



The CMC Community Room

A Place to Stay Connected During the Outbreak

TODAY

Anxiety Management Strategies for You and Your Team

Speaker Biography

Laura Grisolano is an expert on collaborative dispute resolution and organizational dynamics. She brings her extensive experience as an attorney-mediator and conflict management consultant to help parties identify shared goals, resolve disputes, strengthen professional competencies, and move forward.

Since its launch in 2012, Laura's firm Bridge Mediation & Leadership Solutions has served hundreds of clients ranging from law firms and global technology companies to family businesses, start-ups, physicians practices, and institutions of higher education. Laura partners with her clients to deliver solution-driven programs that leverage recent advances in cognitive neuroscience, behavioral economics, personality analytics, and other interdisciplinary best practices.

Laura holds a B.A. in American Studies from Claremont McKenna College and a J.D. from The Law School at the University of Chicago. After law school, she clerked for Judge James B. Moran (NDIL) before joining the Los Angeles office of Sidley Austin LLP as a litigator. A champion of higher education and lifelong learning, Laura serves as trustee of Claremont McKenna College.



Laura M. Grisolano, Esq. , CMC '86
President and CEO
Bridge Mediation & Leadership Solutions

- Mediation
- Conflict Management Consulting
- Leadership Development
- Team Workshops
- Executive Coaching

Strange Days, Indeed.



Our community is confronting a challenging and isolating new reality in 2020.

More than 15,000 CMC alumni, parents, students, faculty, staff, and friends are struggling to make sense of it all and figure out how live and work in this temporary alternative universe.

As you lead organizations, teams, and families through uncharted territory, your responsibilities have increased and become more complex. Loved ones and colleagues may be especially at risk.

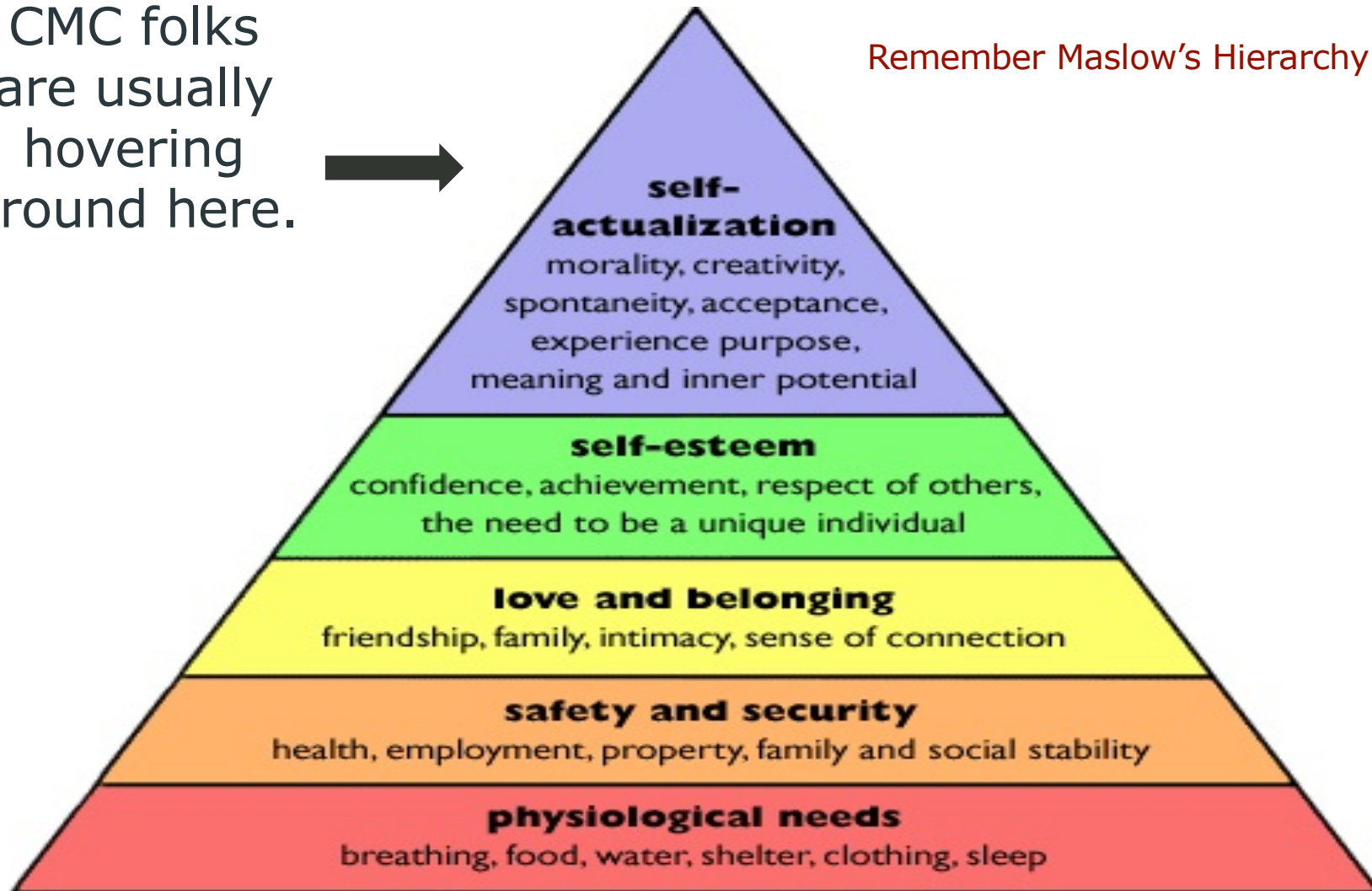
And, making matters worse, our extraverted, people-oriented folks are being forced into isolation, separation, online meetings, and quiet. We are not a crowd who likes disconnection.

More than ever before, CMC has a leadership role to play in keeping our community connected and engaged. We are always appropriately focused on our students, but **we need to widen our focus and ensure that our whole community feels cared for and supported.** With resources, yes, but most of all with connection.

CMC folks
are usually
hovering
around here.

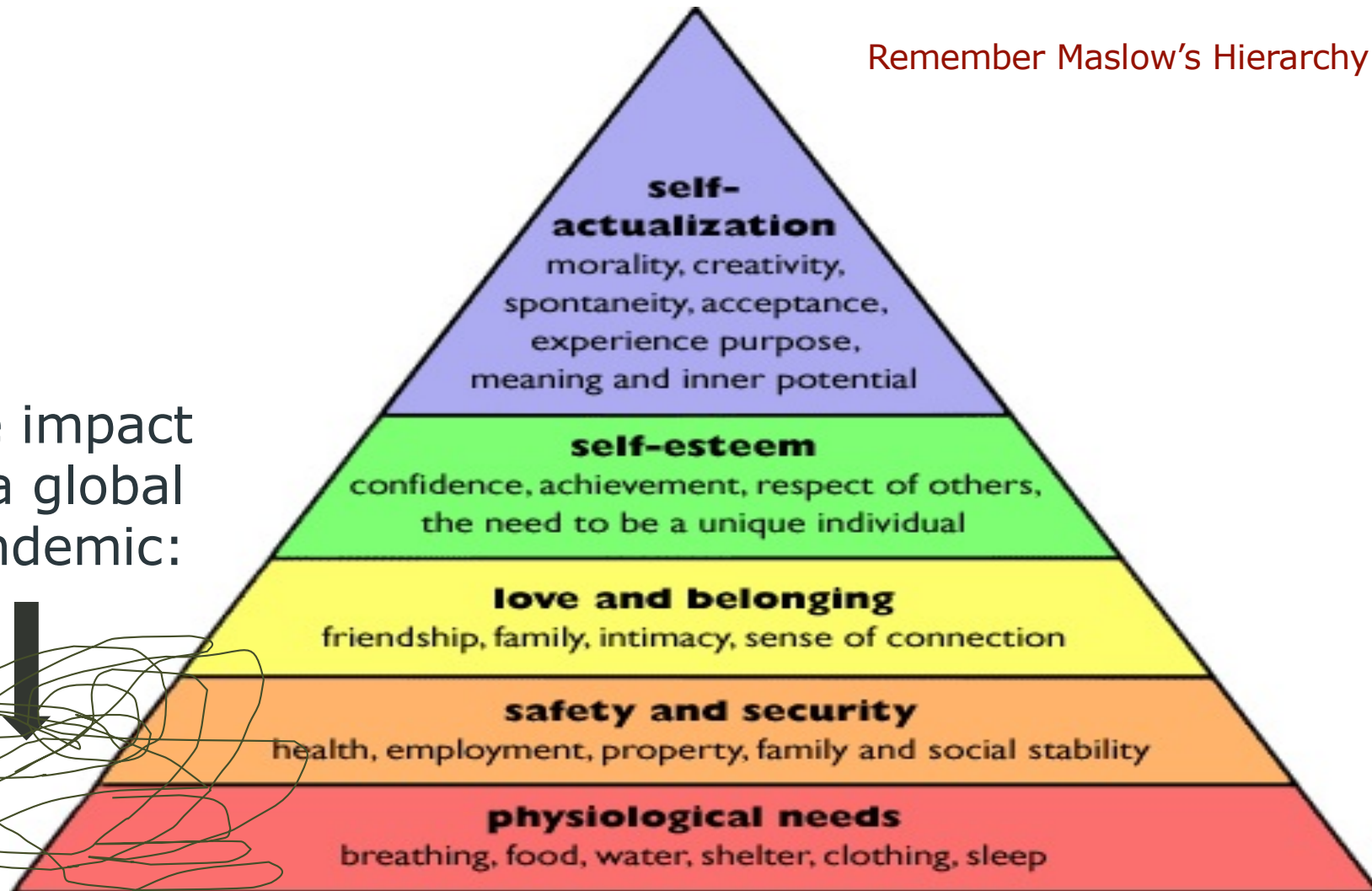
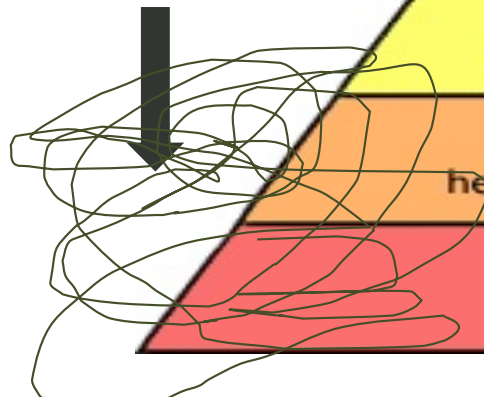


Remember Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs??



Remember Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs??

The impact
of a global
pandemic:



Now more than ever, we must abandon the performative and embrace the authentic. Our essential mental shifts require humility and patience. Focus on real internal change. These human transformations will be honest, raw, ugly, hopeful, frustrated, beautiful, and divine.

Dr. Aisha Ahmad
University of Toronto



The goal:

Use new insights and practices to move toward a sense of calm so that you can survive and be effective during these difficult times.

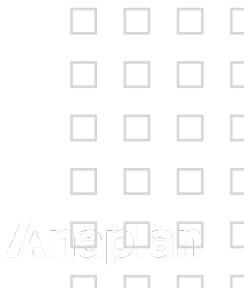
Three Truths:

1. We can't always control the aspects of life and work that cause us stress.
2. Our reactions to this current moment are normal. Most people are experiencing these same struggles.
3. We can take SIMPLE steps improve the way current stressors are impacting our lives and sense of security.



Anxiety Management Tools

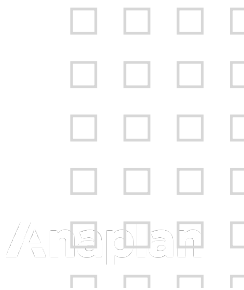
- I. Bringing Curiosity and Compassion to Understanding Your Anxiety
- II. Daily Practices that Work
- III. The Vagus Nerve - Using Your Body's Calming Systems
- IV. Helping Your Team
- V. Sharing Forward - Best Practices and What's Working for You





Anxiety Management Tools

I. Bringing Curiosity and Compassion to Understanding Your Anxiety



The Physiology of Self-Protection

When an animal is threatened or angry, it immediately adopts one of three strategies: fight, flight, or freeze.

Human beings are no different.

Although our brains have evolved additional capacities for rational thought, the original brain structures designed to maximize survival still exist within our brain.



AMYGDALA HIJACK

Within the **midbrain** is a structure called the **AMYGDALA**, which stores emotional memories to help prepare us for moments when we need self-protection. It is the “fight or flight” controller.

Sensory information comes in from the world and passes initially through the thalamus, and from there through the amygdala where the decision is made whether – based on past emotional memories - to send the data to the limbic or cerebral cortex area of the brain.

If the amygdala decides that the situation is risky or dangerous and requires the help of the limbic system, it will trigger (with the help of the hypothalamus) a flood of hormones, causing physical and emotional alarm and readying the body for action. A surge of energy follows immediately after.

This hormonal overload can last several minutes. But there are also longer-lasting hormones that stay in the bloodstream that may prolong or re-provoke the angry reaction.

It can take **20 minutes** for the rush to dissipate and to shift the brain from operating through the limbic system back to the cerebral cortex.

There are two almond shaped amygdalae.



Self-Protection Cycle

In an effort to protect us, our bodies respond to potential violations by making us angry or afraid.

- Our **Sympathetic Nervous System** is activated
- Heart rate increases
- Lungs open, we breathe faster, and we sometimes hold our breath to extract as much oxygen as possible.
- Blood pressure increases
- Pupils dilate to take in more light
- Testosterone production increases
- Adrenaline level increases
- Our temperature rises and we begin to sweat.
- Cortisol (stress hormone) levels increase (??)
- Muscles tense (especially jaw, shoulders, hands, chest, and throat)
- Blood flow increases to major muscles (up to 120% in major skeletal muscles)
- The tightened throat and rapid breathing alters the voice

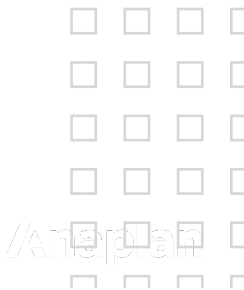


All of this is NORMAL and designed to protect you!!



Anxiety Management Tools

- I. Bringing Curiosity and Compassion to Understanding Your Anxiety
- II. Five Daily Practices that Really Work



Anxiety Management Tools

I. Bringing Curiosity and Compassion to Understanding Your Anxiety

II. Five Daily Practices that Really Work

1. Gratitude – One Thing that Makes you Smile
2. Make a plan for the day to minimize news and social media consumption
3. How can I be of service?
4. The gift of self-care (Eat smart (serotonin), exercise, joy, fun, creativity)
5. When you start feeling anxious, intentionally shift to higher order thinking activities:
 - » **CURIOSITY**
 - » **PROBLEM SOLVING**
 - » **CREATION**
 - » **PLANNING**
 - » **INVESTIGATION**
 - » **LEARNING**

Use your wise human brain.

Triune Brain Theory

Lizard Brain	Mammal Brain	Human Brain
Brain stem & cerebellum	Limbic System	Neocortex
Fight or flight	Emotions, memories, habits	Language, abstract thought, imagination, consciousness
Autopilot	Decisions	Reasons, rationalizes

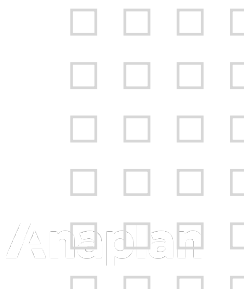


The Triune Brain in Evolution, Paul MacLean, 1960



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Our Nervous Systems

Central Nervous System
(Brain and Spinal Chord)
and
Peripheral Nervous System
(Nerves that connect the CNS to our limbs and organs)

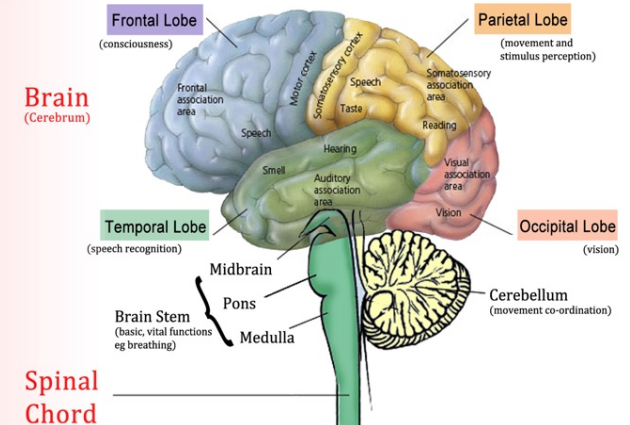
Autonomic Nervous System
(designed to automatically maintain equilibrium)
and

Somatic Nervous System
(within our control)

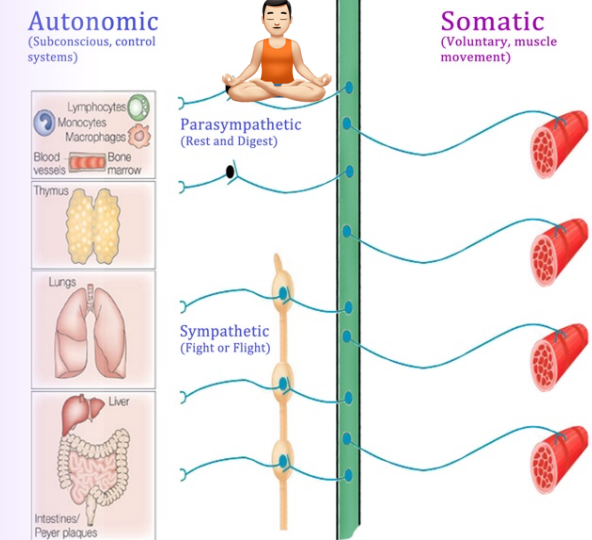
Sympathetic Nervous System (activating)
and
Parasympathetic Nervous System (calming)



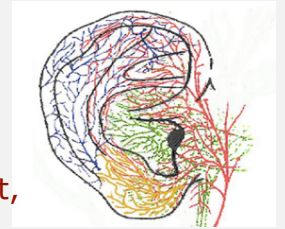
Central Nervous System



Peripheral Nervous System



Secret Strategy for Self-Calming: Stimulate your Vagus Nerve



The Vagus Nerve is the 10th cranial nerve in your body. It is a very long nerve running from the hypothalamus area of your brain, down through your ears, throat, chest, and diaphragm, to your intestines. It wraps around your heart and core area – areas traditionally considered to be the seat of intuition and compassion.

The vagus nerve activates the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS), which manages your relaxation response, and in turn, helps you to control the health of your immune cells, organs and tissues, and even your stem cells.

- Twenty percent of the fibres of the vagus nerve control the organs which 'maintain' your body (the heart, digestion, breathing, glands).
- The other 80 percent of its fibers send information from your gut to your brain.

One of the key roles that the vagus nerve plays, is acting as the “reset” button after your internal alarm system has been set off – i.e., in response to some type of perceived threat (a stress response). This nerve then communicates with the rest of your body to tell you that the threat is gone and that all of your bodily functions can now return to normal, healing mode.

Strategies for activating the Vagus Nerve include:

- Splashing cold water on your face
- Singing
- Rubbing the inside of your ear
- Saliva trick with warm water
- Pressure on the nerve itself (feet, neck, chest)
- Deep Breathing – Especially, diaphragmatic breathing



Diaphragmatic Breathing

Unless you're a yoga master, you cannot directly and consciously stimulate your vagus nerve. But you can *indirectly* stimulate your vagus nerve to relieve anxiety and depression.

When you stimulate your vagus nerve, it releases an array of anti-stress enzymes and hormones such as acetylcholine, prolactin, vasopressin, and oxytocin.

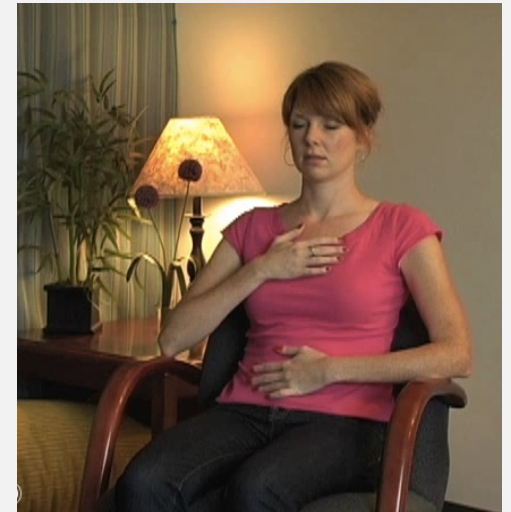
Vagus nerve stimulation is associated with benefits such as improved memory, immune function, sleep, and higher levels of growth hormone.

It also may help tame inflammation, allergic responses, and tension headaches.

Diaphragmatic breathing is a great method to activate the vagus nerve and the parasympathetic nervous system to calm your body's reactions to stress and anxiety.



[Click here to try it!](#)



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- II. Daily Practices that Work
- III. The Vagus Nerve - Using Your Body's Calming Systems
- IV. Helping Your Team
 - Be human. Acknowledge your own human reactions
 - Create a safe place for people to acknowledge their struggles
 - Strengthen sense that we are in this together
 - Adapt daily personal practices for your business team
 - Create a short term rallying cry – Purpose! Service!



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For more information

How can I help? You can reach me at

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Stay safe! Stay Connected.



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