

Gambling and Trauma – Slipping through the Net?

The Scottish Gambling Education Hub

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Session Overview

- Why Gambling and Trauma?
- What is Trauma?
- Types of Trauma – with a Focus on Childhood
- Links between Trauma and Gambling
- Key Considerations & Implications for Practice
- Trauma Informed Practice and Recovery Model and Resources



The Scottish Gambling Education Hub

Informal
Education &
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Universities

Services
supporting
parents & carers

The Scottish Gambling Education Network (SGEN)

The Gambling Education Toolkit

Why Trauma and not ACE's?

There are at least 10 types associated with gambling disorder: Sexual abuse, physical, neglect, emotional abuse, emotional neglect, family dysfunction (separation and perhaps divorce), substance abuse, mental illness, domestic violence and criminal behaviour within the family.

However, these categories do not cover every potentially traumatic event a child could experience.



Circumstances that are not ACE's

- Loss of benefits/benefit sanctions
- Young carers
- Families with a disability
- Homelessness
- Racism
- Peer bullying and discrimination
- Trauma Informed Practice- A Holistic Approach



What is Trauma?

“Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being”

Trauma Informed Practice- A Holistic Approach



Dr Karen Treisman, Safe
Hands Thinking
Minds.co.uk

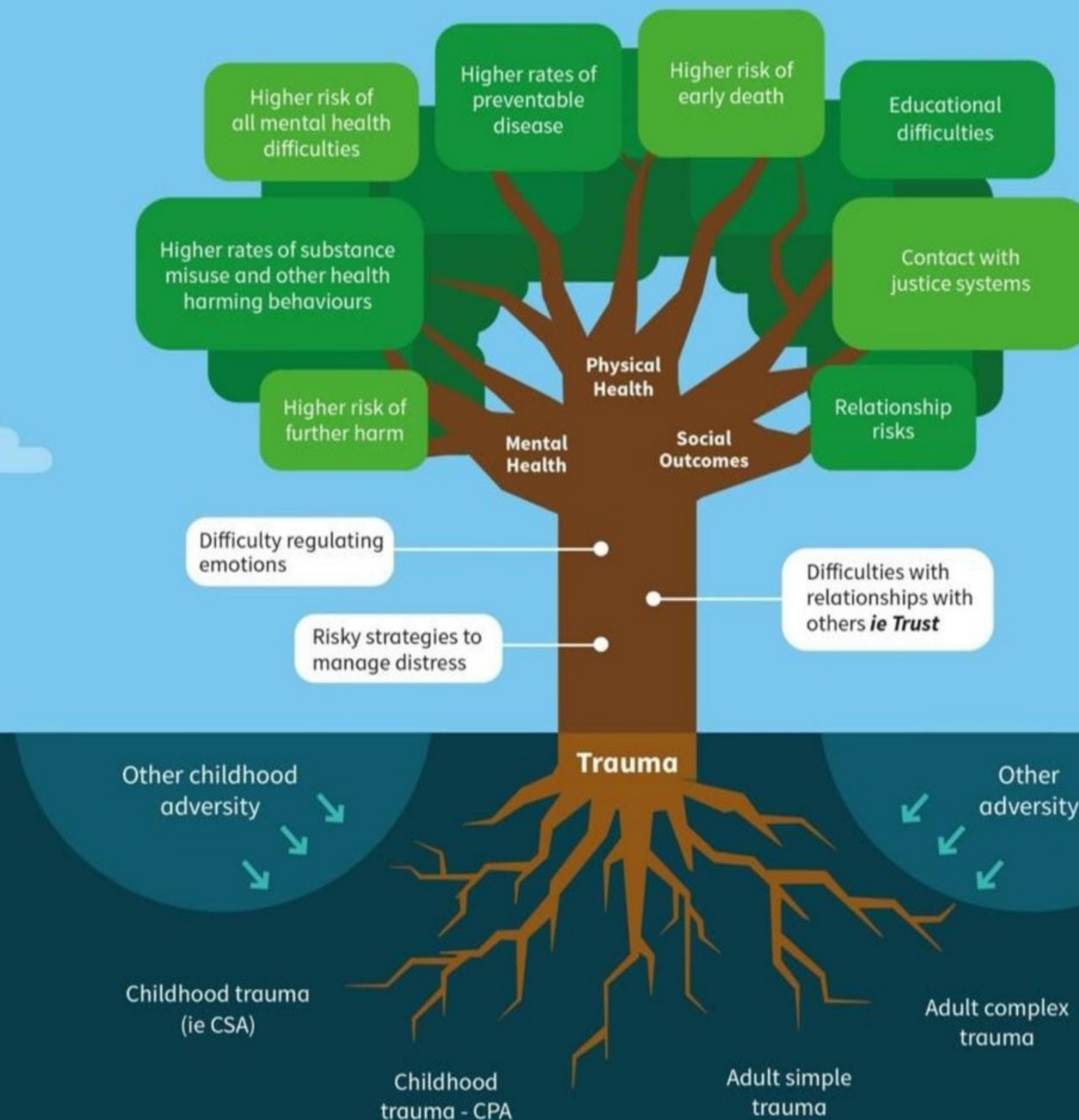
Types of Trauma



Childhood Trauma

Children may go through a range of experiences that classify as psychological trauma, these might include neglect, abandonment, sexual abuse, and physical abuse, witnessing abuse of a sibling or parent, or having a mentally ill parent






Some Key Findings...

- 1 in 5 adults have experienced physical or sexual abuse during childhood.
- Over 1 in 6 11-17 year-olds has experienced some type of severe maltreatment (NSPCC, 2016)
- The Scottish Government estimates that 20% of women experience domestic abuse
- Some groups of people (including children and people with learning disabilities) are more at risk of trauma than others



The Impact of Childhood Trauma

Children who have experienced complex trauma often have difficulty identifying, expressing, and managing emotions, and may have limited language for feeling states. They often internalize and/or externalize stress reactions and as a result may experience significant depression, anxiety, or anger.



**What happens
in childhood**

**Doesn't always stay
in childhood**



The Links Between Trauma and Gambling – Research Findings

Dr. Christina Dineen



Links between trauma and gambling: *Childhood trauma*

People who experience gambling disorder are more likely to have experienced trauma in childhood.¹⁻³

- Children who have been **sexually abused** are between *2 and 3.7 times more likely* to experience gambling problems later in life¹
- Children who have been **physically abused** are around *2.5 times more likely* to experience gambling problems later in life¹
- Children who have experienced **psychological maltreatment¹ or neglect²** are also at *higher risk* of experiencing gambling problems later in life

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1. Lane et al. (2016). Child maltreatment and problem gambling: A systematic review. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 58, 24-38. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/26476945/Child_maltreatment_and_problem_gambling_A_systematic_review?email_work_card=title
 2. Horak et al. (2021). Gambling disorder and childhood trauma: A complex association. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 27(2), 515-528. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33006105/>
 3. Goghari et al. (2020). A family study of trauma and coping strategies in gambling disorder. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 36, 767-782. Available at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10899-020-09963-0>

Links between trauma and gambling: *Childhood trauma*

Researchers have suggested that childhood maltreatment:

- Contributes to **emotional vulnerability**, leading to *gambling to escape* negative emotions
- Encourages development of **impulsivity** as a child, which extends into adulthood

Links between trauma and gambling: *Adult perpetration*

People who are experiencing harmful gambling are also more likely to perpetrate violence towards their children.¹⁻² For example:

- 'Moderate-risk' adults who gamble are **2.7 times more likely to be victims** of family violence, and also **2.6 times more likely to be perpetrators**²
- Even 'low-risk' adults who gamble are more likely to perpetrate or experience family violence victimisation²

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1. Dowling et al. (2021). Problem gambling and family violence: Factors associated with family violence victimization and perpetration in treatment-seeking gamblers. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(15-16), 7645-7669. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30894040/>
 2. Dowling et al. (2018). Problem gambling and family violence: Findings from a population-representative survey. *Journal of Behavioural Addictions*, 7(3), 806-813. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30238783/>

Links between trauma and gambling: *Adult perpetration*

Researchers have suggested that adults experiencing a gambling disorder are more likely to experience:¹⁻²

- Problems with emotion regulation
- Problems with impulse control
- Substance use

“This cluster of behaviours likely diminishes the capacity of parents and caregivers with gambling problems to provide a safe and consistent environment for children.”¹

1. Lane et al. (2016). Child maltreatment and problem gambling: A systematic review. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 58, 24-38 (p. 26). Available at:

https://www.academia.edu/26476945/Child_maltreatment_and_problem_gambling_A_systematic_review?email_work_card=title

2. Dowling et al. (2016). Problem gambling and intimate partner violence: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 17(1), 43-61. Available at:

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25477014/>

Links between trauma and gambling: *Family members and coping skills*

People experiencing a gambling disorder and their family members are less likely to use 'task-oriented coping' in stressful situations

- May suggest a lack of adaptive coping skills 'runs in families'

People experiencing a gambling disorder and their family members are more likely to also experience:

- Trauma and stress-related disorders
- Depression
- Harmful alcohol use

At the age of seven Jason's parents went through a nasty divorce and soon after his mother married a violent, domineering man. Jason received regular beatings and was routinely punished.

His only respite was occasional visits to his paternal grandmother where they all enjoyed watching horseracing. One Saturday Jason's grandfather put a bet on the Grand National for him; the horse won and the memory of winning was one of the fondest of his childhood. Jason spent years of his childhood with his violent, jealous stepfather and became increasingly anxious for his mother's attention.

Jason- A Case Study



What influences have impacted on Jason and his behaviour?

What barriers may we have to consider when supporting Jason?

Some Key Thoughts

- Dissociation
- Choice
- Empowerment
- Impulsivity
- A way to cope with difficult emotions
- Isolation



Gambling harms are the **adverse impacts** from gambling on **the health and wellbeing** of individuals, families, communities, and society.



Mental health



Truancy



Disruption of peer or family relationships



Antisocial behaviour/ crime



Debt



Lying



Poor performance at school



Alcohol/ substance use

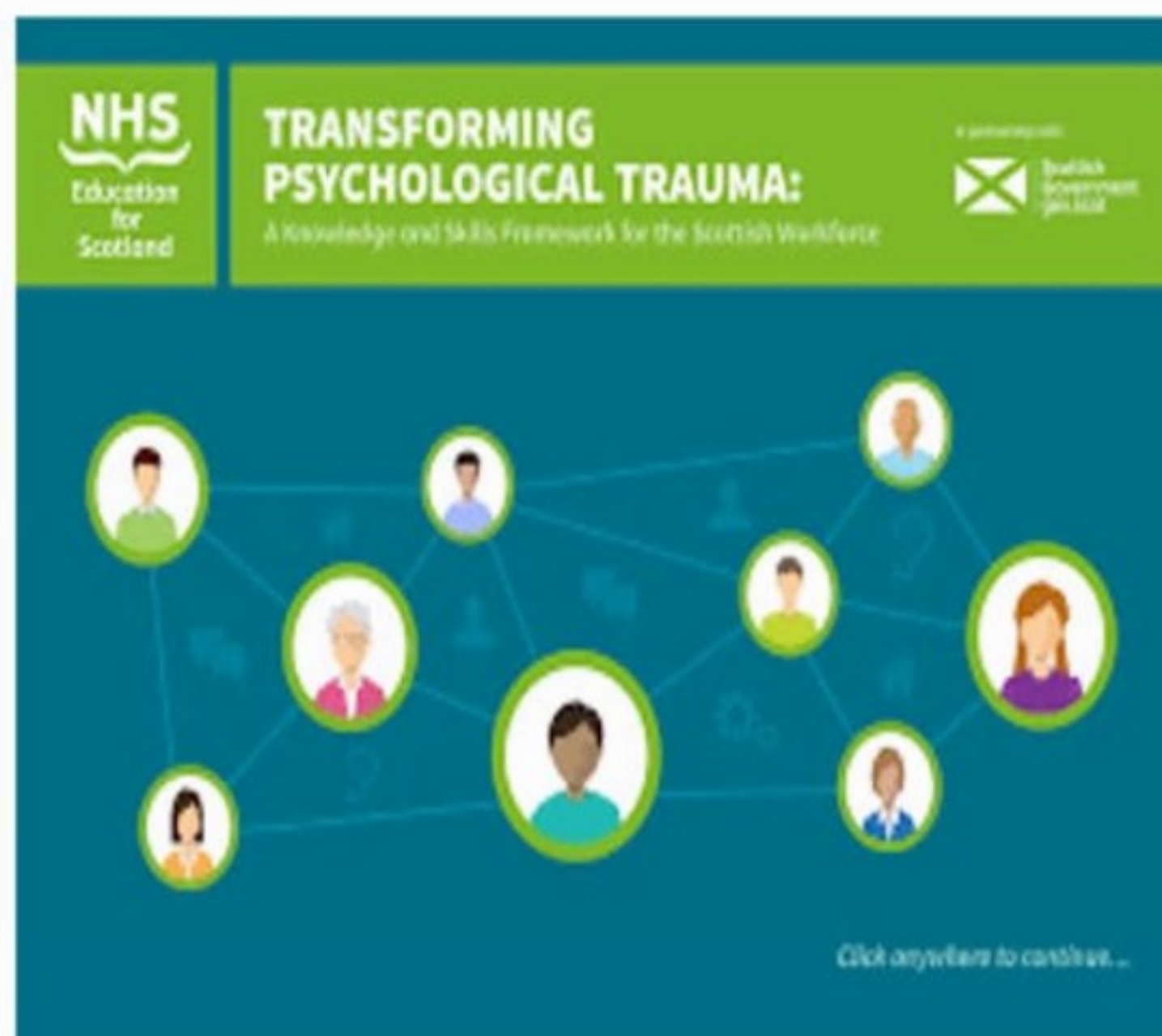


Gambling and Trauma – Key Considerations for Practice

- Training
- Early Intervention
- Respond
- Interaction
- Assessment
- Workplace Informed
- Any other thoughts?



Further Information/Support





The National Trauma Training Programme
www.transformingpsychologicaltrauma.scot



Thank you!

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