

# RENFWREW CONNECTIONS

HOPE, HELP &amp; HEALING



Getting Messy in Recovery:

## Embracing Imperfection through

# Creativity

### IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 Our Collective Voice .....
- 3 Alumni Poetry .....
- 4 The Renfrew Center of Philadelphia - Center City .....
- 4 Virtual Therapy Groups .....
- 5 Alumni Updates .....
- 5 From the Library .....
- 6 Expressions of Recovery .....

#### RENFWREW CONNECTIONS STAFF

**Rachel Tenny, MA, LPC**  
Alumni Coordinator

**Alecia Connlain**  
Director of Marketing

**Melissa Falzarano, MA**  
Marketing Coordinator

**W**hen was the last time you really allowed yourself to make a mess? Or even to be a “mess”? There is often a stigma with both making literal messes and allowing others to see the imperfections within us that aren’t as visible.

Many individuals with eating disorders struggle with perfectionism and wanting to keep their lives and emotions neat and tidy—the opposite of a mess. Creative arts, such as drawing, writing and dance movement are an integral part of the treatment modalities at The Renfrew Center. Through these mediums, it becomes possible for individuals to connect to a part of themselves that they couldn’t previously or struggled to articulate through verbal communication.

When initially presented with materials for a creative arts group, some may struggle with not wanting to make a mess or with not identifying as “an artist.” In these moments, it’s important to be reminded that the point of these groups is NOT about creating a masterpiece, but about processing emotions through a different medium.

There is usually hesitation when someone tells you to “make a mess,” because we are taught to be clean, tidy and in control. The desire to control can often be a contributing factor to eating disorder symptoms and is so important to challenge as a part of recovery.

To create, we need to take risks and open ourselves to making a mess. Similarly, in recovery, we also need to take risks—being open to the parts of ourselves that aren’t perfect, and that we wouldn’t want to be framed on a wall.

It is nearly impossible to be both perfect and creative, or messy and expressive, at the same time. When our “mess” is accepted and able to be shared, there is healing—healing that can help us feel seen and known, healing that is a catalyst to challenge perfectionism, guilt and shame.

This edition of *Connections* is full of alumni art, both visual and written. I hope you enjoy reading these stories and they challenge you to find ways to “get messy” in your life and recovery.



**Rachel Tenny, MA, LPC,** is the Alumni Coordinator for The Renfrew Centers and Primary Therapist at The Renfrew Center of Charlotte. She received both her Bachelor’s degree in Psychology, with a concentration in Creative Art Therapy, and her Master’s degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Lenoir-Rhyne University.

Ms. Tenny has worked in Residential, PHP, and IOP levels of care in both South Carolina and North Carolina. She is passionate about helping women embrace recovery and find their value outside of their eating disorder.

# Our Collective Voice:

LETTER FROM RENFREW'S FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT,

*Samuel E. Menaged, JD*

With 34 years and 19 locations behind us since our opening in 1985, The Renfrew Center continues to offer the highest level of care and remains the pioneer in the treatment of eating disorders. Recently, we proudly announced that our newest site,



The Renfrew Center of Philadelphia – Center City, will open later this spring and be our fourth location in Pennsylvania. Programming at The Renfrew Center of Philadelphia – Center City will consist of a comprehensive range of services including day treatment, intensive outpatient and group therapy. With the addition of this Center City site, patients will

be able to easily transition between all levels of care including residential at The Renfrew Center of Philadelphia – Spring Lane, just ten miles away.

Over the years, we have recognized a high interest and need for incorporating digital services into the spectrum of our treatment offerings. As a result, we have created a website specifically for alumni ([www.renfrewsupport.com](http://www.renfrewsupport.com)) which provides support and resources, monthly online webinars addressing all things recovery and, most recently, virtual therapy groups. These newly designed weekly therapy groups offer structured care in a web-based setting and are available to adolescent girls and women residing in the following states: California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, New York, North Carolina, and Texas. We look forward to expanding this exciting outpatient programming to additional states in the near future.

Lastly, I'd like to personally invite you to join us this summer at our annual Alumni Reunion—hosted at our Philadelphia, PA (Spring Lane) and Coconut Creek, FL locations. The event will be held on Saturday, June 1st, offering a day of supportive and informative workshops along with opportunities to reconnect with fellow alumni and staff. We look forward to seeing you there!

**SAMUEL E. MENAGED, JD**, is the Founder and President of The Renfrew Centers and The Renfrew Center Foundation. Mr. Menaged founded The Renfrew Center 34 years ago as the country's first residential treatment facility specializing in eating disorders. He is the past-President of the Board of the Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy and Action, an advocacy group based in Washington, DC and a board member of the Residential Eating Disorders Consortium. Mr. Menaged is a former healthcare attorney.

# Using Creativity to Renew your Recovery

By: **Susan Kleinman, MA, BC-DMT, NCC, CEDS**

As many individuals with eating disorders progress in their recovery and no longer focus on eating disorder behaviors, they report a void begging for something to replace whatever “benefits” they believe the eating disorder had once provided. According to the famous psychologist, Rollo May:



“Creativity is the process of bringing something new into being. Creativity requires passion and commitment. It brings to our awareness what was previously hidden and points to new life.”

The well-known poet, EE Cummings wrote, “Once we believe in ourselves, we can risk curiosity, wonder, spontaneous delight or any experience that reveals the human spirit.” Therefore, your own way of living in your body plays an important role in opening yourself to the wonder of your very own creativity. In welcoming these opportunities into your “mind’s eye,” a sense of wellbeing can emerge.

## Here are four suggestions for awakening and discovering your creativity:

1. Recognize that all you need is within you.
2. Create a soothing space where you can anchor and experience your true self.
3. Close your eyes and look inward to see what emerges from your discoveries.
4. Trust yourself to take action to express your discoveries.

Use your ability to “create” in aspects of your life that need renewed energy—then enjoy what spontaneously comes forth.

**Susan Kleinman, MA, BC-DMT, NCC, CEDS**, a board certified Dance/Movement Therapist, National Certified Counselor and Certified Eating Disorder Specialist, is Creative Arts Therapy Supervisor and Dance/Movement Therapist for The Renfrew Center of Florida. Ms. Kleinman is a trustee of the Marian Chace Foundation, Past President of the American Dance Therapy Association, and past Chair of The National Coalition for Creative Arts Therapies. She has published extensively, presented widely, and is the recipient of the American Dance Therapy Association's 2013 Lifetime Achievement Award and the 2014 Spirit of iaedp award. Her work is featured in the documentary entitled ‘*Expressing Disorder: Journey to Recovery*.’

# Words of Recovery

**Words.** I've always had tens of thousands of them floating around in my head, however for over 16 years of my life those words did not belong to me alone: they belonged to my eating disorder. For years and years my eating disorder shouted words at me such as "you're not good enough," "not pretty enough," "not smart enough," and even more degrading words like "fat," "stupid," "ugly," and "unlovable." These words left me feeling less than human. I thought if only I could control it, if only I could change myself in some type of way, then I'd be all of those things I desired. I'd be smart, pretty, lovable,



etc. My life with my eating disorder left so much to be desired. Finally, at the age of 27, I was sick of the words my eating disorder was filling my head with and I knew I needed some serious help. During my 4 months at Renfrew I found myself learning new words and terms. As I strived for recovery during and after treatment, I strived to replace my eating disorders words with new words. I slowly allowed myself to start writing my words down, practicing vulnerability with boundaries. I stopped always avoiding the hard stuff. Through writing I am learning how to cope through recovery. While I hope my words can help and inspire others, I realize I can only do that if those words help and inspire ME.

## My Beloved

I am Casper, a creature set apart  
My dim light on the inside  
Magnificently shining in the dark  
Picasso could not have painted a finer horse  
Truly a shimmering work of art

I am Casper, a being in the dark  
Gazing at the herd, longing in my eyes  
Braying against the strict confines  
Branded upon my heart  
Freedom, my elusive faithful muse

I am Casper, a mare growing free  
Closing the divide between what is and what can be  
I see the shiny stallions, glowing in the night  
Gradually coming sweetly closer in my sight  
My heart slowly swells as they take their leave  
I am left alone with me, my own beloved steed



**Rose A.** became a Renfrew alumni in 2014. She is interested in visual art, reading, live music, and also creating hand needlework, lettering, and writing. Rose lives with her husband and calico.



**Kaitlin P.** is 29 years old and from Gastonia, NC. She received her undergraduate degree from Meredith College and her graduate degree in Special Education from UNCC. Kaitlin is a special education teacher and a cat mom. She loves writing, taking pictures and traveling. She has battled an eating disorder since she was 11 years old, and has been in recovery for the last two years.



# The Renfrew Center of Philadelphia - Center City



## COMING SPRING 2019

4<sup>TH</sup> LOCATION IN PENNSYLVANIA,  
19<sup>TH</sup> NATIONWIDE

Offering Day Treatment, Intensive Outpatient and Group Therapy – just 10 miles from our Residential facility

## FREE Recovery Webinars

*For alumni and those needing extra support in their recovery journey.*

- May 8th** *Guilt, Denial, Surprise, Compassion: Helping Families Navigate Their Emotions to Enhance Recovery Support*
- June 12th** *Crafting Your Recovery: Using Creative Arts to Heal*
- July 17th** *Body Neutrality: How to Exist Between Loving or Hating Your Body*

Presenters in this series include:



Rachel Tenny,  
MA, LPCA



Ashley Moser,  
LMFT



Eleanor Poore,  
MS



McKenzie Wilkins,  
LCSW

All webinars are FREE and held from 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm  
and 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm EDT.

**TO REGISTER, PLEASE VISIT [WWW.RENFREWCENTER.COM](http://WWW.RENFREWCENTER.COM).**

## The Renfrew Center Offers Virtual Therapy Eating Disorders Groups

These online, virtual therapy groups actively engage participants with each other to explore and understand the emotions and relational functions of their disordered eating.

Participants must be located in one of the following states:

California • Connecticut • Florida • Illinois  
New York • North Carolina • Texas

More states to be announced soon!



To get started, please call 1-800-RENFREW.

You will need to have access to Wi-Fi and a device such as a smart phone, computer or tablet with a camera and screen.

# Hear from Renfrew Alumni



Aimee



Sherri



Olivia & Parents



Daralyse



Faatimah



Jennifer



Kristen



Cynthia



Kirstin & Sister



Casey

The Renfrew Center is delighted to offer a series of Alumni Video Testimonials from a variety of former patients.

To view these and other supportive videos, please visit:  
[www.renfrewsupport.com/videos](http://www.renfrewsupport.com/videos).



## Renfrew's Annual Alumni Reunion

Be True | Be You

Saturday, June 1, 2019  
 9:00 am - 2:30 pm

The reunion is **FREE** and will be held at the following Renfrew locations:

**The Renfrew Center of Philadelphia**  
 475 Spring Lane  
 Philadelphia, PA 19128

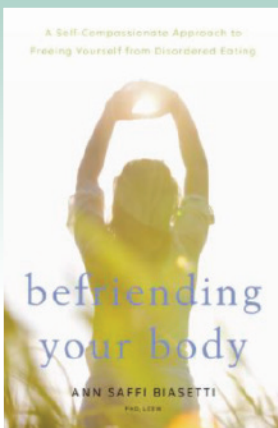
**The Renfrew Center of Florida**  
 7700 Renfrew Lane  
 Coconut Creek, FL 33073

For more INFORMATION and to REGISTER:  
 please visit [www.renfrewsupport.com](http://www.renfrewsupport.com)  
 or call **1-800-RENFREW (736-3739)**.

## FROM THE LIBRARY

### *Befriending Your Body: A Self-Compassionate Approach to Freeing Yourself from Disordered Eating*

By: Ann Saffi Biasetti, PhD, LCSW • 2018, Shambhala Publications



*Befriending Your Body* is a book whose time has come. Dr. Ann Saffi Biasetti explains that essential elements for lasting change must include somatic (body) methods that make it possible for individuals to discover, accept and express feelings and sensations that have been so long buried they become imprinted in mind and body. The concept of *Befriending Your Body* directly addresses and counters the body loathing that has emerged in the global culture over the last 20 years—the body as an “enemy,” not an ally.

Those seeking help can be assured to know that a holistic approach to wellness is not only now well-researched through neuroscience but is built upon the practices, beliefs and findings from the past.

*Befriending Your Body* has approached body shaming, insecurity, fear, and trauma with a loving touch. Using the best elements of psychospiritual growth, yoga, neuroscience, clinical intuition, creativity, and her own research, Dr. Biasetti has set out to provide a

unique and integrative approach to healing the malaise of disordered eating and body disconnection that is plaguing our world.

This book is “heartfelt” and authentic and, surely, those who read it and take it “to heart” will clearly reap the rewards of being in the presence of a true healer.



**Adrienne Ressler, LMSW, CEDS, F.iaedp**, is Vice President, Professional Development, The Renfrew Center Foundation, and has served as senior staff for more than 28 years. Fellow and past-President of the Board of Directors of the International Association of Eating Disorders Professionals (iaedp), she presently chairs iaedp's Senior Advisory Council. Ms. Ressler is the Co-Founder and former Co-Chairperson of the Somatic and Somatically Oriented Therapies Special Interest Group of the Academy for Eating Disorders. In 2016, she was selected as the inaugural recipient of Eating Disorder Hope's *Seal of Excellence* award for her “empowering work as a body image specialist.” Author of chapters on the use of experiential therapies for eating disorders in three textbooks, her work has also been included in the first *Encyclopedia of Body Image and Human Appearance*. A frequent contributor to the popular media, she has appeared on the *TODAY* show and *Good Morning America Sunday*.



# Expressions



"By the time I created this piece I had been stumbling through recovery under a backpack of expectations, none of which included patience, self-compassion, or forgiveness. As I forged ahead, certain I would master recovery perfectly, I still found myself being torn down, desolate, and defeated. Suddenly, the beauty of the earth around me was screaming silent truth that pulsed against my own energy in an unspoken language. I began to think of myself in terms of a tree, from seed to grown majesty. I was growing so slowly, so imperceptibly as my roots drilled into the ground and made me stronger. My branches reached higher as I explored myself and the world around me. I began practicing patience and loving kindness. My backpack full of expectations became a burden that I surrendered for the splendor of now. I found rapture and guidance in the slow unfolding of nature imbued with the rhythm of the universe. I became confident in my "not-knowingness" and used it as fuel to grow myself ever taller. This piece marks a crucial moment of my recovery because it was through the teachings of trees that I awoke to the wildness. But, I'm still learning: to embrace the unruly, nonsensical, raw, and transitory seasons that ravage and strengthen myself. I'm alive, so I am still learning, still growing, still drilling roots and unfurling leaves. I am alive."

-Julia S.

Julia graduated high school in 2010 and embarked on "adult" life. Later that winter, now 8 years ago, Julia began her journey of recovery using art therapy to light her footfalls. In 2015 she graduated from Neumann University with an undergraduate degree in psychology. A Renfrew alumna, Julia is still learning to ride the waves of recovery that ultimately merged with the tides of millennial adulthood. She uses art, writing, yoga, meditation, and DBT therapy to practice greeting all experiences with deeper awareness, patience, and self-love. Julia is at a very exciting point in her life where she is considering going back to school for a master's degree in art therapy, a field very close to her heart indeed. To keep her spirit awake and curious she climbs trees, adopts plant babies and spends time reading in her brother's wicked blanket fort.



"I was wrapping up my final undergraduate semester in December 2016: academically successful, surrounded by great family and friends, and was just hired as a 3rd grade teacher before I even graduated. On the inside, however, I was suffocating. My story prior to treatment isn't unique, romantic, or out of a movie. I had a perfectionistic and avoidant personality, years of unaddressed disordered habits, and a debilitating desire to change everything about myself. Combine those components one of the most stressful transitions thus far, and I had myself a perfect storm.

Fast forward to the present: I'm a little over a year into recovery, and it's messy and imperfect. It's also rewarding, humbling, and beautiful. When I got asked to contribute to this addition of *Connections*, I was honored because it gave me a chance to shine light on one of my favorite coping techniques post treatment: art.

I've always considered myself a "creative," but it wasn't until my eight-month stint at Renfrew where I truly began to explore how I could use that part of me – the creative part of me, the one part that I lost when I was sick and was able to find again – to propel me towards healing.

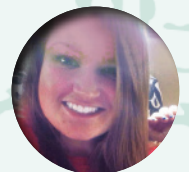
Art at Renfrew helped me challenge my perfectionistic tendencies, and allowed me to express myself in a way that felt right. I whole heartedly appreciated that during my treatment – being able to express myself and heal in a way that felt meaningful.

The piece I am sharing here is a painting I made for my therapist who I had the pleasure of having in treatment. When I was asked to send an image of my art, I instantly thought of this. It perfectly encapsulates my gratitude to her and my team at The Renfrew Center of Bethesda: I showed up damaged and hurt in some places, and felt pretty hopeless and angry too. They gave me a safe and compassionate place to land until I was able to heal.

I use art now to explore, express, and connect with others. The same thing I say about art is the same thing I would tell someone about recovery: it's not about the final product, it's about the process."

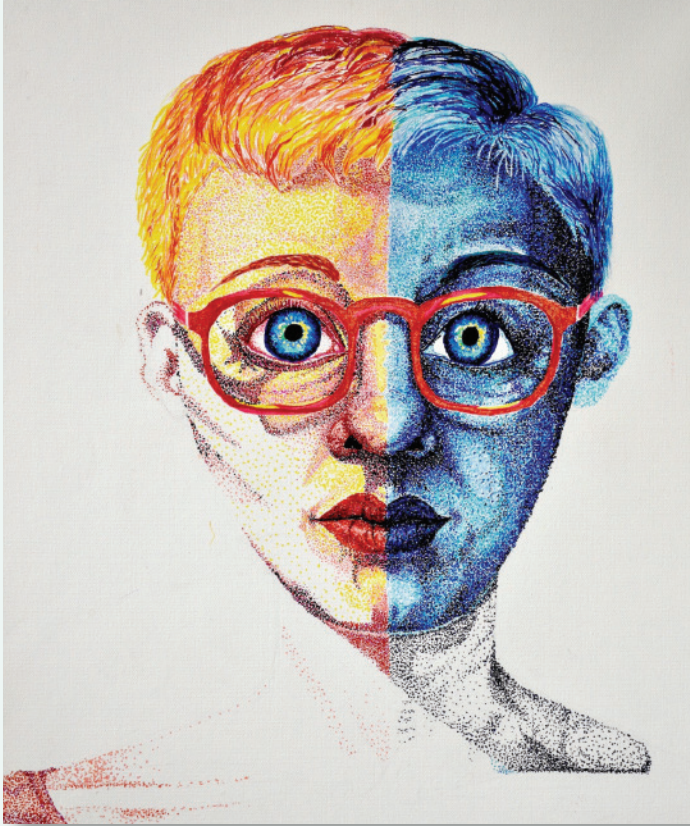
-Kayla O.

Kayla is a twenty-somethin' from Annapolis, MD who spends her days bettering her recovery, directing a local before and after school program, snuggling her pets, and painting stuff. Her keys are usually lost and she is very interested in conversations about bagels. She plans on going back to school to get her Master's degree in Child Psychology because helping kids is a huge passion of hers. You can follow her on Instagram for more art inspo and cute animals at @itsmekaylahb.





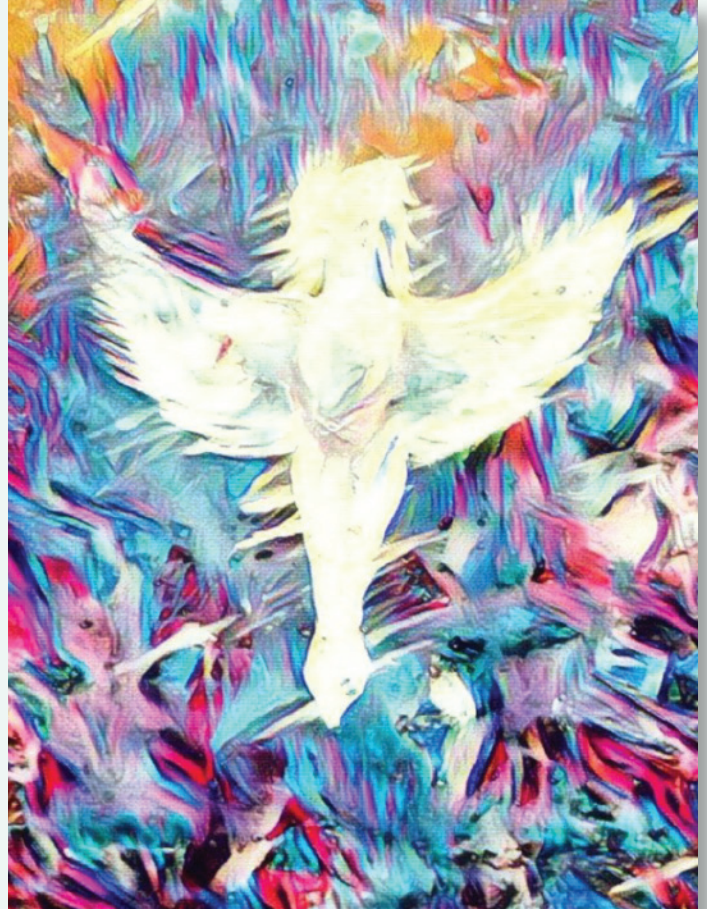
# of Recovery



Integration of the Self

## -Shelby R.

Shelby was born and raised in Arlington, VA. At ten years old, her eating disorder developed as a way to cope with feelings of estrangement, anxiety, and inadequacy. What had initially seemed like a benign coping mechanism rapidly devolved into 13 year struggle with bulimia and anorexia. She was admitted to The Renfrew Center of Philadelphia in 2015, where she completed six weeks of therapy. She also attended The Renfrew Center of Radnor Day Treatment and Intensive Outpatient Programs. Since graduating from Renfrew, she has experienced more love, truth and joy and has learned to savor every moment.



“Recovery has been and continues to be a very hard journey—but one that is completely worth it. I’m healthier and happier (most days!). While at Renfrew, I often complained about art groups, claiming that I could only do art ‘my way.’ Really, I had been avoiding art for a long time because I didn’t want to experience all the bad things I knew would come up if I did. But as I participated each week, my passion for art reignited, and it has become both a constant practice of self-care and of mindfulness. So I’m ‘rising’ from my eating disorder, and I can’t wait to see where I go next.”

## -Lesley F.

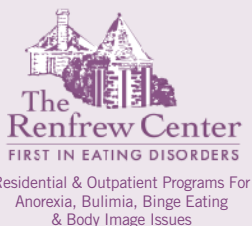
Lesley is a practicing attorney who received treatment at Renfrew from May-August 2018. Since completing treatment, Lesley has put more focus on her passion for art: opening her own online art shop and participating in local art events. She and her husband recently celebrated three years of marriage and are planning a trip back to the Wizarding World of Harry Potter at Universal Florida this summer (she’s a Slytherin, he’s a Gryffindor!). Lesley credits the support she receives from her husband and her outpatient team with helping her to maintain the successes she achieved while at Renfrew and looks forward to a life in full recovery.





The Renfrew Center Foundation  
475 Spring Lane  
Philadelphia, PA 19128

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CENTER FOUNDATION



#### LOCATIONS:

##### RESIDENTIAL

Philadelphia, PA  
Coconut Creek, FL

##### ALL LOCATIONS

Atlanta, GA  
Baltimore, MD  
Bethesda, MD  
Boston, MA  
Charlotte, NC  
Chicago, IL  
Coconut Creek, FL  
Los Angeles, CA  
Mount Laurel, NJ  
Nashville, TN  
New York, NY  
Old Greenwich, CT  
Orlando, FL  
Philadelphia, PA  
(Center City & Spring Lane)  
Pittsburgh, PA  
Radnor, PA  
Ridgewood, NJ  
West Palm Beach, FL

## Support The Renfrew Center Foundation

The Renfrew Center Foundation is a nonprofit organization that helps to advance eating disorders education, research, advocacy, and treatment. Please help us to continue these efforts by making a tax-deductible donation to the Foundation.

#### Donations can be sent to:

The Renfrew Center Foundation, 475 Spring Lane, Philadelphia, PA 19128

Your donation, or that of a family member, may help someone receive the crucial care she requires. In addition, we can continue to educate the public about eating disorders and provide necessary training for professionals in the field.

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Training/Education

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Area of Greatest Need

☐

Research

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