

ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF STAFF CARE

PRACTICES TO STRENGTHEN RESILIENCE
IN INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN
AND DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS



Developed by The KonTerra Group and released with InsideNGO and DisasterReady.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The *Essential Principles of Staff Care: Practices to Strengthen Resilience in International Humanitarian and Development Organizations* could not have been developed without the input – formal and informal – of many people around the world.

We are deeply grateful to all of the organizations that we have worked with over the years. Together we have learned what can help foster resilience for those working in international humanitarian and development contexts. The leaders and staff of these organizations have been welcome partners in developing and refining good practices and approaches to staff care.

The KonTerra Group is honored to release *Essential Principles of Staff Care* with InsideNGO and Disaster-Ready.org. These organizations are leaders in educating and advocating for staff care within international humanitarian and development organizations. Marie McNamee at InsideNGO and Tina Bolding at Disaster-Ready.org have brought to this process a deep understanding of the sector and a fierce commitment to the well-being of staff around the world.

The *Essential Principles of Staff Care* was immeasurably improved by the review and input of formal reviewers. We express our profound thanks to them: members of InterAction’s Security Advisory Group; Nanette Cantrell, NLC Consultants; Jessica Carl, Mercy Corps; Bernadette Channer, Management Sciences for Health; Lorraine Elshiekh, Episcopal Relief & Development; Michael Hegenauer, World Vision International; Heather Hicks, Reconciled World; Emmanuelle Lacroix, Cornerstone on Demand Foundation; Ann Moffett, CARE; Jennifer Morrison, Chemonics; David Palasits, Catholic Relief Services; Peg Ross, PCI; Jeri Westad, Food for the Hungry; Christine Williamson, International Duty of Care; Agnieszka Zieminska Yank, Technoserve.

INTRODUCTION

International humanitarian and development work is often rewarding. It can also be challenging, especially to the psychological health of individuals working or volunteering in this field. Organizations also have a legal and moral obligation to protect and enhance the well-being of their people. They have the responsibility to take reasonable steps to mitigate foreseeable risks to the physical and psychological health and safety of personnel. Taking steps to mitigate these risks helps to fulfill an organization's duty of care.

There are a number of benefits to promoting the health and safety of humanitarian and development personnel. People who feel physically safe and psychologically secure are more likely to be productive and engaged. A productive and engaged workforce may have low levels of absenteeism and high levels of loyalty. An organization's reputation for taking care of their team members may mean they are able to attract the top talent. These factors arguably contribute to an organization that has greater likelihood of achieving its mission.

The risks of not taking seriously the health and safety of individuals are acute. An organization experiencing high levels of stress may see an increase in risk-taking behavior or security incidents because of poor judgment. Turnover may be high and the organization may have a difficult time recruiting for open positions. Ignoring obligations to the health and safety of staff may expose an organization to legal liability and the financial and reputational consequences that could follow.

There is growing recognition of the need for humanitarian and development organizations to do more to protect and enhance the psychological health of their people. Resilience, the ability to recover from shock and sustain energy during chronic upheaval, is a key contributor to psychological health and longevity in this field. Thankfully, more and more organizations are establishing programs and offering services to

promote resilience, something commonly referred to as staff care.

Essential Principles of Staff Care: Practices to Strengthen Resilience in International Humanitarian and Development Organizations aims to outline the principles and practices that, if implemented, will contribute to the resilience and psychological health of humanitarian and development personnel and strengthen an organization's ability to offer a comprehensive staff care program. Throughout this document we use the phrase "staff care and resilience." The use of this phrase reflects a central philosophy in our work. We believe organizations have a role to play in promoting psychological health. They do this through staff care programs and services. We believe that individuals have reservoirs of strengths and abilities and a responsibility to protect and steward those strengths and abilities. This is resilience. We use the phrase "staff care and resilience" to reflect the joint responsibility and opportunity to contribute to a workforce that thrives.

Essential Principles of Staff Care has been developed based on The KonTerra Group's experience delivering staff care services. For nearly a decade, in more than 50 countries and with more than 70 organizations, we have worked in close partnership with NGOs, government agencies and private sector development actors to develop and implement staff care services for international and national staff alike. These partnerships have revealed important lessons that are distilled in the *Essential Principles of Staff Care*.

It is our hope the ideas in this document evolve over time as everyone that cares about the well-being of personnel continue to work together and learn. We believe the *Essential Principles of Staff Care* can be a useful tool for organizations who desire further guidance about how best to support their people.

STRUCTURE OF ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF STAFF CARE

The following document articulates six essential principles of staff care, objectives and accompanying practices.

Each Principle outlines a high level goal that, when considered with the others, provides a framework for organizational responsibility for the psychological health of their employees.

Each Principle also includes one or more Objectives. Objectives help to translate the respective Principle into action. The Practices are concrete actions that operationalize the Objectives.



USING ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF STAFF CARE

There are a variety of ways to use the Essential Principles of Staff Care:

- Benchmark your organization against industry best practices
- Provide guidance to begin a staff care program
- Identify gaps in an existing staff care program
- Help assess if your organization is fulfilling its duty of care responsibilities
- Advocate for donor funding for staff care services and programs
- Assist an applicant in determining if a hiring organization is providing appropriate support to its people

In this document we most frequently use the word “staff” or “employee” to describe the people that work together to achieve the organization’s mission. Your organization may have employees, volunteers, interns, fellows, consultants, seconded personnel and more. An organization has a duty of care to all its people. For simplicity’s sake, we have chosen to use the term “staff” or “employee.” As you read through this document, please consider all those that engage with your work, whatever their title may be.

The *Essential Principles of Staff Care* are based on our experience working with many different entities, including large and small organizations, humanitarian and development actors, sector-specific and multi-sector NGOs, donors, and organizations with secular and faith-based missions. We trust the *Essential Principles of Staff Care: Practices to Strengthen Resilience in International Humanitarian and Development Organizations* will assist you to establish policies, programs and services that support the resilience and psychological health of humanitarian and development personnel around the world.

ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF STAFF CARE

PRACTICES TO STRENGTHEN RESILIENCE IN INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS



ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

PRINCIPLE 1: Embrace an organizational commitment to staff care and resilience and implement policies and procedures to that end.



STAFF SELECTION

PRINCIPLE 2: Ensure the assessment of individual resilience is part of the candidate selection process.



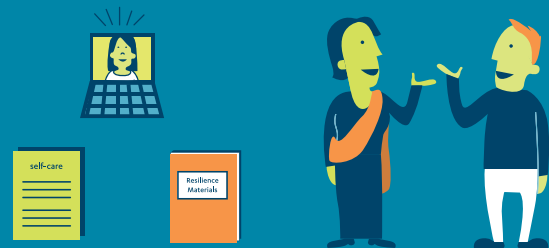
ORIENTATION & PREPARATION

PRINCIPLE 3: Ensure staff have access to staff care and resilience resources and services upon joining the organization or beginning a new assignment, including additional resources for staff who work in high stress environments.



SUPPORT DURING EMPLOYMENT

PRINCIPLE 4: Ensure staff have access to confidential individual consultations, educational materials and training for the duration of their employment.



SUPPORT AFTER ASSIGNMENT

PRINCIPLE 5: Ensure staff have access to confidential one-on-one consultations, educational materials, and training for a period of time following the conclusion of their assignment.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

PRINCIPLE 6: Staff care policies and procedures should indicate that certain sub-sets of the staff population face greater exposure to stress and trauma than the staff population at large. These sub-groups should be identified by name and special attention should be paid and resources allocated to support these individuals.



ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

PRINCIPLE 1: *Embrace an organizational commitment to staff care and resilience and implement policies and procedures to that end.*

OBJECTIVE A: Clearly define the organization's philosophy of staff care.

PRACTICES:

- Garner key stakeholder agreement on why staff care is important within the organization.



- Formalize this agreement in an organizational philosophy of staff care. Include a statement of commitment to providing equity of services to international and national staff.
- Develop and implement a strategic communications plan to ensure the senior leadership team emphasizes the importance and value of staff care to the organization.
- Senior leaders and managers should discuss stress and resilience on a regular basis, including their own experiences using services the organization provides. This serves to normalize the experience of stress and reduce stigma.

OBJECTIVE B: Ensure the organization has well-articulated staff care policies and procedures.

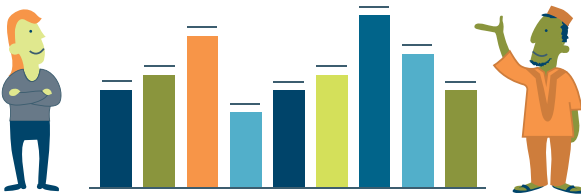
PRACTICES:

- Benchmark the organization's current staff care policies and practices against *Essential Principles of Staff Care* or other recognized guidelines/best practices.
 - Based on this benchmarking exercise, draft and distribute to all staff policies and procedures for staff care and resilience at the organization, including clear endorsement by the senior management.
 - Policies and procedures should be specific and clear and designed to address the specific staff care needs of each internal staff group. Related duties and responsibilities of leaders and managers should be clearly defined.
 - Clear and specific policies and procedures will outline expectations for managers and staff related to staff care. Revise job descriptions if necessary.
 - Brief and train managers on the support services available to staff and what their duties and responsibilities will be in ensuring an organizational commitment to staff care.
 - Managers will be responsible for demonstrating their effectiveness in accomplishing the identified duties and responsibilities and this will be a formal component of their performance objectives and review.
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- Disseminate policies and procedures to all staff and post in an easily accessible place for staff to access at any time (e.g., intranet, staff canteen).
 - As new services are rolled out, issue announcements from senior leadership to emphasize the importance of these to the organization.
 - Use employee surveys, town halls, team meetings or other feedback channels to periodically assess if staff understand policies and use services. Particular effort should be made to determine awareness of and utilization by field staff.
 - Hold staff care and resilience review meetings annually to review the organization's staff care approach and experience and to ensure national and international staff are offered similar support (ensuring support is adapted for cultural and context).

OBJECTIVE C: Integrate staff care support into program planning and budgeting procedures.

PRACTICES:

- Proactively include staff care and resilience services into budget proposals. Develop an internal process to ensure this occurs.
- For programs supported by dedicated contract/grant awards, identify desired services and develop accompanying proposal narrative and budget requests for these services.



- Develop and provide a “tip sheet” to key program planning and proposal writing staff with language about common staff care and resilience activities/resources that can be included in proposal narratives. This may include addressing the justification for including staff care and resilience activities in the proposal.
- Ensure that proposals for emergency response funding include appropriate requests for all staff responding to the emergency.
- Prior to the onset of emergencies, identify institutional and/or individual donors who are receptive to supporting staff care and resilience activities during emergencies.

STAFF SELECTION

PRINCIPLE 2: *Ensure the assessment of individual resilience is part of the candidate selection process.*

OBJECTIVE A: Strengthen the recruitment, screening and assessment procedures to ensure recruiters and hiring managers use appropriate methodologies to assess personal resilience, hardiness and coping mechanisms.

PRACTICES:

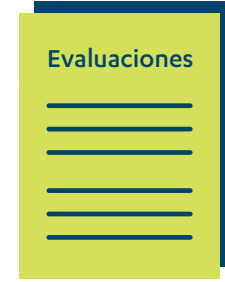
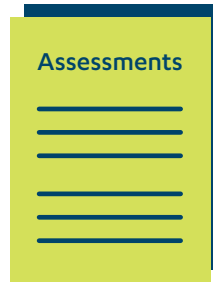
- Review the organization's staff care policy with candidates during the selection process. This conveys the importance and establishes organizational norms and expectations about the value of resilience among its personnel.
- Adopt tools to assess an individual's vulnerabilities and strengths relative to the operating environment in question. Train users in the appropriate application of these tools, including how interviewer bias, personal experience and risk tolerance can influence assessment of a candidate.
- Incorporate into the interviewing process methods to appraise how the individual has demonstrated self-awareness and resilient practices in previous operating environments. Examples of methods include interview questions, exercises, or scenario-based approaches. Determine whether the organization has the internal experience, training and capacity to assess these qualities during the selection process. If there is not sufficient internal capacity, develop a plan to develop that capacity or identify external resources to perform this role.
- Include reference to the potential stressors in the specific job posting. The potential stressors in the workplace and operating environment must be formally assessed so they can be clearly articulated in the job posting and discussed openly in the recruitment process. A specific process to do this assessment should be put in place.



OBJECTIVE B: Standardize recruitment, screening and assessment procedures for interviews, at both headquarters and the field level, to include candidate appraisal of resilience, hardiness and coping mechanisms.

PRACTICES:

- Enact policies and procedures to ensure that the Practices listed in the previous Objective can be implemented world-wide. This includes:
 - Referencing potential stressors in job postings
 - Reviewing the organization’s staff care policy with candidates during the selection process
 - Review adopted tools for cultural and contextual appropriateness. Adapt the tools as needed for various contexts
 - Identify internal or external resources to perform the appraisal of a candidate’s resilience, hardiness and coping.



ORIENTATION & PREPARATION

PRINCIPLE 3: *Ensure staff have access to staff care and resilience resources and services upon joining the organization or beginning a new assignment, including additional resources for staff who work in high stress environments.*

OBJECTIVE A: Orientation and onboarding materials for head office, international and national staff should include specific segments on self-care, resilience and stress management as well as the organization's approach to staff care and information on how self-care, resilience and stress management resources can be accessed.

PRACTICES:

- Documentation stating the organization's commitment to staff care and resilience along with resource materials should be incorporated into all staff onboarding and orientation materials and presentations.



- As a component of the above, all new personnel should be informed of all staff care and resilience related policies and procedures within the organization.
- Upon hire or during the onboarding process, staff should be provided with information outlining what staff care and resilience services are available to them. This information should include how to access support when needed. Provide this information upon hire and periodically throughout the year as a reminder to all staff and managers.
- Provide training during onboarding process related to cross-cultural work environments and cross-cultural communication.

OBJECTIVE A *continued*:

PRACTICES *continued*:



- The above documentation and information should be:
 - Reviewed and updated if necessary at least once a year
 - Easily accessible, either in hard copy or virtually
 - Developed in consultation with staff where possible
- Organizations should consider using videos, animations or other creative visual methodologies to present information to staff.

OBJECTIVE B: Pre-assignment consultations to promote resilience should be available to all staff, particularly staff deploying to high stress environments.

PRACTICES:

- Confidential, individual telephone, videoconference or in-person consultations prior to assignment should be made available to all staff.
- Confidential, individual telephone, videoconference or in-person consultations prior to assignment should be required for all staff working in high stress environments.
- The content of all consultations should be confidential.
- Consultations should be actively encouraged by the organization and senior leaders. They should be presented to staff as a benefit and service to help them to be successful in their assignment, avoiding any implication that these consultations represent a fit-for-duty evaluation or have punitive content.
- The content of pre-assignment consultations should provide an opportunity to discuss psychological readiness for the assignment and resilience during the assignment.
- Specialists who have mental health training, an understanding of the humanitarian and development field and have experience working and living in high stress environments should conduct these confidential consultations.



OBJECTIVE C: Procedures for accessing confidential counseling and staff care services should be clearly communicated to all international and national staff

PRACTICES:



- Staff should be provided with information outlining what staff care and resilience services are available to them. This information should include how to access support when needed.
- This information should be provided verbally and in written form in relevant languages.
- It should be provided periodically throughout the year as a reminder to all staff and managers.

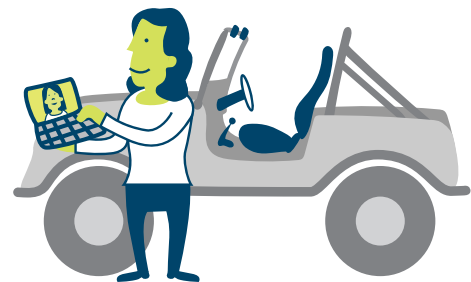
SUPPORT DURING EMPLOYMENT

PRINCIPLE 4: *Ensure staff have access to confidential individual consultations, educational materials and training for the duration of their employment.*

OBJECTIVE A: Organizations should invest in learning opportunities to increase awareness about self-care, resilience and stress management for headquarters, international and national staff throughout their employment.

PRACTICES:

- Educational material should be made available to all staff, in several formats. This may include:
 - Hard copy handouts, tip sheets, booklets and other printed materials
 - Electronic materials distributed via emails, organization newsletters or on internal intranet
 - Videos, animations and other creative visual methodologies
 - Online and facilitator-led education and training opportunities including workshops and brown bags.
- Educational materials should be made available in all business languages used within the organization globally.
- Educational materials and training should be made available to all offices world-wide, with named country-level managers accountable for ensuring compliance.
- The organization should make facilitator-led training available to be delivered on-site as appropriate.
- The organization should make online learning resources available and grant staff time during working hours to participate in online learning opportunities.



OBJECTIVE B: Organizations should provide information on self-care, resilience and stress management on an ongoing basis to specific high stress field locations in relevant languages for use by international and national staff.

PRACTICES:

- Distribute educational materials on no less than a quarterly basis.



- Provide guides, tips sheets and other online resources to all staff.
- Educational materials should be:
 - Available to all staff, international and national
 - Available in all relevant business languages used at the organization’s headquarters and in the specific high stress location
 - Developed with content appropriate for both staff and managers
 - Contextualized for the local operating environment and updated to include guidance on how to access additional support, if needed.

OBJECTIVE C: Organizations should make individual confidential counseling available by phone, videoconference, or face-to-face throughout employment. Where possible, organizations should source qualified local counseling resources that can be made available to headquarters, international and national field staff.

PRACTICES:



- Confidential, one-on-one telephone, videoconference or in-person consultations should be made available to all staff. This is especially important for those working in or supporting those in high stress environments.
- Consultation/counseling support should be destigmatized by
 - Explaining the experience of counseling
 - Providing assurances of confidentiality
 - Leaders voluntarily sharing their own experiences with accessing and using counseling

OBJECTIVE C *continued*:

PRACTICES *continued*:

- The content of all consultations should be confidential.
 - In field offices, provide ongoing access to local-language counseling or other culturally appropriate support resources, preferably in-person. If appropriate local resources are not available, provide these services and resources remotely.
 - In field offices, provide a private space with a computer and internet connection that can be used for telephone or videoconference consultations.
- Specialists who have mental health training, an understanding of the humanitarian and development field and have experience working and living in high stress environments should provide the services.



OBJECTIVE D: Organizations should establish and review rest and relaxation (R&R) policies to ensure that they are appropriate and are designed to coordinate with staff care efforts.

PRACTICES:



- Periodically review R&R policies for high stress locations to ensure the frequency, duration and location of R&R is appropriate for the context.
- Establish appropriate R&R policies for national staff assigned to high stress locations and away from their home of record.
- Provide written guidance to staff about how to best use R&R for psychological health and recovery. This should include information about how to access individual support, if desired.
- Managers should be held accountable to model resilient behavior by taking their allotted R&R.
- Managers should be held accountable to monitor workload and planning for staff rotation so staff can take their allotted R&R.

OBJECTIVE E: Organizations should provide resources to support managers in assessing general staff well-being.

PRACTICES:

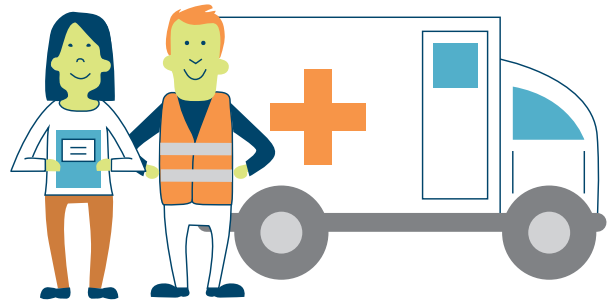


- Organizations should require that all managers working in high-stress environments participate, at a minimum, in annual training on how to assess staff well-being.
- Organizations should provide all managers an annual training on how to assess staff well-being.
- Training should be provided in all relevant business languages used at headquarters and local language(s).
- Training should be delivered both on-site and on-line.

OBJECTIVE F: Organizations should strengthen internal capacity or source external capacity to respond to critical incidents.

PRACTICES:

- Establish clear critical incident policies and procedures, specific to staff care and resilience.
- Policies should include clear duties, responsibilities and accountability for specific individuals in the organization. These individuals should receive and participate in training to perform effectively in their roles.
- The organization's security and crisis management protocols should include explicit guidance for staff care and resilience support.



- Providers of staff care support should be identified in advance of a critical incident for national and international staff.

OBJECTIVE F *continued*:

PRACTICES *continued*:

- A staff care specialist should inform and guide support following a critical incident. As needed, support following a critical incident may be deployed in the following ways:
 - Remote one-on-one, confidential support via telephone or videoconference for both national and international staff, in headquarters' and local language(s).
 - Distribute information to staff to provide education on common reactions to critical incidents, healthy coping strategies, and effective ways to support family members and/or colleagues.
 - Onsite support provided for both national and international staff may include:
 - On-site psychological first aid
 - On-site individual and group support
 - On-site education for managers and staff
 - Direct support to affected family members and/or guidance and support to staff serving as family liaisons.
 - Crisis management team members should be offered confidential individual consultations and group consultations to bolster their resilience during and after critical incidents.

SUPPORT AFTER ASSIGNMENT

PRINCIPLE 5: *Ensure staff have access to confidential one-on-one consultations, educational materials, and training for a period of time following the conclusion of their assignment.*

OBJECTIVE A: Post-assignment resilience consultations should be a standard part of the post-assignment process and separate from programmatic or operational debriefings, particularly for staff concluding an assignment in a high stress context.

PRACTICES:

- Confidential, individual telephone, videoconference or in-person consultations upon the end of an assignment should be made available to all staff.
- Confidential, individual telephone, videoconference or in-person consultations should be required for all staff concluding an assignment in a high stress environments.
- Consultations should be actively encouraged by the organization and senior leaders. They should be presented to staff as a benefit and service to help them to be successful in their transition and avoid any implication that these consultations have a punitive purpose.
- The content of all consultations should be confidential.
- Specialists who have mental health training, an understanding of the humanitarian and development field and have experience working and living in high stress environments should conduct these confidential consultations.



OBJECTIVE B: Procedures and timeframes for accessing counseling and other staff care resources after leaving the organization should be clearly communicated to international and national staff.

PRACTICES:

- Support should be available for at least three months following conclusion of the assignment and/or conclusion of employment with the organization.
- Individuals should be provided detailed information about the resources available and how to access these at least one month in advance of completion of assignment or employment.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

PRINCIPLE 6: *Staff care policies and procedures should indicate that certain sub-sets of the staff population face greater exposure to stress and trauma than the staff population at large. These sub-groups should be identified by name and special attention should be paid and resources allocated to support these individuals.*

NOTE ON SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

Sub-sets of staff that face greater exposure to stress and trauma warrant special attention by organizations. For example, because of exposure to stories of sexual harassment, abuse and assault, staff of gender-based violence programs face unique threats to their resilience. Volunteers may not have the same professional preparation as permanent staff and, therefore, benefit from different kinds of supports to maintain their resilience during a volunteer assignment. Emergency Response Teams (ERT) are another example of a sub-set of staff with greater exposure to stress and trauma. Because ERTs are common within international organizations, below are recommended practices for any organization that deploys emergency personnel. Organizations should develop their own list of practices for each specific sub-group identified within their workforce.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS

PRACTICES

- Pre- and Post-assignment resilience consultations should be a required procedure for ERT personnel, separate from programmatic or operational debriefings.
- Provide cross-cultural and communication training to ERTs before deploying on an emergency response.
- Provide periodic training opportunities focused on maintaining resilience and managing stress during emergency response.
- Materials distributed to these staff members during orientation or assignment should be tailored to the unique operating environments faced by emergency responders.
- Rest and Relaxation (R&R) and compensatory leave policies for ERT staff should be reviewed to ensure that frequency and length are appropriate to bolster psychological health and renewal.
- All staff working on emergency response should have access to individual, confidential consultations/counseling consistent with practices outlined under Principle Four.
- Staff care and resilience review meetings will be commenced with each new major emergency response to ensure national and international staff are offered similar support (ensuring support is adapted for cultural and context).



For further information or to download a copy of
Essential Principles of Staff Care please visit:



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