




**Reaching Students
on the Autism Spectrum...**

**AND the Grown-Ups
Who Come with Them**

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My Three Hats

1. **LMSW, Inclusion Education Specialist**
2. **Writer**
3. **Parent**
—one of my own two children
is on the autism spectrum

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1 in ~~150~~ ³⁶ children today is diagnosed
with autism spectrum disorder.

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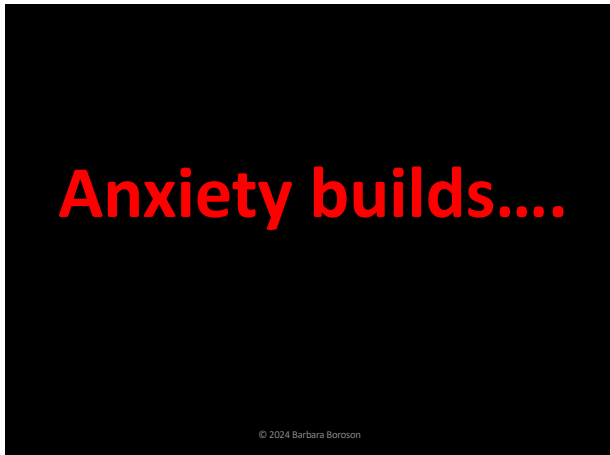
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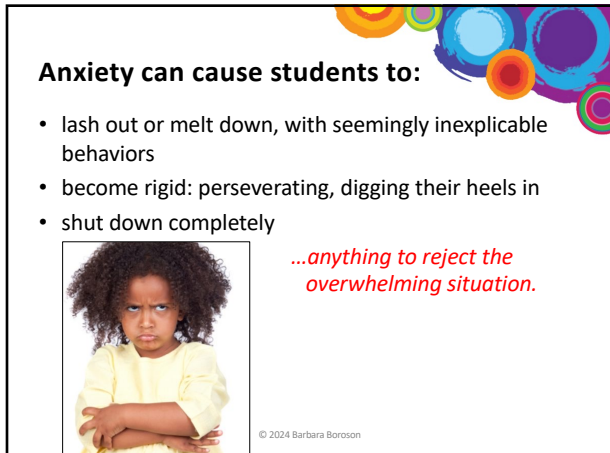
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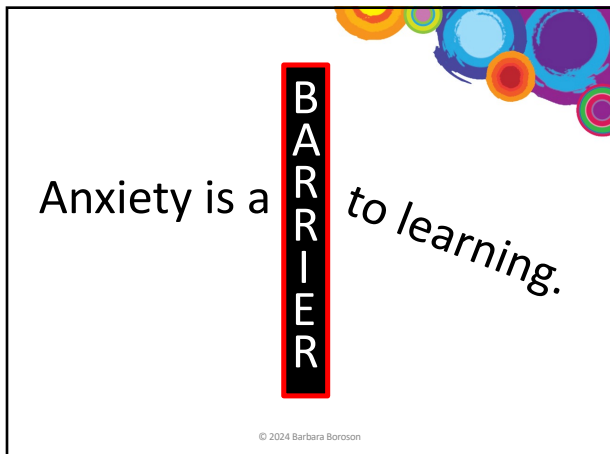
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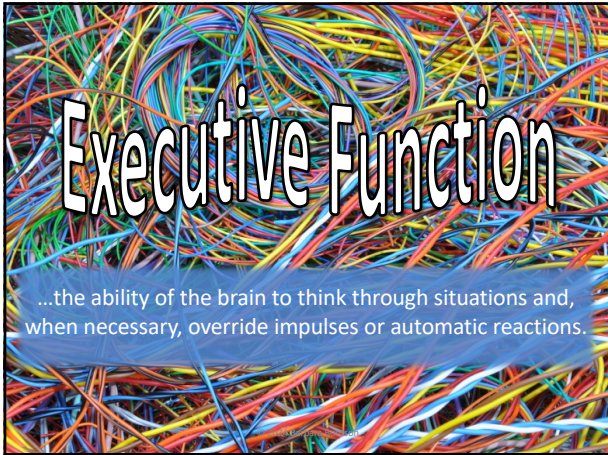
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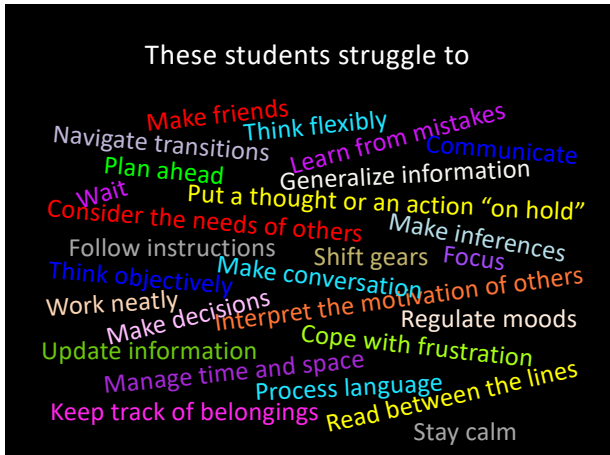
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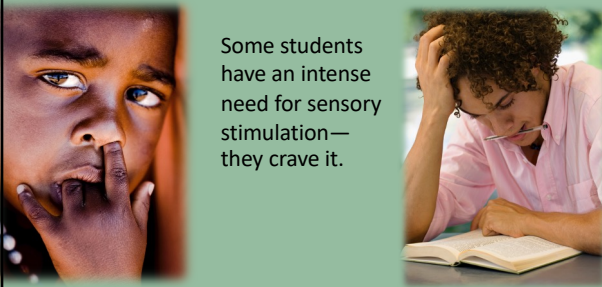
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Sensory Seeking

Some students have an intense need for sensory stimulation—they crave it.



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Sensory Avoiding

Many students on the spectrum are *highly* reactive to sensation.



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If we don't adapt the sensory environment...

...students may seek to regulate for themselves the amount of sensory input they receive.



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Stims

Self-stimulatory behaviors (known as “stims”) are behaviors that help to regulate the stimulation of the sensory system.

- flapping hands
- chewing on objects
- spinning in circles
- making noises
- poking people
- flicking fingers
- head banging
- rocking

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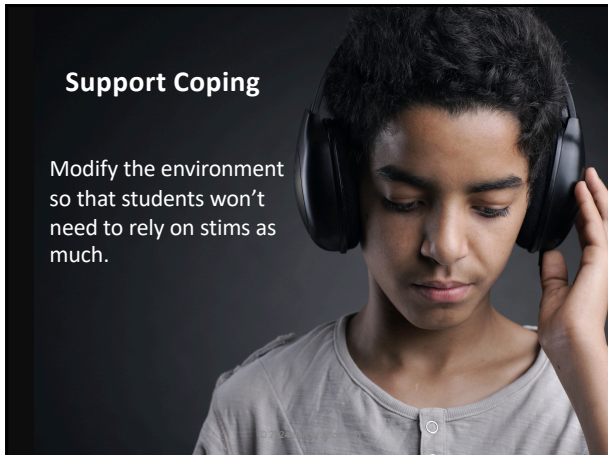
Extinguishing coping mechanisms serves only to extinguish coping.

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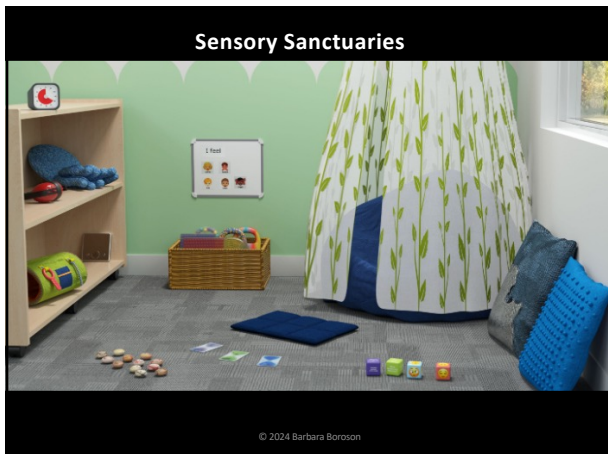
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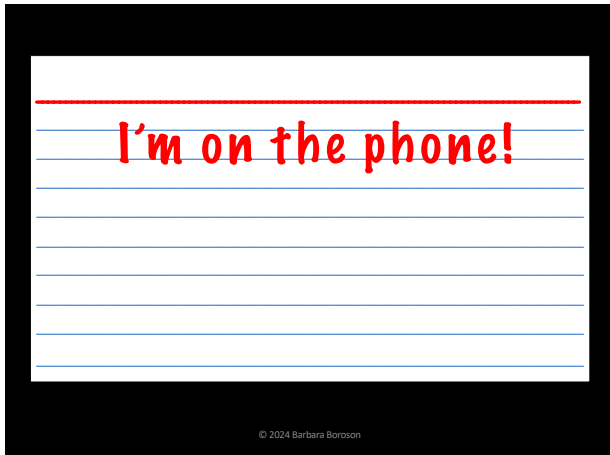
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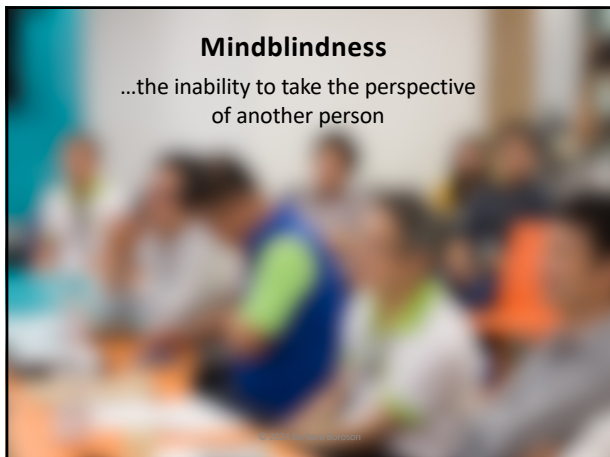
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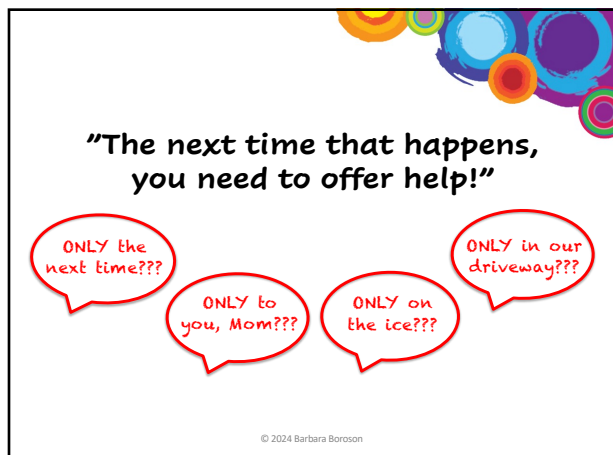
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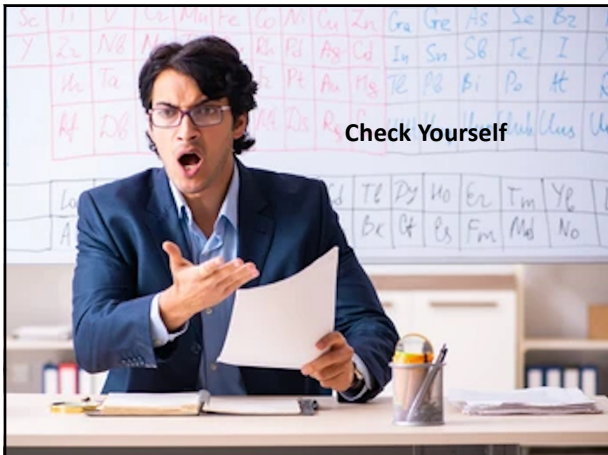
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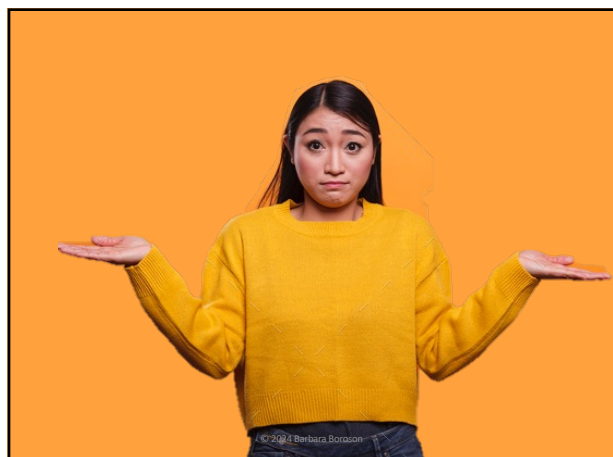
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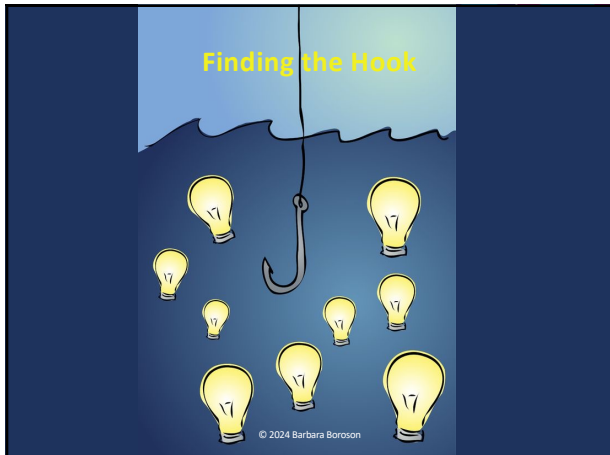
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Using the Hook to Link with Content Areas

We use the hook to:

- Lure students on the spectrum into new territory, and keep them hooked
- Bridge and expand from there

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Using the Hook to Link with Content Areas

Lure into **Spelling and Vocabulary...**

- *time, fare, toll*
- *express, route, exhaust*
- *diesel, congestion, torque*

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**Using the Hook to Link
with Content Areas**

Lure into **Writing**...

- Provide a pencil with a bus eraser cap on it
- Use a template of a steering wheel as a graphic organizer
- Chunk related concepts into buses, e.g., the Adjective Bus, the Preposition Bus, the Plot Bus that drives all the way through the story, etc.

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**Using the Hook to Link
with Content Areas**

Lure into **Math**...

If you're teaching sorting:

- *sort different kinds of toy vehicles*
- *identify different shapes of road signs*
- *sort different kinds of passengers*

If you're teaching geometry:

- *compare the circumference of bus tires to car tires*
- *calculate the total area of windows on a bus*
- *explore the factors that affect turning radius*

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**Using the Hook to Link
with Content Areas**

Lure into **Science**...

If you're teaching magnets:

- *use Matchbox cars*
- *old bus tokens*
- *use letter magnets to spell out bus-related words*

If you're teaching physics:

- *discuss acceleration and momentum in terms of bus stops*
- *compare the aerodynamics of buses to racecars*
- *examine how the driver's door-opening lever works*

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**Using the Hook to Link
with Content Areas**

Lure into **Social Studies**:

- investigate the need for buses in different regions and populations
 - *Why so many in the city?*
 - *Where might there be fewer buses?*
 - *What different kinds of buses are there?*

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**Using the Hook to Link
with Content Areas**

Lure into **Reading...**

- *Wheels on the Bus*
- ANY of the *Magic School Bus* books
- *Gargoyles Don't Drive School Buses*
- *Last Stop on Market Street*
- *Last Bus Out*
- *The 57 Bus*


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Once hooked...

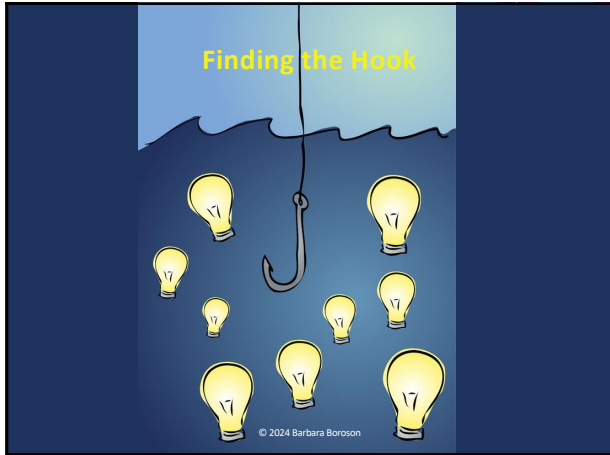
Bridge and expand from there to keep the rest of the group interested and stimulated, and to open up their fields of interest.

- *The Magic School Bus* →
- *The Last Bus Out* →
- *The 57 Bus* →

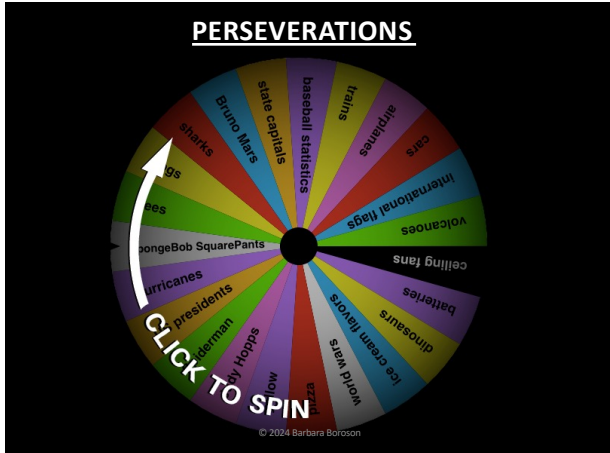


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What's New?
Nothing.

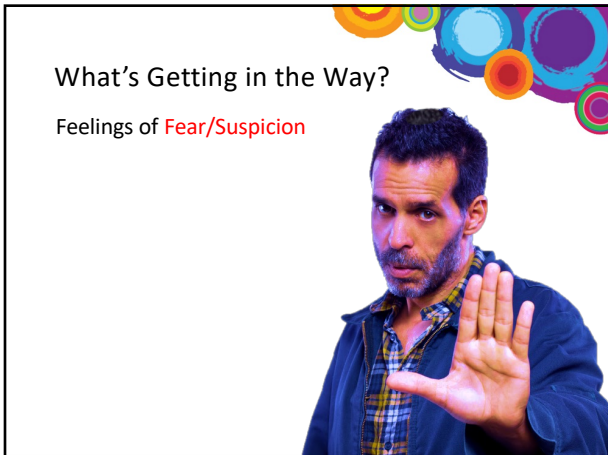
Compared to typical kids, students on the autism spectrum are often:

- less organized
- less engaged
- less intuitive
- less verbal

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What's Getting in the Way?

Feelings of **Intimidation/Unworthiness**



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Who's the Expert?

Teachers are the education experts:
Your specialty is the education of a whole classroomful of children.


Parents/guardians are the historical and holistic experts:
Their specialty is the understanding of their own, whole child.

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Going Home

Parents and guardians can give you years of hard-won wisdom as to:

- what tends to trigger their child
- what his/her reactions look like
- what soothes him/her
- what makes matters worse

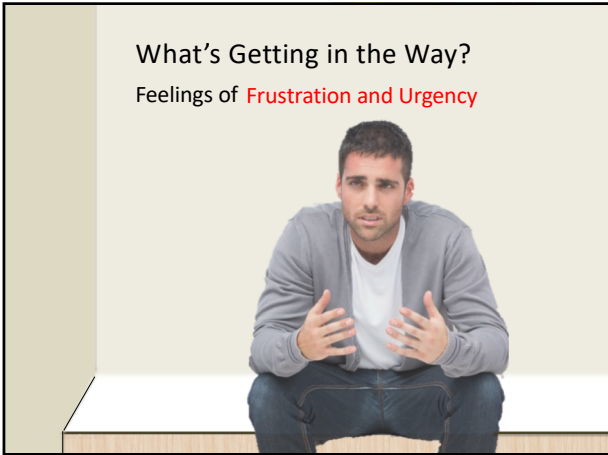


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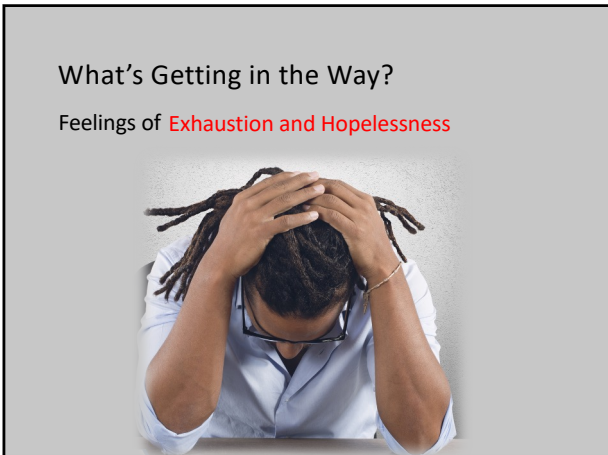
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“We cannot say we want our children’s classrooms to reflect the diverse world in which we live, but only in the politically correct, pretty way that children are a rainbow of colors. Part of that diversity includes kids who scream because they do not have words, kids who throw things because they are filled with anger and rage, kids who act out because the adults in their lives have hurt them, kids who don’t listen to directions because they can’t process them with all of the other noises in their heads. Yes, bringing them into classrooms with typically developing children makes teaching harder. So do poverty, hunger, and home lives filled with uncertainty and chaos. So do children who don’t speak English and children who have witnessed violence. But this is our world.

“To love being a teacher is to love children and embrace them as they come to you. It’s easy to love the child who does all of the homework, has the right answers, stays in her seat, and colors in the lines. The true test of a great teacher is to be able to love the square pegs who will never fit into the round holes. To stop pounding on them in an effort to force them to fit and to start appreciating them as the unique but beautiful children they are. In a just and truly diverse classroom community, every child belongs.”

—Laurie Levy

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