



Bright Start

ISSUE 3 - SEPTEMBER 2008

Growing
the **BRAIN**
through
the ears

**Settling into
childcare**
making it **EASIER** for
you and your child

Teaching children that
life isn't always **perfect**

**GIVEAWAYS
INSIDE!**



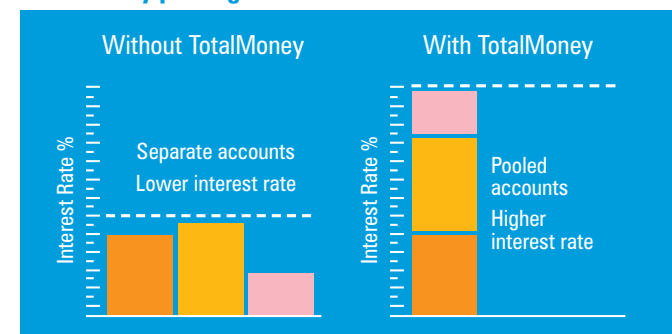
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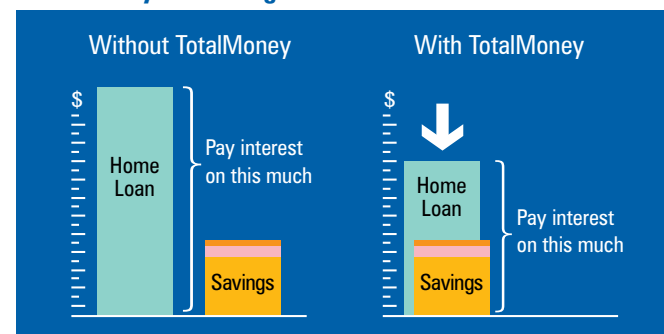


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FROM THE BRIGHT START TEAM

Introducing contributor, Anne Marie Quill.

In this third issue of Bright Start, we continue with our mix of parenting ideas, and practical advice on ways to entertain and educate our wonderful preschoolers.

I am excited how baby brain development is becoming such a topical issue.

Did you know that just by staring into your baby's eyes you are helping their brain develop? Maureen Hawke provides more insight into how to positively influence your baby's emotional and intellectual development.

And now something about me....

I often say I have three jobs: a mother, a writer and a teacher. All three are complementary: a mother and a journalist are both types of educators!

I am a mum to three preschoolers aged one, three and four. My background is in journalism and public relations. I began teaching when I moved to New Zealand from London five years ago. Recently I completed my Masters of Education in literacy. I am currently head teacher of the 'under one's' at a Kidicorp centre in sunny Mount Maunganui. I combine my teaching with writing, which is now relegated to the small hours, and competes with my ever-full washing basket and cluttered living room!

I jumped at the chance to be a contributor to Bright Start, and feel privileged to have the opportunity to share my passion about young children.

In this issue, I write about how we can give our children a 'bright start' when they begin childcare. It is a subject close to my heart, as I have faced various challenges settling my own children in to childcare. I also sit on the other side of the fence, as a teacher who welcomes new families. I know how tough it is to face the morning tears. But I also know that children who are positively supported through life's changes, become resilient, happy young people.

Enjoy your children,
Anne Marie.



Anne Marie with her children.



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Kidicorp is New Zealand's largest private early childhood provider. Over 8,000 children are enrolled annually in Kidicorp centres around New Zealand.

Bright Start aims to increase our sense of family amongst our teachers and to better connect us with our parents and their families.

Shorts

TOP PARENTING TIP

Ever seen a bored child making trouble in the doctor's waiting room, church or anywhere else where he's fed-up?

Make life easy for yourself, him, and everyone else by taking something with you for your child to play with.

Have a small bag always ready to take with you containing a few toys, or a book or a notebook and coloured pens when they get older. Add a bottle of water - not soft drink, which makes them thirstier, and is bad for their teeth. Add a packet of raisins and nuts, a few biscuits – like Gingernuts, and an apple, and you're prepared if you get stuck in traffic or have to wait longer than you expected.

These small common sense preparations can mean the difference between a bored tired and difficult child, and a relaxed, good-humoured and co-operative one.



BABY SIGNING

Coastal Kids at Beachlands recently reminded us of the enormous value of signing. Teachers have found that before children can speak teaching them signing is a great way to avoid baby's frustrations. Often during the 'terrible two's' the challenging behaviour happens because a toddler can't make themselves understood. She wants something but can't get it appropriately or can't communicate effectively. Signing allows toddlers to communicate clearly. This is great for places where you need to be quiet like at church or the library. As your kids grow older you can communicate through glass windows or let them know discreetly I love you!

Babies pick up on basic signing very quickly. When babies realise they are communicating positively the delight in their eyes is evident. Using signing empowers baby's confidence, lowers frustration and certainly improves the eating environment!



Malcolm Short, President of the Maori Trust, Pukeroa Oruawhata Trust, the landlord, Fiona Hughes, General Manager, Development and Quality and Wayne Wright, CEO of Kidicorp after the blessing of the new TopKids site at Pukuatua St, Rotorua.

Giveaways



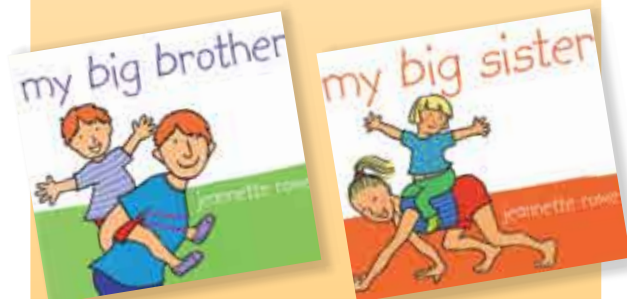
MY BIG BROTHER or MY BIG SISTER

by Jeannette Rowe

These bright, colourful books are great for an older sibling to read to their younger brother or sister. With flaps to open, these books explain why the older sibling is so special. They also capture some of the annoying things younger ones can do to their older sibling!

\$15.99 Allen & Unwin

WE HAVE 4 COPIES OF EACH BOOK TO GIVEAWAY.



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Trustmark Quality Awards

Trustmark Quality Awards were established as a form of recognition for our Kidicorp centres that achieve a level of excellence in the education and care of children. There are four categories of award:

- Quality teaching and positive learning environment
- Customer relationships
- Professional learning and professional community
- Leadership and Management.

At right, **Kids to Five on Clarence**, in Hamilton, is the first centre to apply for and achieve all four Quality Awards. After a glowing ERO report the team set a goal of going for all the awards in one go!



OUR People



DEE FAWCETT

Centre Manager Connelly Street.

I am married with four grown up daughters. I am a nana with two lovely grandchildren aged 4 months and six years old. I am a Christian and enjoy attending the Rock Church in Wellington.

I came into early childhood teaching when I was 30. I was a computer consultant and a single parent working too many hours and not seeing enough of my children. I did some soul searching and decided what I most wanted to do was early childhood teaching. I put myself through teachers college and have never looked back.

I believe it is our job as teachers to find out and help children how best to reach their potential. Children are like sponges just waiting to soak up information provided to them. There is so much learning just in every day life for children. I am passionate about teachers' learning and development, and supporting teachers to reach their potential as this leads to a higher standard of teaching.

Q: When you are not working – What do you love doing?

A: When I am not at work I love to spend time with my family and friends. My family are very important to me and we have lots of family dinners and go to cafes together on Saturdays. I love listening to Christian music and read lots of books. I enjoy reading motivational books particularly on leadership in the work place. I love having candle-lit baths and just savouring the peace and quiet

after a noisy day at work. I enjoy following politics as I was brought up in a very political household and my family and friends have lots of debates around politics.

Q: What Have You Learnt From Working At Kidicorp?

A: I have learnt heaps from our Business Manager Jo Glen. She encourages thinking for yourself and coming up with your own solutions to problems or difficult situations. The professional standards in Kidicorp are outstanding. I have learnt to manage and understand budgets and effective ways to manage money to the advantage of the centres I manage. Attending Centre Managers meetings is a great way of learning new things and sharing ideas that have worked in other centres.

Q: How do you motivate and encourage teachers to finish their formal training?

A: I believe that by encouraging teachers and making them feel valued they are motivated into going into training. We have seven teachers in training at the moment, they are able to share what learning takes place and discuss their assignments. If teachers are trained I believe that this in return provides for better quality learning for the children.

Q: If you were parenting all over again what would you do differently? And what, if anything, do you find you are repeatedly telling parents?

If I was parenting all over again I would have fun with my children rather than worrying about whether I had a clean house or the wash done everyday. I now understand the value of just giving your children time; time to play, go for a walk and so on.

Parents carry a lot of unnecessary guilt about working and leaving their child in day care all day. I think children get more opportunities in a day at day care than parents can provide for them at home, and they can get dirty, really messy and the parent doesn't have to worry about the mess! We do.

Teaching children that

Life

isn't always **PERFECT**

By Valerie Davies

Sometimes small children feel let-down over events we can't control. An outing everyone was looking forward to, and rain causes it to be cancelled, for example.

A toddler can unaccountably have a tantrum over the disappointment, and a mother's temptation is to console him or her, and rescue her child. But, if we remember every moment of our child's life is a learning experience (as is ours if we are awake to it!), this time of disappointment can be used for growth.

Instead of rescuing, or consoling, listen to your child's pain, or disappointment. Even if it seems trivial to you, resist the urge to say "it's not that bad". If you

listen or empathise, your child will feel understood, and we all feel better and recover faster if we feel understood.

If something is not going the way your child wants it, make it clear that this is not an excuse for a tantrum. If he starts one, tell him once he stops kicking and screaming, you'll talk about what to do next. Then, if he can't stop his tantrum, wait until he can hear sense.

When your child, whether two or twelve can hear you, discuss their feelings, and honour them. Don't belittle them, let him know that feelings are okay, whatever they are. Don't try to manipulate or control his feelings by saying what he ought to feel. Just give him the experience of knowing that his feelings are valid, and that you will never judge his feelings. That way, he learns to be honest with himself, and trusts you to understand without making him wrong.

Don't console with a sweet treat, or a new toy or another event, just help him by talking about his feelings. This can be the difference between taking things hard, or learning to be philosophical about it.

My ten year-old grandson once told me he'd learned something very useful when listening to a speech at a public event with his mother. The Mayor, he told me, had said in his speech that when things got rough, he reminded himself that "Everything passes."

It was a profound lesson from a child. Though a two year-old can't think in those terms, an older child can begin to understand those concepts. It eases disappointments and is a practical tool for coping with whatever life brings to a child. It helps them to start getting events into perspective, no matter how tough the challenge, and helps them to come to terms with their own life.



"When your child, whether two or twelve, can hear you, discuss their feelings, and honour them. Don't belittle them..."

This practical and intelligent approach to life can best be laid on the basis of the child knowing that his feelings are okay, and that his parents will always try to understand and accept his feelings, rather than trying to make him feel they way they think he should.

Put yourself in his place. If you were telling someone how you felt – how would you feel if your listener started to argue with you about what you were feeling, and telling you, you should be feeling differently? You'd be pretty fed-up, and decide not to bother to tell them what you felt in future. And that is often how our children feel if we interrupt their explanations.

Listening works when they fall over and hurt themselves too. Many parents, and especially fathers, are anxious their child should not grow up to be a sissy, and they discourage tears when a child hurts himself. Parents often think that by belittling the hurt, or telling them to be brave, they will train the child to be tough and not show how badly he's hurt. When I shut my finger in the door, my father, toughened by the war, would laugh, and say, "why are you crying, it didn't stay there long" - intended to jolly me out of it.

What it taught me was never to expect him to sympathise or understand. But what really works for a child, however small, is to take him seriously. Kneel down or bend down to his level and ask with deep seriousness if it really hurts. He'll say "yes", of course. And then you say, "tell me how badly it hurts".

Often, when I've done this, the child has looked at me with a surprised look on his face and said, "it's stopped now", and skipped off to play again. Even if it not as quick as that, you've made a start, and he knows you care, even if the next stage is to put a plaster on a non-existent cut.

It's a very subtle principle. The child is paying attention to his body, or feelings, and you are paying attention to him. By some magic this empathy helps the child to move on.

Parenting intelligently is really quite simple. It boils down to paying attention to your child, rather than always trying to make things right for him – an impossible task anyway.



Say Hello, Wave Goodbye: Settling into childcare

By Anne Marie Quill

Fourteen month old Brooke arrives at childcare with mum Mandy. Brooke runs excitedly towards her friends, stopping halfway to give her teacher an excited bear hug. Mum sits and chats about Brooke's weekend. When it is time to go to work, she blows a kiss to Brooke:

"Have a great day!"

Brooke waves before eagerly turning back to her play.

For many families, the above image must seem to good to be true. The reality may be wholly different, involving lengthy goodbyes, tears from children and parents alike, little arms clinging to big legs at the door, sulking, and tantrums.

Brooke's mum remembers such difficult times.

"It wasn't always this easy. We worked hard to get to this stage!"

Jean Ker, centre manager at TopKids Mount Maunganui, says it takes time –for children to settle - from several weeks to months in some cases.

"Going to childcare is often the first major change in a child's life. Children may feel vulnerable in a new environment. It's a big change for parents too, who may have mixed feelings about leaving their child. When both parent and child are feeling so emotional about the separation, it can brew up a volatile situation in the mornings. New parents often ask us for some magic formula to spirit away the tears, but the truth is, we have to travel at the child's pace, not ours."

This doesn't mean that it has to be traumatic. Handled well, the transition to childcare can be an exciting period, where children gradually discover a sense of anticipation about new adventures.

"I try to generate excitement about the settling-in process," says Jean. "This

supports children to see change as positive, rather than something to fear."

Jean runs a centre of 120 children. Over the years, she has welcomed hundreds of new families, and faced a variety of settling-in dilemmas. From this, she has learned that there is no one solution to settling children well.

"There needs to be good communication between the child's home and the centre. We advise new families to visit the centre as much as possible before starting. During these visits, teachers act as mini detectives, gaining a deeper understanding of the child, where they are at, what interests them, what they like and don't like. The more information you share, the easier your child eventually settles."

Brooke's mum Mandy agrees that pre-visits are essential:

"It gave me an opportunity to get to know the teachers and the routines. As I relaxed, Brooke also seemed less tense." >>

“Remember, there are thousands of happy, well adjusted children whose parents work. Research shows that children who attend quality childcare fare better at school and later in life than children who stay at home!”

Even the tiniest detail can be the secret ingredient which helps a child feel at home at childcare. In Brooke’s case, mum mentioned how Brooke treasured the pigs on their farm. The teachers suggested that Brooke bring in buckets to collect food scraps. This small gesture enabled Brooke to establish a link between her home life, and her new life at the centre.

While there is no quick fix, it may reassure parents to know that the emotion a child feels on separating from caregivers for the first time is recognized by psychologists as a normal developmental stage.

It is important to recognize separation anxiety as this necessary rite of passage, like learning to move, or toilet training. Children need to journey through this stage to equip themselves with skills that make them confident and resilient in the face of life’s many imminent changes.

What can you do to support your child?

- Consider timing. When your child starts, avoid other major life changes. If returning to work, enrol your child at least a week before.
- Talk to your child about childcare. Use picture books from the library, or ask teachers for material. Speak positively about childcare, constructing it as an exciting place. Your enthusiasm will rub off, and build your child’s confidence and self esteem.
- Make the most of pre-visits. Be your child’s publicity agent. Provide detailed information about their routines, diet, likes and dislikes. Create a mini photo story about your family.
- Do some ‘dry runs’ at home. Have pretend mat times with teddies or dolls. Start following the childcare’s timetable for meals or sleeps.
- Provide a comfort object from home, such as a cherished teddy or blanket. Go shopping together for the childcare bag. Attach a family photo in a key ring. Insert little surprises in the bag such as notes from you, a silly drawing, or a favourite book.
- Allow plenty of time in the morning. It is an Olympian task to get everyone ready but rushing creates stress. Yes, there are days when you will have to literally sling them and their bag through the door and speed off, but as a rule, try to allow at least 10 minutes to help them readjust their settings.
- Cancel the guilt trips. If you have mixed feelings about going to work, do not share these with your child. Children can start feeling responsible for their parents’ unhappiness. Don’t show guilt. In fact, don’t feel guilty! Remember, there are thousands of happy, well adjusted children whose parents work. Research shows that children who attend quality childcare fare better at school and later in life than children who stay at home! Think of childcare as a great opportunity. Brooke’s mum underwent this epiphany:

“At first I hated the fact I had to go to work. Over time, I recognized the positive experiences Brooke has at childcare. Once I started to feel like I was doing the right thing, Brooke stopped getting upset in the morning!”

- Develop a goodbye ritual. Children love the reassurance of repetitive rituals. Everyday, Brooke anticipates her mum’s air kiss at the door. Other rituals include special sayings, a little whisper, something quirky or silly, or anything meaningful for you and your child.
- Set the mood. Children take emotional cues from you. Be authentic. If you feign joy when you feel terrible, your child will see through your Pollyanna act. On the flipside, you don’t want them to witness your hysterical sobbing in the car park. Find a balance: admit you feel a little sad, but add something reassuring, such as how you can’t wait to hear about what they get up to. This turns your child’s attention away from the separation, to anticipation of the day ahead.
- Let their tears flow. If children cry, there is a natural tendency to want them to stop before you go. This sends a negative message to children, that their feelings are being stifled. Instead, acknowledge their sadness and then use your positive goodbye ritual. In the evenings, talk about how they feel.
- Take heed from Lot’s wife, and don’t look back! When it is time to go, if you hesitate, children will also feel uncertain. If they cry, don’t be

tempted to return for yet another round of cuddles, otherwise you are setting a painful pattern. Use your goodbye ritual, and walk out confidently.

- Don’t do a runner! Resist the urge to sneak out when your child is not looking. An abrupt disappearance causes anxiety by robbing them of a goodbye.
- Enlist the help of teachers. Teachers are there for you as well as the children. They will be experienced at handling various situations. Talk to them for advice. If you need help with the actual goodbye, let them know. “Sometimes parents rely on us to be a bit firm – with them more than with the children!” laughs Jean.

And finally, go at your child’s pace.



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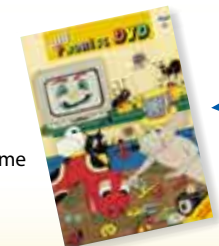
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Grow the **Brain** through the **EARS**



By Maureen Hawke

In my last article I wrote about how smiling and talking to your baby stretches your baby's brain. Singing and talking constantly to your baby is invaluable. But quiet times are good too.

Talk to your baby constantly. What about? Talk about what you are doing and why you are doing it. You'll find baby will develop the ability to imitate sound, saying things like "choo-choo" for train, "woof woof" for the dog.

However, don't talk baby talk. Remember, repetitive language builds that memory bank of sounds and words in the brain.

This process starts when baby's starting hearing their own laughter and crying and by the end of the first year your explorer will love vocalising and socialising.

Associate simple requests for doing things with familiar objects (like cups, spoons, plates). This will help language development, as will simple instructions and actions like "wave bye-bye!"

Your explorer will be developing preferences for certain books and will want to hear them over and over again. Keep reading them. Frequent short periods of reading through the day are best.

"Remember, sound is not like sight, sight can be used for as long as you choose. Once a sound has gone, it has gone and

needs to be repeated again and again if it is to be remembered.

Talk to your baby twice as much as you would an adult. As baby gets older and can focus on you help it look at you as you speak so it can see your mouth moving. This is how your future Raspberry Blower realises you use your mouth to make sounds and form words. Develop a real 'listener.'

Think about how the development process works using the ears:

The first part of the process, the perception of sound, is hearing. The second part, attuning to sound, is the way of hearing or listening.

The explorer is learning how to listen and with increasing understanding of words can follow simple requests and instructions.

Spend a few minutes every day, and at least once a day; give your explorer simple requests or instructions.

MAKE SURE YOU GAIN BABY'S ATTENTION FIRST

Sit as close to baby as possible and make sure your mouth movements can be seen as you talk because speech therapists tell us that sighted children learn to speak more quickly than those who are visually impaired.

KEEP THE NOISE DOWN AT HOME

Our world has changed in frequency; fans, air conditioners, planes and computers compete with the high

frequency sounds associated with the human voice. If your home is noisy and there are televisions, music and radios frequently playing your child may have difficulty clearly hearing speech sounds.

Children have to learn what is important to listen to and to disregard what isn't.

Don't forget, your child needs quiet time just as much as stimulus time. During quiet times, children experiment.

If your child is misbehaving, resist the temptation to re-direct the child through talking loudly or yelling. Try whispering, you will frequently get a better response.

Remember - the brain is either switched on or off. There is no in between. Yelling, loud noises and sounds may switch our brains off. Learning won't happen if the brain is switched off.

The ear collects sounds and delivers them to the brain where complex sorting processes occur. Your baby has to learn about sound to:

- Hear the different tone qualities in sounds
- Concentrate on important sounds necessary for survival
- Disregard some sounds as being unimportant
- Babble and coo in response to your voice
- Distinguish basic sounds of vowels and consonants
- Experiment and practice creating sounds which can then be committed to auditory memory
- Create single words

SLOW SPEECH?

There maybe many factors involved in slow speech development including:

- Insufficient stimuli, where there is a poor supply of speech for your baby to listen to every day.
- Lack of music in the environment, keep up a variety of music. See the boxed list for ideas.
- Inattention, illnesses, particularly middle ear infections
- Continual screaming which can be associated with reflux, colic and/or food allergy

POOR NUTRITION

Toxic factors, like being unable to handle food, colouring, and preservatives. Noisy environments (TV's and radios that are on all day) can overwhelm the explorer and make the reception of language in this environment difficult. (Your explorer has to learn what is important to listen to and to disregard what isn't.)

EAR INFECTIONS

For some children, difficulty learning certain sounds maybe the end result of a history of ear infections or glue ear even though their hearing tests as normal.

Ear infections can interfere with the laying down of speech sounds in your baby's memory. In school these children will have attention and listening problems and generally have delays in learning to read, write and spell. They also follow directions poorly.

DEVELOPING A REAL LISTENER WITH MUSIC

Singing and talking to your baby in a quiet environment trains listening.

Play low volume classical, nature sounds music, which is calm and soothing (not slow and monotonous) while your baby sleeps.

Music calms and stimulates. It will improve the sleeping patterns of many babies by cutting out some of the loud environmental sounds that can cause some baby's sleep problems.

Sleeping problems may have multiple causes. Some babies are very sound sensitive and will wake at the slightest noise. Playing low volume nature sounds, Mozart or Baroque music in the bedroom can calm, or cut out environmental sounds that disturb baby.



While baby is sleeping try music like:

Ah'vous Dirai – JE Maman (Twinkle Twinkle Little Star), Theme and Variations by Mozart.

Other recommended classical music for baby is:

Air-Orchestral Suite 3 - Bach

Ave Verum - Mozart

Flight of the Bumble Bee - Korsakov

Minemet - Boccherini

Can Can from Orpheus and the Underworld - Offenbach

Waltz of the Flowers - Tchaikovsky

Rondo Alla Turk - Mozart

Typewriter - Le Roy Anderson

Spring from The 4 Seasons - Vivaldi

The March of the Siamese Children (King & I) - Rogers

Carnival of the Animals - Saint Saens

Sugar Plum Fairy - Coda

Haydn Surprise Symphony.

About the author

Maureen Hawke has been directly involved in child development work for the past 25 years. A mother of three and grandmother of one, Maureen travels extensively, training teachers on ways to promote child development. Born in New Zealand, moving to Australia in 1967, Maureen now lives with her family in Brisbane, Queensland.

See www.brightstart.com.au for more information.

FUN THINGS

to do with your children

PLAY DOUGH RECIPE

3 cups of flour
 1.5 cups of salt
 6 teaspoons of cream of tartar
 3 tablespoons of oil
 1.5-2 cups of boiling water
 Few drops of food colouring.

- Combine all dry ingredients together
- Add colouring and oil to boiling water
- Pour 1.5 cups of the water initially and stir vigorously
- Knead the dough until all ingredients are combined. N.B. You may be tempted to add more flour but often you don't need this. Playdough ideally comes to its best form about 20 minutes after mixing. If it is still tacky to touch after that, knead in a little more flour.

Remember the value of kneading, touching and shaping, for your child to learn and express themselves.



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