



The Incredible
Journey



How to cope with
ANXIETY

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HOW TO COPE WITH ANXIETY

Anxiety. It's that inner voice that questions everything you do, that makes your mind race uncontrollably, causing you to feel extremely nervous, restless and agitated. Anxiety exhausts you and overwhelms you. You may experience feelings of danger, panic, or dread, robbing you of your confidence to face the world. A sick feeling is commonly reported. There may also be physical side effects such as heart palpitations, shortness of breath and light-headedness.

It is normal to feel stressed, anxious or worried once in a while, in fact, some stress can be good for you if you have a pressing deadline to achieve, or need to step up and do your best at a speech or

presentation. A Chinese Proverb says it this way, “A little anxiety helps to focus the mind, but too much paralyses it” [4]. If stress, anxiety and depression are limiting your ability to function well and are impacting your work and your personal life, then it is definitely time to make your health a priority! In the pages of this book you will discover tools and strategies that have changed the lives of thousands of people, using the principles from Dr Neil Nedley’s Depression and Anxiety Recovery Program.

Risk factors for anxiety include personality, genetics, biochemical imbalance, trauma, and prolonged stress [5].

According to large population-based surveys, up to 33.7%, or 1 in 3 Australians, are affected by an anxiety disorder at some point during their lifetime, particularly in the corporate world [1]. Stress and anxiety also affect 1 in 14 children and teens between the ages of 4 and 17 years of age [2]. However, a large percentage of

people affected never reach out for help or seek any treatment, perhaps because of the stigma attached to mental health issues.

You may be interested to learn that a significant number of celebrities have experienced anxiety in their lives, including Taylor Swift, Oprah Winfrey, Britney Spears, and Chris Evans, among others [6]. They all had to admit their need for help and reach out for it. Prince Harry, in his 2018 royal tour to Australia, opened up about his own struggles with anxiety and depression for many years after losing his Mum in a tragic car accident at the age of 12. “We are all in this together,” he said at a press conference in Dubbo, NSW, while addressing the struggling, drought-stricken rural communities of Australia. “You need to know that part of being strong and tough is having the courage to ask for help when you need it. You must not silently suffer. Asking for help was one of the best decisions that I made. You will be continually amazed at how your life changes for the better once you put your hand

up. It is not easy. There are no quick fixes. It is about being the best version of yourself for YOU and for those around you” [3].

If you are experiencing severe anxiety or depression, we recommend that you consult your medical professional for advice and a proper care plan. In this book, you will find help to manage stress and anxiety in your own life or support a loved one who is struggling. Through persistently applying the techniques and lifestyle recommendations found in these pages, you can reduce stress and anxiety and become the “best version of you” that is possible!

Understanding Anxiety

There are several forms of anxiety disorders, some of which share similar symptoms. Depression may be present in around half of those who have an anxiety disorder, which can make symptoms worse. The defining indicator of anxiety is stress that is out of proportion to the

impact of the event that caused it at the time [5].

1. Generalised Anxiety Disorder

Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is a condition where a person feels persistently stressed and anxious on most days, overthinking and worrying excessively about everyday events and decisions. People with GAD may experience obsessive concerns about family, relationships, pets, money, work, or illness. They often focus on worst-case scenarios and experience irrational fears, such as celebrity Amanda Seyfried who worried obsessively about her parents and her dog, picturing her dog opening the window of her apartment and falling out, even though she couldn't even get the window open herself [6].

Non-drug therapies shown to be effective in Generalised Anxiety Disorder include Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), regular physical exercise, relaxation techniques, spiritual focus therapy, balancing brain chemicals serotonin and melatonin through exercise, proper nutrition,

and sunshine [9]. The ‘how-to’ is unpacked in the 10-step plan on page 11.

2. Panic Disorder

A panic attack is a condition wherein individuals feel like they are losing control or going crazy, and may have strong feelings of impending doom.

Panic attacks are commonly associated with a pounding heart, chest pains, sweating, light-headedness, dizziness, trembling, nausea or other stomach problems, shortness of breath, numbness or tingling. Sarah Silverman describes it this way, “every breath is laboured. You (feel like you) are going to die. It’s terrifying. And then when the attack is over, the depression is still there” [6].

Proven treatment regimens utilise CBT [9].

3. Phobias

Panic disorders can progress into phobias, with fear of an object such as spiders, or a specific

situation such as driving or riding on a train, or speaking in public, if it triggers memories of a negative or frightening experience. Treatments include slow, deep breathing from the diaphragm, CBT [9], and anti-anxiety herbs such as Valerian or Lemon Balm [13,14].

4. *Social Anxiety* is characterised by overwhelming anxiety and excessive self-consciousness in everyday social situations, often rooted in the fear of doing something wrong, feeling embarrassed, and being judged by others. It can involve fear of speaking in formal or informal situations, or eating or drinking in front of others. Kirsten Stewart speaks of social anxiety so severe that if she didn't know how something was going to turn out at an event, she would become physically sick [6]. Treatments for social anxiety include slow, deep breathing from the diaphragm, CBT (75% improvement), and anti-anxiety herbs such as Valerian or Lemon Balm [13,14] or medication.

5. *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)* is a reaction to a terrifying event that keeps returning in the form of frightening, intrusive memories, common after a traumatic life event such as experiencing the horrors of war, surviving a natural disaster, sexual abuse, or a serious car accident. CBT typically forms an important part of PTSD treatment, effective along with strong social support such as building better ties with family, friends and the community to help ease PTSD symptoms.

6. *Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder*

The two main characteristics of *Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)* are obsessions and compulsions. Washing hands several times when once would have been adequate, checking the alarm clock every few seconds to make sure it has been set, these are just a couple of the signs of OCD. Behavioural therapy has been shown to be as effective as medication for helping to overcome OCD.

That summarises the various types of anxiety.

We now look at effective ways to manage stress and anxiety.

Stress Without Distress

You didn't need anyone to tell you that life is stressful. You are experiencing it first-hand!

There is stress getting the family out the door in the morning. There is heavy traffic on the roads. There are grumpy customers, pressure, and deadlines to deal with at work. You have assignments piling up at university, and exams that you need to study for. After an exhausting day, you head home for a second shift of stress and pressure where you may face relationship problems, financial problems, and all of the issues associated with running a home and raising families in today's complex world. Your mind is overactive and you are having trouble sleeping, not to mention the negative self-talk in your own head that pulls you down and takes

away your inner joy.

On top of all those stressors, you and other family members may be experiencing health issues, or have been devastated by a sudden death in your family. You turn on the TV to find some relief for your troubled mind, only to find more stress and negativity with stories about climate change, natural disasters, violence and terrorism that trigger our anxiety to greater heights.

Is there hope for the future? How can you experience peace and joy, even when your life is in chaos? Whatever you are going through in your life right now, there is HOPE for your future! You can experience true joy and peace in spite of how you feel inside right now.

Identifying your stressors

Let's begin by doing a short exercise. Specifically, what are the things that are bothering you now or in recent times? Take some time to list your top 10 stressors. Are they physical problems that can

be solved? Proper planning and organisation are a good place to start in de-stressing your life. However, many of us have stressors that can't be easily solved. If left unchecked, these deep-seated stressors can lead to anxiety disorders [9].

Adopting a stress management plan and learning healthy adaptation techniques are vital for your long-term health and well being [9].

10-step plan for minimising stress and anxiety in your life

You can find this information in detail in the books *Depression, The Way Out* [9] and *Depression Anxiety Recovery Workbook* [10] by Dr Neil Nedley.

1. Exercise

Scientists have found that regular participation in aerobic exercise can decrease overall levels of tension, elevate and stabilise mood, improve sleep, and improve self-esteem [7]. According

to medical research studies, regular physical exercise works as well as medication for some people to reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, and the effects can be long lasting [8]. Psychologists studying the effects of exercise on anxiety have noted that even 10 minutes of exercise is beneficial to elevate the mood for several hours due to its serotonin boosting benefits [8]. Serotonin is a neurotransmitter which is associated with feelings of reduced stress, well-being and happiness. Build up to 30 minutes of exercise 3 - 6 times per week, with intermittent training alternating between low intensity and high-intensity exercise for increased positive benefits [10].

2. Use of Water

2.1 Drink 6 - 8 glasses of water each day for a clear mind and healthy body [10].

2.2 *Hydrotherapy* – stimulating contrast hot and cold showers (hot five minutes, cold thirty seconds) just before bed can greatly enhance

circulation to the brain [10].

3. Adequate sleep

Every hour of sleep before midnight is worth two hours after midnight, so get to bed early [9]. You should sleep no less than six hours and no more than 9 hours a day for optimal circadian rhythm balance [10].

Unfortunately, anxiety can short-circuit one of the most important stress-relieving lifestyle choices – adequate rest. Sleep is a needful restoring process for maintaining our defence against stress and anxiety [9]. The neurotransmitter melatonin assists healthy sleep and is activated by darkness (avoid screens close to bedtime), sufficient calcium and vitamin B6. Getting adequate sunshine into your eyes first thing in the morning helps to balance natural circadian rhythms which has a beneficial effect on sleep [10].

Eliminate the three chief sleep robbers:

alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine. People often turn to stimulants such as these as stress-coping mechanisms, but in reality they make anxiety and depression worse [10].

Maintain a regular schedule for bedtime and wake time [10]. Set your anxieties and worries aside as you go to bed. Give them to God in prayer and dwell on a calming Bible promise.

4. Nourish your body

Food can provide the essential nutrients that our brains and bodies need if we choose carefully. Eating a mostly plant-based diet is helpful for lifting the mood and getting optimal nutrition for a healthy brain [9].

4.1 Eat foods high in Tryptophan

Tryptophan is a precursor to the ‘happy’ neurotransmitter serotonin. By eating tryptophan-rich foods, you can balance your brain chemicals and lift your mood naturally. Foods rich in tryptophan include tofu, flax seeds

(ground), roasted pumpkin seeds and sesame seeds among others [10].

4.2 Eat Foods High in Omega 3

Omega 3 nourishes the brain and nervous system. Eat Flaxseed (ground), chia seeds & walnuts to boost your daily omega 3 [9, 10].

4.3 Eat Foods High in Vitamin B12

B12 is an important nutrient for optimal brain function and mood. Good sources include fortified cereals, fortified soy milk, organic eggs. You may also want to consider taking a B vitamin supplement that includes B12 [9].

4.4 Eat Foods High in Folic Acid

Folic acid is an important nutrient for good mental health. Best sources are chickpeas, black eyed beans, lentils, kidney beans, spinach [9].

4.5 Eat Foods High in Melatonin, Calcium, and B6

Melatonin helps you sleep and calcium and B6 assist the production of melatonin conversion

in the body. Oats and corn are foods high in melatonin. Best calcium sources are legumes, sesame seeds & kale. Find B6 in whole grains, oatmeal, and brown rice [9].

5. Adopt Relaxation Techniques

5.1. Deep Breathing

Slow, deep breathing can calm a stressed-out mind, and ease an anxiety attack. It is recommended that people with anxiety perform 6 very slow, deep breaths over the space of a minute for up to 1 hour a day for maximum benefit [9, 10].

5.2. Listening to relaxing and uplifting classical music. Classical music has been scientifically shown to improve mood, calm nerves and improve the function of our brain. When listening to music, reflect on your past, present, and future to enhance mood and reduce stress [9,10].

5.3 Get in Touch with Massage. Massage helps to boost the circulatory system and decrease

stress and tension. Get a massage regularly to de-stress! [10].

5.4. Meditation through prayer. Earnest prayer is a balanced form of meditation which utilises the frontal lobe – the reasoning portion of the brain, instead of suppressing it as happens with Eastern Meditation. The prayer that is most helpful is not trying to change God, but rather praying to God to help you change to better thinking and doing, and to experience His peace and strength to face the challenges of life [9,10].

In 1 Peter 5:7, we are called to cast all our cares upon Jesus, for He cares for us. Like the perfect psychologist, Jesus invites us to share with Him those things that weigh heavy on our hearts and minds. “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

This Psychologist not only listens but incredibly, He has the POWER to speak PEACE into our troubled hearts, in the same way He spoke the world into existence thousands of years ago.

6. Avoid Negative Speech / Practice Gratitude In one Scientific study, indulging in pessimism / negative speech predicted anxiety, perceived stress and physical disease [11]. Train yourself not to say anything critical about anyone or anything for a period of fourteen consecutive days. When something critical is being said, begin the fourteen days again! [10].

6.1 Practise Gratitude

“Nothing tends more to promote the health of body and of soul than does a spirit of gratitude and praise (to God)” [12].

Start a gratitude journal where you write down five things each day that you are grateful for [10].

6.2 Dwell on the Good

“Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

7. Use Calming Herbs and Nutrients

Natural herbs *Valerian* and *Lemon Balm* have been used as mild sedatives, anxiolytics and hypnotics to help relieve anxiety [13], improve mood and reduce stress. In a study done on *Lemon Balm*, 95% of participants responded to treatment with 70% of that group achieving full remission for anxiety, 85% for insomnia and 70% for both [14]. *Passionflower* also has a calming effect on restlessness, anxiety and promoting sound sleep. *Rhodiola* is a herb that encourages calmness and relaxation, and it reduces stress and anxiety. *Camomile* has a calming effect on anxiety symptoms and is a lovely soothing tea before bedtime.

Lavender oil has been shown to be effective to promote relaxation and sleep, improve mood and decrease anxiety [15].

Magnesium

Studies have shown that feelings of fear, anxiety, and panic can be significantly reduced by increasing your daily intake of the mineral magnesium, which is involved in calming the body's natural stress response. Food sources include legumes, nuts, seeds, whole grains, and leafy greens, and you may also want to consider taking powdered magnesium for an additional boost [9,10].

8. Adopt Daily Spiritual Focus Therapy

Read Psalms and Proverbs in the Bible each day to enhance frontal lobe function and increase abstract thought [9, 10].

9. Dwell on God's Promises

Search in the Bible for promises that speak to you personally. One of my favourites is: "Come

to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from Me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30). Give your worries and burdens to Jesus.

10. Learn Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

CBT is a type of psychotherapy that helps you become aware of inaccurate or negative thoughts and gives you tools to challenge those thoughts in order to alter unwanted behavioural patterns (such as experiencing anxiety.) It provides powerful personal coping strategies to help overcome anxiety and depression [9].

The word cognition literally means ‘thought’. Our thoughts have a very strong impact on our feelings and behaviour.

Emotional Intelligence - or EQ - is a term created by two researchers, Peter Salavoy and John

Mayer, that was popularised by behavioural Psychologist Daniel Goleman. Goleman believes that EQ is more important than IQ as a predictor of your success in life.

The components of EQ are:

1. Knowing our emotions
2. Managing our emotions
3. Recognising emotions in others.

Becoming aware of your own emotions, what triggers them and how to soothe them, is a vital part of living a happy life. Just as importantly, recognising emotions in others - realising that they are human too, and may have stress, pressure or irrational beliefs impacting their behaviour - is an important part of not allowing other people's words or actions to upset you.

Many people believe that their anxiety and stress is related to what others have done to them, how they have raised them, and how others are treating them right now [9,10]. There may be

elements of truth in that. Bad things happen, and life beats up on us all at times. However, blaming your problems on someone else can turn you into a victim that can't recover or move on, because you are lead to believe the cause of your problem is something beyond your control.

On the other hand, CBT empowers you by acknowledging that there may have been some unpleasant life events that led you down the pathway of stress, anxiety, and depression, but you need not lay the blame on someone else and behave like a victim. You can take responsibility for your own thoughts, feelings, and emotions and learn to think rationally rather than irrationally by recognising the links between distorted thinking and emotional upheaval. This is the pathway to empowerment and healing.

So, what is it that makes your mood calm, mad, glad or sad? Let's now look into the ABCs of CBT.

A = Activating Event or the thing that caused you

to feel upset

B= *Your Beliefs* / what you are thinking as the event takes place

C= *Consequence*

Many people who react negatively to situations and have outbursts of anger and irrational self-talk are in fact jumping from the activating event straight to the consequence (A--C) without ever analysing their beliefs surrounding the event, and their own role in allowing themselves to become upset by the activating event. Dr. Lynn Clarke in his excellent book *SOS Help for Emotions* describes this as ‘crooked thinking’ [4].

See if you can tell the difference between A--C thinking, or ABC behaviour in these examples, sourced from *Depression, The Way Out* [9].

1. She hurt my feelings by what she said.
2. My boss made me mad. The more I thought about it the madder I got.
3. I got myself all upset over the cashier’s

behaviour.

Answers:

1 = A--C thinking (irrational)

2 = A--C thinking (irrational)

3 = ABC behaviour (rational)

Do you see the difference?

Let's unpack the statements in 1 and 2 in a more rational way using ABC rather than A--C thinking [10].

1. She said something hurtful, but I don't know what else she has going on in her life to make her act that way. I am still a worthwhile person and I choose to believe the same about her.

2. My boss did something and I got myself worked up about it. I need to stop and talk things through without reacting emotionally to things that are said.

Let's also analyse point 3 and see how it contained

all the elements of healthy ABC behaviour. The activating event was the cashier's behaviour. The consequence is that he got upset.

Belief = who upset him?

Answer = He acknowledged that he got himself upset! No one can make us get upset, or anxious or angry, we have to allow them to. In other words, we are the ones in control of our emotions and behaviour, we are not controlled by other people. With God's help, we can spend our life choosing our behaviour rather than reacting to other people's behaviour. This is a very empowering place to be.

Research has documented that negative thoughts which cause emotional turmoil nearly always contain gross distortions [16]. The thoughts on the surface appear valid, but you will learn that they are irrational or just plain wrong and that twisted thinking is a major cause of suffering [16]. There are 10 classic ways of distorted thinking that cause people stress and anxiety. Learning to recognise these distortions / irrational beliefs in

ourselves, and replacing distorted thoughts with more truthful, less painful interpretations, can greatly improve our relationships with people around us, and enable us to live a happier and more productive life [10,16].

10 Cognitive Distortions to Look Out For **Adapted from Beck, A., [16].**

1. All or Nothing Thinking

There is no “in between”. It’s completely one way or the other.

2. Overgeneralisation

Using limited factual evidence to hold a firm belief that actually is not true.

3. Mental Filter. Singling out one aspect of a situation to the complete exclusion of others that should be considered.

4. Mind Reading. Having the certainty of knowing what another person is thinking without having to ask.

5. Fortune Telling Error. Knowing that if THIS happens, THAT will definitely occur. Connected

to panic disorder & OCD.

6. Personalisation. You are totally responsible for the good or bad that happens to you

7. Emotional Reasoning. Your feelings don't lie

8. Labelling/Mislabelling. Habitually defining ourselves or others with a descriptive term

9. Disqualifying the Positive. Acknowledging the good, appearing to be objective, but believing the good side has no value.

Using this list, learn to identify and correct thinking errors, wrong interpretations of events, and negative automatic thoughts that occur this week. You can find numerous examples of how to recognise each of those distortions and correct them, with lots of stories that will help to solidify the principles of becoming a clear and rational thinker in the book *The Lost Art of Thinking* by Dr Neil Nedley [16]. This book will also teach you how to experience emotional calm and stability under tremendous stress, and train you in the art of CBT.

The 4 steps of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy are:

1. **HEAR** your internal dialogue
2. **ANALYSE** your internal dialogue and identify which cognitive distortions are present
3. **RECONSTRUCT** your thinking by writing down the true statements to replace the distorted thoughts.
4. **PRACTISE**, practise, practise.

CBT Practical Application

Step 1. Think about a time where you experienced strong stress or anxiety response. While recalling what you thought or felt at the time, write down your beliefs and thoughts on a separate sheet of paper [10].

Step 2. Now, look at this list of thoughts and beliefs you have recorded. Do you see any distortions in your thinking? If people you knew were experiencing these in your presence right now, would you consider them rational and logical? Identify the cognitive distortions

that may be involved and write them next to the erroneous belief [10].

Step 3. Take the distorted belief or thought and reconstruct it into a true and positive statement. Avoid using any negative terms [10].

An example: You passed a friend on a busy street. You thought they saw you but they didn't acknowledge you when you waved hello. You concluded that they were mad at you. Probably this is not true, but it hurt your feelings just the same.

The belief might be: "Sally didn't return my greeting and is mad at me or doesn't like me anymore. I feel worthless and unlovable." The distortion involved could be 'Mind Reading' which is jumping to conclusions. A possible reconstruction could be: "Sally might have had something else on her mind and didn't even notice my wave. But even if she had seen me and ignored me, I am still a worthwhile person who has positive qualities to bring to a friendship" [10].

Practicing CBT every day will help manage negative thoughts that lead to stress and anxiety. This, in turn, will help form a new habit of not speaking harsh, critical words about anything or anyone! Practice this new skill for 14 days, and get your family, partner or close friends on board. Once you make it through the first 14 days, celebrate and repeat! You can choose to be free from negative thinking and speaking for the rest of your life!

Need extra help?

Applying the principles in this book will set you on the pathway to a happier life where you manage stress and cope with anxiety better. If you would like a support group to guide you in your positive lifestyle change, Dr. Nedley has created an 8-week Depression and Anxiety Lifestyle Recovery Program to help facilitate positive change in people's lives. The programs are regularly run face-to-face throughout Australia and online through trained facilitators who volunteer their time to help others. If you

would like to learn about upcoming programs, send your request to info@tij.tv.

Testimonies of Changed Lives

*names changed for privacy

Celine's Story - *"I was so broken, I didn't even know where to begin."*

I hit rock bottom after a marriage break up where I was physically and emotionally spent from trying to hold it all together. Anxious thoughts would lead to uncontrollable crying, heart palpitations and a feeling of hopelessness. I was so low that I felt like life was not worth living anymore. Somehow with the help of a counsellor, I found the strength to save my marriage, but my stress levels, anxiety, and depression remained extremely high. I heard about the Nedley Depression & Anxiety Recovery Program, and decided to enrol, hoping to find a way forward. I was so broken, that I didn't even know where to begin, so I started with a daily checklist of

lifestyle changes such as morning exercise, eating flax seeds and plant-based foods, hot and cold showers, sunshine and deep breathing. Applying the lifestyle actions brought my brain into a space where I felt like I had voice over my thoughts. I was then open to learning the art of CBT and was incredibly enlightened by the truth that you can resist negative thoughts instead of taking on board the emotions of the people around you. I also identified incorrect thinking in my own thoughts that had caused me emotional distress.

Spiritual therapy of reading Psalms and Proverbs each day helped to develop a habit that allowed my mind to see reason, and connect me with my Creator God – the Source of Truth. Journaling my concerns and praying for answers has brought me into a beautiful place where God can speak to me and touch me deeply. Although my circumstances haven't changed, my burden is lighter because it is shared with a Heavenly Father who loves me and cares for me. I am

managing my circumstances and my anxiety and depression better even though nothing has physically changed around me. These principles are powerful and I feel like a new person!

Summary

If stress and anxiety have been impacting your life, begin creating your own story of reduced stress and anxiety by implementing these positive changes into your life today! By implementing these steps and practicing CBT, you can become the best version of you that is possible!

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Anxiety. It's that inner voice that questions everything you do, that makes your mind race uncontrollably, causing you to feel nervous, restless and agitated. Anxiety exhausts and overwhelms you, robbing you of your confidence to face the world. In this book, you will discover out-of-the-box methods that have helped thousands of people to cope, and even recover fully from anxiety.



Pastor Gary Kent is Speaker for The Incredible Journey ministry. He has produced and presented numerous documentaries on subjects including the Bible, Bible prophecy, world events and natural health. His passion is to share the good news of Jesus' imminent return.



Neil Nedley, MD, developed the highly successful 10-day residential Depression Recovery Program for treatment of resistant depression and anxiety.

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