

## **Complex Multimodality Treatment of an Alcoholic Client Following the Moonview Model: Creating Synergistic Effects by Integrating Different Treatment Approaches**

Stephen Sideroff, Ph.D., Terry Eagan, M.D., and Gaetano Vaccaro, Ph.D.

### **ABSTRACT**

This case study examines intensive outpatient treatment of a 42-year old man suffering from multiple mental and physical complaints who is abusing alcohol, presumably to self-medicate emotional distress. The idiographic (individual-centered) study protocol employed the *Moonview Model*, a customized multidisciplinary treatment strategy, to reduce the client's substance abuse and emotional distress while improving his self-reported social functioning and quality of life. The report defines the rationale of the model and the various modalities used in the protocol to address the client's clinical issues. The case demonstrates how this novel treatment approach strategically combines conventional and holistic techniques to produce positive results in the treatment of substance abuse and other issues.

### **BACKGROUND**

Alcohol dependency disorder is reported in about 8-14% of the adult population. In addition, recidivism or relapse is reported at rates of approximately 70-80% one year post treatment. At least part of this high rate of relapse is due to the comorbidity of additional psychological issues, unresolved childhood trauma and cognitive deficits, as well as the brain changes and conditioned effects of the disease itself.

The most common treatment approaches to date for alcoholism and indeed most chemical dependency disorders have been the Minnesota Model, twelve step programs, some form of cognitive behavioral therapy or a combination of these methods. In addition, substitution medications such as Suboxone and Methadone have been used and explored. Finally, EEG biofeedback has been shown to be highly effective in treating alcoholics as well as other substance abusers.

According to the DSM-IV, alcohol abuse is determined by one or more of the following criteria over a one year period: role impairment such as failed work or home obligations, hazardous use such as driving while intoxicated, legal problems related to alcohol use or social or interpersonal problems due to alcohol abuse.

Alcohol dependence is determined when three of the following criteria are in existence for over one year: a. tolerance; increased drinking to achieve the same effect b. alcohol withdrawal c. drinking more than one intended d. unsuccessful attempts to cut down on

use e. excessive time related to alcohol f. impaired social or work activities due to alcohol and g. use despite physical or psychological consequences.

This disorder has a tremendous impact on all other areas of one's life including relationships, health and career. While the goal of addiction treatment is typically abstinence from use of the substance, treatment frequently uncovers additional psychological issues that, if not resolved, can increase liability for relapse. In addition, it has been shown that stress and poor coping skills can also increase relapse rates.

For these reasons it is important and facilitative to address underlying psychological issues in the comprehensive treatment of alcohol dependency.

## **INTRODUCTION**

JP is a 42-year old man who presented with complaints of fatigue and a general feeling of unhealthiness. He was experiencing anxiety as well as depression that had been intensified following a recent traumatic experience. His way of interpreting this experience resulted in guilt and anger, increasing his anxiety and his need to self-medicate with alcohol, which disconnected him from these uncomfortable feelings. The client was also experiencing elevated blood pressure. He felt that all these symptoms were at least partly exacerbated by his drinking and thus, in this context, also wanted to address this issue.

An important consideration with drug addiction is addressing the client's discomfort being in their own body and their inability to relax. As a result, they look to an external substance to do it for them, or simply to numb themselves from physical and emotional discomfort. JP had escalated his use of alcohol as a way of dealing with his increased anxiety and resultant stress.

JP's typical daily routine was to get up in late morning. He would take care of some business, but by late afternoon, he was by himself, in his house and drinking. In the evening, he would typically go out with friends and continue drinking. He would then awaken late the next morning, frequently having no memory of the events of the night before.

JP noted the following symptoms and goals of treatment:

1. Address fatigue, poor memory and sense of disease
2. Address high blood pressure and reduce medications if possible
3. Address anxiety that had escalated after recent emotional trauma
4. Decrease social anxiety and feelings of depression
5. Improve self-confidence
6. Improve relationship with wife - communication and intimacy
7. Some interest in reducing drinking behavior as there was an awareness that this might be related to his high blood pressure and disease
8. Address fears surrounding examination of self

## **METHODS**

### Moonview Model

The Moonview Model is a unique team treatment approach. In this model, 10 therapists and related health professionals are selected from a roster of more than 70 treatment professionals representing expertise in over 25 different modalities to create a team wholly engaged in the treatment of one individual. The program begins with a comprehensive assessment from multiple therapeutic perspectives to develop a positively-framed treatment plan that is not based solely on DSM-IV categories.

During the treatments, the client experiences three to five individual therapies daily -- typically mind, body and spirit approaches. A team point person oversees the continuity of each successive treatment and relays relevant information about each session to the next practitioner. Thus, each person meeting with the client is up to date with the most recent and salient clinical information.

This approach was established for a number of reasons. First, we believe that multiple perspectives result in a more thorough assessment and understanding of the client in all his or her dimensions. Further, the approach allows the client to feel fully understood, in turn creating a sense of safety and trust that allows the process to go much deeper than would otherwise be possible.

In the therapeutic process one is always dealing with resistance but the Moonview Model affords a greater opportunity to discover a path into the client's psyche. In addition, by offering a client multiple therapist styles, it can more effectively identify a method that helps the client feel safe and thus more likely to be vulnerable and let down their guard.

The Moonview Model is designed to be flexible and adaptive. Each modality is carefully selected to address the specific needs of the individual client and the sequence of treatments is deliberate, designed to maximize the inherent benefits of each approach. The effectiveness of the individualized treatment plan is evaluated daily in team consultation and continually adjusted to match the client's progress and creatively overcome any resistance or emotional blocks.

The Moonview Model also incorporates the inclusion of family and systems approaches in which family members, as well as other intimate relationships, be it friend or business partner, are included in the therapeutic process.

The true power of this approach is its responsiveness to the client's therapeutic breakthroughs. By integrating the approaches of many different therapists and changing treatments in response to progress, the client benefits from a synergistic effect and achieves much greater results. The Moonview Model is one of the most responsive and adaptive treatment protocols ever implemented in a clinical setting.

## Treatment Approach

After an intensive three-day assessment with approximately 12 different professionals, we established the following goals of treatment for JP:

- ❖ Reduce drinking behavior and address his addiction
- ❖ Address fatigue and sense of disease
- ❖ Address poor memory
- ❖ Address high blood pressure and reduce medications
- ❖ Address anxiety and instill coping mechanisms
- ❖ Decrease social anxiety and feelings of depression
- ❖ Improve self-confidence
- ❖ Improve relationship with wife through better communication and intimacy
- ❖ Address fears about self examination

The treatment plan incorporated the following strategies:

- ❖ Reduce intake of alcohol, eliminate alcohol-related behaviors with goal of abstinence, and enhance motivation to remain abstinent
- ❖ Help client establish a connection with his body and become more comfortable by teaching self-regulation techniques
- ❖ Quiet internal toxic voice and unlearn old cognitive patterns
- ❖ Identify emotional unfinished business and trauma
- ❖ Reduce fear and resistance towards self-awareness

The client began with a two-week outpatient intensive that was followed every six to eight weeks with four-day programs for six months. During this time, the client participated in three to five 60 to 90 minute therapy sessions per day focusing on addiction recovery, coping skills, trauma and personal healing, interpersonal relationships, mind/body connection, psycho physiological self-regulation and stress management.

The initial assessment and subsequent treatment incorporated the perspectives of multiple therapeutic approaches, including:

Biofeedback and Neurofeedback

Solution focused therapy and addiction recovery

Addiction specialist incorporating empathic work and Reiki healing techniques

Gestalt therapy

Neuro-emotional technique (NET)

Polarity

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)

Neurolinguistic programming (NLP)

Integrated martial arts, movement and life coaching

Family systems

The treatment plan was designed to address the above mentioned goals and to strengthen the client's commitment to these goals. In addition, we recognized the need to begin connecting his physical, cognitive and emotional symptoms to his drinking in order to create a motivational hook to make this issue more of a priority.

We wanted to begin with processes that would yield immediate positive impact, including techniques to help with his anxiety so as to build treatment momentum. In the initial stages of treatment, we also helped him identify his cognitive map, the perspective that organizes his view of himself and the world, along with his pattern, or how he copes and interacts with his inner and outer worlds. This would help us determine his primary story and the unfinished emotional business that unconsciously motivated his behaviors.

### Biofeedback and Neurofeedback

Biofeedback is a way of monitoring a person's physiological responses and feeding this information back to the client so that they learn control and self-regulation. To begin, a profile was performed to determine JP's physiological stress reaction and holding pattern. During this profile we observed a very shallow breathing pattern that contributed to a numbing of the senses and we used this assessment to help JP become aware of how his body responds to stress. Indeed, he was surprised to notice his physiological reactions to issues he thought he was okay with.

Biofeedback training encouraged a deeper, more effective breathing pattern along with an enhanced ability to create physical calmness. This helped him become more comfortable in his body and thus reduce his need to disconnect or numb himself. It also was a first step in giving him the tools needed to deal with his anxiety and thus support his confidence building.

Additionally, the client was given a series of neurofeedback sessions. These sessions combined a protocol designed to assist an activation of the brain, while at the same time further facilitating physical and mental calmness and overcoming early trauma. JP experienced some cognitive and memory impairment that was addressed by a neurofeedback protocol that trained a mid beta frequency range, while down training theta, the lower frequency brain waves. A second protocol at more posterior brain locations reinforced brain wave patterns that further encouraged deeper levels of calmness. This process was successful in a previous research study (Scott, Kaiser, Othmer and Sideroff, 2005).

Aside from the goals of specific neurofeedback protocols, there is an added benefit to training the brain away from old brain wave patterns. By challenging the brain to adjust, and by reinforcing it to shift, we are making it more flexible and enhancing the brain's ability to change gears. For these reasons, neurofeedback typically precedes psychotherapy sessions, as it did in JP's treatment.

### Solution Focused Therapy and Addiction Recovery

This part of the therapy helped JP identify the psychological aspects of his addiction, which included abandoning his own self interests to serve others, resulting in depletion and stress. At the beginning of his treatment at Moonview Sanctuary, JP presented with slurred speech, mottled skin and a flushed face. Although he had “cut back” on his alcohol intake in the prior weeks, he wasn’t certain that he wanted to quit completely.

This component also identified potential temptations to use and a plan for maintaining abstinence during difficult times, such as waiting in airports or while cooking. Triggers for craving and drinking related behaviors were identified and behavioral strategies were developed to either avoid such situations or use alternate coping mechanisms. Pros and cons of JP’s alcohol behavior were identified and used to reinforce a commitment to sobriety.

### Addiction Specialist, Incorporating Empathic Work and Reiki Healing Techniques

This approach focused on the roots of JP’s addiction, the spiritual callings that had been denied due to his addiction and the trauma and anxieties he was attempting to keep at bay with his addiction. (Borysenko, 1997; Dayton, 2000; C. Groff, 1995; Jampolsky, 1991; J. Jay & D. Jay, 2000; Sparks, 1993). Also incorporated into this process was an effort to find a spiritual path that might draw JP out and then support that process by teaching, practicing or revisiting the basic tenets of the path. It is a method of treating the body, mind, emotions and spirit of JP, thereby engaging each aspect of self/soul. (1991, 2000).

An empath “feels” the inner experience of the client, as though their body acts as a receiver for affective information. In working with JP, there was a slightly disorganized/largely anxious feel to his presence, which would support an assumption of anxious attachment<sup>1</sup>. The feeling had an infant/primitive nature to it, especially as JP had difficulty with eye contact, and his affective state was flat and disconnected.

Sessions also showed that JP was visibly cut off from his somatic experience. His neck was tense, his arms and legs stiff and brittle, and he seemed to be using his body as a defensive barrier against his own deep emotional pain. When asked how his body felt, he was unable to say.

A Reiki healer and practitioner of Qigong, the therapist utilized both practices to help JP become more physically engaged in his body. Reiki is Japanese for universal life-force energy; ki being energy. When using Reiki, energy enters from the top of the head and moves down through the body and hands (Petter, 1997; Quest, 2003; Stein, 1996). This energy can be used for healing the self and others. Qigong is Korean for “energy work.” It is a gentle stimulation of the chakras or energy centers in the body, using soul energy, movement and breathing together for balance and healing. (Jahnke, 2002; Hon, 2003.) These approaches helped connect his body to his breath: soma to spirit.

Additionally, this energy work helped to soothe his anxiety, and to empower him - an alcoholic - with his own energy (Hon, 2003; Jahnke, 2002; Petter, 2001; Quest, 2003;

Stein, 1996). Through this process, JP began to become aware of his own energy moving through his hands.

Alcoholics struggle with love, especially self-love, so we viewed love as a verb - a series of actions either taken or not taken toward the self or others (Dayton, 2000; C. Grof, 1993; Jampolsky, 1991; J. Jay & D. Jay, 2000, May, 1988; Sparks, 1993). We used an experiential exercise to give the measurement of love meaning, as well as noticing when thoughts or behaviors are not loving. This exercise appeared quite meaningful to JP; moreover, it revealed an area of original trauma and lifelong fear that he has carried (in regard to being given away, or worse, given back). He was able to see the damage that he has continually done to the core of his being by acting in unloving ways toward himself. He was able to reframe some of his new ideas and the possibility of adding loving behaviors to his life, as a form of soul retrieval. He chose nature and his primary soul archetype: The Gardener to represent who he is now becoming (Jung, 1964; Myss, 2001).

### Gestalt Therapy

This approach was employed to increase the client's awareness of the different voices in his head and the unconscious process in which he undermines his sense of self. Gestalt empty chair work was engaged to identify the pattern of unconscious self-criticism developed in childhood, and how this is carried by a self-critical voice. This sometimes took the form of playing roles and dialoging with the two parts of himself: aspects of the old and then the kernel of a new, healthier perspective. The Gestalt technique of speaking directly to a parent was also part of the process of gaining awareness and control of this negative internal voice which was associated with a critical and intrusive parent. This pattern was also addressed by other treatment therapies including NLP described below. The process of learning to express anger toward this negative inner voice was important in the shifting from a passive to a more active role in his personal development and is another way of indicating a strengthening of will.

### Neuro-Emotional Technique (NET)

This methodology is used to identify and normalize unresolved physical and or emotional patterns that have become "locked" in the body. NET assists the body's own healing process by identifying and eliminating unresolved emotional components, resulting in a state of greater congruence regarding what is wanted and what is reality. NET utilizes a muscle testing process in which a client is asked to offer resistance to the therapist pushing down on their arm. When there is full agreement with a statement, there is strength. When the client is not in total agreement with a statement, there is little resistance to the therapist pushing down. This process was used to address JP's ambivalence about his addiction and his basic lack of self confidence.

The process started with a declarative statement proposed by the client, "I can drastically reduce my consumption of alcohol." Just saying these words caused weakness of a previously tested strong muscle, revealing incongruence.

The therapist then asked him to remember a time in his life when a big change might have had a drastic effect on him. JP recalled that when he was eight, his father was diagnosed with cancer and left the house for an extended period of time to get treatment. JP remembered thinking his father would die and that he would lose him forever. He readily saw a correlation between the past and present fear of loss. Through the NET process of resolution, the client was able to return to the same declaration about reducing his alcohol consumption. This time, JP remained strong (congruent) with the statement.

### Polarity

Polarity is a healing modality that balances the human energy fields and nervous system, bringing relief from stress and other ailments that disharmonize health and well being. It was noted that JP's hips, neck and shoulders were very tight and that there was chronic pain in his hips. As pain is an energetic blockage coupled with poor circulation, deep pressure was used to release tightness and to relieve the pain. Other energetic body techniques were also used to uplift his energy fields with spinal, pelvic and foot work.

### Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)

This approach is based on a holistic model that integrates ancient Taoist archetypes built around the Five Element Theory into a holistic model in which Body/Mind/Spirit are viewed as merely different resonances of human energy (Qi). In this practice, the client is educated around a psycho-spiritual approach about their inner nature and shown how thought, emotion and physical energy are related.

JP presented with many of the psycho-spiritual challenges of most substance abusers. During his initial history he related his childhood as an adopted child where he always felt he fell well short of parental expectations, but was nonetheless allowed to pursue a classic underachieving life style, getting into drugs early on and never really working at earning his way through life.

Like many substance abusers, JP was completely separated from his mind, spirit and body when he initially presented. He knew he needed to stop drinking, but wasn't sure why, nor did he seem to have a lot of confidence in a successful outcome. Further, he wasn't really present, showing up for treatment in a passive way. His spirit was extremely clouded by the alcohol, and when he spoke there was no conviction or connection in his words. This was similar to the lack of conviction noted with NET.

JP received a total of five acupuncture treatments during the initial intensive. Since he had complained of feeling shaky and unstable, the first treatment was designed to help him feel more stable physically and mentally. Initially treatment was directed at clearing the toxicity from his liver and calming his central nervous system, through the use of Liver and Gall Bladder channel points, to drain what is known as Damp Heat in Chinese Medicine. Damp Heat creates a clouded sensorium and obstructs QI flow in the meridians most closely aligned with the central nervous system (e.g., Liver).

The therapist also worked to connect JP to his Kidney energy which is the seat of the will and open up the Heart Kidney connection to increase his sense of self-awareness and self-esteem. JP had a significant blockage in his abdomen in part due to trauma from surgery, but also due to the stagnation of his liver energy and weak Kidney energy. This was done by opening the Penetrating Vessel, a deep-lying kidney pathway that connects the Kidneys to the Heart.

### Neurolinguistic Programming

Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP) explores the language of the mind by targeting positive changes in the unconscious mind. Techniques that support positive change include parts integration (resolving internal conflict), instilling new programs while replacing old patterns, future pacing, successful decision making formula and effective goal achievement. As has been noted already, there is often an overlap in the different methodologies used in treatment - here there is some similarity to NET as well as Gestalt therapy – such that the procedures serve to reinforce each other.

The first NLP technique was learning about JP's hierarchy of representational systems of the mind, which include kinesthetic, visual, auditory and analytical.

The primary focus in this case included extinguishing alcoholism and replacing it with a healthier lifestyle. Initially, JP was resistant to complete abstinence. He had controlling parents and therefore rebelled against feeling controlled. As such, the practitioner applied parts integration – again, similar to the Gestalt approach mentioned above - to help him stop drinking. This technique includes the client describing two opposing parts within him: the part that wants to keep drinking and the part that wants to stop. He described these parts and the reasons for their preferences regarding alcohol. Next was the installation of new programs or scripts to assist him in embodying a sober lifestyle. This new program includes all of the benefits he listed in becoming sober.

Next was the incorporation of future pacing, which presents circumstances or triggers in which he would have drunk alcohol in the past. He responded to these triggers with sober responses and alternatives. Future pacing includes tools which eliminate triggers to drink alcohol by releasing the stress that the trigger represents. The client, keeping a daily journal of his anxieties, is an example of a tool to eliminate the trigger to drink alcohol. He can problem solve and make sober responses when feeling anxious.

As our NLP practitioner explained, “Once any person understands how their mind works, it is easier to achieve goals and have more overall control over one's life. We used NLP to uncover the strengths of JP's mind so he could incorporate these strengths when processing information and in achieving goals.”

### Integrated Martial arts, Movement and Life Coaching

This approach draws from both eastern and western transformative life teachings and practices for body, mind and spirit integration. It employs a wide variety of cognitive,

psychological, spiritual and kinesthetic perspectives, tools, techniques and exercises including sitting and movement meditation instruction (breath practices, chi movement practices, martial art forms), guided imagery facilitation for stress reduction and relaxation, power practices instruction (martial arts training, drumming and weapons implementation to enhance balance, coordination, spatial awareness and body/mind harmonization, as well as assertiveness training exercises and other complementary boundary-setting tools and practices), and an array of self-mastery experiential approaches designed to gain access to personal truth, wisdom, purpose and direction.

After taking into account both JP's self-described symptoms (excessive use/abuse of alcohol, depression, anxiety, difficulty with mental focus, memory, concentration and body/mind relaxation, along with poor physical balance and stability) and those observed during an initial assessment (low energy, shallow/restrictive breathing, "emotional holding," and limited body/mind relaxation, centering and grounding capabilities), a Chi-Flow Meditation Practice was initiated.

This particular type of meditative practice works primarily with what is sometimes referred to as the "subtle-body" to strengthen all the channels of the human energy system. Similar to Tai Chi or Chi Gong, Chi-Flow Mediation practice harmonizes body, mind, and spirit to result in greater focus and concentration, increased body/mind centering, grounding and balance, and a decrease in tension and anxiety. This type of practice also helps to release emotional blocks and barriers held deep within the body.

In addition to this work, JP was instructed in a basic drumming practice designed to assist him in connecting to the natural rhythm of his own body, and assertiveness training exercises to deepen and strengthen his ability to establish and maintain personal boundaries via both body language and verbal communication.

### Family Systems

In the Moonview holistic model, it is important to address a person's social environment and personal influencing factors. Accordingly, during the course of JP's treatment, we engaged in couples work with he and his wife.

The family systems approach gives emphasis to the family of origin. By looking in depth at the patterns that were learned adapting to one's family, including not only one's parents, but siblings and extended family members or significant role models as well, one often can see the dysfunctional adaptations in adult life.

During this work, each partner was asked to discuss their family of origin, and their coping skills within the family as they grew to their teenage years. Through this process a couple is often able to see how one or both have recreated their family of origin in their marriage.

This process uncovered the beginning use of drugs by JP at age 11 to cope with his anxiety and his early adaptation to stress. His community of friends, which served as a

refuge from a very critical and withholding family, and the early use of drugs, began a pattern of sedating feelings of inadequacy, frustration and hurt. His wife's story, of a severely alcoholic parent, and her previous marriage to an alcoholic, were also examined, but she was unable to make the connection to her duplicating her family of origin, where alcohol was severely abused.

During their sessions, there was the beginning recognition of how much they both were duplicating their coping skills from childhood in their marriage, and how destructive this was to either intimacy or closeness between the two of them. Seeing direct correlations to one's past adaptations is a powerful tool for change. With JP, and his wife, those connections began to be made.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

At the nine month point following initiation of treatment, JP had achieved and sustained abstinence from alcohol and any other mind-altering substance for **eight months**.

JP made steady and somewhat remarkable progress in his treatment with his true personality emerging rather clearly after just a few sessions. He began to meditate and practice relaxation techniques, and seemed to have gained the upper hand over his addiction to alcohol. In fact, he was sober when he left Moonview after his first intensive of two weeks.

After a few months, he remarked how his blood pressure was decreasing, his memory was improving, his weight was dropping and his relationships with his wife and daughter were improving. He became proficient in choosing sober responses to past alcohol triggers, including social anxiety and work stress. He transformed both physically and emotionally, becoming healthier and more confident and secure in himself and his lifestyle.

The treatment facilitated a remarkable transformation in the client's level of self-confidence and personal self-mastery. Initially JP presented as a man uncomfortable in his own skin, but following treatment, he became more self-assured and at ease with himself, his body and others. JP also demonstrated an ever-expanding interest in spirituality and his connection with the divine. As his capacity for self-awareness and self-reflection continues to deepen, JP has asked for more guidance with meditation and other supportive practices that help quiet the mind.

JP's results on a self scored resilience questionnaire indicated improvements in six of the nine resilience components. The two areas of greatest improvement were his relationship with himself and his sense of presence. He noted that he felt much better about himself and was less apt to pick out what he did wrong. He reported getting less distracted, less likely to become flustered, better able to stay focused and improved sleep patterns. JP became much more physically active, motivated to engage in work and relationships, and in general, taking control of his life as opposed to his previously passive and avoidant behaviors.

This case study demonstrates the positive impact of combining a number of different treatment approaches. We used, for example, martial arts and other movement techniques, combined with biofeedback, Polarity, Chinese medicine and acupuncture, to help the client release physical and energy blocks to be more “present” in his body. Specifically, the Polarity practitioner referred to this as “a major shift in his decision to face the tiger inside himself and to do his work.”

This greater comfort with himself and willingness to be present to “what is,” in turn facilitated the psychotherapeutic work of the Gestalt therapy, NLP, family systems and other modalities, along with the approaches that focused specifically on substance abuse. The combination of treatments, along with his sobriety, further enhanced his presence and led to improved cognitive focus and functioning.

## **CONCLUSION**

This case study presents the results of a unique multi modality treatment program, referred to as the Moonview model. This approach takes advantage of a number of key components, including the creation of a team of approximately 10 practitioners selected from a pool of more than 70 experts. Each practitioner represents a different mind, body or spiritual approach. The treatment begins with an assessment from multiple perspectives that develops a picture of the client that is not based solely on the DSM categories and is positively framed. Treatment sessions are consistently integrated, and reviewed to maximize the synergistic impact of the combination of treatments. The present case study demonstrated the synergistic effect of the Moonview model on addiction and other symptoms of the client.

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