

ISSN electrónico: 2172-9077

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21951507>

“Hey, Are You Smiling?” Recognizing A Smile As An Essential Tool For Positive Communication

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Fecha de recepción de la reseña: 17 September 2025

Fecha de aceptación definitiva: 05 March 2026

Abstract

A smile is unquestionably a vital component of a confirmatory emotion, which has a comprehensive impact on our overall well-being. It creates reliance, diminishes misapprehension, and disperses ambivalence. Although research on the overall effects of smiles on the psyche of human beings has been conducted at large, less enquiry has been made into the subservient visage of smiling. The current research endeavours to showcase the importance of a smile as an indispensable element for positive communication. The primary data is based upon the researchers' observations of the impact of a smile on people's communication style, typically within normal environments, to ascertain dependable behaviour. A Thematic Analysis has been used to detect, explore and find the outcome through secondary materials like research papers, articles, newspapers and interviews to understand the influence of this particular non-verbal communication. The research proves that positive communication relies on confirmatory emotions, which require us to be self-assured in our day-to-day verbal interactions. If we smile recurrently, we create an optimistic ambience, which promotes open communication and an unmediated tenderness between people. A smile acts as a contrivance to convey liking and approachability, which creates a sense of fellow-feeling.

Keywords: Communication Style, Normal Environments, Non-verbal Communication, Confirmatory Emotions, Optimistic Ambience.

1. “A SMILE CURES THE WOUNDING OF A FROWN.” — WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

To build a long-lasting relationship and a thorough understanding, we rely on effective communication, which promotes “happiness, health, and wellness” (Tracy, 2014). Again, immaculately effective communication with other fellow beings requires both verbal and non-verbal communication. Unquestionably, verbal communication has its place in building affinity with each other. In that case, non-verbal communication, such as a smile, underpins active communication, as it eliminates misapprehension, builds rapport, stimulates positive emotions, and fills- the dots (Heerey & Crossley, 2013; Hess & Bourgeois, 2010). A smile is not only spontaneous, but at times, “contagious”, too,

because an authentic smile, without any pretention/s, builds a sense of acceptability and fellow-feeling. As a vital component of facial expression, a smile often inculcates joy, happiness, and pleasure among people (Kraut & Johnston, 1979), and also strengthens mental and physical health, thereby enhancing longevity (Abel & Kruger, 2009) of an individual. It plays an imperative role in solidifying and shielding social associations by instituting a language of its own, which exterminates all variances and surmounts all space.

From the very beginning of creation, a smile is an indication of positive energy, which can intervene with the process of communication, at any place, at any time. "Hardly any other emotional expression has attracted as much scientific interest concerning its genuine expression as smiling" (Quadflieg et al., 2013), because a smile often acts as the shadow of the personality of a human being from the very beginning of her/his birth till the fag end of life. A child's ability to comprehend the necessities of living depends much on a smile, because it serves to strengthen the attachment between the infant and the parents (African American Studies Center, 2006), which provides the base for the overall sustenance and a tenable affiliation (Cohn et al., 1991; Malatesta et al., 1984) with the latter. Subsequently, smile controls the genetic and emotive development of people to a prodigious degree throughout the breadth of their lives. It is being widely observed that when a person dies, an iota of smile remains in his/her orifices.

An act of smiling results in the release of feel-good messengers that help in reducing stress (Riggio & Riggio, 2012) and express emotions and feelings. "The attractiveness of a smile has been related to the thickness and the position of the upper lip, the amount of tooth exposure, the presence of black triangles and occlusal cants, as well as the extent of gingival display" (Van der Geld et al., 2007). It is something that two people can always share and instantly connect. Which helps you keep a positive, optimistic outlook through difficult situations, disappointments, and loss. There are variations of smiles which may be categorised as candid or fake, or, what we may call, duplicitous signs of constructive feelings (Ekman, 1992). Unquestionably, it may be tough, but not impossible to differentiate between an authentic and a fake smile, as the latent nonverbal cues depict the reality in the sphere of shared communication (Krumhuber et al., 2007). Under any settings, a sincere smile is always an unprompted overflow of emotion, and not a prearranged decorum. Nevertheless, a human being doesn't smile only when he/she is communicating, but there are other reasons, too, for that sought-after grin. A smile may denote different emotions and dispositions, depending on the situation. It may connote accomplishment, flirtation, approval, graciousness, etiquette, flummoxes, discomfiture, approachability, bashfulness, shrewdness, sexual allurements, inculpability, etc. (Ruys & Stapel, 2008). At times, smiling is a sign of tremor, dismay, indignity, or embarrassment, which may be visible with a tilt of the head down and to the left, a facial trace, or may be through a forestalled look.

As a vital component of communication, smiles may be assessed on their overall impact on the verbal discourse of consequence, since they provide a pertinent source of normal cadence in a tête-à-tête. Of course, a smile has its impact, because an affirmatory grin portrays facial reliability (Todorov & Duchaine, 2008), whereas a spontaneous smile connotes achievement or craving (Frank et al., 2005). Another grin is for showcasing supremacy over others and is very much contrasted to the other form of smiles. Self-conceited, devious, or perilous smiles are often associated with high social position or societal control, whereas affiliative smiles are allied with positive emotions (Mermillod et al., 2010). Often, this type of smile indicates constructive interactions and is decisive for the formation of a strong attachment and affiliation. It promotes friendship and fellow-feeling among people.

Some researchers now accept that unaffected smiles are not momentary inducements of sentiment, but rather a transparent confession of a person's inner psyche. It has also been proven through research that a smile may act as medication for physical stress (Bossé et al., 1990; Finan & Garland, 2015) or

a contraption for resolving skirmishes or unfriendly engagements (Cross et al., 2023). Some research has proved that females smile more than their male counterparts (Hecht & LaFrance, 1998; Hess & Bourgeois, 2010), but the veracity of its consequences on the different genders has not yet been determined. Nonetheless, it is now a well-accepted fact that smiling makes the surroundings more blissful (Strathearn et al., 2008) than in any ordinary circumstances. The world around us may turn out to be pleasanter and more cooperative if we make it a habit to incorporate smiles into our everyday conversations. Without a smile, life becomes boring and full of drudgery, without any enduring respite!

1.1. Problem Statement

In the background of the accrued information on smile, an initiative has been taken in the current study to find answers to comprehend:

- i) How does a smile encourage positive communication under any status quo?
- ii) How it conveys our willingness to find mutual grounds for trust and bonding;
- iii) Whether a smile has a role in strengthening a sensual relationship?
- iv) How a smile courteously settles disagreements in adverse situations;

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A considerable amount of research suggests that smiles are influential shared amenities that impact personal pronouncements in an innumerable manner. In 'The Vocal Communication of Different Kinds of Smile' (2008), Drahota A, Costall A, Reddy V. have emphasised the fact that the true estimation of both the programming and the decoding of enunciated lexes is of dominant importance in assessing the true intensity of smile. In 'The Simulation of Smiles (SIMS) model: Embodied simulation and the meaning of facial expression' (2010) by Niedenthal, Mermillod, Maringer & Hess, an experiment has been conducted to ascertain the weightage of smile, considered to be the most intricate facial countenance. A solution has been provided in the research paper to showcase smile as the medium for personified reasoning, in the study of facial expressions of sentiments. Tracy and Beall, in their research 'Happy guys finish last, says new study on sexual attractiveness' (2011), have detected gender differentiation in smiling. Porter, S., ten Brinke, L. & Wallace, B. in 'Secrets and Lies: Involuntary Leakage in Deceptive Facial Expressions as a Function of Emotional Intensity' (2012) have stressed the process of emotional "outflow" in misleading facial lexes which leads to expressive statements. The study reveals that the highest and lowest amounts of emotional leakage occurred during appalling and cheerful expressions, on a one-to-one basis.

Kraus & Chen in "A winning smile? Smile intensity, physical dominance, and fighter performance" (2013) detected that specialised battalions, who smiled more in a pre-fight picture taken confronting their enemy, proved themselves to be underdogs in contrast to their opponents. In 'A message behind a smile: how facial expression supports communication in marketing' (2018), Setyawan, Anandya & Fullonga showed the presence of emotional constraint avowed by any specific person when perceiving the facial expression of a second in a commercial. In a nutshell, this emotional contagion influences the upshot of facial expression on customer assessment. Daniel John K.J. in 'The Impact of Smile on Human Interactions: A Psychological Perspective' (2019) has asserted that smiling may act as an apposite and soothing form of human action, which has a copious healing effect. The researcher insists that a smile has the requisite power to enhance the discrete, social, and rational experience to a great extent. Marie P Cross, Amanda M Acevedo, Kate A Leger, Sarah D Pressman, in 'How and why could smiling influence physical health? A conceptual review (2023) argues that a smile can often provide numerous health-related benefits and may work as a stress-buster. It can reduce ailments and act as a

stress-recovery method. Obayashi Y, Uehara S, Yuasa A, and Otaka Y, in ‘The other person’s smiling amount affects one’s smiling response during face-to-face conversations’ (2024), believe that a smile can change anyone’s perception or mood. Thus, smiling tends to play a primary role in our daily social interactions, more so than other physical traits.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The selected literature unswervingly addresses the explicit non-verbal cues within the milieu of the study’s objectives. The researcher has focused on representative contemporary works that explain the after-effects of a smile and has used systematic observation to identify and decipher explicit nonverbal behaviours in a manner that reinforces the examination. The present study is investigative in nature and uses Thematic Analysis to classify, analyse, and report periodic themes or designs from secondary sources such as research papers, book chapters, articles, websites, anthologies, interviews, etc., to arrive at a supposition.

3.1. Smile: An Occasion for Positive Communication

Even though Darwin had stated that “the large class of idiots who are ... constantly smiling” (Darwin & Sheppard, 1884), a smile strengthens social affiliation and interface in a far better manner (Fridlund, 2002), which eventually proves its ubiquitous acceptability as an expedient for societal unity (Centorrino et al., 2015). Smiling creates a happy environment, as it procures endorphins, which ratifies a positive outlook that generates enhanced pleasure and dependability (Mehu & Dunbar, 2008a). It makes us jubilant, because neuronal signals travel from the cerebral cortex to the brain, due to which, the cranial muscle carries the indicator near the smiling face muscle. Now, to produce a sincere grin or laugh, there should be a proper orchestration of our mouth and eyes at the same time, known as the Duchenne Smile (DS), which often creates an impact on the bystander (Girard et al., 2019). The name Duchenne Smile (DS) has been kept in honour of the 19th-century French doctor, Guillaume-Benjamin-Amand Duchenne (1806-1875). He investigated emotive countenance by inspiring innumerable rehab physiques. So, the moment the smiling muscles of our face contract in a synchronised fashion, there is a productive retort circle that now goes back to the mind and fortifies our sagacity of enjoyment (Brannigan & Humphries, 1970; Ekman & Friesen, 1982), which acts as a stimulus for positive communication.

In interpersonal communication, people often show their consent/acceptance of any behaviour through smiling, which forms the base for a positive relationship (Mehu & Dunbar, 2008a). While congealing this very positive relationship, a smile plays a vital role in bonding unaccustomed individuals (Bachorowski et al., 2001), or strengthening conjoining affinity (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006) over a short period, which otherwise may take a protracted period. The development of a cheerful atmosphere inside any family is conducive to the evolution of an idyllic society, which heartens open communication, dispassionate alliance, and bountiful cooperation. Much of our societal interface depends on the ability of the individual to use a smile as a conduit to reach a treaty or approbation, and may even be utilised to nourish social communiqué (Abe et al., 2002). Many a time, when people undergo challenging and indeterminate situations in life, which time and again may affect their overall well-being, a genuine smile may do wonders, which helps people to reinstate their mental/ physical health or may even prolong their longevity (Abel & Kruger, 2009). An assiduous scrutiny of recent research would endorse the viewpoint that a smile helps in boosting mood, making the person look jovial, younger, and thinner (Stearns & Parrott, 2012), thereby influencing the day-to-day activities of an individual. No doubt, communication in everyday parlance may become effective only if it is conveyed with a grin, which otherwise may become dull.

A smile is the most prevalent non-verbal means of communication used in the human interaction process (Kraut & Johnston, 1979), which can regulate any condition, to the extent that it augments the functioning of the brain cortex of children, too! In the workplace, positive communication helps to create an incredible setting, where employees feel motivated enough to indulge in meaningful and constructive dialogue. Actually, during any official interaction between the personnel, a smile plays an important role (Roffey, 2011) because individuals who smile sincerely are perceived to be competent and trustworthy (Friesen & Danner, 2012), and often more persuasive (Matsumoto et al., 2013) than others, in any workplace environment. Although there are enormous variances among diverse beliefs, creeds, and cultures, and even in the belief system of the people regarding smiling (Niedenthal et al., 2018), the connotation of a smile is predisposed by the geographical location, as well as the ethos of the person smiling and of the perceiver. An insignia of kind-heartedness, compassion, and pleasantness, a smile acts as a valued medication, and may support critical patients across cultures to recover more quickly than expected, and thereby help them to lead a healthy and prosperous life. Many a time, the intensity of the smile decides upon the sternness of the state of affairs (Gaudino et al., 2022), and naturally, it assumes its standing in universal communication.

3.2. Smile: A depiction of Trust, Bonding, and Co-operation

Smiling is a widespread emblem of warmth, amiability, and honesty (Thornton, 1943), as it enhances the trustworthiness of any individual. As per the Cambridge online English Dictionary, "trust(verb) is to believe that someone is good and honest and will not harm you, or that something is safe and reliable" (Cambridge). Trust is vital for any kind of societal affiliation and a basis for solidarity, which is extremely hard to achieve (Gefen, 2013), in this avaricious time. Without trust, the relationship between parents and children, siblings, husband and wife, or between office colleagues, friends, or unfamiliar persons in social-networking sites, may turn out to be bitter and pathetic! Even though facial expressions change trust and collaboration in dual circumstances (Bijlsma-Frankema & Klein Woolthuis, 2005), a smile is the de facto constituent of facial appearance, affiliated to human emotions like gratification, predilection, or contentment (Kraut & Johnston, 1979), based on the solid foundation of sociability and dependability, which can lead to augmented affinity and everlasting conviction. Interestingly enough, in the 1960s, it was proven that there is a variance between a lying face and a truthful expression (Ekman et al., 2005), and so, it is not at all problematic to distinguish people who may smile, even when they are lying. In the unceasing skirmish between inevitability and falsehood, scholars have reposed faith in that sincere smile, which is not just a momentary stimulus of desires but rather a spontaneous reaction (Knapp & Daly, 2002) to the assertion of trust and allegiance.

Apart from the trust factor, smiling helps in generating and upholding interpersonal affiliation and social bonds (Heerey & Crossley, 2013; Hess & Bourgeois, 2010), which nurtures optimistic sentiments to improve communication. Undeniably, smiling works as a tool to demonstrate compassion, skill, and receptiveness to the other person (Haakana, 2010; Ochs et al., 2012), which outlines societal influences, eventually leading to a stronger attachment. To form a connection with the other person, one needs to reciprocate the other person's smile, which makes the other person's rejoinder more constructive (McLellan & Lieberman, 2012; Strathearn et al., 2008). When one smile touches the other's, and inversely follow the suit, it helps in building a strong social bond. A durable bond between two individuals or a group of people may form an affiliation, possibly leading to augmented feelings of contentment, welfare, and faith. Hence, reciprocal grinning prompts the concerned people to form an instant societal bond (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Hess & Bourgeois, 2010; Hess et al., 2014; Lakin et al., 2003), which may help them to enter into an unassuming rapport.

Yes, people do smile while contemplating a pleasant occurrence from a bygone time, or when they are

living unaccompanied, but it is widely accepted that societal milieu pulls more strongly at our lips than untouched, secluded feelings. Under any circumstances, while being a part of any communication process, people grin when they intend to form cooperation (Mehu & Dunbar, 2008b) with the other person, or build a friendly relationship (Fridlund, 1994) or a concerted rapport (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006), for the mutual benefit of each other. It instantly prompts reciprocal smiles, nurtures receptiveness, and builds affinity. In an uncertain world, sincere smiles cannot be replicated, and research works have avowed that truthful people who express factual grins are always considered to be happier-go-luckier people (Deutsch et al., 1987), gracious (Bugental, 1986), friendly, gentler, pleasant, and more reliable (Mueser et al., 1984), than individuals who circumvent smile. Since commitment endorses societal integrity, Duchenne smiles always have an upper edge over other types of smiles.

3.3. Smile: A Tool for Sexual Attraction and Allurement

Smiling is a treasured tool for creating that everlasting dent, which is required for strengthening trust and bolstering fruitful relationships, whether in dating or sexual relationships between partners or husband and wife. Everywhere, smiling augments mood-enhancing hormones, to make human beings more cheerful while diminishing stress-enhancing hormones, like adrenaline or cortisol. When human beings are interacting and smiling at the same time, it boosts affiliation between two individuals and may also regulate overall blood pressure. Smiling could make people more conspicuous because it generally signals positive engagement in a social interaction (Bowlby, 1969; Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1989). It has been found through research that in couples, smiling faces become more attractive than unsmiling ones (Lau, 1982). Where smiling often connotes emotional stability, there is always a need to distinguish between romantic affiliation, which implies familiarity, involvement, and a sense of togetherness, and sexual or passionate association, which includes intense desire for passionate implication and infatuation, leading to sexual intercourse (Diamond, 2003; Hatfield & Rapson, 1987). In both instances, smiling plays a fundamental role in strengthening relationships, which exemplifies dependability, as it is frequently related to steadfastness and attachments.

Essentially, "sexuality describes the reproductive mechanism and the basic biological drive that exists in all sexually reproducing species and can encompass sexual intercourse and sexual contact in all its forms. There are also emotional and physical aspects of sexuality. These relate to the bond between individuals, which may be expressed through profound feelings or emotions" (Wiki), such as smiling. A slight smile, conveyed by direct eye contact, with a sluggish squint away would appear on an individual's face when he or she tries to be seductive (Gorvett, 2017), supplementing the discernment of appeal and thereby prompting the impetuses for love-making. Smiling works as a surreptitious way to show empathy, friendliness, and compassion to the other person (Haakana, 2010), subsequently influencing sexual attraction. It has been detected that this very sexual lure related to genital stimulus serves as an affective base for engendering sexual inducement (Hardy, 1964). At times, the social context plays a crucial role in influencing the effect of smiling on others. For example, smiling throughout a quixotic liaison will have a different impact than smiling in the office corridor. Whatever the implications may be, smiling has immense importance in shaping and maintaining relationships between couples. The orientation of smiles between individuals is crucial to forming support, closeness, and social bonds, and is more enthralling between the opposite sex. "An inconsequential smile conveyed by direct eye contact, with a slow glance away, would appear on an individual's face when he or she tries to be seductive" (Gorvett, 2017). Scholarships have also proved that smiling upsurges apparent allure during interaction with the opposite sex, which somewhere or the other augments fidelity and general amiability. Irrespective of the impact, it has been found that women try to allure their male counterparts through smiling and laughing (Hall & Xing, 2015), because it has been substantiated through research that smiling is a way to uphold and nurture interpersonal relationships (Bachorowski

et al., 2001), and trustworthiness in any relationship. Now this concept of reliability plays a major role in the selection of sexual partners, both in the milieu of short-term as well as long-term relationships (Fletcher et al., 2004). Hence, smiling plays a pertinent role in engendering sexual attraction and allure, to strengthen romantic/marital relationships across nations and societies.

3.4. Smile as a Tool for Settling Disagreements

Smiles are transmittable because when someone smiles, it furrows, prompting others to grin. A smile eases disagreement or conflict, as it is a manoeuvre through which human beings try to settle their differences amiably, based on mutual consensus. The act of smiling is indeed a dominant social tool to impact another human being's behaviour (Hess & Bourgeois, 2010), as well as belief (Messinger et al., 2008). In any endorsed parlance, it alleviates tension and improves teamwork, which paves the way for problem-solving and conflict resolution. In reality, conflict is a situation when two individuals or groups of individuals have contradictory viewpoints, motives, opinions, or thought processes, characterised by antagonism, disbelief, hostility, and distrust (McCroskey et al., 1996). “Conflict between people can be viewed as the opposite or antithesis of affinity. In this sense, interpersonal conflict is the breaking down of attraction and the development of repulsion, the dissolution of perceived homophily (similarity) and the increased perception of incompatible differences, the loss of perceptions of credibility and the development of disrespect” (McCroskey & Wheelless, 1976). When conflict is allowed to continue and escalate, it “can be likened to an ugly, putrid, decaying, pus-filled sore” (McCroskey et al., 2005). In such an adverse situation, a smile can act as a linctus, where it may prompt the two sparring parties to reach an agreement in dialogue, strengthening attachment between the parties/individuals, without the need for disputes.

It has been proven through research that a smile is one of the most common non-verbal means of communication, used in human communiqué (Kraut & Johnston, 1979), which is often contagious. It means that if one person grins, it prompts the other person to smile as well, even in hostile situations. Whether in professional or personal space, we smile consciously and unconsciously, and it can often act as an influential therapy. As smiling is generally judged positively by others (Deutsch, 1990), it may soften the mood and create a more favourable milieu to resolve differences of opinion. This positive energy becomes successful in creating a sustainable environment, where communication flows effortlessly, nurturing alliance and solidarity. This positivity generates an optimistic attitude, where smiling leads to a more obliging and empathetic interface. Fundamentally, while differences of opinion or conflict can be deterrents to the growth of an individual or organisation, an authentic smile can be an apt expedient for not only quelling conflict but also strengthening friendship and eventually promoting more constructive and prolific exchanges between the belligerent individuals or parties.

4. CONCLUSION

To conclude, after a thorough examination, it is now clear that a smile is a subsection of facial expressions, which is most of the time authentic, but it can also be pretentious. Whatever may be the nature of a smile, there is no doubt now that it comes under the gamut of nonverbal communication. A smile implies that two people are part of something together, where merriment and goodwill endorse fellow-feeling and help us in establishing a jovial way of life. Often, an authentic smile acts as the most powerful form of human body language, which is more often than not transmittable, as it creates a sense of fellow-feeling inside the one who smiles, as well as the one to whom he/she is smiling. It plays a vigorous role in establishing positive communication between two human beings, often leading to a lifelong alliance. Further, it has also been confirmed that a smile is a sign of sustenance

that nurtures better human understanding and attachment. In many societies, where people are averse to smiling, a misunderstanding can often arise, not only between office colleagues, but even between family members. A smile always generates positive vibes and contributes to the effectiveness of constructive interaction. A smile at any moment of time, may sort out many differences and may create an atmosphere of amity.

Apart from the societal importance of a smile, it also acts as a powerful means to kindle romantic and sexual relationships between two individuals. A smile is a worldwide symbol of cheerfulness and cordiality, and it is widely considered to be the first step towards initiating any romantic relationship. It fosters contentment, carries heartening passions, making sexual communications more agreeable and harmonious between partners, during lovemaking. It has also been proven that smiling can be an effective means for resolving frictions, because it can reduce stress in any given situation. It makes people look more open-minded and consistent, which ultimately reduces anxiety.

Hence, under the present circumstances, all future research works undertaken in this direction should endeavour to articulate a cohesive approach to examine the healing value of a smile under any adverse situation. Researchers of communication theory and practices should focus more on the remedial value of a smile as an expedient and soporific form of human action. As a subdivision of the non-verbal communication model, a smile should be studied as a non-toxic medicine, which upsurges pleasure hormones by triggering more endorphins, while reducing negative hormones, together with cortisol and adrenaline. Naturally, it strengthens a human being's mental health, reduces overall blood pressure, promotes a sense of fellow-feeling, and diminishes feelings of isolation or separation from loved ones. It is a natural tendency among human beings to get attracted to someone who smiles often. Again, human beings tend to avoid people who reveal negative facial expressions like glares, sneers, and smirks! They are generally looked down upon and are often disparaged as undesirable persons. Somewhere, smiling enhances positive communication and relationships. Even if the smile is counterfeit and unaffected, it creates an aura in itself that opens the door for more human interaction, based on love, attachment, trust, and bonhomie, which otherwise is very difficult to attain in an out-and-out acquisitive world. Not only can smiling make anyone more striking, but it can also make one look younger.

Naturally, there is much scope to undertake research in this direction in the days to come. Indeed, the act of smiling nurtures positive communication, strengthens social, romantic as well as conjugal affiliation, relieves us from animosity and anxiety, and, what's more important, establishes a cultivated and enlightened society. So, shouldn't we create a more comprehensive and empathetic society by integrating smiles into our day-to-day activities?

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