A 2021 study published in the International Journal of Eating Disorders found that, for each additional hour children spend on social media, they have a 62 percent greater risk of developing a binge-eating disorder one year later. The study echoes earlier efforts from researchers to determine the potential link between screen time and childhood obesity, the rate of which the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports has more than tripled in the United States since the 1970s. One group of researchers at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland analyzed more than 3,700 children who were not overweight or obese at the start of the study. Despite that, the researchers found that, for every extra hour of screen viewing children engaged in, kids were 16 percent more likely to become overweight or obese. The researchers behind that study urged parents to prevent excessive screen time and ensure children get sufficient sleep, a lack of which was linked to a 23 percent higher risk of becoming overweight or obese.
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The sun makes life on Earth possible. While the warmth and light provided are beneficial for many reasons, the dark side of the sun is the potential damage that can be caused by ultraviolet radiation. These facts about sunlight and UV rays, courtesy of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the FactFile and NASA, can help people make more informed choices about spending time in the sun.

- There are three types of UV rays. UVA reaches Earth’s surface because the atmosphere does little to shield these rays. UVA rays contribute to ailments like wrinkling and can penetrate through windows and clouds. UVB rays largely are thwarted by the atmosphere. However, latitude, altitude and time of year may increase the likelihood of UVB ray exposure, which is often the culprit behind skin cancer. UVC rays are completely absorbed by the Earth’s atmosphere and don’t pose a significant threat, even though they have the highest energy levels of all three types of UV rays.

- The sun’s UV rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the sun is at its highest in the sky. The ultraviolet radiation will be less severe early in the morning and later in the day.

- Snow, water and sand reflect the damaging rays from the sun and can increase a person’s risk for sunburn.

- The higher up in altitude a person goes, the stronger the sun’s rays become. Therefore, sun exposure in the mountains can be more dangerous than exposure at sea level.

- Areas closest to the equator will get the longest hours of sunlight. The sun’s rays are much stronger near the equator.

- Australia ranks near the top of the skin cancer risk list along with New Zealand. These countries are located close to the ozone layer hole over the Antarctic. In addition, during summer, the Earth’s orbit places Australia closer to the sun compared to other countries. That results in an additional solar UV intensity, according to Specialist Clinics of Australia.

- UVA rays penetrate more deeply into the skin and can cause it to prematurely age.

- UVB rays damage the outermost layers of the skin and contribute to the most skin cancers. Overexposure to UVB rays causes delayed sunburns.

- While the sun is more intense during spring and summer, sun glare may be a bigger problem in the fall and winter. The sun during the colder months takes a lower angled route when rising, rather than seemingly going straight up, which it does in the summer. That keeps the sun in a blinding position for a longer period of time in the fall and winter.

- The sun’s energy is produced by the fusion of hydrogen into helium. Nuclear reactions occur in the core of the sun due to temperature and pressure. The sun also emits infrared radiation, visible light and ultraviolet light.
Being a parent requires an ability to adapt to change. Newborns require around-the-clock care that often translates into little free time for their parents. When parents get opportunities to step away, exercise may be the furthest thing from their minds. But it could be in new mothers’ and fathers’ best interests to consider exercise even when their schedules are hectic.

Health experts at the Mayo Clinic advise exercise helps to tame stress, keep the mind sharp and boost the immune system. Staying fit and healthy with a new baby in the house may be easier when parents embrace certain strategies.

- Flexibility is key. New parents strive to maintain schedules, but newborns and infants don’t always comply. Therefore, committing to a workout at a specific time each day or even a specific duration can be foolish. It’s better to take what you can get when you can get it. Don’t get hung up on following a specific regimen right now.
- Exercise in bursts. Rather than devoting a set amount of time to a workout, fit in exercise when you have a minute. Run up and down the stairs while the baby is napping. Or do some bicep curls while preparing a bottle.
- Take a “baby-and-me” class. Gyms and fitness organizations often offer classes for new parents that build workouts around movements that can be done with baby in hand or in tow. Another option is Stroller Strong Moms, a workout group that incorporates kids and strollers. Seek out these programs for innovative ways to get exercise and spend time with your child and other parents.
- Ask for time off. Spouses can divide baby duties so that each gets equal time away to devote to personal needs. Factor exercise into some of the plan, even if you can carve out only a few minutes. Another tip is to multitask. Consider buying a stationary bicycle to use while watching a favorite television show.
- Go swimming. Swimming works many muscles of the body, and the buoyancy of the water relieves pressure on joints and other areas of the body. When baby is old enough, you can even enjoy time in the pool together.
- Prioritize sleep. Do not compromise sleep for exercise, which can adversely affect your overall health. Sleep is essential for human development, says The Sleep Foundation. During sleep, the brain experiences intense activity, building the foundations for how people learn and grow, including the development of our behavior, emotions and immune systems. Adequate sleep is vital for new parents to maintain their health and the health of their babies.

As infants grow, parents will find they have more time to devote to exercise. Until then, new parents can be flexible and make time for exercise when their schedule allows.
C

Childhood obesity poses a serious threat to the long-term health of kids across the globe. According to the World Health Organization, 39 million children under the age of five were overweight or obese in 2020. That means that tens of millions of kids across the globe are facing a serious and potentially chronic health problem before they even begin kindergarten.

The data pertaining to childhood obesity is undoubtedly alarming, but the good news is that obesity is preventable. Parents can provide nutritious foods for children and help them establish healthy eating habits at an early age, which could lay the foundation for a lifelong commitment to eating right.

One of the issues parents may encounter when planning kids’ diets is foods that seem healthy but are actually hidden sources of sugar. That’s a big problem, as Johns Hopkins Medicine notes that excess sugar consumption is associated with an elevated risk for cardiovascular disease. Sugar consumption has long been linked to obesity, which is one reason why the WHO recommended in 2015 that individuals get less than 10 percent of their daily calories from sugar. On the surface, it may seem simple for parents to heed that warning from the WHO. However, various foods and beverages, including ones kids typically love, are hidden sources of sugar. Identifying those foods and avoiding them or choosing versions that are not high in sugar can help kids maintain healthy weights.

• Cereals: Parents may fondly recall overindulging in cereals with popular cartoon mascots on the box as kids. No matter how much nostalgia such memories may generate, parents must resist the temptation to recreate them for their own children. That’s because many popular cereals marketed to children are loaded with sugar. However, even seemingly healthy cereals could be loaded with sugar. Read nutrition labels before buying cereal for kids. Johns Hopkins Medicine recommends choosing cereals with 10 to 12 grams or less of sugar per serving.

• Beverages: Sugar-laden beverages like sodas, certain juices and even some flavored waters increase kids’ risk of being overweight or obese. Encourage youngsters to drink more water and only serve sugary beverages on special occasions.

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Why not embrace your uniqueness and learn to support the real you! What do you have to lose?

For more information or to schedule a free consultation email Coach K at kristin@kristinclickett.com.
By Kristin C lickett
Special to The Mount Airy News

Our world is plagued by ungodly influences that create anxieties in our daily living. So, how can we rise above and serve as an example to those around us? It’s simple, by choosing to exercise faith in God. We are called by the Almighty to focus on faith and choose faith over fear. The faith we exercise in believing God’s Word is the very essence of receiving the promises he says we can have. Reading and hearing the Word of God is the cornerstone to building solid faith.

Romans 10:17 KJV

17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Just like a muscle, faith must be exercised in order to grow stronger and develop. By stretching and building our faith in our Father above, we learn to cast our cares upon Him and trust in His divine plan for our lives. When we fail to exercise our faith, just like a muscle that’s neglected, our faith can become weak. Weakness of faith can result in thoughts and activities that separate us from our walk with the Lord. If we want to be strong, God fearing Christians, first, we must exercise our faith in Him.

All of us face hardships and stumble in our walk with Jesus. God understands this and is always standing by to be our source of comfort. Trusting in the Lord with all our hearts is an act of faith that can soothe our souls. Depending solely on ourselves is a trap many of us fall prey to. Although we may not always understand God’s plan for our lives, we know that when we put our faith in Him, He directs us every step along the way.

Growing our faith through daily prayer, attending church and reading the Bible everyday are great places to start. Another way to strengthen our trust in God’s plan for our lives is to look to the past. When we begin to let worry overcome us, pause and remember all the times God has provided. Faith honors God, and God honors faith!
PERFORMANCE POINTERS THAT CAN HELP STUDENT ATHLETES AVOID INJURY

Professional sports teams often note that injuries are part of the game. That notion is never too far from professional athletes’ minds, but it can be a harsh reality for student athletes to confront, especially if they have never before been sidelined by injury. Though there’s no foolproof way for athletes to avoid injury, student athletes and their families can consider these preventive measures to reduce their risk of being sidelined.

• Use diet to athletes’ advantage. A healthy diet benefits people from all walks of life, and it can be especially beneficial for student athletes. Precisely what defines a healthy diet depends on variables specific to the athletes, such as age and gender, but Nemours Childrens Health notes that balance is vital for teenage athletes. Avoid cutting back on carbohydrates, which provide fuel for young athletes. When choosing carbs, opt for fruits, vegetables and whole grains instead of sugar-laden options like candy bars. The latter can provide a quick energy burst but then cause an energy crash that makes athletes feel fatigued. In-game fatigue can increase risk of injury. In addition, calcium and iron can be vital to young athletes looking to avoid injury. Calcium helps strengthen bones while iron carries much-needed oxygen.
to athletes’ muscles. Protein is important for athletes, but Nemours notes that most teenage athletes who eat healthy diets already get ample protein. As a result, protein powders and shakes are not necessary for teenage muscle growth.

- Make a good night’s rest part of athletes’ routine. A good night’s rest is vital for student athletes, as it ensures they aren’t playing tired. Tired athletes have slower reaction times and that can increase injury risk. Adequate sleep also benefits athletes’ performance. A 2015 study published in the journal Physiology & Behavior found that athletes who increased their nightly sleep from seven to nine hours experienced significantly improved performance after doing so.

- Emphasize the rules of the game. The rules of the game aren’t in place solely to encourage fair play. Rules also are designed to keep athletes safe. For example, student athletes who play contact sports, including football and soccer, should be taught proper ways to tackle so they can avoid injuring themselves and others. Coaches can reinforce these lessons during practices and even games if the need arises.

- Prioritize offseason conditioning. Rest and recovery is vital for any athlete, but especially student athletes whose bodies are still growing and changing. Offseasons have largely fallen by the wayside, but parents can protect their student athletes by encouraging them to avoid year-round competition. During periods when student athletes aren’t competing, they can forgo in-season workout routines to reduce their risk for overuse injuries while also improving their conditioning through cardiovascular workouts. Running on a treadmill, using an elliptical machine and/or swimming are great activities that make it easy for student athletes to keep their bodies in shape as their muscles and joints recover from the season.

Though there’s no foolproof way for athletes to avoid injury, student athletes and their families can consider these preventive measures to reduce their risk of being sidelined.
Work is often cited as the primary cause of stress. Indeed, work-related stress is a global issue. According to the Global Organization for Stress, workers in countries as different as the United States, Australia and China all report confronting considerable work-related stress. But framing stress as an issue primarily affecting workers overlooks how it affects kids.

The Global Organization for Stress reports that stress is the number one health concern for high school students. Kids dealing with stress experience many of the same symptoms as adults, which the Mayo Clinic reports include headaches, chest pain, anxiety, and mood swings, among others. But stress triggers differ for kids and adults, and parents concerned about stress affecting their children can learn about potential stressors so they can be better prepared to help children get through stressful experiences.

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The Boys and Girls Club of America notes that stressors change as children grow up. Parents can keep that in mind but also recognize that certain events can contribute to stress regardless of how old a child is.

GENERAL STRESSORS

The BGCA notes that kids of all ages may be stressed by incidents or experiences that can affect kids whether they’re in elementary school or approaching high school graduation. Such stressors include:
• Conflicts with friends
• Bullying
• Peer pressure
• Academic struggles, including poor performance and difficulties with the curriculum
• Problems socializing
• Disappointing parents
• Parents’ divorce or separation
• Family financial struggles
• Unsafe or precarious living situation

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Parent should know that certain events can contribute to stress regardless of how old a child is.

**STRESSORS FOR CHILDREN**

New experiences are among the stressors that affect children. Such experiences can include being away from home and performing in front of others, whether it's in a sport, school play or other public forum. Children also may feel stress if or when they are picked last for a sports team. Perceived dangers, even when there's no imminent threat, also can be stressors for young children. Such dangers may include kidnapping, fires and natural disasters, among others.

**STRESS FOR PRETEENS AND TEENS**

The bodily changes associated with puberty are among the potential stressors for kids in this age group. The changes children undergo at this stage in life also can lead to issues with self-esteem and other negative thoughts, and that can be a stressor for some kids. The specter of college and the uncertainty that life after high school can spark are another potential stressor for kids in this age group. Older kids who begin dating also may find that this causes stress.

Stress is often caused by work, but adults are not the only ones vulnerable to stress. Various life events can trigger stress in kids. Parents can do their best to recognize potential stressors and help kids manage stress in a healthy, safe way.
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FAMILY ACTIVITIES

TO GET KIDS OFF THE COUCH

Thanks to increasingly busy weekday schedules that have families running in different directions for work, school and extracurricular activities, weekends are an ideal time to recharge. Too often, however, family members retire to their respective rooms, devices in hand.

Kommando Tech says people spend an average of three hours and 15 minutes on their phones each day, with Americans spending 5.4 hours a day using phones. Those statistics do not include how much additional time is likely spent on devices like tablets or laptops.

Chances are phones are being used while lounging on the couch or bed, something that has negative health consequences for many children and adults. A sedentary lifestyle can lead to weight gain, loss of muscle strength, weak bones, diminished immune system response, and poor blood circulation, according to the health information site Medline. These fun activities can get kids and parents off the couch on weekends.

TAKE A FAMILY BIKE RIDE

Inflate those tires and tighten your helmet chin straps. A family bike ride is an ideal activity for the family.
because it is something that can be enjoyed by all age groups. Choose the pace and the terrain based on the age of the youngest and/or oldest rider (flat, easy-to-navigate paths for the very young or the elderly), and enjoy exercise in the great outdoors.

**WASH THE CARS**

It’s a chore, but it’s one that has the potential for lots of laughs along the way — and possibly a suds fight. Washing vehicles also is a great way to cool off when the weather is warm.

**ENGAGE IN SPORTS TRAINING**

Whether the children participate in organized sports or not, set up an obstacle course or fitness circuit in the backyard. Everyone takes turns going through the course. The family can spend time together as everyone gets beneficial exercise.

**DO A WALKING TOUR**

Educational attractions like museums, zoos, aquariums and arboretums are great to visit on weekends. The family will see new sights and learn important information about exhibits, all the while walking a few miles.

**VISIT AN AMUSEMENT PARK**

Research the nearest amusement park and take a road trip for the day. Hours will be spent walking around the park and going on thrilling rides. Consider discounted memberships or season passes if this is the type of activity the family plans to repeat.

**CHECK OUT A DRIVING RANGE**

Practice golf swings at a driving range or a virtual driving range. Everyone can compete to see whose drive is the longest.

The possibilities for physically active family engagement are endless and beneficial for the body in myriad ways.

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Modern amenities and indoor comforts have made life easier in many ways, but they’ve also helped to fashion a generation of people who spend much of their time inside. A 2018 report from the international research firm YouGov found that around 90 percent of study respondents from North America and Europe spend close to 22 hours inside every day. Children may get a little more time outdoors than adults, particularly if they participate in outdoor sports. There are distinct advantages to engaging in more outdoor activities. Here’s a look at some of them.

**IMPROVED MOOD AND REDUCED RISK OF DEPRESSION**: The YouGov report notes that around 15 percent of the world’s population is affected by different levels of seasonal affective disorder, which is believed to be a direct result of lack...
of daylight. Symptoms go away when days are longer and individuals can enjoy more sunshine. Children who go outside and get ample exposure to sunlight may experience a more positive mood and renewed energy.

**LOWER RISK OF OBESITY**: Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg from the American Academy of Pediatrics says outdoor play can help reduce obesity in today’s youth. Children can enjoy self-directed physical activity that also stimulates awareness of one’s surroundings.

**IMPROVED VITAMIN D LEVELS**: Vitamin D has been dubbed the “sunshine vitamin” because sunlight hitting the skin prompts the liver and kidneys to create vitamin D in the body. A deficiency in vitamin D can lead to depression and heart failure and may compromise the immune system. Children can improve current and future health by maintaining adequate vitamin D levels through healthy exposure to sunlight.

**LOWER STRESS LEVELS**: Students of all ages are faced with stressful situations that come at them from every angle. The arrival of the global pandemic has been an added stressor that continues to affect children and adults. According to research by the University of Essex, outdoor exercise offers mental health benefits that exceed those gleaned from indoor exercise. Spending time in a green space can result in improved mood and self-esteem. A 2017 study of Japanese students found those who spent time in the forest for two nights returned home with lower levels of cortisol, a hormone used as a marker of stress, than students who remained in the city. The practice of de-stressing outdoors is often referred to as “forest bathing” or “nature therapy.”

**BETTER FOCUS**: A dose of nature may help children diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder improve their concentration levels. A 2008 study from researchers at the University of Illinois found that children with ADHD demonstrated greater attention performance following a 20-minute walk in a park as compared to a residential neighborhood or downtown area.

Getting outside and engaging in any activity has a variety of benefits for children and adults.

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Psalm 122:1 KJV
I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.
Social media is a big part of young people’s lives. Psychology Today reports that social media use is now the most common activity children and teenagers engage in, with the majority of users accessing social media platforms several times each day through their personal cell phones.

Social media has its benefits, and being able to keep in touch with friends and family remotely was one of the saving graces in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic when people were isolating in their homes. But there’s a dark side to social media as well. Recently leaked documents from Meta, the company that oversees social media giants Facebook and Instagram, suggest the company has known for several years that its Instagram app is contributing to body image issues and other mental health problems for teens, particularly females. Social media platforms use algorithms to enhance users’ engagement. Feeds may be driven toward polarizing topics or those that have the most shock value, further leading teens down a negative path.

The current tween and teen generation is faced with...
constant information being delivered right to their handheld devices. Children may not be developmentally ready for the immediate gratification that social media provides nor the constant onslaught of content. As a result, teens increasingly are becoming more irritable, having trouble sleeping and are spending more time alone as a result of phone usage. The Harvard Graduate School of Education says recent studies have noted a significant uptick in depression and suicidal thoughts over the past several years for teens, especially those who spend multiple hours a day using screens.

There are steps parents can take to help tweens and teens who may be struggling and need assistance managing social media.

• Set real limits. The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health suggests that until meaningful government oversight is in place to police social media platforms, parents will have to set their own parameters for use. Putting phones down at meal times, turning off alerts close to bedtime, and making certain days “a rest from technology” can help.

• Block upsetting content. It’s a parent’s job to be a parent, not a best friend. Giving in to requests to engage with certain social platforms, even when they do not align with one’s beliefs or values, can be harmful. Set limits on which platforms children are allowed to use.

• Regularly monitor kids’ usage. Parents should look through their kids’ phones and accounts on a regular basis to see which sites are being visited and how kids are engaging with others. If social media is affecting a child’s mental health, have him or her take a break or delete the account.

Social media is ever-present in kids’ lives. Parents and other caregivers have to find a way to assist struggling tweens and teens with social media so it does not become a detriment to their overall health.

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Various factors combine to make communities great places to be. If asked to describe an ideal community, individuals’ answers would undoubtedly be as unique as the respondents themselves. However, safety is one attribute that would be at or near the top of most people’s lists regardless of their additional preferences.

Communities in which parents feel safe raising children are generally safe for anyone. Such towns and cities are often a byproduct of collective effort on the part of lawmakers, law enforcement and, of course, residents. There may not be a one-size-fits-all formula to building safe communities for children, but these strategies are among those that have proven successful in the past.

• Build partnerships across various sectors. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation notes that community safety and early childhood development practitioners use various approaches in their work. That underscores the importance of building partnerships that include representatives from various sectors, including community development, criminal justice, education, employment, and health care. By working together, these sectors can develop a shared understanding of the role each plays in building safe communities. Individual citizens working within these sectors can reach out to fellow professionals and begin laying a foundation that can benefit children in their communities.

• Encourage input from a diverse array of citizens.

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes the importance of seeking input and leadership from a diverse group of citizens. This is a great way for all citizens to share their lived experiences and provides an avenue for individuals to identify grievances and discover common goals. Community leaders, lawmakers and law enforcement can work together to establish a process and structure for providing input. Once established, promote that process so all community members recognize they have a readily available avenue through which to share their comments and concerns.

• Keep things simple. The CDC urges individuals and organizations tasked with developing initiatives to build safer communities to keep their messages simple and straightforward. This ensures that messages can be clearly and consistently communicated to many different audiences.

• Identify potential hurdles. The CDC notes that advance planning to address potential hurdles is vital to ensuring widespread acceptance of new approaches and policies. Analysis should include consideration of why safety issues were not already a local priority and how the barriers to a safe community have not been overcome in the past. Politics, funding shortfalls and insufficient resources are potential hurdles that communities may need to clear en route to building safer communities for kids.

Communities that are safe for kids are a worthy goal that can be achieved through effective collaboration.
Accidents happen. While even the most cautious individuals are not immune to accidents, that doesn’t mean it’s not in everyone’s best interest to do everything they can to reduce their risk of accident and injury, particularly around their own homes.

Homes are often seen as safe havens, but they’re also where many individuals suffer preventable injuries. Data from the National Safety Council indicates that about 14 out of every 100 people suffered preventable injuries in their homes or a community venue in 2020.

A home’s status as a sanctuary can make it easy to overlook various safety risks. The following are some safety hazards that can be prevented when homeowners make a concerted effort to make their homes as safe as possible.

- Scalding: Scalding injuries pose a significant threat to anyone. Data from the Consumer Product Safety Commission indicates that more than 375,000 scald burn injuries associated with various household appliances and products were treated in emergency rooms between 2013 and 2017. More than one-fifth of those injuries affected children four years old and younger. To prevent scalding injuries, make sure the temperature on your water heater is set no higher than...
120 F. The American Burn Association advises parents to avoid giving children responsibilities above their developmental ability. For example, don’t let children bathe siblings, cook, wash dishes, or use appliances like toasters or microwaves until they’re able to recognize and understand the dangers of scalding and burns.

- Trips and falls: The National Floor Safety Institute indicates that falls account for more than eight million emergency room visits each year. Seniors seem to be especially vulnerable, as the National Institute on Aging indicates 30 percent of individuals age 65 and over will sustain a fall each year, with 10 percent of those falls resulting in serious injury. These injuries are easily avoided by routinely cleaning up to ensure walking paths like hallways and staircases inside the home and exterior walkways are clear of obstructions and debris. Carpeting and throw rugs also can pose a falling/tripping hazard, so promptly address carpet that is peeling up and utilize non-slip rug pads for throw rugs and floor mats throughout the home.

- Unstable furniture injuries: The CPSC indicates that every year more than 11,000 children suffer injuries that require emergency room visits due to tip-over incidents involving home furnishings like televisions. And kids aren’t the only ones vulnerable to these injuries, as 56 percent of tip-over-related ER visits involve patients over the age of 18. Mount or anchor all flat-screen televisions in your home to reduce the risk of tip-over injuries. In addition, replace any unstable furnishings, such as wobbly dining room chairs or well-worn armchairs that are no longer stable. Such furnishings pose a significant injury risk to anyone, but especially kids who love to climb on couches and chairs.

It’s easy to overlook safety hazards around the house. But a little bit of attention can go a long way toward preventing potentially serious injuries.
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