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## Exploring Anxiety And The Different Types Of Disorders That Are Common In Todays Society, While Looking At The Most Effective Ways to Deal With Anxiety.

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EXPLORING ANXIETY AND THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF DISORDERS  
THAT ARE COMMON IN TODAY'S SOCIETY, WHILE LOOKING AT THE  
MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS TO DEAL WITH ANXIETY.

by

RaySean Pugh

B.S., Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 2017

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Master of Science

Department of Rehabilitation Administration and Services  
in the Graduate School  
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RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

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## PREFACE

This research paper will explore the impact of anxiety while examining several specific anxiety disorders that are common in today's society. According to Oxford, anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome (Stevenson & Lindberg, 2010). I will be looking at the impact of anxiety in one's life and their overall ability to maintain and cope with anxiety. The number of American's who are diagnosed with an anxiety disorder is evident that we have been in an epidemic. 40 million adults, age 18 and older have an anxiety disorder (ADAA, n.d). This paper will look at different characteristics, risk factors and influences such a family history, environment, underreported cases and medical causes that many may face or encounter when at battle with anxiety. This research paper will help readers better identify anxiety as well as understand when someone or even they may be experiencing a specific disorder and who to seek in need. Genders, age groups and environmental factors will be explored throughout this research paper. It focuses on discovering the impact of life when anxiety is present within a person's life.

In addition, this paper aims exploring the history of anxiety, while using both a qualitative and quantitative approach. The evidence supported throughout this research paper explores the overall impact of anxiety and the experiences and stories of individuals who have encountered anxiety in some form. After reviewing the factors and characteristics I would suggest that you to do your own research and stay connected to resources that are available to you. Many people in today's society are afraid to come out and speak on mental illness, how it makes us feel and perceive ourselves but, it is important to educate, communicate and support one another; especially those of minority groups, and those individuals who may have struggled or gone through tough and troubling events throughout their life that causes one constant worry

and fear. I want readers to be able to identify and differentiate between feeling anxious, having anxiety and actually being diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. More than 40 million Americans have an anxiety disorder and the number will continue to increase if we don't educate, advocate and create to ensure the information is out there.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **WHAT IS ANXIETY**

Anxiety is a condition that causes individuals to experience different levels of worry and/or fear in their everyday lives. Everyone has or will go through anxiety in their life at some point. Anxiety is a normal reaction to stress. Stress affects your entire body, physically, as well as mentally. Some common physical signs of stress include headaches, low energy, upset stomach, aches, pains, and tense muscles (NAMI). Life causes us to become nervous or worry about many things in our day-to-day life. However, according to Felman “when a person regularly feels disproportionate levels of anxiety it might become a medical disorder”. Anxiety is a problem when it becomes overwhelming or unmanageable and continues to happen unexpectedly over periods of time. An example provided by the National Alliance on Mental Health stated:

Speaking in front of a group can make us anxious, but that anxiety also motivates us to prepare and practice. Driving in heavy traffic is another common source of anxiety, but it helps keep us alert and cautious to avoid accidents. However, when feelings of intense fear and distress become overwhelming and prevent us from doing everyday activities, an anxiety disorder may be the cause (“National Alliance on Mental Illness,” n.d.).

This statement was valuable because it shows how being anxious can also cause a person to become more cautious to situations and their surroundings in a positive way. Furthermore, it also shows the thin line between having anxiety, and medically being diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. Anxiety disorder is when the experience is consistent and persistent throughout your life, causing obsessive thoughts, unrelenting worries, and causing you to avoid situations and events where you feel an intense emotion of constant fear and/or worry. However, a person

feeling anxiousness does not mean that the person has an anxiety disorder. According to the American Psychiatric Association, “Anxiety disorders are the most common of mental disorders and affect nearly 30 percent of adults at some point in their lives”. Furthermore, 25.1% of children between 13 and 18 years old are affected by anxiety disorders according to the American and Depression Association of America. Anxiety disorders often co-occur with other disorders such as depression, eating disorders, and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); that is why it is so important to take care of your mental health and be aware of your stress level, and triggers so that you can always be in control of yourself and how you feel.

Everyone does not have to deal with stress the same but there are several stress reducers that we can all engage in including relaxation practices, setting aside leisure time, connecting to others, practicing gratitude, starting a stress journal, and avoiding people and things who interrupt your peace are just to name a few ways we can deal with or manage stress and anxiety. Getting in a habit of partaking in activities that manage your stress level will help decrease your overall trigger power ability. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century we face many different obstacles than before, anxiety disorders have not always been identifiable in fact, according to an article that was found: “Anxiety Disorders were only recognized in 1980 by the American Psychiatric Association. Before this recognition people experiencing one of these disorders usually received a generic diagnosis of 'stress' or 'nerves” (Tracy, 2008). Before the 1980’s there were specific events such as slavery and war that sparked a major increase in stress and nerves diagnoses. There was not a broad spectrum or the DSM- 5 like we know of today that breaks down each different characteristic and has its own specific definition. As the world is changing and we are going through life changing experiences it is extremely important to take care of your mental health and be aware of any signs of stress. In the next chapter we will go through the different



types of anxiety disorders that are common in today's society. This next chapter will help readers gain knowledge and awareness of anxiety disorders by going through different history and current events. Readers will also be able to better identify each specific one. The disorders discussed within this paper is very few to the several disorders out there today. All disorders are important and should be taken serious if ever diagnosed or in contact with symptoms of the disorders.

## CHAPTER 2

### GOING THROUGH ANXIETY AND ANXIETY DISORDERS

The four different anxiety disorders that are commonly known that I chose to explore in this chapter, include but not limited to: generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), social anxiety, specific phobias, and post- traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). All anxiety disorders have their very own unique traits that sets them apart from one another. They share one thing in common and that is the constant excessive fear and/or worry that interferes with their everyday lives and or situations. Throughout this chapter we will go through the history and background of the four above mentioned anxiety disorders. “PTSD is a psychiatric disorder that can occur in individuals who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, a serious accident, a terrorist act, war/combat, rape, or other violent personal assault” (American Psychiatric Association, n.d.). Post-traumatic stress disorder is common throughout the world today in fact, according to the *U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*, “About 10 of every 100 women (or 10%) develop PTSD sometime in their lives compared with about 4 of every 100 men (4%) (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). Post-traumatic stress disorder is more common within women, although PTSD can occur to anyone at any time in their life. Men and women are affected from PTSD typically experiencing different situations and events but not excluded from any experience. The U.S Department of Affairs also stated “Women are more likely to experience sexual assault and child sexual abuse. Men are more likely to experience accidents, physical assault, combat, disaster, or to witness death or injury” (U.S Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). Post-traumatic stress disorder causes trauma in a person’s life but not every traumatized person develops ongoing or short-term PTSD. According to an article found, “More than half of children and adolescent will experience, or witness, traumatic events such as

violence, abuse, vehicle accidents, house fires, death and injuries (Copeland, Keeler, Angold, & Costello, 2007). A meta-analysis conducted in 2014 estimated that 16% of children and adolescents exposed to trauma will go on to develop post-traumatic stress disorder PTSD (Alistic et al., 2014). Untreated, PTSD in children and adolescents tend to have a chronic course and high comorbidity with other mental health disorder such as anxiety, depression and severe behavioral problems (Shearer, Papanikolaou, Stedman, Micknnon, Dalgleish, Smith, Dixon & Byford, 2017). Children and teens can have extreme reactions to trauma however, their symptoms may not be the same as an adult. Adults and children may have a difference within the severity and the symptoms however, if not treated it will only grow into a situation for the both. Symptoms must last more than a month and severe enough to interfere with relationships or work to be considered PTSD” (National Institute of Mental Health, n.d.). Not every person who is diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder experience the same symptoms. The course of the illness varies as well as the duration of the disorder, some people can recover within 6 months, while others have symptoms that last much longer furthermore, and within some people the condition can become chronic. “PTSD and depression are frequently comorbid with 48%-69% of individuals diagnosed with PTSD also showing clinical evidence of depression (Elhai, Grubaugh, Kashdan, & Frueh, 2008) (Barrera, Calderon, Castillo, 2017). Depression is very common within an individual with PSTD as well as all other anxiety disorders. A person may feel as though there is no hope or escape from their symptoms, leading them to contemplate suicide. More than 40,000 people commit suicide each year” (Tull, 2019). The brain is a very powerful tool that stores muscle that makes decisions for us throughout our day-to-day life. Children cognitive as well as adults’ levels are very important, you need your brain in order to function properly and make appropriate decisions.

Looking into the next specific anxiety disorder we will review generalized anxiety disorder. GAD is characterized by persistent and excessive worry about a number of different things. According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America: “GAD is diagnosed when a person finds it difficult to control worry on more days than not for at least six months and has three or more symptoms” (Anxiety and Depression Association of America, n.d.). GAD affects 6.8 million adults; women are twice as likely to be affected (ADAA, n.d.). Now that more individuals are experiencing generalized anxiety disorder and just anxiety in general, I believe that there will be more research and testing done to understand the development of anxiety in the future. I even see a difference throughout social media and conversations now, individuals are seeking out to get help or be a help. Generalized anxiety disorder is characterized by a state of worry, inability to relax, and other symptoms. Treatment is available however, you have to find what works for you. Starting out with self-care and mindfulness tip is very important and should always be someone’s first step in the process of experiencing anxiety, generalized anxiety disorder and any other anxiety disorder. That is why it is very important to start early and understand what anxiety is so you are able to figure your best coping skill when dealing with stressors and in this case anxiety. Doing things like yoga, exercising, just simply relaxing, listening to music, getting enough sleep; whatever it is that helps you relax your mind. Generalized anxiety disorder is known to be present with another type of symptom. According to *The Anxiety and Depression Association*, “Major depression is known to co-occur with generalized anxiety disorder” (ADAA, n.d.). This can be stressful and cause an individual to actively participate in more than one treatment possibility, this all depends on the severity of the generalized anxiety disorder and how well the individual is able to function. Medication/antidepressants are also a treatment possibility. It’s very important to seek a proper

diagnoses and treatment plan from a specialist. There are several different coping and support strategies that are used to help with generalized anxiety disorder I would like to mention, and those are, sticking to a treatment plan, taking action, Letting go of whatever it is that is causing one to stress, socialize and not be stuck up in the house, actually getting out and taking your mind off of other things, and facing your fears. Individuals who are living with untreated or unmanageable generalized anxiety disorder may face a significant number of effects as this disorder can affect every aspect of daily living. Common effects of living with untreated anxiety disorder include: Inability to fulfill responsibilities at home, work, or school, sleep disturbances, family and marital problems, difficulty carrying out daily activities, self-injury, loss of motivation, and suicidal thought and behaviors just to name a few (“Anxiety: Statistics, causes signs, & Symptoms,” n.d.).

The next anxiety I would like to look at is social anxiety. According to the Social Anxiety Institute, “Social anxiety is the fear of being judged and evaluated negatively by other people, leading to feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, self-consciousness, embarrassment, humiliation and depression” (Richards, 2012). Social Anxiety disorder is diagnosed based off what a person shows and explains. Richards also stated a “Diagnosis is made on the basis of presenting signs and symptoms and no objective tests are available to support clinical judgement” (Richards, 2012). This shows me how difficult it can be for clinical to diagnose symptoms accurately and appropriately. Social anxiety causes one to avoid situations, events, and people from the fear of being judged due to their own personal feelings. *The Anxiety and Depression Association of America* provided a scenario that stated, “Individuals may decline a job opportunity that requires frequent interaction with new people or avoid going out to eat with friends due to fear that their hands will shake when eating or drinking” (ADAA, n.d.).

According to *the Anxiety and Depression Association of America*:

“Many people with social anxiety disorder also experience strong physical symptoms, such as a rapid heartrate, nausea, sweating, and may experience full blown attacks when confronting a feared situation. . . Although they recognize that their fear is excessive and unreasonable, people with social anxiety disorder often feel powerless against their anxiety” (ADAA, n.d.)”.

Seeking help and practicing to overcome this disorder will be very beneficial so that it is possible to overcome the fear. Strong relationships play a very essential role when looking at social anxiety disorders. According to an article found “Recent models of social anxiety suggest that negative interpersonal relationships are linked to social anxiety through effects on social skills and behaviors” (Weymouth, Buehler 2018). This study *Early Adolescents’ Relationships with Parents, Teachers, and Peers and Increases in Social Anxiety Symptoms* examined the connections among parent-adolescent hostility, teacher support and changes in early adolescent social anxiety symptoms by youth compliance with peers (Weymouth, Buehler 2018). The Results indicated that youths who experienced greater parent adolescent hostility and lower teacher support engaged in greater compliance with peers. . . In turn those who engaged in greater compliance with peers experienced increases in social anxiety symptoms” (Weymouth, Buehler 2018). In result of this study, it shows how significant relationships with parent and teachers have important and unique implications for changes in early adolescent social anxiety symptoms. I really do believe that relationships are important especially at a young age to help avoid disorders like social anxiety. “Social anxiety disorders usually comes on at around 13 years of age. It can be linked to bullying, or teasing” (WebMD, 2019). According to the National Institute of Mental Health: Research suggests that about 7 percent of Americans are affected.

Without treatment, social anxiety disorder can last for many years or a lifetime and prevent a person from reaching their full potential” (NIMH, n.d.). This is something I think about on a daily. I want to become more socially aware, become more socially Intune with people, my environments, and the only way to do that is grow connections, get out the house and by being more aware of what is going on around me. Steering away from events, and situations, individuals will not navigate me to where I am trying to go and the people I am trying to reach within the Rehabilitation field.

The next anxiety disorder I would like to look at is specific phobias. Specific phobias can be related to anything, highways, bridges, water, and new places just to name a few. According to the *Anxiety and Depression Association of America* it stated:

“Specific phobias commonly focus on animals, insects, germs, heights, thunder, driving, public transportation, flying, dental, medical procedures and elevators” (ADAA, n.d.). It is important to not judge a person who suffers from a specific phobia disorder. These emotions they are feeling are personal and it can cause one to become frightened and feel powerless.

*The Anxiety and Depression Association of America also expressed:*

People with specific phobias, or strong irrational fear reactions, work hard to avoid common places, situations, or objects even though they know there’s no threat or danger.

The fear may not make any sense, but they feel powerless to stop it. . . People who experience these seemingly excessive and unreasonable fears in the presence of or in anticipation of a specific object, place, or situation have a specific phobia (ADAA, n.d.).

This disorder can cause disruption to daily routines, reduce self-esteem, and can cause serious problems within relationships; this is because an individual who suffers from this specific

disorder will do whatever it takes to avoid this uncomfortable, terrifying feeling of phobic anxiety. I found an article, *The Relation Between Fears and Anxiety in Children with Specific Phobia and Parental Fears and Anxiety*, within this article there was a study done to examine if anxiety and fearfulness in children with a specific phobia was linked to parental fearfulness and anxiety. Each child and parent participated in a treatment study the children completed the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children (STAIC) and the parents of each child participated and answered the adult version of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory. They answered questions pertaining to any signs or symptoms they may suffer emotionally or mentally as well as rated what extent they expressed fears in the presence of their child. “Analysis shows that there were no correlations between parental fearfulness or anxiety and fearfulness or anxiety in the children, or between parents’ expressed fears and children’s reported fears. There was however a positive correlation between mothers expressed fears and level of trait anxiety in the children” (Lieberman, Ost 2016). Being that parents and children are linked to genetics and similarities, you would think that there would be more correlation between the two however, that is not always the case. It is very important if you the parent or guardian have anxiety that you handle and treat your anxiety so that you are able to teach and see signs early within your child as well as not putting it off on the children. More than half of the children did however have at least one parent suffering from an emotional or mental disorder, 54% to be exact. “Researchers have found that fearfulness of children decreases as they grow older. . . Although the number and intensity of fears have been found to decrease with age; the number of anxiety symptoms has been found to increase” (Lieberman et al., 2016). I believe anything with time can cause healing. It shows that once a person lives with this fear for a period of time the intensity and severity of the fear will decrease. All anxiety disorders are similar in many ways. Many individuals go through the



same condition with different symptoms. The symptoms are not necessarily specific for one disorder, they can impact any disorder. Symptoms are typical for that specific disorders but are not guaranteed. They do have guidelines that pertain to certain anxiety disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder. Anxiety disorders cases are increasing throughout the years; whether it's PTSD, social, anxiety, depression, bipolar, or phobias, individuals are at risk of developing an anxiety disorder. A lot of the time alone. Research is needed to further develop data on anxiety disorders and understanding each case as they are all similar but can be very different. Information is needed to better help families and friends deal and be supportive. We have individuals who face traumatic events every day. As professional we need to be ready to help and serve all people dealing with all different types of disorders, situations, background, and family history.

Anxiety may be caused by a mental condition, a physical condition, the effects of drugs, or a combination (WebMD, 2018). The disorder can run in families and could be linked to faulty circuits in the brain that control fear and other emotions as well. Potential risk factors for developing an anxiety disorder include, genetics, brain chemistry, and environmental.

### **Genetics**

People who have first- degree relatives, such as a parent or sibling, with anxiety disorders are at higher risk for developing these disorders themselves. It's worth noting that while many people who have a genetic predisposition to the disorder, a number of people who have develop anxiety disorders do not have a family history ("Anxiety: Statistics, causes signs, & Symptoms," n.d.).

### **Brain Chemistry**

Abnormal levels of certain neurotransmitters, the chemical messengers of the brain, are

thought to play a role in the developmental of anxiety disorders. Neurotransmitters such as serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine play a role in anxiety control and low levels of these neurotransmitters may incorrectly signal that danger is near. Additionally, parts of the brain that regulate fear, memory and emotion are highly sensitive to unfamiliar or unpredictable situation, which can lead to the development of an anxiety disorder (“Anxiety: Statistics, causes signs, & Symptoms,” n.d.).

### **Environmental**

Individuals who have experienced numerous and severe stressors including traumatic events, multiple deaths of loved ones, being placed in dangerous situations, divorce, sudden illness, moves, job loss etc., are more likely to develop generalized anxiety (“Anxiety: Statistics, causes signs, & Symptoms,” n.d.).

Being more aware of your environment, knowing your family history, and paying more attention to your body and informing your physician of thing you notice will help you better get a guide of the what may be to come.

Seeking professional help is very important when dealing with any kind of disorder. Anxiety can respond well to treatment, most people who receive treatment recover well and can enjoy a good quality of life (Leonard, 2018). Anxiety rarely remits without treatment and can negatively impact all areas of life (“Anxiety: Statistics, causes signs, & Symptoms,” n.d.). Obtaining access to treatment as soon as possible will help one live out their daily life and activities. Treatment is to help the individual grow through their disorder and learn effective tools and resources to help an individual successfully live out their life. Effects of anxiety is highly treatable; professionals will recommend treatment plans that best suit the individual’s conditions and symptoms based on the specific diagnosis.

## CHAPTER 3

### CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Anxiety disorders can be treated by a wide range of mental health professionals including, psychologists, psychiatrists, clinical social workers, and psychiatric nurses (ADAA, n.d.). Effective treatment of an anxiety disorder requires that you are completely open and honest with your physician. The Anxiety and Depression Association of America stated, “Anxiety disorders are highly treatable, yet only 36.9% of those suffering receive treatment” (Anxiety and Depression Association of America). Knowing that the faster you treat anxiety disorder the more effective and easier it is for a person to go on about having a fulfilling life, and the longer you take to treat puts a person at risk of worsening the effects. Why is it that more than half of the people who suffer from an anxiety disorder actually do not seek out help? I know for myself, anxiety was never something that was taught or even really mentioned. I had absolutely no idea what anxiety was at the ages of 13, 14, 15 or even 16. I did not know that the feelings and thoughts I was experiencing then could lead to some sort of disorder now or worsen the risk effects. I just kept quiet about most of it, just thinking that was normal or what I was supposed to be feeling. I would get extremely nervous to the point where I couldn’t even concentrate, and I would fear certain situations before they even happened. I began to lose confidence. Yet, I never knew it was linked to stress and the stress later untreated turned into anxiety. I showed symptoms of anxiety early but wasn’t for sure how to go about handling how I felt. No one ever advised me to see a professional. Now that I’m in my twenties seeking out professional help is extremely important for me and my overall mental and physical health. Some of you may impose the question, when do you know when you need to seek professional help? According to Mayo clinic, you should seek a professional if, you feel like you’re worrying too much and its

interfering with your work, relationships or other parts of your life, your fear, worry or anxiety is upsetting to you and difficult to control, feeling of depression, having trouble with alcohol or drug use, or have other mental health concerns along with anxiety or having suicidal thoughts or behaviors (Mayo Clinic, n.d.). These are a few signs or symptoms to look for but not limited to when knowing when to seek a professional. There can be so many things that individual go through before actually deciding on a doctor and cost is another very important factor when seeking professional help and another barrier for individuals receiving the proper treatment they need. According to an article found, “Nearly half of U.S. college-age adults view mental-health care as unaffordable for most people, according to a 2015 survey. . . One reason: A lot of therapists don't participate with insurers” (Ferraro, Lieberman 2017). Mental health is very important and it's very unfortunate that individuals are not able to get the proper care they need due to financial needs, in fact most therapy sessions cost around \$200 or more. To receive this type of care is not inexpensive and it's going to cost you. Low-cost therapists, counselors, etc. are out there but it is not a load of them, and they may not be as experienced as higher cost therapists. Anxiety is becoming more familiarized and many people are taking up the appropriate actions to better help them cope and understand the events they may be facing. Professionals may refer you to more cost- effective options as well as encourage you to engage in certain resources within your community. Anxiety disorder are common in all age groups; as young as 6 and as old as 60 and older. No one is alone, do not be afraid to seek professional help even if you do not have a diagnosis, there are professionals out there who are ready to talk with you and help you get the proper treatment plan needed. Furthermore, there is also extreme demand paid counseling work. The field is continuing to grow at a steady pace. In addition to society getting more qualified therapist and counselors. This is extremely great for the Rehabilitation and

Counseling and Administration field as we are able to continue to create and produce qualified counselors and members. I recommend within the field to continue to consider those who are less fortunate and/or financially struggling to also be able to receive treatment without being turned away. This information is useful to the field because many individuals who we serve have anxiety disorders. The information helps advocate the severity of taking care of yourself and your mental health. It helped me by sharing my experience and spread a light on the topic overall. Anxiety is hard to handle alone so having real supporters and trusting relationships is key.

In closing, the first step is always to seek and/or speak with a health care professional. From there your specialist will consult with you about your previous health history, your health care professional will refer you to whomever you may need, counselor, psychiatrist, etc. A treatment plan and diagnosis is the first step to effective treatment. Anxiety is generally treated with psychotherapy, medication or both as well as support groups (NIMH, n.d.). A healthy lifestyle can also help combat anxiety. Make sure to get enough sleep and exercise, eat a healthy diet, and turn to family and friends who you trust for support (NIMH, n.d.). Knowing your family medical history is important as well; ask questions. It is very important as professionals and supporters to be understanding and be creative, be able to make use of one's thought and provide the best possible fit and advice for each individual separately. Anxiety starts as young as six so, getting families involved and active together is a great way to stop future cases. If we don't find sources and more helpful ways now, we are going to see an increase for the years to come. It is never too late to practice positive practice, especially kids; Teaching them to meditate, getting outside more and focusing on breathing are very useful tools to utilize for all people and will eventually make a habit as they are essentials to better health mentally and

physically. There are resources in the community, on the web. If you are dealing with any disorder that was discussed within this research paper or any disorder seek out help. You are not alone.

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