



Mind Skills: How can it contribute to a counselor's Self-Compassion?

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Abstract. Counselors are professional helpers who need to meet qualifications and competencies. There is a counselor's character that can support professional counseling services, which is "self-compassion." "Self-compassion" is a state of being open, understanding one's suffering, and not trying to avoid it. Counselors with a strong sense of "self-compassion" can be empathetic, open, understanding, and accepting themselves as they are. In addition to having a character that supports professional counseling services, counselors possess "mind-skills." "Mind skills" are internal skills that play a crucial role in conducting effective counseling activities. Mind skills can assist counselors in their attitudes, behaviors, and communication. The purpose of this research is to understand the contribution of "mind-skills" to counselors' self-character of "self-compassion." This article employs a literature review as a research method, involving the collection of literature sources, reading, and analyzing various types of literature: books, journals, dissertations, e-books, and relevant cases. The results of this research comprise a comprehensive review of the contribution of mind skills to the self-character of "self-compassion" in counselors, including 1) the "self-compassion" of counselors, 2) the mind-skills of counselors, and 3) the contribution of mind-skills to counselors' self-character of "self-compassion".

Keywords: Mind-skills, Self-Compassion, Counselor.

1 Introduction

In the 21st century, the escalating demands have driven society to pursue excellence. This era is also known as the Knowledge Age, where the focus on knowledge in every aspect of life has intensified (Yuniarti, 2023). It's no wonder that there is a surge of individuals tirelessly seeking self-improvement to achieve their life goals. However, the journey towards these achievements is often fraught with unforeseen obstacles and difficulties. While some individuals may be able to persevere and overcome these challenges independently, others require assistance and guidance from others. This is where counseling plays a crucial role. Counseling is accessible to anyone, but what sets it apart is the level of professionalism it entails. The essence of professional counseling services involves (1) assisting clients that are grounded in knowledge and technology that can be accounted for and (2) being based on specific approaches/theories. Counselors with adequate qualifications and competencies are

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the key to the success of counseling services. As Roger (1961) asserted, counselors are the primary instruments in the counseling process.

It must be acknowledged that counselors are also ordinary humans. Despite possessing good knowledge and skills, they are still susceptible to facing failures and difficulties in the practice of counseling. This condition is also relevant to research findings (Antika et al., 2022) which explain that there are times when counselors feel they have failed in the assistance process they provided, which then leads them to self-judgment. Typically, novice counselors experience anxiety, self-doubt, and fear of not meeting their expectations (Corey, 2007). This results in feelings of incompetence that give rise to consequences such as disruptions in the counseling process and a diminished sense of self-worth (Theriault, Gazzola, & Richardson, 2009). This indicates that counselors may not yet possess sufficient compassion for themselves. Feelings of failure and negative self-judgment can emerge due to the counselor's overly high expectations, their self-perception, and unrealistic counselor expectations. This suggests that counselors may not have the adequate skills to manage their thoughts, indicating that their rules, self-perceptions, and expectations do not fully support the counseling process.

The character of self-compassion is closely related to the concept of self-compassion. Self-compassion is defined as a state of being open and willing to understand one's suffering, not trying to avoid it, and having a strong commitment to alleviate it (Neff, 2003; Gilbert, 2010, 2020). The character of self-compassion is highly intertwined with self-compassion, which means showing compassion towards oneself. Neff (2003) explains that self-compassion is an individual's capacity to understand their suffering, not trying to avoid it, and having the belief that they can alleviate that suffering. Counselors should apply self-compassion during counseling sessions, such as displaying kindness, support, and appreciation (Gilbert, 2010). Based on the perspectives of Neff (2003), Gilbert (2010), and Wibowo & Naini (2021), individuals who possess the character of self-compassion exhibit several traits, including (a) having sensitivity and openness to internal suffering, (b) being understanding and not self-blaming, and (c) being able to share their stories to alleviate suffering. In the context of counseling implementation, the character of self-compassion needs to be applied by counselors, depicting an attitude of understanding, support, and appreciation (Gilbert, 2010).

A similar principle applies to "mind-skills," which guide counselors in forming flexible, adaptive, and self-pressure-free rules. "Mind skills" help counselors develop realistic expectations in line with their capabilities and potential. Referring to the earlier explanation, it becomes apparent that "mind skills" contribute to self-compassion because they empower counselors to enhance self-awareness, understanding, and self-acceptance, ultimately strengthening the character of self-compassion. Therefore, the primary goal of this article is to delve deeper into how "mind skills" contribute to counselors' self-compassion. "Mind skills" are fundamental skills that counselors need to master to deliver professional counseling services (Mulawarman & Eni Rindi, 2020).

Jones (2003, 2005) explained that mind skills consist of six components, namely creating helpful rules, creating helpful perceptions, creating helpful self-talk, creating helpful mental images, creating helpful explanations, and creating helpful expectations. Several studies have delved into these six components of mind-skills.

One study by Mulawarman & Eni Rindi (2020) affirmed that mind skills bring significant benefits in various aspects of life, helping individuals to act more positively and effectively. In this context, Husni M. (2017) also discussed one of the mind-skills components called "Creating Helpful Rules." This component allows counselors to position themselves appropriately, and avoid self-imposition during counseling sessions, thus making counseling goals easier to achieve. Research presented by Hidayah (2009, 2012) has highlighted the high urgency of mind skills in the context of the counseling process. When in a counseling setting, a counselor is often confronted with crucial decisions, both related to the client and the counselor's self. However, counselors often fail to realize their potential to control and manage every thought that arises during counseling sessions, even in challenging situations. This results in many counselors conducting counseling sessions but not achieving the desired outcomes. In this regard, mind skills play a crucial role in assisting counselors in making supportive decisions during the counseling process.

From these studies, it can be concluded that the application of mind skills in the counseling process has a significant positive impact. One of its main benefits is helping counselors avoid self-imposition during the counseling process and reducing the tendency to blame themselves when facing failure or obstacles in counseling. This leads to an enhancement of counselors' self-compassion character and a deeper connection with counseling goals in a holistic manner.

Mind skills teach counselors to constantly reconsider their actions in managing their thoughts during the counseling process. This contributes to reducing counselors' tendencies to blame themselves during counseling sessions. Mind skills also relate to perception. When positive perceptions are applied, positive impacts will be felt in an individual's life (Mulawarman, 2020). In other words, the inclination to self-blame will decrease, while the self-compassion character in counselors will be further honed. This view is supported by Jones's (2003) opinion, stating that mind skills are skills that counselors need to develop to effectively conduct the counseling process. These skills will develop optimally if counselors can harness the potential of their minds.

This research aims to understand the contribution of mind-skills to counselors' self-compassion character. The benefits of this research include benefits for science/society: (1) providing thoughtful contributions related to mind skills and self-compassion specifically, and the field of guidance and counseling in general. (2) For counselors, the research results can serve as a basis for continuous competence development, especially in the areas of mind-skills and self-compassion, as an effort to strengthen competence in professional counseling services. (3) For future researchers, it can serve as a reference for conducting research on mind-skills and self-compassion in counselors.

2 Methods

This article employs the method of literature review (library research). The literature review is a research activity involving the collection of literature sources, reading, and processing, as well as examining literature such as books, journals, dissertations, e-books, and relevant case studies related to the research topic (Mirzaqon & Purwoko, 2018). The data sources used in this article are both primary and secondary. Primary

data consists of research articles used in the preparation of this article. Secondary data includes books, journals, e-books, and so on. The literature review procedure, according to Mirzaqon & Purwoko (2018), involves (a) selecting a topic; (b) exploring information; (c) determining the focus of the study; (d) collecting data sources; (e) preparing data presentation; and (f) composing a report in the form of a conceptual review article.

3 Results and Discussion

Counselor's Self-Compassion

Self-compassion and self-compassion are two inseparable concepts (Prabawa et al., 2017). Self-compassion is a form of self-care when facing various problems and having the belief that failures, mistakes, suffering, and deficiencies within oneself are part of life (Neff, 2003a). Kirkpatrick in Salsabila & Fitri (2020) explained that self-compassion is a form of positive self-acceptance of various unexpected events. In line with this opinion, Hidayati (2015) explained that self-compassion is a condition in which individuals can endure, understand, and recognize the meaning of difficulty as something positive. It can be concluded that self-compassion is a form of self-care and acceptance of all suffering or problems occurring without passing negative judgment.

Self-compassion is essential for counselors because it serves as the foundation for providing professional and effective counseling services. Counselors with good self-compassion will be able to empathize, forgive, make peace with themselves, and accept themselves as they are. The self-compassion character within counselors is also a sensitivity to the suffering of others and a willingness to assist clients (Gilbert, 2009). Based on these descriptions, counselors need to develop self-compassion for their well-being and that of their clients. Therefore, counselors need to pay attention to the elements that exist in self-compassion. According to Neff (2003a), three essential elements shape the self-compassion character of counselors: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness.

Self-kindness is the ability of an individual to offer understanding and kindness to oneself when facing challenges, problems, and difficulties without excessive self-criticism or judgment (Neff, 2011). Self-kindness can be understood as an individual's ability to accept oneself as they are without passing negative judgments on themselves. Thus, the self-kindness possessed by counselors can help in being tolerant of weaknesses, mistakes, or failures that occur during the counseling process. Relevant to this description, self-kindness can also be applied by counselors to assist clients in complete acceptance without belittling or demeaning them (Antika et al., 2022).

Common humanity is the attitude of accepting oneself for both successes and failures, difficulties, ease, suffering, and everything experienced, considering them as events that have been experienced by most humans, not just oneself (Neff, 2003a). In line with this opinion, common humanity relates an individual's weaknesses to the condition of humanity in general, so these shortcomings are seen comprehensively, not just subjectively (Karinda, 2020). Similarly, the common humanity possessed by

counselors will help them become more grateful for themselves and avoid the counselor's tendency to commiserate with their client's problems.

Mindfulness is an effort to understand one's condition when experiencing problems, suffering, or failure without avoidance or getting immersed in it (Neff, 2003a). By this description, Antika et al. (2022) explained that mindfulness is an individual's ability to accept the situation as it is without exaggerating it so that negative thoughts can be tempered by mindfulness. Mindfulness brings individuals back to the present moment, helping them consciously make decisions, behaviors, and activities independently, thereby influencing the improvement of well-being and autonomy (Neff, 2011). Counselors who possess mindfulness skills can see the positive side of every event that happens to themselves or their clients. The mindfulness possessed by counselors will assist in the counseling process, allowing counselors to focus on problem-solving efforts for their clients.

In addition to the three crucial elements that form a counselor's self-compassion character, there are six skills closely related to a counselor's self-compassion (Gilbert, 2009; Gilbert 2014; Carona et al., 2017; Vosper et al., 2021). Further explanations of these six skills are as follows:

1. Attention skills: Counselors give attention with warmth, support, and kindness without judging the client.
2. Reasoning skills: Counselors can explain problem-solving efforts or provide specific understanding without judgment toward the client.
3. Behavior skills: Counselors focus more on helping clients solve their problems.
4. Imagery skills: The counselor's ability to help clients cultivate self-compassion based on their conditions, not the demands of others.
5. Feeling skills: The counselor's ability to empathize with others' feelings, allows the counselor to practice self-compassion and foster self-compassion in others.
6. Sensation skills: Counselor skills that help clients deeply absorb the meaning of an event together.

These six skills closely related to self-compassion character can greatly benefit counselors in the counseling process if applied effectively (Antika et al., 2022).

Counselor's Mind-Skills

The term "mind-skills," also known as "mind-competence" according to Raka Joni (2008), refers to the ability to respond contextually to situations, ultimately leading to problem-solving skills in the context of counseling. Similarly, Jones (2005) suggests that mind skills are a series of actions that professional counselors must undertake to ensure the appropriateness and effectiveness of counseling. Through this process, counselors can evaluate their actions and engage in continuous reflection on their subsequent actions. This is reflected in the knowledge or experience of how to conduct counseling stored in the counselor's mind.

Furthermore, the concept of thinking skills is equivalent to the term "metacognitive skills," which refers to the ability to think about what we are thinking (thinking about thinking). Metacognitive skills are typically described as a set of interconnected competencies in learning and thinking, including active listening, critical thinking, reflective judgment, problem-solving, and decision-making (Dawson, 2008:3). Jones

(2005) explains that mind skills are a series of actions that professional counselors must perform to ensure that counseling is conducted appropriately and effectively. Mind skills assist and guide counselors in executing each step of the counseling process and in making decisions during counseling (Azmi, 2015). This is where the application of mind skills becomes necessary. The internal process that occurs within the counselor is closely related to self-awareness, particularly in managing its cognitive aspects. This process is further known as metacognition or, in some other contexts, as mind skills (Jones, 2005).

When counselors can apply thinking skills in counseling practice, there are several benefits to be gained. These benefits include (1) awareness and understanding that they can think more deeply (super-conscious thinking) that can be continuously improved; (2) the ability to think more efficiently by thinking about the purpose of their thinking (thinking about thinking) and recognizing the mental processes that occur in each skill, enabling them to observe, measure, and manage their mind skills; and (3) training in thinking skills (mind-skills) in line with communication skills training or mastering counseling theories, ultimately allowing them to develop their counseling skills more carefully and effectively.

Jones (2005) outlines that there are six components of mind-skills that a counselor should possess. The use of these six mind-skills components is considered effective in enhancing a counselor's self-awareness, helping them become confident counselors, and enabling them to provide appropriate assistance to clients according to their roles and tasks, as stated by Sinaga (2018).

a. Creating Helpful Rules

The term "rules" refers to the norms of "can" and "cannot" in a person's life. These rules can arise from environmental influences or individual creation. Jones (2005) explains that creating helpful rules means designing rules that are realistic and based on preferences, replacing rules that are punitive or absolute. Preference-based rules are flexible and provide alternative options, while punitive or absolute rules are rigid, non-negotiable, and offer no other choices. Counselors who adopt helpful rules will have the ability to place themselves in the right role, practice counselor's basic attitudes according to standards, and avoid the pressure to force themselves during counseling, ultimately leading to the achievement of counseling goals. Several researchers have studied 'rules,' including Hastings and Brown (2000); Schreiber and Dixon (2001); Danforth et al. (2014); The Authors (2015); and Harwood et al. (2016). These studies conclude that rules formed by individuals are related to beliefs that influence emotions and play a crucial role in decision-making. Essentially, rules are created by individuals to guide their behavior.

b. Creating Helpful Perceptions

Perception refers to the extent to which someone accurately perceives and evaluates oneself, others, and situations. The concept of perception is related to proportional thinking. Creating helpful perceptions focuses on accuracy in understanding oneself compared to understanding others and how well someone can assess themselves compared to assessing others. Through the ability to create helpful perceptions, counselors can adopt various perspectives to view a problem. This trains counselors to be more careful in understanding the client's issues, preventing them from falling into premature conclusions. By creating helpful

perceptions, counselors can identify the facts presented by the client, dig deeper, and clarify the data, allowing them to draw more accurate conclusions and assist in achieving counseling goals. Aspects of 'perception' have been investigated by several researchers such as Sivberg (1998); Schellenberg (2007); and Gervais (2013). Their research findings indicate that individual perceptions have an impact on decision-making actions. Perception is also used to predict the behavior of others or the surrounding environment. Therefore, individuals need to develop positive perceptions to have a positive impact on their lives.

c. Creating Helpful Self-Talk

In counseling sessions, self-talk involves three aspects: general conversations between the counselor and the client, self-conversations of the client, and self-conversations of the counselor. Self-talk involves mental processes classified as a counselor's thinking skills (mind-skills). Self-talk needs to be focused so that counselors can manage the self-talk that occurs in their minds, ensuring that counseling remains focused and planned. In this context, instructions refer to directives that guide thinking at the beginning, middle, and end of counseling sessions. The ability to talk to oneself (self-talk) plays a specific role in focusing the counselor's thoughts, enabling them to listen accurately to what the client expresses, respond appropriately, and avoid making premature assumptions in counseling. Findings from the research by Stamou et al. (2007), Tovares (2010), and Hatzigeorgiadis et al. (2011) show that self-talk influences an individual's ability, including decision-making ability regarding an action. Self-talk serves as a guide for individual actions that ultimately can be observed through behavior or performance.

d. Creating Helpful Visual Images

When someone experiences significant feelings or sensations, they often visualize these in their mind. Counselors need to be able to depict what the client expresses visually so that they can better understand the client's thought process. This ability to create helpful visual images can be either positive or negative, and counselors need to address irrelevant negative imagery. The skill of creating helpful visual images enables counselors to gain a deeper understanding and develop empathy. Through useful visual images, counselors are directed to remove irrelevant negative imagery, thus not disrupting the flow of the counseling process. Studies by Domke, Perlmutter, and Spratt (2002); Chapman et al. (2013); and Bailey and Harken (2014) confirm that visual images play a significant role in assisting individuals in their activities. Information in the form of text and visualized images helps enhance an individual's thinking abilities. Visual images also impact self-awareness, empathy, and more complex thinking abilities.

e. Creating Helpful Explanations

Explanations are the reasons individuals give to themselves for various events. These explanations can influence one's perspective on the past, present, and future and affect their feelings, physical reactions, and actions. Mind-skills explore the counselor's ability to create helpful explanations, including for situations faced by the client. In the counseling process, explanations formed by the counselor are not only theoretical but also based on constructive considerations. Through the ability to create useful explanations, counselors are expected to diagnose the client's problems accurately. This enables counselors to help clients find suitable solutions

and achieve counseling goals. Research by Stueber (2012) and Ouzilou (2014) shows that the structure of explanations in an individual's cognition includes a detailed analysis of the reasons. Explanations also encompass actions and skills. Therefore, providing explanations about actions results in accountability.

f. Creating Helpful Expectations

Humans predict the future to influence and control it. Therefore, expectations regarding consequences play a crucial role in communication and behavior. Creating helpful expectations means establishing realistic expectations about one's ability to cope with challenging situations and difficult people. Using mind skills, counselors are directed to create concrete and specific expectations for the short, medium, and long term. Research by Meyer and Sanklecha (2014); Deegan et al. (2015); and Kline (2015) highlights the importance of expectations in life planning and individual goal achievement.

In conclusion, mind skills are an individual's ability to manage the thinking process, leading to accurate and directed thinking. Counselors with strong mind skills can regulate and manage thinking strategies when facing specific situations. The integration of the six components of mind skills into the counseling process is reflected in external behavioral skills. This ability is evident in verbal, vocal, and body language actions.

Contributions of Mind Skills to Self-Compassion

In the counseling process, significant elements include the counselor (including their competence and skills), the client (which encompasses expectations, cognitive understanding, and emotional expression), the therapeutic relationship, and the supportive counseling environment (Mulawarman et al., 2019). Rogers (1957) further emphasizes that a central element in the counseling process is the counselor's character. Counselors are expected to possess basic attitudes that help foster a good therapeutic relationship, including warmth, empathic understanding, genuineness, and positive unconditional regard. These basic attitudes are closely related to how counselors can achieve inner harmony. The inner peace within the counselor eventually leads to the ability to develop self-compassion.

An alternative solution for counselors facing challenges in conducting peaceful counseling is to apply the concept of positive mind-skills. Positive mind skills assist counselors in thinking more clearly, staying focused, and adapting to the situation. These skills promote an understanding of one's potential and qualities while motivating efforts for self-improvement. Thus, the issues frequently encountered by counselors can be resolved wisely.

The concept of self-compassion is related to the skill of thinking (mind-skills). Jones (2005) defines mind skills as a series of actions that must be taken by professional counselors to conduct counseling effectively and accurately. Joni (2008) complements this view with the term mind-competence, which refers to the ability to respond appropriately in specific contexts and leads to problem-solving. This idea reinforces Jones' (2005) concept that mind-skills play a role in monitoring and reflecting on thinking.

Furthermore, Dawson (2008) equates mind skills with metacognitive skills, which refer to the ability to think about what one is thinking (thinking about thinking). Mind skills guide counselors through the steps of the counseling process and aid in

decision-making (Azmi, 2015). This is where the importance of applying mind-skills lies. This internal mental process is related to self-awareness development, particularly in managing cognitive aspects. This process is known as metacognition or mind-skills (Jones, 2005).

Applying helpful rules has significant implications for the counselor's role. It provides counselors with the ability to position themselves effectively in various situations. Furthermore, this concept contributes to cultivating self-compassion, specifically by nurturing self-kindness. By having helpful rules, counselors can position themselves more effectively, avoid excessive self-pressure during counseling sessions, and ultimately assist in achieving counseling goals more easily.

The development of positive perception plays a significant role in nurturing the character of self-compassion in counselors. It involves the ability to observe oneself and others without harsh judgment (self-judgment) while allowing for deeper understanding. High-quality perceptions guide counselors in avoiding judgment traps that may disrupt the counseling process. Moreover, this ability also contributes to the skill of feeling because it allows one to show empathy towards others and oneself, culminating in empathic understanding. Additionally, it enhances sensation, enabling counselors to have empathic self-awareness and an accurate understanding of their feelings, ultimately leading to a profound comprehension of the client's condition, including their emotions.

a. Guiding Thoughts with Supportive Self-Talk

Direct self-talk plays an essential role in guiding a counselor's thoughts during counseling sessions. It helps counselors focus on relevant matters and supports balanced thinking. In the context of self-compassion, this skill contributes to the skill of attention, which assists counselors in staying focused and avoiding distractions during the counseling process. Furthermore, self-talk also promotes balanced thinking from various perspectives, enabling counselors to make wise decisions.

b. Using Visual Imagery to Cultivate Empathy

Visual imagery assists counselors in viewing situations through a positive lens, facilitating deeper empathy development. It plays a role in creating an environment conducive to positive feelings and behaviors for counselors. The skill of imagery also contributes to building self-compassion that aligns with one's true self. This means that counselors have a realistic and ideal self-image that is not dependent on external judgments.

c. Promoting Empathy-Supportive Explanations

Directed and constructive explanations are essential elements in fostering empathic engagement with clients. These explanations play a role in the skill of reasoning and encourage counselors to become reflective practitioners. Through reflection, counselors can evaluate their actions, identify strengths and weaknesses, and plan for improvement in their future practice.

d. Building Realistic Expectations

The ability to create realistic expectations has a positive impact on a counselor's self-compassion. It helps counselors refrain from self-blame or adopting negative thought patterns. Developing positive and proactive expectations contributes to the growth of a counselor's self-compassionate character. Behavior-focused self-compassion skills enable counselors to actively

direct their attention toward efforts to alleviate suffering and stimulate positive development. This implies that counselors can avoid getting trapped in existing issues and remain focused on enhancing their potential to overcome obstacles. This approach closely relates to coping strategies within mind-skills. As previously explained, mind-skills encompass both positive and negative dimensions, including supportive and unsupportive thoughts. Therefore, the primary challenge for counselors in counseling is how they can manage unhelpful thoughts, replace them with supportive thoughts, and thus, effectively guide their steps toward achieving counseling goals

In the context of nurturing self-compassion potential, mind-skills play a central role in shaping a counselor's character. These thinking skills help counselors manage their thoughts healthily, stimulate empathy, and enhance their relationships with clients as well as personal development as a whole. Through the contribution of mind skills to self-compassion, counselors are encouraged to love themselves with compassion, which serves as the foundation for providing counseling services filled with love and empathy.

Both mind-skills and self-compassion together shape the counselor's character. Through mind-skills, counselors are guided in conducting counseling with love and concern. Self-compassion complements this by directing counselors to love themselves with all their strengths and weaknesses, enabling them to provide counseling services filled with compassion and support for the positive development of their clients. Based on these descriptions, there is a clear contribution of thinking skills (mind-skills) to the counselor's character of self-compassion.

4 Conclusion

Based on the objectives and findings of this research, it has been established that there is a significant contribution of mind skills to the development of self-compassion within counselors. Three essential elements shape the character of self-compassion in counselors: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. Additionally, there are six closely related skills associated with a counselor's self-compassion, including attention, reasoning, behavior, imagery, feeling, and sensation. Mind skills consist of six components aimed at enhancing counselors' self-awareness: creating helpful rules, fostering helpful perceptions, guiding supportive self-talk, creating helpful visual imagery, providing helpful explanations, and establishing helpful expectations. These three elements, six self-compassion skills, and six mind-skill components are interrelated, allowing for the contribution of mind skills to the development of self-compassion within counselors.

With the contribution of mind-skills, counselors are encouraged to embrace self-love. The state of inner peace within counselors eventually leads to the ability to cultivate self-compassion, which serves as the foundation for delivering counseling services filled with love and empathy. Therefore, it can be observed that there is a significant contribution of thinking skills (mind-skills) to the development of self-compassion within counselors.

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