

## Welcome to your March newsletter

Welcome to the March newsletter. We were delighted to be visited by Sarah Jennings, Deputy Director Adoption, Family Justice and children's rights, from the Department for Education, last month.

To start her visit, [Sarah met local 11 year old, Lillybelle](#), who has written a book about being adopted, called [In My Own Words](#). Sarah was presented with Lillybelle's book to celebrate and reflect on the voice of a child in their adoption journey.



Sarah talked with the Adopt South West managers about systems and challenges, early permanence and court delays and resources, amongst many other things. She said she was really pleased with all the work that our teams have done in getting it right for children.

We spoke about how we feel really proud of all our adopters, and we talked about the strength of hearing children and young people's voices. And ultimately, how we are really proud of the children; they're all little stars!

As ever we hope you find the information within this newsletter useful and please let us know any thoughts you have on how we can make it better for you. We'd love to hear from you, formally or informally. Please [contact us if you have any comments](#). Remember you can also stay up to date by regularly checking the [events page on our website](#) and [follow us on Facebook](#).

Take care, Mark Berry, Operations Manager Adoption Support and the Adopt South West Co-Production Group

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## Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) online workshop

You are invited to join our free online workshop for parents and carers

- **Monday 15 May, 10:30am to 1pm**
- [Book by registering using this Eventbrite link](#)
- Ticket availability is limited, please book as soon as you can!

Dr Cassie Jackson is presenting a workshop for adopted parents and carers of children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) or suspected FASD, to learn more about the diagnosis and the support that helps affected children, including issues relating to health, therapies and education.



Dr Cassie Jackson is a clinical psychologist and worked in neurodevelopmental NHS services for 16 years prior to setting up in private practice. Her main areas of expertise are paediatric neuropsychology, neurodevelopment, and child protection. Cassie has worked in the assessment and diagnosis of FASD for over ten years, and provides training for NHS services, social care teams, school and children's homes to increase understanding and awareness, and to help professionals to better support children with this diagnosis. Cassie is a member of the UK Experts Committee for FASD.

## Cost of living crisis: Adoption UK analysis

Adoption UK ran a series of short surveys during November 2022 to assess the impact of the current cost-of-living crisis on adopted people, adoptive families, and prospective adopters. [Analysis of the data from across the three surveys revealed](#) that the current economic and financial situation is having an impact on adopters and adopted people.

You can refer to our Adopt South West [signposting for financial resources and support](#) available to you. And please don't hesitate to [get in touch with us for support and advice](#).

## Have your say on adoption support: proposed regulation changes

Please [complete this very quick survey](#) on adoption support providers and Ofsted regulations, from the Department of Education (DfE). More information can be found on the [DfE web pages](#). This consultation closes at 11:45pm on Monday 20 March 2023.



## SEND and Alternative Provision - changes ahead

**Hot off the press!**

It's good news and encouraging change ahead as the Government roadmap is published for national reform to support special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision. [See the summary and how to get involved in Devon's SEND improvements](#).

## Spotlight on masking

## Is your child exploding after school?

When children return home from school their 'lid may fly off', or they may freeze, due to having had to mimic or hide how they really feel inside.

An experienced professional should spot these signs in school but do you know what to look out for? **When "I am fine" means "I have just learnt to blend in to survive"** is

a great visual resource from Beacon House on masking. [Read the article on masking in full on our website.](#)



Source: provided by FASD Hub South West

## Spotlight on continence

### Does your child have an Individual Healthcare Plan in school?

ERIC, the bowel and bladder charity, advise that a care plan is completed for all learners who have continence difficulties that affect their school day. [Find further information about ERIC and a link to the plan on our website.](#)

Source: provided by FASD Hub South West

## Spotlight on sleep

It's difficult if you are faced with lack of sleep every night and it's not at all uncommon in our community. In this lovely [article by a parent to nine-year-old Bertie](#), Mum explains how she worked slowly to get her son to sleep in his own bed, at a pace that was right for him.

[Cerebra recently produced some excellent resources](#) which helps unpick why children with separation anxiety and complex needs struggle to sleep. They also offer a [sleep advice service and free resources](#).

Try an [online sleep seminars, from Cerebra](#), to give you the knowledge, skills and confidence to deal with sleep issues so the whole family can get a good night's sleep.

Source: provided by FASD Hub South West

## Enough tomatoes?

Article written by a parent.

### Does your child only eat certain foods?

"Both my sons will only eat certain foods, this is called a restrictive diet, and one of those 'safe' foods is tomatoes. Having a restrictive diet and bulk-buying food at the moment can be an issue, as there is currently a restriction on buying certain fruits and vegetables in the supermarkets due to global shortages."

[Find out how our parent shows a special card](#) when paying for food in quantity at a supermarket or when ordering at a restaurant.

Source: Co-Production Group



## Childhood trauma and the brain

This resource from the [UK Trauma Council](#) is designed to help carers and professionals understand the latest neuroscience research on childhood abuse and neglect, with insights and advice from clinicians, teachers, and social workers. The explainer videos and short articles give an informative introduction.



Source: Co-Production Group

## Free online session with TouchBase South West Hub

[Louise Michelle Bombèr](#), certified Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy Practitioner and founder of TouchBase, invites you to join a session on trauma recovery, to give you an insight into the impact of adverse childhood experiences and what may be beneficial to support children who have experienced them.



- [Free online information session with TouchBase South West](#)
- **Thursday 27 April at 1:30pm to 2:30pm.**

TouchBase is launching a south-west Attachment Aware and Trauma Responsive Hub to help bring this community together.

## Free online webinar on exam stress

Aimed at Year 11, 12 and 13 students, this [one-hour workshop](#) offers tips and advice for students on looking after themselves during the exam period and the importance of self care.

- **Friday 17 and 31 March: 9.30am to 10.30am**
- **Monday 27 March: 2pm to 3pm**

Hosted by Spark UK. For more information and to book a place head to: [www.sparkuk.co.uk/examstress](http://www.sparkuk.co.uk/examstress)

## Brain in Hand – digital support for autistic young people living in Devon aged 16 to 25 years

Free support available for young people aged 16 to 25 years old who are currently awaiting autism diagnosis or think they maybe autistic. Applicants must reside in Devon and have a smart phone.

Limited places! [Find out more and apply through Brain in Hand \(Devon Partnership NHS Trust\).](#)

## The Way We Talk: Young Devon free online family sessions

Discover what your young person needs to better understand you, and to feel understood. These [friendly and interactive two-hour online workshop sessions](#) explore how to support 11-25 year olds with their communication needs. (These sessions are only available to those living the Devon County Council area).

To book a session call [08082 810155](tel:08082810155) or email: [info@youngdevon.org](mailto:info@youngdevon.org)

Source: information supplied by a young carer of an adopted sibling

## Maintaining significant relationships for children

Members of the Adopted Persons Reference Group have taken part in some of the research being undertaken by the University of East Anglia looking into the significance of maintaining relationships for adopted people. [The paper, which was published in October 2022](#), shares some valuable insights into the need for support for the prioritisation of birth family relationships and will help to inform the work we progress this year.

## Government responds to JCHR call for adoption apology

The Government has provided its response to the Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR) report, [The Violation of Family Life: Adoption of Children of Unmarried Women 1949–1976](#).

In the report, published in July 2022, the Joint Committee called on the Government to issue a [formal apology to unmarried mothers who had their babies taken for adoption in the late 1940s, 50s, 60s and 70s](#).

## Improving Adoption Services for Adults project: a time for change

The Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) leaders are pleased to announce the start of an Improving Adoption Services for Adults project, in partnership with the University of East Anglia and PAC-UK, funded by the Department for Education for 18 months.

This project has been set up to identify and urgently address barriers to tracing and support services which adults affected by adoption have increasingly encountered since the implementation of the *Adoption and Children Act 2002* in 2005. The team will collaborate with experts who have professional experience, alongside adults with lived experience of the impact of an adoption order on their family.

The Project Team will work under the auspices of University of East Anglia Consulting and includes Professor Beth Neil (Academic Lead), Dr Julia Feast OBE (Project Manager) and Dr Mary Beek (Research Consultant). [Please contact Dr Julia Feast OBE for more information](#).

## What's on...

We update our [upcoming events on our website regularly](#), so take a look at the page anytime. Our main [support activities](#) webpage has everything, and we've categorised the event web pages into:

- [School holiday events](#)
- [Education psychology clinics](#)
- [Graduate/support groups](#)
- [Life story sessions](#)
- [Parent-led groups](#)
- [Shaping adoption forums and webinars](#)
- [Therapeutic parenting](#)
- [Wellness courses](#)



Below is a detailed reminder of our upcoming events.

To book onto any of the events listed please email:

[adoptsouthwestsupport@devon.gov.uk](mailto:adoptsouthwestsupport@devon.gov.uk)

## Easter holiday events

# Easter holiday events



## Easter Egg Hunt (Devon)

Emily Parker and Vanessa Dove from Adopt South West invite you to join them on an Easter Egg Hunt and Easter Walk in Plymouth.

**“We will be meeting at 10:30am at the duck pond (look out for us wearing bunny ears!) and then we will be following the Easter egg trail within the gardens”**

- [Easter Egg Hunt and Easter Walk](#)
- **Tuesday 4 April at 10:30am**

School holiday events can be found on our website under [Support activities](#) > [School holiday and after school events](#)



## Families at the Farm Day (Devon)

### Spring Families at the Farm day, with organicARTS

Kevin and Jo from [organicARTS](#) have been running very popular family farm days for the last few years.

The spring session is a day with a mix of farm exploring, creativity and play and is located on a farm. They are suitable for a wide age range. Most children who come are between three and 12 years old.

- [Families at the Farm day](#)
- **Tuesday 4 April at 10:30am to 12:30pm** exploring, creating, playing. **12:30pm to 2:30pm** bring a picnic and play in the community garden.



- The DIY Cafe will be open for hot and cold drinks. Please bring a cup. Donations welcome and dress for the outside! Suggested donation £5 per family

School holiday events can be found on our website under [support activities](#) > [School holiday events](#).

## Easter Family Walk and Picnic (Somerset)

Parents and children of any age are invited to a family walk with Hilary from Adopt South West.

**“Meet for an Easter family walk at 11.30am for a walk and then a picnic, weather permitting. We can do a bunny trail with prizes! This will be a circular walk of around an hour and then time to play, and go to the café, if families want. Plenty of parking. Hilary will be present along with another Adopt South West worker. Wear wellies as there could be paddling in the river!”**



- [Castle walk and picnic](#)
- **Tuesday 4 April** meet at **11:30am**

School holiday events can be found on our website under [Support activities](#) > [School holiday and after school events](#)

## Easter Forest Walk (Devon)

Joanne from Adopt South West would love you to join her for an Easter Walk through the forest.

**Jo will meet you at 10am and will be wearing bunny ears and carrying some Easter treats for the walk! If you would like to come, please could you book a place so that Jo knows how many Easter treats are needed!**



- [Easter Forest walk](#)
- **Wednesday 5 April** at **10am to 1pm**

Please make sure you wear weather appropriate clothing and if it's raining, bring some wellies so we can all stomp through the puddles as we walk.

School holiday events can be found on our website under [Support activities](#) > [School holiday and after school events](#)

## Torquay Nature Hunt and walking get together (Devon)

Parents and children are invited to a walking get together with Rebecca and Frankie from Adopt South West:

**"Our plan is to go on a short walk and do a nature hunt along the way, collecting things to use to make something if you wish. The route is buggy and wheelchair friendly. We will supply materials so you can have a go at rock painting and making nature wands, using things gathered on our nature hunt."**



Rebecca will be wearing a yellow jacket and will be in the outdoor seating area on the right hand side of the café as you face it. Please bring your lunch and a snack if you wish.

- [Walking Get Together](#)
- **Wednesday 12 April at 10:15am to 12:30pm**
- Meet outside the café at 10:15am and end up back at the café after the walk where we can have a snack and a drink or find a spot to eat our sandwiches. Dress for the weather!

Walking groups can be found on our website [Support activities](#) > [School holiday and after school events](#)

## Outdoors Activity Centre Easter Event (Somerset)

Kim and Maria from Adopt South West invite young adopted people aged 13 and over to the [Outdoors Activity Centre](#), for an Easter holiday event.



**Young people can take part in all sorts of activities, while parents mingle. As well as rope swings, hammocks and a slack line there will be Easter-themed opportunities as well as making wood-fired pizza, crafting and clay activities, woodland trails, soft archery, den building and even an Easter Egg hunt!**

- [Outdoors Activity Centre](#)
- **Tuesday 11 April at 12pm (midday) to 2pm**
- There will be a subsidised cost of £5 per young person. We are limited to a maximum number of 15 young people attending.

Holiday events can be found on our website under [support activities](#) > [School holiday and after school events](#).

## Parents walking group - Wednesday 5 April (Somerset)

Join us for a walk and picnic. Bring your children and meet other adoptive parents, develop peer support and get to know Adopt South West. It's a buggy-friendly walk of about 45 minutes and there will be plenty of time to stop for a picnic. Don't forget to bring your own blankets and picnics, and please dress for the weather.



- [Somerset walking group](#) - bring your children for an Easter holiday walk!
- **Wednesday 5 April at 11:30am to 1:30pm**

Future date of the walking groups can be found on our website under [Support activities](#) > [Wellness](#).



# New! Mindfulness course



## New! Mindfulness for adopters - online evening course

This Mindfulness training course is informed by Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), which is designed to help with low mood, anxiety and stress related conditions. Aimed at adoptive parents, it is an opportunity for individual participants to learn new ways of managing daily life, within in a supportive group of other adoptive parents.

**Please note:** This course can be accessed by all adopters who already have a child placed with them and have a right to access the Adoption Support Fund.

- [Mindfulness for adopters – online evening course – eight weeks](#)
- There are eight sessions on Thursday evenings
- **7pm to 9:15pm** starting **Thursday 20 April to Thursday 22 June 2023**
- Complete beginners and experienced meditators are all welcome. The course facilitator is [Ollie Frame](#)

Wellness and mindfulness courses can be found on our website under [support activities](#) > [Wellness](#).

# Life story sessions



## Life story sessions

New dates added for 2023. These online, one-to-one sessions with a member of the Adopt South West team, are for adoptive parents. Virtual sessions are for **one hour** at 10am, 11am or midday:

- [Tuesday 6 April 2023](#) at 10am or 11am or midday
- [Tuesday 25 April 2023](#) at 10am or 11am or midday
- [Thursday 18 May 2023](#) at 10am or 11am or midday
- [Tuesday 6 June 2023](#) at 10am or 11am or midday

More information about life story sessions can be found on our website under [support activities](#) > [Life story sessions](#).

## Education psychology clinics - Devon



### Education psychology clinics

- [Education psychology clinics 2023 - Exeter/Mid/East Devon area](#) - slots between 9:30am and 12:30pm on Tuesdays
- [Education psychology clinics 2023 - North Devon area](#) - slots between 10am and 1pm on Fridays
- [Education psychology clinics 2023 - South/West Devon area](#) - slots between 10am and 1pm on Thursdays

Appointments are for families with children attending Devon schools.

More dates can be found on our website under [Support activities](#) > [Education psychology clinics](#).

## Root and Rise groups for 13 to 19 year olds: Apricot Centre

- [Root and Rise – supporting young people moving towards independence](#)
- **Group 2 starting Wednesday 10 May, 4pm to 7pm**

[Meet the team and find out more in the Root and Rise PDF brochure.](#)

School holiday events can be found on our website under [support activities](#) > [School holiday events](#).



## Support groups



### Monthly Friday drop-in support group – Somerset (Shepton Mallet)

Join our drop-in coffee morning/support group in the Mendip area. It is open to all adopters to meet with other adoptive parents and make new friends. It's a chance to celebrate, rant and relax with like-minded people. Come and let off some steam!

Maria Osborne, Social Worker, and Hilary Harris, our Family Support Practitioner and adoptive parent herself, will be on hand to welcome people. We will also be offering the opportunity to chat with professionals who are involved with supporting families.

Held on the third Friday of the month. There will be guest speakers some months.

- [Drop-in support group](#) (excluding school holidays) from **10am to 12pm** in person
- **Friday 17 March**
- **Friday 21 April** (with guest speaker, Claire Eastwood from Somerset Virtual School for Previously Looked After Children)

Find future dates on our website under [support activities](#) > [Parent-led groups](#).

### Monthly Friday drop-in support group – Martock (Somerset)

Join our drop-in support group on the first Friday of the month. It is open to all adopters to meet with other adoptive parents and make new friends, just like the event mentioned above.

Hilary Harris, our Family Support Practitioner and adoptive parent herself, will be on hand to welcome people.

- [Drop-in support group](#) (excluding school holidays) from **10am to 12pm** in person
- **Friday 5 May** (with Guest Speaker Claire from the Virtual School)

Find future dates on our website under [support activities](#) > [Parent-led groups](#).

## Parents' virtual support group

### [Join this supportive, friendly group: monthly on a Tuesday](#)

Meeting monthly, our online evening support group for parents is facilitated by Bay Deane, a psychotherapist and adoptive parent. Each week we share a discussion on a topic chosen by the group members, such as controlling behaviour, Poly Vagal Theory or an exploration of how to talk about adoption, led by an adopted adult.

Our focus in the group is on supporting each other in an open, non-judgmental way, knowing we are all on this exciting and sometimes turbulent roller coaster of adoption parenting.

- [Parents virtual support group](#)
- **Tuesdays on 21 March at 7:30pm to 9pm**
- online

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## Local parent-led support groups

### [Parent-led group - stay and play, brew and chat: Exeter](#)

This friendly a group is run by adopters, for adopters and it's open to adoptive parents who don't usually attend groups. It's a chance to chat to other adopters who get it! Come along with or without children, there is an inside play area and outdoor space.

- [Devon parent-led group - stay and play, brew and chat: Exeter \(](#)
- **Fridays during term time, 10am to midday**
- next group **Friday 21 April**
- in person

### [Adopters support group: Plympton, monthly on a Monday](#)

The parent-led support group in Plympton, Plymouth offers a warm welcome and a cuppa, it's a face-to-face group for adopters to have a friendly chat and share ideas.

- [Adopter support group: Plymouth](#)
- Next group **Monday 27 March** then **Monday 24 April**
- **midday to 2pm**
- in person

More parent-led groups can be found on our website under [Support activities](#) > [parent-led groups](#).

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### [Support group: Torbay, monthly on a Tuesday](#)

A safe place to connect, share ideas and pray together with a group of foster and adoptive parents; children are welcome too.



- [Meeting on the second Tuesday of the month for a coffee morning at a church in Torquay](#)

More parent-led groups can be found on our website under [Support activities](#) > [parent-led groups](#).

## Support Group: FASD Hub South West

[FASD Hub South West is a parent-led support group](#) for adopted, birth, foster and kinship carers of children, young people, and adults with or without a diagnosis of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) across the South West of England.

'What is FASD?' - find the latest research and the full story on [the FASD Hub South West website](#).

If you, a family member, friend or school have questions or would like access to:

- FASD-focused resources for home and school
- information of forthcoming events and guest speakers
- access to Facebook groups
- friendship
- discreet 1:1 support

please email FASD South West: [fasd.southwest@gmail.com](mailto:fasd.southwest@gmail.com), follow the [Facebook page](#) or take a look at the resources at [fasdsouthwest.org](http://fasdsouthwest.org)

### Ask the Expert event feedback:

Thank you to all those who came along to the February evening event, which was hosted by FASD Hub South West and guest speaker Dr Raja Mukherjee Consultant Neuro Developmental Psychiatrist and Clinical lead for FASD. It was overwhelming how many of us attended; there were over 70 parents!

Parents gave us their feedback:

**"With very little or no support in the medical and education world, we need people like Raj to give us the confidence to 'take on the system' and advocate for our children. The FASD South West group and these sessions are so empowering and provide such support. It makes me feel that at least someone has our back."**

**"I like listening to Raj because he gives a consistent message during all his sessions and provides excellent guidance for us as parents. I have followed his advice, and it truly works for our son. We continue to see him grow from strength to strength, despite his FASD weaknesses:**

- **drip, drip, drip**
- **build on his strengths**
- **scaffold his weaknesses**
- **educate him about his specific difficulties and build his confidence to ask for help and support**
- **educate his teachers, the professionals around him, and the wider community"**

Thank you again for your support. [FASD Hub South West](#)



## Reviews and recommendations from adoptive parents: ITV's Unforgotten series five could be triggering

### Be aware

Please be aware that the recent episodes of ITV's 'Unforgotten' series five, broadcast each week on Monday evening and the full series streaming now on ITVX catch up, is very trauma triggering.



There are references to Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), rape, birth family and failings in the care system. It is a well-researched drama, however, the content could be misinterpreted and have a profound impact on a child, young person, or adult with FASD.

Source: provided by FASD Hub South West

## Book review by Edward, age eight

### You Choose... (series) by Pippa Goodhart

There are three books to choose from:

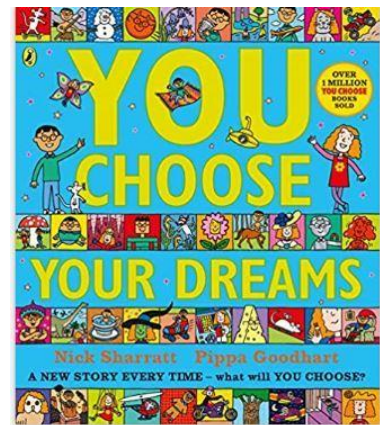
- [You choose your dream](#)
- [You choose in space](#)
- [You choose fairytales](#)

"This book really helps me when I cant get to sleep, I talk to my bunny about which page we would like to dream about tonight and then we start thinking about the page".

"Last night I was worried and it made the worry go away. Me and bunny dreamt about going on an adventure, it was really funny."

### More reviews from children welcome!

Is your child or young person an avid reader, or could they share their enthusiasm by giving us a review? Just a few words and we'd love to share the review in the newsletter. Send it to [adoptsouthwestsupport@devon.gov.uk](mailto:adoptsouthwestsupport@devon.gov.uk)



## Eden Project local membership opens soon

The Eden Project's year-round [Locals' Passes will be available to purchase from Saturday 1 April.](#)

Don't forget that every Locals' Pass holder will also need to pre-book a free timed entry slot.



## Free Devon short breaks and activities from Dream-a-way

This lovely little charity has made one of our families in Devon very happy as they have just agreed to fund a family short break away for them. They provide grants towards holidays and arrange fun days out for Devon families. If your area has a similar scheme please let us know so we can publish the link here.

For more details of the Devon scheme: <https://dream-a-way.org/>

Source: Co-Production Group

## Send us your review!

We'd love you to share a review! It could be a somewhere you've been, a book, a podcast, a film, a boxset or TV programme or perhaps you've come across a sensory gadget or a piece of inspirational music... [please email us](#) to let us know and we can include it in the newsletter.

In addition to our [suggested reading list](#), don't forget we have a number of resources including books suitable for parents, children and teenagers that we can loan to you. If you have a particular book in mind or would like us to email you the list of books we have, [please email us](#). We can also recommend guides and websites.

If you have any helpful tips, links or videos please share them with us on our social media channels: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). You can also find links at the bottom of our [website homepage](#).

## Adopt South West Letterbox service

The [Letterbox service](#) allows information to be exchanged between a child's adoptive family and members of their birth family. The telephone line ([0345 155 1076](#) select option 3) is open on a Tuesday and Thursday 9am to 1pm.

## Financial guidance and news

Find out what you are entitled to in our [resources and funding website page](#). (Because these resources do change, it is best to check directly with source for up-to-date information or contact us.)

## Please contact us - out of hours support

If you feel you need support, don't hesitate to contact us by emailing [adoptsouthwestsupport@devon.gov.uk](mailto:adoptsouthwestsupport@devon.gov.uk) or by calling [0345 155 1076](#) from 9am to 1pm, Monday to Friday.

If you need urgent support and it is out of hours, you will need to contact the local council out of hours/emergency duty team for the area you live in. The numbers are:

- Devon: 0345 600 0388
- Plymouth: 01752 346984
- Torbay: 0300 456 4876
- Somerset: 0300 123 23 27

### Adopt South West

County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, Devon EX2 4QD  
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