Introduction to Chiropractic and Brain Health

What's really beautiful, though, I think is chiropractic's ability to redirect the leaves. Yes. Or the, like I know I don't want to say well either, but like when you feel that child's potential and you say, well, let's reconnect you to the source.

Let's re-connect you that life energy that's running, that has intelligence, you know, is smarter than you and me and see what happens. And you see the child blossom or, maybe their parents say like, wow, they really have been behaving.

It's just beautiful to see what can happen when that brain is reconnected to. Everything is connected and I'm here to tell you how. I am Dr. Laura Hanson with Connect My Brain.

This podcast is for moms who are concerned about their child's development. The brain impacts our mind, body, and overall health. I explain how your brain is wired, what happens when it's out of balance, and how early childhood development not only impacts your child but can affect you as an adult years later.

Want to know how to improve your life? Join me and learn about your amazing brain and what it can do for you. Hi, everybody. Welcome to Connect My Brain, Connect my Child's Brain.

We are so glad that you are joining in. And I love having guests on my podcast because it just offers more perspective to my audience. I have a very special guest tonight, and we're going to talk chiropractic.

So Dr. Tracy Norman, thank you so much for joining us today. Thank you for having me, Dr Laura. I'm happy to be here. Excited. So before we dive in, dr Tracy's been on hold for a very long time regarding a reservation.

And if she gets pulled away, she's just going to give me a little signal that says, I'll be right back. Don't you worry. We'll just step in and keep carrying us wherever we are in the conversation.

Dr. Tracy, tell us first. Tell us who you are, how you got into chiropractic, and what do you want to share with the audience today? Thank you, thank you.

So I am Dr Tracy Norman. I'm a wife, a mom, prenatal pediatric family chirapractor, but I myself was a chiropathic kid. It was repeatedly sick, asthmatic, respiratory infection sort of.

baby and child until my parents discovered chiropractic when I was two. And they knew nothing about chirapratic. I kind of came from more of a medical family.

They had me, you know, going to the repeated pediatricians and emergency rooms and on all the pumps and inhalers, nothing was helping.

Dr. Tracy Norman's Chiropractic Journey

One of my mom's friends said, You should try chireprastic. She said I'd never even heard of that. What is it? So she drove an hour and a half to a chiropractor's office and listened to this simple talk about the brain and the nervous system and how if there's interference, or what we as chiopractors call subluxation, it can interfere with the way the body is designed to function and heal.

And it made sense. And she said, nothing else is working. We've got to at least give it a try. After the first night, my very first adjustment, I slept through the night.

Which was a miracle. I'd never in my two years slept, through a night and they said wow, nevermind her breathing. Look at this baby just slept to the nights.

Something shifted. and after about six weeks of going regularly, and I think I was going two or three times a week, it wasn't needing all those medications.

The pediatrician even called my mom and said Is everything okay? We haven't seen you." And she said, well, everything is okay, and that's why you haven' seen us.

And he said well I don't believe in what you're doing, but if it's working, keep doing it. That was the beginning of my family saying, wow, this works for a two-year-old that probably is really good for all of us, we became a chiropractic family.

It was in our life, it was something we did regularly, when we were well when they weren't well. When we had sports injuries, When were in bad moods, like it is what we do to bring us back into center so we can function more oftenly.

Ah, that's just great. So what came into my life was when my first child was born. It was a very aggressive C-section and I really didn't know anything back then about true health.

And it was such a aggressive c- section that around Oh, I think he was about three months old, my back completely locked up. So here I am with a three month old and I couldn't stand up and at that time when I was married he, was studying to be a chiropractor so I, really starting to learn more about it.

And so I went to a chiropractor and like we were on a really strict budget at the time, didn't have a lot of money, and I couldn't stand up. I could not hold my baby.

And I remember going to this chirepracter over off Powder Springs Road and she was so wonderful and let me come in every day and work because I had a disc issue.

She took care of me, she worked on me and within I think a couple of weeks, I was able to actually weight bear. I just remember it having such a profound impact because the C-section was so aggressive.

No one will ever cut me open again. And thank goodness, 38 years later, I haven't had one other surgery, but it left such tremendous scarring on me. And my life was really changed by that, and I just wanted to know more.

I had what I thought was a healthy lifestyle because I taught aerobics, was competitive bodybuilder, very physical. Having to go in this direction where your body is completely changed after having a C-section and then losing your ability to be able to care for your child and stand up, it left a profound impact on me and obviously, because 30 years later, this is what I do.

So I think it's interesting, our experiences that lead us down this path. So tell us about your practice. Oh my goodness. I have to be honest, my practice is restarting.

And I graduated in 2004, and I've had a very big journey. It's kind of been a globe trotter a bit. My current practice has restarted. But my family and i lived in Jamaica the last 14 years, so I had very busy practice there and then my husband had a serious heart issue and he's Jamaican and the Jamaian medical community really messed him up.

And so we came to the States and after he had big surgery and I said, I looked at him and said we can't live in Jamaica anymore. Like it's time to be in the states.

We moved to Florida and picked up the Florida boards and all that stuff. So I started my practice in April. And I would say, congratulations. Thank you.

I mean, I love serving pregnant women and babies and children, but I really, really take care of anyone. Like

anyone who walks through my door, and I'm going to serve with love.

But I will say I am like really restarting. And forgot what it was like to like start a practice. start from scratch in a brand new community where I know no one.

And it's just a very different times than when I first started, which was a word of mouth. Now it is all Google reviews and Facebook ads and all this.

It's interesting, but I love working with the babies. I loved working the kids.

Starting a Practice in Florida

Well, what part of Florida are you in? We are in Sarasota. Well I grew up in Hollywood, so I'm very familiar with Florida. And my hat's off to you for going through the whole Florida legal thing to get your license.

I did that too, and I vowed I'd never do it again. Cause it was- This isn't real never say never. Like I was like, I'll never live in Florida, but my husband was, like well, let's go to Massachusetts where your family is.

When he was recovering, we drove around and I really felt like, oh, I vibe with this area. There's a nice… Yeah, Sarasota is very nice. Tell us about your experiences with working with children.

Do you have any interesting cases? Oh my gosh, so many. I mean, I've been at births. That's wonderful. Like moments old in my hand. So many interesting cases.

You focus on the brain. Let's do some cool like brain neurology stuff. One of the things that I think you mentioned even at the beginning is that the general public does not think it's chiropractic and think of nervous system function.

They think of spine and back pain. And so, like, why would you bring a child to get adjusted? And, so usually the people who find me are finding me through word of mouth or referral or, you know, maybe they have a or latching issues, right?

Or colic, or they're constipated, they have gut issues. I mean, there's so many different reasons that people come. So here's a kid with coli. How does it present, and what is chiropractic going to do about it?

Oh my gosh. First of all, my mom wishes she found me when I was an infant, because I WAS the colicky baby. We found chiopratic as the asthmatic baby, Colic goodness gracious I feel for those parents because these babies are inconsolable right sometimes they don't even want to eat and they are gassy and They are tight and and you know for any baby who's coming I am gonna ask the question like what was the mom's pregnancy like?

What was birth like because the first moment that a child can have interference is in the womb and during the birth process, whether it's C-section or vaginal or there's forceps.

So I like to say that looking at a children's spine and nervous system is kind of like feeling for a ripe mango. It's very gentle, but very specific because we are trained to feel where there's interference.

Like, is there squeezing and tension on the cranial bones? Is there a misalignment in the spine? And usually what I see with colicky babies is they'll have a moment of like, like there is this little bit of their system that just starts to exhale.

And that might translate differently. Maybe they have little longer sleep. Maybe mom can hold them without them arching their back and thrashing. Maybe they feed well and digest well without their belly getting big and gassy and bloated.

I am remembering, I caught my very first colicky baby I ever took care of.

Working with Children and Colic

Like I was on the second floor of this yoga studio. It was my office on Maui actually. And like we knew when she was coming, we could hear her from the parking lot and she would come like three times a week for multiple weeks.

Then one day I knew she coming but I didn't hear. And she came and she was just like in her mom's arms, and that connection was made. That peace was remembered, right, from within.

You know, I think it's really important to look at the small wins. And I thing our world has kind of created this picture that if something's going to work, it almost like a big bang right at front, but it is not.

So when we're talking about what's going on in somebody's system like colic, they now really associate that with cranial nerve 10 or the vagus nerve, right?

And I always describe the Vegas nerve as like seaweed going through the body. Especially living in Florida. And so you can have it, you could have that.

And it literally is touching every nerve in your torso or every organ in you torso. And when you're able to actually get the vagus nerve integrated or working the way as supposed to, rather than thinking about just, we're stimulating it.

We don't want to necessarily stimulate it, We really want it engage it We want to engage it to do what it's designed to. And it is designed that reset.

So if you were an adult, we might ask you to really practice diaphragmatic breathing. But when you're a baby, you can't coach that. It's like you had to go find that little area that just is not demonstrating ease.

and bring it along. I will say, though, even though you can't coach it, I think that there is a level of synergy between a mom and a baby. Oh, sure. When a colicky baby is like, and then the mom gets all, like they feed off of each other, right?

Oh absolutely. What I will often do is teach them on that because that's her vagus nerve and her nervous system so that she's not anxious and she can approach this baby from a different place and then they feel that, right, and they harmonize.

Absolutely. Yeah, that is beautiful. And I know you talk a lot about primitive nerve reflexes. That's another one. I really love the primitive reflex.

especially when they were upset and I would lay them on my chest and i would just accentuate my breath so that they could feel it and talk to them. I'm a big person on that synergy between mom and baby and one thing that somebody could definitely try if you're going through that with your baby is get in a rocking chair and hold your baby close to your chest, especially if you can do it skin on skin, and rock your Baby and talk to Your Baby.

You know, sound and sight are the first two senses that are developed in the womb. That baby's been listening to you since the beginning. So you have an enormous power that you can give to your baby just by talking to them.

That colleague, that's a big deal. And I'm working with this one little girl right now. She's got a genetic disorder and the little assistant that brings her, her and I were chatting today, talking about little wins.

When she first came to me, it was not easy to try to get that adjustment in. So you just think about where that nervous system was at the beginning. And this little girl, I mean, she goes through tons of therapies.

But it wasn't something that was easy for her. Everything we did had to be so light and so low with any kind of effort. Anytime anything was perceived to her as great effort, it would literally tip her bucket.

And I would spend probably half the session sitting on a ball and bouncing her, getting that vestibular going just to bring her back to homeostasis. And now, wow, she is receiving care.

We were talking about it today. She's still not crawling or walking or talking yet. And I know that that gets very discouraging for parents, but what we're talking with regulating that nervous system first.

That's even what they teach in neurofeedback. When you look at a brain map and you've got an over aroused or even under arousal brain, you can't shift until there's homeostasis that says, okay, I'm able to change.

It's interesting you brought that up. I just went for a brain scan, not just at Christmas time with my son who had had a diagnosis of pandas. We did like a protocol.

He was in a good space. And there's a woman here in Sarasota who has brain sink Sarisota, I believe it is. and I met her and she said, i want to give you a session.

i said will you do it on my sun instead? So he went in for the scan and She showed me one page. She said you see this, the skin. she says, if you. Brought this to a medical doctor, this would be classic ADD ADHD.

But then she said, but see this one, this is inflamed white matter. This is like the lingering infection and the parasites and like we got to clean up his gut.

She said I'm not even going to do brain neurofeedback on him until all that cleans up. So I brought him through a journey, a little parasite cleanse journey and some other things and obviously like a lot of adjustments and cranial work.

And we haven't been back for our repeat scan, like his focus, his attention, and his behavior, there was such a shift. I really wish parents would, you know, they just want to numb the expression of the symptom many times.

And that's where we come in and talk about life and why it's staticky and what we need to do to support it. Well, I think people today, there's just been so much that has gone on, especially since COVID.

I really do see a landmark piece of time that really shifted. People think what happens for a lot of parents is that they are just so overwhelmed. And no one has any margins.

Vagus Nerve, Breathing, and Nervous System Regulation

And I like to think about this like a piece of loose leaf paper. Remember the red lines on the side and you weren't supposed to write over on other side of the read lines, right?

The margin. So it's like that's the space. And I don't think anybody has that. I think everybody's at the edge. And so when you're at edge, just like you said, you work through the parent to bring that calmness to the child.

This is our time that we've really got to try to help parents come back to homeostasis. And I don't think everybody really knows what to do. I think, like you even said, you feel the differences since you've been back.

And it really has been this steady escalation. If it isn't somebody talking about the risk of another pandemic or the gas prices or food prices, or my kid's in trouble, I just don t know what I'm going to I think that's where the majority of parents really are.

Yeah. And I just think even the parents are there, but then the kids have a lot of different stimuli coming in. There's so much nervous system stimulation, soo much input, input that you and I didn't have as children.

that little brains and nervous systems. And I posted something today that was about those e-bikes. You see kids on the ebites and it's just like, they are meant to be peddling and pumping and sweating and moving their bodies and like kids are not moving and that, you know, brain development and nerve system integration in itself, like we're

going to ask them to go sit in school all day and then they sit and they need to move their body.

Well, and you're singing my song because that's the one thing I talk about all the time is how did your child start out? They weren't reading, writing and doing arithmetic.

They were moving. Everything about the brain is about moving and now we've got epidemics really brewing in Alzheimer's, dementia, neurodegenerative changes of the brain, and they have done even enormous research on them, how much better everyone is if you move.

And you're totally right, we're not moving enough. Let's give them an example of like how to breathe so that the vagus nerve can de-stress, right? So integrate the vagus nerve and then show them something they can do movement-wise.

Well, sure. Do you want to demonstrate, breathe it? What is your, I'll show you my favorite one and you can show me yours. Okay. You go first. So I always tell you put one hand on your chest and one on hand your belly.

And then take a deep breath. Which one moves? And if your shoulders are moving, you're not getting that full diaphragmatic breath. Because when you breathe in, You're literally taking the lung and stretching it out.

And it's literally like a piece of meat, but it has all these little holes in it, like sponge. And so when you stretch it out, all the oxygen molecules fill up the holes.

What pulls it down is your abdominal muscles, and that's why you got to breathe it from the belly. I like to tell people, especially any of the adults, I want you to practice breathing.

We do biofeedback and neurofeed back in the office. But you know, I don't want to get completely dependent just on doing it in office, so I think giving something tangible every time you're in a grocery store line waiting to check out.

Practice breathing everytime you are at a red light. And before you now it, you'll reverse it. Because if you remember your little newborn baby, Their little belly, I always say, goes up like Jiffy Pop popcorn, and it just automatic.

We were like that, but something shifted us. And the great part about how the brain communicates to the body all the time, you can bring that back. Even when you have the child excitedly telling you about their day, they're telling me about your day.

They take breaths in between their expression, I think. Oh, absolutely. One of my favorites was taught to me, and you can put your hand on your belly and heart.

You don't have to. It's if you close your eyes, you're going to do two inhales through your nose and one through mouth, but the second inhale is deep, so it's like…

Oh yeah. So try it if you're watching this. So inhale, inhale. Not if your driving, don't do that if it's driving. But you can, wherever you are, if can pause and set your timer, even for like 30 seconds.

Yes. It's not a long time, it won't take a big, huge chunk of your day, but it does get that vagus nerve to come down. That's great. So movement, I'm huge on movement.

20 minutes, treadmill, bike, walking. It has to be an hour. Twenty minutes is such a great time. And learn how to check your target heart rate because that's what's going to tell you if you're actually exercising in an aerobic level, and then on top of it, if you are, I'll tell you how to do that, it's just a math equation, but if get that heart rate up, in your target heartrate, you burn the stress off of your hippocampus, those are areas in the temporal lobes, And I always talk about it like Harry Potter.

So if you remember Harry potter had all these lightning rods on top of the castles, think of that as the receptors on your hippocampus. And when you're stressed out, you actually block those receptors and the hippo campus is long term memory, cognitive flexibility, and your personality.

So you're kind of cleaning off that hippocampus. And when you are in that state, you'll actually create brain-derived neurotrophic factor, which is the protein in the brain that enhances new learning.

Movement, Attention, and Brain Development

Man, with the level of stress we've all been under, we got to make a shift. That shift can be just through movement, getting your heart rate up, getting good protein to the brain.

So to find out what your target heart rate is, you take the number 220 minus your age. That would be 100%. You don't have to exercise at 100% depending upon So we always want you to be safe, but depending upon if you've been regularly exercising and now you want to see what your target heart rate is, you know, maybe go through a range of 60% to 75% of the 100%. If you have not done anything, I would encourage you, sure, find somebody that can actually check you out, But maybe start around 50 to 60%, start off with just walking, And your goal is to then get up into your target heart rate.

So that's what I would encourage everyone to do. That sounds great. Let's give some examples of movements for kids who, like you're a parent, you are watching this or listening and you have a child who maybe they have attention difficulties or they're frustrated or like they just need to move some of their energy.

What's one thing you would? Well, we are treadmill people here in the office. If we could get people outside bike riding, but you have to have sustained heart rate.

That's the big part of it. I've got three-year-olds that do what we call 10-5. Ten minutes going forward and five minutes walking backwards. You really want to get your brain's attention.

Walk backwards! Now, you don't have to do that on a treadmill, but we've got three-year-olds that can do it. I have a 73- year-old woman who was telling me this morning, Dr.

Hansen, I'm walking backward in my hallway. And I was like, fabulous! When you do a movement that your brain doesn't expect, you really get its attention, and your mind does not expect you to walk backwards.

And I think also crawling. Oh, sure. I should sit down and crawl, even adults, but children. Yep. Or if they skipped it neurologically. Like, oh my gosh, if the skipped.

Yes. Crawling and what it does to the brain and that cross. Coordination is really powerful. And I think kids think it's fun. So they don't even realize that like you're asking them to do something that's a little bit therapeutic.

Exactly. You can put a pair of ankle weights on them so that they actually feel their legs even more. Even if you just got like one or two pounds, you can also put it on their wrist and that way you are adding something which really will capture their attention even that much more and you know, I'm glad that you brought that up about paying attention.

One of the things that I'm still working on with kids that are 8, 9, 10, 11 years old, kids are really impulsive, or I like to think of them more They're anticipatory.

I don't like labels at all. So I call kids that most people would call impulsive, I called them their anticipatory. Their brains are always trying to be ahead of them.

And so these are the kids you haven't finished saying the directions and they just kind of blurt it out. Typically they miss something in that process.

But you have to teach, what does it really mean to pay attention? Sometimes I think we're using all these words that kids really don't have any concept of what they actually mean.

So I'm always trying to bring back to them, did you see what happened there? And then wait for the response. And most of the time they've missed it, let's go back.

So you went ahead and I didn't get to finish telling you the directions. And now we're trying to work on your eyes some and the machine's telling, hey, look at the solar system.

Look at this solar. So let's just slow down. Because part of learning how to pay attention is you have to practice it so that somebody really knows what it means.

And I think with kids, it's really important to tie it back to something that's important them. So rather than making it sound like you don't know how focus or this is a problem, I always do it like this going to make you a better swimmer on the swim team.

Wonder if you're sitting on the edge and they say go and you didn't hear it because you weren't present. I really talk a lot about being present and then everybody else is going, then you go.

So you miss the mark. You got to be present in order to make sure that you always hear the directions that somebody is giving you. And they want to do better and swim.

So now we've tied it to something that they really enjoy doing. And man, the brain love to be happy. It loves to enjoy something. You really get your brain's attention when you know that you're doing something you like.

What a blessing you are in these children's lives. Well, I got to tell you, love kids, adults. Okay. Kids are fabulous. I really can't get enough of them to.

What's really beautiful though I think is chiropractic ability to redirect or the like, you know, either, but like when you. feel that child's potential and you say, well, let's reconnect you to the source.

Let's connect you that life energy that's running that has intelligence that is smarter than you and me and see what happens. And you see the child blossom or maybe their parents say like, wow, they really have been behaving.

It's just beautiful to see can happen when that brain is reconnected to. Oh, I love that. Let's give an example. You gave a great one from you being a baby, but think about one of your patients and think something that's going on mechanically, physiologically in the body that maybe somebody had no idea that if they got a chiropractic adjustment It could really make the difference.

I know I have one. The first one that's coming to me is a little, I used to adjust a bunch of babies and children at a children's home in Jamaica. And thankfully each baby got an auntie and these aunties came from the States.

They were beautiful. There were Mennonites and Amish. they were assigned like one auntie to one baby. So because one of the aunties, she grew up in the Mennonite community and like loved chiropractic.

They love all things natural, right? So loved Chiropractics. She had brought her family to the chiopractor. so she had this beautiful eye of like, like she just would like call me and be like this baby needs an adjustment.

This baby, okay. And she would bring them down and And one in particular, her daughter was the auntie for, and he had no reflexes in his lower half of his body.

Like, you know, when you stand a baby on your lap and they push into your lab or they balance or, like, there was nothing there at all. So because these children were in a children's home and had to go through the system, they had them going to all these neurologists and all of these different doctors and getting all, this aunties kept saying, I know that he's going through all this other appointments, but I now it's gonna help him as chiropractic.

And so she would bring him down and we worked on him. He was a baby, he was little. Probably I saw him from like maybe two months to two years before he ended up getting adopted, but we got him putting, like he started having connection between his feet and whatever was beneath him, was crawling and then walking and running.

Chiropractic Patterns and Closing Remarks

But had you looked at him at the beginning, you'd think, well, this kid's legs might not work. And they were looking at all these old diagnoses, But we didn't know his history with his mom or birth or anything like that.

But you could feel where that disconnect was. So that's one that I thought of. What's yours? Well, I got one for a kid and one from an adult. I think, and I can just kind of give it like an example, but kids with low tone.

Here's a kids, you get them on all fours and their elbows like cave in or they just avoid riding bicycles or anything physical because they really can't hold themselves up in gravity.

Those kids love to be adjusted. It's like they feel themselves for the first time. And you really see the connection immediately. You can have a kid. I'm thinking of one little girl.

Sometimes she has a lot of emotional breakdowns. And when I get her down on the table, she's like, no, and then as soon as I start adjusting her, just cracking up.

She feels herself where I think that emotional dysregulation when you're not really sure where you are in space, it's a burden on their nervous system.

The other one, and I do see this in kids too, the same little girl I was talking about earlier, but a lot of these kids with genetic disorders that have not been able to get upright at all.

But even an adult, this can happen to an adults who is fine. There's a muscle called the psoas, it's on the front of your spine, so it is deep. and then it splits and one goes on one side of the pelvis and the other one and goes in the another side.

When you think about just the mechanical part of it, it's about lifting your knee to your chest. But muscles can have other reactions and so when you have a stress response, that muscle gives you this slight little flexion in your torso and it's not sure if you're about to be stabbed, punched or shot.

So think of these people in chronic stress. That's a big area that I do focus a lot on too. Even kids are in Chronic Stress. Then that muscle is shortened.

And this can really help people understand this idea of feedback. So not only is it going on in your brain, but this muscle, as long as it stays short, it's telling your mind, threat, even if the threat doesn't exist.

And a short muscle is not a contracted muscle. It's literally a muscle that's lost individual motor units, and it's not enough to stretch it. You got to re-educate it, just like Dr.

Tracy said, you have to reconnect it because it is talking to another pathway and you need to break that response. And I think that is one of the biggest things I love about chiropractic and What's happened for me over the years is the patterns.

I've learned the pattern that the body can get in. But it's a fabulous way of breaking pattern. And that's why, like with our program, it is not just movement, neurofeedback, nutrition.

it's chiropractic too. So you don't have to do the whole program to get an adjustment. I was telling Dr. Tracy that a mom had reached out to me this morning and said, hey, my son who you helped back in 2022 wants an Adjustment.

Can he get just an adjustments without doing your whole Program? And I'm like, oh my gosh, what message have I put out there? Of course you can. We love people that just want to Get adjusted.

We love people that want to have their children come and do a program. And even if you just want do one part of it, it's about your journey. What's right for you?

What is the right fit for your? So I don't know, I'm like you too. I like to take care of everybody. I do have a very big heart for kids. The majority of my practice is children.

But we love all kinds of people. And many of the adults that show up, their traumas and their interference started as a child. Maybe no one knew to breastfeed them.

Amen. I couldn't have said it better. Totally. Oh, really? You fell on your tail, but someone pulled the chair from you when you were a kid and you never addressed it?

Just a little thing to add up. But I will say, regardless of complexity of what is going on in a I feel like children are so much easier to work with because they don't have all of the years of life that adults come with.

It's like they respond really beautifully and a lot quicker than adults. Yeah, I do agree. Well, thanks so for having this conversation with me. I said, but we love you all.

Yes, we do. We love all of you. Hey, everybody. Thank you so much for tuning in. And remember, Connect My Brain is over at 3535 Roswell Road, Suite 35, Marietta 30062. You can go on to the website.

If you have a question, you can schedule a complimentary consultation, and we are happy to reach back out and connect. Maybe something in this conversation really made you think.

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