

Sharing OUR Recovery

A quarterly newsletter dedicated to support victims, survivors, caregivers and loved ones of motor vehicle collisions.

SUMMER EDITION 2024

ISSUE 27

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Editor in Chief - Dawne McKay

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Supporting Crash Survivors
👉👉 One Step at a Time 👈👈

We are Your Summer Connection

Exciting things have been happening! We recently launched a collection of free downloadable forms tailored to support you on your recovery journey. These forms aim to streamline the process of managing various aspects of post-crash challenges, making it easier for you to navigate and stay organized during your recovery. Feel free to explore and utilize these resources—we're here to support you every step of the way.

Every day, countless lives are affected by motor vehicle crashes and it's up to each of us to do our part in creating safer roads for everyone. That's why the Crash Support Network has introduced our [Reck Pledge](#) which is driving towards safety one pledge at a time! Please join us in pledging to drive responsibly because together we can make our roads safer for everyone. Take our Reck Pledge today and help us spread the word!

Last month, I was honored to speak at the Major Collision Conference in York Region alongside Ontario Provincial Police Major Collision and Fatal Road Investigators. Our Community Outreach Volunteer, Alana McGuire also shared her story and did an amazing job! Victim's perspectives and stories can be impactful and we were so grateful for the wonderful opportunity to discuss the crucial work of supporting crash survivors. We are truly grateful for the invaluable contribution these Investigators make to our community. Their commitment to seeking justice and understanding the circumstances surrounding collisions is commendable and we acknowledge that their job is far from easy.

In this Issue, you will hear how a musician involved in a crash while on tour was able to write and record her recovery journey through music, we also introduce you to a young determined woman who was at the peak of her career as an award-winning journalist whose life took a sudden turn due to a drunk driver and you will meet the Founder of Brain or Shine who was a freelance motivational speaker, travelling all over the country before a fall changed everything.

The journey of a crash survivor is marked by resilience, strength, and unwavering determination. Despite the challenges we face, physically, emotionally and financially, we continue to persevere, one step at a time.

It's time to embrace the warmth of the sun, the beauty of nature, and the love and support of those around you. Whether it's a leisurely stroll along the shoreline, a hike through the forest, or simply sitting beneath a canopy of trees, let us find solace and peace this summer in the healing embrace of nature. Together, we will navigate this journey with grace, courage, and unwavering hope.

- Dawne

Why You Shouldn't Say These Phrases to Someone Who's Grieving

Submitted by Tess Rowland, Traffic Safety Liaison

When I was hit head-on by a drunk driver in May 2021, the immediate recovery was undeniably the most difficult time of my life. The day before my crash, I was a healthy 22-year-old attending an Orange Theory class. I had never broken a bone in my life. Little did I know, my life would drastically change in just a matter of hours due to someone else's decision to drive after a night of drinking.

Undergoing seven surgeries with the insertion of four plates and 22 screws, both my future and recovery was cast into uncertainty due to a drunk driver. Looking back upon that time, I now realize I would not have made it through without the support network of extraordinary family, friends, colleagues, and community. They were instrumental in helping persevere through my arduous recovery.

There is No Yellow Brick Road to Healing

A day before my crash, I reached a new personal best on my mile time, and suddenly my new reality required round the clock care. I found myself reliant on assistance for basic activities such as dressing, feeding, and clothing myself - an outcome stemming from a completely avoidable crash. I understand that my loved ones must have faced a daunting task in choosing their words during this tumultuous period because what exactly do you say? However, some things are best left unsaid.

The phrase "everything happens for a reason" was all too familiar and unsettling. There was no rational explanation for the crash occurrence, or justification for my severe physical and mental injuries due to a drunk driver. For me, my path to healing meant talking about my crash and sharing my story. I found peace knowing maybe I would change the trajectory of someone's life and prevent this crime from injuring or killing someone else. However, it's crucial to understand that there is no "yellow brick road" to healing. Not all victims find solace in reliving moments of crashes that robbed them of loved ones or left them severely injured.

"You're so lucky. You could have died." I acknowledge the grim truth that many are unable to share their stories due to untimely loss - lives cut short by the recklessness of others. However, despite seven surgeries and more looming, I cannot honestly claim to feel fortunate. Other things people said, *"You're so strong. If anyone can get through this, it's you"*. *"I don't know how you do it. You've always been the strongest person out there"*, while likely well-intentioned, it stung. Feeling strong was far from reality, both mentally and physically. It seemed to trivialize the situation - implying that



my toughness made the experience less challenging. Strength doesn't always lighten the load.

Survivors Recovering Are Craving Companionship

I recently came across a graphic on Facebook that read, *"Check on your strong friends"*. That struck me. Sometimes, simply asking someone how they're holding up is the most profound gesture for those in mourning. Maybe it's time to reconsider the notion that grieving individuals seek a magical remedy for their troubles. Instead, they crave companionship - a sense of not being alone on their journey.

Empathy doesn't require perfect words. It's about being there, being vulnerable, and being willing to listen to someone's experience. Here are some better ways to show your support and empathy for a friend or loved one who may be grieving or going through a dark time.

- **Share a cherished memory:** Relating a positive recollection involving a departed loved one can aid the

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grieving process by commemorating their legacy.

- **Assure them that their emotions are valid:** Grief is a complex journey, often encompassing shock, sadness, pain, anger, guilt, anxiety, and numbness. It is not linear either.
- **Let them know you're thinking of them:** This simple gesture conveys your support. If they're unsure of their needs, suggest assistance with simple errands or cooking.
- **Sometimes, silence is golden:** Recognize verbal and nonverbal cues; at times, lending a patient ear is the most valuable contribution you can make.

The power of empathy can be transformative to someone going through adversity. As we extend our hearts and commit to being present for someone in need, we become beacons of light in the incredible dark times of grief. It's not the words we say, but the genuine care we offer that could make a difference in another person's journey to healing and peace.

"It's not the words we say, but the genuine care we offer that could make a difference in another person's journey to healing and peace."

I Am Thankful For the Crash Victim Community

Speaking from personal experience, I'm delighted to say that, like many other victims and survivors of drunk driving, I've transformed my pain into purpose after my crash. I've learned to navigate life with my polytraumatic injuries, adapting to my new normal – or as I like to call it, "Tess 2.0." While grief for my old self still lingers, I'm content to say it's reached a point where I can manage it.

It's important to acknowledge that recovery may be ongoing. While, I believe I have made it through the worst of my post-crash recovery, with more surgeries on the horizon and a whole lot more life to live, I know there may be dark days ahead. That's why I am so thankful to have the traffic crash victim community. While this may not be my family by "choice" as we are all bound by someone else's choice to drive under the influence, I would not trade them for the world. For those seeking support and a safe place: please don't hesitate to reach out to the [Crash Support Network](#). You're not alone on this journey.

[Tess Rowland](#) is a passionate roadway safety advocate and an Emmy-nominated journalist. Tess currently serves as the Traffic Safety Liaison for the Harris County Sheriff's Office in Texas where she works to educate the community about traffic safety and coordinates with law enforcement to enhance traffic safety initiatives. Most recently, Tess served as the [National President of Mothers Against Drunk Driving](#). She has been featured on platforms like News Nation, Good Morning America, and [Teen Vogue](#).

We thank Tess for her continuous support and for all of her hard work creating important road safety initiatives.

Special Offer!

The following online programs may help you on your road to recovery and we are pleased to announce that both of these helpful online courses are offered to crash survivors at a discounted rate!

25% OFF

LEARN TO THRIVE WITH POST CONCUSSION SYNDROME Self Study Course

LEARN TO THRIVE RESILIENCE IN RECOVERY Self Study Course

CLICK HERE

reviveandthrivewellbeing.com



How I Survived Surviving - One Musician's Journey to Recovery

Submitted by Laura Hickli

I'm no stranger to plans completely derailing. Just two nights before the accident our converted van was practically swallowed by thick mud in Las Vegas, New Mexico, forcing us to stay awake until 3 AM while our hosts transformed from friendly audience members to absolute heroes. They shoveled out our tires, laid plywood and even woke their neighbor, who graciously wrenched our van out of the earth's stomach with their tow truck. Like I said, I can handle changes in plan. I am a professional touring musician; which means I live in my van, I shower at stranger's houses, I have an unpredictable income, and I love it. Or at least, I loved it.

It was the morning of March 23, 2023 when everything changed, in a way I absolutely could not handle. My band and I sighed in relief when we saw the freshly plowed Colorado highway. As a musician, we were on route to perform at *Treefort Music Festival* in Boise, Idaho and had just endured Wyoming's brutal road conditions for the last hour. Visible pavement parted snow-covered hills, and promised the worst behind us. A herd of antelope, with their permanently startled eyes watched us from the shoulder as we drove by. I was loopy that morning. I'd caught the awful cold that recently had both my bandmates slathering vaporub like sunscreen in the Sahara Desert. I dozed off in the front passenger seat.

I Felt I Was in The Afterlife

I awoke to my body violently hitting the door. My fiancé who is also a musician was gripping the steering wheel, swearing. The miracle highway turned out to be covered in black ice.

In under twenty-four seconds, we spun backwards into the opposing lane, flew off the highway's edge at sixty MPH and rolled three times down a fifty foot hill. Each roll suspended us upside down in the air before slamming into the ground on the passenger side. I imagined the metal frame crumpling around us, and anticipated each coming hit as the one we wouldn't survive. I knew I was going to die, there was no doubt in my mind. I was lonely, and then I blacked out.

"In under twenty-four seconds, we spun backwards into the opposing lane, flew off the highway's edge at sixty MPH and rolled three times down a fifty foot hill."

When my eyes first opened, fragmented thoughts informed me I was in the afterlife, and I was no longer falling. I saw my body with bloated, blurry vision, and patted myself down. Broken glass fell out of my hair and lap as I leaned over, sick to my stomach.

My limbs were shaking uncontrollably from shock. My fiancé and I had suffered severe concussions. The roof had caved in and the back bench tore out of the floor. Our bandmate was completely buried in our belongings and had broken two of his ribs. We crawled out of the windows, and helped each other trudge up the steep hill to a passerby who'd already called an ambulance.

The PTSD Was Unbearable at Times

We flew back home to Calgary, AB and began an infinite list of medical appointments. I had a meltdown when my concussion therapist touched my right shoulder. I rolled into a ball and screamed at him to leave me alone. He respectfully left me to my privacy and I wept the whole appointment away. When my



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second therapist asked me to hold my hands out in front of me, I saw them floating over the dashboard. Suddenly I was rolling and watching all my things fly around me in slow motion. Both therapists put me to the top of the waitlist to see their on-site psychologist; a woman with fiery red hair who became my lifeline.

She diagnosed me with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety. I was riddled with flashbacks and imprisoned by my overactive amygdala. I was hyper-alert, overly cautious, terrified of noise, motion, elevators, planes, cars, snow, ect. I could hardly sleep, and if I did, it wasn’t long before nightmares bolted me awake into heart-pounding, sweaty panic attacks. I was constantly on the verge of throwing up and had multiple migraines a day. I struggled with balance, strength, vision, reading, writing, concentration and visual auras. I couldn’t move my head to the right, or my arm above my shoulder. I felt completely broken, and I hated myself. For nine long months, nothing could console me. Music, my passion and lifelong dream, had become a major trigger. I was a musician. I had no desire to create and no hope for a future.

My medical team urged me to start Fluvoxamine, an SSRI that helps victims of PTSD. I had reached suicidal levels of depression and was willing to try anything. It was not only the chemical change in my head that brought the first breath of relief I’d experienced all year, but the surrender to the idea that I needed external support to survive *surviving*. I began weekly Exposure Therapy, a therapy style I initially refused because I didn’t want to actively relive the most terrifying experience of my life. But I did, fifty or so times. I was bed-ridden for days after each session, but eventually, I cried away most of my repressed tears. Slowly, I began to face my fears. Winter’s first snow fell. Instead of panicking, I reached for it and watched it melt in the heat of my hand.

I Was Able to Write and Record My Recovery Journey Through Music

There is a Ford E-150 parked in our neighborhood that looks identical to our old van. One day, instead of avoiding it, I chose to walk by. A week later, I walked by again and stared at it until I cried. Two weeks later, I walked up to it and imagined I was in it. I felt the seatbelt hold my weight and the dashboard graze my fingertips. I felt the grief of my inner child and held her. I cried my final tears. Then, one day, I just walked on by. For me, grief hit so hard I couldn’t imagine getting up again. But over time, the evidence of my recovery was reflected in my mirror, in my mother’s eyes, in my therapy sessions, and even in my dreams. Somehow, throughout the year, I wrote an entire record detailing my

journey. I joined a community of MVA survivors at the [Crash Support Network Group](#). I even began booking my next tour.

It was the morning of March 23, 2023 when everything changed, in a way I absolutely could not handle, *alone*. I’m a professional musician, and now, I’m an MVA survivor; which means I am resilient, I am brave, I feel the heights of joy and the depths of suffering, and I can handle a change in plans. For more information please visit: www.laurahickliofficial.com.

REVIEW

★★★★★

“

The Crash Support Network has been a place where I can share, vent, rejoice, celebrate, mourn, commiserate, ask questions & share experiences without fear of judgement or rejection. The wonderful people that are part of this network truly understand what it’s like to be a survivor of a traumatic event because they are surviving too. The network has been a shining beacon of light for me whenever I get a little too wound up in my own darkness.

So thankful for this group.

S. Perry

Has the Crash Support Network helped you on your recovert journey? Please take a moment to share your thoughts with us on google. Your feedback not only encourages us but also helps others discover the variety of helpful resources that we continue to offer our crash survivor community.

WRITE A REVIEW





In 2012, life was great. I was a freelance motivational speaker, travelling all over the country and working with teenagers in schools. It was such a buzz. We loved travel and my wife, Jules and I, were enjoying a cheeky week away on the beautiful island of Fuerteventura. This is when the phrase, 'holiday of a lifetime' took on a new meaning, and not in a good way.

I did something that I do many times a day, I went to the toilet, blacked out and hit my head. Yep, as simple as that! No horrific accident, no attack, just a simple trip to the toilet and our lives changed forever. When we got back to England, we went straight to A&E to get a brain scan. And the results were a total shock! We were told that my traumatic brain injury was so serious that over 95% of people didn't survive, let alone be able to walk, talk and function 'normally'. We knew that I had done some damage, but we weren't prepared for this.

There were hematomas on the right side and one on the left side and my brain has been misaligned due to the trauma and swelling plus there was a fracture to my skull and right ear. The next decision we had to make was whether I should have a craniotomy operation. Now this sounded scary. The operation would involve removing part of the skull to reach the brain and a hospital stay of 3 to 6 months. I'd been conscious for over a week by this point and after some

serious consideration, I decided to not go ahead with the operation and take the risk that the two blood clots would disperse. As a family it was so difficult, but they supported my decision and at the end of the day, only I knew how I felt inside.

The (Bumpy) Road to Recovery

I spent the next few weeks at home resting with a sore, groggy head. A couple of hospital appointments later, we received some fantastic news. The swelling had started to disperse. Eight weeks later, I was given the all clear on the final scan. Except for a few warnings about playing physical sports (man, I was going to miss football), we were given the impression that I could go back to living life as before. However, sadly this just wasn't the case.

No one had prepared us for the non-physical effects of sustaining a brain injury. Gradually over the coming months, Jules noticed changes in my personality. Where I used to be laid-back, I started to get stressed very quickly. Where I used to have lots of energy, I started to feel really tired after a day at work. Where I used to be able to solve problems, I now struggled to understand the simplest of tasks. We started to worry.

After speaking to my neurologist, we were told that it could take years for my brain to heal. But as time went on, things



started to get worse rather than better. I suffered from horrendous fatigue, mood swings, confusion, sleepless nights, nightmares, anxiety, and depression. We didn't know what to do and who to turn to for help. We felt lost. And after six years, we felt broken.

The Turning Point

After visiting my neurologist again, he referred us to a brain injury hospital, 10 miles from our home which we didn't even know existed. Actually, we didn't even know the term brain injury existed at this point! Luckily, I was welcomed into a support group which changed our lives. We learnt what a brain injury was, how to manage fatigue and some of the other side effects that were affecting me on a day-to-day basis. We began to get our lives back on track. Over 10 years on, I'm probably as good as I'm ever going to get. I still suffer with many of these symptoms on a daily basis but having this support and knowledge has shown us how to focus on the positive things and given us insight into how to live our lives on our terms.

What Now?

Since my brain injury, I spent a lot of focusing on the things I can do as opposed to what I can't. We'd already set up our own business – *Future Toolbox*. Future Toolbox was created through a passion to help individuals grow and make a difference to people's lives. Our mission is to help people become the best version of themselves and live life to the fullest. We do this through motivational speeches, mindset coaching, school workshops, and writing books.

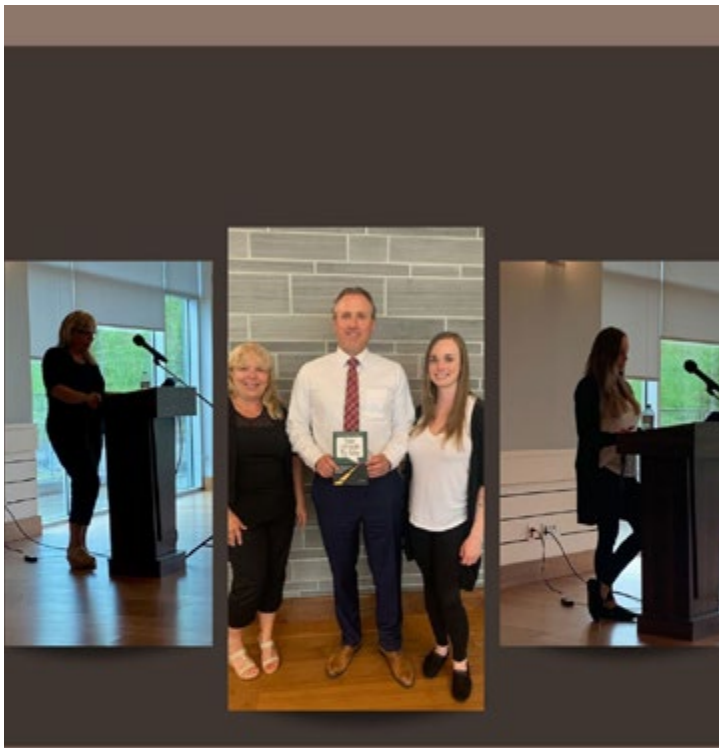
Recently we created a project called *Brain or Shine*. We don't want anyone to have to go through the struggles that we did for so long. So, now it's our time to spread our knowledge and support. We started this a few years ago by writing, *What the Hell Just Happened?*, a book about Mark's brain injury from both of our perspectives. However, this was not enough. We wanted to make more of a difference. And that is where Brain or Shine was born. Our goal is to create a support mechanism and a community for people affected by any form of brain injury. We have resources for brain injury survivors, their families, friends, work colleagues, and employers.

The struggles of brain injury still affect me on a daily basis but life is very much on our own terms now. I can rest when I need but also enjoy all the things that I love doing with Brain or Shine. I'm a keen runner and have run over 100 half marathons. Travel, trekking, cycling and paddle boarding are also big passions of ours and more recently, I even taken up learning to sing and play the guitar. I was also honored to be named the Alex Richardson Achiever of the Year at the Headway Annual Awards in 2022.

Jules and I have been happily married for over 20 years now and the strength and love in our relationship has got us through the tough times to where we are today. We've come a long way on our journey, and we're very grateful to be where we are now. A simple quote to finish with is, 'Focus on the things you can do and not the things that you can't do and, then find a way of doing them.'

Many thanks to Mark & Jules for sharing their story with us and for their support. For more information on Brain or Shine please visit: www.brainorshine.com.





Founder, Dawne McKay and Community Outreach Volunteer, Alana McGuire speaking at the Major Collision Conference in York Region

The Crash Support Network is a Dedicated Not-For-Profit Organization committed to work hard and make a big difference as every step we take is aimed at connecting and supporting crash survivors.

Recommended Books to Read After Surviving a Motor Vehicle Crash



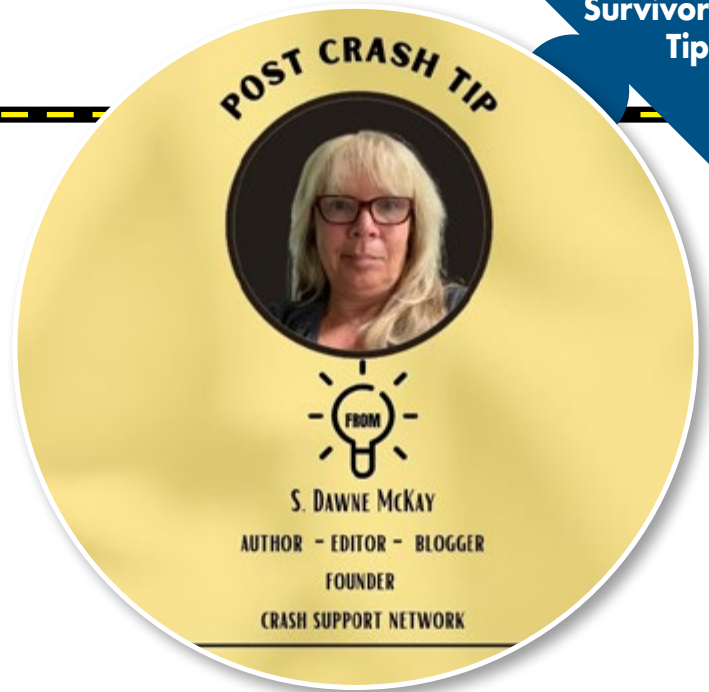
Follow Medical Advice

Submitted by S. Dawne McKay

Crash
Survivor
Tip

Following medical advice when you are injured in a motor vehicle crash is crucial for your recovery and overall well-being. Here are some tips to keep in mind.

- Make sure to attend all scheduled appointments with healthcare providers, including follow-up visits, therapy sessions, and imaging tests.
- Be open and honest with your healthcare provider about your symptoms, concerns, and any changes in your condition. Clear communication ensures you receive appropriate care.
- Don't hesitate to ask questions about your diagnosis, treatment options, and expected recovery timeline. Understanding your medical care empowers you to make informed decisions.
- Adhere to prescribed treatments, including medications, physical therapy exercises, and lifestyle modifications. Consistency is key to achieving optimal outcomes.
- If you experience new symptoms or your condition worsens, notify your healthcare provider promptly. Changes in your health may require adjustments to your treatment plan.



- Follow any activity restrictions or precautions provided by your healthcare provider to prevent further injury during your recovery process.
- In addition to medical treatment, prioritize self-care activities such as rest, hydration and stress management to support your body's healing process.

Compassion
in Motion



WELCOME TO OUR TEAM

ALANA MCGUIRE
Community
Outreach Volunteer

We are honored to welcome Alana McGuire to our Volunteer Team, where her personal perspective and resilience will make a profound difference in the lives of others who have experienced similar challenges. Together, we will continue to turn pain into purpose and make a positive impact in our crash survivor community.



Take our Reck Pledge!

Let's make the roads
safer for everyone.
Show your commitment
to safe driving practices
and take our pledge
today.

We are Driving Towards
Safety One Pledge at a
Time!

Join us in making a
difference.



MANY THANKS TO OUR 2024 SPONSORS!

We couldn't have done it without your support!



By sponsoring the *Sharing our Recovery Newsletter*, you are supporting the continued growth of this valuable free resource for crash survivors.

Would you like to be part of Sharing Our Recovery?

Articles/Stories:

We are always looking for articles or stories, and we would love to hear from you!

Want to share?

Email: info@crashsupportnetwork.com

Sponsors:

We are always looking for *Sharing Our Recovery* sponsors.

Interested in sponsoring?

Information:



Meet Dawne McKay – Founder

S. Dawne McKay is the Founder of the Crash Support Network and continues to donate countless hours to her crash survivor community by sharing resources, highly informative articles, a quarterly newsletter and a blog that allows her to share her own personal journey as a crash survivor. Dawne works hard at bringing awareness to crash survivors through CSN's social media platforms and the online support group by sharing inspirational posts with survivors from all across the world. Dawne is also the author of the book, "Talk Crash to Me - What to Expect After Surviving a Motor Vehicle Collision and How to Manage Your Recovery" which is [available on Amazon](#).

Our Mission is to raise awareness to the recovery journey that many people face after being affected by a motor vehicle crash and to provide online support, education and resources.



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