SUPER REGULATORS

Self-Regulation and a New Type of Human

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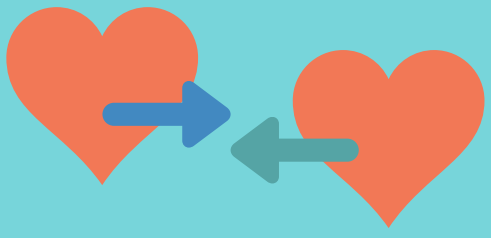

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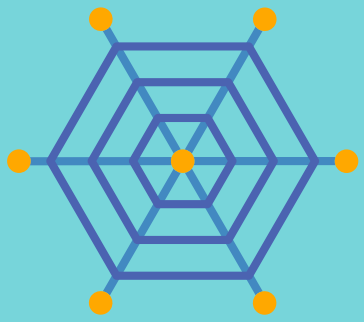
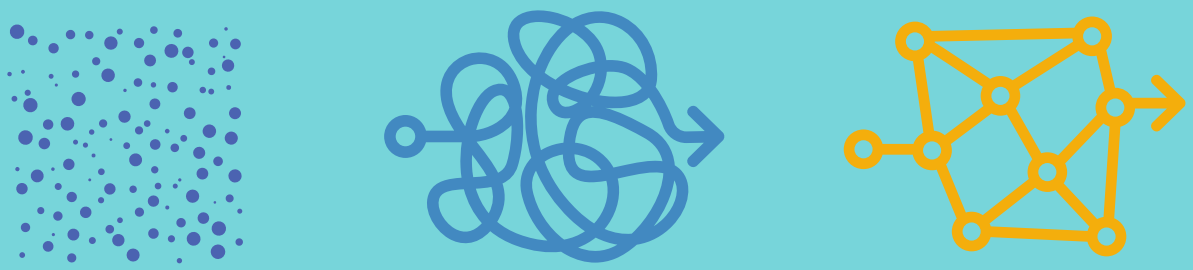


A NEW TYPE OF HUMAN?

What if... the way humans are now - the version we are all familiar with - is not the 'end of the line? What if we are on our way to something better?

What if... when we get knocked down and find ourselves at what feels like rock-bottom, it's actually a sign that we are at the precipice of something so profoundly new that it has to hurt for a bit in order for us grow into it?

What if... through the chaos, complexity and connectivity of the human species and the planet as it is today, a new type of human is emerging?



I call this new type of human a Super-Regulator.

A Super-Regulator is someone who has learned the skills of:

1. **Self-Regulation:** they use their mind and body to access a sense of inner well-being, growth and evolution
2. **Co-Regulation:** they use relationships to access a sense of well-being, growth and evolution
3. **Super-Regulation:** they serve as a unique member of the species who helps other humans learn to self-regulate, co-regulate and access a higher awareness of their own possibility for well-being, growth and evolution

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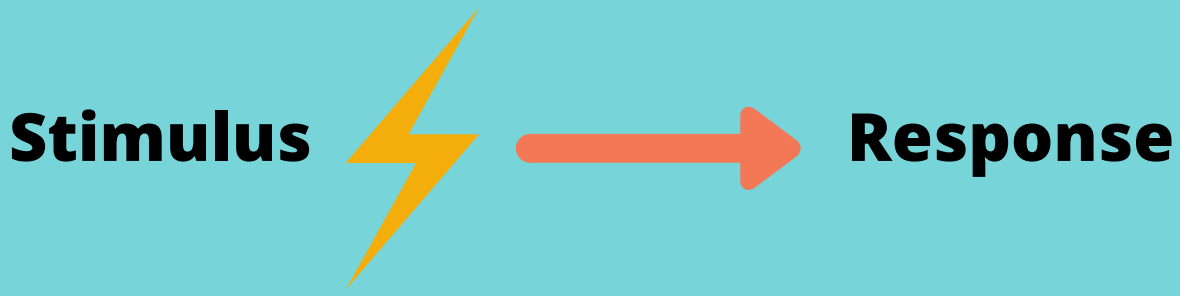
THE S-O-R MODEL

STIMULUS-RESPONSE (S-R)

But before we go into all that, lets talk about an outdated way of thinking about humans that is not always helpful. This outdated way of thinking (a 'paradigm') is the STIMULUS-RESPONSE model.

This model is influenced by the idea that we can give a 'stimulus' to an organism and this stimulus will trigger a response. For example, if you give an electric shock to most animals and humans, there will be a reflexive movement to get away from the source of the shock. There are certain types of stimuli that we can somewhat rely on to trigger a pretty consistence reflex or reaction.



Sometimes this model can be helpful when we are trying to create experiments or research on animal and human behavior. But in large part, this model is missing something VERY important... it's missing the role that the Organism plays in how the stimulus gets received and processed, which then affects how the organism reacts.

What the stimulus-response model does not account for are the INFINITE number of combinations of tiny, microscopic, neural, chemical, behavioral, biological variations that can exist in a person at each moment. These variations can affect how a stimulus affects that person.

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THE S-O-R MODEL

There is a 'secret' step to insert between the Stimulus and the Response.

You.

You are the Organism. You are the changeable, adaptable, ever-evolving variable in this equation.

S + O = R

And there are three things that can influence your Response. These three things are your 'Powers' that can help you evolve your life into something that feels better for you

These three Powers are:

- Your temporary physiological state
- Your neural and behavioral resources
- Your perception of yourself and the world around you (which we could also call worldview, paradigm or mindset)

These three powers give you the ability to create literally any feeling you want at any moment you want it. This is the essence of "Self-Regulation".

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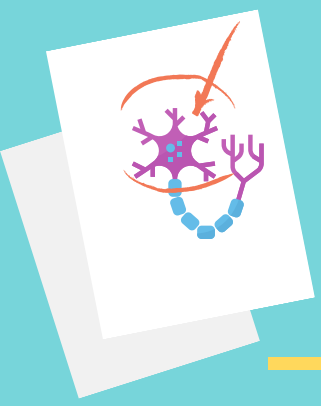

Self-Regulation: the opposite of selfish

Self-regulation is like putting your own oxygen mask on before helping someone else

Self-regulation (self-soothing, self-care) and taking care of your well-being is the OPPOSITE of selfish. It is an act of generosity and service.

Whether it's your relationship with a child, spouse, girlfriend, boyfriend, partner, boss, co-workers, clients, students... you figuring out how to replenish your own neural resources means that you will be able to give others your most evolved and highly functioning self. Rather than a depleted, fatigued, exhausted, defensive or resentful version of you.

So I just wanted to make that clear, ok? Please do what you need to replenish yourself and not feel guilty about this. Please find more things that bring you comfort and joy, and do them regularly. The people in your life need you to do that.

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BENEFITS OF CONSCIOUS SELF-REGULATION

In case you're still not convinced of how good things can get when you learn how to self-regulate, here are a few more things to consider.

When you learn how to consciously self-regulate, you:

- feel better, which means you may not need to turn to something unhealthy to try to make yourself feel better
- gain a sense of power and control over how you feel
- send biological signals to your brain-body systems that allow them to function in their most highly evolved, creative and adaptive ways (which then helps you 'solve' the problems you are experiencing)
- are on your way to becoming a Super-Regulator, which is a special role a person can play in helping create a new type of human society and civilization (we'll go more into that when we get to the section on Super-Regulators

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SELF-REGULATION

TWO TYPES OF SELF-REGULATION

You can do things to access a restorative, replenishing state with external things and also with simply the power of your own mind. This brings us to the two categories of self-regulation: Conditional and Unconditional

01

conditional self-regulation

We can also call this 'bottom-up' regulation.

This is where we use sensory stimuli and activities to change our internal state.

These are things we do that don't rely on other people (when other people are involved, it falls under 'co-regulation).

Examples of conditional self-regulation:

- music (listening to or playing)
- art
- reading
- browsing the internet
- games
- going into nature
- journaling
- cooking
- movement of any kind (dancing, stretching, exercise, etc.)

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SELF-REGULATION

Unconditional self-regulation is using the power of your mind to access a desired state.

02

unconditional self-regulation

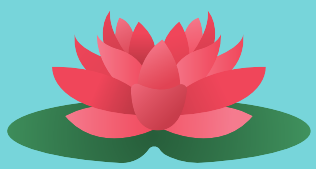
We can also call this 'top-down' regulation.

This is where we keep our bodies still, and we withdraw from the external world in order to change our internal state.

The main form of unconditional self-regulation is through what many of us know as mindfulness and meditation. I also include visualization (or 'feelingizations') in this.

When we want to use only our mind to change our state, there are a few ways this can happen:

- **non-judgmental 'noticing'** of our own thoughts and sensations in our body (often called open awareness meditation)
- **using a mantra or visual** that you return to over and over as soon as your mind wanders (focused awareness). It can be a visual of a light, a flame, a color, or a verbal mantra. It can also be a spiritual image such as chakras, or 'energy bodies'/ frequencies and patterns of light, color and sound
- **visualizing an experience** that makes you feel happy and excited or peaceful. This can be bringing up a fond memory, a person/animal, a future experience.



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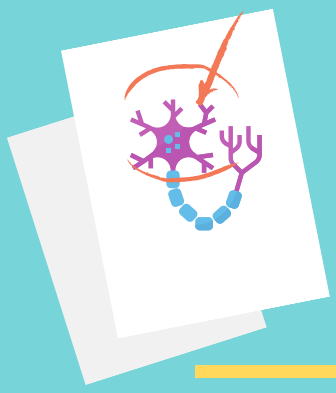
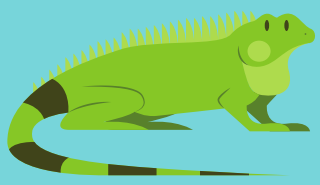
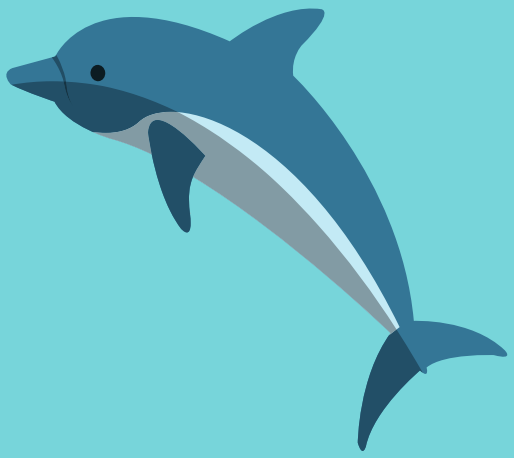


Co-Regulation: Connection is our Nature

So, self-regulation is what we do on our own to regulate our nervous system. Co-regulation is the mechanism we use to do this, but instead of on our own, we do it by connecting with other living beings.





What is something that sets creatures like iguanas and snakes apart from other creatures like dolphins, hamsters, dogs, gorillas, etc.?

Well first of course, iguanas and snakes are classified as reptiles, while dolphins and hamsters are mammals. Humans are also mammals. (we then get further sub-categorized, but mammals is part of the broader class we belong to).

Why does this matter? Being a mammal means that we are extremely 'nurture-dependent'. Our ability to survive is very tied to our relationships. From the very moment of birth and for a very long time, we literally could not survive if there was not another human in our life. Connection is a 'biological imperative'. We cannot survive without connection to another.

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CO-REGULATION

TWO TYPES OF CO-REGULATION

We can co-regulate with other mammals and with people. As wonderful as pets and animals are, the most beneficial type of co-regulating in terms of our brain functioning is with other humans.

Why? Because the health of our neural circuitry depends on complex feedback loops. The more complex and less repetitive the stimulus we get, the stronger our brains become because we need to fire up very flexible and sophisticated networks to respond.

Humans are the most complex and unpredictable of species on the planet. This is because we have not only the same components as the reptile brain, mammal brain and primate brain - we have even more complex machinery in our prefrontal cortex.

All of this means that if we really want to have our brains function at their highest level, we need to connect with other humans.

Bittersweet, right? Sometimes we don't want to deal with other humans - which is where self-regulation comes in.

But we can't stay alone. We need to balance our alone time with relationships - for the sake of our brain and nervous system!

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CO-REGULATION

TWO TYPES OF CO-REGULATION

There are two types of co-regulation: Conditional and Unconditional

01

conditional co-regulation

We can also call this 'bottom-up' regulation.

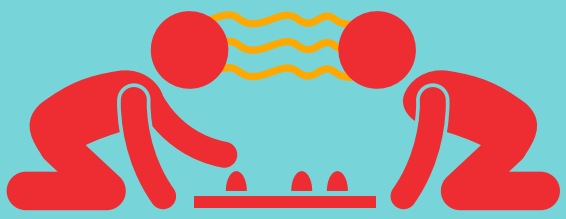
This is where we use the physical (and online) presence of others to regulate our state.

This can include conversations, doing activities together, moving together (dancing, sports), eating together.

The cool part about spending time with another person is that when we engage in 'joint attention' or 'joint movement' we actually increase the chances of forming brainwave coherence with that person.

This means that our brainwaves can synchronize its patterns with another person's, and this can make us actually feel like we are 'on the same wavelength' as them.

Teams and partners who have brainwave coherence can solve problems more efficiently and effectively. (Check out the fascinating research by Caroline Szymanski as well as Suzanne Dikkers on this.)



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02

unconditional co-regulation

We can also call this 'top-down' regulation.

This is where we can use our relationships to regulate our state but we do not need the physical presence of that person.

Types of unconditional co-regulation:

- **Compassion Meditation:** this is where we extend compassion in 'concentric circles', beginning with wishing peace and joy for ourselves, then our closest relationships, family, then community, then all the people in the world and finally the entire planet. Richard Davidson has done intriguing research on this type of meditation and its relationship with gamma brainwaves.
- V**isualization to mentally and emotionally prepare for future interactions.** This is something I have done extensively in my own life. I was inspired by various research I had read on athletes using visualization to perform at their highest levels during high-adrenaline situations. I decided to apply these principles to stressful relationships in my life. The visualizations have three components: 1) imagining myself in my most calm and tranquil state, 2) then imagining myself interacting with a person who is causing me to feel stressed - and imagining them at their worst behavior towards me, and 3) imagining myself still breathing and feeling calmly as I notice their facial expressions while they are acting this way. Visualizing in this way helped me feel more like a neutral observer during very stressful situations - which allowed me to think and communicate my boundaries more clearly to the person. It did not change the other person, but it helped me say what I really wanted to say, which was empowering.
- **Visualizations to heal and forgive past or present relationships.** These can be used for relationships where we can no longer be in the physical presence of that person.

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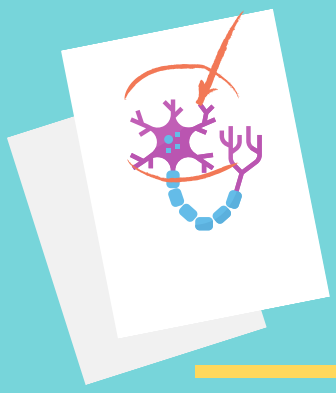
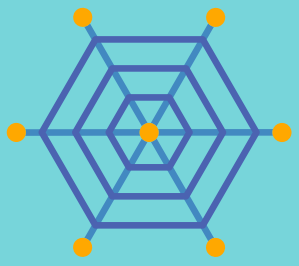


Super-Regulation: A New Type of Human

So, quick review: self-regulation is what we do on our own to regulate our nervous system. We can do that by using external conditions or activities (conditional, or bottom-up regulation), or by withdrawing our attention from the outside world and using our mind to create a desired state (unconditional or top-down regulation)

With co-regulation, we use relationships to regulate our physiological state. We can do this in the presence of other people (conditional, bottom-up), as well as by using our own mind and imagination (unconditional, top-down).



So what is Super-Regulation?

The essence of the word 'super' relates to the idea of 'beyond' or 'transcending'.

Super-regulation is our ability to create a desired physiological state within us, both by using self-regulating and co-regulating abilities - but with an extra dimension of being able to do this in a conscious way that is in service to others, to help them learn to self- and co-regulate. Super-regulators go beyond themselves, to act as a regulator for an entire system, group or community.

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SUPER-REGULATION

A super-regulator is aware of their own abilities to regulate and are able to help others to do this for themselves, either through teaching it explicitly or creating optimal conditions in a conscious way.

This can come in many forms. Examples of super-regulators include:

A teacher who is able to explain to students how to get into an optimal state for learning, or creates conditions to help students do this - even without making it explicit to the students.

A leader of a company who consciously makes efforts to find their own optimal state and then creates frameworks for their employees to self-regulate and co-regulate, both at home and at work.

A sports coach who is able to help athletes use both their mind and body to regulate themselves before, during and after competition.

The essence of a Super-Regulator is someone who has personally experienced the transformative benefits of self-regulation and co-regulation, and who understands that all humans will benefit from taking conscious care of their mind-brain-body system. Super-Regulators care about creating conditions and sharing wisdom on how to optimize the human mind-brain-body system.

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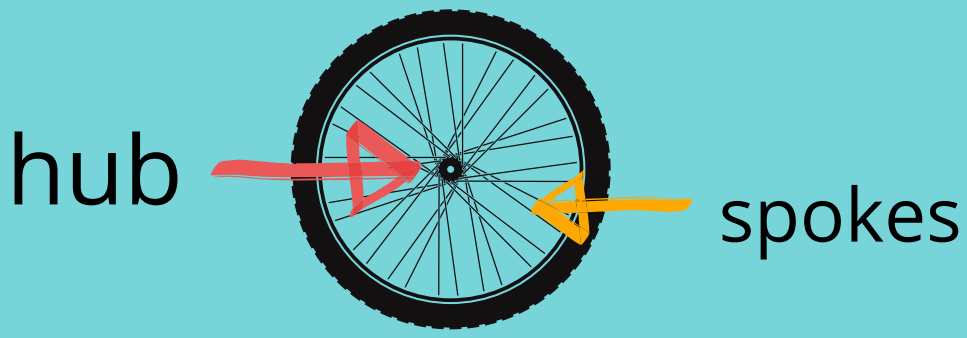
SUPER-REGULATION

SUPER-REGULATORS: THE HUB OF A WHEEL

Imagine a super-regulator as being someone who is at the hub or center of a wheel. The spokes represent all of the relationships that surround the hub.

A super-regulator is the 'eye of the storm', someone who can hold steady for others, but who also needs others in order to keep turning. Without the spokes, the wheel would collapse. Without the hub, the spokes would have nothing to center themselves on.



Every human on the planet is capable of becoming a super-regulator. However, because our earliest experiences and conditions that are not always in our control can make it difficult for some people to learn how to regulate in adaptive ways, it is challenging for a large portion of the planet to learn how to consciously self-regulate.

Another important note is that human children are not born with the capacity to self-regulate. They MUST have caregivers who create conditions for this and who nurture the child's brain development through co-regulation and modeling self-regulation. So whether we are dealing with young people, or grown-ups - there's a good chance some of them did not have what they needed growing up in order to become a super-regulator.

This is why we need models. Models are not more 'special' than anyone else. It's just they've managed to figure out how to regulate themselves and they understand they need to help others do it too.

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SUPER-REGULATORS DON'T MODEL PERFECTION

Another important point is that super-regulators are not always calm. They are not always gentle, and they are not always regulated.

In fact, what super-regulators are good at are coming back to their center - even if they get thrown off course. Because they are still emotional and can have ups and downs, they are a better model for others because they can show what it looks like to course-correct. If a model is always 'perfect', they are not able to demonstrate how to get back up after a fall, since they have never 'fallen'.

So how does a person become a super-regulator? It's a perpetual process and not a 'goal' to achieve. In addition to learning how to self-regulate and co-regulate using a variety of methods, the journey of a super-regulator often also includes the following:

- a desire to evolve, grow and learn how to embrace what we think are our 'faults'

- an intention to create a sense of safety and nurturing with others

- actions that involve taking emotional risks (like saying "no" when you feel depleted, or saying "I love you" even if you are scared of feeling rejected)

- a sense of humor and playfulness

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SUPER-REGULATORS NEEDED!

Let's wrap this up for now with a quick review.

For any given stimulus, you - the organism - can influence your response by learning how to have more conscious control over:

Your temporary physiological state
Your neural and behavioral resources
Your perception of yourself and the world around you

You can do this by experimenting and practicing self-regulating and co-regulating behaviors. These can be with your mind only (unconditional) or through experiences and relationships that engage your physical senses (conditional).

When you get better and better at optimizing your internal state through regulation, you increase your chance of being able to help others learn to do this for themselves. This is the journey of a Super-Regulator.

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SUPER-REGULATION

i go into many of these concepts in my book, The Biomechanics of Human Communication. It will be published in October 2023 and i'll have links to it on my website and in my weekly newsletter. I'll also be covering many more topics in short videos on YouTube every Tuesday!

So make sure to subscribe to my YouTube channel as well as my newsletter - where I'll send you the weekly video plus a short article to accompany it.

If you'd like to really dive deep into a wide range of neuroscience-related topics and become part of a vibrant learning community, please join my monthly seminar series! The list of topics include:

October 3, 7:30 PM PST: Neuroplasticity and early childhood: How life experiences affect brain development and life trajectories

November 7, 7:30 PM PST: Emotion Regulation: Mastering our nervous system across the lifespan

December 5, 7:30 PM PST: Attachment and Affiliative hormones: how our drive to connect can impair or enhance our lives

January 9, 7:30 PM PST: Distortions and filters: Why communicating and understanding others is harder than we think

February 6, 7:30 PM PST: What are emotions? A look at appraisals and coping

March 5, 7:30 PM PST: Vibrational Beings: How others' frequencies affect and reflect our hearts and minds

April 9, 7:30 PM PST: 'Use your words': How language helps us regulate

May 7, 7:30 PM PST: Empathy and Social Understanding: Dangers, myths and benefits

June 4, 7:30 PM PST: Relational resilience: How to use neuroscience to build thriving families, partnerships and communities.

You can join any month, or register for all of them. You'll gain a sense of community with amazing people from all over the world who love learning about neuroscience and personal growth. You'll also get notes emailed to you after each seminar to help you anchor your learning and apply it to daily life. THANK YOU... for taking the time to subscribe ! I'm honored that you chose to spend some time with me. If you have any questions or comments, email me at hello AT stefaniefaye DOT com. And I'd love see you at one of my seminars!

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S U P E R - R E G U L A T I O N

About Me

I'm a neuroscience specialist with expertise in optimizing learning, performance, attentional control, cognitive flexibility, neurodiverse challenges and emotion regulation using biofeedback, cognitive training and frameworks that integrate mindset, childhood experiences and family systems.

I have worked as a counselor, cognitive trainer, reading therapist, research analyst, coordinator of learning programs, and have analyzed many physiological aspects of nervous system states and brain functioning including electric conductance of the skin (GSR), facial electromyography (EMG), heart rate variability and quantitative electroencephalography (QEEG). I Integrate all of this with my experience training in monasteries with meditation masters from Vietnam, India and West Africa.

youtube: youtube.com/c/stefaniefaye
instagram: @stefanieffaye
website: stefaniefaye.com
linkedin: https://www.linkedin.com/in/stefanie-faye/

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