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## PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MALADAPTIVE MOTHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS IN A FAMILY AFTER DIVORCE: ISSUES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING AND PSYCHOCORRECTION

**Abstract.** *We describe four consecutive stages of the development of maladaptive mother-child relationships in a family after divorce: 1) an initial, but quite significant increase in tension, which stimulates the usual ways of solving some problems; 2) a further increase in tension in conditions when these methods for developing adaptive mother-child relationships in a family after divorce turn out to be ineffective and useless; 3) an event greater increases in tension, which requires the mobilization of external and internal sources for the development of adaptive mother-child relationships in a family after divorce; 4) if everything turns out to be useless, the fourth stage comes, which is characterized by increase in the level of anxiety and depression, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, and disorganization of the personality.*

*In order to identify the psychological conditions for the development of adaptive relationships between a mother and a child in a family after divorce and to the greatest extent possible to positively resolve the problem of socialization of a child from a single-parent family, the adaptation of this child as a whole to social life, in a family in which the parents have recently experienced a divorce, it is, in our opinion, possible under the conditions of planning, implementation of a set of measures with the aim: the earliest possible identification of psychological problems of a child, registration of a child from a single-parent family, if this is required by the child; the identification of the causes of psychological distress of a child from a single-parent family; provision of informational psychological assistance to a child from a single-parent family; the organization of prevention of inappropriate ways of raising a child from a single-parent family in so-called "socially oriented risk group"; under the conditions of psychologically directed coordination and organizational assistance to a child from a single-parent family by both a psychologist and a social educator, based on a psychologically conditioned algorithm compiled specifically for working with single-parent families. Psychological activity with the child should be organized in the conditions of the child's education in a secondary educational institution, that is,*

at school, where we proposed the program “Socio-psychological assistance to children from single-parent families”, showing different ways of its testing and implementation, taking into account the fact that the basis of social disadvantage is significant violations in family interaction in the “Mother – Child” system.

The goals of the program “Socio-psychological assistance to children from single-parent families” there are: creating positive psychological conditions for the successful socialization of a child from a single-parent family, which was implemented by us through a system of psychological tasks and objectives, such as: early identification of single-parent families, their identification by a psychologist immediately after the parents’ divorce, identification before the child has developed serious mental traumatic conditions; providing informational and educational assistance to a single-parent family, both the mother and the child, by including them in an artificially created “socially directed risk group” by a psychologist; providing psychological assistance with the aim at largely successful socialization of a child from a single-parent family; if it is possible, carrying out the activity of a psychologist to reduce the number of single-parent families, such as families in which the child is raised only by the mother.

**Key words:** maladaptive mother-child relationships, after divorce, adaptive relationships between a mother and a child, socio-psychological assistance to children, a single-parent family.

**Problem’s statement.** When considering the concept of maladaptive family situations, it is necessary, first of all, to specify the concept of a *maladaptive situation*. A situation (from the Latin “Situation” – the event, the position) is a certain unstable set of conditions and negative, unproductive circumstances that create certain relationships between people, a certain negative, destructive, unproductive situation or even a crisis situation that negatively affects family life as a whole and shows its course (Barsalou, Santos, Simmons & Wilson, 2008).

In psychological research (Hathout & Namer, 2018) for practicing psychologists, the concept of “adaptive situation” it means a system of external prerequisites for the subject that motivate, facilitate and mediate the person’s attitude to life, his/her vital energy, his/her activity, under which psychological conditions predict and explain the external adaptive situation for the subject, and it means:

1. The external adaptive position in relation to the subject is perceived in spatial and temporal terms as some external location in accordance with the paradigm of space and temporal boundaries.
2. Purely in temporal terms as a warning of maladaptive, destructive and aggressive actions of the subject.
3. In functional and paradigmatic terms adaptive situation is as a significant independence quality from the space of the corresponding prerequisites or conditions of the individual at the time of manifestation of actions and activities and activity in a whole.

In this regard, scientists (Lin, Chen, Chan & Hsu, 2019) also include the formation of adaptive states of the subjects of activity themselves in the previous time of carrying out the activity as elements of the adaptive situation, if they determine their consistent, functional and generally accepted adaptive behavior. It should be noted that a complete description of the adaptive situation involves the allocation and separation of adaptive requirements imposed on the individual from the outside or developed by him/her, which appears for the subject as some initial data, which can be regarded as prerequisites for the psychological conditions for the development of adaptive relationships between a mother and a child in the family after divorce.

So, **the purpose of our research** is to analyze psychological characteristics of maladaptive mother-child relationships in a family after divorce: issues of psychological counseling and psychocorrection.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Scientists (Hampe & Grady, 2005) perceive the concept of “adaptive situation” as a certain harmonious position, comfortable environment, a set of adequate reasons. Scientists (Mann, Malone, Nielsen, Goldman, Erdos & Gelernter, 1997) define

the concept of “adaptive situation” as a set of certain adaptive values and dominant attitudes that an individual or a group of people deal with in the process of the activity and in accordance with which this activity is planned and its results are evaluated. Moreover, according to many scientists (Soloff, Lynch, Kelly, Malone & Mann, 2000), each specific adaptive or maladaptive activity is a solution, a productive solution is a certain, even maladaptive situation of social interaction.

The authors (Malone, Waternaux, Haas, Cooper, Li & Mann, 2003) distinguish three types of adaptive data, which was contained into the paradigm of the adaptive situation of social interaction:

1. Purely objective adaptive prerequisites in which an individual or a society acts adaptively. These prerequisites are a set of adaptive values (such as economic, social, spiritual, religious, axiological, intellectual and others, which directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, but always adaptively, affect the state of cognition of the individual of other people or a micro-group, as well as an individual).

2. The attitudes existing in an individual or a micro-group, which at a given moment in time have a real impact on the adaptive behavior of the individual.

3. The definition of an adaptive situation, which is a more or less adaptive concept of the prerequisites for the development of the individual, the formation and the awareness of its values, attitudes, desires and ideals.

Scientists (Alyami & Mohsen, 2019) believe that the concept of adaptive situation of personal development is usually used to denote the adaptive social environment that can be used most optimally for the adaptive development of a child. An adaptive situation of personal development should be considered, as scientists suggest, in accordance with the harmonization of the child’s personal characteristics and the qualities of the person who acts in this situation, performs the activity in comparison with the adaptive activity itself. Other scientists (Liu & Zhang, 2014), in particular, argue that the adaptive situation of personal development, in which the child’s behavior is carried out, often does not remain unchanged, but, on the contrary, significantly changes under the influence of the child’s behavior (activity) towards its harmonization, due to which new adaptive qualities of the subject are arisen. According to scientists (Oquendo, Malone, Ellis, Sackeim & Mann, 1999), each adaptive situation dictates its own style of adaptive behavior and actions of the child: in each adaptive act, a person “presents” himself/herself and his/her personal qualities and characteristics are different, and if this “self-presentation” is not adaptive or adequate, then social interaction will be considered complicated or maladaptive.

**The results of the research and their discussion.** Throughout a life, a person is likely to be in a certain adaptive or maladaptive life situation, and at the same time still try to solve their respective problems that arise in any case. According to scientists (Nordstrom, 2007), the concept of “adaptive problem situation” is very widely used in psychological research, which emphasizes the moment of a certain novelty for the subject of some aspects of our life, external adaptive prerequisites, adaptive social circumstances that a person must discover or invent for himself/herself. These prerequisites will also contribute to the creation of psychological prerequisites for the development of adaptive relationships between a mother and a child in the family after divorce. Although this problem should be dealt with specifically, which we will do within the paradigm of our research.

A maladaptive situation is a kind of event that causes great harm to human life, the environment, the existence of a certain social organization or its formation. In the family, scientists (Barsalou, 1999) note, maladaptive relationships between a mother and a child in the family after divorce, and these maladaptive relationships are considered to be receiving even negative information about some event, conflict, feature, situation, happy or unfortunate incident, etc. Scientists (Heidari, 2019) define maladaptive situations as some situations of emotional and intellectual stress, which requires a significant, essential change in adaptive ideas about the world and oneself in a rather short and insignificant period of time, which, in turn, is reproduced in the

paradigm of family space. According to the authors (Placidi, Oquendo, Malone, Brodsky, Ellis & Mann, 2001), a person who is in a maladaptive family situation cannot remain unchanged in terms of his/her internal personal characteristics. A child often fails to fully comprehend or rethink his/her acquired traumatic experience. He/she has a tendency to operate with familiar, completely stereotyped categories and use familiar, adaptive models of solving family problems. Maladaptive family situations should be perceived as an important warning that something needs to be done before something worse happens to the child himself/herself, to his/her personal development.

In modern literature (Sublette, Milak, Galfalvy, Oquendo, Malone & Mann, 2013), the following types of maladaptive relationships between a mother and a child in a family after divorce are distinguished:

- Sudden maladaptive relationships, when there is no time and opportunity to prepare and plan the person's activities. This includes the situation of parental divorce, the situation of the death of one or both parents, the situation of the death of a brother or a sister, as well as situations when a child together with the mother found themselves in a space where an earthquake, fire, war in Ukraine, etc. is taking place.

- Emerging and directly formative maladaptive relationships, which provide considerable time for the research and planning one's own activities, one's own actions, when the task was to conduct psychocorrection of the child's maladaptive states before the psychological crisis enters the most critical phase.

- Permanent, long-term maladaptive relationships, which can last for months or years, despite the efforts of both parties (a mother and a child) to eliminate them.

It should be noted that the theory of *maladaptive mother-child relationships* in a family after divorce appeared in the psychological space relatively recently. Its beginning is considered to deal with the analysis of acute, deep grief. Among the ideological sources of the theory of maladaptive mother-child relationships in a family after divorce are also psychoanalysis (and primarily such concepts, as mental adaptive balance and psychological adaptive defense), some ideas of T. Krzeszowski (1993) and the theory of social roles. The distinctive features of the theory of maladaptive mother-child relationships in a family after divorce, according to scientists, are the following ones:

- the theory of maladaptive mother-child relationships in a family after divorce refers mainly to a specific child, although some of its concepts are used in relation to the family, small and large social groups;

- the theory of maladaptive mother-child relationships in a family after divorce emphasizes both the possible pathological consequences of such relationships and the possibilities for growth, adaptability and development of the personality.

Among the social psychological events that can lead to maladaptive relationships between a mother and a child in the family after divorce, various authors distinguish the following ones: death of a loved one, serious illness, physical separation, separation from parents, family, friends, changes in appearance, changes in a gender role, changes in sex, changes in a social situation, a marriage, sudden changes in social status, etc.

We describe four consecutive stages of the development of maladaptive mother-child relationships in a family after divorce:

- an initial, but quite significant increase in tension, which stimulates the usual ways of solving some problems;

- a further increase in tension in conditions when these methods for developing adaptive mother-child relationships in a family after divorce turn out to be ineffective and useless;

- an event greater increases in tension, which requires the mobilization of external and internal sources for the development of adaptive mother-child relationships in a family after divorce;

- if everything turns out to be useless, the fourth stage comes, which is characterized by increase in the level of anxiety and depression, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, and disorganization of the personality.

We believe that the development of maladaptive mother-child relationships in the family after divorce can end at any stage if the danger disappears or a solution can be found. In particular, the authors distinguish two types of the development of maladaptive mother-child relationships in the family after divorce, which differ in the degree of possibility of realizing the inner need of life or the desire for the full depth of life. The maladaptiveness of the first type, the authors believe, it can significantly complicate and interfere with the child's realization of the life plan, but it still preserves the child's full ability to restore the course of life interrupted by maladaptive mother-child relationships in the family after divorce. This is a truly significant test, from which a person can emerge only if he/she has significantly preserved his/her life plan and has proven his/her identity and self-identity. The maladaptive relationships between a mother and a child in the family after divorce of the second kind, the crisis of family relationships, to a large extent makes it impossible to realize the life plan that the child previously built. The result of experiencing this impossibility is so-called metamorphosis of the personality, the degeneration of adaptive relationships between a mother and a child in the family after divorce into purely maladaptive ones, the adoption of a new, acceptable life plan for the child, new life values, a new life strategy, a new self-image.

The maladaptive relationships between a mother and a child in a family after divorce take a person out of the usual life rut. On the one hand, for a child, the maladaptive relationships between a mother and a child in a family after divorce are stress, depression, neurosis, aggression and instability. On the other hand, a person is given the opportunity to look at his/her life at a given period of time as if from the outside, that is, the usual life is presented to the child from a different perspective and the complex, stressful circumstances and events that have occurred are assessed. Scientists, in such a case, name the main directions that the child uses to develop adaptive relationships between a mother and a child in a family after divorce:

I. A person does not intend to put up with the difficult situation of the parents' divorce that has been arisen, and then there is:

- a destruction of the personality, dissatisfaction with the outside world, which pushes the child to consciously avoid the development of adaptive relationships between a mother and a child in the family after the divorce, due to the destruction of established stereotypes. In this case, the child relies on the fact that, having changed life circumstances, he/she will thereby get out of the crisis and new opportunities will open up before him/her, which will give him/her a certain positive result, bring the desired satisfaction, and this, in general, will contribute to the development of adaptive relationships between a mother and a child in the family after the divorce;

- the completion of maladaptive relationships between a mother and a child in the family after divorce and the understanding that the crisis situation indicates that the usual and established life situation has exhausted itself, the end of one of the life stages is coming, and after the divorce of parents, one should not get stuck in a rut, stop at what has been achieved, but rather sum up some past results, prove something or finish certain things before moving on to the beginning of a new stage.

According to modern authors, both options have one direction, which is the child's search for new opportunities for the development of adaptive relationships between a mother and a child in the family after divorce, but the reasons that prompt the child to such a search are quite different.

II. A person, through analytical reflections, considers the process of developing adaptive relationships between a mother and a child in the family after divorce, where the desire to preserve existing life circumstances prevails, and then one observes:

- maintaining the development of adaptive mother-child relationships in the family after divorce, under the conditions of which the child makes some analytical conclusions that help him/her to accept this life situation of divorce as God-given and find acceptable options for getting

out of the family crisis, supporting his/her own family after the divorce of his/her parents and further effective development of adaptive mother-child relationships in the family after divorce;

- maintaining the development of adaptive mother-child relationships in the family after divorce at a certain level, which is marked by the fear of loss and future pessimistic changes that force a person to preserve at any cost the living conditions and positive situations to which he/she is accustomed.

In this second direction, the authors note, the child seems to be prompted to action by various motivations, he/she is guided by them and uses somewhat opposite methods to achieve his/her goal, such as the goal of developing adaptive relationships between a mother and a child in the family after divorce.

III. A person adapts to certain externally given circumstances that have arisen, and in this case there is:

- a change in the prerequisites for the development of adaptive relationships between a mother and a child in the family after divorce. In this case, the child accepts a certain stable, formed over the years situation in order to better assess the crisis situations of the development of adaptive relationships between a mother and a child in the family after divorce and find a certain optimal solution to get out of it. In this case, the child tries to act as a strategist who waits and plans to use external and internal circumstances to develop adaptive relationships between a mother and a child in the family after divorce.

- the process of adaptation to the prerequisites for the development of adaptive mother-child relationships in the family after divorce. In this case, the child seems to be going with the flow, relying on the decisions and actions of other people. The child will be dominated by a great reluctance to accept responsibility for the consequences of the development of adaptive mother-child relationships in the family after divorce, for shortcomings and lack of confidence in their own abilities. In these cases, the situation of the development of adaptive mother-child relationships in the family after divorce will sooner or later lead a person to any life conditions that he/she will be forced to accept globally. In this case, the main thing is to feel the very moment when temporary expectation turns into a stage of constant inactivity, and then the prerequisites for the development of adaptive mother-child relationships in the family after divorce can be considered lost.

The authors (Byram, 2012) point out that each of the options is neither better nor worse than the other one, any of them has the right to exist. Usually, a child uses various combinations of these directions in the person's life to develop adaptive relationships between a mother and a child in the family after divorce, since life is quite diverse and none of the situations is able to repeat the other exactly, in detail.

Thus, the analysis of literary data and the results of our own empirical research allowed us to draw the following conclusions: the development of adaptive mother-child relationships in a family after divorce are special moments in the person's life; the main types of formation of maladaptive mother-child relationships in a family after divorce are psychological, mental, economic, social, age, professional, family, crisis of avoidance, and these adaptive mother-child relationships in a family after divorce are axiological, existential ones. The characteristics of the types of the development of adaptive mother-child relationships in a family after divorce, their periodization and possible ways of overcoming maladaptive mother-child relationships in a family after divorce are given. The development of adaptive mother-child relationships in a family after divorce is considered as progress (promotion of the child's personal development and transition to the next stage of its development) and regression (life dead end, personal degradation). Most often, maladaptive relationships between a mother and a child in a family after divorce are defined as stress factors in the person's life. Maladaptive relationships between a mother and a child in a family after divorce create crisis situations characterized by emotional and intellectual stress for the child and his/her parents, which requires the child to significantly change his/her perceptions of the world around him/her and himself/herself in a short period of time.

A detailed scheme for analyzing the modern family was proposed by scientists W. Croft (2009). Their description of the family includes the following main characteristics and their basic variants:

1. Structural composition of the family: complete family (there is both a mother and a father); incomplete family (there is only a mother or only a father); distorted or to some extent deformed family (the presence of a stepfather instead of a father or a stepmother instead of a mother).

2. Functional features of the family: harmonious family, disharmonious family. Disharmonious families are also quite different. In the psychological literature, the following reasons for family disharmony are distinguished in such a way:

- there is no partnership between the parents (one of them dominates, the other one only submits to the first, while the child, at the same time, submits to the stronger parent);

- a destructured family (there is no, even the slightest understanding between family members, there is no emotional attachment and solidarity between family members in solving any life problems);

- a family that is currently falling apart (dominance of only one family member with excessive dependence on others, rather strict regulation of all family life, lack of emotional warmth towards each other; all this leads to the autonomy, sovereignty of the spiritual world of family members from the formation of a powerful leader within it).

So, the family is an extremely complex organized structure with diverse relationships, where the basic role is played by the relationship between parents and children, and the relationships between spouses, and between spouses and their parents, and between the older generation and the younger generation in general, and between older and younger children. And in each of these paradigms, a conflict, a family crisis can arise. The family itself seems impossible without these relationships, but in some cases, they are the main cause of dysfunctional family life and the collapse of the family in general.

**Conclusions and perspectives of further research.** So, in order to identify the psychological conditions for the development of adaptive relationships between a mother and a child in a family after divorce and to the greatest extent possible to positively resolve the problem of socialization of a child from a single-parent family, the adaptation of this child as a whole to social life, in a family in which the parents have recently experienced a divorce, it is, in our opinion, possible under the conditions of planning, implementation of a set of measures with the aim:

- the earliest possible identification of psychological problems of a child, registration of a child from a single-parent family, if this is required by the child (in particular, if the child has been diagnosed with certain psychotic and non-psychotic conditions, in particular depression, neurosis, etc.);

- the identification of the causes of psychological distress of a child from a single-parent family;

- provision of informational psychological assistance to a child from a single-parent family;

- the organization of prevention of inappropriate ways of raising a child from a single-parent family in so-called “socially oriented risk group” (in the case when certain non-psychotic conditions of the child, in particular depression, neurosis, which can cause certain psychotic disorders, in particular schizophrenia, bipolar disorder);

- under the conditions of psychologically directed coordination and organizational assistance to a child from a single-parent family by both a psychologist and a social educator, based on a psychologically conditioned algorithm compiled specifically for working with single-parent families (in this case, here and hereinafter, by “single-parent family” we will understand a family where there is only one child who is raised by the mother). Psychological activity with the child should be organized in the conditions of the child’s education in a secondary educational institution, that is, at school, where we proposed the program “*Socio-psychological assistance to children from single-parent families*”, showing different ways of its testing and implementation, taking into

account the fact that the basis of social disadvantage is significant violations in family interaction in the “Mother – Child” system.

*The goals of the program “Socio-psychological assistance to children from single-parent families”* there are: creating positive psychological conditions for the successful socialization of a child from a single-parent family, which was implemented by us through a system of psychological tasks and objectives, such as: early identification of single-parent families, their identification by a psychologist immediately after the parents’ divorce, identification before the child has developed serious mental traumatic conditions; providing informational and educational assistance to a single-parent family, both the mother and the child, by including them in an artificially created “socially directed risk group” by a psychologist; providing psychological assistance with the aim at largely successful socialization of a child from a single-parent family; if it is possible, carrying out the activity of a psychologist to reduce the number of single-parent families, such as families in which the child is raised only by the mother. The ways of providing the program “Socio-psychological assistance to children from single-parent families” will be the perspectives of our further research.

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**ПСИХОЛОГІЧНА ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКА ДЕЗАДАПТИВНИХ  
ВЗАЄМОСТСУНКІВ МАТЕРІ І ДИТИНИ В СІМ'Ї ПІСЛЯ РОЗЛУЧЕННЯ:  
ПИТАННЯ ПСИХОЛОГІЧНОГО КОНСУЛЬТУВАННЯ ТА ПСИХОКОРЕКЦІЇ**


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У статті описано чотири послідовні стадії розвитку дезадаптивних взаємостосунків матері і дитини в сім'ї після розлучення: 1) первинне, але досить-таки суттєве зростання напруги, що стимулює звичні способи вирішення проблем; 2) подальше зростання напруги в умовах, коли ці способи для розвитку адаптивних взаємостосунків матері і дитини в сім'ї після розлучення виявляються безрезультатними, марними; 3) ще більше збільшення напруги, що вимагає мобілізації зовнішніх та внутрішніх джерел для розвитку адаптивних взаємостосунків матері і дитини в сім'ї після розлучення; 4) якщо все виявляється марним, настає четверта стадія, що характеризується підвищенням рівню тривоги та депресії, почуттями безпорадності та безнадійності, дезорганізацією особистості. Зазначено, що з метою виокремлення психологічних умов розвитку адаптивних взаємостосунків матері і дитини в сім'ї після розлучення та найбільшою мірою позитивного вирішення проблеми соціалізації дитини з неповної сім'ї, адаптації цієї дитини в цілому до суспільного життя, в сім'ї, в якій батьки зовсім нещодавно пережили розлучення, є, на наш погляд, можливим за умов планування, здійснення та імплементації комплексу консультативних та психокорекційних заходів, спрямованих на: найбільш раннє виявлення проблем психологічного плану у даної дитини, постановка дитини з неповної сім'ї на облік, якщо дана дитина цього потребуватиме; визначення причин психологічного неблагополуччя у дитини з неповної сім'ї; здійснення інформаційної психологічної допомоги дитині з неповної сім'ї; організація профілактики невідповідних шляхів виховання дитини з неповної сім'ї у так званій «соціально спрямованій групі ризику»; за умов психологічно спрямованої координаційно-організаційної допомоги дитині з неповної сім'ї з боку і психолога, і соціального педагога, на підставі психологічно зумовленого алгоритму, складеного спеціально для роботи з неповними сім'ями. Психологічна робота з дитиною має бути організована в умовах навчання дитини в закладі середньої освіти, тобто в школі, де було запропоновано програму «Соціально-психологічна допомога дітям із неповних сімей», показано шляхи її апробації та імплементації з урахуванням того, що в основі виникнення соціального неблагополуччя знаходяться суттєві порушення у сімейній взаємодії у системі «Мати – Дитина».

Визначено цілі програми «Соціально-психологічна допомога дітям із неповних сімей»: створення позитивних психологічних умов для успішної соціалізації дитини з неповної сім'ї, що реалізовувалася нами через систему психологічних завдань і задач, таких як: раннє виявлення неповних сімей, тобто їхнє виявлення психологом одразу після розлучення батьків, виявлення до того часу, поки у дитини ще не виникли серйозні психічні травмуючі стани; здійснення інформаційної та просвітницької допомоги неповній сім'ї, тобто і матері, і дитині, шляхом їхнього включення до штучно створеної психологом «соціально спрямованої групи ризику»; надання психологічної допомоги, спрямованої на великою мірою успішну соціалізацію дитини з неповної сім'ї; за можливістю здійснення роботи психолога зі зниження кількості неповних сімей, тобто сімей, в яких дитина виховується лише матір'ю.

**Ключові слова:** дезадаптивні стосунки матері та дитини, після розлучення, адаптивні стосунки між матір'ю та дитиною, соціально-психологічна допомога дітям, неповна сім'я.

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