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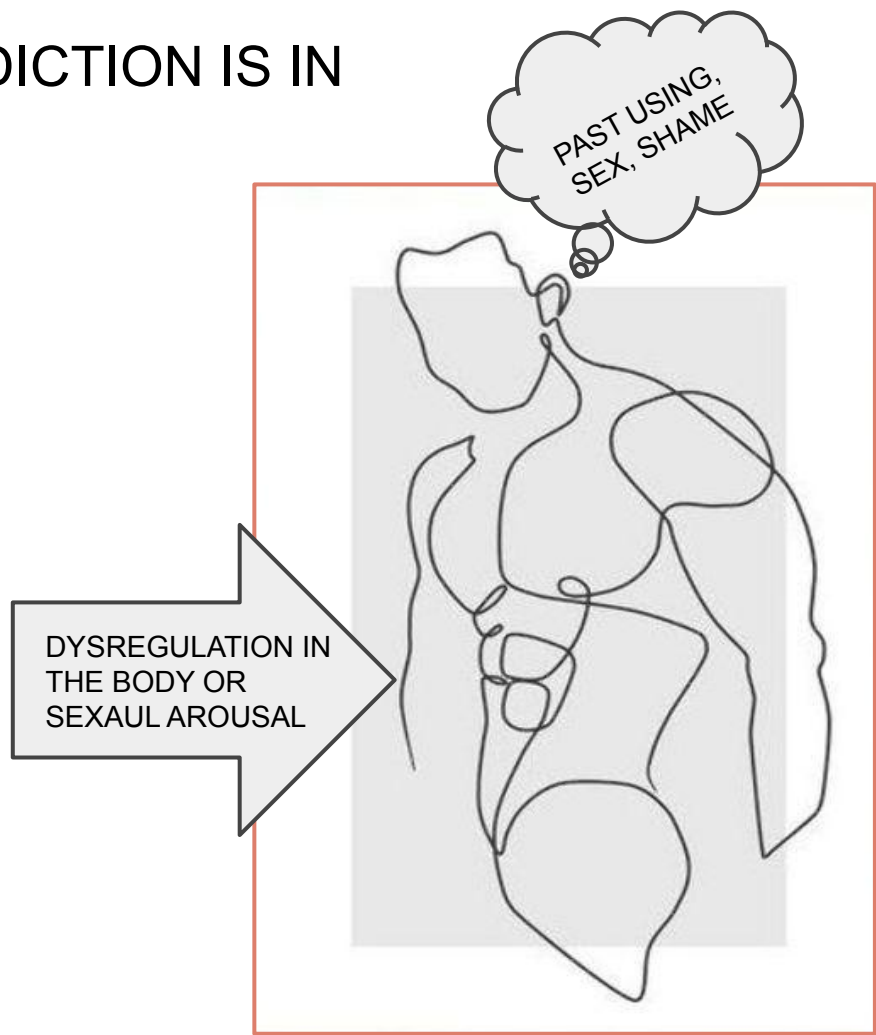
SEX IS IN THE BODY WHILE ADDICTION IS IN THE BRAIN

Chemsex fuses neural pathways in the brain. *"If it fires together it wires together"*

Most users feel cravings or triggers from toes to nose

Arousal in the body is felt first and followed by thoughts of using or acting out sexually

Repressed emotional material such as guilt/shame or trauma can activate a fight or flight response triggering thoughts or impulses to escape or use



WHY OTHER DRUGS FAIL TO COMPARE TO CHEMSEX

STIMULI

DOPAMINE OUTPUT

+1000%



+150%



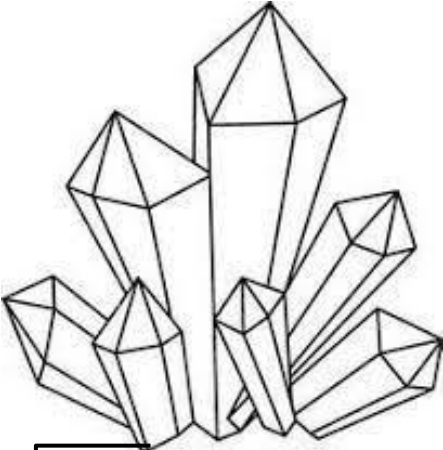
+200%



+300%



+200%



Not only do users instantly feel a surge of dopamine that fails in comparison to any other drug, they also might feel a false sense of connectedness with others.

Crystal meth instantly eradicates shame for most users. For those that struggle to connect it can be a hot wired conduit to intimacy. In a population flooded with external oppression, homonegativity, and stigma regarding sex, the allure of a shame free sexual experience is very enticing.

The Permanent Journal, NCBI, 2008. The "Party Drug"
Crystal Methamphetamine: Risk Factor for the Acquisition
of HIV

CYCLE OF CHEMSEX ADDICTION

UNRESOLVED EMOTIONS (SHAME, GUILT, REMORSE)

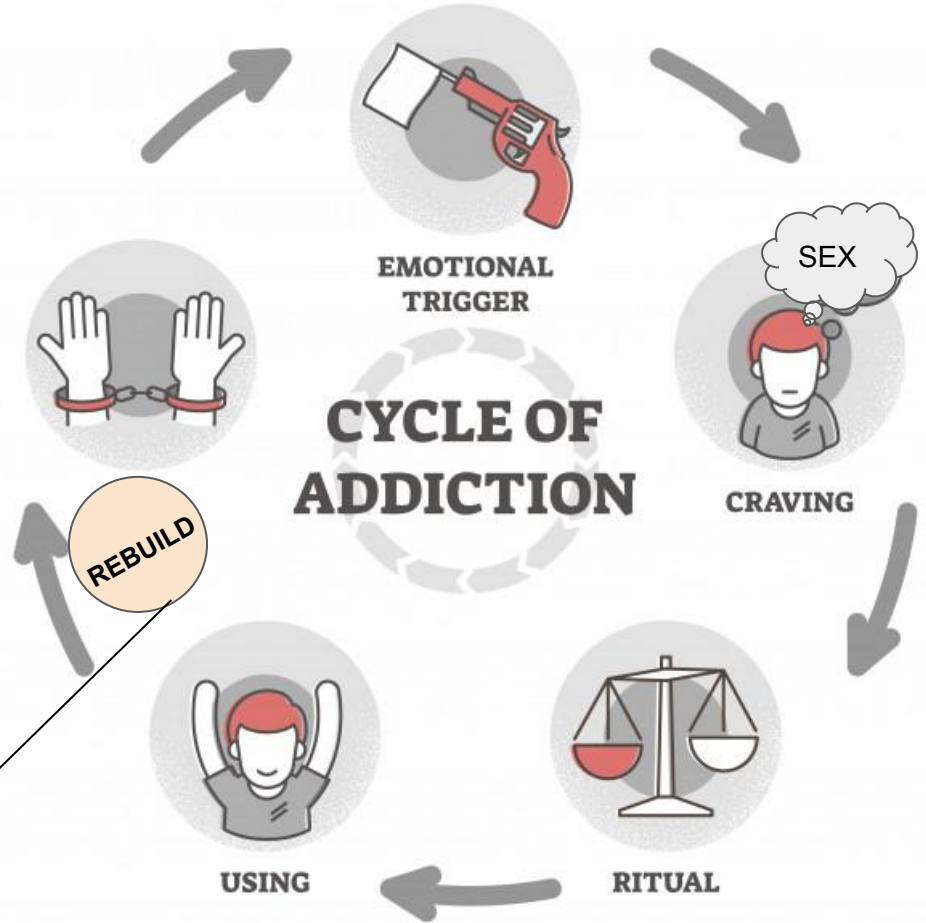
THOUGHTS OF USING OR HAVING SEX

RITUALISTIC BEHAVIORS
PREPPING FOR BINGES

BINGE ON SEX, METH OR BOTH

**REBUILD AFTER USING WITH HEAVY FOCUS ON
EXTERIOR WELLNESS**

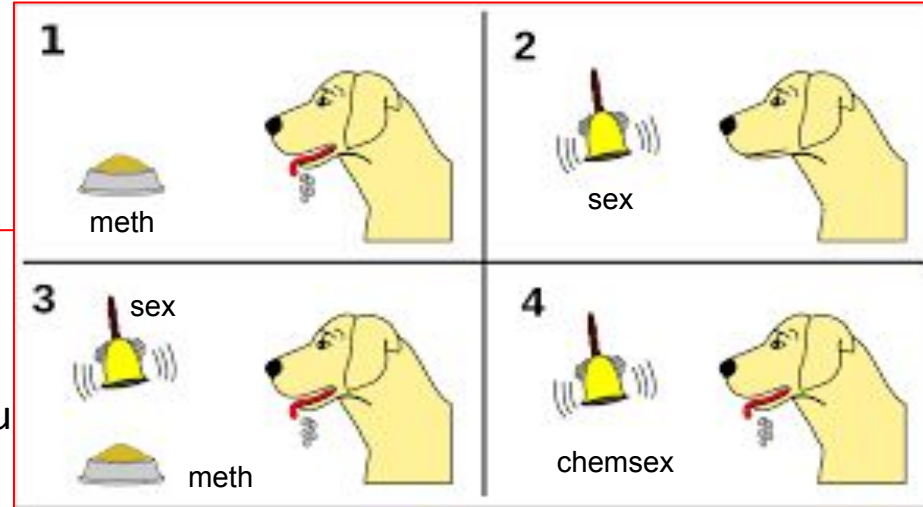
UNRESOLVED EMOTIONS (SHAME, GUILT, REMORSE)



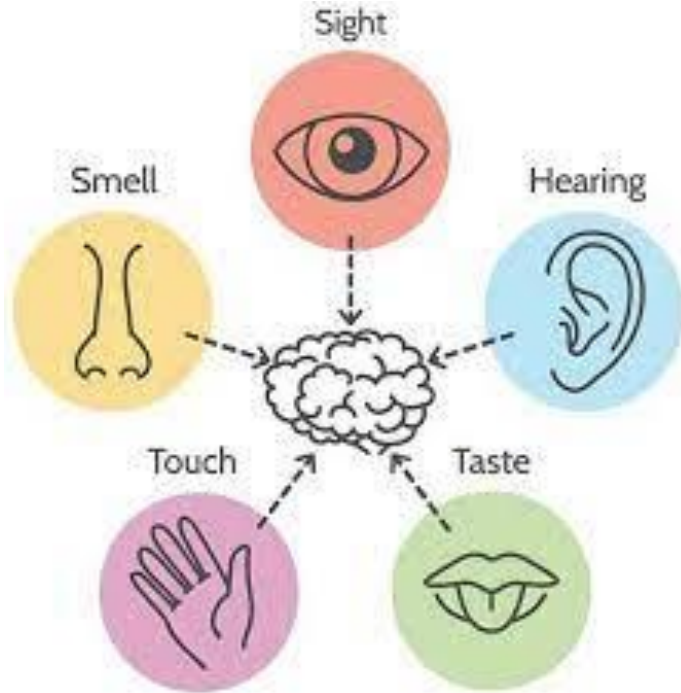
Drug + Sex Fusion

Dopamine causes bonding and users might feel a counterfeit sense of connection to one another
Sexual desire becomes highly focused and also drug dependent

Creates complex network of triggers and cues
Sex triggers meth; meth triggers sex – well into recovery. Addressing both issues with substance relapse prevention planning and an integrative sexual recovery plan is necessary.



RELAPSE TRIGGERS



Chemsex affects sensory perception and increases sensitivity to sensory triggers.

A sound from a hookup app indicating a message, color schemes from popular hookup apps (yellow/black), imagery from explicit to rated PG, social media content, masturbation to fantasies of past using sessions, items of clothing or sex toys, unresolved trauma and dysregulation, and euphoric recall.

Euphoric recall and thinking about past chemsex session can mimic the feeling of being high and induce strong cravings to use.

Having sex to soon in recovery process or engaging in secretive sex

Shame about sex or using and dishonesty around obsessive thoughts relating to sex

IMPACT OF METH USE ON THE BRAIN



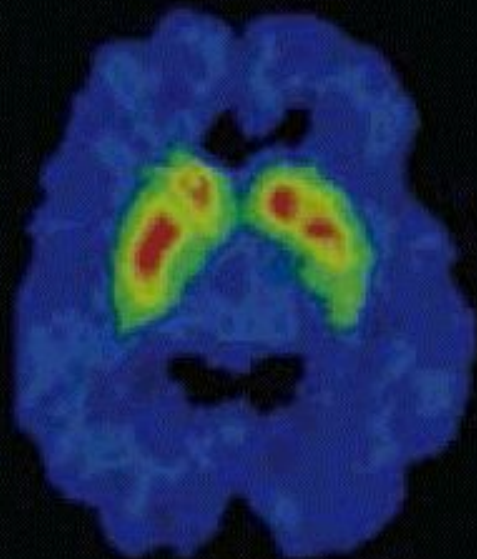
Chronic use of Meth is often associated with cognitive deficits ranging from impaired impulse control, attentional problems, memory impairment, and can lead to temporary or permanent anhedonia. Meth affects the reward circuit in the brain and users may be desensitized to risk and reward.

Brain injuries due to Meth can involve “riskier behaviors” including viewing more explicit material (extreme pornography), taking high stakes chances, and engaging in unsafe sexual meetings. Most chemsex users have a primary of sexual compulsion.

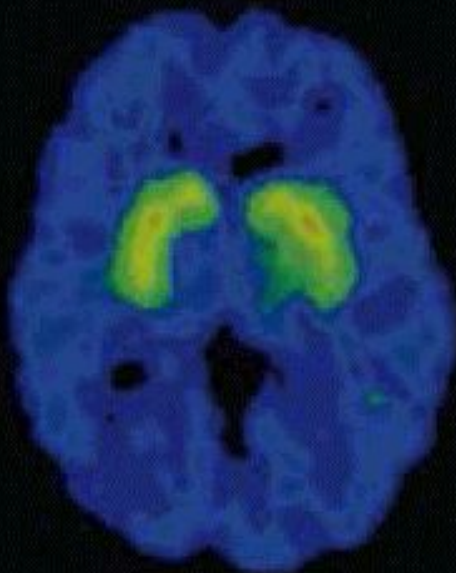
Paranoia and Psychotic features are often prevalent due to a flood of dopamine in the brain over a long period of times. Damaged receptors are unable to mitigate the flood of dopamine from the drug which can produce heightened states of paranoia.



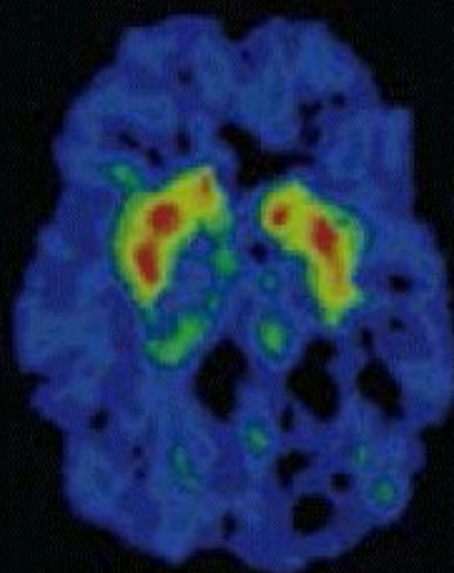
BRAIN RECOVERY WITH PROLONGED ABSTINENCE



Healthy Person



**METH Abuser
1 month abstinence**



**METH Abuser
14 months abstinence**

Digital Bath Houses

Reduction in self esteem among many users, reinforces faulty core beliefs.

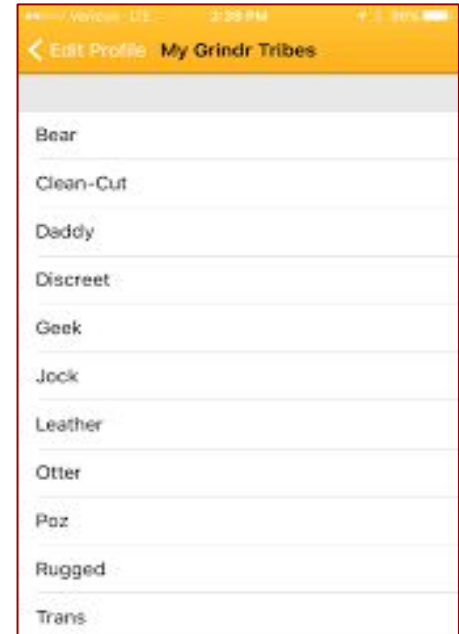
Compare and despair can lead to disordered eating habits and amplify existing body image issues.

Loss of courtship, intimacy, and relationship skills

Apps are unpredictable and can lead unsuspecting persons into using environments without their knowledge.

Reinforces “you must fit in this box” queer stereotypes or you don’t belong if you do not identify with these tribes

Instant access to meth and other drugs



HOMOSEXUAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT STAGES (CASS, 1984)

Stage model; individual progresses along this path; may take years to get through a stage and never complete stage 6. Foreclosure (individual denies identity or hides it from others) can occur in any stage and halt the process.

Stages

- 1. Identity awareness: Individual is aware of being “different.”**
- 2. Identity comparison: Strategies to deal with differences**
- 3. Identity tolerance: Commitment to an LGBTQ+ identity**
- 4. Identity acceptance: Identification of oneself as LGBTQ+**
- 5. Identity pride: Identification with and participation in LGBTQ+ culture**
- 6. Identity synthesis: Integration of former heterosexual and new identity.**

INTERNALIZED HOMOPHOBIA

“the gay person’s direction of negative social attitudes toward the self” (Meyer & Dean, 1998) and in its extreme forms, it can lead to the rejection of one’s sexual orientation. Internalized homophobia is further characterized by an intrapsychic conflict between experiences of same-sex affection or desire”.

- Feeling disgust towards other LGBTQ people who don't express themselves in a heteronormative way
- Excessive judgment of other LGBTQ people
- Anger and resentment toward other LGBTQ people for being out, or proud of their identity
- Transphobia, gender policing, shaming or harming LGBTQ individuals who do not fit into the gender binary
- Anger or embarrassment that other LGBTQ people “represent” you
- Toxic Shame (Shame is an emotion that activates the sympathetic nervous system and can lead to activation and compulsive behaviors)
- Inability to establish non-sexual intimate connections with other gay men due to unresolved internal biases

WHEN AROUSAL STATES ARE FUSED

Conditioning and priming often begins in early childhood from cultural messaging, societal imprinting, and family disapproval. This can lead to many early queer sexual experiences being secretive, shameful, or fear based. Homonegativity is often internalized and in some cases expressing one's sexuality can be a life threatening experience..

Human desire can be confused with survival states and can contribute to compulsive sexual behaviors as a means to cope or calm the nervous system. It may feel unnatural for some clients to experience sexuality without secretiveness, fear, or shame mixed in.

Some of the messages received by queer folks can throw natural human desire for intimacy and physical connection in to the shadows.



THE INTERSECTION OF TRAUMA & COMPULSIVITY

THE FEVER OF WAR OR SYMPATHETIC N.S.

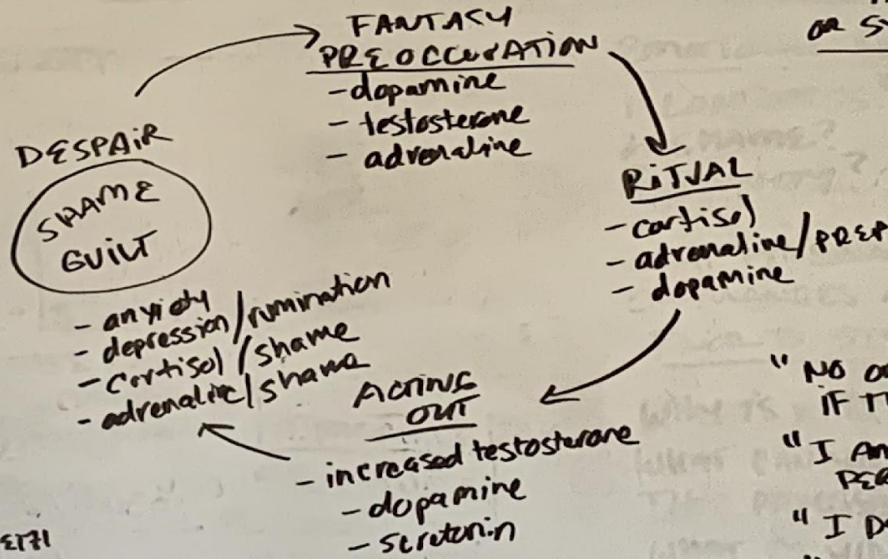
TRIGGERS! *

- Boredom
- Loneliness
- Anxiety
- Depression

BELIEFS

- "NO ONE WOULD LOVE ME IF THEY TRULY KNEW ME"
- "I AM A FLAWED BAD PERSON"
- "I DESERVE A BREAK"
- "I JUST NEED SEX"

"FIGHT, FLIGHT, FUCK"



DESPAIR
SHAME
GUILT

- anxiety / rumination
- depression / shame
- cortisol / shame
- adrenaline / shame

- increased testosterone
- dopamine
- serotonin

SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

CORTISOL - STRESS HORMONE

- RELEASED IN F/F
- RUMINATION
 - ANXIETY

ADRENALINE - STRESS HORMONE

- PREPARATION HORMONE / IMPULSE
INCREASED BLOOD FLOW / BREATHING

TESTOSTERONE - SEX HORMONE

- SEX DRIVE - NEUTRALIZING AGENT TO CORTISOL
ADRENALINE CALMS THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

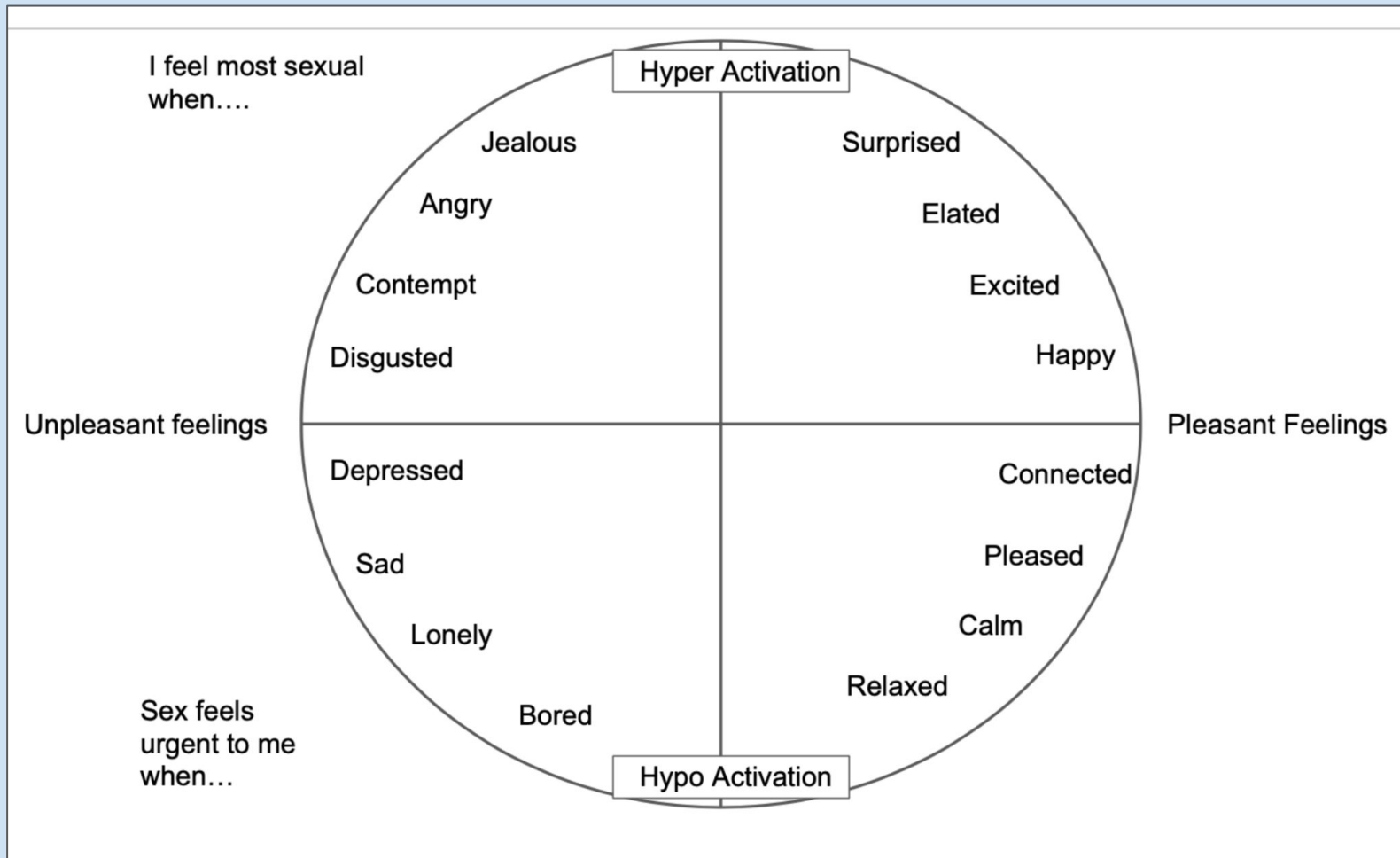
DOPAMINE - INCREASED FLOW W/ METH

"feel good chemical"

* DOPAMINE DANGEROUS WITH METH USE

RISKIER BEHAVIOR IS NEEDED TO ACHIEVE THE "ORIGINAL HIGH"

- * KNOW YOUR BODY!
- * IMPULSE / CRAVING SOMATIC ID
- * THOUGHT / TIME DISTRACTIONS
- * IMPULSE / CRAVING WILL PASS IN 20/30 MIN
- * GROUNDING
- * BREATHING



Hijacking the Arousal Template

Connections to dopamine-rich fantasies about using or past using sessions become deeply grooved and automatic. Fantasy contamination skills are imperative.

Dopamine requires novelty and increased stimulation, riskier and more taboo scenarios needed for same effect.

Sober sex might feel “boring” in recovery.

Requires a reset from superstimulation including porn, masturbation, sex, social media, and apps.

Persistent anhedonia in early recovery

Each of us has a sexual arousal template – a “map” in the brain of what we find sexually appealing.



What is an Arousal template?

Arousal templates embed what we learned, what we are told, and what we believe about sex and love

Biology: Genetic coding for what's hot and what's not. Biological attraction is based on survival instinct that is encoded in our DNA. Chemsex hijacks the biological template and needs time to reset.

Family: How did your parents interact with you? Were they loving, affectionate, cold, distant, punishing, reward based? We become what was modeled to us.

Early Sexual Experiences: In some case abuses can have a profound effect on ones arousal template. Often times when sexual abuse takes place people are imoobilized and cannot give consent. Feelings like shame, fear, and anger mix and mingle with sex and certain emotionally arousing states become tied together.

Components of the arousal template:

Feeling states

Personality types

Objects

Processes

Body Types

Courtship stages

Substance Use

Understanding your arousal template

How was the topic of sex handled when growing up in your family?

What do I think about sex? How do I feel about it? "I think sex is..." (List all your honest thoughts about sex.)

What or who all played a role in my sexual learning and development (i.e. parents, peers, church, media, etc.), and in what ways? Who was your first "crush"?

Write about your early exposure to sexual images (i.e., pornography) or sexual stories (i.e., erotica). What did you learn about sex from those exposures?

What did I learn about sex? What was I taught?

What did I learn about courtship?

What attracts you to sexual/romantic partners?

What is attraction anyways?

Sexual attraction: attraction that makes people desire sexual contact or shows sexual interest in another person(s). Desire, lust, want.

Romantic attraction: attraction that makes people desire romantic contact or interaction with another person or persons. Dating, enjoying intimate time together.

Aesthetic attraction: occurs when someone appreciates the appearance or beauty of another person(s), disconnected from sexual or romantic attraction. "That's hot."

Sensual attraction: the desire to interact with others in a tactile, non-sexual way, such as through hugging or cuddling. Physical attraction that isn't sexual.

Emotional attraction: the desire to get to know someone, often as a result of their personality instead of their physicality. This type of attraction is present in most relationships from platonic friendships to romantic and sexual relationships.

Intellectual attraction: the desire to engage with another in an intellectual manner; more to do with what or how a person thinks instead of the person themselves.





What is your Erotic Blueprint?



Erotic BluePrints and Arousal states, also called our accelerators and brakes are unique to each of us, and the more we allow ourselves to be curious about who we are erotically, the more satisfied we will be sexually.

The quality of our relationship with our own bodies and our sexuality is greatly influenced by how we embody pleasure.

We can better understand this by exploring the unique ways each of us are wired.

Energetic Blueprint

Turn-ons: space, longing, presence, eye-gazing, anticipation, build-up, tease, and light or hovering touch.

Superpowers: able to experience sexual connection without touch and to go into an altered transformational state. Connection can be from physical touch but also can be without any physical touch and more energetic.



Shadow aspects: becoming overwhelmed with too much touch or stimulation, or touch that is too quick and doesn't allow time for a slow build-up of arousal. One can easily shut down if sensing that one's partner is not fully present.

Sensual Blueprint

Turn-ons: pleasure in all of the 5 senses, such as music, textures, food, art, flowers, dancing, romance, massage, sunsets, nature, and lingering contouring touch. With sex, the Sensual likes a lot of buildup of pleasure and it can consist of an hour or so of just making out before moving on to anything else..

Superpowers: turn ons revolve around anything that stimulates the senses—even a beautiful sunset, delicious food, or an exquisite piece of music. The Sensual has access to pleasure all over their bodies.

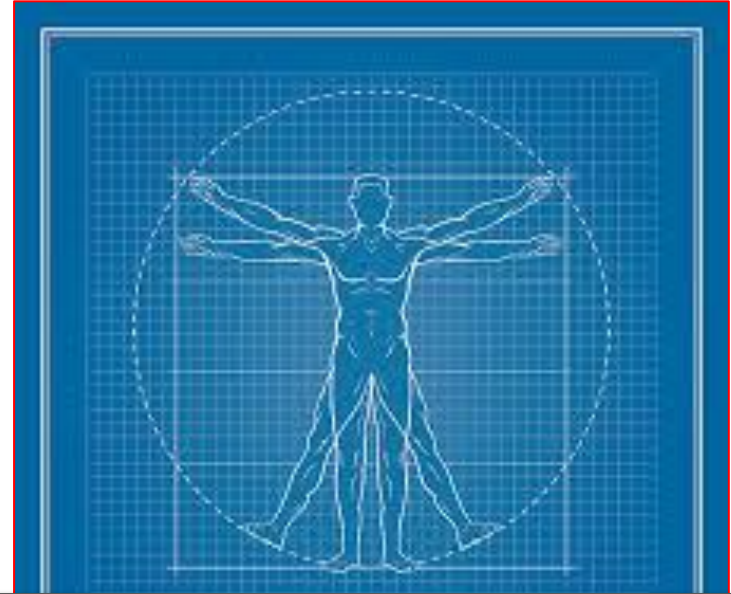


Shadow aspects: getting stuck in their heads and pulled out of the moment, especially if anything is off in the environment (i.e. temperature, sounds, smell, feel of something, a messy room), or can get stuck in their heads with worries and thoughts (i.e. I'm taking too long to orgasm, I don't like the way my body looks).

Sexual Blueprint

Turn-ons: genitals, genital touch, naked bodies, certainty of frequency of sex and orgasm, getting to an orgasm, porn (basically, what we commonly think of as sex in our society).

Superpowers: simplicity and directness of sex for them. Sex is viewed as both fun and a necessary.. Sex between 2 Sexuals can be delightfully easy, fun and fulfilling.



Shadow aspects: having a narrow definition of sex, defining it as only intercourse and penetration, becoming impatient and goal-oriented, focusing only on orgasm. This laser focus often misses the deeper erotic connection. It is interesting to note that whereas the Sensual needs relaxation to have sex, the Sexual often needs sex to relax.

Kinky Blueprint

Turn-ons: anything that is considered taboo, out of the norm, or forbidden for the individual (i.e. for some people, anything other than missionary position may be considered taboo!). It is important to know that Kink is more than whips, leather and chains. It has to do with going to your erotic edges and allowing yourself to marinate in curiosity about your erotic potential. It can manifest with psychological play (power dynamics between dominance and submission), or can involve sensation play (i.e. ropes/Shibari, restraint, sensation items).

Superpowers: creativity and ability to approach sex as play.

There is the potential to go into altered states of consciousness and often there can be healing and transformation through positive Kink experiences.



Shadow aspects: deep shame. When this is present there is an inability to acknowledge and communicate one's Kinky desires (which have been labeled as taboo) both to oneself as well as to a partner.

Shapeshifter Blueprint

Turn-ons: they can experience all of the turn-ons of the other Blueprints and be fed erotically by all 5 Blueprints and shift among the different Blueprints. They love novelty, excitement, discovery and MORE, MORE, MORE (think hours of sexual play with lots of variety)!

Superpowers: tend to be more erotically sophisticated. The Shapeshifter finds unlimited pleasure and orgasm in all the different Blueprints and likes to weave in turn-on from all of the Blueprints. As a result they are good lovers to partners of any Blueprint, because they have access to pleasure in all the different Blueprints.



Shadow aspects: they often feel like they are too complicated, especially if they have a partner who is not a Shapeshifter. Also, because they can shapeshift to please their partner in their partner's Blueprint, the Shapeshifter often feels starved and like they either can't ask for what they desire or are seen as too much by a partner.

Intensity

sensational adjective

sen-sa-tion-al (sen-'sā-shnəl ◀▶) -shə-nəl

[Synonyms of sensational >](#)

- 1 : of or relating to [sensation](#) or the [senses](#)
- 2 : arousing or tending to arouse (as by lurid details) a quick, intense, and usually superficial interest, curiosity, or emotional reaction
| *sensational* tabloid news

Sex addiction by nature is intensity seeking. Its is sensational and disconnected, lustful. Many intensity seekers use sex or other behaviors to mitigate discomfort, numb out, seek relief and find themselves in the trance of preoccupation. Intensity is urgent.

Intimacy

sensory adjective

sen-so-ry ('sen(t)s-rē ◀▶) 'sen(t)-sə-rē

[Synonyms of sensory >](#)

- 1 : of or relating to [sensation](#) or to the [senses](#)
| *sensory* stimulation

Intimacy is connected to all 5 senses. Taste, touch, sound, smell, sight. Intimacy is safe, pleasurable, sensual, and focused on desire rather than lust. It is built on trust and sexual safety. Intimacy is not urgent or rushed.

FIFTY SHADES OF INTIMACY

Emotional intimacy	Intellectual intimacy	Physical intimacy	Experiential intimacy	Spiritual intimacy
<p>This is what allows you to tell your loved ones personal things that you might not necessarily share with strangers. Emotional intimacy is a space of vulnerability, mutual trust, and acceptance.</p>	<p>Getting to know how another person's mind works and sharing the map to your mind too. Intellectual intimacy is built on ideas, philosophies, and creative thinking. It is built on the exchange of ideas and meaningful conversations.</p>	<p>Touch and closeness between bodies. In a romantic relationship, it might include holding hands, cuddling, kissing, and sex.</p>	<p>You build experiential intimacy by spending quality time with someone and growing closer over common interests and activities.</p>	<p>Generally speaking, spirituality is about belief in something beyond the physical realm of existence. That belief can be in a higher power, in human souls, spirit of the universe, or in a greater purpose.</p>

Domains of sexual recovery

- *Nurturance* –the capacity to care for self and others
- *Sensuality* – the use of the senses, emotions, spirit to connect sexually
- *Self-image* – a positive view of self, including your sexual side
- *Self-definition* –a clear sense of self and boundaries in sexual activities
- *Comfort* –the ability to be comfortable with yourself and others
- *Passion* – the ability to express and receive deep feelings of desire about the relationship and sexual experience
- *Knowledge* – education on sexuality in general and your own preferences
- *Relationship* – the capacity to have intimacy and friendship in one relationship
- *Partnership* – the ability to be linked together but also have separate functions and identities
- *Non-genital sex* – the ability to express affection without the use of the genitals
- *Spirituality* – the ability to connect sexual desire to the greater purpose of one's life



Boundaries vs Standards

Boundaries (internal)

- no last minute dates
- no disrespect
- no chasing
- no pursuits of unavailable people
- no sex before 3 dates
- no abuse of ANY kind

Standards (external)

- must have the basics: job, house, transportation
- versed in recovery in some way
- emotionally available
- time
- working on themselves
- has a therapist
- has a support group or close friend group

What is SAFE sex?

The **SAFE sexuality** mnemonic is great for helping to define your sexual behavior:

- **Secret.** Sex isn't safe when it's a secret
- **Abusive.** Sex doesn't involve hurting self or others. This includes physical, emotional, and psychological abuses.
- **Feeling bad.** Sex isn't used to medicate discomfort or pain.
- **Empty.** Sex isn't safe when it's empty or produces feelings of guilt, shame, or remorse. The core principle of sex positivity is feeling good about the sex you're having.



What are the 4 rules of consent?

Consent is a voluntary and mutually agreed upon ongoing agreement.

It is informed.

It is mutual.

It is honest.

It can be a verbal or non-verbal agreement.

Consent is ongoing

If you're unsure, just ask.



Sex Transparency Worksheet

Part 1: What Do I Want?

During sex, my objective is _____

(to orgasm, to make my partner orgasm, to explore, to have fun, to watch/voyeur)

My pronouns are _____ Do they change when I have sex? _____ Explain: _____

My level of experience is _____

For me, sex is _____

(a fantasy, a way to destress, a way to connect with my partner, meet new friends, a community, a new experiment)

I want to have sex because: _____

(I'm curious, horny, I want catharsis, I want to try something new, I want to please my partner, to have fun)

When have sex, I want to feel _____

(turned on, scared, safe, powerful, humiliated, sensual, in control, out of control, pushed to my limit, cared for...)

Part 2: What Will We Do?

The one thing I would most like to experience during sex is _____

Do I want to act out a certain role or scenario? _____

Do I want to engage in physical play, psychological play, or both? _____

Do I want to feel/inflict pain? _____

Do I want to engage in BDSM? _____ What kind? _____

Do I want to use toys? _____ If yes, which ones and where on my body to use? _____

Sober self sex and mindful masturbation

Focus is on the body and somatic experience of masturbation

Regaining impulse control by making a self sex “date”

Sober self sex script

Stop should euphoric recall occur

Managing cravings and urges through support systems, grounding skills.

Journaling as a method of emotional processing after self sessions

Experimentation with toys as a way get to know your sober body



Introducing Sober Sex

Identifying healthy sexual ideals.

Begin discussing values and goals relating to sex.

Create a bottom line behaviors plan as illustrated in SCA

Relapse prevention planning around sex including “bookending” dates or hookups. Create a safety plan.

<p>Bottom Line:</p> <p>Behaviors I abstain from no matter what (count time)</p> <p>Anything that puts me in Legal or Physical Jeopardy.</p> <p>Anything that causes so much pain and suffering, that I'd do anything to stop</p>	<p>Action Plan:</p> <p>Actions I take on a daily basis in order to stay sober:</p> <p>Stepwork: Steps, writing, inventory, amends, work with sponsor Support: Meetings, fellowship,</p> <p>Self Care: Exercise, work, bills, mail, cleaning, responsibilities</p>
<p>Gray Area:</p> <p>Behaviors I work toward progress not perfection</p> <p>Anything that probably belongs on my Bottom Line, but I'm not ready to give it up yet.</p> <p>Any hard to define behaviors (ie, cruising vs. flirting, compulsive vs. healthy masturbation)</p>	<p>Vision Plan:</p> <p>Goals I want to achieve as a result of taking these actions:</p> <p>Self: Self esteem, positive body image, accept imperfections Social: Close friends, part of a community, clubs/hobbies Material: Good career, car, home, debt free, financially stable Emotional: Loved, joy, secure, freedom from fear and shame Sexual: Healthy sex, dating or caring committed relationship</p>

Back Into The Body

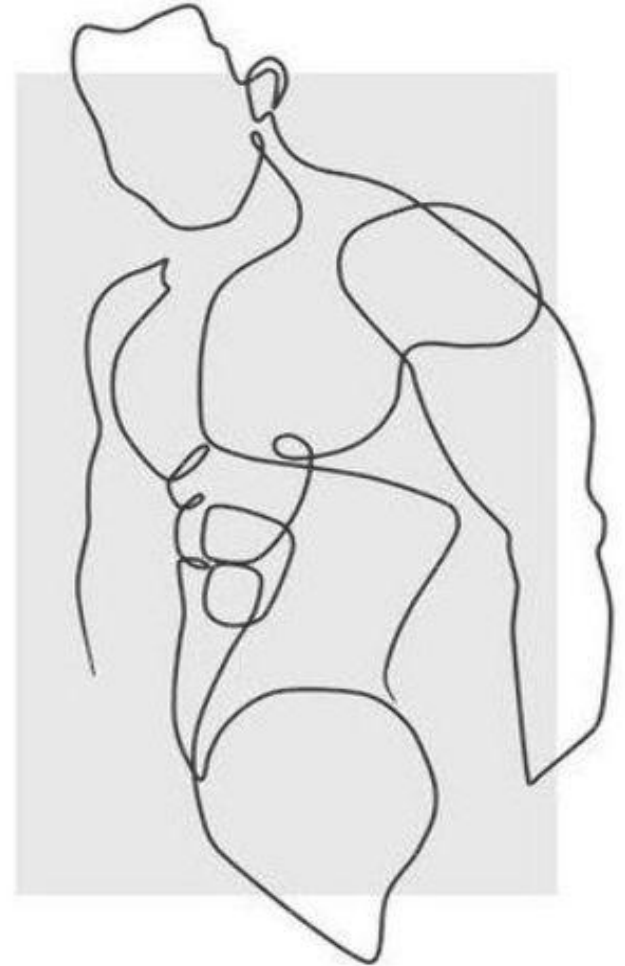
The body can be an unsafe place for many chemsex users.

Focus is on safety and stabilization with bottom up regulation vs top down.

Identify somatic cues of various arousal states that trigger thoughts of using.

Arousal states begin from the neck down sensate focused therapy can help clients decrease urge driven impulses.

Yoga, ecstatic dance, stretch lab, and holotropic breathwork can be useful in helping clients return to their body.





YES NO



Have a safety plan in place

Know your partner(s)...are they safe emotionally, mentally, physically

Discuss boundaries and limits

Keep a clear definition of wants and desires

Practice mindful self sex prior to having sex with another person

Express your sexual desires openly and discuss with fellows or friends

HAVE FUN!!!

Unsafe sexual situations

Loose outline of boundaries

Hooking up with persons under the influence of drugs/alcohol

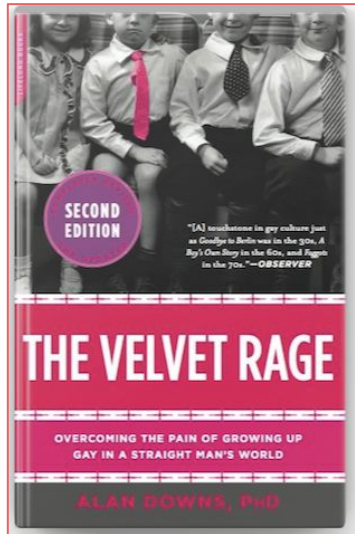
No safety plan

Unable to talk openly with wants, needs, desires with partner(s)

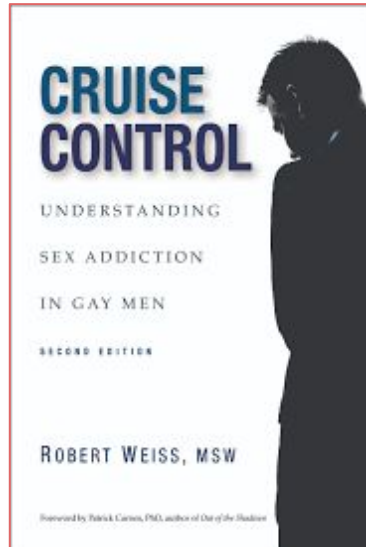
Too early in recovery

Good Reads

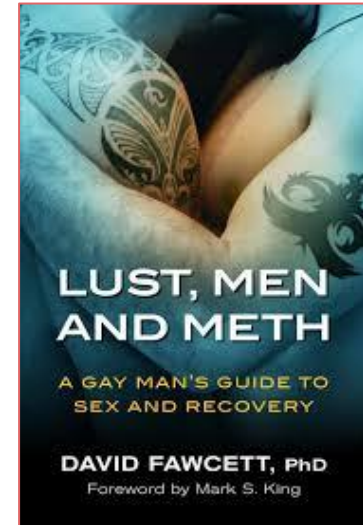
The Velvet Rage addresses the myth of gay pride and outlines three stages to emotional well-being for gay men.



Cruise Control is a resource that can help gay men determine if they are indeed a sex addict and whether or not they are willing to explore behavioral changes.



Lust, Men, and Meth: A Gay Man's Guide to Sex and Recovery provides insight for gay men struggling with the issues of sex and recovery



***Disclaimer: All of these reading selections are written from the perspective of white, cis-gender gay males.**

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