

DISABILITY INDEPENDENCE, EMPOWERMENT & FAIRNESS

INTERSTATE CONNECTIONS



General Disability Etiquette - April is Parkinson's Awareness Month

Mobility Disabilities.

Respect personal space and assistive devices. Offer help, when necessary, but always ask first.

Do: Before assisting, ask, "Can I help you with that?" and wait for a response

Don't: Lean on or move someone's wheelchair, walker, cane, or other mobility aid unless you have been asked.

Don't: Block access to ramps, elevators, or accessible parking spaces.

Don't: Assume someone needs help based solely on their disability.

These "Think Again" reminders are courtesy of ILICIL Independent Lifestyles, Inc. in Sauk Rapids Minnesota.

UPCOMING EVENTS JUST FOR YOU!

Palouse Family Fair Walk & Roll

April 25, 2026 - 1-4 pm - Pullman City Playfields

Join DAC NW at this fun event held for all our citizens! Enjoy a bike rodeo, our wheelchair obstacle course, tour police cars and fire trucks and more! Free face painting and cotton candy. Walk & roll the track at 2:30 with Butch T. Cougar and Tase T. Lentil.

Find more accessible events at www.dacnw.org/events



Interacting with Your Elected Officials

NEWS FROM DAC NW

They say you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. You can use this approach when communicating with your elected officials. People are hard wired to react emotionally. Social media's success is founded on that reaction and builds their algorithms to perpetuate the emotional response.

You need to rise above that if you want to build a relationship that might move your goals forward in our government.



You may have heard the story that broke about Washington State Senator Leonard Christian who used the “R” word during a Senate floor debate. People reacted with outrage. Indeed, the use of the slur caused significant pain within the disability community. But it also offers a chance for dialogue and growth.

DAC NW reached out to the Senator and invited him to a meeting, to discuss how he could become a genuine ally to the disability community. We invited him to connect so we could share the perspectives of the people we serve. Understanding the lived experience of people with disabilities is invaluable for any legislator.

He agreed and met with the Executive Director Mark Leeper and our staff at the DAC NEW office. We explained how the Independent Living Movement has spent more than 50 years working to shift public perception of disability - away from a model that views people with disabilities as problems to be managed, and toward one that recognizes every person's inherent dignity, autonomy, and right to participate fully in society. Words spoken from positions of power shape culture, influence policy, and signal to constituents who is valued and who is not.

The meeting went well and we connected on the needs of people with disabilities in Washington State including House Bill 1390 that would potentially harm those with intellectual disabilities. ³

Reacting emotionally to these issues can potentially cause the elected officials to “shut down” and dismiss our concerns. Instead, we worked together to see what we can build on common ground that we all share.



DAC NW – YOUR KEY TO INDEPENDENCE

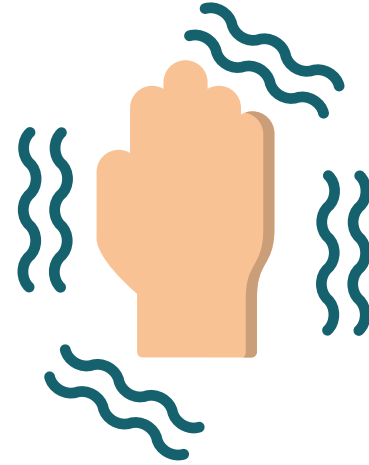
A Parkinson's Story from a Family Member

NEWS FROM DAC NEW

By Erin Ferrier

In February 2025, my mother passed away from Parkinson's disease dementia. She was 77 years old. April is Parkinson's Awareness Month.

When early signs of Parkinson's started approximately 10-15 years ago, my mother claimed it was just old age. She ignored the symptoms. By the time she did seek a diagnosis to qualify for hospice care, her quality of life had significantly diminished. By the time she was officially diagnosed, she was terminal. She passed away a month later. No one in the family was surprised by the Parkinson's diagnosis. You don't have to suffer in silence. Please seek help.



Parkinson's by the numbers

Parkinson's is the second most common neurodegenerative disorder in the U.S., following Alzheimer's. It affects more than multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, and ALS combined. While most diagnoses occur after age 60, Parkinson's can affect younger people too.

Parkinson's is a complex neurological disorder that can affect almost every part of the body, ranging from how you move to how you feel to how you think and process.

Symptoms like shoulder pain, depression, sleep issues, constipation, and loss of smell can appear long before motor symptoms but are often subtle and overlooked until after diagnosis.

According to [Davis Phinney Foundation for Parkinson's](#): It is not life-threatening in itself, but complications can be serious. It is progressive, meaning symptoms and effects get worse over time. There is no single cause or predictor, though researchers have discovered genetic and environmental factors may influence the development.

How Parkinson's Affects the Brain

Parkinson's is a brain disorder linked to the loss of dopamine-producing nerve cells (neurons) deep inside the brain. Dopamine's role: Dopamine is a neurotransmitter (chemical substance) that helps regulate the body's movement, coordination, and control. Impact of low dopamine: Less dopamine means difficulty with movement control and reduced mobility. Many treatments aim to replace or enhance dopamine.

Parkinson's Progression

Parkinson's is both chronic and progressive, meaning symptoms will change and worsen over time. The rate of progression varies by individual. While Parkinson's itself doesn't directly cause death, complications like choking, pneumonia, or falls can be life-threatening in late stages of the disease.

Understanding Parkinson's Symptoms

Parkinson's is officially classified as a movement disorder because it involves damage to the areas of the brain, nerves, and muscles that control the speed, quality, and ease of movement. While motor symptoms like tremor, stiffness, and slowness are often the most visible signs, non-motor symptoms, such as mood changes, sleep problems, and cognitive challenges, can have an even greater impact on your quality of life.

Parkinson's is a complex condition that causes a wide range of symptoms, which may begin years before diagnosis and change as the disease progresses. These can include: Pre-motor symptoms: early non-motor symptoms like loss of smell, constipation, depression, or anxiety. Motor symptoms: movement-related issues that typically appear after significant loss of dopamine-producing nerve cells, such as tremor and balance problems. Non-motor symptoms: challenges not directly related to movement, including changes in mood, thinking, sleep, digestion, and blood pressure.

No two people experience Parkinson's in the same way, and not everyone will have the same symptoms or progression. Symptoms can combine in ways that feel overwhelming. For example, poor sleep may worsen fatigue and intensify mood changes like anxiety or apathy.

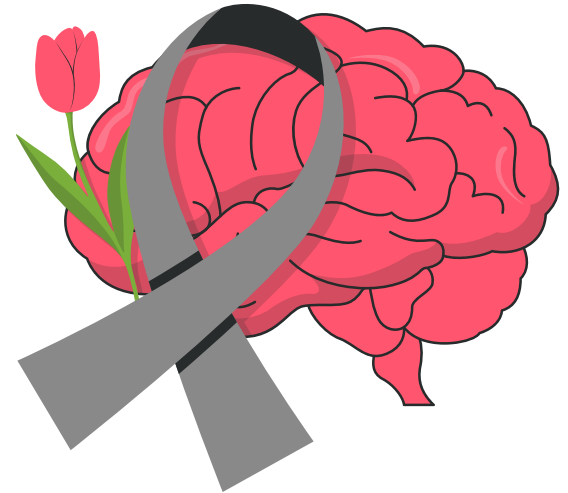
The [Davis Phinney Foundation for Parkinson's](#) emphasizes being informed about the range of possible symptoms helping you and your family take meaningful action to live well today.

"The important thing is to make a commitment to start. Stop waiting and start moving. Your goal isn't simply to accept Parkinson's. Your goal is to live well." - Davis Phinney

Vocal Exercises Protect Your Ability to Swallow and Speak

Parkinson's disease is a movement disorder, so it's important to keep everything moving, said Hanah McCabe, MS, CCC-SLP. This is why you should exercise every day--not just your limbs, but especially your vocal folds. McCabe is a speech therapist at Gritman Therapy Solutions, where she sees patients with Parkinson's and related disorders. She spoke at the March meeting of the Peer2Peer Parkinson's disease support group.

Your vocal folds, also called vocal cords, are two muscular folds inside your larynx that vibrate when you talk or sing. They work together to help you breathe and swallow your food safely. Swallowing disorders are common in people with Parkinson's, said McCabe.



McCabe is certified in the SPEAK OUT!® Therapy Program. This program helps people with Parkinson's and related disorders regain and retain their speech and swallowing. The program's aim is to have patients speak with "intent." McCabe said speaking with intent means to focus; concentrate; be purposeful; be mindful; take control of your speech; put forth conscious effort; say it like you mean it; and be deliberate. McCabe guides her patients through special exercises that help them strengthen their vocal folds. When you make your vocal folds stronger, she said, that helps you with your swallowing. The program was developed by the [Parkinson Voice Project](#), a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

McCabe taught the Peer2Peer group the following three exercises to help them warm up their vocal folds. She said when you do them, use your best voice with good intent. Be deliberate, hold your focus, and concentrate on the sounds you are making.

MAY-ME-MY-MOE-MOO

Say these words slowly, but as you do, lift your voice and project it forward.

Repeat five times.

AHHHHHHHH

Say "ahh" with a good quality, intentional voice for 6-8 seconds. Lift your voice and project it forward.

Repeat five times.

GLIDES

At a comfortable pitch, produce a steady "ahh."

Think of your voice as an elevator going from a low floor to a high floor. Glide up the floors with your voice. Stop.

Produce a steady "ahh" at that level.

Glide down the floors with your voice. Stop.

Lift your voice and project it forward.

Repeat five times.

The Parkinson Voice Project has other speech exercises on their web site that people can try.

If you're starting to notice changes in your voice or swallowing, said McCabe, get a referral to the speech therapy department at Gritman Therapy Solutions for a Speak Out Evaluation. This is covered by Medicare.

NW ADA CENTER ~ Idaho

ADA Question of the Month

QUESTION:

Will the ADA increase litigation burdens on employers?

ANSWER:

Some litigation is inevitable as with any other ruling.

However, employers who use the period prior to the effective date of employment coverage to adjust their policies and practices to conform to ADA requirements will be much less likely to have serious litigation concerns. In drafting the ADA, Congress relied heavily on the language of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and its implementing regulations.

There is already an extensive body of law interpreting the requirements of that Act to which employers can turn for guidance on their ADA obligations. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which has issued regulations implementing the ADA's title I employment provisions, published a technical assistance manual with guidance on how to comply and will provide other assistance to help employers meet ADA requirements. Equal employment opportunity for people with disabilities will be achieved most quickly and effectively through widespread voluntary compliance with the law, rather than through reliance on litigation to enforce compliance.

For additional information contact **Dana Gover, MPA, ADAC, Training & Technical Assistance Consultation**

Northwest ADA Center-Idaho Email: dananwadacenteridaho@gmail.com ADA

TA Hotline: voice and text

208-841-9422



Did U Know?

Captioning supports everyone including people with hearing loss or deafness, people for whom English is not their first language, and neurodiverse participants who may need captions to help focus. Captions also assist people with normal hearing who may be participating from a noisy space.

Step-by-Step Home Cleaning Guide (con't) for People with Disabilities by Sara M at Sanitair LLC

Bathroom Cleaning, Hygiene, and Health Support

Disabled-Friendly Bathroom Design and Cleanliness

A disabled-friendly bathroom design makes cleaning easier and safer. Bathrooms should support both hygiene and independence, with features that minimize physical effort.

Key design elements include:

- Walk-in or roll-in showers
- Grab bars near toilets and showers
- Non-slip flooring
- Wall-mounted sinks and cabinets



For cleaning, use long-handled scrubbers and spray cleaners that do not require excessive force. Choose mold-resistant materials to reduce maintenance frequency. Cleaning the bathroom regularly prevents bacteria buildup and reduces the need for intense scrubbing sessions.

Personal Hygiene Tips for Disabled Individuals

Personal hygiene is closely linked to bathroom cleanliness. Maintaining hygiene supports health, comfort, and self-esteem.

Helpful practices include:

- Keeping hygiene products within reach
- Using electric toothbrushes and razors
- Installing bidet attachments for easier toileting hygiene
- Using shower chairs for stability

If fatigue or pain interferes with daily hygiene, partial routines are acceptable. Focus on essentials and build consistency over time.

Laundry and Clothing Care

Laundry can be physically demanding, especially when machines are placed low or in inaccessible areas. Front-loading washers on raised platforms reduce bending and strain. Sort laundry while seated and use rolling hampers for transport. Smaller, more frequent loads are easier to manage than large ones.

Clean clothing contributes to hygiene, comfort, and confidence, reinforcing the benefits of an organized home.

One of the most important skills for sustainable cleaning is pacing. Overexertion can lead to pain flare-ups or fatigue that disrupt daily life. Clean for short intervals, such as 10-15 minutes. Alternate tasks using different muscle groups. And rest before exhaustion sets in.

Listening to your body allows you to maintain consistency without setbacks.

Affordable Drugs Resource!

SELF-DIRECTED PA SERVICES

Struggling with the cost of your medications? Besides trying Good Rx, and other coupon related websites at your local pharmacy, you can check for online/mail order prescriptions.

CostPlus Drug Company is a public-benefit corporation launched in January 2022 by Alex Oshmyansky and Mark Cuban to drastically lower prescription drug prices. By bypassing pharmacy benefit managers (intermediaries) and selling generic drugs directly to consumers with a transparent 15% markup, labor fee, and shipping cost, they aim to make medication affordable.

The company originally utilized Truepill Pharmacy for fulfillment but later transitioned to HealthDyne. The transparent pricing, showing the manufacturer price, their markup, and the final price makes it easy to compare prices with local pharmacies. It's focus is on generic drugs, so new and trial drugs won't be offered.

They do not take insurance - a boon for those without decent drug coverage. And their prices are often lower than most insurance co-pays. You do need a valid prescription from your doctor.

Check their site on which medications they currently carry first, then contact your doctor. Ask your doctor to write a new prescription that includes ALL of the following information: Your name, your email address, your date of birth, and your medications. Give your doctor this information for the pharmacy: **NCPDP ID # 5755167**



JOKE OF THE MONTH

Q: If you have 13 oranges in one hand, and 10 apples in the other, what do you have?

A. Big hands!

Services YOU control!

Semper Fi & America's Fund VETERANS WITH DISABILITIES

Supporting all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, Semper Fi & America's Fund provides one-on-one case management, connection, and lifetime support. They have a Transition Program that incorporates a proven holistic approach that helps veterans connect and grow, post-injury or following illness. Education support and career assistance provides them with the tools and skills to successfully reconnect with their communities and build improved, productive lives.

They also provide direct financial assistance and vital programming for combat wounded, critically ill, and catastrophically injured service members and military families during hospitalization and recovery.

The Housing Assistance Fund delivers vital modifications such as ramps, wider doorways, accessible showers, and can provide support for urgent rent, mortgage, and utilities, as well as critical home repairs. Their goal is to create secure, stable homes that meet the unique needs of every family. They sometimes partner with the Home Depot Foundation and can rebuild driveways, pathways and entrances so vets can remain in their home.

They can also help provide adaptive vehicles and essential vehicle modifications to provide freedom and mobility, as well as car repairs and fuel support to ensure veterans and their families can safely travel to vital medical appointments.

From advanced visual aids and adaptive communication technologies to customized wheelchairs and home water systems for severe burn care, The Fund delivers innovative tools and equipment that empower recovery, strengthen communication, and support freedom and mobility.

You can connect with a Case Manager and apply for your needs at their website. <https://thefund.org/financial-family-assistance/> Scroll down to the Connect with a Case Manager in the dark blue box.

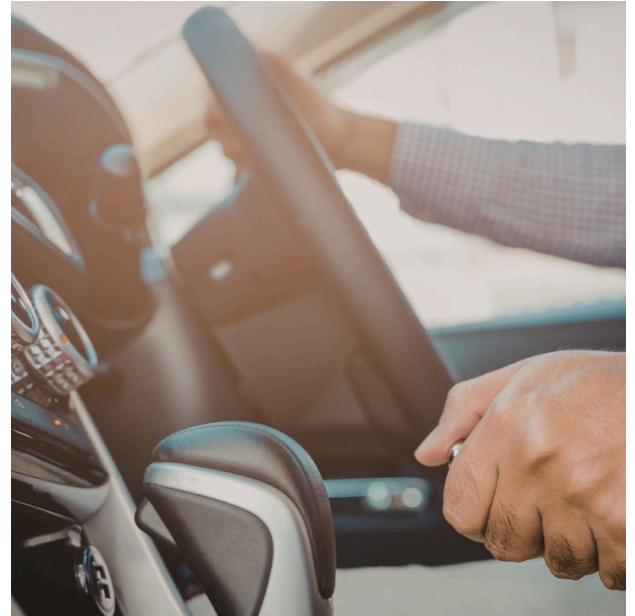


**VETERAN-
DIRECTED
CARE**

**Questions about Veteran Directed Care?
Call Spokane 509-434-7000
Or Walla Walla 509-525-5200**

Pathways to Partnerships at Work Young Adults – Next Chapter

Many youth with disabilities want to learn to drive, but families and professionals often wonder if it is a realistic goal. Disability related barriers can make the traditional path to drivers' education and getting a license more challenging. Transportation affects nearly every part of daily life, including getting to school, keeping a job, or taking the next step toward independence. This makes being able to answer the question, "Is driving a possibility for me?" critical.



To help explore this question and support informed decisions, Life, A Center for Independent Living, applied for and received funding from the Idaho Pathways to Partnerships grant to purchase a driving simulator. This new tool gives youth a safe way to understand whether driving is a realistic option and what supports they may need.

The simulator provides a realistic driving experience that includes scenarios designed to test awareness of pedestrians, reaction time, and situations such as low fuel. After each session, participants receive a detailed report that can be shared with doctors and family members to support informed and collaborative decision making.

DAC NW also reached out to Idaho and Washington Department of Motor Vehicles to see how we can advocate for drivers ed to become accessible.



Rewriting the narrative of what's possible!

QUOTES TO MAKE YOU THINK

“Advocacy is not just a task for charismatic individuals or high-profile community organizers. Advocacy is for all of us; advocacy is a way of life. It is a natural response to the injustices and inequality in the world.”

~ Alice Wong, [Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-first Century](#)

A Single Step Can Exclude a Neighbor: Rethinking Housing This April

NEWS FROM LINC

Imagine you have a son or daughter who uses a wheelchair, and you move into a newly built neighborhood—a fresh subdivision with sidewalks, parks, and families just settling in. Your child makes friends next door. A birthday party invitation comes. But the question is: will they be able to get inside? Will they be able to visit independently, or will every social interaction require planning, lifting, and assistance?



Now imagine a different scenario. You've lived in your home for years. You know your neighbors. You've built equity. It's your place—your stability. Then an accident or health change means you begin using a wheelchair. Suddenly, the home that once worked perfectly no longer does. A step at the entrance becomes a barrier. Narrow doorways limit access. Basic daily routines become difficult or impossible.

The question becomes: can you stay in your own home?

For tens of thousands of Idahoans with mobility challenges, these are not hypothetical situations. They are everyday realities. We are still building neighborhoods—and homes—that exclude people by design. But it doesn't have to be this way.

April is Housing Month—a time to think not just about housing supply and affordability, but about how our homes shape inclusion. One practical, proven solution is visitability.

Visitability means incorporating a few simple features into new single-family homes: a zero-step entrance, wider doorways, and a bathroom on the main floor. These are not expensive or complex changes when included during construction, but they make a profound difference. They allow people with mobility challenges to enter a home, move through basic spaces, and participate in everyday life.

Too often, accessibility is treated as an afterthought—something added later at great cost, or not at all. Visitability flips that model. By building homes right the first time, we reduce the need for expensive retrofits and make homeownership more affordable over time.

More importantly, visitable homes create visitable neighborhoods. They allow children to play together, neighbors to gather, and families to stay connected. They support aging in place and ensure that a temporary injury or long-term disability doesn't mean losing your home or your community.

Housing Month is also a call to action. If you know a builder, developer, or architect, start the conversation. Ask if they are incorporating visitability into their designs. If new subdivisions are being planned, encourage those leading the projects to include these features from the beginning. Developers and builders make decisions that shape our communities for generations—often a century or more. They have the power to redefine what “standard” housing looks like.

If you know of a builder or developer who wants to talk about incorporating visitability into the homes they design and construct, let us know. Email us at info@lincidaho.org or call (208) 336-3335.

We don't currently build neighborhoods that work for everyone. But we can. And it starts with expecting more from the homes—and communities—we create.



Empowering Independence!

BLUEPATH -

College Students Load Accessible Businesses on BluePath



A leadership class at Washington State University has been mapping accessible businesses while on Spring Break. As part of their project, they learned how to map an accessible business to load it on the BluePath site. It's easy to do, takes about 10 minutes.

They mapped several businesses including the Union Gospel Mission Thrift Store in Coeur d'Alene. Although the Thrift Store is mostly accessible, they do have issues maintaining a 36" aisle free of obstructions throughout the store. But if that isn't a deal breaker for you, the business should meet your needs.

Hosting a Mapathon is an easy way for a group to do something for the community that's fun and interactive. If you have a group that is interested in some community work, let us know and we can set up a training. About 30 minutes is all it takes and you are ready to go out and find accessible businesses to load on the site. We take care of the rest!

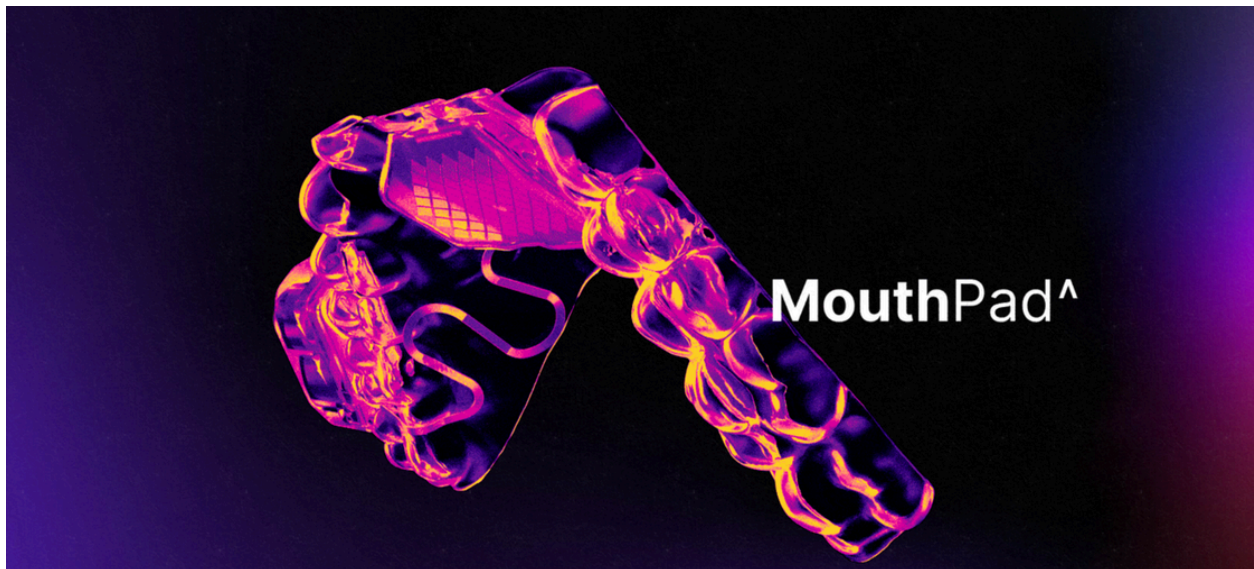
Learn more at www.blue-path.org.

BLUE  **PATH**

Find YOUR path!

LIFE HACKS For Disability

Assistive technology can help you to do everyday tasks!



Accessible Gaming

Here is the world's first hands free touchpad. The MouthPad is a smart retainer-like mouth piece that allows you to control your phone, computer, and tablet hands-free. Perched on the roof of your mouth, the device converts subtle head and tongue gestures into seamless cursor control and clicks. It's virtually invisible to the world — but always available to you.

It has two modes, both head and tongue tracking for cursor control, according to your preference. In either mode, use the tongue trackpad and sip gestures for commands such as left and right clicks, click-and-drag, and scroll.

Free from cords — and complications, it connects to all your devices instantly via Bluetooth, just like a wireless mouse. No software required.

The MouthPad is unobtrusive and discreet. You can speak freely while wearing the device and use it without anyone in your vicinity even noticing.

If you are interested in learning more about it, you can watch a video of it's use playing [MarioKart](#) and get on the [waitlist](#) for the launch.

Stuff to make life easier!

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING



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