

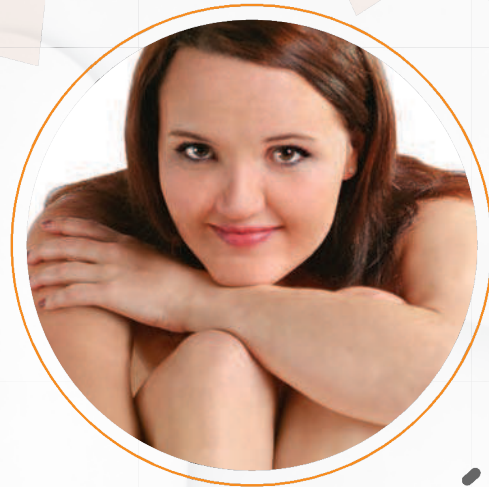
naked divorce

Your new life in 21 days

Naked Divorce

21
DAY

Keep in mind the ETHICS of the 21-day programme



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Foundation

#1 ETHICS

Like the spokes of a bicycle wheel, no spoke can be out of place or the integrity of the wheel will be compromised. The ETHICS of the *naked divorce* programme are critical to the success of the programme. They are:

- 1 Being self-expressed.
- 2 Avoid *Short Term Emotion Avoidance Tactics*.
- 3 Establish a *Grounded Routine*.
- 4 Sleep on any drastic changes you wish to make in your life.
- 5 Say no.
- 6 Cause VS effect.
- 7 Focus on yourself VS your ex.

1 Being self-expressed

Practice being radically honest with yourself about your break up; how do you really feel about it? Many people act recovered. A false image or sense of recovery is the most common obstacle griever must overcome if they expect to move on.

Putting on a brave face and pretending you're fine when you're not is exhausting. The cost in energy will be huge. Unresolved grief following divorce consumes tremendous amounts of energy.

Below are some things to avoid:

- ✘ Saying, "I'm fine" when you don't mean it.
- ✘ Putting on your happy face.
- ✘ Intellectualising your feelings.
- ✘ Acting recovered.
- ✘ Ignoring your feelings.
- ✘ Focusing only on fond memories and building a pedestal for your ex.
- ✘ Focusing only on what was negative about the relationship and being unwilling to let go of disappointments and anger.

Here are some suggestions:


- ✓ Tell the truth.
- ✓ Be real.
- ✓ When your feelings come up, acknowledge and experience them.
- ✓ Be authentic to yourself and how you're doing.

It's important that you don't suppress your true feelings during the programme. You may build walls around yourself to block input from others. This means living with secrecy, frustration, anger, and anxiety. If you have difficulty expressing yourself freely, it's possible you have been repressed a great deal, either in childhood or within your marriage.

When you're not fully self-expressed, you may feel as if you're not fully present, that you're a façade, a paper doll, rather than a whole person. Whenever you don't speak your truth (your feelings and thoughts), you shut down the joyful and creative spirit within. When you do eventually speak, you may feel extreme anger or seek revenge for feeling muted for so long.

To practice full self-expression, start by journaling all your thoughts and all the things you have wanted to tell others about how you feel. Start slowly by expressing yourself to those around you, one person at a time. Concentrate on it. Take note of all the times you remain silent when you know you have something to say.

Exercise:



Where are you not fully self-expressed in your life?

Do you have a habit of bottling up your feelings?

How effective are you in communicating your frustrations?

Do you blow up? Over what?

Knowing what you know now, what are you committing to for the duration of the *naked divorce* program?

2 **Avoid Short Term Emotion Avoidance Tactics (S.T.E.A.T.s)**

John James and Russell Friedman, who wrote ‘The Grief Recovery Handbook’ talk about confronting your emotions rather than filling your life with things that fill your time, but only provide a short-term relief. They tell the story of how a mother may deal with a child’s crying by offering the child a cookie. The mother may say, “Don’t cry. Here, have a cookie and you will feel better.” Later in life, that child could associate fixing their feelings with food. Eating the cookie in the moment, the child gets distracted and may forget about the incident that caused the upset, but the fact remains that there was no emotional completion of the pain caused by the event. The event and all the feelings associated with it, were buried.

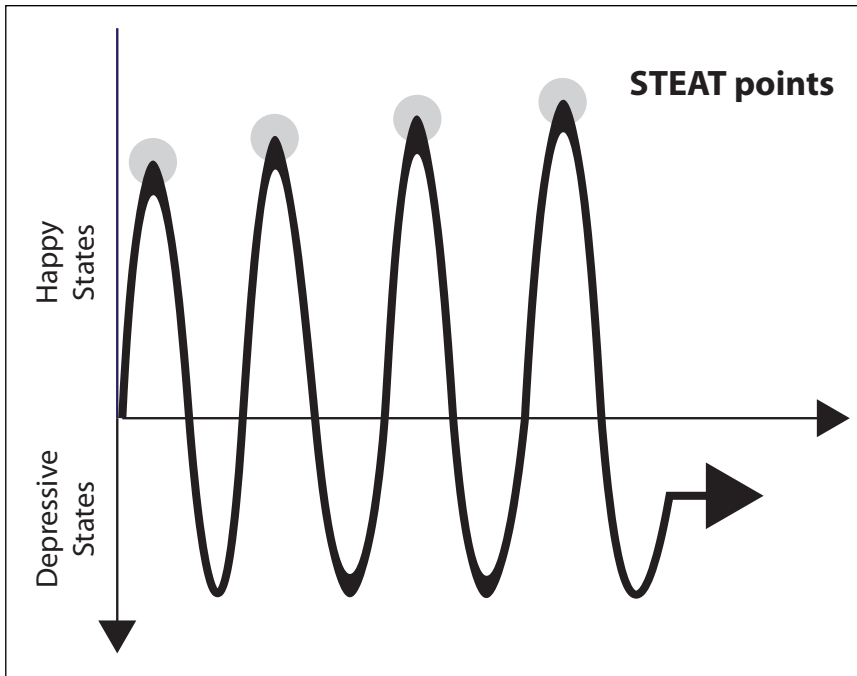
Short Term Emotion Avoidance Tactics will help you feel better in each moment BUT the thing to be aware of is that you are not feeling better for real – it’s a false sense of security - a false feeling of recovery. It fits into the *False Healing* category.

Short Term Emotion Avoidance Tactics are things you do to avoid feeling the pain, numb the pain, or to take the pain away in the short term. They are often escapism-type activities where you keep SO focused and busy that there is no time to think about how you are feeling or doing. If you fill your life up with lots of S.T.E.A.T.s, your healing will not progress.

The sad thing is that for most people who struggle to get over their divorce are engaging in a cycle of feeling the pain, applying a *Short Term Emotion Avoidance Tactic*, feeling the pain, applying another *Short Term Emotion Avoidance Tactic* etc. until over time they feel numb and they think this numbness is them healed from their divorce.

S.T.E.A.T.’s prolong the emotional rollercoaster of your divorce. So you never **fully grieve** for long enough or experience the loss critical to healing for real.

Your emotional rollercoaster will go up and down, up and down as shown in the diagram on the next page.




Short Term Emotion Avoidance Tactics include but are not limited to:

- ⇨ Excessive socialising.
- ⇨ Over-exercising.
- ⇨ Fantasy or escapism activities (books, TV, movies).
- ⇨ Shopping/retail therapy.
- ⇨ Work and becoming a workaholic.
- ⇨ Ignoring feelings.
- ⇨ Pretending something hasn't happened.
- ⇨ Overeating.
- ⇨ Eating foods loaded with sugar and fat (comfort eating).
- ⇨ Excessive drinking of alcohol.
- ⇨ Excessive use of recreational drugs.
- ⇨ Using prescription drugs such as tranquilisers or antidepressants.

- ➔ Exercising compulsively.
- ➔ Behaving compulsively.
- ➔ Excessive sex with or without a partner.
- ➔ Excessive busyness.
- ➔ Constantly intellectualising and analysing situations.
- ➔ Excessive reading or TV viewing.
- ➔ Spending hours watching romantic movies or fantasising about the one.
- ➔ Keeping conversations superficial.
- ➔ Burying angry emotions under the mask of peace and love.
- ➔ Spending countless hours with your children under the guise of being a good parent but with the actual agenda being to use your children in some way to help you feel better.

Exercise:



Try to identify at least 2 examples of short-term relief you have used to displace your feelings. This is not as easy as it appears. It could be your first chance to demonstrate your commitment to total honesty in this recovery process.

3 Establish a *Grounded Routine*

Often, the first thing that goes out the window during a divorce or break up is your routine. Many of my clients stopped eating, getting dressed, cleaning the house, etc.

On a practical level, when something as earth-shattering as a divorce hits you, your number one priority should be to go back to basics and establish a *Grounded Routine*.

A *Grounded Routine* has a very particular purpose; the more aware and faithful you are to the rituals and routines that help you feel rooted, the more adaptable you will be when life throws you a curve ball. A *Grounded Routine* will prevent you from internalising the chaos, so that no matter what goes on around you, you'll be able to maintain your balance and stay solidly grounded.

You can establish a *Grounded Routine* by creating order, gaining support from key people and being honest and ethical in all your workings in your daily life. These steps will strengthen your resilience during divorce.

Trite as it sounds, it is the simple things in life that make a difference.

- ✓ Take up a pottery class, DIY or some creative activity.
- ✓ Listen to your body and honour its signals. Create routines which feel healthy for yourself
- ✓ Go to bed earlier.
- ✓ Prepare your own meals, eat at a table and stick to established eating times.
- ✓ Do the ironing and catch up on washing all that dirty washing.
- ✓ Organise your drawers and thoroughly clean your house.
- ✓ Write in a journal every day.
- ✓ Make an appointment with a nutritionist and improve your diet.
- ✓ Eat loads of green, leafy vegetables.
- ✓ Take a daily multivitamin.
- ✓ Drink plenty of water; you need lot of water to re-establish balance in periods of emotional instability.
- ✓ Bake bread and spend some time kneading the dough with your hands.
- ✓ Pay your bills on time.
- ✓ Buy a leafy plant to care for daily.
- ✓ Make jam or chutney or a Thai curry from scratch. Cook something that takes hours to make.

- ✓ Get into the garden and dig up weeds.
- ✓ Do something really nice for someone as a Random Act of Kindness.
- ✓ Get to know your neighbours.
- ✓ Establish exercise times and adhere to them.
- ✓ Take a kickboxing, crossfit or aerobic dance class.
- ✓ Have a picnic.
- ✓ Take more baths.
- ✓ Build something or dig up something.
- ✓ Get in touch with an old hobby and try it again.
- ✓ Go on a long bicycle ride.
- ✓ Wear a comfortable bathrobe.
- ✓ Set the breakfast table before you go to bed.

Whatever you choose to do in terms of establishing a *Grounded Routine*, the purpose is to create something to come home to. Even if your home is a physically chaotic place, find solace and comfort in your routine.



Video: I created a YouTube video on the topic of *Grounded Routine*. To watch me explaining the concept in more detail, go to www.youtube.com/nakeddivorce

4 Sleep on any drastic changes you wish to make in your life

I would highly recommend holding off on any drastic changes until at least one month after the programme has been completed.

I know it feels empowering and exciting to put the past behind you but it's also important to make changes which are healthy and in tune with your life.

This programme is challenging enough so limit any other drastic changes. It's all about timing and pacing the changes you want to make or you could find yourself in the same situation as one of my clients, Mary.

Case study: Whispers from the looney bin...

Mary was told by her former husband that she was boring. Their divorce was acrimonious and Mary was left feeling that no one would ever want her.

One night Mary decided to do something crazy to prove to the world that she was not boring. She decided that she would become GI Jane. Within a space of one hour, she had shaved all her hair off and signed up to a military fitness course (which started the next morning) that consisted of highly physical training, even though she hadn't seen the inside of a gym in years. She stayed up all night getting pumped-up by drinking vodka shots and putting war paint on her face.


She arrived at the course at 05:50, and began training with everyone else. Everyone was looking at her very strangely and within 27 minutes, she had fractured her wrist in a crazy karate move and was sent to hospital. It was only when she was being wheeled into the operating theatre that it dawned on her that she had made some impulsive decisions which she would later regret...

If you are doing any of these activities, you are in danger of making decisions which are not healthy for your life:

- ➡ You are obsessed with creating a 'new you' and you want to change everything such as your hair, your clothes, your behaviour.
- ➡ You have decided to move house and maybe even take a backpacking trip and hide out in a jungle for 5 months whilst you find yourself.

- ➡ You just put a deposit down on a new Ferrari.
- ➡ You wrote a letter to the government declaring that you want to join the CIA or MI5.
- ➡ The change is SO extreme that even you have trouble to believing what you have done.
- ➡ Bills are drastically increasing or decreasing.
- ➡ You are keen to quit your job tomorrow.
- ➡ People are questioning these drastic changes and possibly talking about you behind your back.

Exercise:



Are there any drastic changes you are considering?
What is driving you to make these drastic changes ?

Tip-

*Delay making any major changes to your appearance or personality until you've completed the **naked divorce**. Ensure that any changes you make are thought through, slept on, and congruent with the 'new you'. Wait 1 month before doing anything!*



5 Say no

Loving yourself is not simply about treating yourself well, taking care of yourself or having an inflated opinion of yourself. Love for yourself includes establishing healthy boundaries when it comes to other people, including your ex. It may feel hard to set limits with your ex or with other people in your life. You may feel ashamed or guilty. Doing things against your will, will leave you feeling used and resentful. It's really important in the next few weeks to *say no* to things you don't feel comfortable doing and *say no* whenever you feel intruded upon.

A simple and direct, "NO, I am not able to help you with that" is the best solution. If you want to give an explanation you should keep it simple, "NO, I have already made another appointment for that time" or, "NO, sorry. I am afraid I have to decline because I have no spare time" or, "NO, it's not okay for you to pop in whenever you feel like it."

Other ways of saying NO:

- ➡ I can't do this right now.
- ➡ NO, thanks. Not this time. Thank you for asking.

- ⇒ Sorry, but NO.
- ⇒ Please accept that I cannot come.
- ⇒ I'd rather not.

On Day 19 of the *naked divorce* programme, you will spend more time focusing on setting healthy and ethical boundaries, but begin this work now.

Exercise:

List 3 ways in which you allow yourself to be intruded on:

1

2

3

List 3 ways in which you can choose to establish your boundaries and respect yourself in the next few weeks:

1

2

3

6 Cause VS effect

Many of us confuse responsibility with blame and blame is a hot potato that no one wants to hold. So you may feel that if you take responsibility for your divorce, you are stating that you are to blame which will force you to hold this hot potato in your hands. I want to be clear that **taking responsibility has nothing to do with blame.**

Responsibility is a way to regain power over a situation and stating, “yes, I had something to do with this happening.” Responsibility is not about holding hot potatoes.

The ultimate purpose of taking responsibility is to regain control over your life.

I remember thinking, “This situation was forced upon me by him so he is to blame.” That may have felt very real and true for me at the time, but what I later learnt was that by blaming him, I gave up control of my life and turned myself into a victim of a bad situation. I chose to do that. I chose to become a victim.

In life, we have a choice of either feeling at the *effect of life* or feeling in charge and at the *cause of life*.

Tad James, the founder of Timeline Therapy™ discusses the concept of 'cause VS effect'. Here is a summary of his principles:-

Feeling like you are at the effect of life

Do you feel like:-

- ➔ You are in a position where you are giving your power away to other people and you may believe that the answers, solutions to issues and power in life lie outside of yourself.
- ➔ Your ex ruined your life.
- ➔ You say things like “my ex makes me angry.”
- ➔ It may feel like the divorce has all the power in your life and that you have lost control.
- ➔ You may be feeling worried about what others think.
- ➔ You might even be seeking someone or something to rescue you from your situation.

Eleanor Roosevelt said, “*No one can make you feel bad about yourself without your permission. You are in control of how you feel. You feeling angry or sad is you choosing to feel those things because only you can feel YOUR feelings*” When we make other people or events responsible for our feelings, then we also give them control of our lives.

This way of living life is called *living at the effect* of life.

In a relationship, what is powerful is for both people to be fully responsible for themselves and their emotions. If you think it's your partner's responsibility to make you happy or it's their fault when you are sad, you are not living responsibly. Consider that your partner's only job in life is to top-up an already happy version of you. Your job is to make yourself happy.

Feeling like you cause your life


When you create your life and take full responsibility for your life, you acknowledge that you may have something to do with how your life runs, how your divorce will be, your emotional state and what actions you take. One of the biggest steps in healing is actually adopting the mindset that you are in charge and you have the power. Power statements include:

- I take the action.
- I have the power.
- They are my emotions and are not caused by anyone else other than me.
- I am responsible for my life and how it runs.
- If bad things happen in my life, I don't allow those things to crush me, I rise up and find an empowering meaning from what happened, take responsibility for what I can be responsible for and learn the lessons that propel me forward.
- I don't make excuses or argue for my limitations.

- I am learning from this divorce situation and this is what I have learnt...

This will not always be easy to do when you are feeling low, however, it's all about practice. Just one simple thought like this every single day will make all the difference in the world. This way of living life is called *living at the cause of life*. Healing from your divorce now is all about taking ownership, being responsible and choosing to move on with your life. Practice *living at the cause of your life* every day. In the beginning it may be challenging but after 21 days of practice, it will come more naturally to you.

Exercise:



What part of your divorce can you take responsibility for?

.....

.....

Think of people you know who spend more time living at the cause of life (heroes, powerful women, billionaires):

.....

.....

What can you learn from these people?

.....

.....

What steps can you take today to demonstrate that you are practicing *living at the cause of your life*?

.....

.....

Tip-

CHANNEL YOUR HERO FOR A DAY:

Spend one day walking around as if you are your hero. For example, if you choose Oprah, practice BEING her for a day. Think about how she would approach the situation you are in, what she would say, what she would do. This exercise is SO MUCH FUN and you will learn magical things in that day.

Whenever you feel disempowered, try and channel your hero for a day.



7 Focus on yourself VS your ex

Let me tell you a bit about one of my clients. I shall call her Molly.

Case study: Molly

Molly came to see me towards the end of 2009. She had been divorced for six years and in that time had not stopped obsessing about what her ex-husband was up to. In the beginning, she would talk about only one thing...

"You know, he is seeing Suzy now and I think they have been dating for a few months (not that I have noticed) and I don't think she is right for him. He's also got an earring now and changed his car – why do you think he did that? Well, actually I don't care but it is strange isn't it? A lot of our friends say that he's changed for the worse and just isn't the same guy now. I would agree. He has even taken up sky-diving! He is clearly having a midlife crisis! Suzy isn't even that pretty, she looks strange with her little skinny legs and fake tan. My friend Sally says that she gives them another six months and they will split up, too."

What Molly wasn't aware of, was that she was fixating on her ex-husband and how HE was doing, what HE was thinking, feeling and who HE was seeing. This focus on him was actually her way of escaping and avoiding dealing with her own emotions. Although a great deal of time had passed, she was no further along in her healing.

Working with her, the key component which shifted her into healing from her divorce, was supporting her in shifting her focus from him onto herself. It was painful but once her grieving was complete, she found peace, harmony and a new life once she stopped fixating on him.

The last time I saw Molly, I asked her how her ex-husband was doing and she said, "You know, I don't have a clue and I haven't thought about him for ages. Let me show you some pictures of the hot air balloon ride I did two weeks ago. I have always wanted to do it and now I have!"

One thing which I see time and time again with my clients, is this concept of *Target Fixation*.

Target Fixation is a process by which the brain is focused so intently on an observed object that awareness of everything else diminishes.

With *Target Fixation*, the observer can become so fixated on the target that they will forget to take the necessary action to avoid it, thus colliding with it. This is a common issue for motorcyclists and mountain bikers as statistically most collisions are due to *Target Fixation*. A motorcycle or bicycle will tend to go where the rider is looking; if the rider is overly focused on something in the path ahead, the cyclist can collide with that object simply because of the rider's focus on it, even though the rider is ostensibly trying to avoid it.

As a keen motorcyclist, I am well aware of the hazards of *Target Fixation*. In fact, on one motorcycle trip in the Himalayas, I collided with the back of a motorcycle I was fixated on in front of me. This almost led me to fly off a cliff so it was a pretty frightening moment.

Focusing on your ex and what they are up to leads to no good. You are in essence, fixated on them and end up having daily collisions with unnecessary pain and suffering over and over again.

When I observed this type of fixation on the ex with most of the people I worked with, I realised that tackling FOCUS inside of the **naked divorce** was very important.

For some of you who have been divorced for years, it may be easy to not think about your ex however, do notice if you are constantly thinking of your job or your children as a distraction from your healing. The lesson is to think of yourself during this programme. It's time to be selfish and be fascinated in how YOU are doing and to grow your awareness and analysis of yourself, rather than something else.

Examples include:

- ➡ Whenever you want to think about what your ex had for breakfast or if their new partner has remembered to launder their socks – think instead about yourself, your own eating and laundry habits.

- ➡ Whenever you find yourself drifting off and wondering what your ex meant when they said he loved your new hairstyle, think about the new bath towels you are purchasing on the weekend.
- ➡ Whenever you find yourself wondering why your ex said whatever they said, focus instead on painting your nails.

Training your mind to stop being preoccupied with thoughts of your ex and what he is thinking or what he is up to, OR to stop pointless thoughts of your neighbour or friend, or job, it is a little like training a new puppy:

- 1) **Start by gently ignoring the yelps for attention.** If you notice your mind flashing to your ex or another unhelpful distraction, relax. Imagine that the thought is a soft, fluffy white cloud. Imagine this cloud drifting across your mind like a cloud floats across the sky. Just notice the thought and gently let it go. Tell yourself that this unhelpful thought is just floating across your mind. Engaging with this thought is like engaging with a puppy's yelps for attention and this is not constructive.
- 2) **If the yelps continue, keep a short leash.** If you find yourself constantly drifting into an amazing fantasy story or if you find yourself stuck in a cycle of analysis-paralysis, sometimes it's good to reign in that thought with one swift action. Immediately say to yourself, "NO, enough is enough." Make a swift sudden action and stand up, telling yourself out loud that this line of thinking is not constructive. Become immediately fixated on doing something else like journaling about your feelings or going for a focused power walk. The key is swift, intentional action to jerk yourself out of the lethargy of daydreaming. If your leash is too long and you indulge negative thinking for too long, it takes longer to come back into the present.
- 3) **Reward with healthy treats if well behaved.** If you notice that it's been a few hours or days since you last engaged in unhelpful thinking, then reward yourself with a healthy treat. Something like taking yourself out on an outing.

In summary

Each day of the *naked divorce* includes an exercise that reminds you of the ETHICS of the 21-day programme. Each day you have an opportunity to rate yourself and then devise actions you can take to move up a level (a rating of one is low on the scale and a rating of 10 is high on the scale).

The example below is one a client completed while doing her *naked divorce* homework:

Ethics	Rate yourself on a scale of 1-10	Actions I will take to move this ETHIC to a level 10 in my life
Full self-expression	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I commit to stop hiding out and telling Sally that Bill and I are getting divorced. • I will call Angie to tell her the truth about her dress I borrowed and that I did lose it.
Avoid STEATS	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Am SO proud of myself for being so healthy and focused at the moment. I even caught myself almost hiding behind the kids and it didn't happen. WOW!
Establish a Grounded Routine	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I commit to having a hot bath before bed so I don't stay awake all night worrying. • I will go home at a reasonable hour and make time to cook dinner. • I just called Myra to help me with the washing and ironing, which was piling up – feel SO much better!
Sleep on any drastic changes you wish to make in your life	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hmm. I sucked at this today as I decided to dye my hair blond. It came out orange and now I have to go to the hair-dresser tomorrow to fix it. Argh!
Say no	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will tell Paul tomorrow that he cannot come over before 3p.m. because that time doesn't work for me
Cause VS effect	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel pretty good just completing this list and proud that I haven't been a victim once today!
Focus on yourself VS your ex	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have not thought about your ex once today, so to reward myself have just booked a massage for tomorrow after fixing my hair disaster.

Tip-

Whenever you feel lost during your divorce, come back to the ETHICS of the program. Each day, take a look at actions you can take to put them back in place.



Notes

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Your new life in 21 days



Adèle Theron helps high powered professional career men and woman heal from divorce using an intensive 21-day process. She has written other trauma programmes too which can all be accessed online and used around your busy schedule to maintain your high performance.

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