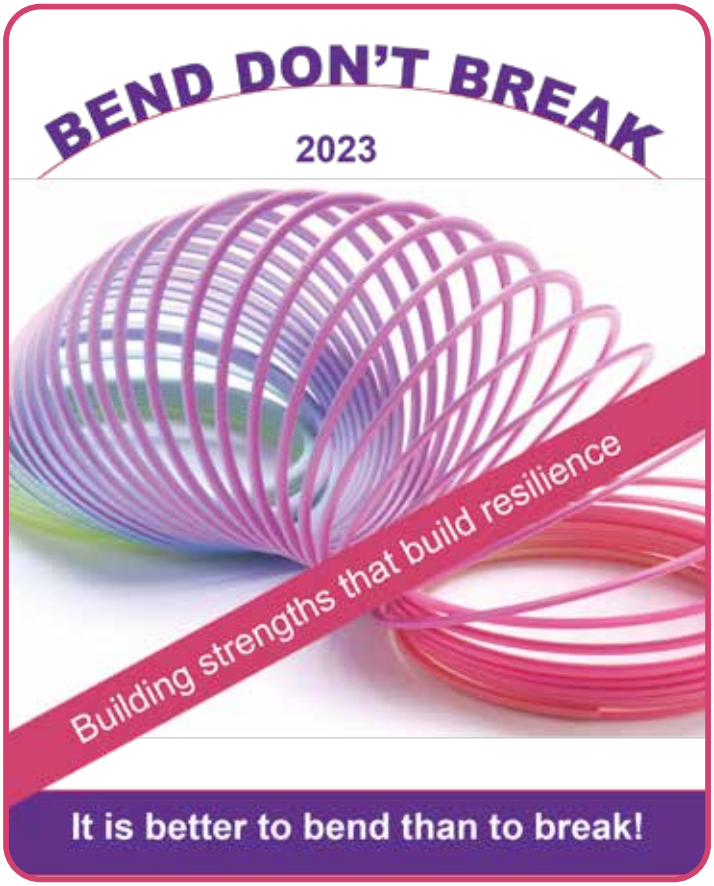
Skills to help practice what is in Bend Don't Break



Using the skills in Bend Don't Break



Feelings can't be stopped. They are normal.

But we can have ways to deal with them.

The worksheets in this skills pack will help you practice the skills covered in *Bend Don't Break*.

Writing down your thoughts and feeling is a way of ordering and organizing the busyness in our mind. By getting the thinking 'outside of your head', it can release some of the pressure."

When our minds are busy, it can be difficult to understand what we really think and feel about something. Putting your thoughts into words helps you to process these feelings and thoughts.

It also helps to give names to our thoughts and feelings. By giving a name to our thought patterns and feelings helps us see them and change them.

The more you unload onto paper, the more you will be able to make more sense of things.

New skills don't happen by themselves. You need to practice them. It takes time and repetition to build positive habits. That is the thinking behind this skills pack to give you resources to practice these skills.

It will also help you see the progress you are making using this work.

Don't worry about handwriting and spelling. How you use these worksheets is up to you and you will only share them with anyone if you choose to.

We hope you find them helpful.



Where do I feel upset?

Where do I feel when I am anxious or upset?

When you are anxious or upset where do you feel it in your body?

Put an X where you feel it most



How would you describe it?

Like a Container

- "I am full of anger."
- "I am brimming over with rage.

As Pressure

- "I am going to explode in a minute."
- "I'm like a volcano about to explode."
- "I need to let off steam."

In different parts of the body

- I have butterflies in my stomach
- I have the weight of the world on my shoulders
- My chest is heavy
- My head is about to explode
- My heart is pounding like a drum.
- I am sweating buckets
- I am crapping myself
- I am hot and bothered
- I can't sit still.

Let the clouds of emotions roll by: Feelings come and go

Feelings are temporary. On average, an emotion comes and goes in about 90 seconds. Over thinking can make those feelings last much longer.



Like dark clouds in the sky, we can dwell on them and worry that they are going to last forever. Or we can see feeling as they are: temporary and changing.

It's like being caught in a storm at sea. The boat will rock with each swell of the waves. Like emotions – the wave will calm down given time.

This skill says to notice what you feel and how your body is reacting but don't obey it. Ride out the storm: this too shall pass.



Did you use this skill this week?

What was the situation?

How were you feeling?

What happened when you applied this skill?

Name it to tame it: Naming how you feel

Take each feeling word and list as many other feeling words that be used to describe the initial feeling. Separate words for these feelings into MILD, MIDDLE, AND STRONG



Mild	Middle	Strong



Mild	Middle	Strong



Mild	Middle	Strong

Be more accurate in naming what you really are feeling

Rate the strength of the feeling

When you name the feeling (or have trouble naming it) put a number to it on a scale from 1 – 10 (1 is low)



Stop to think is it really the number I just gave?

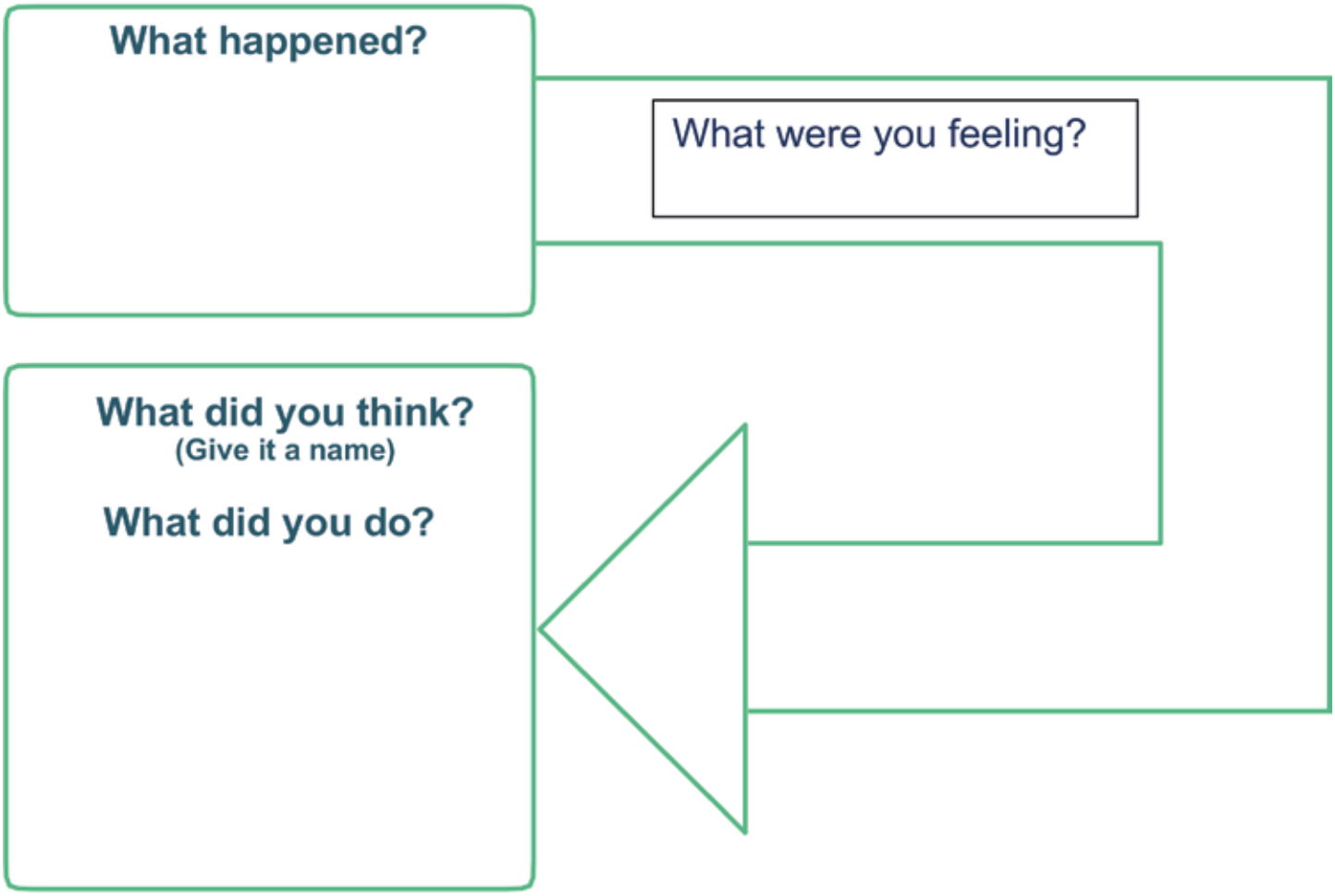
How did this skill work for you this week?

This task is to build the positive habit of "Catching it"

Take a situation and name feelings and types of thoughts you had.

Thought spotter

Think - Feel - Do



Types of unhelpful thoughts

- Black and white thinking
- Over generalizing
- Mental filter
- Disqualifying the positive
- Labelling
- It's all my fault
- jumping to conclusions
- Making a mountain out of a molehill
- Emotional reasoning
- Should statements.

Push the pause button

When you notice strong feelings or your body's reactions, it is a signal to create thinking time.
Here are some additional ways to create a bit of calming through grounding.



Grounding- bringing yourself into the present

At time of heightened stress, our minds can go racing into the future or dwell on our past. Stress hormones are released. Grounding, or if you want to call them coping skills, helps keep someone stay in the present. Grounding skills can be helpful in managing overwhelming and intense feelings or anxiety.

When we are stressed, it is helpful to have a variety of ways to cope that work quickly and do not require too much mental effort. These techniques *work best if practiced regularly for about 2 to 3 months in order to create the habit of doing it*. You choose one you think will work for you.

Some key points



- **Use them in calm times**: It is important to practice coping techniques when they are not needed to become more comfortable using them when you need them most.
- **Coping skills are not one size fits all**. There is no one skill that works for everyone. The key is to discover ones that work for you and use them with flexibility.
- **Make skills your own**. There is no right or wrong way to cope as long as it works for you and does not harm anyone. When you learn a new skill, it's OK to tweak it to meet your needs.
- **Have realistic expectations**. Coping skills are not magic bullets. They don't work 100 percent of the time. With learning any new skill, make sure you are realistic.
- **Combine skills**. What if you used two coping mechanisms together as opposed to only one? Give it a try. This might increase their effectiveness.
- **There is no quick fix for stress**. It will take time, effort, and repetition to turn using these skills into healthy habits.

A word of caution: Stop if you feel you have opened a part of you that is difficult to manage. If you experience an increase in any symptoms or distress, stop, and discuss it with a professional.

Deep Breathing

When we experience stress of any kind, we tend to breathe shallow and rapid. Breathing like this is part of the fight/flight/freeze response. Slow, belly breathing is effective to counter that.

Deep breathing allows lots of oxygen to quickly enter your body, which can result in a calming sensation. While sitting or standing breathe with your diaphragm.



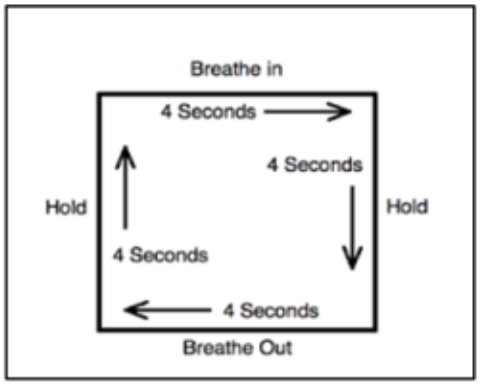
Breathe from your stomach rather than your lungs. When you breathe in, your stomach should rise or expand, and it will fall or contract as you breathe out. Try placing your one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach. Is your stomach rising? Then you're doing it right!

Here are some deep breathing techniques:

Puckered-Lip Breathing (2-4)

- Breathe in normally for 2 seconds.
- Pucker your lips, as if you were about to drink through a straw.
- Exhale through puckered lips for 4 seconds
- Repeat

Box Breathing



Rhythmic movement is the body's natural way to self-soothe.

- How would you calm a crying infant or toddler? You might instinctually pick up the child and rock, sway, or gently bounce them in your arms. Rhythmic movement is an ancient calming intervention. Dancing, drumming, moving in circles. Here are some examples of rhythmic movement:



- Dance. It doesn't matter what type of dance it is or whether you dance with others or alone. The point is that you move your body to some type of rhythm.
- Throw a ball. Repetitively bouncing, throwing, or catching a ball is a type of rhythmic movement. You can do this alone or with another person.
- Beat a drum. You can also create a beat with your hands or body on an object.
- Rock or sway. Allow your body to rock or sway at a pace that feels calming. You can use items to help with these movements, like swings and rocking chairs. You can also ask someone you trust to rock you while they embrace you.

Sensory Grounding



Grounding techniques using your five senses: sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste to help you to connect to the present moment. Engaging the senses helps the brain quickly refocus.

Sight

- Focus on a particular object or your immediate surroundings and notice all the details that you see: colors, shapes, things out of place, objects that you like or dislike, and so on.
- Pick five objects that you can see and focus on each one for five seconds in turn. Then move on to the next. Change the order each time you begin again.
- Play a counting game based on what you see in your environment. How many squares can I see? How many objects are made of wood? How many shades of blue can I spot?

Sound

- Stop and listen. How many different sounds can you pick out? Be patient, as it may take a few moments for background sounds to become noticeable.
- Make your own noise. Read something out loud, sing, or make a sound that only you can hear. Don't just make the sound, listen to it closely.
- Listen to music. Try to isolate all the instruments you hear, separately and then together.

Touch

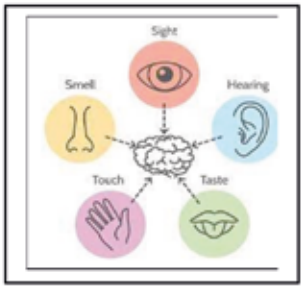
- Feel the ground below your feet or the chair beneath you. Notice how it feels to be supported. To intensify this, press your feet firmly into the floor or grab tightly to the chair.
- Put something cold on your face, wrists, or the back of the neck. Feel your body's response.
- Touch something and notice how it feels. You can use your phone, a stone, a pillow. Whatever is nearby. Pay attention to details of the texture and temperature.

Smell

- Stop and smell your environment. Try to identify every scent that you can. Be patient. Some scents are mild, and it takes focus for them to become noticeable.
- Smell an essential oil, a perfume, a cologne, a candle, or anything that is strongly scented. Breathe it in deeply, focusing intently on the aroma.

Taste

- Notice a taste is in your mouth right now. Focus solely on that. What does it taste like?
- Taste something that has a powerful flavor, like a lemon, hot sauce, or peppermint. Let the flavor run its course in your taste buds until you can taste it less and less.
- Drink something warm or cold. Recognize how it feels in your mouth and as it travels down your throat. Savor the experience.



5,4,3,2,1 is a sensory awareness grounding exercise that many find a helpful tool to relax or get through difficult moments using all your senses. Describe 5 things you see in the room. Name 4 things you can feel ("my feet on the floor" or "the air in my nose".) Name 3 things you hear right now ("traffic outside". Name 2 things you can smell (or 2 smells you like) Name 1 good thing about yourself.

Self-Calming - self-containment.

When stress gets too much, we may feel out of control, chaotic or overwhelmed. Here are two exercises that may help. (From Peter Lavine)



Self-Hug - Being out of control is unsettling, even if it is unconscious. This exercise helps us become aware of our body as the container of all our sensations and feelings. When we can feel the container, the emotions and sensations do not feel as overwhelming.

Place one hand under the opposite arm, and then place the other hand over the upper part of the other arm. You are giving yourself a hug. Pay attention to your body. Let yourself settle into the position. Allow yourself to feel supported by it. Allow yourself to feel contained.

See if you can sit with it for a while. Let it shift your perceptions of yourself and the world before coming out of it.

Are there any of these ideas you find helpful? Write them down here.

Are there any things you don't find helpful? Write them down here. Certain scents / voice / songs / images / objects / noises / food / drinks / drugs, too bright / too dark, loud noise, excess movement / heat, being touched.

Tip - When you experience unpleasant feelings it's hard to think. Try some of these.

- **Energy too high?** Try inputs that feel soothing and calming.
- **Energy too low?** Try inputs that feel energizing and alerting.
- **Any time -** Use inputs that feel grounding and comforting.

What did I use to pause it?

- **Use words or phrases that tell you to clear your head**
- **Breathing**
- **A safe place in your head**
- **5,4,3,2,1**
- **Rhythmic movement**
- **Using your senses**
- **Mindfulness**
- **Other idea you might have thought of**

In the space below, write down the self-soothing activity you tried

Rate how helpful they were in creating thinking time using the following scale: 1 = Not helpful at all; 7 = Very helpful.

What did you use?	Day tried	Success Rating (1-7)	What were the benefits of doing it?

Think through a situation for someone else

Think through advice you would give a good friend when they walk past a group of people, and they are in a fit of laughter. One of them seems to be looking and pointing in their direction. It really upsets your friend.

Catch It

What are they initially feeling? (Name the feeling)

What are they thinking?

(Dwelling on the bad, ignoring the good, taking it personal, jumping to conclusions, making a mountain from a molehill)

Pause It

What could they do to create pause it and create thinking time?

Challenge It

Use that thinking time (other explanations, put things into perspective). What is another way to see this?

Change It

What is a different way, more helpful way to think? Alternative, evidence, implications



Challenge It, Change It - Use that thinking time



Using all the skills: take a situation you found challenging and apply catch it pause it, challenge it, change it

What happened?

How did you feel? (Rate your felling on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high)

What did you do? What was going on in your body?

What were you thinking? (Unhelpful thoughts)

What did you do to pause - to create thinking time

Challenge It

Evidence

Other Explanations

Putting things into perspective

Change It: A more balanced way of thinking

Gratitude

Monday	Something I did well today Today I had fun when I am grateful for	
Tuesday	I felt good about myself when Today was interesting because I am grateful for	
Wednesday	Something I did for someone today I saw a nice thing today I am grateful for	
Thursday	I felt proud when Today I achieved when I am grateful for	
Friday	I felt good about myself when I smiled today because I am grateful for	
Saturday	Something I enjoyed today Something I had a good laugh about I am grateful for	
Sunday	Something I did for someone today A nice thing I saw today I am grateful for	

At the end of the week how would I describe it for me? 🙂 😐 ☹️

Whether you worked on The Five Ways to Wellbeing or Positive Emotions, keep note of what you did and what affect it had on you.

- **Connect**
- **Be Active**
- **Take Notice**
- **Keep Learning**
- **Give**



1. *Notice positive things*
2. *Express these positive things*
3. *Gratitude*
4. *Mindfulness*
5. *Positive rethinking*
6. *Focus on your strengths*
7. *Attainable goals*
8. *Acts of kindness*

Day	What did you do? Take 5	What did you do? Positive emotions	Benefit 🙂 😐 ☹️
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

Support

What did you need?	Who did you get that support from?	How did it make you feel?
When I wanted to share worries		
When I needed advice		
When I wanted to be listened to		
Practical help		
To have fun		
When I want to be with someone who knows me well and understands me		
When I wanted to be listened to		

What stopped you using support?

One of the best ways to get support is to give it.

What support did I provide someone this week?

How did that work out?



Some strengths of people who are successful at change and coping

It will be your strengths that support you. Yet in Northern Ireland people are generally not as good at seeing their strengths compared to their weaknesses.

Circle the ones you see in yourself.

Accepting	Committed	Flexible	Persevering	Stubborn
Active	Competent	Focused	Persistent	Thankful
Adaptable	Concerned	Forgiving	Positive	Thorough
Adventuresome	Confident	Forward-looking	Powerful	Thoughtful
Affectionate	Considerate	Free	Prayerful	Tough
Affirmative	Courageous	Happy	Quick	Trusting
Alert	Creative	Healthy	Reasonable	Trustworthy
Alive	Decisive	Hopeful	Receptive	Truthful
Ambitious	Dedicated	Imaginative	Relaxed	Understanding
Anchored	Determined	Ingenious	Reliable	Unique
Assertive	Die-hard	Intelligent	Resourceful	Unstoppable
Assured	Diligent	Knowledgeable	Responsible	Vigorous
Attentive	Doer	Loving	Sensible	Visionary
Bold	Eager	Mature	Skillful	Whole
Brave	Earnest	Open	Solid	Willing
Bright	Effective	Optimistic	Spiritual	Winning
Capable	Energetic	Orderly	Stable	Wise
Careful	Experienced	Organized	Steady	Worthy
Cheerful	Faithful	Patient	Straight	Zealous
Clever	Fearless	Perceptive	Strong	Zestful

See ones you use each day.

Taken from Motivational Interviewing, Helping People Change by Bill Miller, and Steve Rollnick, 2013

Principles of coping

Do we have rules or helpful beliefs that we live by to help us cope? In Bend Don't Break, it mentions the Principles of Coping. Which of these could work for you?

- No thought or feeling is "wrong". It is what we do with it that really counts.
- Be aware of the way your body feels as tension begins to build up. Do something to deal with it as soon as you can.
- You are not on your own. Ask for help and advice.
- If you are feeling overwhelmed, try to reduce your activities for a period if you can.
- Recognize that family and friends must deal with their feelings too (they may be helpful or unhelpful to you).
- Try to have fun, relax, and exercise every day.
- You can work to solve some of the problems that are stressing you out.
- Feeling guilty and worrying about things you CAN'T change is useless and energy-draining.
- Give yourself credit for whatever level of coping you are achieving.
- Value and respect yourself – because each of us is, with our strengths, a unique and worthwhile person.

Each day write down one principle you applied that day.

Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	

How would you say your week was? 🙂 😐 🙁

Use R.A.I.N. to help you deal with your strong emotions

R.A.I.N., an acronym first coined by Michele McDonald, is an easy-to-remember practice to help recognize emotions so you can respond, not react, to challenging situations. It has four steps:

Recognise

Recognise the emotion you are feeling; Give it a name.

Allow

Accept the emotion is how you feel right now, even if it is uncomfortable.

Investigate

Look at the emotion with curiosity. Notice where you feel it in your body. Observe thoughts you may have.

Non identification

See the emotion as passing, temporary. It is a feeling not fixed part of you.

R — Recognize: It is impossible to deal with an emotion unless we acknowledge it. The first step is simply to notice it. Put a name to it. What are you feeling? That may take a bit of work to get a better vocabulary of our emotions, so we are more accurate when we name it.

A — Acknowledge / allow: The second step is an extension of the first. You accept the feeling and allow it to be there. Put another way, you give yourself permission to feel it. Typically, when we have an unpleasant emotion, we react in one of three ways: by piling on judgment, numbing ourselves to our feelings, or by distracting our attention elsewhere.

Allowing means letting the thoughts, emotions, feelings, or sensations we have recognized simply be there. Don't try to change it. It is not bad or wrong. Just acknowledge it. This is the entry into self-compassion.

I — Investigate: Now you begin to ask questions with openness and curiosity. This feels quite different from looking for answers or blame. You investigate with kindness, natural curiosity, pausing to ask: Where is this feeling coming from? What is going on here?

Unless you bring your unconscious beliefs and thoughts into awareness, your emotions will control you rather than the other way around. There is freedom in allowing ourselves curiosity and moving closer to a feeling, rather than away from it. We might explore how the feeling is in our body.

N — Non-identify: In the final step of RAIN, we consciously avoid being defined by a particular feeling. Feeling angry about something or someone is very different from telling yourself, "I am an angry person" You make a gentle observation about the feeling, not you. This opens the door to a more compassionate relationship with yourself.

By allowing ourselves this simple recognition, we begin to accept that we will never be able to control everything that happens, but that we can control how we respond. This changes everything

Developed by Ed Sipler Health Development Specialist South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust with support from Sonia Montgomery, Western H&SCT, Pauline Kelly Multi-disciplinary team in General Practice and Claire Black South Eastern Trust

Further You Tube clips you may find helpful can be found by searching Ed Sipler on You Tube

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