

10 guiding principles of recovery

10 Guiding Principles of Recovery: Navigating the Path to Wellness

10 guiding principles of recovery serve as a compass for anyone striving to overcome challenges—be it addiction, mental health struggles, or personal setbacks. Recovery is a deeply personal journey, yet these foundational ideas provide a roadmap that fosters healing, growth, and sustained well-being. Whether you're embarking on recovery yourself or supporting a loved one, understanding these principles can illuminate the path forward with hope and resilience.

1. Recovery is Holistic

Recovery doesn't just address the symptoms or the immediate problem—it encompasses every aspect of a person's life. Emotional, physical, spiritual, social, and psychological health all intertwine, influencing the healing process. For example, someone recovering from substance abuse benefits not only from therapy but also from improving nutrition, building meaningful relationships, and reconnecting with their values or spirituality. Recognizing this interconnectedness encourages a well-rounded approach to recovery.

2. Recovery is Person-Centered and Individualized

No two recovery journeys are identical. What works for one person might not suit another. Tailoring recovery plans to fit individual needs, preferences, and goals is crucial. This principle emphasizes respect for personal autonomy and encourages people to actively participate in shaping their recovery process. By honoring individual differences, people are more likely to stay motivated and achieve lasting change.

3. Recovery is Empowering

At the heart of recovery lies empowerment—regaining control over one's life and choices. Recovery encourages self-efficacy, fostering confidence that change is possible. When individuals feel empowered, they are more inclined to take responsibility for their health and future. This principle also involves overcoming stigma and internalized shame, reminding people that their value is not defined by past struggles.

4. Recovery Happens Through Many Pathways

There's no single "right" way to recover. Different approaches—such as counseling, peer support groups, medication-assisted treatment, mindfulness, or creative therapies—can all contribute to healing. This diversity acknowledges that recovery is flexible and adaptable. Embracing multiple pathways invites people to explore what resonates most with them, making recovery a personalized and evolving process.

5. Recovery is Supported by Peers and Allies

Connection and community play a vital role in maintaining recovery. Peer support groups, friends, family, and professionals provide encouragement, accountability, and understanding. Being part of a supportive network helps combat isolation and builds resilience. Sharing experiences with others who have walked similar paths can be incredibly validating and inspiring, reinforcing the idea that no one recovers alone.

6. Recovery is Culturally Informed and Responsive

Cultural background shapes how individuals perceive health, illness, and healing. Effective recovery respects cultural identities and incorporates relevant traditions, values, and practices. This principle encourages inclusivity and sensitivity, ensuring that recovery services and strategies are meaningful and accessible to diverse populations. When culture is honored, people feel seen and supported in their unique context.

7. Recovery is a Process, Not a Destination

Recovery unfolds over time, often with ups and downs. It is not a one-time event or a simple fix but a continuous journey of growth and self-discovery. This perspective fosters patience and compassion, both toward oneself and others. Recognizing that setbacks are part of the process helps reduce discouragement and reinforces persistence.

8. Recovery Requires Hope

Hope is the fuel that sustains recovery. Believing that change is possible—even in the face of difficulties—motivates individuals to keep moving forward. Cultivating hope involves setting realistic goals, celebrating small victories, and envisioning a better future. Without hope, the recovery journey can feel

overwhelming and bleak.

9. Recovery Builds on Strengths and Resilience

Rather than focusing solely on problems or deficits, recovery highlights personal strengths and resilience. Everyone has unique skills, talents, and coping mechanisms that can be harnessed during recovery. Identifying and nurturing these positive qualities empowers individuals to overcome challenges and build a fulfilling life beyond their struggles.

10. Recovery is About Living a Meaningful Life

Ultimately, recovery is more than symptom management—it's about reclaiming a life that feels purposeful and satisfying. This involves engaging in activities that bring joy, fostering relationships, contributing to community, and pursuing personal passions. When recovery is tied to meaning, it becomes a source of motivation and fulfillment, transforming the experience from mere survival to thriving.

Applying the Principles in Everyday Life

Understanding these 10 guiding principles is one thing; applying them daily is where true transformation happens. Here are some practical tips to incorporate these ideas into your recovery journey:

- **Practice self-compassion:** Treat yourself with kindness, especially during setbacks.
- **Seek support:** Connect with peer groups or trusted individuals who understand your experience.
- **Explore different therapies:** Don't hesitate to try various recovery methods until you find what resonates.
- **Set achievable goals:** Break down your recovery into manageable steps to maintain motivation.
- **Celebrate progress:** Acknowledge even small improvements as milestones worth recognizing.
- **Stay culturally connected:** Incorporate cultural rituals or practices that affirm your identity.
- **Maintain hope:** Remind yourself regularly of the potential for growth and renewal.

Recovery is a dynamic journey filled with challenges and triumphs. By embracing these guiding principles, individuals can navigate their path with clarity, strength, and a renewed sense of purpose. Each principle interlocks with the others, creating a supportive framework that nurtures long-term healing and well-being. Whether dealing with addiction, trauma, or mental health challenges, these tenets offer valuable insight into what it means to truly recover and thrive.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the 10 guiding principles of recovery?

The 10 guiding principles of recovery typically include hope, person-driven, many pathways, holistic, peer support, relational, culture, addressing trauma, strengths/responsibility, and respect. These principles guide individuals on their journey to recovery from mental health and substance use challenges.

Why is hope considered a key principle in recovery?

Hope is fundamental in recovery because it inspires individuals to believe that improvement and a fulfilling life are possible despite challenges. It motivates continued effort and resilience throughout the recovery process.

How does a person-driven approach influence the recovery process?

A person-driven approach means that the individual in recovery directs their own journey, making choices based on their needs, values, and goals. This empowers them and promotes autonomy and self-determination.

What role does peer support play among the 10 guiding principles of recovery?

Peer support involves connecting with others who have similar lived experiences. It provides encouragement, understanding, and mutual aid, which can enhance motivation and reduce feelings of isolation.

How does addressing trauma integrate into the guiding principles of recovery?

Addressing trauma recognizes that past traumatic experiences can impact mental health and substance use. Recovery approaches that incorporate trauma-informed care help individuals heal comprehensively and avoid re-traumatization.

Why is cultural competence important in the recovery principles?

Cultural competence ensures that recovery approaches respect and incorporate an individual's cultural background, values, and traditions. This relevance enhances engagement, trust, and effectiveness of recovery efforts.

Additional Resources

10 Guiding Principles of Recovery: A Framework for Sustainable Healing and Growth

10 guiding principles of recovery serve as a foundational framework for individuals navigating the complex journey from adversity to wellness. Whether addressing substance use disorders, mental health challenges, or physical rehabilitation, these principles provide a structured pathway toward sustainable recovery. Rooted in evidence-based practices and holistic understanding, they emphasize not just cessation of harmful behaviors but the restoration of balance, purpose, and connection in one's life.

Recovery is multifaceted and deeply personal, influenced by unique circumstances and needs. Therefore, the 10 guiding principles of recovery act as flexible pillars rather than rigid rules, supporting individuals across different demographics, backgrounds, and recovery pathways. By examining these principles in detail, this article aims to elucidate their significance, interconnections, and practical applications in fostering long-term wellness.

Understanding the 10 Guiding Principles of Recovery

At the heart of most recovery models lies the recognition that healing is more than merely eliminating symptoms or behaviors; it's about reclaiming an empowered sense of self and rebuilding a meaningful life. The 10 guiding principles of recovery provide a comprehensive lens through which to view this transformative process, encompassing emotional, psychological, social, and physical dimensions.

These principles have been shaped by decades of research in addiction science, mental health, psychology, and social work. They align closely with the concept of recovery as a holistic, person-centered process. Importantly, they also reflect insights from those with lived experience, making them practical and relatable.

1. Hope as a Catalyst for Change

Hope is often cited as the cornerstone of recovery. Without hope, motivation to pursue change can wane, leaving individuals trapped in cycles of despair or resignation. The 10 guiding principles of recovery consistently highlight hope as the initial spark that initiates and sustains the recovery journey. Studies

show that individuals who maintain a hopeful outlook are more likely to engage fully with treatment and support services, enhancing outcomes.

2. Person-Centered and Individualized Approach

Recovery is not a one-size-fits-all process. Tailoring interventions to an individual's unique strengths, needs, cultural background, and preferences is essential. The 10 guiding principles of recovery reinforce respect for autonomy and self-direction, emphasizing that individuals are experts in their own lives. This principle contrasts with historically paternalistic models and aligns with modern approaches advocating for shared decision-making.

3. Holistic Focus on Mind, Body, and Spirit

The complexity of recovery demands attention to all facets of well-being. Physical health, mental health, emotional resilience, social connections, and spiritual fulfillment all contribute to sustained recovery. This principle underlines the importance of integrated care models that address co-occurring conditions, such as depression alongside substance use disorders, ensuring comprehensive support.

4. Strengths-Based Framework

Rather than focusing solely on deficits or pathology, the 10 guiding principles of recovery emphasize leveraging an individual's existing strengths and resources. This positive psychology approach fosters empowerment and resilience, helping individuals build on what's working well and develop new coping mechanisms.

5. Peer Support and Community Integration

Social isolation can be both a cause and consequence of many disorders. Rebuilding connections through peer support groups, family involvement, and community engagement is a critical component of recovery. Peer-led programs often provide unique empathy and understanding, complementing professional treatment and enhancing motivation.

6. Respect for Self-Direction and Autonomy

Empowering individuals to lead their own recovery journey fosters ownership and accountability. The 10

guiding principles of recovery advocate for honoring each person's choices, even when they diverge from clinical recommendations, as long as they do not pose significant harm. This principle supports collaboration rather than coercion.

7. Non-Linear and Ongoing Process

Recovery is rarely a straight path. Relapses or setbacks are common and should be viewed as opportunities for learning rather than failure. Recognizing this non-linear progression helps reduce stigma and promotes persistence. The 10 guiding principles of recovery encourage flexibility and patience, both for individuals and providers.

8. Culturally Sensitive and Inclusive Practices

Culture shapes beliefs about health, illness, and healing. Recovery frameworks must be adaptable to diverse cultural contexts to be effective. By incorporating culturally sensitive approaches, services can improve engagement, trust, and relevance for historically marginalized or underserved populations.

9. Addressing Trauma and Co-Occurring Issues

Many individuals in recovery have experienced trauma or have co-occurring mental health disorders. The 10 guiding principles of recovery stress the importance of trauma-informed care and integrated treatment models that address multiple challenges simultaneously rather than in isolation.

10. Emphasis on Meaning and Purpose

Sustainable recovery often hinges on finding or restoring a sense of meaning, whether through employment, education, creative pursuits, or relationships. This principle recognizes that abstinence or symptom reduction alone does not equate to wellness; a purposeful life is central to lasting change.

Applying the 10 Guiding Principles of Recovery in Practice

Translating these principles into real-world settings requires coordinated efforts among clinicians, peer support specialists, policymakers, and communities. Effective implementation involves:

- **Comprehensive Assessments:** Evaluating physical, psychological, social, and cultural factors to guide personalized care plans.
- **Multidisciplinary Collaboration:** Engaging professionals across medical, psychological, social, and spiritual domains to provide integrated services.
- **Peer-Driven Initiatives:** Incorporating peer recovery coaches and support groups to enhance engagement and empowerment.
- **Flexible Service Delivery:** Offering various treatment modalities—residential, outpatient, telehealth—to accommodate individual preferences and needs.
- **Ongoing Monitoring and Support:** Recognizing recovery as a lifelong process requiring sustained resources and community connections.

By embedding the 10 guiding principles of recovery into program design and policy, stakeholders can improve accessibility, effectiveness, and equity in recovery services.

Challenges and Considerations in Upholding Recovery Principles

While the 10 guiding principles of recovery provide a robust framework, several challenges can complicate their application. Stigma remains a significant barrier, discouraging individuals from seeking help or fully engaging in recovery-oriented care. Additionally, resource limitations in healthcare systems can restrict access to comprehensive, integrated services.

Another consideration is balancing autonomy with necessary clinical oversight, especially in severe cases where safety concerns arise. Navigating cultural differences requires ongoing training and organizational commitment to cultural competence.

Despite these challenges, the principles serve as a north star, guiding continuous improvement in recovery-oriented systems.

Recovery, by its nature, is an evolving journey shaped by individual experiences and broader social environments. The 10 guiding principles of recovery encapsulate a shift from deficit-focused treatment to strength-based, person-centered healing. They remind practitioners and policymakers alike that true recovery transcends symptom management, aiming instead for holistic wellness, meaningful engagement, and enduring hope.

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10 guiding principles of recovery: *Different Diagnoses, Similar Experiences* Michael John Norton, Oliver John Cullen, 2024-08-27 Emerging from an era of changing mental health and addiction services, this edited collection is the first work in its field to gather narratives of mental health, addiction and dual diagnoses into one publication, as well as to critically examine the differences and similarities of these experiences.

10 guiding principles of recovery: *Caring for People with Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders in Primary Care Settings* National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, Health and Medicine Division, Board on Health Sciences Policy, Board on Health Care Services, Forum on Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders, 2021-01-30 Behavioral health conditions, which include mental health and substance use disorders, affect approximately 20 percent of Americans. Of those with a substance use disorder, approximately 60 percent also have a mental health disorder. As many as 80 percent of patients with behavioral health conditions seek treatment in emergency rooms and primary care clinics, and between 60 and 70 percent of them are discharged without receiving behavioral health care services. More than two-thirds of primary care providers report that they are unable to connect patients with behavioral health providers because of a shortage of mental health providers and health insurance barriers. Part of the explanation for the lack of access to care lies in a historical legacy of discrimination and stigma that makes people reluctant to seek help and also led to segregated and inhumane services for those facing mental health and substance use disorders. In an effort to understanding the challenges and opportunities of providing essential components of care for people with mental health and substance use disorders in primary care settings, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's Forum on Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders convened three webinars held on June 3, July 29, and August 26, 2020. The webinars addressed efforts to define essential components of care for people with mental health and substance use disorders in the primary care setting for depression, alcohol use disorders, and opioid use disorders; opportunities to build the health care workforce and delivery models that incorporate those essential components of care; and financial incentives and payment structures to support the implementation of those care models, including value-based payment strategies and practice-level incentives. This publication summarizes the presentations and discussion of the webinars.

10 guiding principles of recovery: *Psychiatric Nursing* Mary Ann Boyd, Rebecca Luebbert, 2025-08-26 The definitive resource for Psychiatric-Mental Health Nursing education is now fully updated for today's practice challenges. Psychiatric Nursing: Contemporary Practice, 8th Edition, prepares students to deliver exceptional care through evidence-based, recovery-oriented approaches. This updated edition emphasizes clinical judgment development and adds reflections from professional nurses, discussion of mental health inequities, trauma-informed care guidance, expanded safety content, and a new chapter on complementary therapies and integrative health. Trusted pedagogical elements like threaded case studies, therapeutic dialogues, and clinical judgment care plans create a seamless bridge from classroom to clinical practice, transforming student apprehension into confidence.

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C Townsend, 2013-08-16 New DSM-5 content! Whether it's an entire course on psychiatric nursing or integrating these principles into an existing course, this is the text that's concise, engaging, and informative. It offers an evidence-based, holistic approach to mental health nursing—in a streamlined format that explores nursing diagnoses for both physiological and psychological disorders. It's the psychiatric nursing text that students actually read, understand, and use.

10 guiding principles of recovery: Medications for Opioid Use Disorder Save Lives

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, Health and Medicine Division, Board on Health Sciences Policy, Committee on Medication-Assisted Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder, 2019-05-16 The opioid crisis in the United States has come about because of excessive use of these drugs for both legal and illicit purposes and unprecedented levels of consequent opioid use disorder (OUD). More than 2 million people in the United States are estimated to have OUD, which is caused by prolonged use of prescription opioids, heroin, or other illicit opioids. OUD is a life-threatening condition associated with a 20-fold greater risk of early death due to overdose, infectious diseases, trauma, and suicide. Mortality related to OUD continues to escalate as this public health crisis gathers momentum across the country, with opioid overdoses killing more than 47,000 people in 2017 in the United States. Efforts to date have made no real headway in stemming this crisis, in large part because tools that already exist—like evidence-based medications—are not being deployed to maximum impact. To support the dissemination of accurate patient-focused information about treatments for addiction, and to help provide scientific solutions to the current opioid crisis, this report studies the evidence base on medication assisted treatment (MAT) for OUD. It examines available evidence on the range of parameters and circumstances in which MAT can be effectively delivered and identifies additional research needed.

10 guiding principles of recovery: Partnering for Recovery in Mental Health Janis Tondora,

Rebecca Miller, Mike Slade, Larry Davidson, 2014-05-19 Partnering for Recovery in Mental Health is a practical guide for conducting person and family-centered recovery planning with individuals with serious mental illnesses and their families. It is derived from the authors' extensive experience in articulating and implementing recovery-oriented practice and has been tested with roughly 3,000 providers who work in the field as well as with numerous post-graduate trainees in psychology, social work, nursing, and psychiatric rehabilitation. It has consistently received highly favorable evaluations from health care professionals as well as people in recovery from mental illness. This guide represents a new clinical approach to the planning and delivery of mental health care. It emerges from the mental health recovery movement, and has been developed in the process of the efforts to transform systems of care at the local, regional, and national levels to a recovery orientation. It will be an extremely useful tool for planning care within the context of current health care reform efforts and increasingly useful in the future, as systems of care become more person-centered. Consistent with other patient-centered care planning approaches, this book adapts this process specifically to meet the needs of persons with serious mental illnesses and their families. Partnering for Recovery in Mental Health is an invaluable guide for any person involved directly or indirectly in the provision, monitoring, evaluation, or use of community-based mental health care.

10 guiding principles of recovery: Wellness-Based Addictions Counseling Philip B.

Clarke, Todd F. Lewis, 2023-12-22 This book presents a culture change in addictions treatment that places wellness at the forefront of relapse, addiction, and recovery. The authors introduce a wellness-based conceptualization of addiction and recovery including the wellness model that grounds Wellness-Based Addictions Counseling (WBAC) and the techniques of this approach. Wellness-Based Addictions Counseling advocates for wellness as the primary variable in addiction and recovery outcomes, presents a wellness-based model of addiction and recovery, and highlights techniques for unlocking the motivational and strength-based aspects of this approach. Specifically, the authors provide wellness questions and screening tools to incorporate into the clinical evaluation and structure for creating a wellness plan and family wellness plan for the client's loved ones. Readers will learn numerous wellness-based techniques related to the mind, body, spirit, emotions,

and connection that can prevent relapse and facilitate well-being. All WBAC interventions are grounded in developmental, culturally responsive, and strength-based perspectives. Wellness-Based Addictions Counseling is essential reading for professionals who provide addictions treatment and counseling as well as scholars who conduct writing and research on addiction.

10 guiding principles of recovery: A Court of Refuge Ginger Lerner-Wren, Rebecca A. Eckland, 2018-03-06 The story of America's first Mental Health Court as told by its presiding judge, Judge Ginger Lerner-Wren—from its inception in 1997 to its implementation in over 400 courts across the nation As a young legal advocate, Ginger Lerner-Wren bore witness to the consequences of an underdeveloped mental health care infrastructure. Unable to do more than offer guidance, she watched families being torn apart as client after client was ensnared in the criminal system for crimes committed as a result of addiction, homelessness, and mental illness. She soon learned this was a far-reaching crisis—estimates show that in forty-four states, jails and prisons house ten times more people with serious mental illnesses than state psychiatric hospitals. In A Court of Refuge, Judge Ginger Lerner-Wren tells the story of how the first dedicated mental health court in the United States grew from an offshoot of her criminal division, held during lunch hour without the aid of any federal funding, to a revolutionary institution. Of the two hundred thousand people behind bars at the court's inception in 1997, more than one in ten were known to have schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression. To date, the court has successfully diverted more than twenty thousand people suffering from various psychiatric conditions from jail and into treatment facilities and other community resources. Working under the theoretical framework of therapeutic jurisprudence, Judge Lerner-Wren and her growing network of fierce, determined advocates, families, and supporters sparked a national movement to conceptualize courts as a place of healing. Today, there are hundreds of such courts in the US. Poignant and compassionately written, A Court of Refuge demonstrates both the potential relief mental health courts can provide to underserved communities and their limitations in a system in dire need of vast overhauls of the policies that got us here. Lerner-Wren presents a refreshing possibility for a future in which criminal justice and mental health care can work in tandem to address this vexing human rights issue—and to change our attitudes about mental illness as a whole.

10 guiding principles of recovery: Designing and Operating a System of Care in Behavioral Health Stuart Koman, Robert J. Keane, 2024-12-06 Designing and Operating a System of Care in Behavioral Health: Solutions to Fragmentation in Mental Health proposes a pathway to combat the current fragmentation of mental health services. Drawing on the authors' 25 years of experience in the private and public sectors, this book develops a constellation of integrated treatment services to provide a cohesive path to recovery for individuals with mental or behavioral disorders. Koman and Keane embrace the request by patients and their families to be “at the table” in making decisions about their care and to influence how this care is provided by professionals and institutions. This is an invaluable reference for mental and behavioral health professionals seeking a better way to provide effective mental health services to clients and their families.

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improve their quality of life. An ideal resource for OT students as well as those pursuing an Occupational Therapy Doctorate, the extensively updated 6th Edition expands coverage of the many assessments and interventions available in today's clinical practice, empowering users with a sound foundation in occupational therapy processes and clearly demonstrating how to effectively intervene to meet the needs of clients with mental health issues.

10 guiding principles of recovery: No Saints Here Claudette Fette, Aaron Fette, 2025-06-24
Aaron Fette lived with mental illness all his life. At age 15, he envisioned himself as a modern-day Jack Kerouac, living an adventure on the road that he would chronicle in his writing. Instead, he found himself fleeing from paranoid delusions that drove him from city to city. As a victim of abuse and someone who perpetuated violence, as a drug addict and alcoholic, and as a survivor of the US justice system, Aaron's story offers a unique perspective on some of the thorniest issues in our society today. He died of an opioid overdose in a homeless encampment under Interstate 35 in Fort Worth, Texas, on April 2, 2017. His mother, Claudette, alternates his narrative with her own, walking through a clear-eyed self-appraisal as a teenage mom struggling to support her son, who started life with many adverse childhood experiences and her own failures throughout his life. Aaron's life illustrates the consequences of that abuse as it reverberated through the rest of his life. When he landed on the streets at fifteen years old after numerous ineffective interventions, Claudette became an occupational therapist, and later a college professor, seeking to better enable youth, families, and people living with mental illness in her community. She began to understand where systems had failed them, and the search led her to communities of family advocates and other professionals who were developing best practices in mental health. Claudette weaves Aaron's first-person accounts of his struggles together with her own. No Saints Here presents their experiences as a cautionary tale while offering better alternatives based on Claudette's years as a scholar and therapist. They share their hard lessons to encourage us to reject ignorance and accelerate the development of a smarter, healthier culture for generations to follow.

10 guiding principles of recovery: Rehabilitation Work Hannah Graham, 2016-05-26
Conversations about rehabilitation and how to address the drugs-crime nexus have been dominated by academics and policymakers, without due recognition of the experience and knowledge of practitioners. Not enough is known about the cultures and conditions in which rehabilitation occurs. Why is it that significant numbers of practitioners are leaving the alcohol and other drugs field, while disproportionate numbers of criminal justice practitioners are on leave? Rehabilitation Work provides a unique insight into what happens behind the closed doors of prisons, probation and parole offices, drug rehabs, and recovery support services drawing on research from Australia. This book is among the first to provide a dedicated empirical examination of the interface between the concurrent processes of desistance from crime and recovery from substance misuse, and the implications for rehabilitation work. Hannah Graham uses practitioner interviews, workforce data and researcher observations to reveal compelling differences between official accounts of rehabilitation work, and what practitioners actually do in practice. Practitioners express a desire to be the change rather than being subject to change, actively co-producing progressive reforms instead of passively coping with funding cutbacks and interagency politics. Applied examples of how practitioners collaborate, lead and innovate in the midst of challenging work are complemented with evocative illustrations of insider humour and professional resilience. This book is a key resource for students, academics and practitioners across fields including criminology and criminal justice, social work, psychology, counselling and addiction treatment.

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