

Well Being





What does well-being mean to you?

Is it good health, security, family, love? Each person defines it differently. Your experiences shape your view. And your view changes as life rubs against you—sometimes smoothing rough spots, sometimes creating cracks and fissures that must be healed.

For 5-year-old Ayda, now in recovery from a life-threatening disease—being well enough to play in the sun equals bliss.

For glass artist Jessy, who has undergone countless surgeries, it's her creative gift.

And for Joel and Wendy, who tragically lost an infant son, time with their two daughters provides healing and joy.

Clinical care is only a fraction of total health and well-being. So CareOregon asked 20 community members—including representatives from partner Coordinated Care Organizations and CareOregon Advantage—what well-being means to them. They invited us into their lives, shared their thoughts and created artful depictions of their feelings about well-being.

Our long-term goal? To understand what individuals and communities need to ensure well-being, then partner with them to create innovative, out-of-the-box solutions and support systems to meet those needs.

Why? Because we are Better Together.



Being someone's hero

"Well-being is to be healthy, not just inside and out, but up here, too," says Cassy, tapping her head. "It's being able to move on from a rough spot in your life. It's being able to look at the brighter side."

It's easier if you have a role model. Or, if you are the role model and you take the responsibility seriously.

Cassy's inspiration is her 3-year-old daughter, Claire.

"My daughter is pretty much the reason I got into the medical field," Cassy says.

Cassy was waiting tables, working long and odd hours for less than minimum wage when Claire was born.

"After I had my baby, I thought, 'I need to do something with my life to support her, to be that person in her life she could look up to,'" Cassy says.

With help from family and friends, Cassy worked and studied for two years. And now she's a medical assistant at The Rinehart Clinic in Wheeler. It's a job that enables her to actively create a sense of well-being for her daughter, her patients and herself.

"It's a very rewarding feeling," Cassy says.

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When she draws well-being, Claire focuses on family and home, and gets help with captions from Mom.

Finding the middle way

There is enormous need at the Neighborhood Health Center’s Milwaukie clinic, where the mission is to serve those who’ve had limited access to care.

“It’s a huge problem to overcome,” says James , the dental director. Poor oral health “is one of the most chronic illnesses that children have. It’s a big mountain to climb, but it’s something we’re trying to make an impact on, little by little.”

And on the weekends there are other mountains to climb and new trails to hike.

Between work and leisure, there is balance.

“To breathe fresh air. Stretch my legs. Look at the birds. Smell the amazing scents that are just kind of floating around in the air here.

“If I didn’t have that, or some way to relieve the pressure, that would decrease my sense of well-being.

James, who previously practiced in New Mexico, recalls a Navajo philosophy of “Finding the middle way.”

“I learned a lot from that. Not getting too high, not too low, but finding that peaceful middle way.”



Stacked rocks have spiritual meaning in many cultures. To James, they represent balance and well-being.

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Caring for one another

Life is not always easy.

Infants and parents pass on. The circumstances of life sneak up and derail plans.

But life goes on.

For Wendy and Joel, life is 4-year old Madelyn, known as Maddy, and 6-month-old Sophia.

“We don’t have a lot of money but we have us,” Joel says. “And it’s the greatest thing in the world.”

Joel stays home with the girls while Wendy works as a medical assistant at Physicians Medical Center in McMinnville, a part of the Yamhill County Care Organization network.

Ask Maddy about well-being, and she’ll think of a line from a favorite cartoon, “Lilo and Stitch.” The line is, “‘Ohana’ means family. Family means no one gets left behind.”

“After our son died, we got a new perspective on what is important in life,” Wendy says. “For us, it is family. We are blessed to have two beautiful girls now and there is nothing more important to us than their well-being. We will move the earth to make sure they are safe, happy and have everything that they need.”

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The words that spell “family” and mean well-being are rays of sunshine in Wendy’s world.

Living artfully

With her deft touch, a lump of molten glass becomes a treasure. In clumsier hands, it could end up in the recycling bin.

A fine line separates destruction and creation.

Jessy knows that line well. She's endured a lifetime of surgeries that involved breaking her bones to correct a congenital leg and hip condition. As a member of Jackson Care Connect, she recently had surgery that could dramatically improve her life.

"Glass blowing allows me to be creative," says Jessy. "It's also great stress relief. It takes total concentration, so it takes your mind off everything else in the world."

To take what you have and make it right, to make it art. That's a definition of well-being that Jessy relates to. Despite a lifetime of pain, she enjoys life with her pets and her friend, Zane. She plans to complete college, and channel her experiences and training into making things better for others as an occupational therapist.

"To me, well-being is enjoying the outdoors in beautiful Southern Oregon as much as I can," she says. "It's loving and caring for all of my many pets as if they were my babies. It's creating—I'm always my happiest cooking, gardening, or doing arts and crafts! And of course spending my days with the one I love."



Creating beautiful glass art like this is an important aspect of Jessy's well-being.

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photography courtesy of Jessy's friend Zane Bennett



Being with family

Distance is a fickle thing.

Sometimes it brings loneliness. Being alone, thousands of miles from home, living and working among strangers, struggling to learn a new language.

Sometimes it brings wonderful surprises.

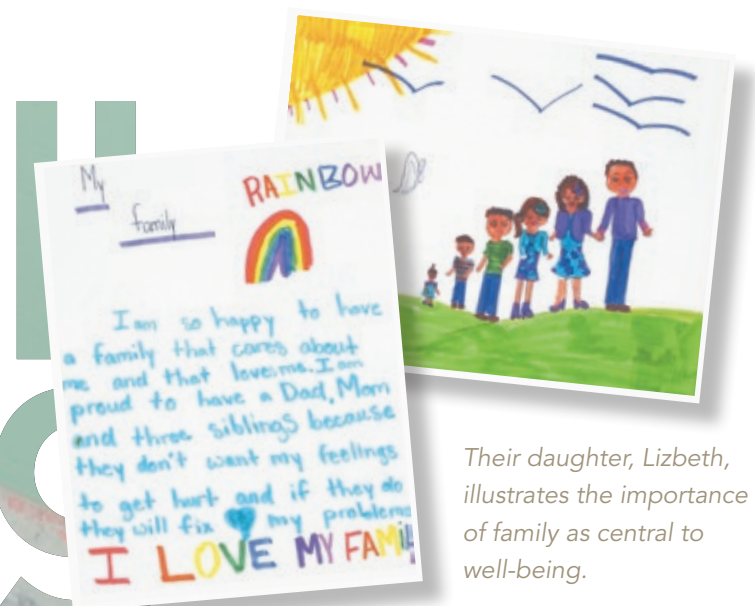
Distance brought together Santos and Maria. Both are originally from Guanajuato, Mexico. Yet they met for the first time in Oregon.

Now they are married, with four beautiful children and more family members—many more family members—close by.

A crowded room full of family, giving thanks together. That means well-being to Maria and Santos, who are members of Yamhill County Care Organization.

“My parents and siblings live in Oregon,” Maria says. “I am happy and fortunate to have my family nearby because we can share special occasions, such as Thanksgiving. This past Thanksgiving Day, we got together and there were 65 of us total. Having my family together is a gift from God and a big blessing.”

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Their daughter, Lizbeth, illustrates the importance of family as central to well-being.

Knowing who you are

You can't make it through life without a few bumps and bruises. That's okay with Kirstin.

She's had more than her fair share.

At just a year old, she was in an accident involving a logging truck. Head trauma and other injuries left her in a coma for months. The doctors told her mother, if Kirstin pulled through, she'd spend the rest of her life unable to move on her own, care for herself or communicate.

But she did—surviving the coma and working through years of therapy.

Today she's a college student, the wife of Scott and mother of 2-year-old Aurora, with another child on the way.

Kirstin continues to have issues, but on this she's clear:

"Without family, you don't really have a sense of well-being and who you are," Kirstin says. "Well-being is happiness and knowing who you are.

"This has always been me and who I am. I may have a limp and my arm may be shorter than the other one. But I am who I am because of my experiences. If you regret your past, if you take away things from your past, you wouldn't be who you are today."



Columbia Pacific CCO member Kirstin finds well-being in photography and family.

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Embracing life's rhythm

There is ebb and flow on this country farm, on 10 acres, east of Astoria.

Rain gives way to warmth and sun. Births balance loss. Generations succeed generations.

For 16-year-old Teo (far left), there is pleasure in raising geese by hand, and pain when it comes time to sell them.

For Kathy, Teo's grandmother, there is hard work and rewards in managing a household of six and raising miniature horses, trees, bamboo and grandchildren.

"So I keep planting and pruning, grafting and raising bamboo, and building fences. All that stuff...makes me really happy," she says.

For Teo, well-being is riding a friend's quad, or a little quiet time alone, not thinking about chores, school or life as a teenager with diabetes.

"Living here in the country is better than probably being in the city where all the noise and stuff is," Teo says. "It is peaceful."

"Raising five grandkids for the last 18 years seems like it gets easier as time goes on," Kathy says. "It is a house full at times, but it is all worth it."

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For Teo, a member of Columbia Pacific CCO, photography and raising geese by hand symbolize well-being.

Finding peaceful balance

Shawna was a single mother with three teen-aged sons when her 19-year-old son, Van, was killed in a car accident. A successful business owner in Central Point, Oregon, her life changed forever that day.

“Everything in my life died, and I was left alive. I went into total shock. I did not want to be alive. The pain was so intense – physical, mental and emotional. But, I couldn’t cry.”

Depressed and unable to work, Shawna reached out for help. With La Clinica Central Point, she began her journey back.

“They have a lot to do with me getting better and having a better life.” she says. “I’m still on my journey.”

One of her sons, named J (pictured here), has multiple health issues.

“He is my life,” Shawna says.

“I want to find peace and joy, and I have experienced that. I would really like to help others.

“I believe a peaceful balance of spiritual, emotional, physical and mental health and healing will lead you to the way you view yourself, and to the quality of life you will lead.”

Shawna’s collage of images show that for her well-being means balance. She and J are members of Jackson Care Connect.



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Watching over them

Any house with five kids can be a bit chaotic.

When home is a small apartment, the walls can really vibrate with the sounds of play, and laughter, and growing up.

Out in the playground next to her home, Shavantee watches her five children. Sometimes, even out here, the walls quiver a bit.

Imagine how it would be if it weren't for that one patch of calm, that eye of the storm that is 9-year-old Eliah.

Eliah makes order from the chaos, watches out for his brothers and sisters, makes sure they don't get too rambunctious with each other, feels happy that 1-year-old Eliza's premature birth hasn't kept her too far back.

Sure, Eliah enjoys playing tag or tetherball or video games with friends. But this is family.

"To me what well-being means is your family members and friends," Eliah says. "I like to play with my friends, and my family is loving and caring. So who wouldn't want to be with a family like that?"

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For Eliah,
a member of
Health Share
of Oregon,
well-being is
friends and family.

Serving others

Well-being has a simple definition for Ragib:

“To find a good life, be treated as a human being, and have respect and have equal opportunities for everyone, and to feel, I may say, as a human being sometimes,” he says.

Simple, but not easy growing up as a Meskhetian Turk in Russia, where his people have been political outsiders since the days of Stalin.

Here in Portland since 2007, Ragib is thrilled by the opportunities. He’s finished a two-year degree at Portland Community College, studies psychology at Portland State University and plans to be a Physician Assistant.

“To love and respect different people, different cultures, different religions,” Ragib says. “That makes you happy.

He takes great joy in helping fellow Oregonians as a CareOregon Community Health Engagement Advocate, and helping fellow Turks as a teacher at Rosegarden Turkish American Cultural Center. He revels in acting as big brother to a dozen or so nieces, nephews and cousins, all under the age of 12.

“They are the future of our country,” Ragib says. “We need to navigate them to the right path, what direction to go and what to do in life to be a good human being.”



Friends, like those in this snapshot from Russia, and family mean well-being to Ragib.



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Enjoying simple things

When 5-year-old Ayda draws the things that make her happy, she draws herself and her brother, 9-year-old Max, outside, playing together in the sun.

Max's idea of well-being is to repeat the June walk they took together on the trail near Multnomah Falls.

"I wish we could do it once a week, without worrying," Max says.

It doesn't happen very often. Ayda was born with Hirschsprung's disease. She's on a feeding tube 16 hours a day. Unable to risk infections from the outdoors or other children, Max and Ayda are home schooled. Excursions take an hour of preparation and a bag of emergency supplies. Most days, Max and Ayda's fun is inside at home, with father, Benjamin, and mother, Janice.

Well-being doesn't have to be complicated, Janice says. "To me it's about family, enjoying the simple things," she says. "It doesn't have to be something extravagant," she says. "Just doing the things you enjoy."



Max and Ayda are members of Health Share of Oregon. For them, well-being means being together, as in Max and Ayda's drawings.

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Singing from the heart

Musicians call it dissonante. It's a passage that's out of harmony, jarring to the ear.

To Jihad, dissonante is time past, when alcohol robbed him of health and silenced his singing. Now, you'd describe him as harmonious. And for that, Jihad gives thanks to his doctors, to God, and to Peggy, the Health Resilience worker who's been his guide.

As a young man, Jihad toured the world, as a singer and with the University of Washington drama department.

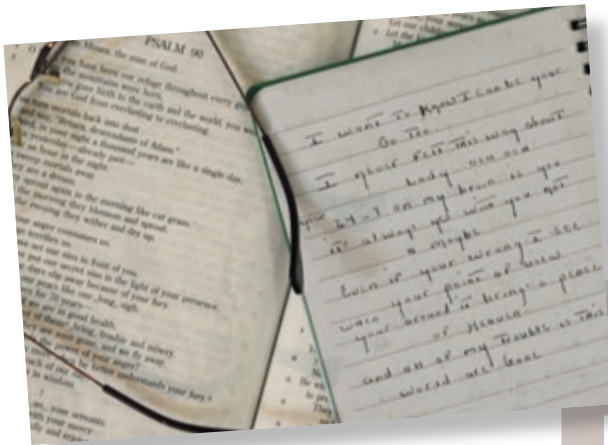
Now, recovering from substance abuse and health problems, he has revitalized his voice as a member of the Highland Church choir.

"Now that I feel healthy enough I can just sing at any time, you know?" Jihad says. "I think of songs that make you happy. I think of songs that make you proud of yourself."

Like this one:

"God has not promised me sometime that is not the way it is going to be, but a little rain mixed with God's sunshine or a little pain, so we can appreciate the good time. Be, be, be grateful. Be grateful."

Vittorioso is another musical term. It means victoriously.



Jihad, a member of Health Share of Oregon, expresses well-being in songs he sings and writes.

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Finding the right path

The poet Robert Frost describes the road less traveled as making all the difference.

To Sattva, the real difference is in taking the road not previously traveled.

From his home city of Tehran, Iran, he's traveled to Germany, been a batik, candle and jewelry craftsman in the San Francisco Bay Area, circled the globe, had a lucrative career as an oceanic artist in Kauai and now paints abstracts in Portland.

"After 30 years of painting, I don't have a big name for myself, because I've been constantly moving from one place to another," Sattva says. "If I had stayed in one place, if I was in California, it would be a different ball game."

The painting he was doing before wasn't satisfying him.

"It was just commercial; it wasn't art. I just wanted to do something that had depth, some spirituality behind it."

"Art," Sattva says, "becomes almost part of you. If you don't do it, there's something missing in your well-being. When I'm doing painting, I'm rejuvenated, I feel good, I'm excited."

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For Sattva, a CareOregon Advantage member, art is key to well-being.

Blending old and new

An old leather chair sits in Rich's office at Newberg's Villa Medical Clinic. Well-worn and familiar, it's a comfortable place to sit and work on his computer.

Together, chair and computer, old and new, represent well-being to Rich, a Physician Assistant.

"I try to keep the old ways that work while also adopting new methods to make sure that I stay in balance as a primary care provider," Rich says. "That's the only way that I am able to be strong and compassionate for my patients."

Staying up to date on new research and developments in medicine challenges him intellectually, while working with his patients allows him the privilege of connecting on a deeper level.

"What we do in primary care allows people to stay in balance, when they are also dealing with the stresses of acute or chronic illnesses," Rich says.

His practice, part of Yamhill County Care Organization's network, also is integrating behavioral and physical health. Combining the old ways with the new helps patients set goals to improve their overall well-being, and keeps things new and interesting for Rich.



An old chair and new technology help Rich and patients, like Jayden, stay in balance.



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Being a good neighbor

Not everyone from a big city thrives in the great Pacific Northwest, but Floyd does.

He grew up amid the asphalt streets and ethnically distinct neighborhoods of Chicago’s West Side.

“Then I came here,” Floyd says. “I saw these hills and mountains, and thought I was 10 years younger.”

Floyd has seen life’s twists and turns. He’s experienced racism. Life experiences changed his career path from lawyer to truck driver. He’s had health problems and economic hardships as a result.

“Martin Luther King said, ‘The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.’” Floyd says. “I aspire to that. To be there for another human being who needs my help. Because no matter what my skin color or what my faith is, we’re all brothers and sisters.”

Today Floyd is there for others in a variety of ways, from transporting shut-ins to Christmas dinners, to speaking to legislators on behalf of CareOregon as a Community Health Engagement Advocate.

“My view of well-being is, ‘How can I help the next person?’ Because I’m doing fine.”

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A quote by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is at the core of Floyd’s well-being illustration.

Enjoying a good walk

When you first see Anita, it's likely she'll be walking.

"I absolutely love walking. People see me everywhere I go," she says. "When I meet new people in this area, they always say, 'Oh, I saw you walking someplace.'"

Walking takes her out on the streets of Medford, or onto its country lanes and greenway trails, where the scenery inspires her paintings, and makes this place the only home she ever wants to have.

Anita says even if she did drive, she'd still walk.

It's been tough the past few years. Severe asthma has made walking, working, even stable housing a near-impossible challenge.

Now, after working with Linda, a community care outreach worker from Jackson Care Connect (pictured left), Anita's asthma is back under control, she has steady housing, people who love her, and a good chance at the rest.

"To me, good well-being is being active in my spiritual community, as well as being able to walk all the places I love to walk," she says. "I'm working on the physical health. One step at a time."

Anita's artwork often illustrates Shakespeare's quote, "The eyes are the window to your soul."



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Remaining faithful

Between the people dropping in and those walking by, a barber can get a good sense of the world, even in a small town.

From his barber shop in Tillamook, Ron watches, observes, and during the lulls, he writes—a weekly newspaper ad. Sometimes poetry is the result. Sometimes faith is the subject.

Well-being means faith, Ron says.

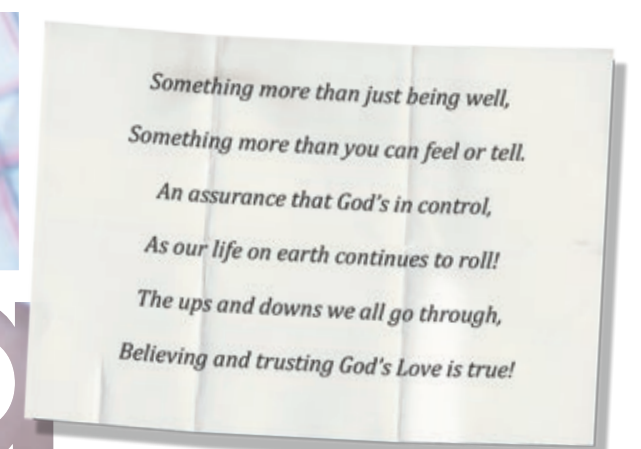
“Life is challenging,” he says. “Being a Christian, I believe that this life is just a stepping stone. My well-being, even through my struggles, is that I know where I’m going.”

It hasn’t been easy. Ron has lost a career and started over. He faithfully visits and cares for his wife who lives independently. He’s been sole parent to “Daddy’s girl,” Ronnie Alyssa, now in college. And he’s endured the challenge of living with insulin-dependent diabetes and no health insurance.

Ron’s lifetime of experience has made him a valued member of the Tillamook Family Counseling board of directors for the past 20 years. Now he serves as a member of the Community Advisory Council for Columbia Pacific Coordinated Care Organization.

“Things happen for a reason,” Ron says. “I don’t always understand those reasons. But I believe I am where God wants me at this point.”

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Ron shares his ideas of well-being, life and faith through poetry.

Overcoming obstacles

Originally from Grants Pass, George enjoyed a full and active life in Alaska, including managing a convenience store. The 50-mile drive home through a snowy landscape after the graveyard shift was taxing. When he fell asleep at the wheel, his car flipped—leaving him permanently in a wheelchair with limited use of his hands.

For George, well-being means setting achievable goals, so he returned to Oregon and found new outlets for his energies. He is a health care activist, including serving as co-chair for Jackson Care Connect's Community Advisory Council, and an advocate for people living with disabilities. He's become an expert on adapting to one's environment and adapting tools to special needs.

"Sometimes people in wheelchairs take pity on themselves," George says. "I never did. I took life head on."



Reaching goals despite limitations. Creatively using what you have for what you need. That's well-being for George.

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photography by Jeanie Lunsford and Jerry Rhodes (inset)



photography by Jerry Rhodes

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Sharing family fun

For LeeAnn, obstacles are opportunities to go higher, whether she's leaping gracefully at a ballet recital, flying on the aerial silks at circus camp or getting major air on her skateboard like the next Tony Hawk.

Family is opportunity, too. With family, you still have a chance to reach for your dreams despite obstacles.

Family is what makes LeeAnn's active life possible, more than a year after her Type 1 diabetes diagnosis.

LeeAnn lives with her older brother, mother and grandparents in Medford. Mother Lori is there when LeeAnn needs help with her insulin. Grandmother Clyda pitches in when Lori needs to do chores away from home.

"Lori and the kids being here is a blessing," Clyda says. "Family takes care of family."

Lori agrees.

"Well-being is not so much about me as it is being able to know my kids have what they need," she says. "Well-being is knowing we can do what needs to be done."

Even if that means being in a circus.



Family fun, like Lori's henna handiwork, is part of well-being for three generations, according to this Jackson Care Connect member.

Enjoying family time

At Newport, there is great clam chowder. At Cannon Beach, Sydney's favorite, there are marshmallows to roast on the beach. At Pacific City, there is a giant sand dune to climb.

"Me and my grandma climbed it together," she says. "We didn't make it to the top, but close to the top."

Any beach—anywhere at all, really—is wonderful when family is there to share it.

"Well-being means family to me," says Sydney, an active, healthy 11-year-old who loves pets, science, photography, reading, school, friends and family. "My family makes me feel really good all day, every day."

Born in Chuzhou, China, at 17 months of age she boarded a plane with her new mother, Caroline, for the long journey home to the United States.

Having her own small business and the support of extended family enables Caroline to devote lots of time to Sydney.

A close-knit family makes well-being possible, Caroline and Sydney agree.

"Family is forever and when I am with my family it's like I am filled with joy inside," Sydney says.



The family portrait she drew years ago means well-being to Sydney, a member of Health Share of Oregon.

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