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Issue 36 Summer/Autumn 2022



# London Mums



Sister Sledge



Rhys Lewis

**Star  
mum**

**EXCLUSIVE!**

Hollywood power couple  
Kristen Bell and Dax Shepard  
share their parenting tips and  
insights into their family life

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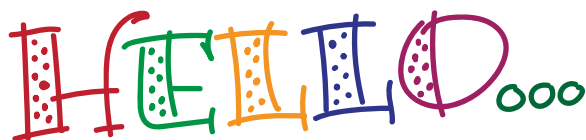
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## Editor's letter



Media invite them to share the secrets of their happy marriage. Filmmakers cast them in their flicks all the time. Instagram can't get enough of them... Meet this issue's cover stars. Hollywood husband and wife duo has been bringing hilarious, relatable content to audiences for years. Recently *The Woman in the House Across the Street from the Girl in the Window* star, Kristen Bell, and the *Armchair Expert* podcast host, Dax Shepard, came to

London to launch their family brand Hello Bello and to share their secrets to happy parenting with me. Do yourself a favour and get to know them on p6.

Elsewhere in the issue, 70s Disco Queen Kathy Sledge talks about iconic Sister Sledge. To this day, her family girl-band remains one of popular music's defining vocal acts, with their Global hit *We Are Family* hailed as one of the Top 20 Greatest Girl Group Songs of All Time.

On to another of life's great delights: soft rock music. Don't miss my 10 minutes chat with rising star singer-songwriter Rhys Lewis, mostly known for *No Right To Love You* (featured on *Love Island*).

Anyway, I hope you enjoy this Summer and Autumn's edition as much as the London Mums' team have loved producing it!

**Spread the word – joining London Mums is totally and utterly FREE!**

Monica Costa, Editor in chief, Founder of London Mums & mum of 16-year-old Diego [monica@londonmums.org.uk](mailto:monica@londonmums.org.uk), [@londonmums](https://www.londonmums.com)

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# THE BIG INTERVIEW



## Kristen Bell

### Editorial

London Mums magazine is produced by London Mums Limited

**Editor and Publisher:** Monica Costa  
[monica@londonmums.org.uk](mailto:monica@londonmums.org.uk)

**Editorial Assistant:** Carolina Kon  
[info@londonmumsmagazine.com](mailto:info@londonmumsmagazine.com)

**Head of Partnerships:** Laura Castelli

**Illustrators:** Irene Gomez Granados (chief)

**Contributors:** Emma Hammett, Rosalba Costantini, Adele Greaves, Julia Minchin, Ranjeet Panesar, Usha Patel, Diego Scintu.

**Photography Credits:** Photos of Kristen Bell by Nat Michele; Photos of Rhys Lewis by Credit: Lauren Luxenberg.

**POST:** London Mums Limited, 74 Dowdeswell Close – London SW15 5RL

**CALL:** 07900088123

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**NEXT ISSUE:** The Winter 2022-2023 issue will be out at the end of October 2022 – Deadline for advertising: 15 September 2022

**DESIGN:** Urban52

**PRINTED BY** Holbrooks Printers

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# Kristen Bell & Dax Shepard

Share their parenting tips and  
insights into their family life

By Monica Costa

World class comedians Kristen Bell and Dax Shepard came to London recently to launch their family brand Hello Bello. Dax and Kristen are the most formidable husband and wife duo in Hollywood. Not only are they at the top of their game as actors, but in 2019, from their

kitchen table, they created premium yet affordable eco-conscious products for the family. Available exclusively at Asda, the range includes nappies, nappy pants, baby wipes, baby lotion, baby oil and bubble bath. London Mums tested them and can confirm that all products are ideal for delicate skin types and good value for money.

**Monica:** What's the inspiration behind the brand Hello Bello? *Bello* in Italian means 'beautiful'.

**Kristen:** When I was pregnant I paid a lot for good ingredients. I had access to great products at all the little Los Angeles boutiques. It occurred to me how unfair that was and I wanted to even the playing field by making healthy, organic – whenever possible – yet affordable products for every family. I don't want parents to ever have to choose between their baby and their budget.

**Monica:** How have you created the brand and why?

**Kristen:** There was a real hole in the market for products with good ingredients that were widely available to people, at prices they could afford. We teamed up with people much smarter than us and made affordability, accessibility and premium ingredients our north star. Our products are made without chlorine processing, artificial fragrance, lotion, latex and from recyclable packaging, and are designed specifically for sensitive skin.

**Monica:** How much was Hello Bello forged by Kristen and how much by Dax?

**Kristen:** Much like our marriage. It's right in the middle.

**Dax:** It's the perfect marriage. Because Kristen was very militant about what went on our children, from the nappies they wore, to their food. I don't care much. If they're happy, who cares... But I have a chip on my shoulder about class. So, if we can have something that other people can't have, it pisses me off. Every mother would want to do what Kristen's doing. But our friends and family in Detroit can't afford that. I find it unfair. So, when she said 'mum's ingredients at dad's prices', the brand was born.

**Kristen:** That's Dax's tag. It came out of this weird moment we shared when we were preparing for the baby and I was buying products. I started with cloth diapers and it was not tenable. I was having them picked up. It is not a lifestyle choice you can keep up with.

**Dax:** If you live on a farm, maybe, and you have nothing else to do that day, you could stay on top of washing those diapers.

**Kristen:** It's not practical. We've come so far from who we actually are, which is working class people from Detroit. But we know that my sister has four kids and still lives in Detroit and could never not look at the receipt after she shopped. We also represent charitable organisations in the States, and we know how one in four people choose between their baby or their food budget. Am I going to put a diaper on my baby this week? Or am I going to feed it? This is unacceptable. We wanted to leverage what we have and we didn't need another pay-check. We wanted a company that does it right and we wanted to help as many people as possible. We have so far managed to give away a million diapers a year. That was mandatory for us when we started Hello Bello. We have put 250,000 into Ukraine, hoping to get it up to 500,000. We also created ►







The Diaper Fund on our website like GoFundMe, where you can create a profile if you're struggling, or you can create one for a friend, or donate to your community, or blessing a person with diapers every month simply because they need it.

**Monica:** I've watched your parenting podcasts and read some of your family stories and they're hilarious and make all parents feel okay. If you high-profile personalities say these things, we feel better too as we realise that we're all on the same boat.

**Dax:** Everyone's doing it wrong.

**Monica:** The London Mums organisation was born in 2006 as a platform for parents to share parenting dilemmas without feeling judged. At the end of the day we are all on the same boat. We should have no shame in talking about our challenges. My child (and I, of course) couldn't sleep at night until he was four. At the time, I couldn't talk about it, without feeling abnormal and judged so I created my own caring network of like-minded parents.

**Dax:** We had a kid that once said to us: "I'm not

going to stop wearing diapers." We're like, "What are you talking about? When are you going to stop?" "When I'm 16." I'm like, "Okay, that's going to make dating interesting for you. But look, we can't make you not wear them." Our first daughter potty trained herself at 18 months. We thought we were geniuses.

**Kristen:** Without feeling shame, we look at each other, we laugh about it. We're like, "Everything's going to be fine."

**Dax:** She might wear diapers into her 20s. That'll be her choice. Thank God she's cute, because when you bring your diapers for your first sleepover at a romantic partner's house, that's got to be quite an announcement. "Hey, you know what I decided, I'm always going to wear these. So, whatever."

**Monica:** What's your parenting style? A good cop- bad cop approach?

**Dax:** I don't know if Kristen would care that I say this, but, in general, I'm more the disciplinarian.

**Kristen:** I'm a pushover and a doormat.

**Dax:** If our daughters want something, they



definitely know to go to mum. I'm so grateful for that. We both recognise now how hard it must have been for both of our single mothers that they had to be everything. Kristen can be a pushover and know that I'll get them in bed on time. She's always a safe place to go. They'll always feel comfortable talking to her and seeking nurturing from her. And if they want to get somewhere on time, they'll know to ask me. They benefit from us being so different.

**Kristen:** We've realised what we do best. Dax is practical with them. One of the things I love about him being a dad is that he's incredibly playful and active with them and very affectionate. It is important for my young girls to see a man that stops and kisses your neck all over the kitchen, or gooses your hip as you walk by or...

**Dax:** ...has always time to dance.

**Kristen:** Yes... he has always time to dance. He puts on a song and will dance with them at night regularly, or just says, "Do you want to cuddle? Come into my nook." He's there for them in all those ways, but he's also practical and analytical. He sometimes says: "I understand you're having this feeling. Do you need me to hear any more about it? I'm also a human being and you can cry about this. But now I'm bored." That's actually a practical thing to say because they shouldn't think that the world is their audience at all times. He will say, "I've heard you out. I understand you're

upset. I'm now going to go outside because I want to take a walk and you're welcome to lash out any emotions in your bedroom. I'm not suggesting to stop them. But I'm not going to be an audience for this anymore." Whereas I will be like, "I just want to bear witness to what you're going through. Get it out." We have different approaches and personalities. It's helpful for our daughters to be able to reach out to us for different things.

**Dax:** It becomes clear that you recognise what you maybe didn't get growing up in a single parent household. I'm always aware of what partner I hope my daughters end up with. And I have to model that. I have to be the person that I hope they will date one day. I say: "I respect you. I love you. But I'm also not a doormat. I don't want you to have a husband that's a doormat." I've really got to be careful because they'll emulate what they have with their dad. I have to make sure I'm the dude I would want my kids to marry. It makes me aim for something higher than maybe I would.

**Kristen:** Very early on, when we first had our baby, Dax's mind was endlessly racing, which is really annoying. But sometimes this proves to be helpful when he has thought through a situation. He once said: "Kids see conflict and don't often see resolution. Parents are snippy with each other, they apologise in the bedroom, you wake up the next morning, the kid never saw the resolution. How are we modelling that behaviour for them?" ►





If that ever happens to us and we're snippy with each other, if we make up in the bedroom, the next day we make sure that we minimally play the part. "Hey, daddy, last night I came home and I had so much anxiety and anger about what I did at work, I took it out on you and I'm really sorry." "Oh, that's okay, mummy." In that way our daughters are bearing witness to the resolution as well.

**Dax:** They're going to see all the fights and the makeups.

**Monica:** That's a good point, because traditionally parents were told to never fight in front of their children.

**Dax:** Oh, get real. What kid didn't see their parents fight?

**Kristen:** How can you leave the parents' house knowing how to handle a disagreement if you have never seen what worked? The only person that can clean your side of the street is you. And when your side of the street is clean, you have a much higher level of self-esteem and you just feel better about yourself.

**Dax:** Here you go, Monica, cool parenting tips from a couple of comedians. (*giggling*).

**Monica:** Kristen, you have been part of many comedies – *Couples Retreat* and *Forgetting Sarah Marshall* are my favourite ones – but your latest character in a Netflix series (with a not

memorable long title) seems tragic. How did you prepare for that role?

**Dax:** Did you get it though? Did you realise the whole thing was a joke? You didn't didn't you? It is, because there are so many of these shows in the US and they're all so generic.

**Monica:** Of course, it was ridiculous that the murderer was the child.

**Dax:** How ridiculous that it was a child. And she fights a child for 12 minutes.

**Kristen:** So ridiculous! In that genre, especially the series written by women for women, they're always drinking wine, they're always mixing it with pills, they're having fantasies about the neighbours. It's very sexualised and way too romantic.

**Dax:** Every time she looked out the window, the guy was shirtless. It was all a joke. And the title? What was the title here? So preposterous, right?

**Kristen:** *The Woman in the House Across the Street from the Girl in the Window*. Maximum amount of words, giving you zero information, which was, again, a joke. It was a very subtle satire of the genre.

**Dax:** My sister-in-law watched it and said: "I don't want to tell Kristen, but it's terrible." Then she was at work and she had some girlfriends talking about how funny it was. And she was like, "Oh, I'm supposed to laugh at it?" She went back and watched it and she went: "Oh, my God. I love it now that I know it's a comedy." The sex scenes on stairs were ridiculous.

**Kristen:** Each of the women in it have an affliction. They always suffer something.

**Dax:** A phobia.

**Kristen:** My character has Agoraphobia. I can't go outside.

**Dax:** This one woman also has a fear of rain. That's preposterous. Who would have a fear of rain? She's also a terrible painter. She keeps talking about what a great painter she is.

**Kristen:** So below average. And she keeps talking about her amazing artwork.

**Dax:** Then there was this dream of the ex-wife drowning and how the girl died. Who leaves their kid with a serial killer? Who would do that?

**Monica:** I've got to watch it again. It's certainly not your *Couples Retreat* type of movie that I watched many times.

**Dax:** No, that's a drama and a serious movie.

**Kristen:** This differs from the types of comedy that I've done before. I thought: does this seem stupid enough to everybody? Yes, great. Let's shoot it.

**Dax:** Even if you watch it again, you're going to have the same experience. The whole thing's ridiculous. She keeps dropping these plates. She can't figure out how to carry a casserole.

**Kristen:** How long does it take for the guy to fix the mailbox? He's been working on it for two years...

**Monica:** Kristen, out of all the roles you've played, which one do you prefer and why?

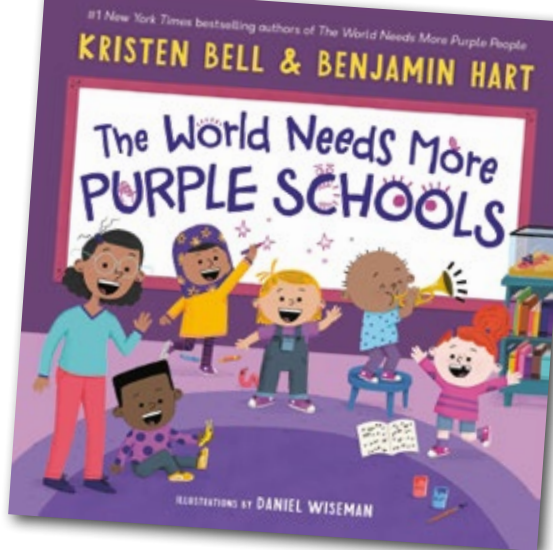
**Dax:** I might have to leave the room to get an honest answer out of her.

**Kristen:** No. That's truly like asking me to pick between my children. I've learned something from every role and it's built me up in a different way. Veronica Mars will always be super special to me because it gave me the platform to be seen. And I really learned hard work and how to care for myself and how to care for the character that I was playing.

**Dax:** You started by playing a confident and powerful woman. So, the roles that followed made sense for you to continue to play. But had you come out in something that wasn't the role of your breakup, you could have got stuck in being, say, a Bond girl or something like that for a lack of a better opportunity. You were very lucky in what got you popular.

**Kristen:** I learned how to play a character that had ownership, despite her circumstances.

**Dax:** I got famous for playing dummies, and that's what I mostly ended up playing, obviously.



**Kristen:** Dax wrote a role for me in the first film that he wrote and directed about our relationship called *Hit and Run*, which is where I was playing myself, basically. That was very special. That's why he said he had to leave the room.

**Kristen:** I loved playing Sarah Marshall, but I would have to choose Anna in *Frozen* because that character affected so many kids and adults positively. But if I had to pick just one, it would have to be Veronica Mars because of all the things I learnt on that series and movie.

**Monica:** What are you up to next?

**Dax:** I'll continue to host *Armchair Expert Podcast* on Spotify, which I love.

**Kristen:** I'm excited about the publication of my second children's picture book *The World Needs More Purple Schools*.





# West London's leading walk-in clinic reopens



One of London's most prestigious and innovative walk-in health clinics – specialist one-stop-shop for musculoskeletal conditions, primary care and health screening – is to reopen under new clinical management. (med)24 has been acquired by a consortium of health practitioners to provide primary care, health screening with a focus on world leading musculoskeletal diagnosis and treatment.

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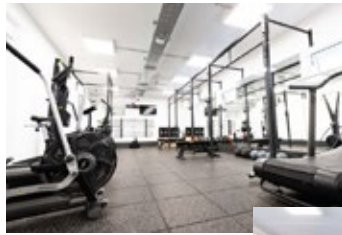
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# EXCLUSIVE!!! 70s DISCO QUEEN

## Kathy Sledge talks about iconic Sister Sledge

By Monica Costa



Dreams come true! Mine came true when I was picked – from a crowd of fans at London’s Indigo O2 gig last May – to dance *He’s the Greatest Dancer* with Sister Sledge on stage. It was pure magic and a coincidence, because I already interviewed iconic lead vocal Kathy Sledge on Zoom a few months before. To this day, her family girl-band Sister Sledge remains one

of popular music’s defining vocal acts, with their Global hit *We Are Family* hailed as one of the Top 20 Greatest Girl Group Songs of All Time, by US Billboard Magazine. With trendsetting style and musical flair, this world-renowned band created a unique sound that garnered Grammy nominations, number one hits, and timeless global anthems.



**Monica:** Your songs *He's the Greatest Dancer*, *Thinking of You*, *Lost in Music*, *We Are Family*, *Frankie* are associated with good times. What's the inspiration behind the iconic song *We are Family*?

**Kathy Sledge:** The wonderful story behind *We are Family* is to be traced back to the songwriters, Nile Rodgers and Bernard Edwards. They had huge hits, and then they were asked by our record company Warner Brothers, for Atlantic records then, to give them a hit record. Warner brothers wanted them to produce Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones. Nile Rodgers and Bernard Edwards, so the story goes, answered to that: "Well, if we record Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones, it's going to be an instant hit. So, Warner gave us an act to record that no one knows." And that would be us. This is before we had any hits in the United States. The then record company president started describing us: "You got to meet these girls, they're family. And they flock together like birds of the feather." So, Nile and Bernard started writing down the description of us. That became the lyrics to the song. I like to say that it was really written about us from a description of who we were as little kids. I was 16, growing up in a family of five sisters. The heart of Sister Sledge is *We Are Family*. The lyrics to our signature song were inspired by our real-life family dynamic that propelled us to worldwide fame. That's what makes it special to me, and originally, we were always the Sledge Sisters. One night the DJ introduced us backwards, so we became Sister Sledge. A lot of things happened organically. The records became bigger than life, more than we'd ever expect.

**Monica:** Was it easy to work with your sisters?

**Kathy Sledge:** It was easier being sisters than it was working together as sisters. What's important with any family is that there will always be dynamics that may not work well together. But as long as the spirit of growing, and the spirit of allowing each other to grow is important. That was something that was problematic for some of my sisters, especially with me singing everything. Sometimes there was jealousy.

What I've learned through it is that it's in every family. The disadvantage that I had growing up is you're under a magnifying glass when the world is watching you, and all families have their madness. To be in the public eye was always a challenge. Now, I'm thrilled that I am surfacing again and singing these songs the way we know and love them.

**Monica:** All Sister Sledge songs are iconic, but what is your favourite one and why?

**Kathy Sledge:** I love *Thinking of You*, because it's sexy and fun. I'm loving the fact that, here in the United States, it's like a new record. Now, it's new to people. My son and my daughter, their friends, say, "Oh, your

mum has a new record out." And I'm like, "That's been out. But it's new now." I love singing it live on stage and having the authentic sound of what the song is. People appreciate that more than ever now. It's fresh, evergreen. At gigs I see these kids who know and love it, although they have never been around to see a live Sister Sledge show. We were the first girl band to ever dance full on. Even though the sisters don't really perform together anymore. I make sure that when the lights come up at my concerts, and you see *Lost in Music*, the smoke appears and you hear the strings. You see these four silhouettes, the dancers, and then all of a sudden, you're right into this experience. By the time I hit the stage, you're already up here. I want to be able to give especially to people who weren't here in our heyday, the experience. Of course, most importantly, the hits have to sound exactly like the record. You have to close your eyes and feel like you're just playing the record.

I still feel the chills on stage. Once I was chatting to a friend about relationships. I was saying, "Sometimes relationships lose their passion. You still love each other, but there's no passion." And he asked me, "Will you ever lose your passion for music?" I was like, "No." And then he went, "Passion is passion." That's what you feel when I talk about the show because I'm very passionate about the music and making sure that when we're up there performing, we, the dancers and the musicians and the singers, have to sound exactly like the record. My passion comes through because everything works the way it should. I'm excited about that. ►





**Monica:** How about the dance routines? The disco routines were amazing for us watching them and they seemed so easy. You made them look easy, but I bet there was a lot of really tough work behind it. Do you have any anecdote on how you prepared for those dance routines?

**Kathy Sledge:** In the early days, my sisters and I, when we were a band together, we would always have to take ballet classes because if there was a kick, the kick had to be up here. Now when I work with choreographers and the dancers, of course, I don't kick up there, but I do say to the choreographer, "Sister Sledge always had it here. If the leg is there, I want to see it there." The hard work comes in. In the early days, my sisters and I would always work very hard with the choreography. I totally admire artists like Beyoncé. You can tell the work that goes in. She has my utmost respect because I feel like I know

how hard she's working, but it takes being an artist to understand how much work goes into this.

It could be a three-minute song, but everything's got to be right on. I always appreciate dancers because I feel like, in some cases, they work the hardest. Incredible dancers, they're like my family now. When I work, when I tour, and we become a family. I always make sure, and my tour manager makes sure of it too, that we have a family-style dinner after every show. Because the camaraderie is where you really lock.

**Monica:** What's coming up in the world of Kathy Sledge, and is there a new album?

**Kathy Sledge:** Yes. It's funny you should say that because my favourite producers, of course, are Nile Rodgers, Bernard Edwards, Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis. Jimmy and Terry have now written some songs for my voice. I've been writing with them. They wanted to write a song that sounded Chic. They sent me this material that sounds even more than Chic. I sent one of the tracks to Nile Rodgers. Eventually, he will probably be playing on it. It's in the very beginning stages, but we will be collaborating together in the future. I would like that very much.

**Monica:** That's a recognisable voice and guitar... the moment you hear it, you know, that's Nile Rodgers. It's no one else, a distinct guitar sound like Carlos Santana. You know exactly who that is, first note, right?

**Kathy Sledge:** Yes. That's incredible. I did share this thought with Nile. I said, "Nile, when people hear your guitar, they know exactly." And he goes, "You think?" And I'm like, "Yeah, I think." And this is why. It's one thing to have a voice, and you sing, and you hear it, and you go, "Oh, that's Sade. Oh, that's Sting. I recognise his voice." Or "That's Jagger." But when you take a thing, a guitar is a thing. It doesn't have a life. It's a thing until that person can bring life through it. It's pretty remarkable. That's a thing, but they're actually bringing their spirit through it. When I think about that, it blows me away.

There will be an EP, five to six songs. I've written around four.

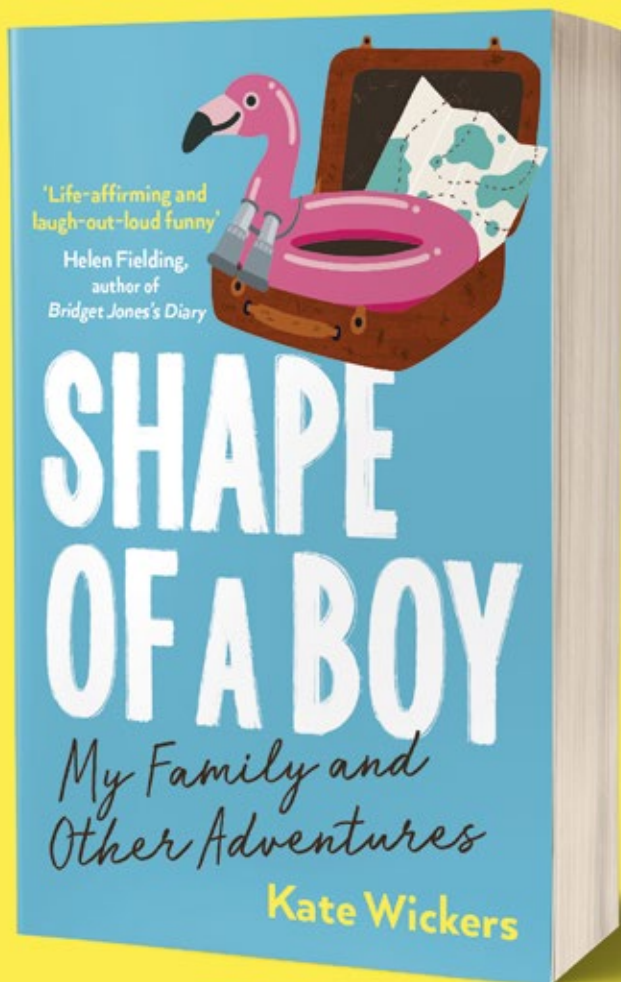
I'm mainly writing with Jimmy Jam, and I love Terry Lewis, too. It's a dream come true to work with them. It would be even more of a dream come true to work with them and have Nile do a guest appearance. I would like to say it would be something for the end of the year. That's very doable.





‘Anyone who has travelled with children  
will find this book uplifting, life-affirming –  
and laugh-out-loud funny.’

**Helen Fielding, author of *Bridget Jones’s Diary***



**‘The best tonic for Summer 2022’**



# “BRIGHT BUT NEEDS TO CONCENTRATE!”

**Neurocognitive Therapist, Usha Patel, gives insight into why some children are unable to concentrate and what can be done to help them improve.**

Some children finish their homework. Others find it impossible to start, distracted by any number of other things. What's the difference?

In the last twenty years scientists have learned a huge amount about the brain's ability to focus. They have discovered that poor concentration is down to something they call 'Working Memory Deficit'.

## **What is Working Memory?**

Working memory is your active short-term memory. It holds onto data and uses it to work out other information. If I asked you to add 39 and 137, your Working Memory remembers the numbers in this mental maths task and manipulates them to do the calculation.

Think of your Working Memory as a small container with a lid that holds information in the moment. Those with Working Memory Deficit can only manipulate small amounts of data at one time, and can't keep hold of all the information that's needed. So it's like having a smaller jar than others, with a lid that doesn't fit.



## **What Working Memory Deficit looks like**

- Often late or forgetful about time
- Overwhelmed with verbal instructions
- Easily distracted
- Has trouble waiting his/her turn
- Struggles to complete multi step tasks

## **What can help the situation?**

Here are three things to try at home with your child, using visual clues not verbal instructions.

- Often late leaving the house? Draw a clock face with the time you need your child to be ready. He/she can refer to this instead of forgetting.
- Can't follow the homework timetable? Assign a subject and a colour to a day, eg Monday is a 'red' day on the wall chart, and red means English.
- Not keeping to task? Use a special clock that helps your child track how long is left on a task. Called a Time Tracker, it shows visually the time left available.

## **Working Memory Training from Cogmed®**

Visual clues like these make sense for children with concentration issues. However more robust help is available too. Cogmed® Working Memory Training is a software programme developed by neuroscientists who specialise in Working Memory. It has impressive results – a good Cogmed® Provider, who leads the process, can help your child increase working memory by up to two years in just a month or two.

This is a clinical product, delivered remotely as a series of brain training memory tasks and repetitive games. The child plays the games on a computer over several weeks and the Cogmed® Working Memory Training programme adjusts to the changing results of the player. The training stimulates and strengthens neural pathways to an impressive degree.

## **Test your Working Memory for free**

Not sure if your child has a concentration problem? Take our self check test online. It's free and available at Raviv Practice London website [www.ravivpracticelondon.co.uk](http://www.ravivpracticelondon.co.uk) (under the Resources tab). Or just call us for advice on 020 3887 0486.



# Raviv Practice London

Your daughter can talk the hind legs off a donkey! She makes up amazing stories has everyone laughing.

But with all her stories and big words she refuses to read or write. She thinks it's too difficult and worries about misspelling and reversing letters.

Let her find her creative streak and learn to write her stories. With the help of Raviv Practice London, she can.

Raviv Practice London helps children with dyslexia, dyspraxia, learning difficulties in 8 weeks using Cogmed® Working Memory Training.

We also have a one-to-one motor-sensory programmes that help with spelling and letter reversals. All programmes suited for age 5+

**Usha Patel**  
Neurocognitive Therapist

**0203 887 0486**  
[www.ravivpracticelondon.co.uk](http://www.ravivpracticelondon.co.uk)

NEW MUSIC!  
**10 MINUTES CHAT WITH  
SINGER-SONGWRITER  
RHYS LEWIS**  
By Monica Costa





31-year old rising star Rhys Lewis has already caught the attention of the public with his songs of heartbreak, many of which have featured on some of the biggest shows on television. But it is his love of performing live, curiosity of his craft, command of his instruments and impressive vocal ability that has taken him around the world, racking up legions of loyal fans along the way.

Brand new single, *Alone*, signifies a major life shift for the Oxfordshire-born artist. After years living in the capital city, Rhys made the decision to step away from city life. On a little plot of land in the countryside he found comfort in simple loneliness. In contrast to its title, *Alone* is an optimistic song. This perfectly crafted pop gem sets mesmeric strings against Rhys' soaring vocals, as he dreams of escape.

With a phenomenal 620 million lifetime streams to date, the *BBC Introducing* favourite has seen 200 million streams for standout single, *No Right To Love You*, the very song that caught the attention of Decca Records. Heading into his biggest summer yet, Rhys has just taken his new music around Europe, but yet he has found time to chat to me about his music.

**Monica:** When did you start composing your songs?

**Rhys:** At 13, without realising it, I was writing songs, because I was in band with my older brother and we would play gigs and write music together. Both my brothers are musical, so we'd always just be playing. Tom played keyboard and saxophone. George (my twin brother) played drums. We were a little family band for a while.

**Monica:** What music did you make?

**Rhys:** Weirdly, it was more soul funk, because we were listening to lots of old music that I guess our parents had gotten us into, like Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, Al Green, The Temptations. In a way, we were building our repertoire of songs as a cover band to play at weddings and birthdays. We were listening to all classic music that you'd want to get up and dance to. They're so well written songs. When you're learning that, and then you start writing your own, you've got that language musically in your fingertips and in your



voice to try and use. It was very much imitation when we were first writing a riff or a song that sounded like one of those songs, but it was good fun.

**Monica:** Has any of that early composition been incorporated in your new songs?

**Rhys:** Not intentionally, but some of the earlier songs had that soulful edge to it, because that's where I first found my voice. It made sense to use some of that flavour in my music.

**Monica:** What's the inspiration behind the lyrics?

**Rhys:** When I first started writing songs, I didn't really have much life experience or much emotional history to draw from. I did lots of different kinds of writing and the artists who mostly inspired me were all lyrically driven like Carole King, James Taylor and Bill Withers, who almost spoke to you when they sang. And Simon and Garfunkel, the story they can tell and the way they can tell it. The first song I wrote was *No Right to Love you*. It came from just going through a breakup, a really difficult one to get through for the first time. And that was when I realised that not only was song-writing an amazing creative outlet, but it was also a great emotional outlet for me. I had to literally go away and write that song, because I felt I needed to get it out of me and say it. That song started as a conversation I had with a friend. I had literally said the chorus word by word. Then I thought that would be something I could really pour emotions into.

I have also written songs that have not come from life experience. Most of my songs have come from the seed of an idea, which is born from an emotion. Other times the starting point is a fully formed tree. The Beatles as songwriters, for example, are constantly chasing a feeling. I was so impressed by Paul McCartney's instincts for a feeling, because he ►

can see the idea. In song-writing you have to be really good about seeing into the future, because you've got to almost imagine the song already exists.

**Monica:** You're only 31 but you have the same depth of an experienced musicians and that is really unique about you. *Hold Onto Happiness* is a mature song that really resonates with me. Why do you record your music using analog tape?

**Rhys:** When I met a keyboard player called Aidan Glover, we realised we shared the same musical taste, interest and passion. So, when we decided to write songs together, we met in his studio, and he'd set it up as an all analog tape in a very unassuming place. It was more a live session and we wrote *Better Than Today* together. We recorded it to tape because it is a really high-fidelity way of capturing the sound. The process is very limiting in a really creative way but the infinite space of a computer means you almost have option paralysis. I was finding the process of recording music quite anxiety inducing, because you can almost make things perfect in a computer.

When we started recording, I realised that there was an excitement to performing on tape because you have to capture a moment and an energy that we weren't going to touch or change. We'd do a take and it was done. I felt really inspired by that process. If you don't do a take well enough, you do it again and you don't edit it. You do it until it feels right and it sounds good.

On the other hand, when you are looking at a computer screen, you don't realise how much you're judging your music based on what it looks like. Whereas with a tape machine, you are using your ears completely. You're not looking at a screen. You're not judging whether it's perfect or whether it sits well or on the beat. You're judging it based on a human instinct for music, not a human instinct for perfection. I feel like it's a musical process that almost puts the emotion and energy at the forefront of what you're trying to capture. I hope it stands the test of time because of how we recorded it.

**Monica:** What's the song in your repertoire that you feel the most and maybe it's closer to your heart?

**Rhys:** I am proud of *The Sun Will Rise*, because I feel very connected to it, having written it during lockdown. We wrote it more as a hymn for the here and now because we were all feeling slightly depressed by the way the world was going into lockdown and falling apart and shutting down. We wrote that song in a short space of time and it was just like we captured a moment. It was also written with Aidan. He had chords and I put this melody. That song will always have some humanity in it because of where we were when we wrote it. There was enough emotion and heart and spirit to that song that it's not a love

song where I'm over it. Something like *No Right to Love* You was about a specific breakup. Even though other people can hear it and get something from it, I've moved on. Whereas something like *The Sun Will Rise*, whenever I hear it gives me the same feeling of hope that I had when I wrote it. I hope that because of how much we put into it, it will always feel relevant to a moment in our culture. I feel really proud that I've been able to capture a sentiment for myself that hopefully will stand the test of time.

**Monica:** If you could choose one musician or singer to do a duet in the future, who would you pick?

**Rhys:** I've always been a fan of Lianne La Havas, who has such an authentic voice that it'd be amazing to duet with her. The lyricism in her voice and her melodies are just spellbinding. We could write a song together. That'd be the dream. She's a great artist. Put it in the ether, see what comes.

Rhys Lewis' single 'Alone' is out now via Decca Records

Photo Credit: Lauren Luxenberg



SUMMER FUN

# With PLAYMOBIL

It's the season for open-air swimming and water parks!



The new Tropical Aqua Park from PLAYMOBIL is a real paradise for everyone who loves the water. Inspiring swimmers both young and old, the new play theme features numerous slides, games to play in the water, and even more highlights. Grab the sunscreen and let's go! Surrounded by tropical plants and flowers, the large Water Park with Slides invites the whole family to come and enjoy a wonderful day of swimming, paddling and splashing. Ride the spiral slide, try the free-fall slide with trapdoor launch, or jump off the diving board: all routes lead to a refreshing pool of water. Six accessory sets in this play theme bring even more fun and variety.

The Children's Pool with Slide gives kids their first try at splashing about, while older swimmers can play around at the Small Pool and test their accuracy with the water sprayer. Also, who is going to dare to climb the wobbly Swimming Island first? Later, after an enjoyable boat ride, it's time to indulge in some Caribbean refreshments at

the Paddle Boat Rental centre – complete with juice bar. This play theme is rounded off with more snacks and refreshments from the mobile Crêpe Cart. With the Aqua Park Swimmer children can learn all about the effects of the sun. The PLAYMOBIL character will turn a darker shade of red the longer it is exposed to UV light. Helping to educate children on the effects of the sun and how they need to protect themselves in the Summertime.

Introduce a splash of fun to your children's toys with this new AquaPark range from PLAYMOBIL. With slides, water play and more, this range is great for sparking kids' imaginations and encouraging role-play. Ideal for children aged 4+ years old.

Visit [www.playmobil.co.uk](http://www.playmobil.co.uk)  
for more information





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# ASK THE EXPERT!

## *Asthma in children*

By Dr Helen Brough Consultant in  
Paediatric Allergy and Immunology  
[www.childrensallergydoctors.com](http://www.childrensallergydoctors.com)

### **How does asthma in children differ from asthma in adults?**

Asthma in children is mostly allergic asthma, which means that it is driven by a type of cell in the lungs called the eosinophil and is usually associated with triggers from environmental allergens, such as house dust mite or grass pollen. This form of the condition is usually responsive to the standard treatments we prescribe for asthma including:

- inhaled steroids which prevent exacerbations or attacks
- reliever inhalers (usually blue) which help to relax the muscles in the airways to provide relief from symptoms

In adults, asthma could be related to obesity, for example.

### **What are the most common symptoms of asthma in children?**

The most common symptom of asthma in children is wheezing, which is a high pitched, whistling sound. Wheezing is most often heard when the child breathes out and is usually triggered by sudden exposure to cold weather, exercise, or if the child is having an asthma exacerbation.

Further to this, a persistent cough may be associated with uncontrolled asthma. This is most often a dry cough, often but not always, at night. There are, however, many causes of a cough and therefore it's important to go through a systematic approach to understanding the cause behind a chronic cough. For example, certain types of coughs, such as habit coughs, never occur at night, so that the timing as well as the characteristic of the cough are very important.

If a child is having an asthma attack, they can experience not only coughing and wheezing, but they can also develop difficulty breathing. In this situation, it's important that the child has a personalised asthma action plan so that the family know how to deal with the asthma attack.

### **How is asthma in children diagnosed?**

Asthma is mostly diagnosed after the age of five, because from this age up, the child has the necessary motor skills to perform sophisticated breathing tests.

Although these tests form part of the standard diagnosis of asthma in children from five years and up, a medical history is also vitally important and this can be taken from a very early age, meaning a diagnosis can be given at any time. Ruling out other conditions also forms part of the diagnostic process. This may include a chest infection or post-nasal drip due to house dust mite allergy, for example, which can lead to a wet cough.

Many children get recurrent viral infections and consequently can develop viral induced wheeze. In this case, the child only wheezes/coughs when they have a cold, but they don't have any asthma symptoms in between colds.

Based on a clinical history and an examination, we can establish if asthma is likely.

Even during this diagnostic stage, it's very important to provide inhaler device training along with a prescription for a reliever inhaler in case the child has an asthma exacerbation.

**To book an appointment with Dr Brough  
email: [admin@childrensallergydoctors.com](mailto:admin@childrensallergydoctors.com)**



# Protect your family from the harmful house dust mite with the **AllerGuard Starter Pack**

The AllerGuard Starter Pack features a fully enclosing pillow protector, duvet protector and mattress protector in any UK Standard Size.



Use the code "londonmums"  
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**Scientifically** proven to drastically reduce asthma and eczema symptoms and medicine intake

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Or contact us:

Email: **Marianne** at [mvg@allerguard.co.uk](mailto:mvg@allerguard.co.uk) Mobile: **07939 690412**



# MY GYM – CHILDREN'S FITNESS CENTRE

## Creating Moments That Matter!



My Gym was born out of our passion to teach children in a fun, physically engaging environment. We delight in seeing children's eyes light up for all those incredible milestones, from the tentative first steps to tumbling down soft mats. Sharing the parents' excitement at their children's accomplishments is always the high point of our day. Our older Gymnastics and Ninja students continue to amaze us with their confidence to tackle new courses and their determination to complete challenging skills.

We knew from the start that, through fun and captivating activities, we could accomplish great things. Our goal: to create an environment where children feel loved and supported so their self-esteem and confidence can flourish. Now, more than 35 years later, we're proud to say that all children of all abilities can succeed and thrive at My Gym.

With 700+ locations worldwide, 6 of which are in the UK, and 3 in London, our dream of active, giggling children growing into happy and confident adults has been realised. We cherish every one of our members and are grateful to have each as part of our My Gym family.

We run structured gymnastics based, development classes, parties and camps in our purpose-built, state of the art facility, for kids aged 4 months to 10 years old. From traditional gymnastics equipment such as the beam, the horse, and the high bar, to play equipment such as a ball pool, swings and a zip wire, we really do have it all!

We are currently offering a fantastic introduction to My Gym – 2 Weeks Of Unlimited Classes for just

£2 – to book visit [mygym.com](http://mygym.com) and choose the most convenient location for you. We Look Forward To Meeting You And Your Family!

... why not take a look at our Instagram @my\_gym\_uk to learn a little more about us! Or for the London Gyms @mygymbatterseakids, @mygymcrouchendkids or @mygymrichmond

### What Our Members Say:

**Christine:** "A great place to take your little ones. The teachers are full of enthusiasm and the structured classes have different activities each week to keep them engaged. Our first class was at 6 months, she's now 14 months and still loving it"

**Lara:** My 3 year old loves her weekly class here and constantly asks when she can go. Both her and her sister have enjoyed the holiday camps too. The staff are all so caring and enthusiastic. We love My Gym!

**Heart:** It's a really great and valuable experience for children! I love the structure of child led and adult led times and the wide range of activities and games! My son really enjoyed himself and it brought out his adventurous and confident side which I loved seeing.





## A HEALTHY, HAPPY FAMILY IS GROWN AROUND THE KITCHEN TABLE

Social media's favourite foodie father Adam Shaw shares his delicious, budget-friendly recipes to take you from pregnancy through to parenthood, all while bringing fun and flavour back to the table.

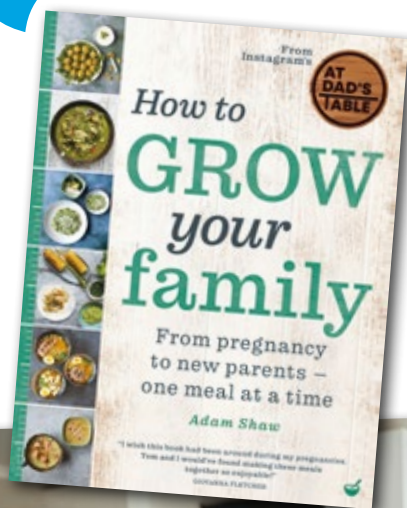
Whether you're newly expecting or already have a growing clan, ditch old-fashioned books that focus on what you can't eat. Enjoy what you can eat, and share every exciting moment together – especially when dad is cooking!

### The book contains:

- Over 110 yummy, global and nutrient-rich dishes to nurture and bring joy from the first trimester right through to toddlerhood: ramen, jambalaya, poke, tagines, Thai curry, tacos and more
- Vegan, vegetarian and pescatarian options cater for everyone
- Energy-rich meals to get you through the fog of new parenthood and one-handed snacks for when you can't put baby down
- Weaning and first food guidance to give you the confidence to safely and successfully introduce your newest recruit to the world of food
- Baby friendly, nutritious pram snacks for baby on-the-go, from veg-packed muffins and rostitis to gently spiced fritters and falafel
- One dish options for the whole family: save time, money and sanity with traybakes, batchcooks and one-pots, delicious for baby and parents

Fully approved by a qualified nutritionist, you can make any of the meals in this book and be certain your growing family is getting exactly what they need to thrive!

*Images credit: Emily Butters.*





# PRETTY THINGS

## Disney Frozen 2 Singing Queen Elsa by Hasbro

Disney has released a range of new toys, costumes, and collectibles as part of new campaign 'The Gift of Play', which was inspired by research that shows that 60 per cent of parents have 'forgotten' how to play and need help to reignite their imagination. Playing with singing Queen Elsa doll wearing her beautiful Frozen 2 outfit brings the magic of Arendelle into every playroom. When you press her bodice, Elsa sings the popular songs from the sequel.

RRP £21.99

Available from Smyths and [shopdisney.co.uk](http://shopdisney.co.uk)



## Disney Princess Moana Shimmer Dolls by Hasbro

With this stunning looking Royal Shimmer Disney Princess doll, kids can imagine joining Moana as she bravely sets out to sea for an epic adventure. The doll's bodice gleams with gem-inspired facets that shimmer beautifully alongside her glittering skirt. Kids can recreate scenes from the movie. This toy makes a great birthday present or holiday gift for girls and boys.

RRP £9.99

Available to purchase on [shopdisney.co.uk](http://shopdisney.co.uk)



## Shire Men's Fleece Jacket by TOG24

Yorkshire-based, family run outerwear brand TOG24 makes excellent value-for-money high-performance coats and leisurewear for teens going back to school this autumn as well as for their mums and dads. This classic microfleece sweatshirt is lightweight, soft and cosy and adds an extra layer on cold mornings and chilly evenings. It has a full length zip and it's been lightly fluffed up inside to give a lot of warmth for such little weight.

RRP £45.00 £22.50

Available from [www.tog24.com](http://www.tog24.com)



## Valley Women's Softshell Jacket by TOG24

This premium 3-layer softshell jacket has a bonded microfleece lining providing warmth when required. Its waterproof, windproof and breathable softshell outer fabric makes it the ideal outwear for mums at the school gate. It can be combined with other clothes to provide a classic business look for the professional female, smart with a suit yet casual when worn with a blouse and skirt or trousers.

RRP £75.00 £35.00

Available from [www.tog24.com](http://www.tog24.com)





### **Xplora XGO2 Android children's smart watch**

The Xplora XGO2 is an affordable and GDPR compliant ideal first phone for children aged 5–12. Running on Android 4.4 with a 1.4" capacitive touch colour LCD screen, it is easy to use and is incredibly responsive. When wearing and using the device, children can make and receive voice calls from pre-saved numbers only, so they can communicate with friends or family without the risk of receiving any unsolicited calls. These contacts can be managed on the parent's app. The watch does not feature social media, making the safety of children using it a priority. The device can also receive and reply to text messages including text, emojis, images and voice messages. With a 0.3-megapixel camera and 4GB storage, there is also plenty of room to store photos.

**Available from Amazon for an RRP of £99.99**



### **BuddyPhones® Cosmos+ Active Noise Cancellation Headphones for kids**

The new Cosmos+ wireless active noise cancelling headphones are ideal for kids to use from remote learning and in-school computer lessons to gaming, listening to music and watching videos whilst still ensuring hearing health is protected. The foldable headphones with soft protein PU leather ear pads also include a BuddyLink for sharing so siblings and friends can easily watch and play together. The 24-hour battery life makes them ideal for keeping children entertained whilst travelling or on long car trips.

**Available from [buddyphones.com](http://buddyphones.com), [onanoff.com](http://onanoff.com) and [Amazon.co.uk](http://Amazon.co.uk) for £99.90**

### **Trybike Steel Balance Trike**

The coolest balance bike on the block which converts from a three-wheeler to a two-wheeler – for kids aged from 15 months plus.

**RRP £144.95**

**Available from [www.hippychick.com](http://www.hippychick.com)**



### **Vilac Classic Car**

Metal ride on cars – a true classic with fabulous retro styling. Suitable from 18 months plus. Available in a choice of colours including new orange.

**RRP £119.95**

**Available from [www.hippychick.com](http://www.hippychick.com)**



### **D-Robe Outdoors**

Perfect for both children back to school and their parents, D-Robe waterproof and wind-resistant jackets are stylish pieces of outerwear inspired by the ease and protection of a changing robe. D-Robe Outdoors' durable and versatile selections are genderless, ageless and stand the test of time, limiting overconsumption as a go-to staple that fits perfectly with any capsule collection, using sustainable, plastic-free packaging and eco-friendly materials.

**RRP from £119**

**Available from <https://www.d-robeoutdoors.com>**







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