

THE 5 SECRETS TO ONLINE THERAPY SUCCESS

An easy to follow confidence booster eBook
for online therapy practitioners



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Contents

Introduction **3**

Secret 1: Screen presence **9**

Secret 2: Managing anxiety **13**

Secret 3: Confidence and patience **15**

Secret 4: Privacy, legislation and encryption **23**

Secret 5: Marketing **26**

References **30**





Introducing.... The 5 Secrets to online therapy success

**Are you a counsellor, psychologist
or therapist wanting to work online
and don't know where to start?**

**This eBook will benefit all therapy
professionals wishing to work online.**

**I'm Renee McDonald and I have been
working online and training therapists
about how to be online for a few years now.**

**I have trained many professionals
in basic skills and more advanced skills
in face-to-face and online therapy.**

Prior to working online
and in the advent of working
in the virtual space,
I have worked in the counselling
and therapy industry
for some time.

I've been in private practice
for over 12 years
and worked in therapy
for over 16 years.

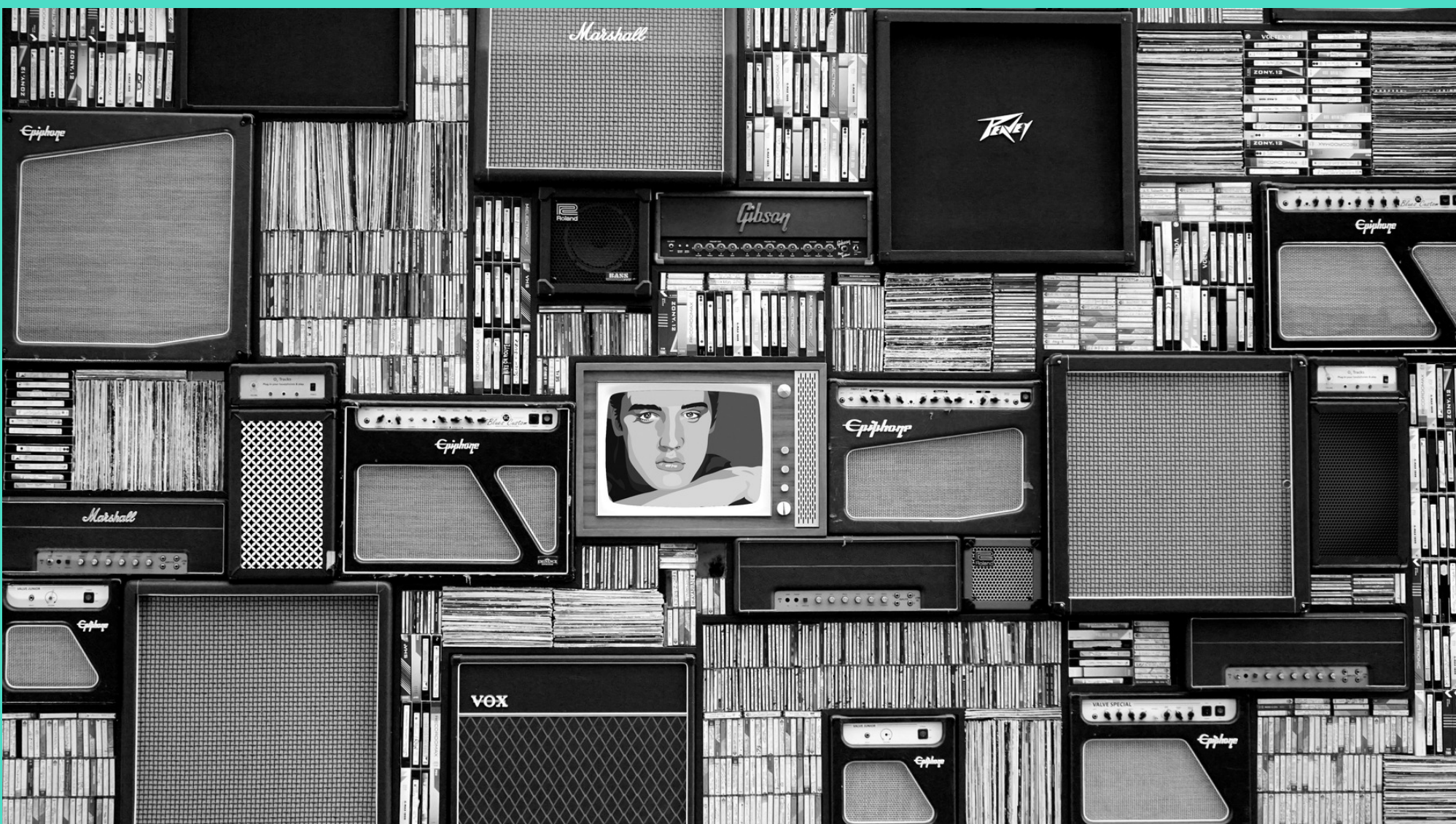
There are several lessons
that I have personally learned
along the way
that I will be able to help you with –
here in this eBook.



Firstly, my professional background
wasn't therapy to begin with.

When I left school,
I worked professionally in media,
marketing and the entertainment
business before being a therapist.

In this professional work,
I had exposure to screens
through film research and working
at television studios -
with directors, producers
and camera men.





My experience
has me exclusively placed
to have a different perspective
to know the value
of how to hold screen presence
in the online space - with any client.

The importance of film and screen presence
has been demonstrated by the advent of
Instagram, Facebook Live videos, YouTube
and many mediums that have adopted
the powerful medium that is video.

Dunn & Francis-Smith (2017) discuss the
importance of screen presence with online
client work, along with screen presence
discussed in the book edited by Weitz (2014).

Within this brief text, you'll find simple, human, life-giving and practical and step-by-step ideas to put in place to assist you as an online counsellor, psychologist, social worker or generalist therapist.

Some people may also call this work e-Therapy, Telehealth, video conferencing, e-counselling, online counselling or virtual therapy.

What will be discussed in the coming pages is the essentials any therapist needs when working online.





Sssshhh.... I let you in on my secrets...

The top 5 secrets I've found
to online therapy success are:

1. Screen presence
2. Managing your anxiety
3. Being human: Improving your confidence and having patience
4. Ensuring privacy, legislation and encryption principles are upheld.
5. Marketing – it's no use that you are the best kept secret!

Secret 1: Screen presence



When you work online with screens,
YOU NEED SCREEN PRESENCE.

So, what is screen presence?

The Merriam-Webster dictionary (2018) suggests that screen presence is “a quality that attracts attention in movies”.



If you are working with video, video conferencing facilities or with any live video program, it is essential to have screen presence.

Dunn and Francis-Smith (2017) also acknowledge the importance of screen presence in their training.

Screen presence is how you hold and present yourself in front of camera – the video webcam.

Depending on how you work
therapeutically, will determine how
you wish to hold your screen presence.

How practised are you when working
in front of a webcam?

Have you practised this skill?

If you haven't practised,
be sure you do so.



Throughout the AOTT training that I run, it is emphasised the importance of screen presence in order to connect to the client.

If we are working with video, we only see part of the client, so our screen presence is highlighted to the client, therefore how we have our screens impacts on the client, as that is all that they can see of us.



Secret 2: Managing anxiety



Oftentimes therapists, if they haven't worked online may feel anxious about the daunting task of sitting in front of a screen

and talking to a client, rather than being able to see their whole body in person.

How comfortable do you feel before a session with a client?

It's important that you feel up to the job, each and every time you work with a client online.

Through my training,
I teach therapists about the
importance of grounding when
working online and getting in
touch with themselves, in order
to manage their own anxieties
(McDonald, 2018).

If we don't manage our own
anxieties, then our clients'
anxieties could be expanded.

If we manage our own anxieties
when working online, we can
have greater compassion and
empathy for our clients.



Secret 3: Confidence and patience

Two other important aspects of running online sessions is to feel confident in your ability and to have patience for both yourself, your client and the process of being in the digital space.

How confident would you feel with a traumatised client if you worked online?

What if you had a suicidal client when working online? How prepared are you for all eventualities?



Do you need some
additional training
to feel more comfortable
with your confidence
when working online?

Don't hesitate to be in touch
if you need more information
or wish to know more.



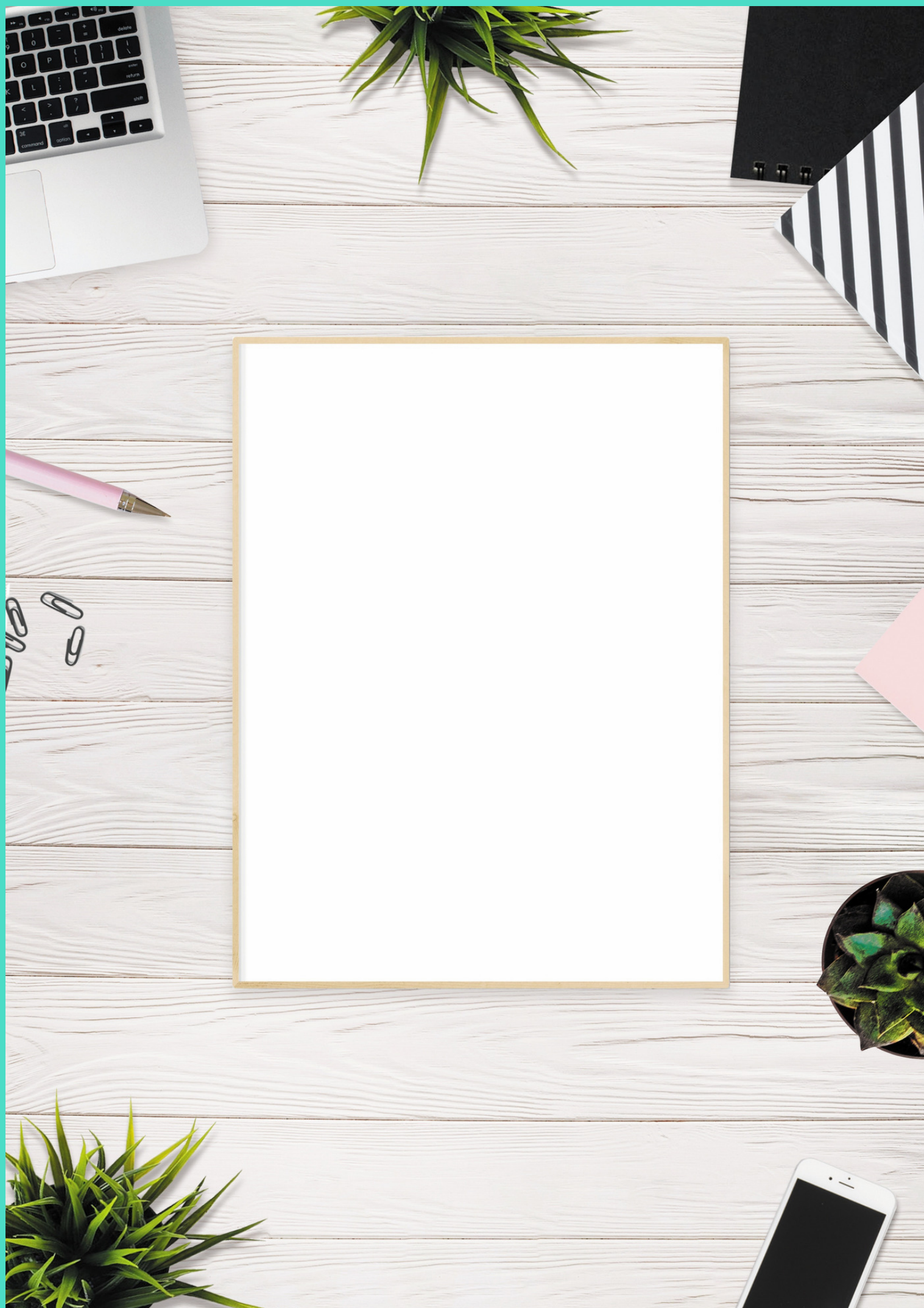
Practice also here is key.

So, to assist you with both confidence and patience – it's important to complete an online course.

If you need help with practice, AOTT runs online courses for online therapy and online supervision.



As Stokes (2018) suggests,
it's important for practitioners
to be prepared
for the new medium
that is online therapy
and to additionally be prepared
for online supervision.



Then, there's patience.

Firstly, with patience, we need to have patience with ourselves.

You may need time to get your head around the technology.

Then, have patience and have empathy for your clients – trying to get online and figure out new technologies with you.

Finally, have patience for the technology – as technology, like us, is not perfect.



Patience is required
both of yourself
and the client
when you are working online.

Dowling (2015) suggests through
his research that online therapy
can be effective for young
people, especially young women,
that have lack of hope.



It is essential that we can assist clients when they have help-seeking behaviours in the ways in which they wish to have that support.

In online therapy research, both instant chat and online video conferencing were seen as equally viable options (Dowling, 2015).



There's many ways of working
in online therapy.

Choose which way suits you best
and what makes you feel
confident and able to hold
the space for your client.

The different ways
of working online are;

- 1) instant chat
- 2) video conferencing
- 3) audio only
- 4) email therapy, or finally,
- 5) virtual reality therapy.



Secret 4: Privacy and legislation requirements

How are you maintaining client privacy, confidentiality and legislation requirements?

Ensure you are keeping adequate notes.

Where are you storing them?

Have you considered the safety of the clients, or others (like children) in the scenario?

These are essential matters – and it depends where in the world, or state(s) you are practising as to what determines how you work online.

Generally, Skype is not recommended for online therapy – as it doesn't have the right level of encryption and security settings expected of the private space that counselling is.

Skype also isn't enough in these changing times that require adherence to data protection legislation throughout the world, HIPAA or the GDPR (Association for Counselling & Therapy Online, 2018).



Suggestions of appropriate software you can use are: Zoom, Doxy.Me and VSee – all three of these programs can be used for free for short periods.

Please try out these programs to see what works for you.





Secret 5: Marketing

Firstly - have a marketing plan.

You don't want to be
the world's best kept secret.

If you have a special way
that you work with clients,
tell them in your marketing.

Who are your clients?

Do you work with relationships,
grief, trauma, depression, anxiety,
PTSD, domestic violence,
or other specific issues?

Whichever client groups you work in
– this is your niche, your target
market group, or client groups.

Then.... consider....
how will your clients find you?

Are you on social media?
Are you in social media groups?

Do you have a marketing strategy?
How do you wish to be found
by your clients?

It is essential that you have a
marketing strategy in place
so that your clients can find you.

These days, it's not enough to put your name in an association.

Currently, the market is flooded with services, coaches and counsellors and psychologists that are working online.

How will you cut through the white noise? What is your key message(s) to your clients?

Finally, you can manage your own private therapy practice yourself.

There is no need to join an all-in-one platform. You can work how you would like to work. The freedom is in your hands to work how you need to work.

Good luck with your online therapy businesses.

If you're confused or struggling with new technology, or how things are changing, feel free to reach out.

Contact me here:
www.aott.com.au



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