Advice to my Little Sister

Fantastic Friends: Like Family!

Featuring Thope Foundation

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GOOD VIBES
Letter from the Editor!

I’m an only child, so I never had a sister to give me advice. I can share some advice with my step-brother, but he’s not always interested in my...sage wisdom.

Instead, I took this question to girls and women everywhere. What would YOU tell your little sister or a younger girl in your life? What do you wish you knew as a teen?

Last year, I shared some advice to my younger self for WriteGirl’s #28DaysWriteGirl prompt. Here are some highlights:

Girl,
You will grow into your own. Things will not go your way all the time, but you will learn from every bad situation and become stronger.

At 25, you realize life has treated you pretty well. I know you’re a worrier, but you can let your worry muscles relax sometimes. As you learn, things work out- just keep smiling and drown out all those negative thoughts.

Don’t ever stop moving forward. Let go of the bad and use the good to propel yourself forward. And there’s so much good. Learn to compromise now, but don’t ever compromise your deepest principles. Pick your battles, is what I’m saying.

You’re in the process of carving out a niche for yourself. One that will make you feel welcome, comfortable and at home wherever you go in the world. At some point though, you’ll get a little jealous, a little mean, towards other girls. This will be a huge mistake. Don’t do it. Not only do you know better, but you will miss out on a lot of friendships. Most importantly, refuse to get bogged down. Just keep moving forward. Love yourself, love your family, and love other girls.

That’s where I left off last February. I’m a year older now, and I’d probably add a few things: make some time for fun. You’ll always have to do things you’re not good at...keep practicing and they’ll get easier- possibly even fun!

Although I never had a younger sister, hopefully some of the advice contained in these pages will be useful to you. Everyone writing is on your side. We’re all rooting for you!
Thanks to everyone who contributed to Issue 5!
We couldn’t have done it without you <3

Short Advice from Friendly Women
Appearing throughout issue
Kelly Rolon (@KrazyKellye)
Kim Kelly
Gabrielle Quinet-Conforti
Janne Mosser
Maggie Ridgely
Jaqueline Meraz
Megan
GDay For Girls
Dani Kohan
Money Matters
Candice Ward
Jana Mays

Special thanks to Paige McKenzie aka
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Special thanks to Marissa Hacker and everyone at Fantastic Friends!

Fantastic Friends

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Our deepest thanks to the Thope Foundation, especially Ritsie and Sine, for inspiring this issue!

This issue would not have happened without your great idea and wonderful submissions!

We’re so happy to present “Advice to My Little Sister” from girls at the Thope Foundation on pages 24-26
“You’re worth more than what the people you date tell you.” – Kim Kelly

Kim Kelly is an American journalist.

“[I’d tell girls] that life will do some rough shit to you. But someone’s been there, someone’s lived through it. And you will, too.”

-Gabrielle Quinet-Conforti

American ex-pat living in Belgium, raising 3 and a bit kids, full time working teacher, who had life thrown up in the air over 6 months and is just now getting her feet on the ground.

“Don’t let anyone tell you you can’t be successful at something because of your gender. Unless it’s like... producing sperm.” - Sara Luedtke

“I used to think the world was more full of kind people than it really is. Don’t get me wrong, there are so many good humans out there. There are also a lot of people who will present you with small acts of kindness because they expect something in return. This doesn’t mean we should suspect everyone is up to something, but instead take the time to let people show us who they really are. Just wait a little to see the bigger picture.”

-Janne Mosser

Janne has seen and done a few things, is still figuring it out, and feels pretty good about it.

We know you have invaluable life advice!

What would you tell another teen girl? A younger girl? Your younger self?

Share it with us by dropping a line to submissions@missheardmagazine.com or by tweeting us @MissHeardMag.
Our society seems to be quite skilled in the art of inferiorizing everyone. The healthiest way to live life is not to pursue perfection, but to live in an authentic way and let perfection find you. Love yourself, and love your life.

-Maggie Ridgely

I am finishing up a degree in psychology, which has been my life long passion, and have gained many insights through dealing with chronic illness, love and pain, and issues and triumphs that many women in this society go through themselves.

We often get caught up in what everyone else is doing and how we are expected to live our lives. I feel that disconnecting yourself from others is essential for your health and happiness. We can be easily influenced by many things and people around us and gradually lose ourselves. That is why I think it is important to allow yourself some alone time to reflect and reconnect with nature.

These practices make you a more conscious and stronger person who enjoys life in a more meaningful way. Don’t let other people get you down and travel if you can. And it’s ok to get lost in life because finding yourself again can be the most beautiful experience.

-Jacqueline Meraz

Jacqueline is an elementary school teacher and avid world traveler. She enjoys art, culture, metal festivals and anything that comes her way! Her major goal is to teach overseas.

It’s finally here! We’ve been following the amazing Paige’s YouTube channel since the inception of MissHeard and we were thrilled to see that she’d signed a three book and movie deal. And finally, we hold in our hands The Haunting of Sunshine Girl.

Quick background for those who don’t know: Sunshine is a 16 year old girl who moves to a haunted house in Oregon with her adoptive mother. It’s like “Gilmore Girls meets Paranormal Activity.” When Sunshine’s mom starts to...change...it’s up to Sunshine and her new friend Nolan to help Sunshine channel her newfound power to save her mom.

What immediately pulled me in was how relatable the main character, Sunshine is. After the first chapter, I want to know more. Sunshine seems very friendly and authentic. I feel like we’re already friends and I want to hear her story.

I wondered “how spooky will a YA horror story really be?” Well friends, be prepared. From the first page to the last, The Haunting is scary! The more pages I turned, the tighter I gripped the book. It’s creepy and well-thought out; there’s an elaborate backstory to the haunters. Luckily, the seemingly fearless Sunshine keeps a relatively cool head throughout the adventure!

Although Sunshine’s mother doesn’t believe in ghosts, her new friend Nolan does. While the two have an immediate connection, their story doesn’t focus on romance, which is a nice change of pace from YA novels. While Sunshine shows some interest in Nolan, the focus is on their journey together.

I would highly recommend part 1 of Sunshine’s adventure to anyone who values love, friendship and doesn’t mind looking over her shoulder every few pages.

Check out our interview with Paige here!
Be Supportive: Advice from Joy Merten

Though I’m not very old yet, nor do I have a lot of life experience, I’ve learned a few things, especially going through college, that might help someone younger than I am.

Find what (and who) you like

Don’t try to blend in or try to stick out. If you like something, own it, and do something with it. Surround yourself with friends who like hearing about your interests, but who will introduce you to new perspectives and new ideas. Have no time for people who bring others down, or who make it seem like being their friend is a privilege.

Be supportive of others, especially other women

Society tries to get women to be competitive, to tear each other down based on how they look or what choices they’ve made in life. If you see another girl succeeding at you wanted to succeed in, don’t view her as an enemy, but rather as a comrade in arms. Support each other and you’ll each get further along than you would on your own.

Be kind to yourself

Another thing I’ve learned is that you need to be kind to yourself. If you’re already feeling bad about something (or yourself in general), there’s no need to beat yourself up for how you’re reacting to it. If you’re struggling with a paper, go to sleep and write it in the morning instead of punishing yourself by staying up all night (especially if it’s not due the next day). And try to keep as regular a sleep schedule as possible. It does wonders for your brain and your health.

Advice from Megan

Don’t be embarrassed to ask to be accompanied to the bathroom by a ladyfriend when you’re out. If it happens to you, don’t be afraid to report a sexual assault. You could be saving someone’s life if you do. If you’re kind of a big flirt or kind of a prude or somewhere in between, just do you and don’t be ashamed. It’s ok if you don’t have many friends, you can use extra time to make radical music.

-Megan
Megan manages a doggy day care and sings for bands.

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And don’t forget to check out our website www.missheardmagazine.com

Hey! DYK you can subscribe for FREE and get future MissHeard issues in your e-mail?
If I Were Still Around
by Chloe Williams

Little Sister,

If I were still around, I’d tell you I love you, and that no matter what distance comes between us, it won’t hinder our relationship. I won’t let a couple hundred miles diminish the relationship we built.

If I were still around, I’d tell you that you’re beautiful, and more importantly, smart, charismatic, artistic, and possess the most endearing awkward charm. I’d tell you that no boy or girl—I don’t really know—will validate your existence, and even if they could, you won’t ever let them, because you’re stronger than that.

I’d tell you that your education is important, and not to do drugs, and not to kiss boys because they have cooties, but I know the decision is yours. I just ask that you don’t make mistakes that aren’t necessary to you maturing. Your mom is probably right more often than not, I knew she was when I was young and still is to this day.

Trust is earned and is not an entitlement, contrary to popular belief. I’d vow that it’s something distributed as it is given, and you won’t find some brilliant way to get it without giving it back.

I’d tell you that your first love won’t be the last, and I wouldn’t invalidate your feelings for a second, because I know heartache is the worst. I know chocolate ice cream doesn’t really dull the pain, but it feels great to binge on it and serves as a good distraction, if nothing else.

I’d talk about safe sex and quote Mean Girls, claiming adamantly that if you have sex, you will get pregnant and die. I’m joking. Kind of.

I’ll tell you about college life when I call every once in a while, and how studies are awful, and how I wish I could come home and be with you, but revoke my statements because you need to have ambition; not necessarily college, but something you’ll follow through with, like I will with my education. I’ll tell you I love you for the thousandth time in those fleeting moments between classes, and promise I’d be right there with you, doing your hair, if I were still around.

All my love,
Chloe

Chloe Williams is a senior in high school. She lives in Northern California and has traveled with a spoken word organization called Light the Stage.

Chloe is also interested in cosmetology, equality and all forms of art. She serves on the Teen Advisory Board.

Learn more about Light the Stage and check out their scholarship contest!
As girls who aren’t quite grown up yet, it is often impossible to feel in control of everything happening in our lives. Sometimes, this is because circumstances around us are forced upon us by family, friends or school. Other times, it feels like our parents are the only people who have a say in what we do, and how we act. Sometimes, structure can feel nice, and it’s comforting to have adults who take care of things and a school routine to fall into. Other times, that structure can feel suffocating, or the people who should be enforcing them can’t do it properly, and everything feels like it’s falling to pieces around you. Everyone feels like almost all of these are true at one point or another, and I’ve learnt that regardless of whether everything around you is going completely to plan, or completely off the rails, it’s important to feel like you can always be there for yourself. You can make yourself feel like some things are in your control, and you can be one constant thing in your life when nothing else is.

Self care starts by taking time to check in with yourself, properly and mindfully. Often, when things aren’t going too well in life, and even when they are, we forget to think about how we are, how we’re feeling and how we’re coping with everything that’s going on. Spend some time in bed in the morning, or nighttime, just reflecting on what’s happening in your life, and how everything fits together. Where do you fit in with everything? What sort of demands are on you at the moment? Do you feel like there is a balance between the different areas of your life, or is one thing taking up more time and energy than everything else? Think about whether you’ve been feeling more tired, or energised lately, and where any of that energy (or lack thereof) is coming from. By intentionally identifying the relationships between your state of mind, and your environment, you can begin to address any issues that are in your control, or promote anything that you think is making life easier.

If things aren’t going so well, be the first person to offer yourself a mental hug. Treat yourself with the same care you would treat your best friend after they’ve failed a test, broken up with their boyfriend or girlfriend, had a fight with a parent. When a friend is going through a tough time, we will offer them all the help and support we can, but when we are going through similar struggles, we won’t offer ourselves the same kindness. We need to give ourselves permission to just shut down for even a couple hours, and to actively feel better. The benefits of this are endless! A clear, refreshed mind can go a long way, and looking after yourself will make tackling the issues around you easier because you’ll have the energy and the ability to face them head on.

Once you’ve actually put some thought into how you’re feeling, and what level of rejuvenation you need, and consciously committed to looking after yourself, get into self-care mode! For a relaxation, I’ll buy some loose leaf tea that feels like it should only be brought out on posh, grownup occasions, and poured from a beautiful tea pot (if you don’t like tea, maybe buy some chocolate chip cookies, and marshmallows to dip into hot chocolate), and brew myself a nice, big pot to sip at like a princess while I read through a good book. For a longer pampering session, I’ll light some candles, drop a bath bomb into the tub, and soak until my feet wrinkle up. Another way to feel really great about yourself is to dress up, just because. Often when you’re feeling lousy, doling yourself up on the outside will make your mood brighten almost instantly - you’ll want to smile every time you catch your stunning self in the mirror. Try different things, and see what works for you! Some people find that spending time around really positive, vibrant friends instead of more toxic personalities works as a way to energise them. Others find it easy to recharge when they can just take a break from the rest of the world, and spend some quality alone time watching their favourite movies, or doing something with their hands, like painting. When you’ve found something that works for you, do it as often as you can - repeating the same things and associating them each time with a goal to improve your frame of mind will create automatically soothing activities over time. I’ve found that a specific ‘feel-good’ playlist works great with this, especially when you’re trying to calm down and get confident on the go.

Whatever works for you, I think that self-care is one of the most valuable skills any girl can learn, at any age. The ability to independently control the way you feel will become one of your most valuable assets, and not needing to rely on anybody else when it comes to your happiness and well-being has an exponential effect, making you feel more and more empowered, and confident in your ability to be separate from your circumstances, and to be able to go out, and get what you want done.
To my seven year old sister: once out of every five times that you want to buy a trinket or a candy bar, save it instead. You’ll be amazed at how much you have to get something really cool later on. If I had a teenage sister, I’d tell her the same thing but I’d tell her to open a savings account and put five bucks in it every week.

-Candice Ward

Candice is a graduate student studying the archaeology of clothing in California. She’s also a singer, graphic artist and an all around rad lady who designs our issue covers!

Whether you’re saving for a car, a backpacking trip, a new gadget or putting away money for college, it’s important to know some money basics.

**Budgeting and Savings**

A budget can show you how to afford the things you need while still saving for the things you want. A budget can help you stay debt free too. Sticking to your budget means you’ll get to your goal faster!

Start with your income. That’s all the money you earn from a job and tips, allowance, gifts, spending money from your parents or guardians, etc. Add it up, and that’s your income. If you make $80 a week after taxes at your part time job, that is $320 a month and $3840 a year.

Plan for your needs. Do you pay your car insurance? Gas? Your phone? Rent? Pet food? Clothes? Deduct that from your income. If you need to spend $100 a month on car insurance and $30 a month on gas, that leaves you with $190 a month. You may find that a spending journal helps you see where your money goes. (Do you really need a grande latte every day?)

Set some aside for your wants. This is where your latte budget comes into play. Things like Bandcamp downloads, concert tickets, clothes your folks won’t buy you, eating out, etc. fall into the “wants” category.

Save, save, save! Banking experts say you should save 10% of your income. If you make $80 a week, that’s $8 a week. If you don’t have many bills, you may be able to save more. If 10% seems too daunting, try saving $5 a week at first, like Candice suggests.

If you haven’t yet, you should consider opening a savings account, which can earn you interest. (*Your money makes money! Just sitting there!*). Take a look at the pros and cons of national banks, local banks, and credit unions and open an account at one that fits your needs best. You may find you’re less tempted to spend money when it’s in the bank rather than in your wallet. Check the account regularly.

Stay motivated! Write your savings goal on a piece of paper and hang it where you’ll see it.

What if I mess up? Everyone messes up sometimes. From time to time, the urge to splurge is overwhelming. As long as you check your budget routinely, it will be easy to get back on track!

Learn more about money at one of these sites:

- [www.moneymattersmakeitcount.com](http://www.moneymattersmakeitcount.com)
- [Daily Finance for Teens (by Teens)](http://www.moneymattersmakeitcount.com)
- [The Mint](http://www.moneymattersmakeitcount.com)
- [High School Financial Planning Program](http://www.moneymattersmakeitcount.com)
- [Fool.com](http://www.moneymattersmakeitcount.com)

- Jana Mays

Jana is a 20-something someware developer and ukulele player for The Palmettes.

- [Head over to moneymattersmakeitcount.com for more tips!](http://www.moneymattersmakeitcount.com)
20 Things I’d Want My Younger Sister to Know
by Julia Schemmer

I grew up in a home of three amazing older sisters, an older brother, and a younger brother, so my heart was always warmed by the different personalities that each brought. Although I can’t say I have a younger sister, there have been moments where I’ve dreamed of having one.

In this materialistic and affluent world we live in, it’s easy to forget the enormous value of genuine advice and understanding. However, there are so many things I’d want to tell her. Although I could probably fill a book with the ‘do’s’ and ‘don’t’s of this paradoxically chaotic yet still life, I decided to slim down my advice to only twenty things.

1. In your life, there are going to be people who will try to beat you down, to remind you of your weaknesses and attempt the death of your dream. Don’t listen to them. Jonathan Sprinkles, a world renown speaker once said, “Never adjust your expectations downward to compensate your peers’ lack of success.” You are going places. Even when there’s not one person who believes in your vision, keep going.

2. Know your worth. The only difference between a mountain and a hill is how high they’re willing to hold themselves up. It’s unfortunate that girls are being objectified and scorned for not having the ideal body type, but know that beauty is greater than surface level. You are beautiful in every single way, and don’t let the fleeting trends and pop culture try to change who you are as an individual.

3. Live everyday with a purpose. The grim thing about this adventurous life is that at any moment, blessings can be taken away. Wake up every morning like it’s Christmas morning. Get excited over the little things. Cherish relationships. Time is a’flying, and it’s of the essence that we are intentional with the days we are given.

4. Study hard. Even when you think you know the material, review it. Work hard, diligently, and with integrity.

5. Don’t be afraid to order your fries “Animal Style” at In N Out. It’s lifechanging.

6. Don’t be embarrassed when you can’t do something. For me, I know now that I’m horrible at sports and loathe group projects, but the only way I would have known this if I tried it first. Love yourself enough to be willing to expose yourself to new opportunities, but don’t fret if they don’t work out. It means you’re becoming even closer to finding out what does work out, and when you find your passion, the joy of it will outweigh any of the failed experiences.

7. Listen. You’re a Schemmer, so you’re going to want to talk a lot, but take moments to listen to the world around you. Whether it’s the dogs barking endlessly at things our eyes cannot see or the words from a mother to a daughter in the grocery store, there are incredible stories out there.

8. Life is too short to use your real name at Starbucks.

9. Dress clean and classy. You can borrow my clothes if you want, but the ultimate style advice to use your preferences, and wear them in a clean and classy way. Be polished together, but with personality. Trust me: classiness will always be better than immediate gratification.

10. Don’t be so busy that you forget people you care about. With a personality and passion like yours, you’re going to be busy changing the world. However, please don’t forget about how much we all love and support you, and cherish the moments we get to spend with you. We’re rooting for you, but please don’t forget us.

continued on the next page
11. Be adventurous. There is an adventure in everything, from a trip to the postal office to halfway across the world. With your eyes open to the possibilities that anywhere provides, you’ll live your life fully.

12. Nothing worth having will be easy. Work hard. Demand the best of yourself in every situation. Proofread, revise, rewrite, and repeat. Sweat until your practice reflects your performance. When you achieve your goal, it’ll feel better than it’s ever been.

13. Don’t be afraid to be a little ridiculous. Paint your nails an annoyingly bright color. Sing in the shower, even if you’re tone-deaf. Dance around the kitchen like you’re six years old. Sometimes the best moments come from being a bit ridiculous, and living life unconventionally.

14. When you’re old enough, I’ll introduce you to this amazing British singer named Sam Smith. If you’re having a bad day, listen to his songs. I pinky-promise he’ll become your new obsession.

15. Practice your handwriting. Legible handwriting is a form of art, and whatever career you go into, writing is valid and needed.

16. Break the rules. Form your own impression of what you want your life to look like. Don’t settle for a life of being a mother and a homemaker if that’s not what you genuinely want. Create your own destiny, even if it goes against popular opinion.

17. Don’t keep calm and carry on. Make noise, shake the gates of hell, and change the world!

18. Remember to relax. Nothing should be worth making you stress out and compromise your health. Remember to take breaks, watch reruns of Friends, and have fun. Life is short, and I know you want to do everything, but sometimes it’s enough to take a night off for yourself.

19. Give back. You’ve been blessed with much, and it’s important for you to serve the community. Don’t just listen to the stories of others, do something that will make their lives better. Leave people and places in a better position than what you last found them in. Whether it’s volunteering at a toy drive or lending a smile, making the choice to give back is the best decision you can make.

20. Rock out to your own beat. This is your life, and it’s you who will be changing the world!
Don’t let your self-worth be defined by Facebook likes, Instagram followers, or YouTube views. Those things didn’t exist twenty years ago, and twenty years from now there will be a whole slew of new technologies influencing how we interact with one another. As a young woman, you will be told to stay quiet, to stay sweet, and to stay out of the way. You will be told to make other people happy by sacrificing your own comfort and well-being. I dare you to defy those expectations.

Make decisions based on your own contentment and understanding of the positive and negative outcomes that could occur. Try not to let your friends, peers, and adults dictate how you navigate through your life. Some of these people will have wonderful advice, and others will try to live vicariously through you by cutting you down or pushing you towards choices that might not be in your best interest. Little sister, you’ll feel it in your bones when something isn’t right for you. Follow your instincts, never stop learning about the subjects you’re passionate about, and surround yourself with people that you trust.

You’ll make mistakes along the way, but I urge you to forgive yourself and never stop moving forward. You are more powerful than you know, and I look forward to being in a world filled with the many triumphs and accomplishments that are in store for you.

"TAKING RISKS AND MAKING CHOICES IS WHAT MAKES LIFE SO EXCITING."
To My Younger Sisters
by Maram Elnagheeb

To my younger sisters,

Growing up you will regret mistakes, you will feel guilty, and you will get confused, lost even. One minute you think you know what you want to do in life, but that plan can change in an instance too. Trust me I’ve gone through it.

To the young girls becoming teens, I would say allow yourself to feel your emotions. When you’re angry, sad, happy, hurt, allow yourself to feel the feeling. Pushing aside or bottling up your emotions is toxic, and it will build up to a point where you feel overwhelm. Find ways to deal with your emotions and cope in a healthy way, whether it’s writing poetry, painting, writing screenplays, or playing sports. Also, learn to forgive yourself early on in life. It’s a valuable tool that will serve you well for the rest of your life.

As you become a teen, you get more responsibilities, which eventually leads to more opportunities to mess up. It is okay to make mistakes. Do not feel guilty. Guilt is a wasted emotion that does not serve you well. Mistakes and failures are not in our lives to make us feel ashamed or guilty; they are there to teach us and help us grow. You can learn from every mistake. It might not seem like it in the moment, but there are lessons in the mistake. That is the number one lesson I wish I learned when I became a teenager.

I would tell my younger self to not worry. I don’t perform best when I’m worried or overwhelmed; I underperform. I would say find out what do you care about and what do you love. Focus on that, and don’t try to do what others want you to do, when you don’t enjoy the activity yourself. You are entitled to your life, and you get to choose your passion and your field in life. I would definitely tell that to my younger self and other young girls too.

Also, you may feel alone and isolated at times in life. Being alone does not mean you are not worth spending time with or you are not lovable. Trust me, I’ve had extensive experience being alone. Being alone is a blessing. Being alone allows you time to be with yourself and discover yourself in depth, which is a very valuable experience to have a teen. Figuring out who you are builds strength and confidence. You’ll have encounters where people will say or do mean things to you, but when you are firm in who you are as a person, it won’t shake you. You may feel that there is no help available. You can find help though whether it’s out there in the world or finding the courage from within to take action and to stand up yourself. You are all on your way to becoming wonderful women.

So don’t be afraid of the terrible teen years because you can use this time to your advantage. Trail blaze your own path, be faithful to yourself, discover you, forgive yourself, and find your passions. I wish you all well in your lives.

Your sister,
Maram Elnagheeb

Maram is a high school junior and advocate. She leads her school’s Girl Up club and UNICEF club. Maram is a writer and editor for Her Culture, a writer for United 4 Social Change, and a writer for Hello Flo. Maram is also a Her Campus High School Ambassador.
Dream on an Un-Realisic Level
by Sareana Kimia

Sometimes when we want to dream about life, we only consider to dream on a realistic level. The thought of big imagination and the impossible becomes inconceivable. As we grow, the thought of flying cars or talking teddy bears seems to slowly vanquish. Being realistic isn’t a bad thing, but we tend to concentrate on it too much. The world is constantly changing, and things we thought were impossible 5 to 10 years ago are very real now.

When I was younger, like many others, I was told to get serious and stay more realistic. I wish someone had told me to continue to think of the impossible and make it possible. When I was younger, I wanted to become a biomedical engineer because I thought it would be a job that was still in the market; and I could aspire to be one. However, no one ever told me that I could be whatever I wanted to be, even if the job didn’t exist at that moment. No one ever told me that I could aspire to be the person who could genetically modify teddy bears to talk or make flying cars as the new mode of transportation. Such things were only false realities that had absolutely no relevance to the real world, and so I didn’t consider dreaming of them.

Nothing is too abstract to aspire to. Every single day something we all once dreamt of is becoming a reality. So, never stop using your imagination; dream a bit bigger; aspire a bit more; and make what you want a reality.

Sareana Kimia is a high school student who takes classes at a local college. She’s the president of Youth For Change and is a very active youth activist. Sareana was just awarded an NSIL Youth award to study in China!

You can Tweet with Sareana!

We’re looking for submissions for our next issue!

What do you think about life after high school? Are you planning to go straight into a 4-year school? Maybe you want to go to community college first. Or learn a trade. Or take a gap year and travel or work. Will you work and save money? Perhaps you’ve got a million-dollar idea and are starting a business. Do you have a job waiting for you? Are you doing something 100% unique?

It’s never been a better time to be a girl and we want to highlight all of the paths you could take after graduation!

Want to contribute but not sure where to get started? Here’s some ideas:
- Interview a woman you admire about her path
- Tell us about your top college picks and why
- Give us your travel bucket list
- Share how your gap year or alternative student path benefitted you
- Write about your unique job or trade

We accept submissions of any length and in multiple formats. Share your art, your poetry, your music. If you attach images, please keep them 300 dpi or greater.

Send your submissions to submissions@misheardmagazine.com by May 29th for consideration!
It took some time for me to realize this, but a life well-lived is probably the most any of us can hope for. With that in mind, here are some thoughts that might help you on your way:

1) Your life will not go the way you expect. There will be wonderful surprises and well-earned victories; but there will also be crushing losses and unexpected sadness. Both are transitory. Don’t get so comfortable in happy times that you stop exploring, stop learning, stop trying. And never, ever let hard times paralyze you for long.

2) Be kind. Do your best to make kindness and compassion your first response to others. It costs nothing, and it may turn out to be a real gift to someone.

3) Pursue your dreams, even with the knowledge that some may not materialize. If they don’t, find new dreams. There is no single way to live fully; if one path dead ends, carve out a new one.

4) The people in your life matter, and your relationships will teach you a lot about yourself. Hold tightly to those who support you, who listen, who make you laugh, who trust you and whom you trust. Let go of those who do not add to your life. (Accept, too, that there will come a time when someone wants to let you go, and remember that this happens to us all sooner or later.)

5) Gratitude is essential to happiness. Even when things are terrible, look for something to be grateful for – anything (or anyone) that brings light into your life when you most need it. And when things are going well? Take time to really, truly appreciate it. Remembering whatever good there is in the world gives us hope in difficult times and helps us keep moving toward something better.

**How can I practice gratitude?** Start by appreciating the things around you. In a negative situation, try to identify a positive. For example, if your Friday night plans fall through, try to appreciate the extra time you have to try a new hobby, read a book, or get caught up on your Netflix queue. Give compliments! Bonus points if you can compliment someone for who they are, rather than something they own. Something like “Hey! You know you have the best sense of style!” or “You always cheer me up when I’m sad” rather than “I like your new phone!”

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**Meet Allison Sellers!**

“I’m a grad student whose life did not go at all the way I thought it would, but has nonetheless been filled with joy. I haven’t loved every moment, but I wouldn’t take any back.”

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**A Well-Lived Life**

by Allison Sellers

Happiness is not a goal...it’s a by-product of a life well lived.

—Eleanor Roosevelt

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How can I practice gratitude? Start by appreciating the things around you. In a negative situation, try to identify a positive. For example, if your Friday night plans fall through, try to appreciate the extra time you have to try a new hobby, read a book, or get caught up on your Netflix queue. Give compliments! Bonus points if you can compliment someone for who they are, rather than something they own. Something like “Hey! You know you have the best sense of style!” or “You always cheer me up when I’m sad” rather than “I like your new phone!”
Dear Hypothetical Little Sister,

Full disclosure, I’ve never had a little sister. However, I do have a wonderful niece and several friends who are quite a bit younger than I am. For the sake of this article, whoever you are – go ahead and consider yourself my adopted little sister.

There are a lot of things I was called as a girl. I was (and still am) extremely weird. I had an odd turn of phrase, and was often teased for my choice of vocabulary. I wore my hair like my favorite characters in my favorite fantasy novels. I wore entirely too many necklaces and bracelets – mostly because I liked the way they sounded. You could hear and see the mess of my outfits coming from a mile away, and all of this was capped off with giant, circular glasses.

I say all of this because I know you must feel like you stand out. I KNEW I stood out, people delighted in telling me. And you know what? That’s the best thing in the world. For every person who teases you right now, who tells you something that is weird about yourself – I promise you there’s another person who is looking up to you as a source of strength. Be yourself, and inspire other people to be themselves, and I promise – everything will work out okay.

I will never forget, in my last week of my senior year of High School, I was looking forward to where life would take me. I’d decided to go to the University of Central Florida (because I wanted to live next to Disney World) and in a few short months I was moving to the dorms to figure out how to be an adult (some 15 years later, I’m still trying to figure that out). Just like everyone is, I was scared and excited. I felt alone. I wondered if I’d ever be able to make new friends out in Orlando (turns out the answer is yes, and I’m still friends with most of my college buddies).

A person can’t help but reflect on all the people they knew, all the things they were told, and begin to wonder if they’d be accepted in the next step of their lives – being as most of us don’t feel accepted most of the time. I always kind of wondered if people were laughing at me in secret. I was friends with several of the popular kids at school – mostly because we were in the same classes. They were nice, and we got along – but I never exactly fit in with them. I had my group of weird kids that I hung out with – and they were perfect, but I knew my group was special and irreplaceable. I wondered if more people on the outside were more like the popular kids, and less like me.

Our Psychology teacher had given us the task of writing three letters to be given to three different people. They were supposed to tell that person what they had done to inspire you, to make you feel better, and to help you through everything. To be honest, I can’t even remember who I wrote to anymore. Certainly my parents, my favorite teacher at the school... I couldn’t tell you for sure. What I can tell you is that I received one of those letters.

One of the more popular kids I knew had taken the time to write to me – ME! I was completely surprised. He told me that he admired my strength, and my wackiness. He said I never looked afraid. He completed the letter by telling me that I’d helped him find himself. He’d been able to be himself because of me.

I still have that letter, it’s safe, tucked in my yearbook.

continued on next page
I tell you that story to reinforce this idea: You never know who’s looking up to you. And, you never know who’s jealous of you. We so often feel like we don’t belong – when we really do. We feel like no one notices us – when someone is watching everything you accomplish (and taking delight in your accomplishments.)

You’ll eventually grow up, and grow into yourself. The things that make you weird now, make you awesome later. That one thing that only you can do – if you work hard enough, you can levy it into a skill that makes your life exciting and fun. Just keeping being weird. The world has enough of the same old boring stuff – that’s why it’s old and boring. Your weirdness though, that’s totally unique and special.

I still have my glasses, and I still wear odd jewelry – and a lot of times stuff that I make myself. I learned to sew properly, and tend to make my own clothes (and costumes). My hair has been almost every color of the rainbow. But... I found a job that embraced me, a boyfriend who adores me, and friends who challenge me to keep learning and growing.

So, keep doing what you love. I think it’s awesome.

Love Always,
Your Big Sister, Loryanna

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Advice from G Day for Girls!

Fitting in with Loryanna’s theme, this piece of advice comes from G Day for Girls via Facebook.

Be YOU!! Nobody fits in anyway and you’d be surprised to know how many people think how cool you are!

G Day for Girls is an social movement that seeks to empower and celebrate girls as they enter adolescence. G Day supports and encourages sisterhood, respect and diverse role models. G Day events are community-based rites of passage! They are based in Canada.

Visit the G Day for Girls website!
Growing up is hard. Anybody who says otherwise is either too young to realize or aged enough to know that this experience is only one of the countless inevitable difficulties in life. Especially transitioning from a child to an adolescent, the journey can often seem pointless, stressful, and unfair. If I was to live those awkward middle school years all over again, I would without a doubt fight the same obstacles very differently. So, to my all sisters who are experiencing this period in their lives, please remember these 4 pieces of advice:

1. You are not fat
Whether it’s promoted in popular movies, songs, or tv shows, skinny bodies, toned abs, and thigh gaps seem to have always to be top priority goals for many girls in middle school. When I had enough free time to be absorbed in media, yet was not mature enough to understand why I had to be like a Victoria’s Secret model, I was determined to lose weight. However, I remember that although I was skipping meals and exercising, I was doing more harm to my body than good. Looking back, I realize that it is important to remember you should never put your health at risk in order to reach for some unattainable image promoted by clothing brands that just want to make more money.

2. Enjoy school
School can often be the hardest part of becoming a teenager. This is the time when kids are incessantly gos-siping, attempting to be cool, and even bullying their peers. However, when you become older, you realize that those words that used to feel like they’re destroying your world were really nothing but words. They can hurt, but they are also harmless if you ignore them. Furthermore, while there is always pressure to get those straight As, never forget that your middle school years are perhaps the last few years you have the most free time before college or even beyond. So enjoy those 3 years, because the ones to come only get harder.

3. Cry when you have to cry
“What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.” Those who restrain themselves from crying because they see it as a sign of weakness are really only making themselves weaker. When you release all the unhappiness and stress stored inside you, you are physically improving your mental state. Think of it as a cleansing routine where just like you have to shower periodically to wash away the dirt, it is also necessary to cry once in a while to wash away all the unhappy thoughts.

4. Be Confident
I know, I know, when my mom told me to get braces in the 6th grade I also thought it was the end of the world. I was already short and acne-ridden back then, and the brace face is the last thing I needed. However, if you look around, you will realize that most everybody is just like you. So, don’t be insecure about your image, but be confident instead because the truth is everyone around you is probably just as worried about their appearance as you are.

Cheryl Wang is currently a junior in North Carolina who is passionate about spreading awareness of social issues through writing. She also writes for Her Culture and Her Campus, but in her free time, she enjoys golfing, horseback riding, and movies with friends. Cheryl is a Teen Advisory Board Member. Tweet with her!
Hey!

You are gorgeous.

You are absolutely gorgeous because of how beautiful you are, and because of your intelligence! You are very smart and you are so beautiful and nothing changes that. The color or fit on a piece of clothing can’t even dent this beauty, because it’s more than just how you look. You could probably draw on another eyebrow and be fine :).

But your beauty has nothing to do with tiny little things! Clothing can compliment you, but your attitude and your grace and your energy is what people can see and feel.

Here, around you, is an entire world of family and friends, of challenges, of fun, of excitement. Don’t use up any ounce of your energy feeling uncomfortable, or questioning yourself. You have that energy to meet the world- a beautiful, challenging, amazing journey filled with love and conquest and learning and being good to yourself and the people around you.

You are beautiful because of everything that you are, and you don’t need to check, or measure, or adjust. You can look out to others and learn about their personalities, their hopes and dreams, when they could use a little help from you, instead of focusing inward on yourself and how you look to others.

Be able to be a great friend and family member without jeopardizing yourself. Be comfortable, be healthy, be happy, and be a little bit in love with all of the amazing things that you!

Ashley-Rae keeps her big dreams optimistic, works hard, and rests often. She loves to spend time with her family, create adventures, and is constantly learning.
I have a little sister and I don’t think she likes when I give her advice. It's a little sister thing I guess. Just upset because us big sisters have ALL THE KNOWLEDGE and they don’t want to admit how right we always are. ;)

Recently I’ve been thinking about how crazy it is that things have worked out so well in my life. I've been lucky and I wish that I could go back in time and tell little Amina things so that everything wouldn’t have been so serious or worrying all the time. So if I could give advice to my younger self at age 15 or 16 here’s what it would be:

Give yourself permission to live for yourself and not for someone else. Don’t worry about what people expect of you; don’t worry about what someone else wants for your life do you, little bae.

F those AP science classes that you hate and don’t study a language if you don’t want to / have to. As long as you get by okay, school is pretty meaningless at the end of the day and if you’re the kind of middle aged person who remembers your SAT scores or how many points you got off on your driver’s test, you should really reevaluate your life.

Don’t rush. Don’t race everyone else. As my brother told me once, why would you want to sprint to the finish line in gym class when you can just walk with your friends instead? [Sometimes, younger brothers can be pretty insightful.]

If I had done what my parents wanted me to, I would have been a missionary nurse living in remote African villages with Doctor Husband saving lives and converting people to Islam. Or I would have had a government job. If we’ve met, you’ll know neither of these are really my vibe. I cannot sit still in a meeting that lasts more than 20 minutes without doodling or chugging coffee.

When I was in school, and I think this probably applies to most people in school, I had ‘future’ tunnel vision. I was in a GPA state of mind. Everything was about what elitist major I was going to have [Journalism or Environmental Science]; what internship I was going to land [FEMA]; and how much money I’d be making in two years, five years, ten years, a million years... I think we just need to step back for one second and evaluate what we want. I didn’t really want a desk job in my heart, I always wanted a creative career. But did I go to art school? No. I went to a boring public school and finished with a boring generic major that would get me some boring job and allow me to buy a boring car one day. Six months after graduating from college I had the chance to jump off of this ship sinking into the most mundane life ever and started pursuing my creative career.

I was always afraid, and still am to some point, of how people judge me. If I had a dime for the amount of times that I told people what I did for a living and they responded, “Oh, cool so what’s your real job?” I’d be rich and I would use my riches to frame every single one of those people for murder so they would go to jail forever. (The phrase “real job” is one of the most rude, obnoxious phrases you can ever utter while swinging your boring government ID lanyard around your neck. Another piece of advice: if you do meet a person with a nontraditional career, don’t ask them that. Open your mind a wee bit instead.)

continued on the next page
Advice on Creative Careers contined

Something that I’m working on is letting go of other people’s expectations, judgements and comparisons; living as honestly and fully as is right for me at any time. Right now that’s making candles and helping other artists / crafters / artisans launch and grow their businesses. Tomorrow it might be opening up a bookstore or launching a food cart the possibilities are endless as long as you don’t limit yourself.

My grandparents had a small creative business when they immigrated to the US in the 80s. It was a curtain making shop called Jamil Interiors. My late grandmother was extremely creative and my grandfather is a wise worrywart. They worked hard to give their four kids a good life. I worry that if my grandmother was still living, despite our creative connection, she wouldn’t like that I gave up a stable life for a less predictable one. I worry that she wouldn’t like that I make candles for a living and that she wouldn’t like me. My grandparents didn’t move to America so their grandkids could work as hard as them, you know? This is something my grandfather has made pretty clear anytime I talk about opening a store. Why work that hard when you can get paid by the government to work from home once a week and have paid vacations?

It’s a hard pill to swallow and it does get into my head sometimes, but ultimately it’s just a hypothetical thought to let go of because it’s just a stick in the road that doesn’t need to be there. Regardless of anyone else’s take on your life, at the end of the day it is your life and you should live it as fully and honestly as you need. Give yourself permission to do that and let go of external burdens that have nothing to do with you. Having a creative career or whatever life you want is totally doable- you just have to go do it.

_Amina Ahmad is a lifelong crafter that currently owns and operates a soy candle company, Handmade Habitat, based out of her apartment in Takoma Park, MD. When not making all the candles or walking her dog you can find her loitering in coffee shops or out hustling candles at DC area markets._

On Relationships

by Dani Kohan

If I could go back in time and tell 16 year old me anything, it would be not to be sad that I don’t have a boyfriend, and not to freak out over being single forever. Even if it seems like all your friends have met their one-true-loves—they haven’t. The unfortunate truth is that teenage relationships almost never last, and the guys and girls who put all their energy into their relationship, often fall behind and regret it later. Focus on your friends, school, hobbies and becoming your best self. Relationships will come, I promise. Just don’t waste too much time or emotions on them.

Dani is a music journalist, concert lover and shopaholic fueled by green tea lattes. You can find her on Twitter _@danikkoh_.

_You got something to say? We’re ALWAYS accepting submissions! submissions@missheardmagazine.com_
Fantastic Friends is a really great group started by Marissa Hacker. She started the group her freshman year to help her autistic twin brother to make friends. Marissa wanted Matthew and other special needs teens and tweens to have a space to make friends and be accepted by their peers. Fantastic Friends also has sibling and parent groups!

From their site: Fantastic Friends is a social group like no other – one designed specifically for Young Adults, Teens, and Tweens with Special Needs. Chapters host fun events that enable members to build lifelong bonds with fellow peers and neurotypical volunteers.

I love Fantastic Friends for the enthusiasm of the participants and leaders! It makes me overjoyed to see!
- Laura

I would love to start a group in my town called Fantastic Friends and Marissa is going to help me in May! Thanks Marissa!
- Sam

What I love about Fantastic Friends is that everybody can be them selves and have a great time!
- Mitch

The thing I love about Fantastic friends is getting to meet new people and having fun together, it’s hard to make friends with kids that make me feel important and like me for me.
- Sammi

It is my passion to make a difference on a large scale to the special needs community. I feel that through my work with Fantastic Friends, I have the ability to take everything I have learned from running the organization and working with such special members, families, and volunteers to the next level. It has truly been an absolute gift to see and feel how the organization greatly affects all involved. The reason why Fantastic Friends is successful is because of love. The organization feels like a giant family, and everyone involved always feels welcomed and cared for. My goal is to expand Fantastic Friends into an international organization, that can provide many services to those with special needs and their family members.
- Marissa <3

Join Fantastic Friends!
http://fantasticfriendsgroup.com/
www.facebook.com/fantasticfriendsgroup
http://twitter.com/ffsocialgroup
I learned how to talk to people at Fantastic Friends. I love seeing my friends and they should join to have fun. The proms are the best!
- Matthew

What I have learned from Fantastic Friends is being accepted. [I learned] that I am not the only person with a disability, what fun is and what self confidence is. Also, what its like to have a dream and watch it grow right before my eyes. The best time in Fantastic Friends was the Disney prom because we got to have fun and be with people who are like us.
- Kayla

What I learned from fantastic friends and being in Fantastic Friends is that nobody’s perfect but we are perfect in our own way. FF has taught me to look beyond myself and look towards others who are in need. Make the best of each and every day when you’re with your fantastic friends!
- Jay

As a parent I have always tried to put my son in activities, the more socially active he is the better he will be for the future. I cannot remember how I heard of Fantastic Friends but I remember the first activity, Funplex. It was such a great time had by all, the volunteers are wonderful. They are always there to help the kids try something for the first time and just want them to have fun. It is an awesome group with a great group of people, they always make the kids feel like they are all friends. My son always looks forward seeing his friends and cannot wait for the next activity.
- April
The Thope Foundation is a non-profit organisation providing primary school support programs to young girls in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, South Africa. Our programs are aimed at 12 to 16 year old girls and the program currently hosts over 60 young girls. The girls come from disadvantaged homes and combat immense challenges yet show tremendous resilience in the face of adversity. Our key mission is to contribute to an African society where women and girls have equal socio-economic opportunities to be healthy and productive citizens.

These submissions come from Grade 6/7 girls.

If you’d like to support the Thope Foundation, you can donate on their website or by contacting info@thopefoundation.org.

Right: Thope Girls supporting #BringBackOurGirls. Photos throughout article from the Thope Foundation Facebook page and website.

**Advice to my Little Sister about school:** You must work hard at school. Do not play around when your teachers are not around; you must read or finish up your work in order to succeed. Always bear in mind what you are there to do.

**Advice to my Little Sister about boys:** Boys fight and can be rude sometimes. You must not allow them to disturb you in your schoolwork. Do not let them provoke you into fighting. Be focused.

**Advice to my Little Sister about growing up:** When you’re growing up, it’s important to respect people. Do not be surprised by changes that will take place in your body. Puberty is a big part of growing up. You will start growing breasts and be faced with different challenges. Always ask questions about things that you are uncertain about.

Written by Elam Nxangashe

**Advice to my Little Sister about school:** At school you must work hard to get the greatest codes (grades). You must hang on to every instruction your teacher gives in order to understand your work. Take pride in your school work and do it with love and passion at all times.

**About boys:** You must not listen to bad boys who will try to make you feel bad about yourself or where you come from. There will be also boys who will also tell you that they love you and want you to be their girlfriend. Tell them books before boys, because boys bring babies.

**About growing up:** Have goals of where you want to be in the future. Make plans and have timelines so that you can have clear direction. Do not be naughty or mean to others. Spread kindness everywhere you go, even if the people are not kind to you. Have the ubuntu spirit and make the world a better place for you and everyone who is around you.

Written by Thimna Mgaba

continued on the next page
More Advice from the Thope Girls!

Advice to my little sister about school: When you are going to school, go with a positive attitude that strives towards hard work and success in your studies. Always do your homework and see going to school to as an opportunity to learn something new and expand your knowledge. Lastly, work hard every day, make that your daily goal.

About boys: Boys may try to mislead you by telling you that they love you and want to make you their wife. Tell them you do not have time for them and you are focusing on your studies. If they don’t stop tell someone older.

About growing up: Growing is a journey. Enjoy and embrace every moment of it. Make sure you have no regrets. Make wise decisions. Don’t try to find happiness or love in boys, take the love you get at home. Tell everyone who is trying to make you feel bad that you know that there are people who think the world of you and God loves you.

Written by Ongezwa Mbutho

Advice to my little sister about school: When you get to school, you going to have to make decisions about who you hang around with. Choose good friends that will be able to tell you when you are doing something wrong. When you are in the classroom listen attentively to your teacher. You will also find that at school there are those who are just there to disrupt others. Watch out for those kind of people and be careful not become that type of a person.

About boys: There are boys who are strangers and you must be careful about them. Some boys rape girls. Always be on the watch. Never trust any of them, make sure when you are around them you are in a group.

About growing up: When growing up know your likes and dislikes. That way you can focus on your goals and see your weaknesses and ask for assistance from people who will balance you. Always be able to know what is wrong and what is right. Lastly, know what you want to be when you grow up.

Written by Sinovuyo Nogwaza

Advice to my little sister about school: At school, work very hard and have the mind set of wanting to improve your personal best. There will be many books to read and learn different things from them. In some tests you will be asked general knowledge questions and that can make a difference in your marks especially when it comes to ANAs (national assessment tests). There will be lots of tests; always study for those.

About boys: Boys like to play soccer and other rough games. If you don’t like them, don’t play them, especially if you might hurt yourself. Always distance yourself from bad boys. Some of them will say nasty things to make you feel bad. Don’t listen to them, just remember who you are and walk on with your head up high.

About growing up: Always listen to your elders. They have been children and know most of the challenges you go through. Do not be afraid to pray to God and read the Bible to be wiser. Go to church and believe in Jesus’ name.

Written by Lilitha Simanga

Contined on the next page!
Advice to my little sister about school
My sister, you have to go to school because you going to expand your knowledge and know many things. You will be able to open doors for yourself in the future by getting an education. Always put school first before anything else.

About boys: My sister, I want to tell you that you must be careful about boys. Do not make a mistake and date a boy at your age, even if one of your friends has a boyfriend. If someone tells you to date someone, tell that person that you will be in trouble with your parents. My sister, what I’m trying to say is that boys may be a bad influence for someone at your age and persuade you to do things that are not good for you and your health. If someone says “if you want to be a part of our group of girls you must have a boyfriend,” you must go and find some other friends. My sister, I really hope that you were listening to me because what I told you could make succeed in life.

About growing up: My sister, I want to tell you that growing up is not an easy thing. Life has ups and downs, when days are dark and friends are few and when days are brightened friends are many. That’s how life goes. In the stages of growing, there is a time where you change as a person. One of the stages of life is puberty when you start having periods and that is the hardest part. When you are developing, you may have friends that have rich parents and you could be the only one that is poor. Your friends will have clothes that are in fashion and you may be the only one with old looking clothes and that won’t make you feel good- but that does not mean give everything up because it’s not end of life! Even if others tease you, just don’t mind them because they don’t know what they want in life.

Written by Sinokuhle Ngcwangu
Your story is one others need to hear!

Send us your original:
short stories
articles
poems
art
blogs
ideas and suggestions
or anything you can imagine to

submissions@missheardmagazine.com

We will attempt to respond to every submission.

Writer’s block? We accept submissions on a rolling basis! If it’s not publication-ready, we can help you get it there!

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