



Same-Sex Attraction and
A Road Less Traveled



Session 2: April 3, 2022

Love and Accept Yourself, Just As You Are

Rich Wyler

- Founder and Director of Brothers on a Road Less Traveled (“Brothers Road”)
- Certified Life Coach since 2005
- Creator/co-creator of experiential workshops (“Journey Into Manhood,” “A Woman Who Loves,” etc.)
- Married, father of an adult daughter and son
- Began his own inner work (“reparative therapy,” SA, etc.) in 1997



Mark

- Senior psychodrama and inner-healing (“guts”) facilitator for weekend intensives with Brothers Road and EdgeVenture
- Advisory council board member, Brothers on a Road Less Traveled
- Family physician
- Married, father of four
- Began his own inner work in 2003



BROTHERS ROAD

BROTHERS ON A ROAD LESS TRAVELED

Who We Are

Men supporting each other in aligning our sexual thoughts, feelings, and behaviors with our values, faith, beliefs, and life goals.



Update from last week, session 1, March 27, 2021:

Explore Another Path to Peace

1. Our “road less traveled” — and what that means
2. This work is not about “turning straight”
3. Frequent commonalities in our stories
4. “... *courage to change the things we can...*”
5. Getting started on this road less traveled
 - Decide for yourself
 - Accept and love yourself as you are.
 - Get support, build friendships
 - Get sexually sober
 - Start your “M.A.N.S.” work



Accepting and liking yourself are core needs



Accepting and liking yourself are core needs

If you gain nothing else here,
we want you to know two truths ...

1.

You are good
and valuable
just as
you are.

2.

You have brothers
who see your
“shadows” and
accept you just
as you are.

Accepting and liking yourself are core needs

Common beliefs of SSA men:

- I hate my SSA
- God hates me
- I'm not masculine enough
- If anyone knew, they would reject me.
- Are my mannerisms or voice effeminate?
- "Real men" _____ and I don't.
- I'm not a real man
- I don't belong among the men
- I hate my body. I hate my looks.
- I will always be alone
- I'm a bad Christian / Jew / Muslim



Accepting and liking yourself are core needs

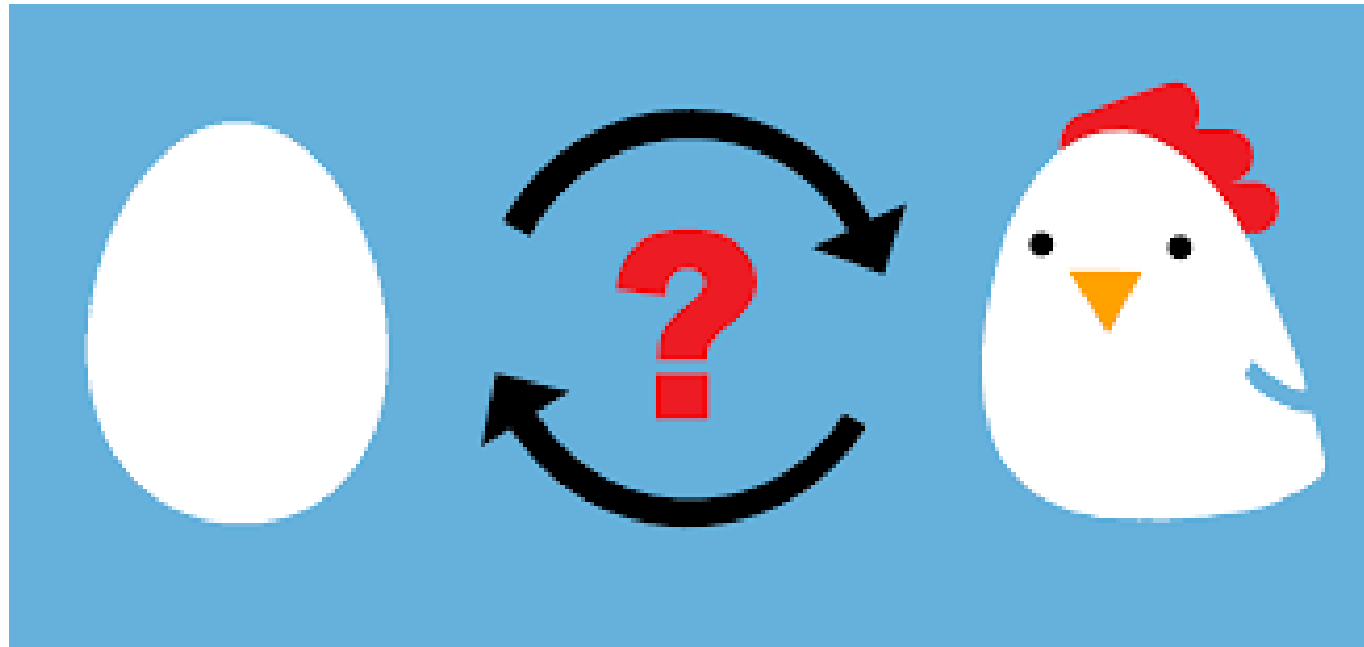
Common beliefs of SSA men:

- I need to *change my sexuality* first before I can accept myself and before others can accept me — including God!
- Until then, I am worthless.



Accepting and liking yourself are core needs

Does SSA cause shame and self hate?



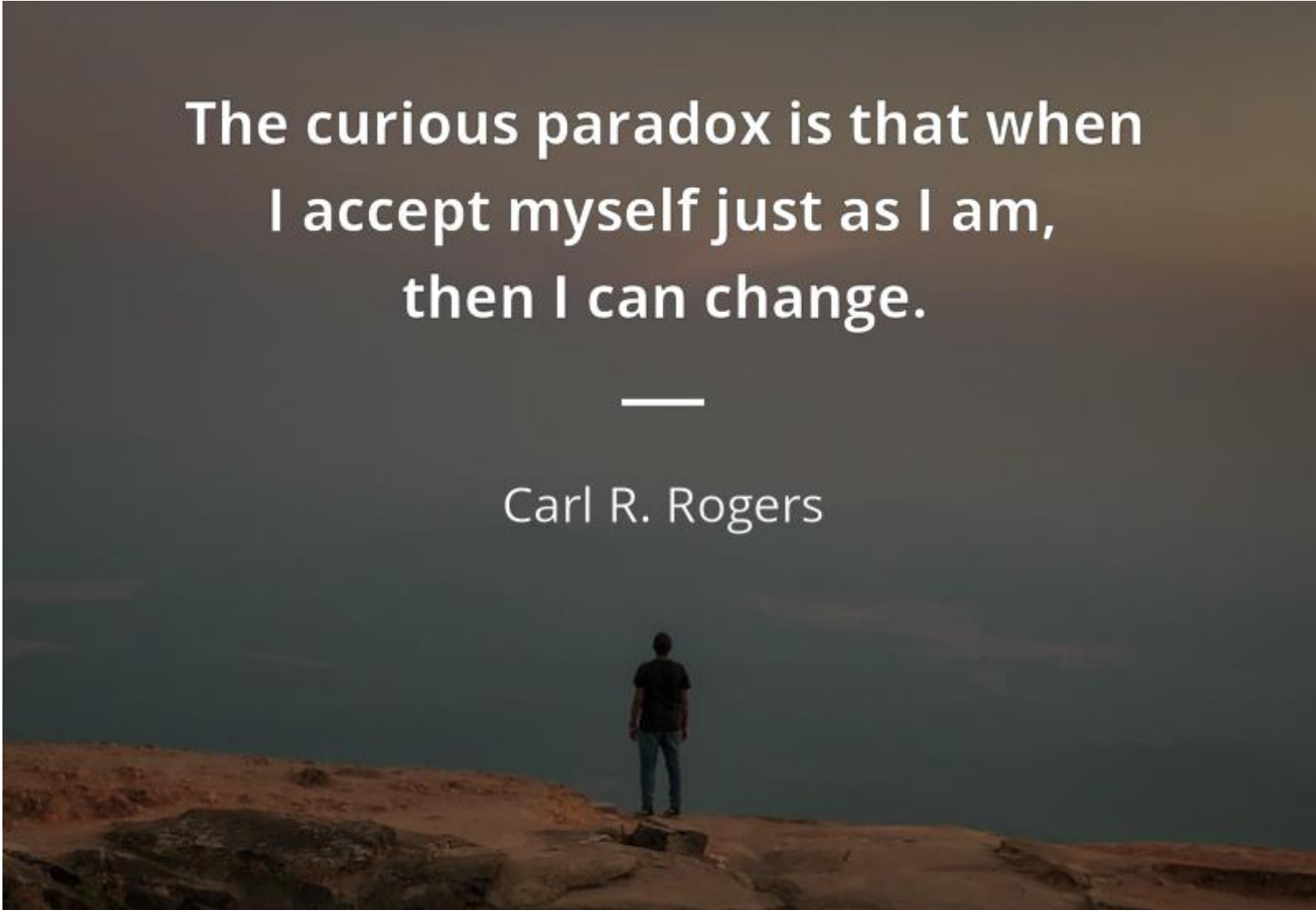
Or do shame and safe-hate cause (or at least contribute to) SSA?

Accepting and liking yourself are core needs

The curious paradox is that when
I accept myself just as I am,
then I can change.

—

Carl R. Rogers



Accepting and liking yourself are core needs

There is no peace without
learning to like and accept yourself
just as you are right now.



How can you help someone steeped in shame or self-rejection?

- Show unconditional love (as long as it's real)
- Gently challenge his negative stories (ask permission first)
- Give him (honest) affirmations about how you see him
- Help him feel God's love for him
- Listen more, talk less
- Hug him. Regularly. (Ask permission first.)



How can you help someone steeped in shame or self-rejection?

Curiosity

Compassion

Genuine friendship

Time



Common mistakes

when helping someone steeped in shame or self-rejection

- Showing disgust
- Withdrawing from contact
- Never bringing it up again
- Bringing it up all the time, or without asking first
- Giving him unsolicited advice (especially about things you haven't experienced yourself)
- Minimizing what he's going through
- Not respecting what he wants to do with his life



Make peace with your SSA

Make peace with my same sex attraction?!

What?!!

Make peace with your SSA

Making peace with your SSA
isn't the same as "out and proud" or living a gay life.

Remember the third path?

A photograph showing the lower legs and feet of a person wearing blue denim jeans and black loafers. They are standing on a dark asphalt surface. Three large, white, hand-drawn arrows point in different directions from the person's feet: one points towards the top right, one towards the top left, and one towards the bottom left. The person's feet are positioned near the top right arrow.

Deny, suppress, and hide
(often a path of shame and self-hate)

**Adopt a gay identity and
pursue same-sex
partnerships or hook-ups**

(may be a path of
deep regret and
even worse turmoil).

Brothers Road offers a third path:

neither suppressing and shaming
nor indulging and celebrating
our same-sex attractions

...but instead, exploring and fulfilling
our needs for same-sex affection,
community and brotherhood
in platonic and affirming ways
that align with our faith
and values.



Make peace with your SSA

*God, grant me the serenity,
to **accept** the things I cannot change...*

Things I cannot change and need to accept	
What happened to me in the past	
My past responses to what happened to me	
How others see me or respond to me	
My past choices	
The way I'm "wired"—sexually, romantically, emotionally	
Most aspects of my physical body and appearance	
God's laws / the laws of nature	

Make peace with your SSA

*...and courage to **change** the things I can*

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Make peace with your SSA

*...and courage to **change** the things I can*

Things I cannot change and need to accept	Things I can change (or at least strongly influence)
What happened to me in the past	How I think about myself and treat myself
My past responses to what happened to me	My beliefs, judgments, values and goals
How others see me or respond to me	Whether and how I act on my attractions
My past choices	The choices I make today
The way I'm "wired"—sexually, romantically, emotionally	My thought life
Most aspects of my physical body and appearance	Who I associate with
God's laws / the laws of nature	My spiritual life

“...courage to change the things we can...”

Some men see how their same-sex attraction can be a blessing

**We can embrace its “gold”
(all that is positive about it)**

**While turning from its “shadow”
(all that is negative or harmful)**

**Sexual attractions and feelings themselves are neither good nor bad,
but what we do with them might be.**

“Gifts” related to SSA?

SSA is not our enemy.

It is not our “battle” to fight
or our “cross to bear.”



“Gifts” related to SSA?

SSA can be our teacher.

It has a lot to reveal to us about ourselves
and any unmet needs, unhealed wounds,
or other unfinished inner “work.”



“Gifts” related to SSA?

SSA men may have an innate drive for:

- Meaningful friendships
- Brotherly love
- Connection, belonging and community
- Appreciation for healthy masculinity



“Gifts” related to SSA?

SSA men may naturally
be more:

- Creative and artistic
- Emotional and sensitive
- Empathic and relational
- Driven
- Spiritual



Tim's Story





Preston's Story



This work is about...

Radical
self-acceptance

Courageous willingness
to change and grow



Radical self-acceptance



Thoughts and Beliefs

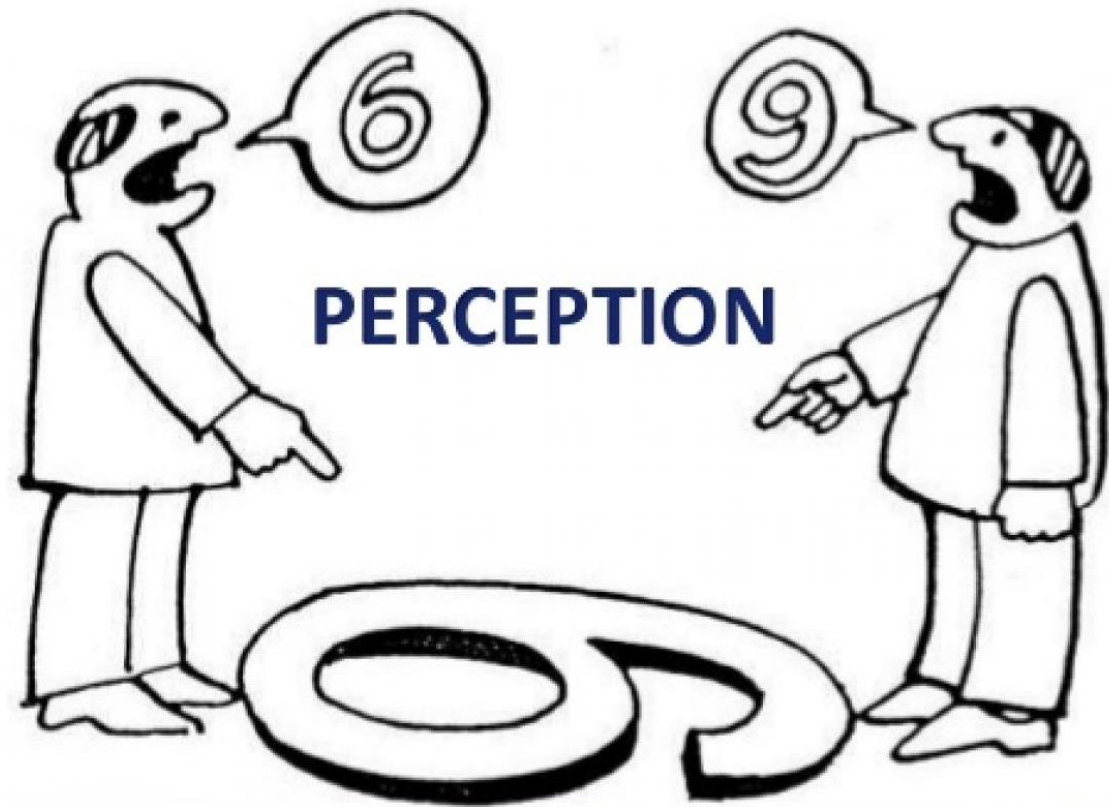
Feelings

Behaviors and Values

Relationships

Challenge your distressing *THOUGHTS*

*The way you perceive
yourself and others
creates the “reality”
in which you live your life.*



Challenge your distressing *THOUGHTS*

*Change your beliefs
and you change your world!*



Challenge your distressing *THOUGHTS*

What is it like to live in your head?

All or nothing thinking



Sometimes called 'black and white thinking'

If I'm not perfect I have failed

Either I do it right or not at all

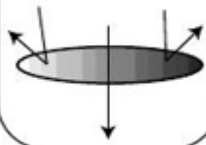
Over-generalising

Seeing a pattern based upon a single event, or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw

"everything is always rubbish"

"nothing good ever happens"

Mental filter



Only paying attention to certain types of evidence.

Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes

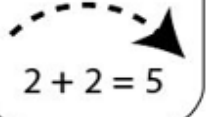
Disqualifying the positive



Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another

That doesn't count


Jumping to conclusions



There are two key types of jumping to conclusions:


- **Mind reading** (imagining we know what others are thinking)
- **Fortune telling** (predicting the future)

Magnification (catastrophising) & minimisation



Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophising), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important

Emotional reasoning



Assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true.

I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot


should

Using critical words like 'should', 'must', or 'ought' can make us feel guilty, or like we have already failed

must

If we apply 'shoulds' to other people the result is often frustration

Labelling



Assigning labels to ourselves or other people

I'm a loser

I'm completely useless

They're such an idiot

Personalisation

Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault. Conversely, blaming other people for something that was your fault.

"this is my fault"

Distorted Thinking
From Dr. David Burns,
"Twelve Days to Self-Esteem"

Challenge your distressing *THOUGHTS*



Challenge your distressing *THOUGHTS*

Beliefs Inquiry: Challenging Distressing Thoughts*

Is it really true?

- Can you absolutely know that it's true?
- In other words, do you know for sure that it is "data" and not "story," judgment, beliefs or interpretation?



<https://brothersroad.org/tools-resources/>

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How do you react when you believe that thought?

- What do you do?
- How do you feel?
- Who do you become?
- How does that belief affect you?



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- Were you born with it?
- Did you adopt it from someone who was critical of you?



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Turn the thought around

- Are there ways in which the opposite belief is just as true or even truer?
- "Turnaround": For example, "He doesn't like me" might become "*I* don't like *him*" or "He doesn't like *himself*" or even "*I* don't like *me*." Are any of those turnarounds just as true or even more true than the original belief?



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What would you prefer to believe if you could simply choose?

- Visualize yourself as someone who truly believes your preferred belief. What would it feel like to be you then?



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*From "The Work" of Byron Katie

Who would you be without your old, distressing story?

Challenge your distressing *THOUGHTS*

What if your inner critic has **good intentions**?

What if you could change your inner critic to an **inner coach**?



Challenge your distressing *THOUGHTS*

Inner critic:

- You're a failure!

Inner coach:

- Here's what you're doing right
- Here's what you could do better.
- Let's figure out how.
- I know you can do this!



Radical self-acceptance



Thoughts and Beliefs

Feelings

Behaviors and Values

Relationships

Heal old wounds and painful *FEELINGS*

Low self-esteem or a sense of inadequacy may be driven by a history *(real or perceived, it doesn't matter)* of

- Rejection
- Betrayal
- Harsh criticism, especially repetitive criticism
- Violence or abuse
- Trauma or other adverse childhood experiences



Heal old wounds and painful *FEELINGS*

Experiences like these can result in

- Self-blame (*“I must have caused it”*)
- Feeling worthless
- Feeling unwanted or unworthy
- Shame
- Performance-based identity (*“My value is only in what I do, not who I am.”*)
- Perfectionism (*“I’m only worth anything if I never make a mistake”*)
- And worse



We can't change the past, but we can change

- How we interpret what happened
- The meaning we give it
- How we relate to it today

We can choose to see how
it made us better, stronger



Heal old wounds and painful *FEELINGS*

We can heal pain from past experiences

Through “parts work,” we recognize parts of ourselves that are wounded and parts that are healthier.

We imagine sending the healthiest part of our mature, adult self back in time to a wounded “inner child” to...

- Affirm him
- Stand up for him
- Protect him
- Love him unconditionally



Heal old wounds and painful *FEELINGS*

Or bring a loving God or Father into the painful scene from the past

- To heal your wounded “inner child”
- Affirm him
- Protect him
- Love him unconditionally.



Heal old wounds and painful *FEELINGS*

Some resources

- Therapy, especially trauma therapy
- Loving pastoral relationships
- Journaling
- Safe circles to share and be heard
- Programs like Journey Into Manhood



How can you help someone holding pain from the past?

- Listen without judgment
- Don't minimize
- Don't give advice
- Give him (honest) feedback on any ways you see that his pain or his history have made him a good man today
- Help him feel God's love for him
- Pray for him and with him, if he is open.
- Don't push him to forgive others before he has really felt and honored his own pain first.
- Keep listening.



Radical self-acceptance



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Bring your **BEHAVIORS** in line with your values

It's hard to really like yourself
when you're not living
in line with
your authentic core values.



Bring your BEHAVIORS in line with your values



lifevaluesinventory.org

PERSONAL VALUES Card Sort W.R. Miller, J. C'de Baca, D.B. Matthews, P.L. Wilbourne University of New Mexico, 2001	IMPORTANT TO ME
VERY IMPORTANT TO ME	NOT IMPORTANT TO ME
ACCEPTANCE to be accepted as I am 1 9/01	ACCURACY to be accurate in my opinions and beliefs 2 9/01
ACHIEVEMENT to have important accomplishments 3 9/01	ADVENTURE to have new and exciting experiences 4 9/01
ATTRACTIVENESS to be physically attractive 5 9/01	AUTHORITY to be in charge of and responsible for others 6 9/01

Google "life values card sort"

Bring your BEHAVIORS in line with your values

The secular world:

Change your values to align with your preferred behaviors.



Life on a more spiritual plane:

Change your behaviors
to align with your core values

Radical self-acceptance




Thoughts and Beliefs

Feelings

Behaviors and Values

Relationships

Your relationships affect your identity and self-worth

A black and white photograph showing the silhouettes of several people standing in a line against a light-colored wall. The shadows are cast onto the wall, creating a sense of depth and presence. The overall mood is somber and reflective, consistent with the text about toxic relationships.

**Walk away from toxic relationships
that bring you down**

Your relationships affect your identity and self-worth

Pursue and build relationships with people who believe in you and lift you up.



Ultimately, we all go where we feel most loved.





Tim's Story





Pret's Story





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Who We Are

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