

# Beyond Understanding

**Special Version**

Conventions, festivals & Events suggestions guide

A suggestions guide for hidden differences at partner dancing environments

related to

Salsa, Bachata, Kizomba, Cuban Salsa, La Rueda and many more

Understanding & information for attendees with hidden differences

Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Social Anxiety

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KMC



With extracts from

Plus Value Awareness



Written by Keith Mckenzie



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This document is written by Keith Mckenzie creator of neurodiversity awareness projects, a qualified graphic designer and a participant of salsa dancing & community projects

# Introduction

This document is a supplement to the Main guide for partner related environments

This document is designed to enable the crew members general volunteers of a particular conventions, events or festivals to have a better understanding & insight related to visitors living with hidden differences.

It provides essential information they need to know regarding the human aspects of understanding also potential scenarios along with tips and guides to enable an inclusive volunteering environment

## **How to use this guide**

This guide provides suggestions, ideas and possibilities. To make it easier you can use a support structure to make sure any solutions are far-reaching and benefit your team.

## **Please note**

Even though the information and suggestions are related to dancers for Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Social Anxiety some of the information can also apply to independent people with other neurological difficulties, invisible disabilities and people who experience anxiety. However, it would be advised to approach the information with caution to prevent any negative situations or any circumstances which could be compromising to anyone well-being and stability

# About Hidden Differences

The term hidden differences are a collective description of independent & articulate people who lives with neurologically related difficulties and specific phobia which you cannot see. It is linked with a family of conditions at a moderate level, including Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Social anxiety & others. The types of difficulties can affect the mind (including memory), communication, physical appearance, practical tasks, physical appearance, reading, writing & calculation. The difficulties can vary from person to person along with their self-awareness, adjustments, empathy and considerations.

**Please note: Because of many feedback & to prevent further stigma this document and the projects and information online are summarised as "Hidden differences" or "Differences".**

## **Their lives and their impact**

Despite many individuals have many there do have many strengths they also have a limitation of specific along with coping mechanisms. This can affect their ability to function and in some cases affect their presence in society by facing stigma, and shame. Individuals who have restrictions on physical appearance, socialising & memory can get easily singled out with harassment, bullying & hate. In some cases, they have to suffer without sharing or reporting due to negative attitudes. When this occurs, it can affect their mindset in dancing environments. This can affect their presence in classes when attending classes & events or how long they stay.

**Find out more online by visiting  
<https://plusvalue.dudaone.com>**

**Select the feature "About Hidden Differences" page from the home page**

# Environments

This guide will explore suggestions & possibilities with the following environments

## **Outdoor-related Festivals**

**Located at outdoor public squares and open locations such as an outdoor field.**

## **Salsa Conventions**

**Mainly located indoors or part of a larger venue**

# Environments: Festivals

## **During festivals & conventions**

The social environment can be highly competitive. If a person with differences struggles to have a circle of friends they can be at risk of high anxiety if they are not in regular company with others. This does affect their dancing motivation and presence. If the event is continuous through day & night then several challenges may occur especially if they are surrounded by the wrong type of person or an Environment: outdoor and specific festivals. The outdoor festivals involve social dancing, live music & live dancing performances. It can be a great day out especially if the weather is great outdoors. The event has a mixture of attendees of regular & experienced dancers with the general public. Although there may be no major problems would occur some challenges can happen especially from the general public.

## **The negative risks**

For example, if a person with hidden Differences can face intimidation and physical abuse in a busier atmosphere with some causing unrealistic demands to move when they have no space. In one situation occurs a particular parent with a child's pushchair became aggressive when pressured to move when there are little or no spaces to manoeuvre. The impatient parent can run over a person with differences shoes and then make derogatory & insulting threats and remarks against a person with differences. Another example of someone prejudiced against a person with differences can either mock, ridicule & make verbal insult very persistent to a person with differences. This kind of prejudice can be taken further when can physically be knocked, pushed, blocked in the walking direction and make rude pranks such as make gyrating abuse to imply homophobic judgement & hate, even if the person with differences is not gay or lesbian. A person with differences can face deliberate intimidation with also being physically attacked to risk their personal safety & their life or can have their personal items stolen. All these examples can be extremely upset & can lead to anxiety for a person with differences if would feel threatened to leave earlier. Also, it won't be noticed easily in a packed atmosphere. However, if the person with differences has a strong supportive surrounding & the confrontation offender is being challenged, any conflict can be resolved very quickly. However, if there is no social surrounding it can cause a person with differences so badly that serious emotional despair can happen to force the person with differences to leave abruptly and because of the shame caused may feel irrelevant to visit similar events again.

So a person with differences needs to go to these outdoor events with a supportive circle of friends who not only meet but also stick around with them continuously till the end of the event. However, for their personal safety against prejudice, they should not attend alone.

# Environments: Conventions

It can be a great place to discover new dancing experiences, meet new people and face fantastic entertainment. However, it can be a difficult & an intimidating environment if a person with differences is not inclusive, socially and is made to feel unappreciative throughout their visit.

Because the social environment can be highly competitive if a person with differences struggles to have a circle of friends, they can be at risk of high anxiety if they are not being in regular company with others.

This could affect their dancing motivation and presence. If the event is continuous through day & night then many challenges may occur, especially if they are surrounded by the wrong type of person or a group of people.

## **Conventions during the daytime hours**

A variety of different classes & workshops take place throughout the day. A much bigger amount of attendees I like to be in each class. This can be stressful and intimidating if the particular class if a person with differences is struggling. Because many people have attended would have various levels, there would be a lack of patience with partners of the opposite sex can lead to negative intolerance and hostility against personal differences and can lead to a person withdrawing and facing stress & anxiety. It can lead to a negative perception against a person with differences identity. Because of the importance of parts spacing in classes to make sure them with many people and to prevent being marginalised and alienated later in the evening during the social hours.

A suggestion a specific in a suggestion of extra support of key people if in case anyone is struggling.

## **Conventions during gap periods.**

To make sure a person with differences maintains their presence, energy & enthusiasm, several factors need to happen. Extra dance practice It would very beneficial if an attendee or an experienced dancer arrange to have practice dance moves with a person with differences (if they are trustworthy and not to cause mistrust to see page 14 for details)

## **Extra company & dance extra practice**

The importance of social friends and acquaintances to be in touch with an attendee with hidden differences regularly and arrange to spend quality time.

# Environments: Conventions

## **Conventions during the party hours**

The classes during the evening sessions can also be challenging especially when many attendees for parties are more likely to have a mixture of experiences and various amounts of patience. This can lead to similar problems if a person with differences during class faces constant negative responses when struggling in a similar way to general class at a social night however with bigger numbers of attendees. (Please refer to the beyond an understanding main guide to salsa for details.) So unless anyone can offer extra support during these classes they might avoid evening classes completely.

## **Live shows**

For some people with differences, watching live shows alone can cause a negative effect during the party hours. It could cause them to feel intimidated and can make them feel irrelevant and inadequate very quickly. So unless they have someone with them who is appreciative of them, then the person with differences might avoid watching the show to prevent any stress & anxiety afterwards. Some people will try to watch a particular performance, and show support to someone they know who is performing. Having someone to watch the entire live show will reduce any negative effects mentioned.

## **New Year's Eve celebration**

This same effect applied to the midnight celebration during New Year's Eve as it can cause a negative feeling especially when they did not receive celebration attention, especially when others around them are hugging & kissing it can make them feel inadequate. So it would be if you know a person with differences attend during New Year's Eve it would be helpful for specific people who appreciate an attendee with differences is around them around at the midnight celebrations chime. This prevents the risk of feeling separated, causing negative thoughts or feeling they are not fully alone. However if the main room is extremely packed it may be too much and may need to relocate elsewhere to prevent anxiety risk.

## **Main party hours**

During the main party time hours, how long a person with differences stays (especially with autism & social anxiety) will depend on how inclusive, engaging & appreciated they are throughout the night. So if they are inclusive & appreciative they are highly likely to stay around for longer. Appreciation exchange It was important for the team members, experienced dancers and attendees who are appreciative to introduce a person with differences to a person who is with. Especially those who struggle to socialise & to gain new friends and acquaintances.

Having someone to hang out with is a helpful way to stay motivated to dance. As mentioned already some people with differences struggle socially so if they are alone, they can feel drained after a period of time. Also, they can be easily taken advantage of. For example, if a male with differences just met a woman they know during a social party, a different man nearby would take advantage and lure them away by inviting the particular woman to dance with them.

# Environments: Conventions

## **Marginalisation & Alienation**

Individuals with differences especially those in the autistic spectrum might not be able to manage to socialise at a level on what's expected this can mean they can easily be disrespected, disliked and ignored. If that's this occurs then it cannot affect their motivation to dance which can cause stress and anxiety especially if they are continuously on their own and not able to engage. Men in particular with differences are under greater pressure to make an effort to approach others and make friends especially when the traditions of women attendees are being approached by other men. However, this can lead to being shunned, rejected and disliked. When attempted to be sociable and display humour and lead to a hostile response against them. Because they are a risk of bullying & discrimination with facing marginalising manipulation which harms their presence.

## **Be aware of potential risks**

Just like at festivals some people with differences can be at risk to face several prejudiced behaviours including bullying discrimination and hatred. If ignored, not only could affect their personal safety and it could force them to withdraw their presence or be made to not attend at all, including any party on the same day. When attendees are drunk can behave unsavoury, and certain people might cause unpleasant behaviour. This includes singling out a person with differences, including ridiculing, bullying or causing further physical disruption without other people noticing the exploitation in a packed atmosphere.

Just like at festivals it is essential that a person with differences isn't continuously on their own for out the event and be supported when things become challenging.

## **Marginalising exploitation**

It is important to be aware and what can happen if a person with differences does not have a social circle and is seen on their own. Over a period of time, it can lead to certain attendees disliking & disapprove of their presence. Prejudiced or intolerant people can take advantage of a person with differences to deliberately make a person with differences in social life very difficult. For example, if a person with differences is socially engaging with a social friend & acquaintance, the prejudiced or intolerant person would approach the social friend/acquaintance suddenly and abruptly cut into their conversation with a person with differences and when walking them away to either socially engaged with each or to dance together. This means a person with differences would force to not be socially engaged. This deliberate strategy is to undermine the person with differences presence to make them feel they should not be around and should stay at home. This should be informed of any of the salsa teams and if necessary confront the offender who's deliberately making things difficult.

## **Social presence Summary**

Some people find all social environments with salsa and associated dance move challenging. Despite many familiar and recognisable faces being present, some people with differences are likely to be alone throughout the event. Also, they are not likely to have a contact to arrange to meet before the event and during the event period. This means they are they can be socially separate, even if they meet some familiar faces.

Because women with hidden differences can blend into social situations better and can receive greater attention, some men with differences can struggle and can be at risk to be alienated, and excluded. This affects their motivation throughout the event throughout.

# Other points to consider

## **Safeguarding allowances**

Any adjustments towards a person with differences must be based on trust as well as their self-awareness, consideration intentions, responsibility intentions, adjustments and compassion for others.

If someone is unaware that they are behaving inappropriately then they need to be initially informed in a respected way to prevent bad feelings and still make them feel welcome and appreciated. But if any problems persist, then you can follow any procedure that's appropriate to you.

However, if anyone is exploiting your trust & your team by taking advantage or compromising the safety of your team then you need to follow any procedures to safeguard your team and creditability towards visitors and the venue.

This can be done by using the support structure to make any actions effective and can prevent any sort of resentment to maintain your team's security & safety.

This might be a reminder, warning and further action to prevent future problems to occur. If a person with differences has a lack of self-awareness then you could refer them to instructions websites such as [how.com](http://how.com) (with a UK version also available) & [wikihow.com](http://wikihow.com).

## **When circumstances & climate is challenging**

If any part of the team members is going through a challenging or compromised circumstances need to inform the person with differences right away. This is important as if they approach the crew members and have reacted more negative not only affect how they feel but not only can take it the wrong way when not only they be dancing much less they highlight likely to leave early. If they offer empathy or undermine it is important not to reject their consideration or to silence them as it causes negative harm to their presence.

# Support & reporting

## The Supporting & reporting summary

### **Support Level 1: Organising teams**

Get to know if & discover if they have Differences. If they have shared their difficulties with their condition then give them their sport & encouragement. Especially if they are self-aware, attempted to be considerate to others & trustworthy. Keep in regular communication on their progress. Several factors to be aware of If the person with differences is on their own the majority of the time and they are not dancing frequently at social dances. Some will need time on their own without anyone approaching them and after a while, they will gradually start to dance. With others, they need to be encouraged by other experienced dancers and other attendees to spend a brief time with them socially and to dance with them. Also for encouraging others to develop friendships with the person with differences. For suggestions, their ideas could be helpful for classes, social dances & events.

### **Support Level 2: Teachers & class helpers**

It is important to discourage other attendees to be critical and instead let them inform you directly. It would be better to spend extra time with the person with differences have struggled after classes to practice the moves it should take no longer than 10-15 mins. If a person has pulled out, approach them after the classes, especially if the other attendee's attitudes & impatience forced them out of the classes and report this to the organising teams. Also, offer if they need minor assistance for an additional 10 minutes.

### **Support Level 3: Experienced dancers and participants**

If they notice a person with differences has pulled out of a class, check if they are ok and offer assistance away separately which should last more than 5 minutes. If the person is on their own the majority of the time and they are not dancing much encourage other experienced dancers and other attendees spend a brief time with them socially and to dance with them. This is especially if the person has no social circle. If they are stressed and anxious invite them for a quiet chat and ask them about any issues which affect them. Just giving them your listening time can have them relaxed, enabling them to dance more & to stay at the social dance for longer. Please note, that some people will reject any offers of help as explained in the paragraph under support level 1.

### **Support Level 4: Social event DJ's & hosts**

A suggestion for DJs & hosts on the microphone is to encourage attendees to dance with people other than the ones they normally dance with. At last, play the switch game to encourage everyone to dance with different people dance with more variety of people regardless of abilities or background round. The event host can also be a point of initial contact the ask other team members to help or support them in dancing & socially (especially if a person with differences has a little social circle or is anxious) Please note, that some people will reject any offers of help as explained in the paragraph under support level 1.

# Extracts from sense of belonging & momentum circle

Extracts from Sense of purpose & Momentum Circle

A visual element of the education and training feature "Smarter Senses" who shows what can be possible with the positive effects of sense of belonging.

Remember unless a person with differences are socially engaging with many people then they're not likely to be motivated or feel encourage to dance frequently, leading to anxiety & being made to leave early.

Table 1: Momentum Circle

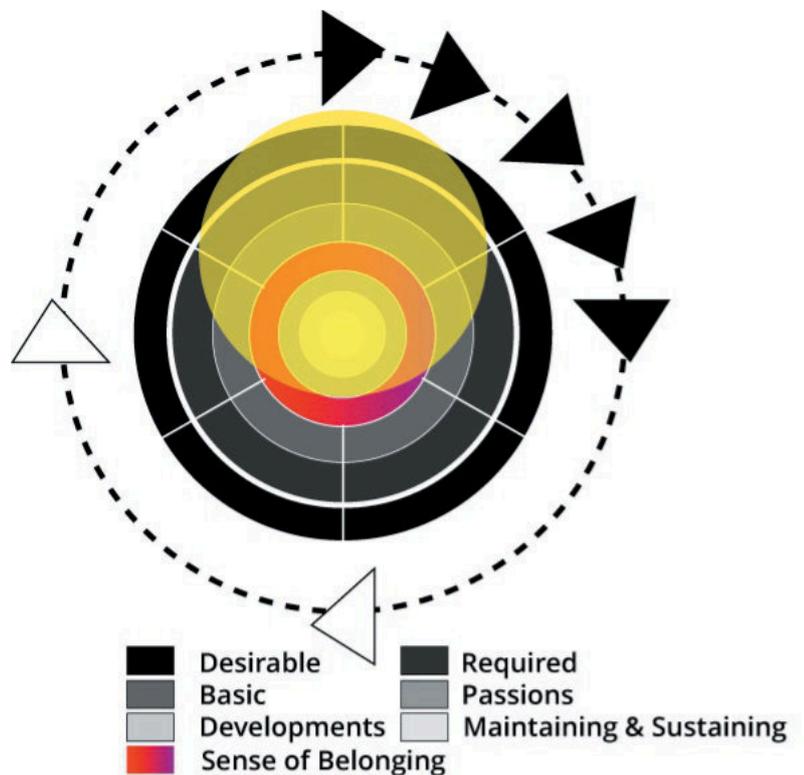
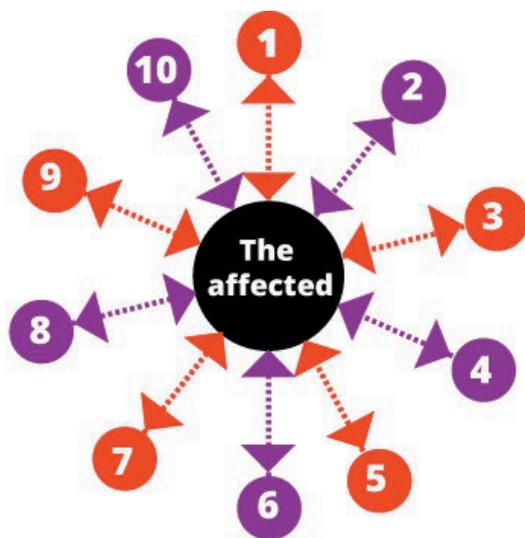


Table 2: Sense of Belonging



- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <b>1</b> Good Company                 | <b>2</b> Admire qualities & identity          |
| <b>3</b> Engaging & show interest     | <b>4</b> Understanding                        |
| <b>5</b> Value & supportive           | <b>6</b> On their minds when not around       |
| <b>7</b> Respected & appreciated      | <b>8</b> Humour & entertaining                |
| <b>9</b> Accepting to make allowances | <b>10</b> Balanced between idealism & realism |

# Additional Information

A man with hidden differences can be an additional disadvantage in classes. Especially when there are more males as leaders in the class and when selected women chose not to follow but to lead. This can be a nightmare for some men with differences as they have too many gaps which disrupt their ability to learn which forces them to withdraw and pull out of the classes.

Some women do not have any sympathy for men when these situations occur. One woman's voice made an unrealistic suggestion that men should be adaptable and learn to be a follower. This is very discriminatory against certain men with hidden differences, especially those who are visual learners and live with short-term memory difficulties.

The other factor affects a person with hidden differences in classes. Because they are visual learner they need more time to grasp things which enables them to be confident. Also on occasions, they need to see moves in greater detail. This can be a missing factor between a person who is struggling and the who can follow classes. Through the classes, patience and encouragement are mandatory. However, never make critical remarks such as "You doing this wrong" or be unsupportive by ignoring their presence. Not only you are damaging their presence you can only damage their confidence but also causes mental health challenges and anxiety.

# Additional Factors

Women with social anxiety and autism can be able to mask their difficulties better than men. An autistic & ADHD woman can adapt or blend into social situations better and have fewer boundaries than men.

So unless an autistic or ADHD man can access the social know-how, it is much harder to mask their differences and be able to navigate social occasions without rejection, exclusion and prejudiced attitudes. Also, an autistic woman can largely manage verbal tasks better than men.

A Dyspraxic woman can manage motor coordination more than men. However, they can face many day-to-day tasks including eyeliner and wearing high heels. There has been conflicting research that there are no variations between dyslexic men and women. However, there is other research that there is some distinctive variation between different sexual orientations.

Because of social pressures on men not to share their feelings, if they ask about something is wrong they can be disbelieved or dismissed as some men share information very short to hide any shame or embarrassment. Women with hidden differences can also be disbelieved as they manage social situations better and mask their difficulties.

Hidden Differences and Multicultural backgrounds Men & women from ethnic backgrounds can be stigmatised much greater stigma of their difficulties is noticed. Due to a stigma, they can be stereotyped very negatively and can be seen as a liability or a burden.

As mentioned elsewhere Autistic & ADHD women blend into a social situation, however, a black autistic or ADHD man can be singled out if their difficulties are noticed. With facing trivialised stigma and shame. As it seems as lowering themselves and it is discouraged to share for understanding as it can be associated with lacking pride and attention-seeking.

When it comes to learning dance steps some people with hidden differences are visual learners. This means more detailed information visually is required in classes. This can affect individuals with Dyslexia, Autism and Dyspraxia. As well as the difficulties many people with hidden differences have specific strengths and attributes.

**Find out more by visiting  
[plusvalue.dudaone.com](http://plusvalue.dudaone.com)**

For understanding details visit the "Understanding Series" Access the feature directly from the home page For details of strengths and attributes visit the "Advantage". Access the project by selecting the "Projects A-Z index" link from the home page

# About Plus Value Awareness

The Plus Value Awareness initiative is a family of awareness projects, campaigns and potential services in the future. The aim is to enable a smarter sense of value for independent young people and adults with invisible related difficulties

This is approached within 5 key areas: dignity, integration with inclusion, participation, well represented and responsibility with adjustment.

This means this initiative highlights the human aspects rather than medical or perceptions. In the future to transform Plus Value Awareness as part of the Social Enterprise concept to provide a family of services for businesses, organisations and public services with a family of products to be available for all. In addition to developing a family of social mission activities which will benefit local communities for free and at a discount level.

**Find out more on Plus Value Awareness online by visiting <https://plusvalue.dudaone.com>**

## About the author

This document was written by Keith Mckenzie project director of Plus Value Awareness.

Over the past two decades, Keith has developed a variety of awareness projects, campaigns and activities. His projects have been involved with many awareness and support organisations across the UK and have participated in several presentation talks at different events around two decades.

Outside awareness, Keith has been involved in the behind-the-scenes of a unique music project, which includes filming and other behind-the-scenes assistance with developing video documentaries and music events that involve music artists DJs and producers.

Also, Keith is a participant in salsa dancing classes in the community as an assistant along with volunteering and a participant in a salsa dancing conventions Motion city & Latinmotion's NYE Fest based at Birmingham's NEC.

Keith has a background in art & design and has been involved in and many projects related to Graphic design, selected photography and visual art.

In 2022, Keith become a featured community participant and was part of video campaign for Birmingham City Council to showcase the city legacy since hosted the Commonwealth Games

In 2023, Keith participated in an awareness campaign by visiting for supporting the annual events Autism Dance Day (by Anna Kennedy OBE) and International Dance Day (by The Dance Committee of ITI ). To coincide supporting both events an awareness information project was launched to encourage inclusivity at dancing related environments for dancers with Neurodiversity, Invisible Disabilities and those who have experienced anxiety

**Find out more on developments and achievement by visiting his website [Keithmckenzie.weebly.com](http://Keithmckenzie.weebly.com)**

# Other guides available

This document is a detailed guide and there are also a family of other guides available.

- \* Quick Guide pullout
- \* Guide for volunteering
- \* Guide for conventions & events

Other materials are available

To enable greater understanding a family of additional options can be available

\* "Smarter Senses" PowerPoint presentation & training document.  
For key members of a salsa organisation or a festival/convention

\* A Special family of documents linked to the projects and campaigns  
featured on the Plus Value Awareness website

\* "Sense of Value Education"  
A detailed understanding & information document on the lives of hidden differences

\* "Sustainable" guide  
The comprehensive relationship & interaction guide for families and friends of hidden differences

# Notes

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# Useful Links online

## Dancing Direction

The online feature which including dancing related projects and developments

Available via

[keithmckenzie.weebly.com](http://keithmckenzie.weebly.com)

## Embrace Dancing

The online Special for supporting Autism Dance Day & International Dance Day

Available via

[keithmckenzie.weebly.com](http://keithmckenzie.weebly.com)

<https://plusvalue.dudaone.com>

## Plus Value Awareness



from the awareness website developed by me

### Inclusive to Dance

The information and guidance project which enable inclusivity at dancing environments for dancers with Neurodiversity, Invisible Disabilities and people who have experiences Anxiety

### Awareness home page

Titled "Plus Value Awareness". the website projects a variety of projects and information based the experiences on changing public perceptions for over 20 years.

<https://plusvalue.dudaone.com>

### Advantage

The information project how certain neurological difficulties can be beneficial to work, education, communities and rest of society.

<https://plusvalue.dudaone.com/advantage>

### Zero Toxic

The information project against prejudice, ablism, discrimination, bullying and hatred.

<https://plusvalue.dudaone.com/zerotoxic>

The contents of this document provide a series of observations and insights. So you are advised to be cautious before adopting any information. Therefore, Keith Mckenzie cannot accept responsibility if any errors which may occur.

Designed & published by Keith McKenzie with extracts from "Plus Value Awareness"

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