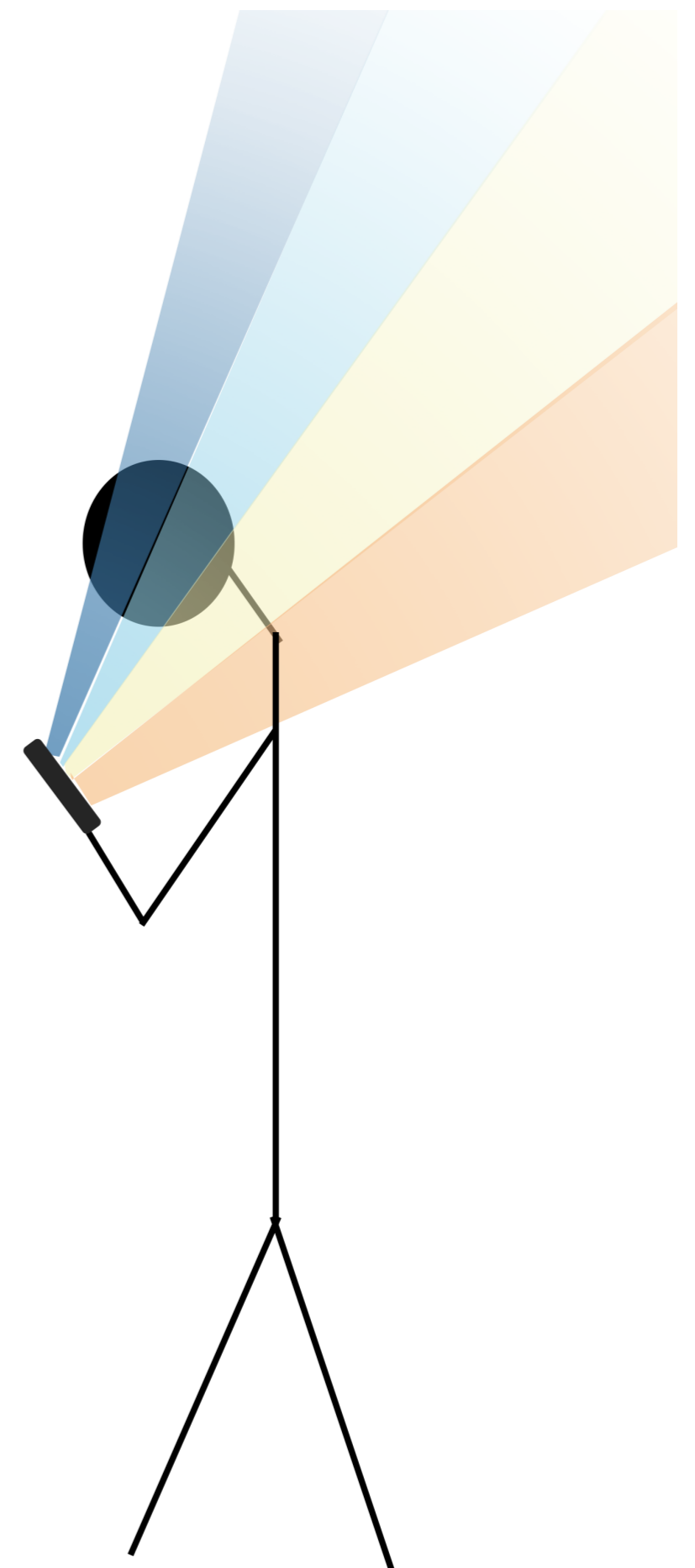
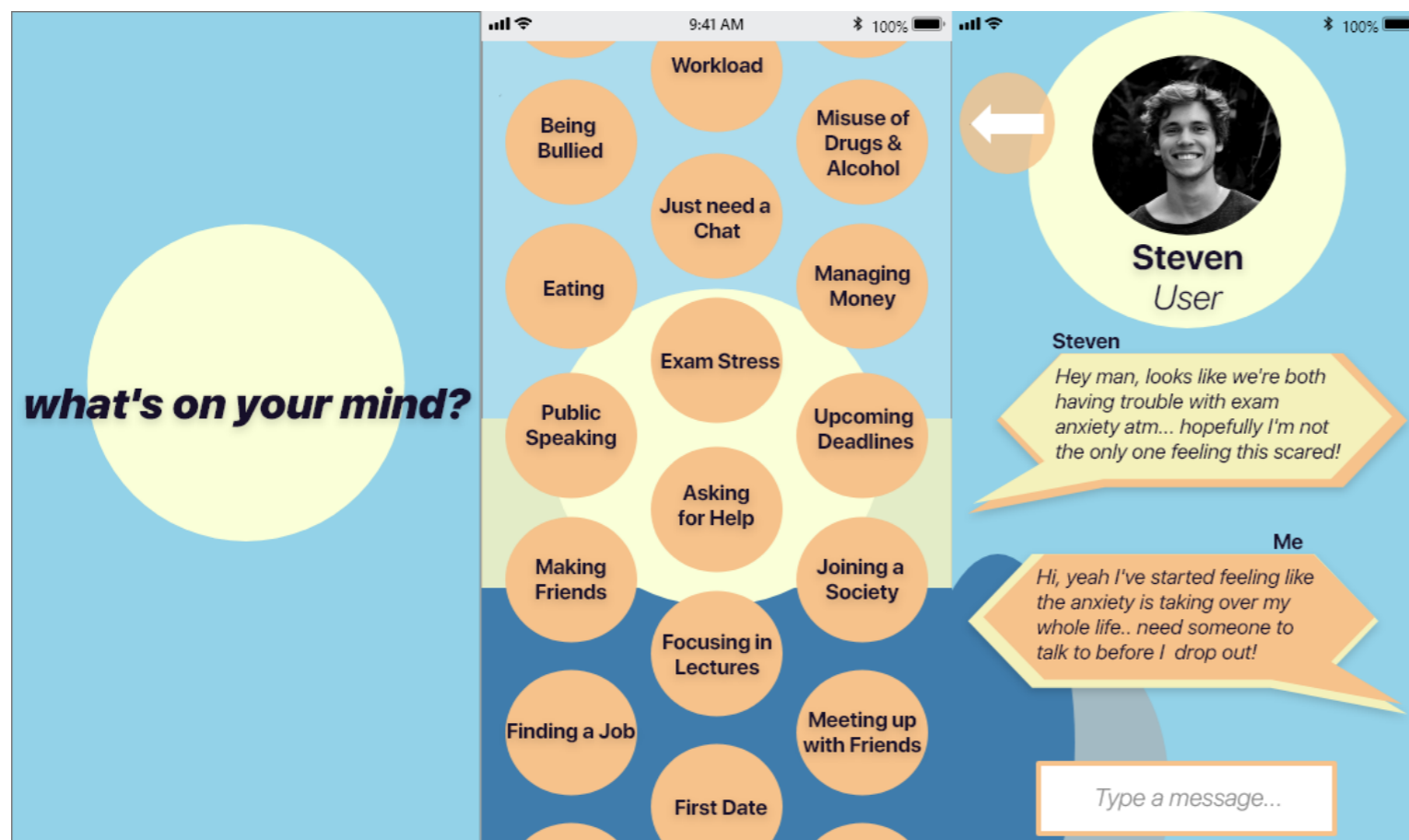


# Hidden Figures

Changing the relationship between Students and Anxiety.



## Problem

Anxiety in University students is a rising epidemic that can seriously damage a person's mental health and performance at University. Many students are diagnosed with anxiety disorders whilst attending University. To cope with this anxiety, many students drop out of University, turn to alcohol/drug abuse, or simply avoid socialising altogether.

## Process

To investigate this issue, I used a range of different sources. As a University Student with an anxiety disorder myself, I have first-hand experience of how anxiety can completely take over someone's life at University. I also sent out surveys to students with and without anxiety disorders and asked what impacts anxiety had on their academic lives. From worrying about deadlines, being unable to focus in class, to dropping out, these impacts were insightful.

## Solution

My proposed solution is a mobile application that is designed entirely from the feedback received from surveys and research. My application will allow University students to learn more about what they may be experiencing, chat with someone feeling the same way to share their experiences, or chat with a doctor.

## Social & Environmental Benefits

My app will improve the overall satisfaction students have with their University experiences. The app will enable them to share their experiences, which will hopefully be a base for forming friendships, as University can be lonely for many students. With the inclusion of a Doctor service, students will also be able to chat in real time with Doctors. This will enable students to voice any concerns to doctors without having the need to leave the house, as this can also be a big cause of anxiety. The goal of this app is to also improve the performance of students at University, as for most students, anxiety can be the biggest distraction during lectures and exams, for example. By enabling students to not only learn more about any anticipatory anxiety they may be experiencing before exams or lectures but by also giving them someone else to talk to, the students will hopefully discover that they aren't alone in this experience and that these kinds of feelings are completely normal. By increasing the performance and satisfaction of students, it's hoped that University pass rates rise and drop out rates decrease.

## Research & Insights

A large portion of this project was researching what I'd need to include in my app. I started off by researching the different kinds of hidden disabilities people can face. These can include mental health conditions such as autism, dyslexia, schizophrenia, bipolar and many more. On the other hand, this can also include physical disabilities such as prosthetic limbs, deafness and blindness. I chose to aim this project at people who are experiencing uncomfortable amounts of anxiety at University, as I have experience with this. Once I had the hidden disability I was going to find a solution for, I researched the different barriers people with anxiety disorders may face. One of these barriers is accessing mental health care, as people who suffer from anxiety may find that they're too anxious to go to the doctors, due to the fear that they believe they'd say or do something wrong. It can also be distressing for people with anxiety disorders to leave the house and engage in social situations. This barrier was something I wanted to help break down with my app. Whilst reading a US study on college students and anxiety disorders, I learned that the many anxieties and responsibilities associated with attending college may exacerbate current psychopathology that first manifested in childhood and perhaps even trigger its first onset. This leads to more people being diagnosed with anxiety disorders at University, which is something I wanted to face with my app.

# Design Thinking

I wanted my app to be fun to use and different from many other mental health apps out there. To achieve this, my initial idea was to incorporate a system that would award points to users who posted how they were feeling at the moment, on a real time board with other people's feelings. This would encourage them to share any worries they may have about the way they're thinking or feeling about things, whilst at University.

With this decided, I started mocking up a design for the app using photoshop. (page 8, fig. a) Users would be able to write how they were feeling into the text input field and see their thoughts in real time in the centre of the screen, along with other people's thoughts. These thoughts would float around the screen like bubbles, until they got caught by one of the nets in the top part of the screen. The nets would swing in real time, to represent a thought being answered. The squares in the top left would represent doctors and the squares in the top right would represent someone feeling the same. Users and possibly doctors would also get points for answering questions, so sharing experiences and also helping others is encouraged with this app. These points would be used as a motivator and 'score' system within the app, to represent how committed people are to sharing/helping.

After some consideration, I discovered that this points system would perhaps cause too much competitiveness within the app, which may have caused people to misuse it by posting random thoughts or answering questions in ways that aren't helpful. I also believed that the 'butterfly net' mechanic could be too complex for an app designed to help people understand things. Because of this, I removed the net.

I then used photoshop to mock-up a different UI style (page 8, fig. b) where I experimented with how I would display the different worries students have at University. I decided to display these worries in a grid system. Primarily, I used circles in this grid system, but then I moved to hexagons. This grid would act as the app's home screen.



# Design Thinking

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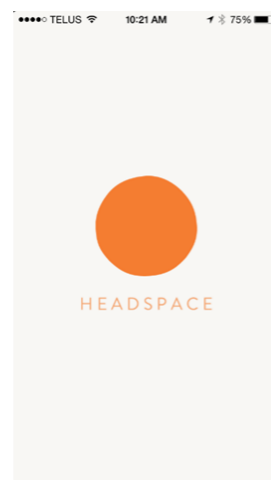
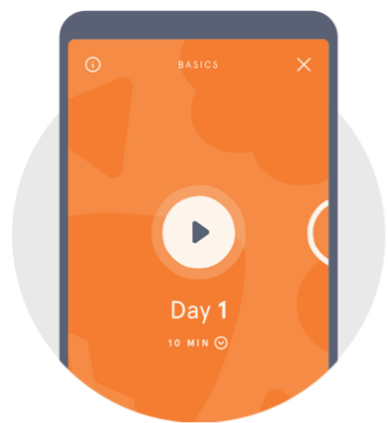
I chose to use these hexagons in a grid formation because this signature 'honeycomb' formation represents strength and I wanted to include some biomimicry. To begin with, I believed using a hexagonal grid to display all of the worries was aesthetically pleasing and professional, due to its symmetry. Whilst conducting research, I also discovered that symmetry in itself can be very calming to most people. I also read that it's important to be symmetrical, as people who suffer from a mental health condition such as OCD can become more anxious if they notice elements are unsymmetrical. After I sent this design to a UI Design sub-reddit (page 9, fig. c) they said that it appeared too pointy and there was too much to look at with all the shapes I used. With the feedback I gained, I went back and redesigned the UI (page 11).

From the home screen, the user would be able to tap on any of the topics and be brought to a screen that would tell them a bit more about the subject. It would rationalise the worry and reassure them that it's completely normal to worry. On this same screen, they'd also have the option to either talk to a doctor or talk to someone feeling the same way. The user would have the choice of either selecting one of these icons or going back to the home screen, to select another worry.

I also experimented with different colours after researching colour theory, to determine the appropriate colours to use that would promote calmness. After sending out a prototype I made using adobe XD to reddit (page 10, fig. c) I received some feedback which said the use of blues was too overwhelming. To improve this, I used less blues in my final prototype but made sure that the colours used were still positive and calming. To achieve this effect, I used oranges and yellows to convey joy and serenity. With all of these colours being use in one composition, the calming effect was effective and attractive.

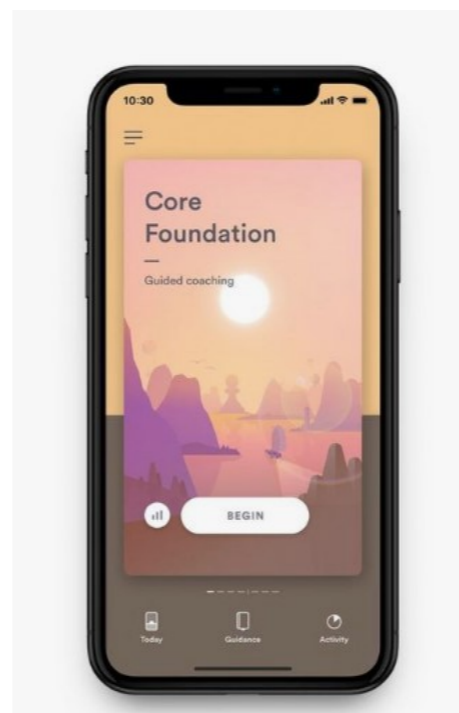
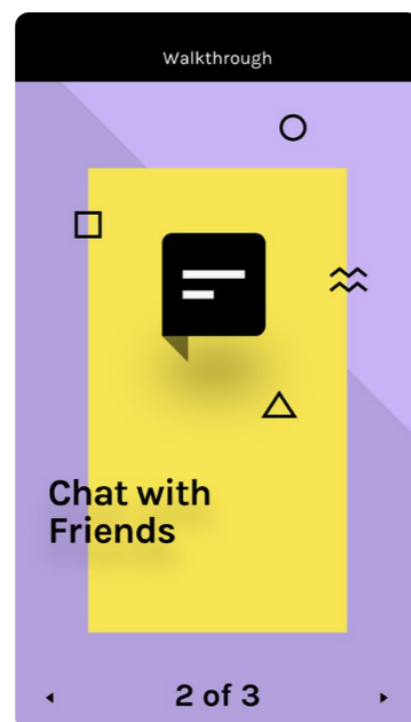
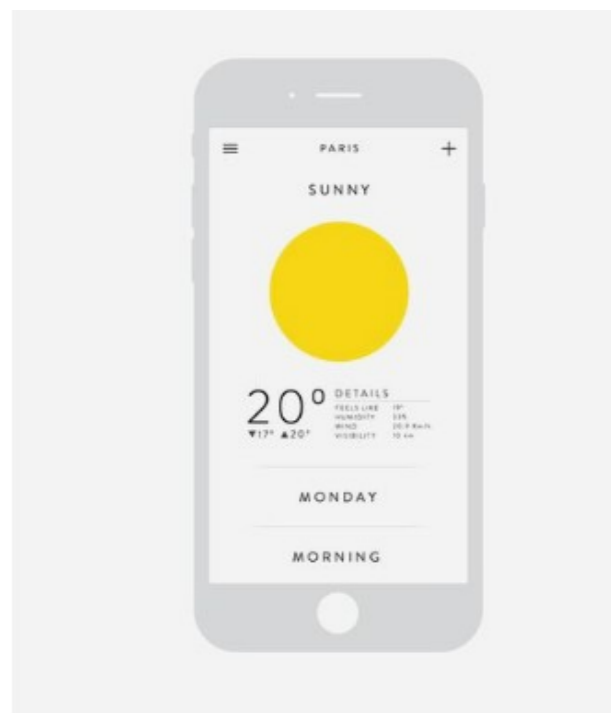
# Design Thinking

It was important to analyse the design techniques used in other apps as well, as this was my first experience designing an app with the intent of it going commercial. The first app I looked at was Headspace. Headspace uses flat design to give the app a professional and artistic feel that appeals to all target audiences. It's designed in a way that makes it different from most other apps out there, as it uses very warm colours such as reds and oranges, which represents joy and happiness.



Whilst I believe Headspace is designed in an aesthetically attractive way, I believe that the layout of the UI could still have been changed in a way so that it still conforms to app design regulations but also differs itself from many other apps out there. I wanted my app to still be usable, but draw in the user's attention more, letting them forget about how they're feeling whilst they use the app.

I also used Pinterest to research some more of the aesthetic principles of app design. By doing this, I was able to find some inspiration on the use of shapes and composition.



I used these styles to influence my design. Within all of these apps, they use flat design to give the app an attractive aesthetic, whilst also keeping the functionality of the UI clear.

# Commercial Awareness

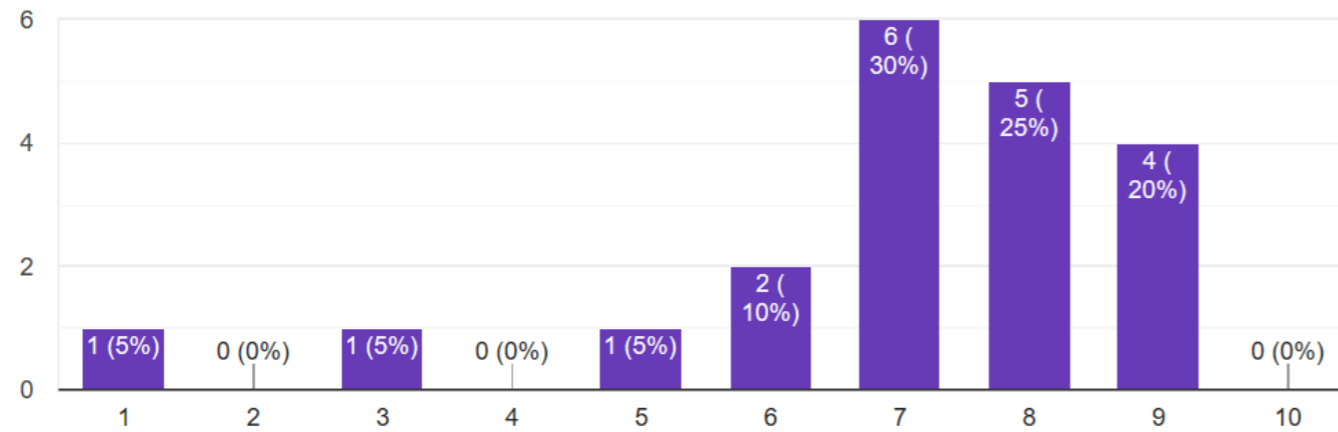
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It was also important that I was aware of the financial side of my app and whether or not it was viable in this sense. I believe that the app would be fairly inexpensive, without the 'speak to a doctor' feature. With this feature however, the doctors would most likely have to be paid for their services. Without the doctor feature, the simplicity of the app's design and functionality ensures that costs wouldn't exceed the affordable mark. The upkeep of the live chat service would need to be paid for more than once, as it would most likely be a running cost, due to server fees. The doctor feature would be included if the app was marketed, however. Compared to other apps out there that offer similar services, my app is unique in the sense that its exclusive to University students. This means that students would assuredly be connected with another student, which means that they'd be able to discuss things that they both are experiencing at University. With this considered, the app could be marketed towards Universities as a digital platform for mental healthcare and potentially start gaining a profit.

# Survey Results - (20 Responses)

## How much does Anxiety effect your day to day life?

20 responses



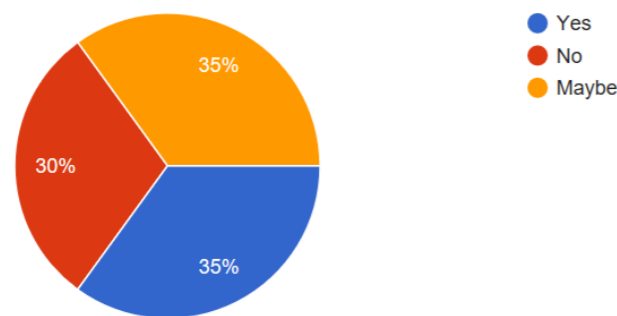
## In which ways does anxiety effect your day to day academic life?

20 responses

- I constantly worry about the future and that something bad is going to happen, which affects me from sometimes eating and doing anything due to this making me feel down.
- Difficult to ask professors and classmates for help.
- Struggle to attend, feel like I can't interact with others/lecturers
- Stops me from focusing
- Academic life requires constant interaction with people.. anxiety messed everything up and tire one's mind easily
- None because I dropped out. However when I was in school it led me to not interact with my peers. No contact outside of the classroom.
- It makes me not enjoy the good moments apart from academics because I always have deadlines and want to perform to the best of my abilities
- I strongly dislike talking to anyone I don't know, and I often worry about what people think about me when passing by between classes/in public
- spend most of the time alone, difficulty doing presentations
- avoid socialization and collaboration with others

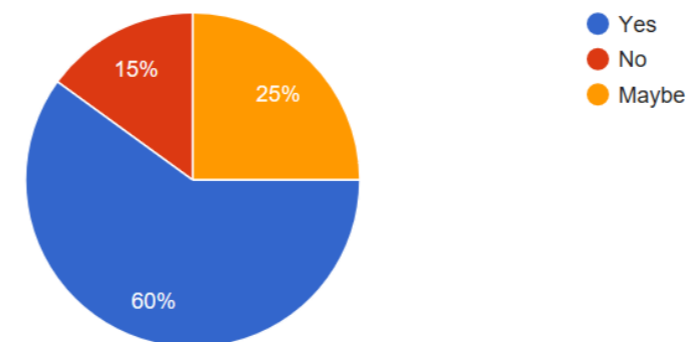
## Do you believe you would feel more comfortable speaking to a doctor using a live chat service?

20 responses

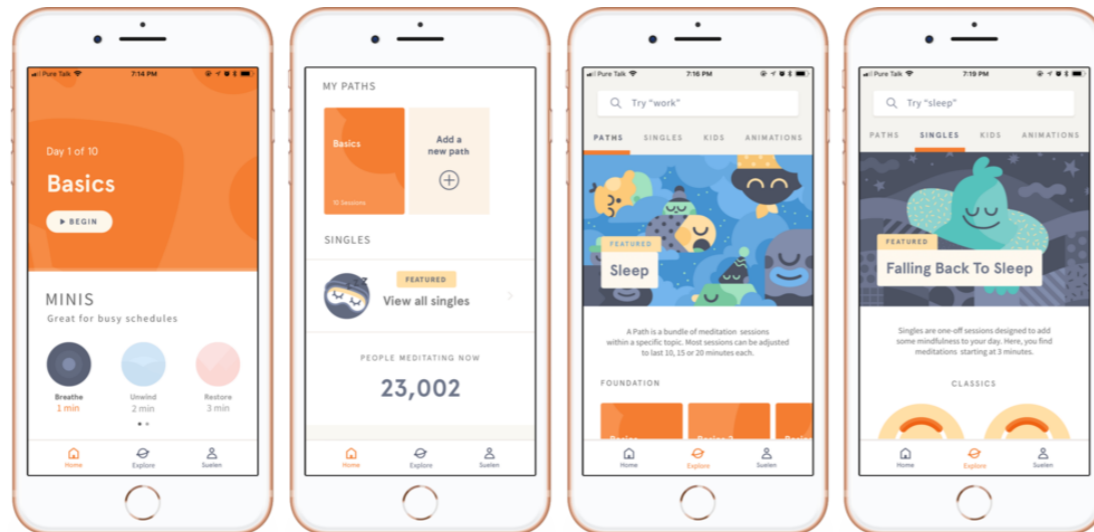
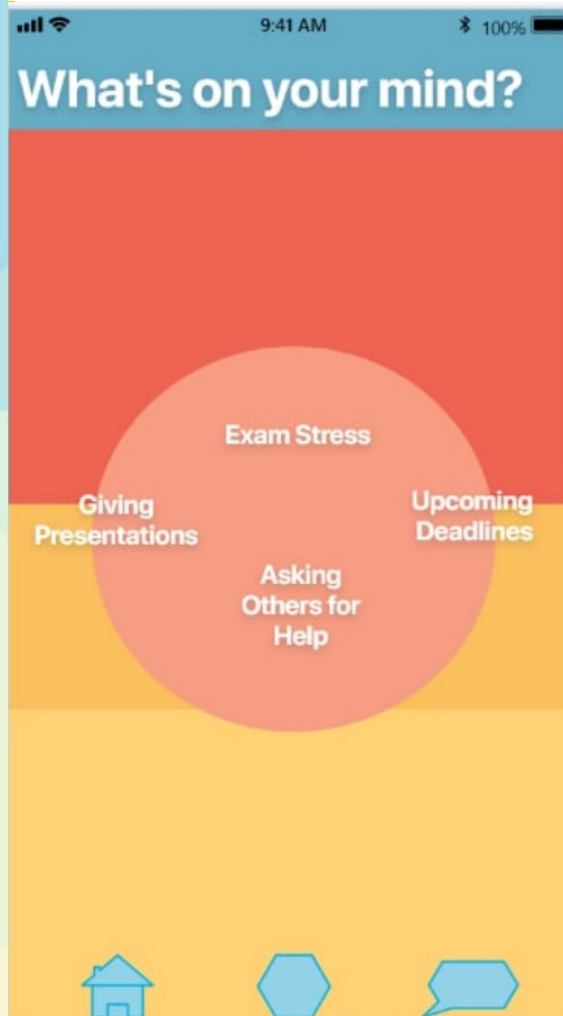
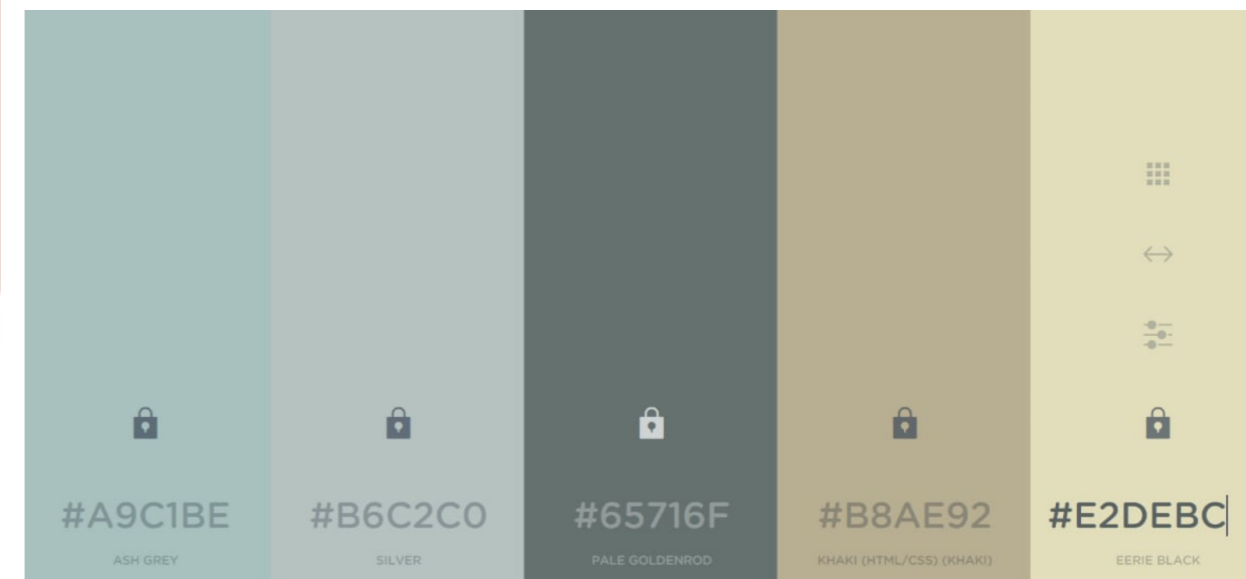
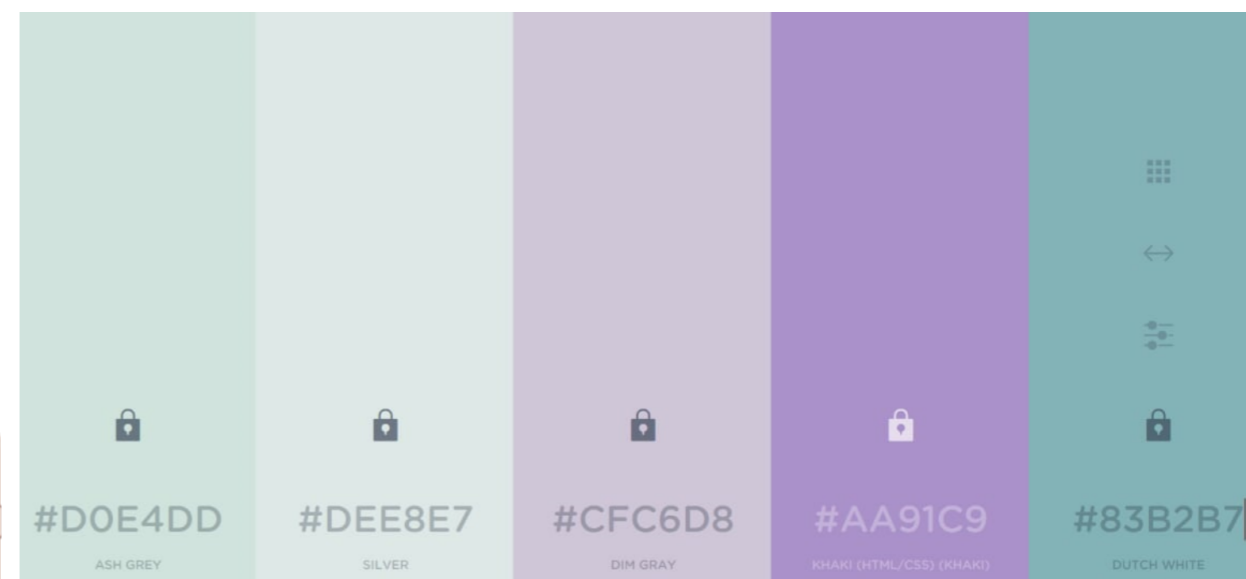
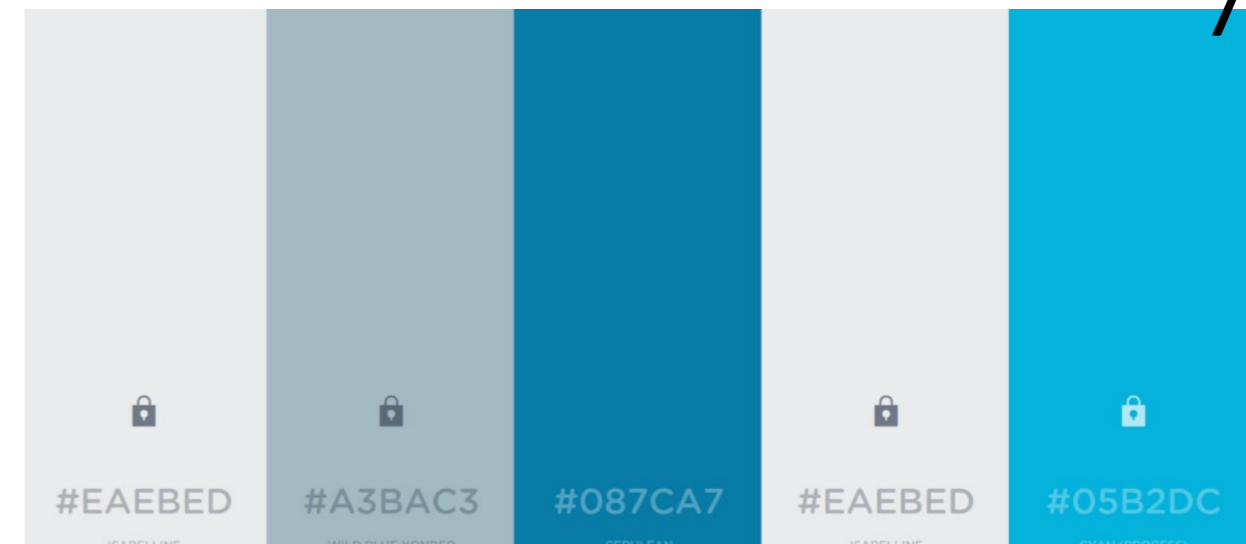
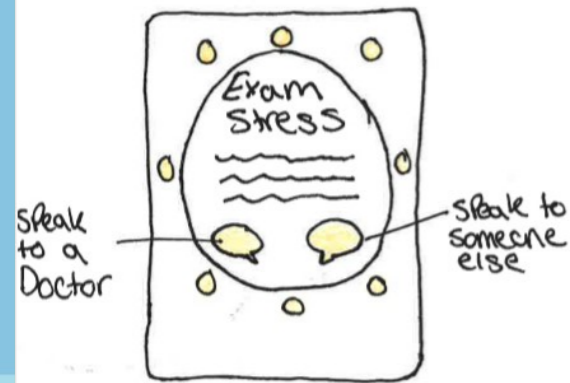
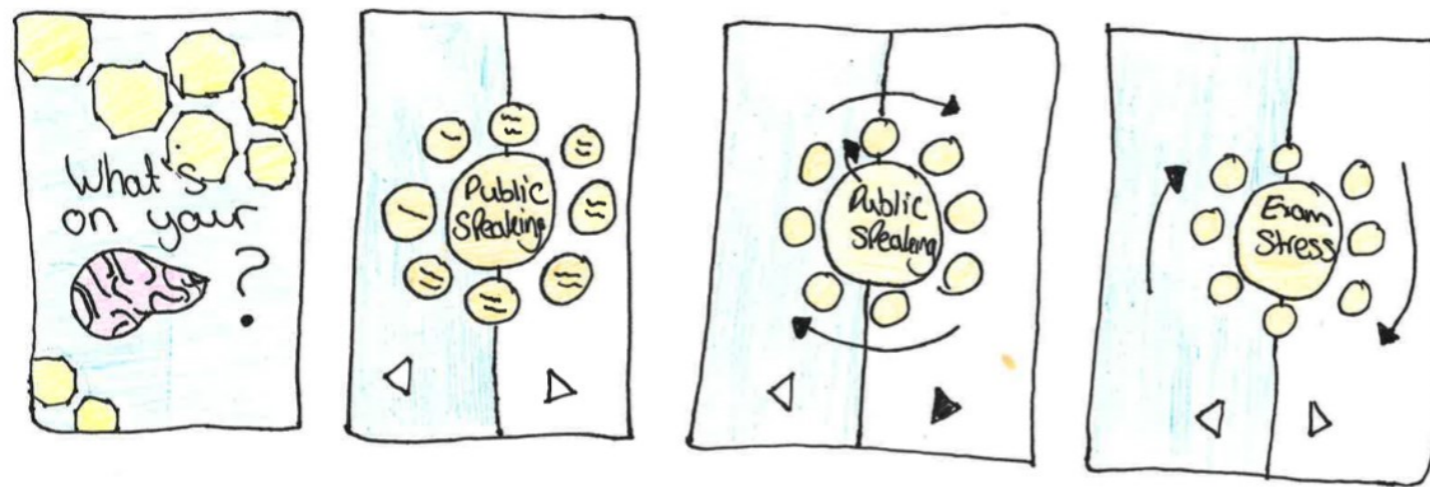


## Would you use a service that would connect you to others feeling the same way as you and encourage you to share your experiences?

20 responses





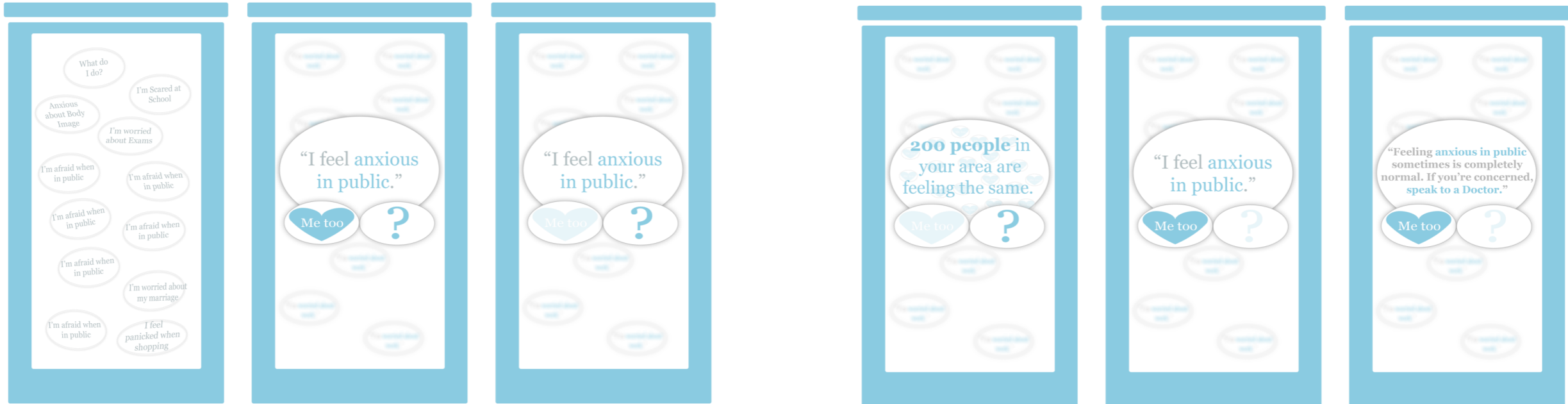




A)



B)



C)

