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Section AC: Mental Wellness
2c: Design Research Check-In

Our Participants

We interviewed a clinical psychologist at Hall Health, called Kate here for anonymity. She provides psychotherapy and crisis intervention primarily to a variety of students. We met in a therapy room in Hall Health. Our survey received 50 responses, all from UW students, with ages ranging from 18-33.

What We've Learned

We learned a lot about the way that people can cope with problems related to wellness. Kate discussed some of the common causes of stress and emphasized that awareness of emotions, feelings, and thoughts was one of the most important ways to cope with / handle mental wellness. We also learned that these relationships can help handle a lot of the wellness problems that people experience - the social support / network that we have can provide different ways to cope. Respondents to our survey were asked how they define "mental wellness." We identified 6 major themes: mental wellness through balance in life/time, peace of mind, the absence of stress and/or anxiety, social relationships, and self care. We also found the following five stressors, in order of how common they are: school, work, the future, relationships, and family.

Tasks, Problems, Opportunities Uncovered

One thing that was reaffirmed during the interview was the need to be sensitive to the problems people are facing, and the need to make sure that we are helping and not hurting through our design. The task of awareness was also very clear throughout the discussion. We discovered that there's potentially a huge opportunity at the intersection of maintaining wellness and technology, online networks, and support communities. Kate also emphasized destigmatization, so it would be nice to explore those opportunities more as well.

Difficulties in Communication

The communication with Kate was fairly casual and comfortable, which allowed us to gain a lot of information. In our survey, respondents were fairly open, but the information given was not elaborate.

Remaining Participants

At this point, we have also interviewed one other counselor at Hall Health. We have begun some diary studies, while others are scheduled to begin tomorrow.

Research Plan Changes

We went in with our own biases, and this definitely influenced the way we asked questions and the questions that we asked. This allowed us to get very detailed in some aspects, but also some other important areas went more unexplored, so we need to explore these areas more. After our first pre-study interview with a participant, we decided to make part of the diary study more structured in terms of what we wanted the participant to record, while making another part of the diary study be left unstructured for the participant to track what is important to them in terms of mental wellness. We applied these changes to the rest of the pre-study interviews.