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2d: Design Research Review

We conducted three forms of research for our project: a 3-day diary study and interview with three participants, two interviews with mental health counselors on campus, and a survey with 50 respondents to learn more about mental wellness habits. Our diary study is where we are getting the bulk of our information from, but the counselor interviews and survey are incredibly important as well. For our three diary study participants, we have so far completed one post interview and will be completing the last two tomorrow.

We received 30 survey responses from willing participants, contacted 4 of them, and arranged diary studies with all four. In our initial individual meetings, we introduced our project to each participant and asked them questions about how they currently track and maintain mental wellness. We then asked them to begin tracking that four times a day and submitting the entries to the team each time (some participants did this by emailing written up entries, while others wrote entries by hand and submitted pictures of the entries). This means that the general diary entry prompt is unique to each participant, but is personalized based on what is important to them. We framed the diary study to participants by emphasizing that we are interested in participants tracking whatever would be beneficial specifically to them, not us, but we are interested in how they identify and respond to what they track.

Through the collected diary entries and our post interview with P1, we found that tracking has generally been useful to the participants' mental wellness. For the most part, it has been helpful to check in regularly to track things such as emotions, stresses, and activities. Many of these topics can be very personal, while some things might be useful when shared with a circle of friends. A common theme we have seen across all of our interviews is the social aspect to mental wellness. Interactions with friends can positively affect a person's mental wellness. Furthermore, through discussions with the mental health counselors, the idea of a social medium to reach out to communities with shared interests might be an interesting thing to explore in terms of the social aspect of mental wellness, whether it is reaching out for help or helping others.

Research Participants

- Our first participant (P1) is a male senior at the University of Washington studying engineering. He reported that he thinks about mental wellness often. He participates in an active sport with regular practices and regularly listens to music, noting that music is an important indicator of his mental wellness. Social relationships seem to have a large impact on his mental wellness, with the main events that impacted his diary entries being interactions with and thoughts of a particular person. He mainly filled out entries at home, with occasional entries at locations on campus. P1 defines mental wellness as "being able to do the things I want without anxiety or fear." When asked to elaborate, he said he knows he's doing better mentally when he isn't thinking about his mental wellness, and he is instead focused on his life and daily activities.

- Our second participant (P2) is a female student at the University of Washington studying science. We completed the entry interview on Friday and they intended to begin the study on Saturday, but on Sunday she communicated to us that she wanted to be thoughtful in her entries and was too busy with midterms to complete the study by Monday. Since we did not want to counterproductively put stress on our participants, we arranged for her to start the diary study this Thursday (1/26). We will primarily be using our other diary studies and interviews to inform our design.
- Our third participant (P3) is a female student at the University of Washington. She currently has an internship and reported that she “always” thinks about mental wellness. She mainly filled out entries at home. Social relationships seem to be a very important element in maintaining her mental wellness. She seems to be aware of current events and social media as a source of stress in their life. Homework was also a source of stress in weekend entries. Putting together a puzzle, cuddling with her cat, watching TV, and reading are some of the ways she stays happy. P3 was sick on the day of her final interview, so her findings will be completed on Tuesday/Wednesday.
- Our fourth participant (P4) is a male student at the University of Washington studying Human Centered Design & Engineering. He reported that he thinks about mental wellness often. He commutes to school and work, and is slightly older than other participants. He often engages in meta-cognition, conducting what he calls a personal inventory, which involves considering how he appears from the outside, how many friends he has checked on recently, and reviewing a document he maintains with a list of new experiences he wants to have, such as activities, books he wants to read, and music from new artists.
- We interviewed C1, a female mental health counselor in a therapy room in Hall Health. Her background is in providing psychotherapy and crisis intervention primarily to a variety of students, but has experience with other groups as well. C1 emphasized awareness of feelings and emotions as one of the most important tactics to maintaining wellness; she said “self-monitoring is an intervention in itself.” She identified finances, family, relationships, and academic performance/achievement as the most common sources of stress for the students that she sees. During this interview, we learned that relationships can be a source of stress but also a great source of support. C1 said, “listening is something we can always do.” Additionally, she brought up that technology is changing the way that people interact with each other, and that many people now prefer online communication over in person communications now. When asked if she felt that online support groups and communities can be a source of support for individuals, she said that they can be extremely helpful.
- We interviewed C2, a female mental health counselor, at her office in the on-campus health clinic, Hall Health. She focused on students throughout the interview, which is understandable due to her position in a campus clinic. She strongly emphasized the importance of a routine in maintaining mental wellness. She commented that she does not “make a distinction between physical health and mental health.” She believes routine, sleep and exercise are the most important factors for maintaining mental wellness. She mentioned that being aware of making time to spend with others or to

decompress after spending time with others, depending on whether you are an extrovert or introvert, is important.

High-Level Themes

Our survey asked respondents about how they personally defined mental wellness, with a short-answer response form. After analyzing all 50 responses, we identified the following six themes in how participants define mental wellness: balance in life/time, daily happiness, peace of mind/feeling content, the absence of stress and/or anxiety, social relationships, and self care. Almost all responses fit into at least one of these themes. The six themes are absolutely not unrelated, however, the purpose in their distinction is that this is how our participants frame their definition of mental wellness. From these, we know how to frame different mental wellness issues in our application.

Potential themes to consider after doing another interview:

- How social relationships affect mental wellness
 - How people reach out to others to help them or want others to reach out to them
 - Sharing diary entries with anonymous people vs. close friends vs. no one else
- How doing the diary study affects their mental wellness and how they track it
 - Whether or not they liked the study, what was positive or negative, what they already do in everyday life
- What people like to track for their mental wellness
 - How often they like to track, length of entries, rating system (P1 used this), 3 word system
 - When tracking is more helpful - i.e. significant life events or daily events
 - P1 said that it would be better to track at times when maybe some big negative event is affecting him, but not so much otherwise. That's a potential design: an app designed for tracking yourself for short periods of time when you feel you need it most. But we would want to compare with other participants' findings to validate this

Task Analysis- Informed by your design research, provide brief answers to the following questions. These should help you begin to identify tasks essential to your design.

1. Who is going to use the design?

College students - our design targets people who are already mentally conscious and need help maintaining their mental wellness, or people who would like to be more mentally conscious. Our research participants each already have a well defined concept of what mental wellness means to them. Our designed will be focused what these participants find useful in tracking mental wellness.

2. What tasks do they now perform?

Tracking emotions/feelings (i.e. words or rating system), checking in with friends, reaching out to talk with friends in order to benefit wellness in some form, and checking in with themselves consciously

3. What tasks are desired?

Checking in regularly with other friends, friends checking in on themselves, reaching out to anonymous communities with similar experiences

4. How are the tasks learned?

Checking in can be learned through some sort of reminder, reaching out for social interactions can be done naturally depending on the circumstance.

5. Where are the tasks performed?

Usually at home (or at a someone else's home ie friends), sometimes at school, sometimes in transit, all types of emotional states

6. What is the relationship between the person and data?

The data could be personal (only expressed and seen by the person tracking) or the data could be shared with other people, including the individual doing the tracking. The content of the data will potentially be different, depending on whether the individual recording the data knows whether it will be shared or not. It will also depend on who they are sharing with; the person might know the others or is it might be anonymous. Access to this data is individualized - in some way each person would have their own form of an account.

7. What other tools does the person have?

Most people have a cell phone - this is often how we were able to remind our participants to complete the diary entries, or how a participant took photos of their entries to send to us. There are many many other mood tracking apps, however this doesn't mean that our participants are familiar or have used these before. One example is Daylio for android, which is free on the Google app store.

Pencil and paper - P4 chose to write down his entries

8. How do people communicate with each other?

Friends communicate with each other - specifically some of our participants would discuss areas of stress or anxiety with their friends, and most of the time these conversations had a positive impact. Most of these conversations were in person according to our research. Communication can also be through online communities with shared interests/values.

9. How often are the tasks performed?

We had participants track mental wellness four times a day, which P1 said was often. We would instead do 2-3 times per day, but it depends on personal preference. P1 also mentioned that tracking was better for time periods around specific events versus regular/periodic tracking. However, he said he did not find it hard to remember to track himself four times a day.

10. What are the time constraints on the tasks?

Tracking mental wellness ideally would be a short task in order to make this task a regular habit. Our participants in the study were told not to spend too much time on each entry in order to not take too much time out of their days.

One participant mentioned that his before-bed entry would be short because he was tired and also he had been drinking that night.

11. What happens when things go wrong?

One participant communicated with us that something had happened that made it too difficult for them to complete a diary entry. This was fine. When something goes wrong, life outside of the application is more important than keeping up with the application.