

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: DESIGNING A PROTOTYPE TO PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

Eamon Oldridge, Kristy Pan, Michelle Santacreu, Bryson Tang



Mental Health

Mental health problems can affect anyone regardless of one's nationality, religion or geographic location. In China, there is a stigma surrounding mental health problems. These issues are not openly talked about and there are limited resources available for people to find help. Part of this is because mental health is culturally bound, and China follows the ideals

of a collectivist culture. In a collectivist culture, individuals have an interdependent view of themselves and are defined in terms of their relationship with others (Hopper, 2015). These cultural differences can affect social norms and social anxiety (Hopper, 2015). To better understand how individual behavior regarding mental health can change, the Transtheoretical Model can be applied.

Taking the Steps to Change

The Transtheoretical Model was developed to describe the process of behavioral change in individuals and identifies five main stages an individual progresses through as their behavior changes (Adams & White, 2004).

Pre-Contemplation

Individuals are unmotivated to change and not ready to accept help.

Contemplation

People begin to think about changing and are more aware of the consequences of change but are not ready to take action.

Preparation

People intend to start changing in the immediate future and have a plan of action.

Action

People are making specific changes in their lifestyles, but not all changes in behavior can be classified under action.

Maintenance

People have made changes in their lifestyles and are working to prevent relapse and continue to try to maintain those changes made (The Transtheoretical Model).

An individual going through the stages of change can **relapse** at any point and go back to a different stage, once again starting the cycle (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997).

Facilitating Change

One way to help individuals change their mental health practices is through mindfulness. Mindfulness is the practice of focusing on the present, and being aware of one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations without judgement (Mindfulness Staff). It has become an increasingly popular therapeutic technique, which could be attributed to the fact that it can be learned and performed without a trained facilitator and at no cost to the individual (Positive Thinking Mind). Additionally, mindfulness has been shown to decrease anxiety, increase stress-resilience, and improve cognitive function, even compared to more traditional alternatives (Ostafin & Kassman, 2012; Troy, Wilhelm, Shallcross, Mauss, 2012; Georgetown University Medical Center, 2017).

Our Project

The purpose of our project was to design an interactive platform to promote mental health and mindfulness for college students in China. College students were decided as the target audience as we had an easier opportunity to interact with them and better understand what they wanted as a resource. With the help of our sponsor's feedback and from our survey responses about the best platform to use, we decided to design a prototype for a WeChat Mini Program as a resource for students to learn more about mental health and mindfulness. This prototype was designed with the feedback provided from students through surveying and focus groups, as well as by researching other mindfulness resources available.

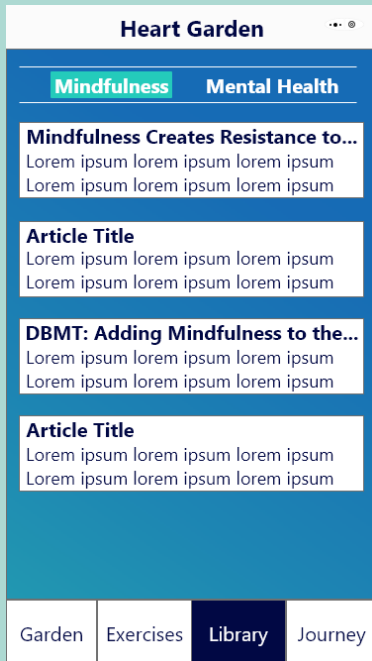
From this point forward, the word prototype will be used to describe our deliverable. The prototype is a collection of semi-interactive storyboards that imitate the functionality of a mini program. However, the prototype itself does not have the full capabilities that the mini program will have once developed.

Designing the Prototype

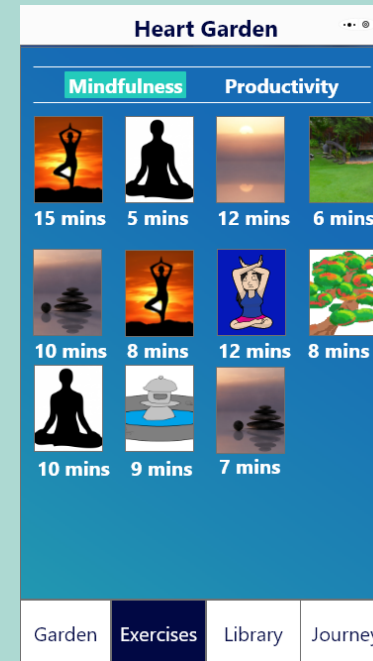
To get a better understanding of mindfulness resources available, we looked at two mini programs and two apps. The mini programs were Breathing Meditation and Wiseheart. We noticed that they both had different activities relating to mindfulness exercises and mindfulness courses, but applied them to different aspects of daily life. In addition to looking at mini programs, we also looked at two different apps, which were Happify and Moodpath. These apps were different as Happify focused on making a game out of the content and Moodpath was focused on tracking daily mood and journaling. These mini programs and apps not only inspired certain functionalities, but also helped us design our prototype to be informative while still an engaging platform.

The prototype we designed contains four main sections. They are the library, exercises, journey and a garden, each section containing different resources and activities.

Prototype Designs



The library section aims to educate users about mental health and mindfulness. In our first round of focus groups, students expressed that they had a difficult time finding reliable online resources and typically turned to reading books instead. We wanted to provide students with professional and credible resources to show them that these types of resources do exist. This section contains articles in different categories so users can learn more about mental health and mindfulness. They are able to read articles and have the ability to take notes or highlight within the article as well.

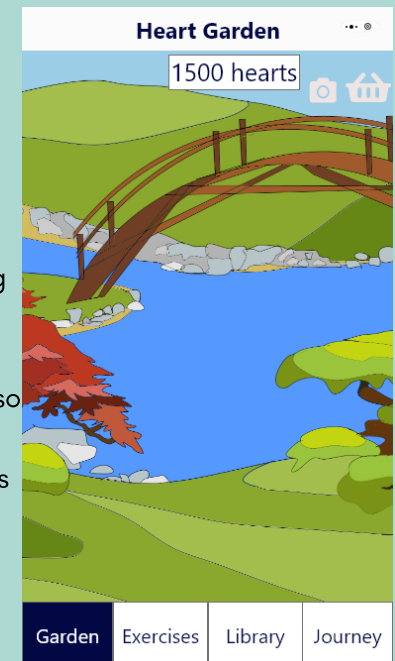


The exercises section aims to encourage users to practice mindfulness exercises. This section follows a similar design format to the library section. There are different categories of exercises that users can do depending on what they are interested in. Exercises will consist of audio recordings that walk the user through various mindfulness exercises. Each exercise has a time estimate so users know how much time they need to dedicate to it. This section allows students to practice mindfulness activities that reflect what they have read in the library section.

The journey section is a way for users to keep track of articles read and exercises completed, which will be shown in the weekly view. Users can also write notes to themselves on how they felt that day and record their moods in this section. The weekly view is portrayed as stepping stones because it represents the steps users are taking in order to increase their awareness of mental health and mindfulness. There is also a color-coded monthly calendar that displays the user's mood history.

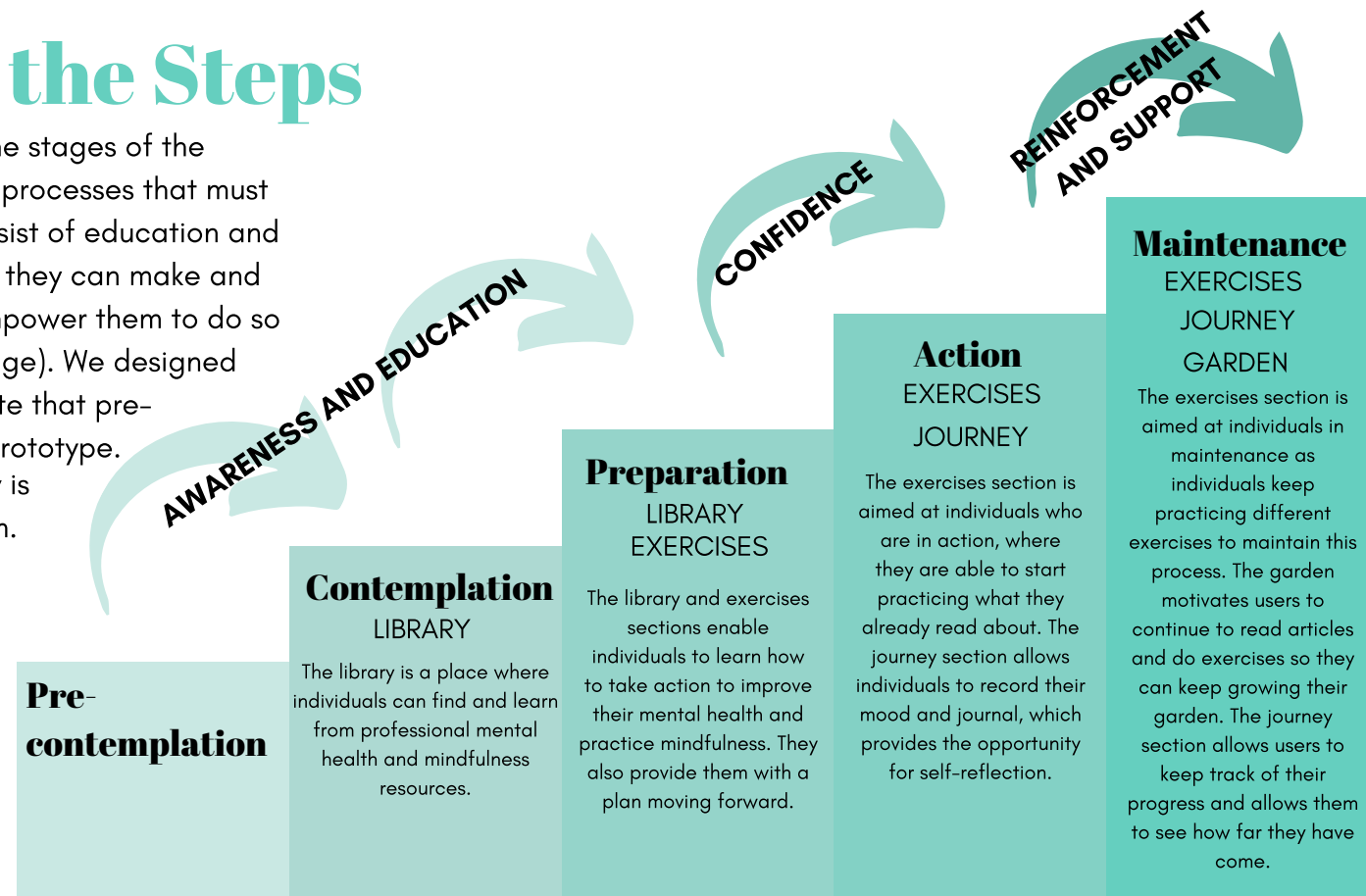


The garden section provides users with an interactive garden that they can design themselves. Users can earn new objects to decorate their garden by reading articles, completing exercises, and consistently using the features. For each of these achievements, the user earns 'hearts' they can spend in the garden store. Users are also able to share an image of their garden to their Moments in WeChat. This enables users to show their gardens to their friends while also serving as a marketing tool.



Going through the Steps

In order for individuals to move through the stages of the Transtheoretical Model, there are certain processes that must take place. Some of these processes consist of education and understanding of the subject, confidence they can make and maintain changes, and strategies that empower them to do so (Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change). We designed our prototype with this in mind. Please note that pre-contemplation is not covered within the prototype. We recommend that a marketing strategy is developed for deploying the mini program.



Recommendations

Add more categories to the library and exercises sections of the mini program. This addition of more categories would be valuable, as more individuals would have the opportunity to find activities and articles that would suit what they are looking for.

Continue to add resources to the library section and new exercises to the mini program. This continual addition of literary resources would be valuable as users would have the most up to date information to learn from and more resources to choose from.

Expand the functionality of the garden. This would be beneficial as it would keep users more engaged through the addition of new features and interactions, such as enabling users to interact with each other.

Develop a marketing strategy for deploying the completed mini program. This strategy would be valuable by informing college students about the mini program and get more individuals interested in learning about it.

Analyze usage statistics and perform more focus groups to get user feedback once the mini program is deployed. This analysis would be beneficial so that the users find things that are interesting to them. This also provides the opportunity to include new ideas users want.

Take the prototype designed for college students and apply it to another demographic. This could be a future IOP project that would take this design process and make the changes necessary to fit another target audience.