HCDE 318

5.23.2021

Experience Evaluation Plan & Simple Evaluation: *Project SafeChat*

Project Description

Project SafeChat is an initiative to provide University of Washington students with access to on-demand mental health resources. Through a mobile app interface, trained student volunteers provide support to other students both on-demand and scheduled for the future. The app also has features to help users practice daily mental health wellness and mindfulness. Current mental health and wellness options are expensive, hard to access, and generally not available on-demand. Our design aims to provide options that minimize these pain points.

Evaluation Plan

Task 1: On-demand scheduling

In this task, the user is asked to make contact with a mentor for immediate mental health support. Users may choose which communication method to select (text, call, or videochat). Completion of the task is achieved when the user reaches the communication interface screen (i.e. the texting, calling, or video chatting screen) and presses end.

Task 2: Regular Scheduling

For this task, the user will be challenged to make a scheduled appointment for the 10th day of whichever month they end up selecting, along with filling the necessary options such as their appointment time, choice of peer mentor, and communication method. Completion of this task will be reached once the user receives the visual confirmation of their appointment and is able to view their appointment details.

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Task 3: Daily Support Resources

For this task, the user is asked to make use of the self-guided 'Daily Support' resources that are built into the app. The user must navigate to the tab with support options and initiate an exercise. (The user does not have to finish the exercises, since those have not been fully implemented yet.) The task will be complete once the user has found and selected an exercise.

Post-Task Questions

Question 1: What features did you find to be most helpful during your task completion process?

Question 2: What features did you find to be a hindrance?

Question 3: What additions or changes would you make in order to promote a better user experience next time?

Metrics

Time: We'll be keeping track of the overall time it takes for each user to complete their assigned task. Doing so will potentially help us pinpoint any design flaws that may be causing a larger completion time than initially expected.

Number of Wrong Turns: We will track the number of instances of pressing the "incorrect" button for the task the user is trying to do. This allows us to observe how intuitive our interface is and pinpoint areas where confusion may occur. By minimizing wrong turns, we can make the app more efficient and easy to use.

Overall satisfaction: Post-task questions will allow us to gain specific details on how the users felt after they completed their assigned task. This will help gain specific details on broad aspects of our design and may even promote positive change if needed.

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Participant Information

We interviewed participants who are students at the University of Washington with varying levels of experience with mental health support resources. All of the participants were from majors outside Human Centered Design and Engineering and the College of Engineering. We selected these participants because they are reflective of our target user group and personas.

Participant 1 (KH1): The first user is a sophomore studying Informatics for his undergraduate degree at the University of Washington. He has never sought out mental health support before, although he has considered it. He has intermediate experience with using mobile apps.

Participant 2 (CR2): The second user is a Junior studying as an undergraduate at the University of Washington and aiming to get their BS in Nursing. He has never attempted to receive any mental health support through either UW-affiliated resources, nor any resources he has stumbled across on his own. However, he does have some experience with mobile scheduling for health-related reasons, and also just mobile scheduling in general.

Participant 3 (SH3): The third user is a graduate student at the University of Washington who is pursuing an MBA. Her prior experiences with mental health resources have been through services provided by her former employer, Microsoft. She does not have any experience with mental health resources at UW, nor has she used an automated mobile system for this purpose in the past.

Participant 4 (AA4): The fourth participant is a second year undergraduate in the Public Health Global Health major. He does not have any experience using mental health resources or similar mental health apps. He does have experience using mobile apps in general.

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Motivation

Our motivation for conducting this study is to better understand how users will interact with our app, and how easy the interface is to navigate. We wanted to understand if the flow of information is intuitive, and if the interactable parts on the interface are easy to touch.

Simple Evaluation

Findings

Finding 1: Aesthetics, Going from Lo-Fi to Hi-Fi

Our users had a few issues with the aesthetics and functionality of our prototype. Some of these issues can easily be fixed as we switch from our lo-fi prototype to hi-fi, such as the grayscale color scheme giving the app a more dreary feel, which contradicts our mission of helping people feel more positive. Participants KH1 and SH3 expressed their dislike for the lack of color in our app. KH1 said that the fonts were too small to read comfortably, and participants SH3, CR2, and AA4 explained that the buttons were too hard to click because they were too small. KH1 added that the hamburger menu was unnecessary, since we already have a main menu at the bottom and the only page in there was the user's profile.

For functionality, CR2 and AA4 claimed that it was difficult to understand exactly where on the button to tap, since only a small fraction of the button was actually clickable. Participant KH1 reported liking the bottom menu, since it was clearly labeled and easy to navigate.

Suggestion:

Based on our users' feedback, to improve the aesthetics of the app we are going to make the buttons, icons, and fonts bigger to help with readability and clickability. We will test out tapping the buttons on our own to make sure that the clickable zones are big enough. We plan to remove the hamburger menu and move the user profile page onto the bottom menu with the rest of the pages, since this location makes more

sense. Some of the other issues, such as the color, we will add as we transition to having a hi-fi prototype.

Finding 2: Usability and Efficiency

The majority of the usability and efficiency feedback we received was related to the scheduling interface, used in task 2, which was the most complex part of our prototype. While participant AA4 said that the interface for the scheduling task matched his mental model of what scheduling an appointment online is usually like, other participants expressed concerns. Participant KH1 felt the interface for scheduling an appointment should be more similar to the interface for initiating on-demand support, as he felt the on-demand support interface was easier to use. Making these more similar would allow us to promote a consistent mental model for users within the context of our app.

KH1 expressed that since the scheduling interface takes the user back to an appointment details screen multiple times that is gradually filled in as more details are established, the process of scheduling an appointment feels unnecessarily inefficient. This participant also said it was sometimes unclear what to do next after arriving at the appointment details screen.

In general for all the app's functions, several testers expressed that the ratio of text to icons contributed to the complexity and inefficiency of completing a task. At this stage in the prototyping process, most of the controls are labeled with text, so testers had to do a lot of reading for each interaction. Participant SH3 also mentioned that given the high volume of text, the hierarchy wasn't sufficient to be able to spot the important information quickly.

Suggestion:

Given this feedback, we plan to revise the scheduling interface to promote a more streamlined experience. We are considering using signposting or another type of signifier that remains on the current screen to show users where they are in the

process without taking them to a separate screen. The appointment details screen can be combined with the confirmation screen that is shown at the end of the process. We will also make sure the on-demand support and scheduling appointment interfaces mirror each other as much as possible.

We foresee that some of the text-related complexity will decrease as we transition from a Lo-Fi prototype to a higher fidelity iteration. As we create the rest of the icons, there will be less need for text. Additionally, as we add color and finalize our font choices, we will be able to establish more hierarchy with the text that remains. Even though we recognize that these usability issues are tied into the fidelity of the prototype, it was still helpful to receive and document this feedback so we can understand how important text hierarchy and effective icon design is for users.

Finding 3: Redundancy, Discoverability, and Feedback

While the majority of our interface elements were easily discoverable and provided adequate feedback, our evaluation participants helped us find a number of areas where we could improve this.

We learned that a number of functions and controls, like the “Journaling Update” widget and “Daily Support” button in the navigation bar, are redundant. This gives users multiple pathways to complete the same task, leading them to question which one is right for them. Inconsistent labels for redundant controls further add to the confusion.

Other controls, such as the “Profile” tab that is hidden in an expandable hamburger menu, are too hard to find. Additionally, the language for some controls, like the “Schedule” button in Task 2 and the “Peer Advisors Online” button in Task 1, is vague and does not indicate exactly what the buttons do. To be more specific, when it came to selecting a scheduled peer mentor, CR2 detailed that due to a lack of specificity, they weren’t quite sure of the difference between the calendar icon and “Schedule” text box. This made understanding the correct route towards completing the scheduling process a bit more confusing than it should have been.

Finally, our participants critiqued the feedback of our UI, pointing out that the lower menu bar does not indicate which tab is currently selected and that the scheduling feature does not incite a feeling of progress as the user advances through the screens. The “Daily Journaling” feature does not have a button to save and exit, so users do not know if their work has been successfully stored. Most notably, our participants were unclear what happens after they provide a “preferred” time for their scheduled appointment with an advisor – would this time automatically be granted, or is there some provision for misaligned schedules?

Suggestion:

To address these concerns, we can remove any redundant controls from the interface and provide users with a single pathway to complete each task. We can also ensure that multiple references to the same feature use exactly the same language for added clarity. Additionally, we can do away with hidden controls to improve discoverability and use more precise language to indicate exactly what each button does. Furthermore, we can create a separate button for on-demand help to ensure that users can more easily find this function, especially when the need is urgent. Finally, we can implement each of our participants’ suggestions regarding feedback (i.e. indicating the selected tab in the navigation bar, adding “Save and Exit” buttons, and more) to prevent users from feeling unsure about their status within the app.