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| START AUDIO |  |
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| Interviewer: …Then let me know. I’m going to talk to you today about the hackathon that I conducted, which was called ‘Self Harmony’. This was in April. Quite often hackathons are kind of renowned for being very tech orientated, so quite often it’s what is billed as a collaborative computer programming event, and it’s often around a social purpose.  |  |
| I wanted mine to concentrate creating digital tools for not only those that self-harm but their support networks as well, so their friends and family. I wanted to bring a group of people together to sort of think about raising awareness, enhancing understanding of self-harm, de-stigmatising the term and practice, and thinking about, if people will self-harm, how can we reduce the amount of harm that they cause to themselves?  |  |
| It was a two-day event and there were a lot of computer programmers, but there were also some junior doctors, medical students, there were people with lived experience of self-harm that had no technical expertise whatsoever, and there were people from mental health charities up here in Newcastle, like ‘Launchpad’, and ‘YoungMinds’, and ‘Mind’.  |  |
| They created seven teams altogether and they came up with seven different concepts, to varying degrees of completeness, so some of them… They were mostly like mock-up apps; there were prototypes, but none of them are completely polished, so today I want to think about the concepts, really.  |  |
| I didn’t create these, so I want you to be as honest as you possibly can. If you think they’re terrible, then I’d like to hear that they’re terrible, because I want to think about how we can involve more people in the conversation about designing for people with mental health issues or self-harm. |  |
| So, I will start off by showing you the first team. The first team were called ‘The Polecats’. Matt, who’s been doing some sexual health work with young people in HCI; [Izzy is 0:02:23] a junior doctor, very little experience of mental health issues other than the rotations that she’d done during medical school. Rachel is an academic, or she’s a PhD student looking at self-harm within friendship networks and her carer, and then Gavin is a mobile app developer.  |  |
| They came up with something that they called ‘Paper Chain’, and the way they built it was a creative mood mapper for those experiencing self-harm. They modelled it on existing coping strategies around chain analysis, which, as you will know, is used in dialectical behaviour therapy. They wanted to think of it as a personal way of tracking mood, emotion, and experience in a novel and interesting way.  |  |
| The idea is based on people doing physical paper chaining to keep track of certain behaviours, but what they did was they envisaged this as an app. You had a strip of paper that you could colour in and you could then pinch to make it smaller, and you could add on, like you might put… You might have one piece of chain to represent Thursday, then you would add it onto the rest of the chain and you could zoom out, so you could gain perspective of a week, or a month, or a year.  |  |
| They also had this idea of having a code with loved ones, so it might be the you would decide that two orange meant that you’d had a really bad day and you needed a cup of tea when you got in, or two yellows, for example, might mean that you’d had a good day. It’s this idea of sharing with your loved ones how you’d been feeling that day. I’ll show you Matt talking about it. |  |
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| [Video starts] |  |
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| Male: This is our imagined interaction for the app. It’s a strip of paper that you’re able to colour – in interesting, novel ways, which we’ll come to in a moment. The idea is that you can pinch and add it onto your chain for that day. Something that we would like to build into the app in future iterations is this idea of filling. Existing apps kind of have these- |  |
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|  [Video ends] |  |
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| Interviewer: I will show you what they imagined it would look like. It’s fairly simple at the moment. You have your first screen, where you would have to enter a code to get into it, and then you have your second screen, where you would choose a colour and you could colour one of the chains, one of the pieces of chain in. Then there’s this idea of sharing it with a loved one and you could potentially send a message along with it. Then they also thought a bit about, for future iterations, having more intricate patterns that you could use to reflect or convey how you’re feeling. |  |
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| Respondent: So, the individual would decide the key for the colours, themselves? |  |
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| Interviewer: Yes. |  |
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| Respondent: So, what does that..? That has a comment on it, does it? |  |
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| Interviewer: That’s just the days of the week. |  |
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| Respondent: I see; they’re the days. |  |
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| Interviewer: They represent days, yes. |  |
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| Respondent: Okay, fine. What do I think of it? |  |
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| Interviewer: Yes – and be as critical as you want. I spoke to some clinical psychologists about it yesterday and they thought it was quite reductive just having block colours to maybe represent an entire day. |  |
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| Respondent: The principle behind it, the concept behind it is that it might, for individuals, be a useful tool to help them understand and give them a way to express emotions or feelings that they clearly are having difficulty expressing in everyday life. So, as a principle you can see the sense of it, particularly if… I think the risk of it is that there will be – there could be – a small number of people that it’d really work well for, but will it be a universally useful tool? Absolutely not, and really getting some idea of what proportion that looks like. If it’s 1 in 100 people can begin to get away with it, then clearly it’s not going to have much impact or lasting value.  |   |
| I think it might be too unsubtle, too reductionist; it might be for some people. You can imagine my clinical psychologists might say, “It’s a bit too reductionist,” because they must spend all their time thinking about the nuances of people’s emotions, if you like, but their simplicity might alternatively be exactly what somebody needs, because there’s a little bit of control, they choose what the colours signify.  |  |
| I can also completely see the principle, the idea that monitoring yourself becomes more useful if you can communicate yourself monitoring, in a way, but again it will be as useful or not as the individual who’s trying to use it – and their network around them. |   |
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| Interviewer: Yes. |  |
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| Respondent: On the one hand, the kind of emotions it might throw up for some individual is you receive this from the person and you think, “Okay, fine, they’ve let me know; they’ve let me know what their last couple of days or the weeks since I saw them last has been like for them. That’s really good,” and see it as a positive.  |  |
| Alternatively, others will see it as a way to pull them into a place that they don’t necessarily want to go. I’m thinking of a sibling, or a parent, or a child, or whatever, might begin to dread when this communication comes through, because they don’t know what they’re going to find when they open it, or they’re going to…  |  |
| Anyway, so as a tool it is going to be no more positive or negative than the individuals involved in using it, and it probably has as much potential to have negative connotations for, say, the person who’s receiving the communication. It certainly has potential for that, as well as potential of being seen as a good thing. |  |
| The self-monitoring thing, it’s simple. I don’t think simple is bad, and it’s in the right kind of place because finding alternative ways to express their distress that are less harming is no bad thing. I’m less worried by the… You’ve got one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight colours there, or seven colours and white. It’s a start; it’s not bad. By being reductionist, if people manage to use it as a shorthand to the complexity, if you like, but found it an effective way to express something about their day, or their week, or their month, then it’s okay. |   |
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| Interviewer: Do you see an advantage to it being digital, because there was a lot of conversation around this concept? There were questions about why is it digital? What are the benefits? They said the benefit was the fact that you could pick it up anywhere, so if you were going to be doing physical paper chaining, you’re going to struggle to get on the bus and be doing it, but this is the sort of thing that you can just kind of pick up if you’re en route somewhere. |  |
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| Respondent: Yes. |  |
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| Interviewer: And also the locking mechanism, the fact that you can keep it private. |  |
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| Respondent: People are on their phones all the time, that’s where they are, so it’s kind of available where they happen to be. That’s not a bad thing. It’s with them constantly – not a bad thing. I’m talking as an individual; I might struggle to think it… Except I’ve never been in that place – well, I presume that I have been in that place lots of times where emotions that I wanted to express I didn’t know how to. I’ve been there, but don’t know that that would work for me as an individual, because it’s so simple. |   |
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| Interviewer: Yes, it is very simplistic. I think my issue with it is probably what they were saying yesterday, is this idea of the colours; just having one colour to potentially represent an entire day is quite problematic. |  |
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| Respondent: Except it’s not, though, is it, because that’s Wednesday and that’s-? |  |
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| Interviewer: Well, yes. |  |
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| Respondent: You’ve got one, two, three, at least four links to a day. |  |
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| Interviewer: I suppose it would be better if you could- |  |
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| Respondent: And two sides to each link, so you could colour- |  |
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| Interviewer: Yes, that’s true. |  |
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| Respondent: You could colour, so that’s eight potential blocks of colour that you could use. I think it’s going to be a minority interest. |  |
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| Interviewer: Yes. I found this with most of the concepts. They weren’t specific to self-harm, which was interesting because the event was about self-harm, but some of the speakers, because we had some people come in at the start, so we had Alisdair Cameron from Launchpad and Steve O’Driscoll, who works for him, and a couple of other people with lived experience. They were talking a bit about comorbidity and the fact that self-harm isn’t usually a standalone issue; it might be a symptom of depression, or anxiety, or another mental health issue. I think maybe that’s where these apps that seem to be designed for more general mental well-being have stemmed from. |  |
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| Respondent: Yes. |  |
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| Interviewer: Right, I’ll move on to the next one. |  |
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| Respondent: Yes. |  |
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| Interviewer: The next one actually won first prize. We had seven judges and they’d been sort of mentoring people throughout the weekend, and then they were given specific criteria that teams had to meet, and they chose this team to win. Alex has just become a junior doctor and he was quite interested in coming to the event – as a medical student, but also he’d had partners that had self-harmed. Then \_\_\_[0:14:59], she is a lecturer in computing at Northumbria University. They were called ‘The Box Team’ because they came up with this idea of a digital distraction box.  |  |
| They were very much not about this idea of stopping self-harming but intervening in the action and trying to reduce the amount that somebody self-harmed. They drew their inspiration from distraction boxes, so this idea of filling materials – sorry, filling boxes – with your self-harming tools at the bottom, and then on top of that putting things that would hopefully distract you and put you in a better frame of mind. So, they were thinking about games and photos of pets and loved ones, and obviously it would be personal to the individual what would put them in a better frame of mind. They’d also spoken to a mentor that had told them that they used to keep their self-harming blades in blocks of ice so they had to sort of bash at it to get to the tools. Then, by the time they’d done that, often the urge to self-harm had passed.  |  |
| The idea is that you’d have this box that would be locked and it would be filled with your clean blades, or whatever it was that you were using to self-harm, at the bottom, and then nicer, tangible materials in the box. Then it’s locked with a digital screen on the top, and the idea is that you have a personal code to get into it. Then you have to swipe through it, but you can configure the screen in as many ways as you want, so you might put inspirational quotes or photos of family members. If you’re into games, then there might be room for a game.  |  |
| They were also thinking about this idea of recording and reflecting, so thinking about recording why you’re self-harming, what the emotions might be when you have the urge to self-harm, what’s gone on that day, so that then you could retrospectively look at the data. You’d have your own, sort of, dataset to monitor what you’d been going through at those times that you’d been self-harming.  |  |
| They also had this idea that you could configure the box so you had to shake it for a certain amount of time before it would unlock again, thinking about hopefully the urge to self-harm passing. There were loads of different ways they thought about configuring it, and this is \_\_\_[0:17:35] talking about it. |  |
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|  [Video starts] |  |
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| Male: The materials, clean materials in the box [included], but also things like bandages and so on. There will be an electrical lock here, effectively, which basically will just make it very hard to open up until you get through all the materials, so it’s just a way of kind of helping you reinforce your own self-will in this point but actually trying to- |  |
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|  [Video ends] |  |
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| Interviewer: So, that one is very much thinking about distraction, harm reduction, and reflection. That was a favourite amongst the people at the hackathon that self-harmed, themselves, but it still seems to be quite taboo for some people – this idea of thinking about, sort of, not providing them with the tools but saying, “It’s okay to self-harm.”  |  |
| That came out of some of the speakers at the beginning who were saying… They were kind of trying to say to the audience, “It doesn’t always lead to suicide; for me it was a way of living, it was a way of grounding myself, and making me feel like I was alive, and allowing me to live.” What are your thoughts on that one? |  |
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| Respondent: I like it, yes, as everybody else seems to have done. Clearly, the fact that you can, at times when you’re not feeling distressed, design all those distractions and those hoops for you to get through. Yes, you could see that shaking the box could be one of those layers – lots of, as you say, reminders of other things. Self-designed is quite powerful; I like that. It is clearly building on techniques that people with lived experience have shared, so that seems it’s well grounded.  |   |
| Obviously, all the usual intellectual risks are that people decide they’re not going to revert; they’re so not in the place that they want to conform with their other selves that they completely bypass it or choose not to, but that’s no more a weakness than anything else. It’s an intervention, isn’t it, that people can choose to engage with or not? The not engaging with it isn’t a weakness of the intervention itself, but it’s a reality. Other than that, it sounds as if it’s rooted in something that is effective for some people, and it’s nicely designed for them to be in control of the distractions. It’s good; it’s a good idea. |   |
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| Interviewer: I think one of the concerns that also came about was the fact I think the clinical psychologists were saying, if they were to reimagine it, they would probably like something a bit more portable. I’m not sure, because I don’t really know whether self-harm is something that’s constrained – not constrained, but quite often takes place in somebody’s home, so I would never have… It wouldn’t really have occurred to me that it would need to be portable. What do you think about that? |  |
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| Respondent: You can have all the distraction, the digital distraction component you can have on your phone, and that can be portable. You won’t have it with a physical box with your chosen tools at the bottom of it, but, as you say, it may not be a venue-specific thing, but you can carry all the digital component with you all the time, can’t you? |  |
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| Interviewer: Yes. |  |
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| Respondent: Whether you would then use that… I imagine some people would, if they were committed to the idea, they’d use the box a few times, find it effective. They might then be able to use just the digital component on their phone and still find it effective. That happens a lot, doesn’t it? Behavioural techniques are all based on the fact that you can do something again, and again, and again, and then you can take a little bit of it and can still have the Pavlov’s dogs and the bell thing. It’s behaviourism and so that would work – for some people. No, I think it’s good. I don’t think you have to have… You don’t have to carry your blade with you in a portable device all the time for it to be effective, if it was a blade. |   |
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| Interviewer: Yes. It’s interesting that I kind of mapped out at the beginning… We were talking about self-harming behaviours and these wide, all-encompassing definitions, so not just cutting, but burning, and hair pulling, and head banging, and potentially over-exercising, and all of these different things. This team were the team that thought most specifically about self-harm, but they still kind of were talking this language with blades and cutting. It’s quite interesting that that was what came out of it. So, I will move- Sorry. |  |
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| Respondent: So, the question is: does it have to be a physical thing? Do you need that physical box? Do you need a tool? If you were harming yourself in other ways, how would you..? The only idea of the box is that there is something that you are looking – seeking – when you are distressed that you’re creating a set of hurdles, if you like, to get to. That doesn’t have to be something physically present. |   |
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| Interviewer: That’s true. |  |
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| Respondent: But how would you replicate it for somebody, for example, who exercises excessively? How would you recreate something for them to get to? It’s probably no more or less effective than putting a blade in the bottom of a box. If somebody is able to say, “Okay, I do see my addiction to exercise as harmful and I do know that I do it in times of distress, to harmful degrees,” or whatever it would be, “Therefore, I am going to discipline myself by saying, ‘I will only ever exercise by going through my digital box,’” that’s no different from somebody who actually cuts themselves with a particular blade, because they can choose to go get a knife from the kitchen drawer instead. |  |
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| Interviewer: Yes. |  |
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| Respondent: There’s no more or less discipline to creating a behaviour that you always want to enact, which is, “I’m going to go through these hoops before I harm myself.” It’s no different, I don’t think, so I don’t think you need a physical box. |  |
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| Interviewer: No. I think, yes, that’s exactly what they were saying yesterday. We were talking about just having… Again being able to configure it in so many different ways, but the app and the distractions being the mainstay of the concept, really, so it might be… We were talking about having the box talk to your phone, so your phone might say, “Have you tried..?” and then it would kind of prompt things that you’d put in earlier that you enjoyed. So, it might be, “Have you spoken to Sarah?” “Have you had a cup of tea?” “Have you done some yoga?” You could personalise it in that way. |  |
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| Respondent: You could; you could. In fact, you could link the idea with the first ‘Paper Chain’ one with this one; you could link the two by saying, “Okay, what colour are you? What colour is your mood today?” You could then have a different set of responses or hurdles, because on one it might be there’s a picture of your pet, on another it could be, “Have you spoken to a friend?” or whatever it would be, depending on the colour.  |   |
| If it got really complicated, you could link some of that self-regulation – self-mood regulation, if you like – into the hurdles that you… Or the responses that you want can vary, depending on what you think the problem is at the time. That might be quite interesting. |  |
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| Interviewer: Cool. I’ll move on to the next one, which was actually a favourite yesterday. You might not feel the same about it, but they really liked it in the context they were working in. Now it’s gone back to the beginning.  |  |
| Some of them I actually find quite difficult to explain, because of the way that they did the pitches. We’ll do this one, actually. I didn’t get to this one yesterday. This team were an interesting team because there were three developers, three male developers, and there was also a lady called [Vionne 0:28:51], who was sort of helping them out a bit but didn’t stay the entire weekend.  |  |
| They were all quite open in the fact that they didn’t know very much about self-harm, or they claimed to not know much about self-harm, although they were all there, so they obviously were interested. What was interesting about this team was that there were a lot of tensions between them and the mentors. The mentors were kind of going around all of the tables and they were really helping out with the ideation process, so at every point they would say, “This idea is really good, but from my experience that wouldn’t work. Maybe you should change it like this.” This team just weren’t… They weren’t really listening, which is okay, but that sort of meant that at the end of the weekend they weren’t looked upon as favourably by the judges.  |  |
| So, very development heavy, they were very keen to get something looking very pretty. They were called ‘Wavelength’ and they came up with this idea of an anonymous chat platform, and it was based entirely on – almost entirely on – imagery.  |  |
| The idea, the concept behind it, was helping people to find a common language. They were building on the idea that every person has a right to listen and be heard. So, when you go onto the interface you would be able to be a listener or a speaker. If you’re a speaker and you’re wanting to communicate potentially distress, or low mood, or anxiety, you have a pool of images from which you can select three.  |  |
| You’re then able to input brief descriptions about the images and why you feel they’re relevant to you. The idea is, obviously, that the images best represent their mood. They’re connected to a random listener, and then they can have a one-on-one peer conversation. The idea is that it’s a very simple and approachable user interface, which you will see in a moment. |  |
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|  [Video starts] |  |
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| Male: You choose three; select several images, and then the next stage you have to input a brief description about those images, why they’re relevant to your particular concerns. Once you do that, go on to the next stage and then there’ll be a listener there, someone there to talk with you. Then, if we opened another tab or if someone came on from here, you could start having a one-on-one peer-to-peer conversation. So, that’s everything. |  |
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|  [Video ends] |  |
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| Interviewer: I’m not entirely sure that I see the value of speaking to a random listener, but you would have… That would be the first interface and you’d be able to select whether you want to be a speaker or a listener. Then you would have the second interface and you would have sort of a series of pretty images that you could select three from.  |  |
| Then you would have to annotate the images, so you would have to say why you feel that the images represent your mood at that particular time. Then you would submit and then you could be connected to somebody. You could then have a one-on-one peer conversation and discuss the images and your mood. |  |
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| Respondent: So, they’re all pretty images? |  |
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| Interviewer: Yes. |  |
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| Respondent: Was that intentional? |  |
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| Interviewer: They don’t have to be, but the guy that was just speaking then is very much about aesthetics. He’s done a lot of graphic design, and that always comes across in whatever sort of platform or website he’s building. I don’t know if you’re familiar with Instagram, but it’s very much like this, it’s sort of these really beautiful images. People don’t tend to post mundane photos of things, but the idea is that you could post… You would have a pool. I don’t know how that would be configured, but you would be able to select an image or a group of images.  |  |
| I think part of the reason these images look pretty is because there was a bit of an incident where somebody had put up a picture of some railway tracks, which then triggered somebody else at the hackathon who felt upset by it. So, then they decided to use quite neutral – fairly neutral – images when doing the prototype or the mock-up. |  |
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| Respondent: Yes, because there are suicide websites, aren’t there? |  |
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| Interviewer: Yes. |  |
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| Respondent: That people share all sorts of techniques and stuff and so on. Okay, so as an idea this is based on a couple of things. It’s a form of communication, so there’s nothing wrong with that, and some people like the anonymity of being able to communicate through, say, the Internet. That can be for good reasons, but it also can be for malicious reasons as well, so there’d be all that kind of stuff you’d need to consider.  |  |
| Then it’s based on some kind of peer support model, and there’s nothing wrong with that either, so those two components of it seem pretty reasonable to me. Practically, there are young people do this kind of stuff all the time, don’t they, whether it’s Facebook, or Instagram, or whatever, so it isn’t in a… For a lot of people nowadays, it would not be alien as a form of communication, so it might work. The obvious difficulties would be who’s online when you go online and who’s going to be that peer support. The effectiveness of peer support is very dependent on the effectiveness of the peer supporter, I suppose.  |  |
| You’d need all sorts of safeguards designed into it, I would have thought, because if it’s essentially a website where overtly vulnerable people are going, then there’s potential for people who want to cause harm to see it as an opportunity, as well. |  |
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| Interviewer: Yes. |  |
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| Respondent: But it doesn’t upset me particularly, the idea that people might find online communication attractive for them. That doesn’t upset me or worry me unduly. The idea that this is a peer support model I would generally see as being a positive within all those sorts of risks, and caveats, and all the rest of it.  |  |
| Most of these kinds of things, there are communities out there; there are large numbers of people out there who would be willing to use this kind of stuff, so the idea that you’d go online and there’d be nobody there doesn’t really seem to be the case these days, does it? |  |
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| Interviewer: No, not really. |  |
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| Respondent: No, there are usually thousands of people on these kinds of things all the time. |  |
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| Interviewer: I suppose I wonder, and maybe they didn’t really think this far ahead, but I wonder about the value of speaking to somebody random. They used the word ‘random’, and I don’t know how you could effectively marry up to people that didn’t know each other, but I’m not sure how that could work. |  |
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| Respondent: The nature of these kinds of Internet communications is that people do sort it out for themselves. If we ignore all the negative ones, the grooming and all that kind of stuff, or the encouragement to people to self-harm, if you remove all of that for a second, my very limited understanding of this is that actually people do form Internet relationships.  |  |
| I was visiting somebody a couple of weeks ago who hasn’t been diagnosed with anything in particular. He’s in his early 20s and he’s into his gaming, but he almost certainly sits somewhere on the autism spectrum. His best friend is somebody who lives in the United States; they game with each other at two o’clock in the morning. Without question, that is this young man’s best friend.  |  |
| So, it happens; people form anonymous Internet friendships which are quite positive at times. So, the idea that somebody might, through the medium of text and imagery, might be able to express something and they get an endorsement or a reflection back from somebody who says, “Yes, I’ve had these feelings, too,” or whatever it happens to be, even if anonymous, doesn’t necessarily mean that it wouldn’t be valuable.  |  |
| I think the world is changing and young people – particularly young people – are communicating in all sorts of different ways, but when you are in that space you are vulnerable, and you are vulnerable to being preyed upon. That, I think, would be the biggest challenge for a website like this. It’d need lots and lots of – what’s it called? |  |
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| Interviewer: Safeguarding? No, [that’s not what we’re doing here 0:40:08]. |  |
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| Respondent: Safeguarding you’d need in there, but when a comment is- |  |
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| Interviewer: [Monitored], moderated? Moderated? |  |
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| Respondent: Moderated. |  |
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| Interviewer: Yes. |  |
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| Respondent: You’d need an enormous amount of moderation in a website like this. |  |
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| Interviewer: Yes, that was discussed at the hackathon, is who would you have moderating, and how would they do it? |  |
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| Respondent: Yes. |  |
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| Interviewer: Because even I’ve heard about, and I am sure you’ve heard about, if certain hashtags get banned on the Internet. On Instagram they banned pro-anorexia hashtags and self-harm, but then these communities still find a way of communicating with each other; they would just, potentially, crop out the vowels from the word and have that as a new hashtag. So, yes, you’d have to think quite carefully about how you would moderate it. Are you okay for time? |  |
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| Respondent: What’s the time? |  |
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| Interviewer: 12:02. |  |
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| Respondent: Yes. |  |
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| Interviewer: Yes. |  |
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| Respondent: Last one, is it? |  |
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| Interviewer: Yes, we can do one more if you are okay with it? |  |
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| Respondent: Yes. |  |
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| Interviewer: I’ll go onto ‘Squeeze’, which is a little bit different because it wasn’t an app. There were actually four team members. Paul left early, he left on the first day; he wasn’t there on the second day. This team, who called themselves ‘Squeeze’, they took inspiration from Paul. Paul was very open about his issues around anxiety and self-harming, and his suicide attempts, and he was sort of saying how mindfulness really, really helped him, and the breathing techniques that he incorporated into that. So, that’s what this team built their idea on, and they created a prototype.  |  |
| Angelica and Janice, who were in the team and very much into makerspaces and DIY, and the ideal was also built upon art therapy, so they created sort of an ‘e-squeezeball’ out of yarn. It was connected to a Raspberry Pi computer, and the idea would be that you would practise mindfulness or your breathing techniques whilst squeezing the ball. Then you would be able to have light and sound feedback from what they called the ‘e-stressball’.  |  |
| They also spoke about how you could incorporate it into your house, so it might be that you got feedback; the prototype might talk to a lamp in your house, so as you’re breathing the lamp might light up. They were thinking, as well, about DIY. Potentially, people with mental health issues or anxiety that wanted to practise mindfulness could maybe knit these themselves, so they’re thinking about having a DIY toolkit. Obviously, it involves tech, so you’d probably have to have some level of technical expertise, but you could also have like an online repository that would tell you how to make it. I will show you them talking about it briefly. |  |
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|  [Video starts] |  |
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| Female: It’s a kind of ‘e-squeezeball’, so it’s a kind of… \_\_\_[0:43:38] called it an ‘e-stressball’. |  |
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| Male: ‘E-squeezeball’, yes. |  |
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| Female: ‘E-squeezeball’. The idea is that when you’re in a moment of anxiety it’s just something to distract you from that and something to be a bit more mindful about what you’re doing, and your breathing particularly.  |  |
| We said, instead of a lot of mindful activities is just trying to get you to breathe in a certain way, but instead of going at it from that angle, we’re kind of going from a personal angle. So, with this you can control your own breathing [to the 0:44:04] kind of thing that you want to do. The idea is that you press it and then, when you press it, it lights up. There is sound coming out of it, as well. |  |
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|  [Video ends] |  |
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| Interviewer: So, they played quite heavily on the idea of personalisation, so you could sort of create it in a way that was personal to you, with the colours and the feedback, and also this idea of reflecting, potentially whilst you were making it, but also whilst you were using it.  |  |
| I know the people from the retreat that I was talking to yesterday in York, the clinical psychologists, a lot of the patients that we work with that self-harm incorporate these sorts of toys anyway – sort of low fidelity, like from ‘The Poundshop’, but they use these stress balls to control their breathing, and reflect, and practise mindfulness. |  |
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| Respondent: So, it’s being used anyway as a technique. What’s the added value of the flashing light and the sound? |  |
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| Interviewer: They also spoke a bit about biofeedback, so potentially having it so you could feel your pulse, maybe thinking about seeing your stress decrease or your anxiety decrease with the feedback. |  |
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| Respondent: Yes, that’s recognised as a useful technique, so if the technology bit of it was there to do that, that might be useful. Yes, it works as an idea. |  |
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| Interviewer: I don’t know how realistic it is for people to be able to create these. Personally, I’m not into knitting, but I don’t think I would be able to create that. |  |
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| Respondent: It’s going to be a barrier for some people, isn’t it? |  |
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| Interviewer: Yes. |  |
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| Respondent: So, the question is: why would you want to [create? No 0:46:15], it would be great if the hope they had was that in encouraging people to make it for themselves it’s empowering, it’s giving them a chance to do some reflecting while they knit, or whatever it is, but for the majority of people it would just be a barrier. It’s like getting any of those do-it-yourself kits: lots and lots of people don’t manage to do them.  |  |
| You might have two models, you might have them readymade, and then for those people who have enjoyed the readymade and want to do something for a friend, they might decide to knit one for a friend. I don’t know, but you could see that for a lot of people it would just mean that it doesn’t get out of the packet.  |  |
| The only added value I think: there’s no point just having a sound and a light, unless it was specifically some kind of biofeedback. I don’t know how valuable people who practise mindfulness would find the biofeedback to be. I don’t know; I don’t know enough about that. The people that you talked to yesterday said that people did use stress balls, but they presumably weren’t using it for biofeedback, were they? |  |
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| Interviewer: No. |  |
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| Respondent: So, I think there is a question about whether biofeedback in this situation is useful or not. If not, then it’s a stress ball and you don’t need to knit your own stress ball. |  |
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| Interviewer: Yes, [and then what? 0:48:09] [Crosstalk] Yes. |  |
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| Respondent: So, I think there’s a question underneath all of that, which is: is biofeedback useful for a number of people who are trying to practise meditation techniques, or relaxation techniques, or mindfulness, or breathing control, or whatever it happens to be? |  |
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| Interviewer: Perfect, thank you. |  |
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| Respondent: Okay. |  |
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| Interviewer: We’ll end it there and I’ll let you get on. |  |
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| Respondent: Good, interesting. |  |
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| Interviewer: Turn this off. |  |
|  |  |
| END AUDIO |  |
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