



User Research

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UXD 260
February 7, 2021



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rootd is an app that helps guide users through tasks that aim to help alleviate stress, anxiety, and panic attacks. Users are able to participate in short breathing exercises, meditation, and journaling. There are short term fire drill techniques, as well as long term wellness practices that are both designed to help alleviate and educate.

We sought out potential users who proclaimed to suffer from these issues and might benefit from a tool like Rootd. Our interviewees all described experiences with stress or anxiety to some degree, and while they all utilized some kind of coping mechanism, most sought even more tools at their disposal to help mitigate these issues. The goal in our research was to get a feel for how often people experience anxiety, what methods they depend on, and what they might want to see in an app designed to address this. User research is conducted to learn about the target users and get their perspective on usability problems based on interviews and other methods. The purpose of our research is to get a better understanding of what the target users' wants and needs are so that we can make significant improvements in our chosen application.

To conduct our user research, we completed user interviews, created personas, scenarios, and an experience map. With all of these methods and representations, we were able to communicate our findings and further our research, which will ultimately help us towards a final solution.

Through these interviews and methods, we found that people have a multitude of both stress points and alleviation methods. There were many consistencies found in our interviews, and it was illuminating to see how many similarities there really were. Most people are open to trying new things in improving their mental health, including the exploration of a new digital tool. We found that there is a wide array of approaches and mentalities people employ to deal with these issues, and that any app designed to address them should take that wide array into account.

METHOD

Our main method for finding data was done through interviews. Before we started interviewing our target users, we had to recruit them through using screeners. For our screeners, we had to find people who experience stress and are interested in finding a stress reliever. After we found our target users, we would ask for verbal consent, and made sure they knew what the research was about and that it will be an interview about their experiences with stress and anxiety. When they would agree, we would conduct the recorded interview to gather our data. As a group, we were able to interview eight people in total. The individuals we interviewed were young adults between the ages of 20-25, who experience stress with school, jobs, COVID related problems, and family troubles. The screener questions, verbal consent, and full interview script could be found in the appendix.

For the interview, we started with warm-up questions to get a good understanding of who the interviewee is and what their daily routine consisted of. Going into the general questions, we would focus on what their main stressors are and what methods or techniques they use. In our deep-focus questions we would ask questions about how the users are affected by their personal techniques and how they feel afterwards. The interviews were not conducted face-to-face due to the global pandemic and the need to take safety precautions, so most of the interviews were done over Zoom and were all recorded.

To analyze our data, we transcribed the recordings and took notes on the main takeaways. The transcriptions could be found in the appendix. In a shared Google Document, we all posted our notes and highlighted what they all had in common. After this, we created an affinity diagram to organize the main points of our data. We used Miro.com to create the diagram and had categories for common stressors, common relievers, wants, and recommendations to improve app. This can be found in the appendix. By gathering this data, we were able to find common stressors and relief methods which allows us to better understand how the individual may use the Rootd app and what they can expect from it. This will lead us in making improvements to our selected app.

Lastly, after we compiled our data we created three different personas and scenarios that match with each, as well as an experience map to represent all of the data.

FINDINGS

After coming together and comparing our interviews, we were able to find a few similarities. We found that many of the interviewees were people who keep to themselves while undergoing feelings of stress or anxiety. Also, the main stressor for most of the interviewees were school/work related, and the COVID-19 pandemic. All of the interviewees have their own way of relieving their stress, and the common methods were working out, breathing exercises, and listening to music. Overall, most of the interviewees have an interest in using a mobile app that helps relieve their stress and anxiety.

In addition to our interviews and overall findings, we wanted to provide representations of our findings through personas, scenarios, and an experience map. A **persona** is a fictional person that is used as a representation of the type of user that would utilize our chosen application. They are based on the data we gathered from conducting the interviews. Personas describe the potential user's goals, needs, and frustrations. A **scenario** describes an example situation of a time when the potential users would use our chosen application. It tells a story and highlights the user's motivations and actions while using the app. And an **experience map** is a structured way to visualize the user's thoughts and actions of using the app. It highlights the main points of their experience and how they feel throughout their experience.

The main take aways from creating the personas and scenarios is that we are able to visualize and fully understand who our potential users are, and what their behaviors, experiences, and goals are as well. Understanding who our users are will allow us to move forward in creating improvements for our selected app based because we want the app to appeal to our our users and to be an effective tool for them to use.

The following pages will show all of the representations.

PERSONA #1



Annette Black

Age 26

Occupation Digital Advertising

Location Minneapolis, MN

About

Annette works a high stress job that demands extra hours past the scheduled workday as well as weekends. She has to be on call at any given time and is always a bit on edge because of this. Traditional therapy has never been especially helpful and she usually seeks solace from within. Overwhelming demands can sometimes spiral from stress in anxiety attacks, and she needs a tool that can help her manage on her own schedule and within her own means

Needs

- An app that can help guide her through breathing exercises
- A variety of options to help reduce stress and anxiety
- Meditation tool
- Breathing tool

Obstacles

- Leads a busy, hectic life
- Doesn't always know what methods to utilize to mitigate stress and anxiety

Personality

Easygoing

High strung



Introvert

Extrovert



Emotional

Pragmatic



SCENARIO: ANNETTE BLACK

#1

Annette begins her day with an early morning by following a busy work schedule that blends her weekdays and weekends with having to work overtime. Her work is demanding and asks her to be on call for work, so she is usually always beside her phone. She needs to know what she should do to keep in check with work, yet also refrain from experiencing an anxiety attack. The first thing Annette does is check her phone for any missed calls, voicemails, or messages. She then checks her schedule for the day. If she happens to have an on-call meeting, she tries to make note of everything she needs to do after. Often times, she is very overwhelmed with the demand of her work. She wants to decrease her stress and anxiety. Annette doesn't like sharing her personal issues with a therapist. Her cousin suggested the Rootd app and she gives it a try. She sees the Rootr emergency button feature on it and likes how it goes through the process of helping her throughout her panic attack. She likes how it communicates with her and how efficient it is.

#2

Annette is overwhelmed with her stressful job and having to be on call for weekdays and weekends. She feels overworked and needs to destress. She wants to learn more about how she could personally manage her stress and anxiety with methods such as, meditating and breathing. Annette felt very overwhelmed after work and it was late in the day. She decided to use Rootd and the Roor (red emergency button which is specifically for panic attacks). Rootr sends her messages that she can hear through audio by reassuring her that she will be okay and her anxious moment will soon pass. After she calms down, she is praised within Rootd and it reminds her that she is capable of perseverance.

PERSONA #2



Barry Donovan

Age 20

Occupation Full time student

Location Chicago IL

About

Barry is a transfer student at Depaul University. This is his first year at Depaul as a Junior. He doesn't know many people at Depaul but he does have a couple friends that go there. Barry is trying to get used to the new school and keep his grades up while also finding new friends. Barry is also trying to get an internship for the summer. He is overwhelmed with the amount of work that he has to do and is trying to find some relief.

Needs

- A method that can be used at anytime
- A technique that helps with stress
- Something that helps with focusing on what is important to him (school)

Obstacles

- Can't fit in a crowd
- Overwhelmed with school work
- Needs to apply to scholarships, but doesn't know where to start

Personality

Easygoing

High strung



Introvert

Extrovert



Emotional

Pragmatic



SCENARIO: BARRY DONOVAN

#1

Barry likes to start his day with his usual routine by keeping on track with his daily schedule. Being that this is the first year attending his university, he wants to know what he needs to do in order to maintain his good grades, while also trying to be social. The first thing Barry does is check his emails and assignments for the day on his phone. He made a checklist for himself the night before. He prioritizes his schoolwork by going in order with due dates. He then tries to remember if he forgot to add anything to his list. He tends to be overwhelmed with the amount of schoolwork he has to do. Barry wants to balance his school and social life. He wants to alleviate his anxiety and stress. He doesn't like having to write things down on paper. His friend recommended the Rootd app and he checks it out. He sees the 'My Journal' feature on it and likes how it checks in on how his day was. He likes how portable and convenient it is.

#2

Barry is stressed out with having his parents urging him to apply for internships for the summer. He does not know where to begin just yet. Barry feels overwhelmed with keeping a good GPA and also being a full-time student. He also wants to stay social by finding new friends at his university. Barry decided to calm himself down by journaling using Rootd so that he can lay out his thoughts and emotions. Rootd also shows what accomplishments he has done for the day too. After Barry would log his journals, he could then learn to grow from them and see how he could improve on his anxiety.

PERSONA #3



Henry Hudson

Age 24

Occupation Lawyer

Location Los Angeles, California

About

Henry just completed law school and has a substantial amount of debt. Henry is also searching for a job. He cannot seem to find one and is getting a little stressed. Everything he has tried to alleviate his stress has not worked, so he is open to trying something new so that he can learn to cope with his stress and anxiety. When he finds a method that works, he believes that it will help him feel better and move forward with paying his debt and finding a job.

Needs

- An app that can help guide Henry to options of coping with his stress
- A variety of options to help reduce stress and anxiety
- Meditation tool
- Breathing tool

Obstacles

- Has lots of debt from law school
- Cannot find a job
- Doesn't know how to cope with his stress and needs new methods

Personality

Easygoing

High strung



Introvert

Extrovert



Emotional

Pragmatic



SCENARIO: HENRY HUDSON

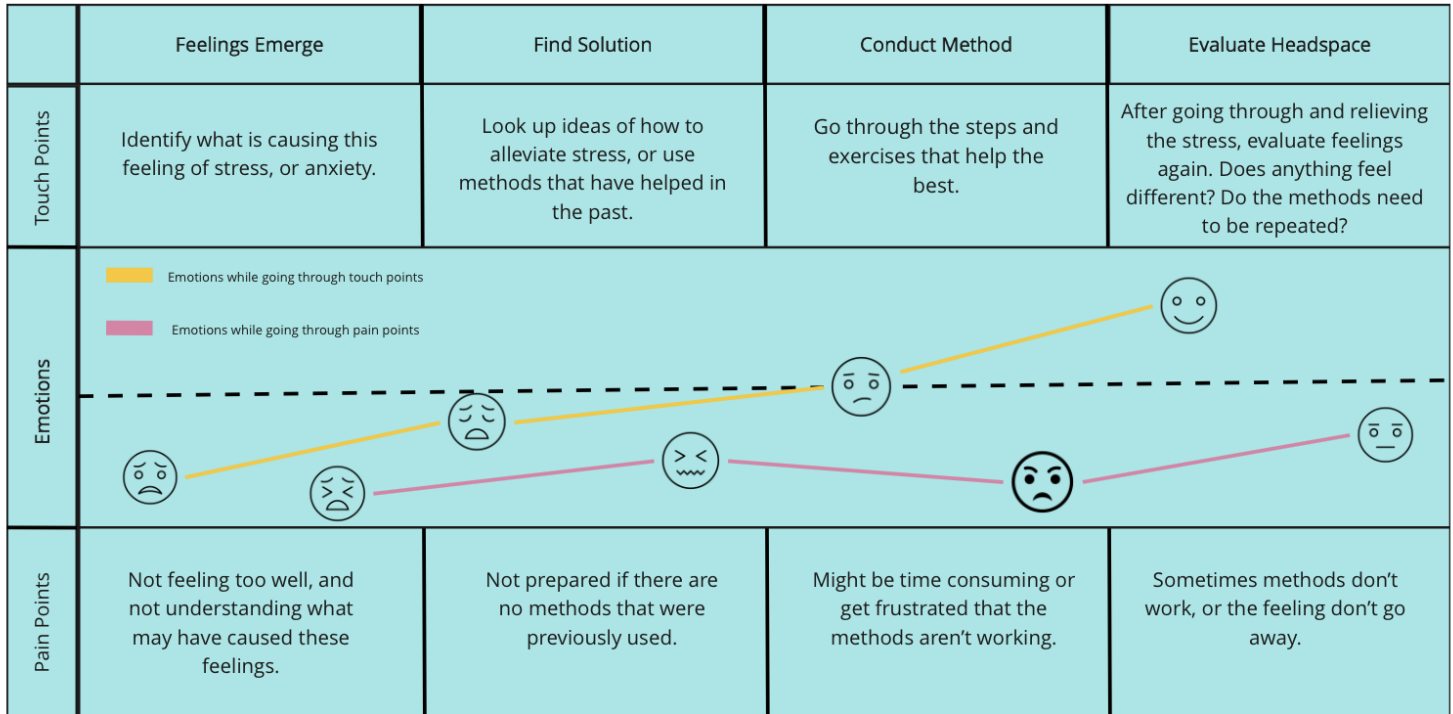
#1

Henry starts his day by checking what he needs to do to prep himself for interviews so that he can land a job. He is a young, newly law graduate and wants to secure a job as a lawyer at a firm and to get out of debt. This process is stressing him out. The first thing he does is check his emails and sees what opportunities there are. He then goes over his resume once more and reviews any questions and/or answers that may come up for future interviews. He organizes his scheduled interviews with his phone with his calendar and keeps a notepad close-by for whenever he needs to remind himself of anything important. He starts to feel stressed with the job hunt. Henry wants to find a job so that he could start paying off his school debt. Henry wants to learn how to cope with his stress and anxiety. He does not know what to do to not feel stressed out. But, he is open to anything that will help him with his journey. His friend tells him about Rootd. Henry is interested in the app and downloads it. He views the 'Understanding Lessons' part of Rootd and reads about the first steps into understanding more about anxiety and ways to cope. He likes how Rootd has those lessons about anxiety and how it provides him with the insight he needs.

#2

Henry is stressed with having the amount of debt that he has and is worried about finding a job as a lawyer to pay it off. He does not know how to cope with his stress. Henry is stressed out from constantly looking for a job. He is open and willing to learn ways to help him reduce his stress and anxiety. Henry started to feel so anxious just before an interview and decided to use Rootd's 'Breathr' tool to calm him down. Rootd equips him with this useful method that helps him relax before an interview.

EXPERIENCE MAP



This is the experience map that was created to visualize the thoughts and feelings of our users. There are four possible phases our users could experience when dealing with stress or anxiety. It starts with the feeling of stress coming to the attention of the individual. Next it goes to the individual wanting to find a solution to help them deal with the stress or anxiety. Then they conduct their method of choice that they believe would help them calm down. And finally, they evaluate their headspace and see how they feel after the fact. Going through these phases, there are touchpoints and pain points. It was decided to represent the emotions of the users during the possible touch points and pain points because they are two different experiences and not every user will have the same reactions. The big takeaway from creating the experience map is understanding the perspective of the user and understanding their process of going through the phases. It is helpful because we can take the research further in finding ways to minimize the pain points as much as possible.

GROUP CONTRIBUTIONS

As a group, we were all able to conduct two interviews each, resulting in eight interviews total. We also all wrote down our interview notes and discussed the similarities and differences we found with each other. Patrick wrote the executive summary and helped organize the document to make sure everything that is needed is included. Selma wrote the findings, created the experience map, and organized the data that was discussed into an affinity diagram. Adam wrote the methods and the personas. Jannah organized the appendix and wrote two scenarios for each of the three different personas. It was easy to collaborate as a group during this user research process, and everyone contributed to the project.

APPENDICES

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Screening Questions: (answer to these questions must be 'yes')

1. Do you currently experience stress or anxiety?
2. Are you interested in new methods to address stress or anxiety?
3. Would you feel comfortable sharing details with me in an interview about your experience with stress and anxiety?

Verbal Consent: For our research, we want to have a better understanding of who our users are and what their goals are. We want to find what causes the users' stress and anxiety, and how they relieve these feelings. The purpose is to collect data and find ways to improve our application. We will be conducting this research by collecting data from our recorded interviews. This research has no known risks. Are you comfortable with me conducting an interview to ask about your experiences with stress and your methods to alleviate stress?

Introduction: Hello! My name is _____ and I am a DePaul student conducting user research to understand more about people who experience stress, anxiety, or panic attacks, as well as what role technology could play in alleviating these feelings. I am hoping you could tell me about your experiences with stress and anxiety and what you do to calm yourself down. This interview should take about 15-20 minutes, but we can stop at any time you would like. Remember that there are no right or wrong answers and we will keep all your answers and responses confidential.

Consent: Before we begin with the interview, I want to let you know that no personal information will be disclosed, and that the data from this interview will be compiled with other interview data for further analysis. Are you comfortable with this interview being recorded? Can we begin the interview?

Interview:

Warm up -

1. Tell me about your daily routine.
2. Is your professional life/student life stressful or overwhelming at times? In what ways?
3. Are there any stressors that affect you in any specific way? How & Why?

APPENDICES

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

General -

1. How often do you feel stressed?
2. How often do these stressed feelings turn into something that feels less manageable?
3. Can you tell me about the last time you felt stressed or anxious?
4. What are some things that cause you to feel this way?
5. Do you turn to other people or become closed off when these feelings arise?
6. Which specific techniques do you use to relieve stress?
7. Which of these techniques are most helpful?
8. Would a mobile app that utilizes anxiety relief techniques be of interest to you?
9. Have you ever used an app to relieve stress? If so, which ones?
10. (If they use an app) Can you tell me about the last time that you used an app to relieve stress? Describe.
11. (If they use an app) What do you enjoy most about the app you use?
12. (If they use an app) How often do you use this app? Is using it a part of a routine?
13. (If they use an app) Why did you decide to use this app?

Deep Focus -

1. What kind of relief do you feel after utilizing techniques like the ones you mentioned?
2. Where did you learn about these techniques? Or did you develop them yourself?
3. Why do you use these techniques to help you alleviate stress or anxiety?
4. What do you find to be most useful/helpful about these methods? What has been least helpful?
5. Are there certain methods you don't find particularly helpful? Why?
6. If there is more than one method that you use, could you describe how one is better than the other or what the difference is between the two? Do they have the same effect on you?
7. Do you think these methods would translate well to an app?
8. What would you like to see in an anxiety/stress relief app?

Wrap Up: Is there anything else you would like to share? Do you have any questions for me? I want to thank you for participating in this interview. Your responses were very useful and will help move our research and evaluation further. If there is nothing else you would like to add, this concludes our interview. Thank you, again.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS: <https://bit.ly/36L86py>

INTERVIEW AUDIO FILES: <https://bit.ly/3rsAm8g>

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INTERVIEW NOTES

ADAM'S NOTES:

Interview 1

- Plans assignments accordingly
- Will look at different internships on a daily basis which can stress him out
- Schoolwork on top of this is overwhelming
- He needs ways to alleviate stress.
- At times his stress can be overwhelming
- Closed off when stressed
- He is an only child aswell
- Goes to room to listen to music when he is stressed
- This is the number 1 way that he copes with his anxiety and stress.
- Music helps with stress
- Drives around
- Plays sports
- An app would be an interest to him
- Has used an app before for stress
- He uses breathing techniques and sports to alleviate some of the stress when it gets to be too much for him
- The app is something he goes to when he is under a lot of stress

Interview 2

- Stresses about schoolwork and covid because it messes with his schedule
- He relies on video games and working out as a huge stress reliever
- He mainly focuses on working out in order to relief the anxiety and stress.
- He does not use an app currently and does not think that it will help
- He would like to see something engaging and a category in an app that keeps your mind off of things
- He finds his stress relievers to be relaxing and soothing.

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INTERVIEW NOTES

SELMA'S NOTES:

Interview 1

- Main stressor = school/school projects
- Group work and not getting in contact with classmates
- Feels stressed/overwhelmed with school every week
- Doesn't let stress affect them too much... and doesn't let it take over their headspace
- Technique: taking mental breaks. Away from phone and computer. Example: cooking
- Plans out a schedule for what they have to get done
- Doesn't turn to other people... keeps to themselves
- Breathing exercises they found online help
- Feels tense in chest when they are stressed, so breathing exercises help
- Interested in using a mobile app that helps relieve stress and anxiety
- Uses an app called 'Headspace'
- Use the app about twice a week
- App has a meditation practice and guided breathing
- Only use app to get themselves in a good mental state... not everytime they are stressed
- These techniques help them because when they feel tense they forget to take those deep breaths

Interview 2

- Main stressor is full time job and covid
- New hire at company and isn't familiar with concepts and is still learning
- But, company/coworkers are a good support system
- Feels constantly in enclosed space because of covid
- Has to work from home and can't leave the house as often
- Can't do the things they used to do like go to concerts, eat out, etc
- Doesn't feel stressed consistently, but there are some moments
- Private person when strugglings, so mostly keeps to themselves
- Knows it is good to ask for help when needed
- Likes to be active. Working out is main stress reliever and is most helpful
- Listens to music and reads as well
- They are all good stress relievers and have the same affect on them after doing them
- All help keep their mind off of things
- Has to distract themselves. Doesn't want to focus on the problem or feeling
- Interested in mobile apps. Never used one before. Wanted to use one but it wasn't free, so they never got it.

APPENDICES

INTERVIEW NOTES

JANNAH'S NOTES:

Interview 1

- Her stressors involve the increase of schoolwork with homework and group meetings.
- She feels stressed about 4 out of the 7 days throughout the week.
- She feels like there is too much to do within the day, but not enough time to do all of it.
- Her stress relief includes going to the gym early in the morning around 4:45am with her overall day ending around 10pm.
- She likes to physically write down things in a journal with a calendar and dates to keep organized.
- She does not like using a mobile phone's calendar because it's confusing.
- She communicates to her best friend when she becomes stressed out.
- She finds that taking a nap at least once a day & having balanced meals throughout the day helps her.
- When stressed, she also talks within her podcast via iTunes and Spotify.
- She utilizes the Apple health app with her Apple watch to keep track of her heart rate and breathing.
- She uses an app called, "I Am" that relieves her anxiety. It gives her positive affirmations and notifies her daily to keep motivated.
- She is open to use an application that may be more interactive with sensory features.

Interview 2

- Her stressors include having 5 classes, being in 3 organizations and leading them, volunteering at an elementary school, having a part-time job, financial concerns, taking care of her younger sister, being in a relationship.
- She feels stressed out often, as in daily.
- She is overwhelmed by all the work to do and with time management.
- She keeps organized by having a journal/notebook to jot down notes and things of importance.
- She wants to be on good terms with everyone.
- She tends to be closed off to not worry others.
- She tries to calm herself down by journaling and drawing.
- Her stress relievers would be to get her nails/hair done, go for a drive, read, watch a movie, or get a tattoo.
- To her, her relievers are a temporary fix -short term
- She does not use an application for when she's anxious/stressed.
- She prefers verbal and physical interaction.
- If she were to use an app, she would like it to be interactive with a community of people.

APPENDICES

INTERVIEW NOTES

PATRICK'S NOTES:

Interview 1

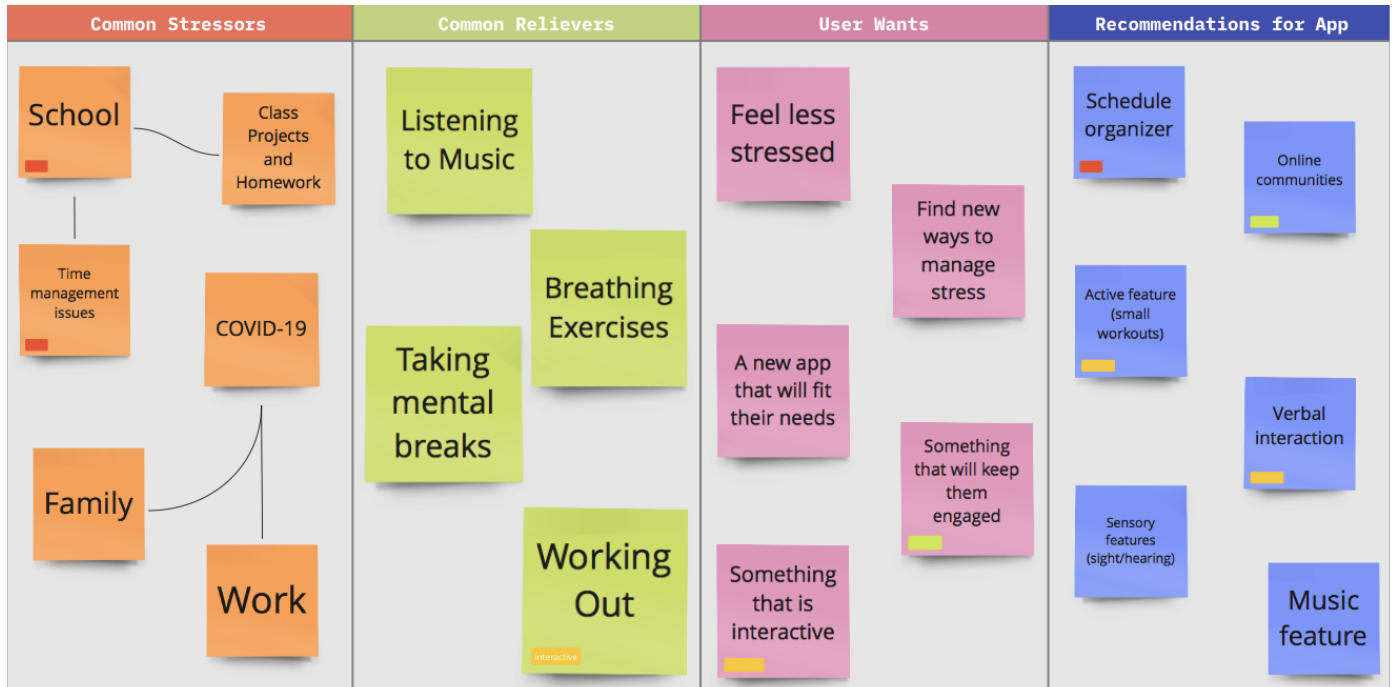
- Holds a demanding job with daily stress point.
- Clients and colleagues are a constant source of stress.
- Issues range from mild stress to panic attacks.
- Used to the feeling, but has learned to manage in one way or another.
- State of the world is a contributor as well as work. Internal and external forces at play.
- Closes off when dealing with these feelings, has used therapy but reverts to internalization mainly.
- Meditation, breathing, journal, reflection
- Uses the “Calm” and “Headspace” apps.
- Would like a tailored experience that is always available, not dependent on others to alleviate. “Choose your own journey” as she puts it. Wide array of options.
- Trouble sleeping
- Hasn't found techniques like ASMR helpful

Interview 2

- Feels a “Groundhog Day” effect at work, causes stress.
- Not a constant state, but certainly feels stress from work related issues. 3-5 times per week.
- Very rarely experiences panic attacks.
- Clients and colleagues cause stress.
- Mainly external causal forces.
- Finds solace in communication when feelings arise. Sense of release.
- Even when anxiety lingers, communication helps extinguish.
- Breathing, yoga, exercise.
- Would like different techniques for different problems in an app, customizable interface.
- Uses “Calm” app.
- Finds that there are techniques that are better suited for short term and long term issues.
- Resolution is all about balance. In life, in techniques, in habits.
- An app would need cover a lot of bases

APPENDICES

AFFINITY DIAGRAM



An affinity diagram is used to organize the data we collected from our interviews, and gather any new ideas that can be used later on. For our affinity diagram, we had four different sections and put notes in each category. We have a category that displays the common stressors our interviewees shared, their common relievers, and their wants. Lastly, we have some recommendations for Rootd that could improve the app based on our research. There are different colored tags on some notes that indicate how they correlate with each other. For example, the red tag is on school and time management issues located in the first column. It is also on schedule organizer in the last column. This shows how the common stressor of the user can be translated in an improved design of our selected app. The notes that have the same colored tag at the bottom right relate to each other in some way, to help us find similarities across all the columns.