frens

Feeling Recorder & Empathy Node Sharing

Mobile App & Responsive Website

Design for Social Good

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September 2021

Project Overview

The Product:

frens is an online community project intended to educate people of all ages on emotion definitions and how to develop empathy. *frens* primary target is adult users like parents and teachers who are concerned with introducing and fostering empathic thinking in their students.

Project Duration:

August 2021 to September 2021.
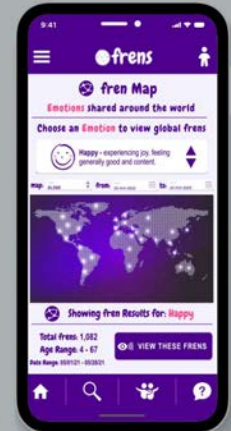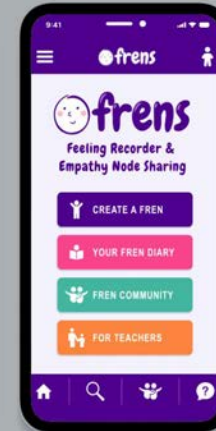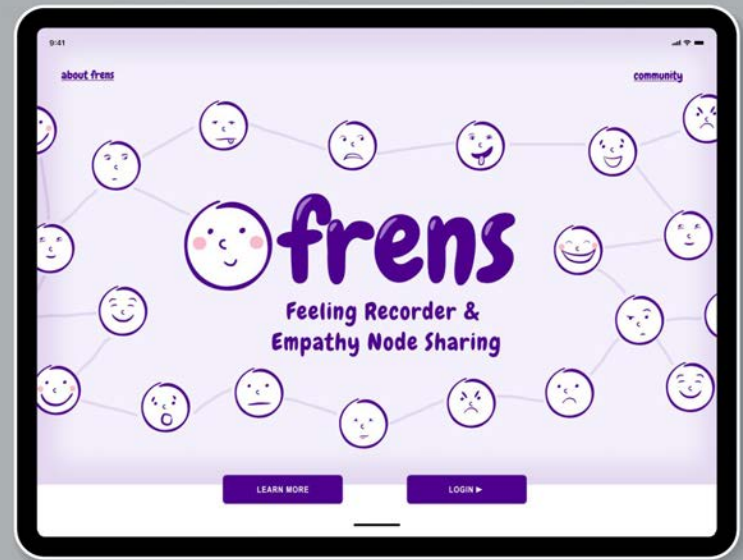
Project Overview

The Problem:
Parents & Teachers need a educational activity that will help them illustrate concepts of emotions and empathy to their students

The Goal:
Design an app that will improve education on the topic of emotions and empathy, by creating an exercise that teachers and parents can use as a lesson plan.

My Role:
UX designer leading the app and responsive website visual and product design from concept to delivery.

My Responsibilities:
Conceiving and conducting user research plans, interviews, and surveys. Synthesizing and diagraming user interviews and usability study data to form insights. Composing paper and digital wireframes and creating low and high-fidelity prototypes via Figma and Adobe Xd. Iterating on designs and progressing user research loops.

Understanding the user

- User Research
- Personas
- Problem Statements
- User Journey Map
- Competitive Audit
- Ideation

User Research

Summary

I conducted interviews and created empathy maps to understand the users I'm designing for and their needs. A primary user group identified through research was: **working parents who want to foster empathic thinking and encourage emotional intelligence and in their children.** This user group confirmed initial assumptions about **frens** customers, but research also revealed that parents were not the only users looking for empathy teaching aids. Other users included teachers that were **seeking out a way to have their students participate in empathy exercises in the classroom**.

Pain Points

1 Time
Working Parents and Teachers need a way to teach concepts of emotions and empathy to adolescents.

2 Accessibility
Online teaching tools are not equipped with many assistive technologies

3 IA
Text-heavy educational websites with too many categories are often difficult to read.

Persona 1: Kevin

Problem Statement:

The user, Kevin, is a married father and electrician that lives in a major city, who needs a fun and engaging way to connect with his kids, because he wants to help develop their emotional vocabulary and foster their capacity for empathic thinking.

Kevin Charles

Age: 43
Education: Technical school
Hometown: Boston, MA
Family: Wife 40, son 12, daughter 10
Occupation: Electrician

"I love teaching my kids about the world and seeing them enjoy learning."

Goals
• Find fun and educational games to play with his kids.
• Find new ways to teach his kids about important things.
• Set a good example for his family.

Frustrations
• *"Sometimes my wife and I are too busy with work and it obviously upsets the kids."*
• *"I need help teaching my kids how to express their feelings."*
• *"I don't want my kids using smartphones until they are at least in high school."*

Kevin has been an electritian for 8 years and works 30-40 hours a week. He prides himself on being a hard worker and likes his job. Kevin was working for a contractor but has recently started a new business of his own making outside house calls to perform electrical home maintenence. He and his wife take turns picking the kids up from school during the week.

Persona 2: Julie

Problem Statement:

The user, Julie, is a married mother and real estate agent that lives in a major city, who needs a fun and engaging way to connect with her kids, because she wants to help develop their emotional vocabulary and foster their capacity for empathic thinking.

Julie Miller

Age: 34
Education: Bachelors
Hometown: Milton, MA
Family: Husband 38, 2 sons (9, 7)
Occupation: Real Estate Agent

"I work long hours, so when I get home my kids tell me all about their day."

Goals
• *Find ways to connect with her kids when she gets home from work.*
• *Support her family financially and emotionally.*
• *Help her kids learn about making new friends.*

Frustrations
• *"I cant get my kids to behave sometimes, they fight with each other too much."*
• *"They like having their friends over after school, but sometimes they can't come over."*
• *"I always check my kids phones and only let them have a few apps because you have to be so careful letting them online."*

Julie has been a Real Estate Agent for 6 years and works 40+ hours a week. She works hard to provide for her family. Her husband is a stay-at home dad and handles most of the house chores. Julie trys hard to make time to reconnect with her family when she gets home. She is looking forward to helping her sons get ready to go back to school in the fall.

User Journey Map

Julie's Journey:

Mapping Julie's user journey revealed how helpful it would be for users to have access to an easily sharable exercise to learn about feelings and emotions.

Persona: Julie Miller

Goal: Show her kids the app and help them make user accounts, do the portrait exercise with them and talk about what they learned about empathy and emotions.

ACTION	User finds the App via Sm	User Creates Account (and family accounts)	Users play the game by building their emotion avatars	User confirms avatar final design	User shares their avatar with their family or class	User explores the other emotion avatar examples
TASK LIST	Tasks A. Notice the ad B. Navigate to the app store by clicking the ad C. Download the app	Tasks A. Create parent Account B. Help kids create their own accounts C. Choose account preferences & create User Bio.	Tasks A. Choose the type of avatar they want to play with (animal, person, word-cloud, ect). B. Select various shapes & colors to design their avatar C. Select a quote for their avatar to describe their current feelings.	Tasks A. Review the final avatar design B. Make any changes C. Confirm the final design depicts how the user "feels"	Tasks A. Share avatar with their family and/or the app's community B. See how the other avatars display symbols of emotions to show how they feel. C. User compares how they feel to other avatars.	Tasks A. Compare your emotion avatar with the avatars of others B. Observe the similarities and differences between the avatars C. User reflects on what they have learned about emotions
FEELING ADJECTIVE	• Interested • Curious • Skeptical	• Confused • Creative • Frustrated	• Confused • Overwhelmed • Inspired	• Overwhelmed • Alert • Nervous	• Empathic • Curious • Surprised	• Excited • Relieved • Disappointed
IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES	• Target ads to users who post about getting kids ready to go back school	• Offer customization options in user accounts • Send text invites to family via app	• Offer examples of avatars • Offer definitions of emotions as well as colors • Make sure to include text for the color blind	• Offer to send an alert to family/friends that their avatar is ready to view • Offer merch with their avatar design printed on it.	• Show positive feedback • Show the comparison of their avatar with a map of avatars around the world	• Incentivize sharing thoughts via app community or sm • Incentivize testimonials of how the app helped you understand the feelings of others

Competitive Audit

The Scope:

An audit of a few competitor's products provided direction on gaps and opportunities to address with the frens app. There were a few direct competitors but they were targeted at very young children, so I decided to skew my app's exercise to appeal to teachers of older adolescents.

Competitive Audit Goal: Identify and understand the effectiveness of products and features currently used to teach emotions										
	General information									
	Competitor type (direct or indirect)	Location (s)	Product offering	Price ($ - $$$$)	Website (URL)	Business size (small, medium, large)	Target audience	Unique value proposition	Desktop website experience	App or mobile website experience
okplay	Direct	Online, Global	App and website that offers emotional games excercises for kids	$	www.okplav.co	Large	Young children & teachers	"Where Kids Create the Story"	Good + Strong, consistent branding + Easy to navigate - Lots of complicated features	Good + Strong, consistent branding + Easy to navigate + All features are useful
toca pet doctor	Direct	Online, Global	App and website that offers emotional games excercises for kids	$	www.toca boca.com	Large	Young children & teachers	"capture the power of play."	Outstanding + Easy to navigate + Strong branding and visual design + All features are useful and intuitive	Outstanding + Easy to navigate + Strong branding and visual design + All features are useful and intuitive
itouchilearn	Indirect	Online, Global	App and website that offers routine building exercises for kids	$	www.itou chilearn-life-skills.com	Medium	Young children & teachers	"Immerse your child into the virtual world of morning routines"	Okay + Easy to navigate - Feels like it's missing some useful features	Okay + Easy to navigate - Feels like it's missing some useful features

s & empathy to kids						
UX (rated: needs work, okay, good, or outstanding)						
Features	Accessibility	User flow	Navigation	Brand identity	Tone	Descriptiveness
Outstanding + Personalized story feature -	Good + Strong use of visuals + Use of color is accessibility-friendly	Good + process is clear and straightforward - Using some features is time	Outstanding + Straightforward navigation + Clear indication of clickable elements + Consistently	Outstanding + Strong brand identify reflected throughout design + Consistently	aligns well with branding.	Outstanding + Conveys information clearly + Descriptions are succinct and
Okay + Engaging Visuals - Walls of Text	Outstanding + Strong use of visuals + Use of color is accessibility-friendly	Good + clear and straightforward - difficult to complete due to manual entry	Good + Comprehensive navigation menu - Offering so many supplier options is overwhelming at	Outstanding + Strong brand identify reflected throughout design + Consistently	playful and humorous	Okay + Descriptions are succinct and to-the-point - Information is not always easy
Needs work - Inconsistent use of visuals	Needs work - no specific callouts	Good + Quick and easy to use ordering process	Needs work - Some clickable elements are not indicated well or clearly marked - Navigation direction	Okay - Simple visual design - Inconsistent font usage	Formal but friendly	Okay - Conveys information inconsistently - Overly descriptive at

Click to view the full competitive audit and audit report
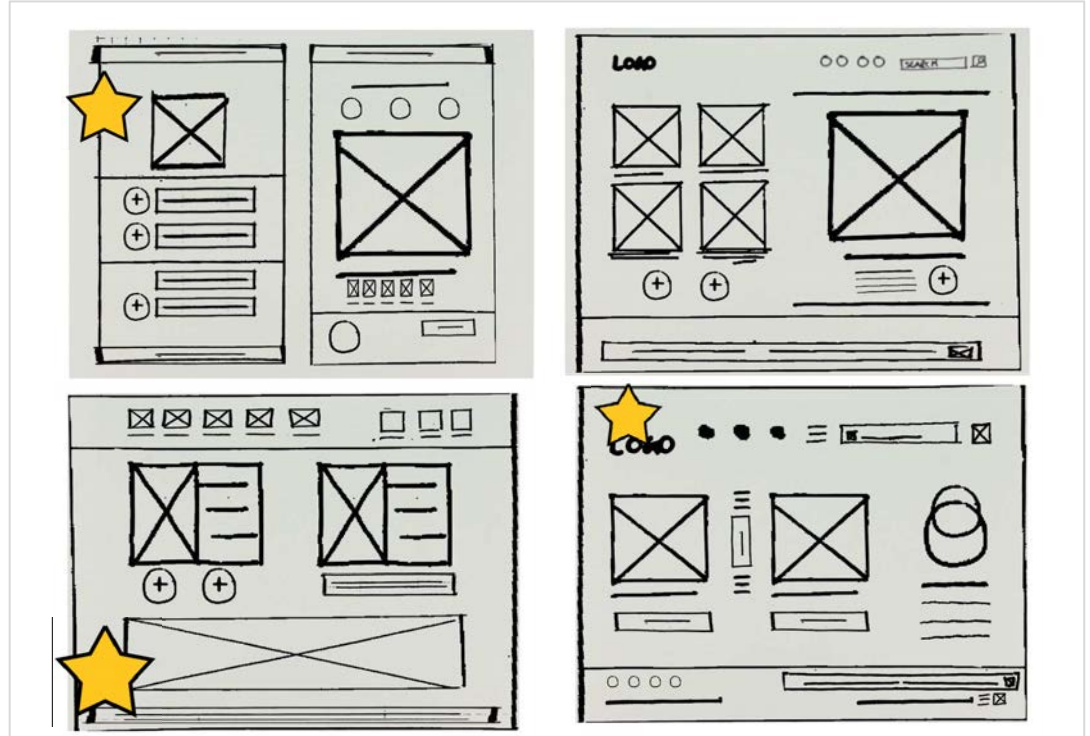
Ideation

Initial Ideas:

I did a quick ideation exercise to come up with concepts for a learning exercise to teach empathy and that incorporated my findings from the competitive audit. My focus was specifically on **creating an interactive game or activity that encouraged expressing feelings.**

Paper Wireframes

Planning the Design:

Taking the time to draft iterations of each screen of the site on paper ensured that the elements that made it to digital wireframes would be well-suited to address user pain points. For the home screen, I prioritized a **quick action selection process** to help users save time.

Stars were used to mark the elements of each sketch that would be used in the initial digital wireframes.

Starting the Design

- Digital Wireframes
- Low-fi Prototype
- Usability Studies

Digital Wireframes

Planning the Design:

After ideating and drafting some paper wireframes, I created the initial designs for the frens app. These designs focused on guiding users through the steps of the empathy excercise.

Top text acts as a guide through the empathy excercise

Easy access to app features from global navigation
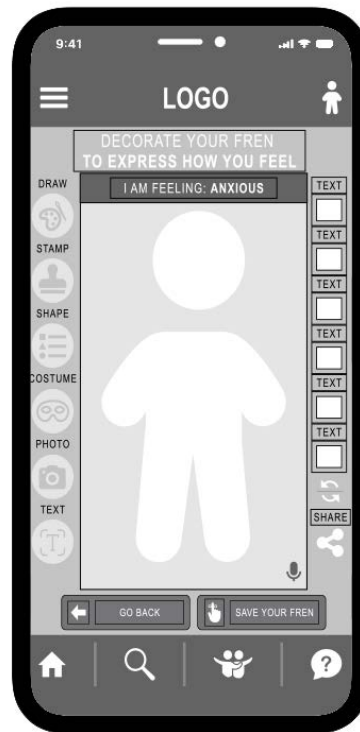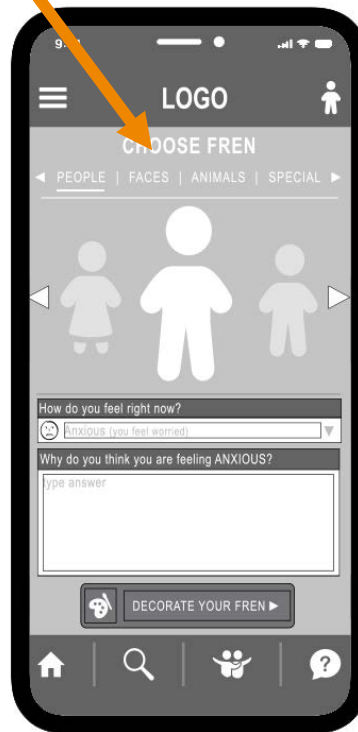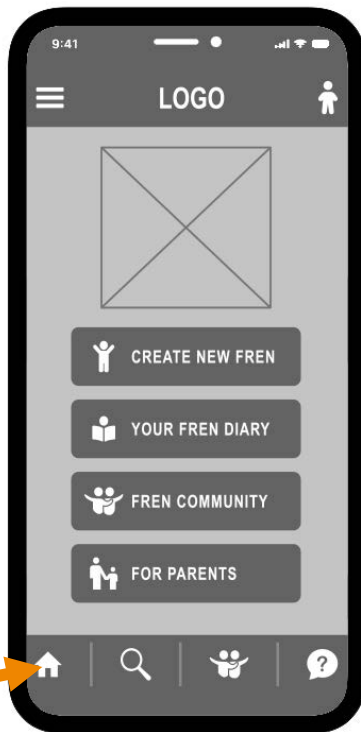
Low-fi Prototype

Connecting the Design:

Using the completed set of digital wireframes, I created a low-fidelity prototype. The primary user flow I connected was performing the empathy excercise, so the prototype could be used in a usability study.
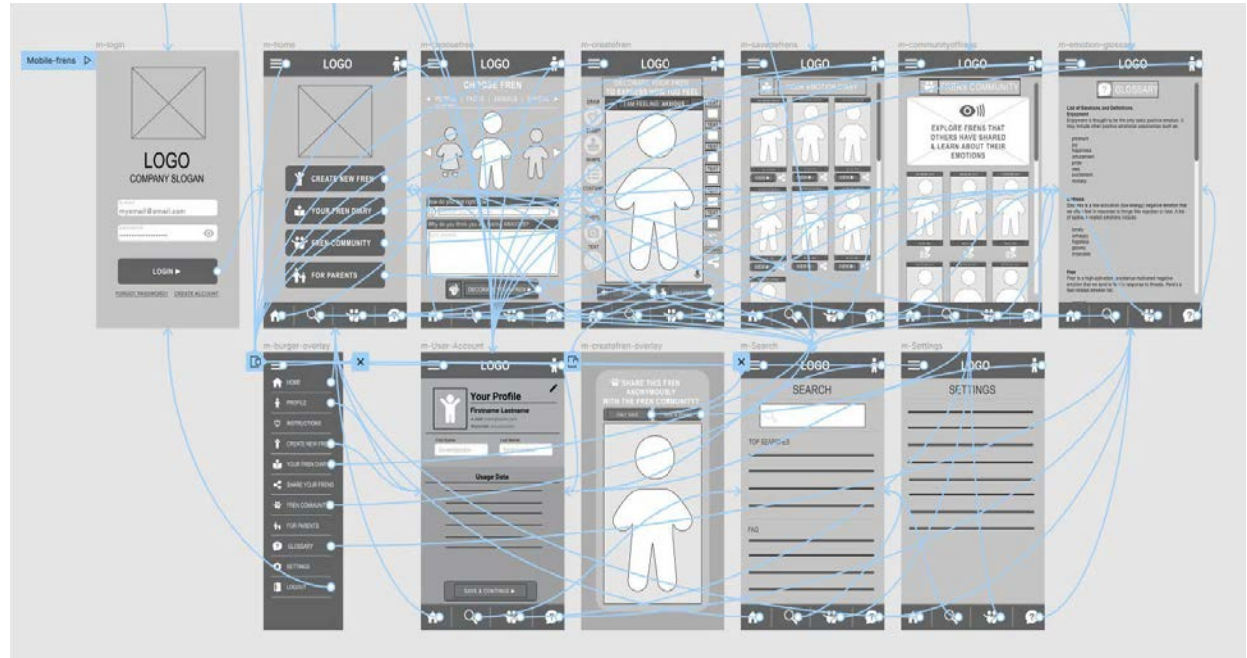
View the *frens* low-fi prototype

Usability Study: Parameters

Study Type:
Unmoderated usability study

Location:
USA, remote

Participants:
5 participants

Length:
30-60 minutes

Usability Study: Findings

These were the main findings uncovered by the usability study:

1

Useful

Parents want engaging ways to teach their kids about emotional intelligence and empathy.

2

Step Numbers

People had difficulty following the steps of the exercise in order.

3

Customization

People wanted lots of options for the design phase of the exercise.

Refining the Design

- Design System
- Mockups
- High-fidelity prototype
- Accessibility

Design System

Creating the Design Assets:

The site utilizes an "education for all" business model, so I designed art assets and chose colors that leaned toward a friendly but also thoughtful and emotional aesthetic.

A main sans-serif font was chosen for instructional text, as well as a more charming font to appeal to adolescent audiences.

frens

Feeling Recorder &
Empathy Node Sharing

Fonts:

Arial Narrow
Arial Narrow Bold
chewy regular

Colors:

Graphics & Icons:

Mockups

Refining the Design:

Based on the insights from the usability studies, I applied design changes like providing clearer calls to action on the homepage, and removing the word "parent" and replacing it with "teacher".
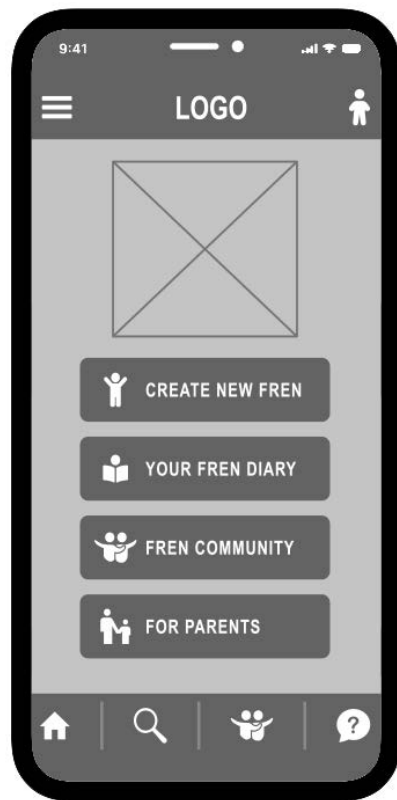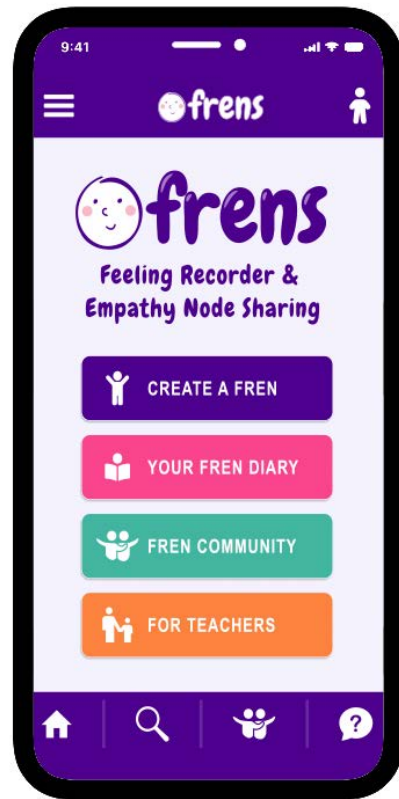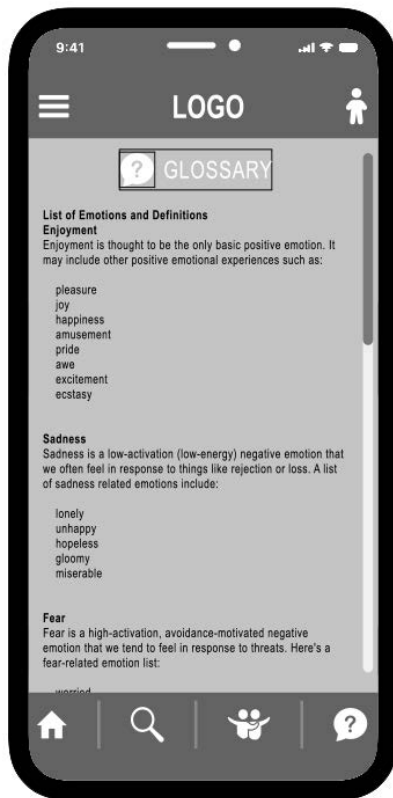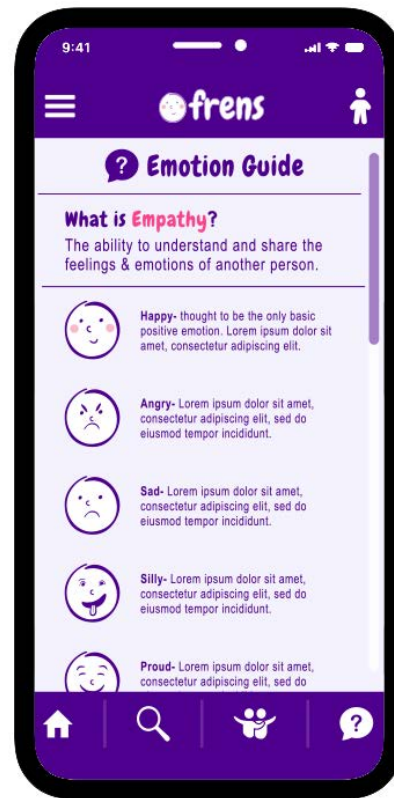
Mockups

Refining the Design:

Additional design changes included adding more illustrations to the emotion guide, as well as breaking up the definitions to read more clearly to the user.
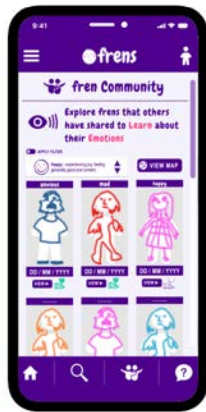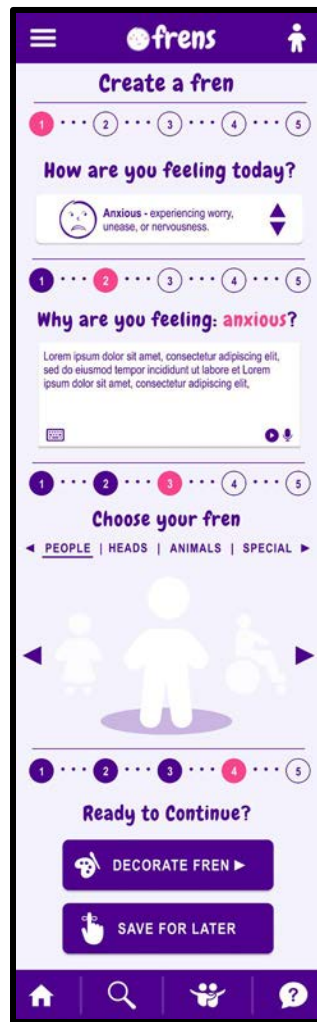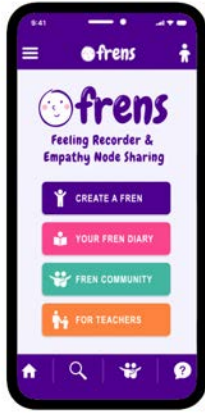
Key Mockups

High-fi Prototype

Finalizing the Design:

The final high-fidelity prototype presented **cleaner user flows** for performing the empathy teaching activity. It also **met user needs** for allowing more customization options for their personal fren portrait.
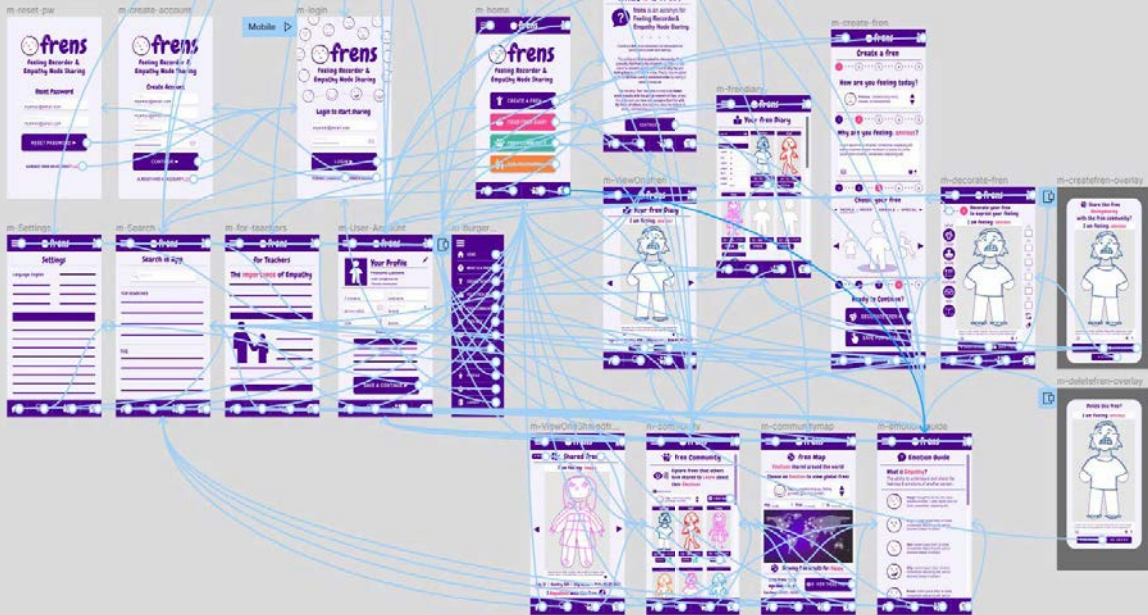
View the *frens* high-fi prototype

Accessibility Considerations

1

Provided access
to users who are vision
impaired through adding
alt text to images for
screen readers.

2

Used icons to
help make
navigation easier, and a
chronological numbering
system for step by step
guidance through the
empathy teaching exercise.

3

Used illustrations to
help all users better
understand
the flow and allow them to
better review their own
profile

Responsive Design

- Information architecture
- Responsive design

Sitemap

Organizing the Design:

With the app designs completed, I started work on designing the responsive website. I used the App's sitemap to guide the organizational structure of each screen's design to ensure a cohesive and consistent experience across devices. I made sure to consider the users journey when constructing the sitemap. My research suggested that most users would prefer to just browse and not have to sign in until they want to participate, so I structured the site around that option.
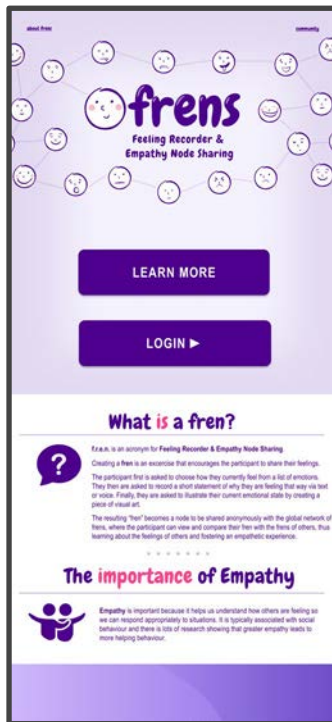

FRENS | SITEMAP
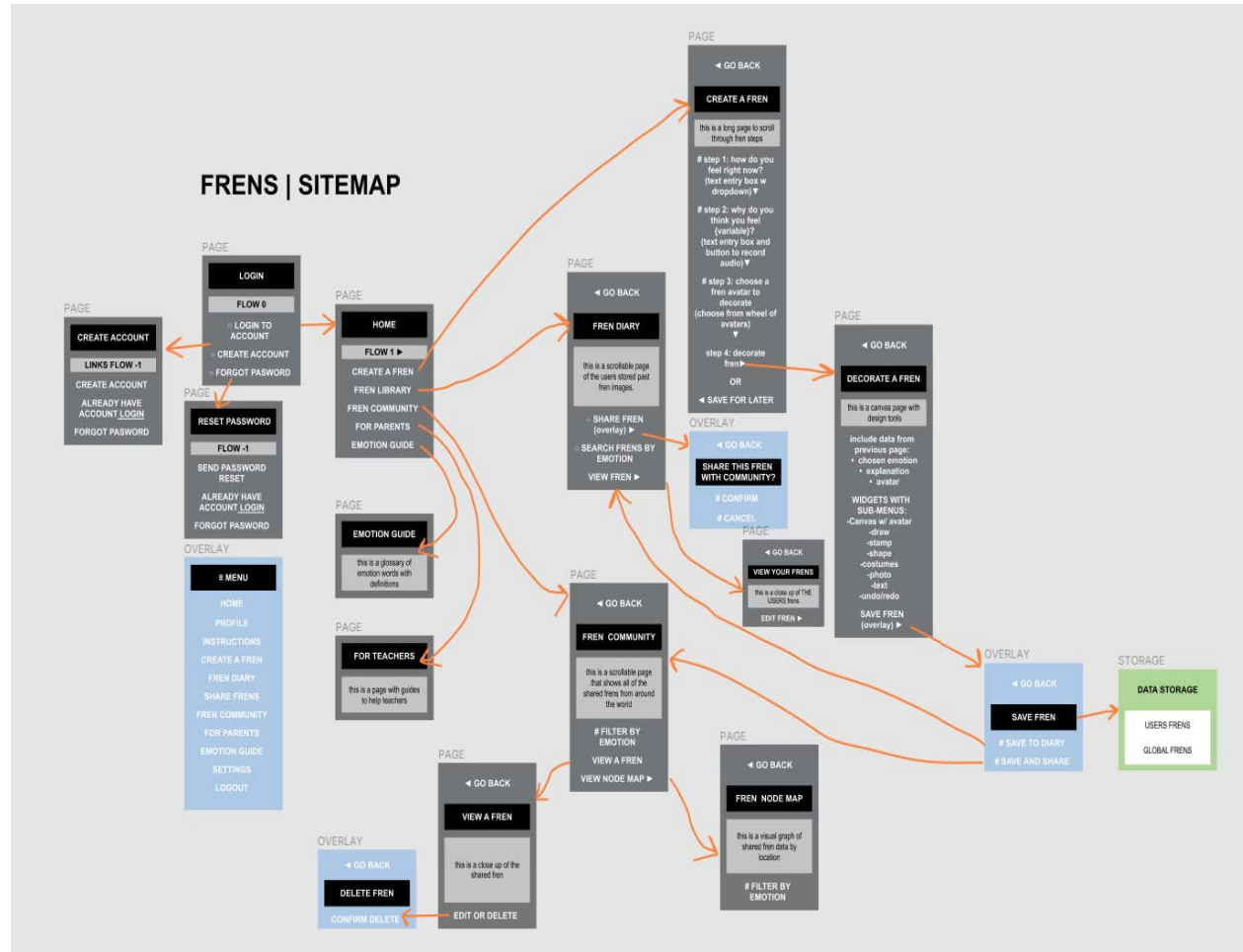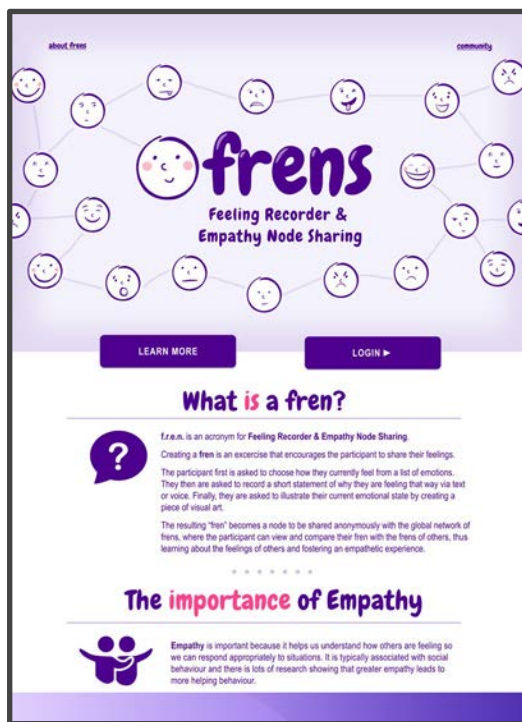
Responsive Designs

Diversifying the Design:

The designs for screen size variation included mobile, tablet, and desktop. I optimized the designs to fit specific user needs of each device and screen size.

Going forward

- Takeaways
- Next steps

Takeaways

Impact:

The Website makes users feel like *frens* really thinks about how to meet their needs.

One quote from peer feedback:
"The site made it very easy to compare my emotions to the emotions of others. I would definitely use this to teach my kids about empathy and their feelings."

What I learned:

While designing the *frens* website, I learned that the first ideas for the site really are only the beginning of the process. Usability studies and peer feedback influenced each iteration of the site's designs. I plan to continue testing the site and add features to eventually release frens as a free app onto the iOS and android mobile markets, and also publish the frens website.

Next Steps

1

Conduct another round of usability studies to validate whether the pain points users experienced have been effectively addressed.

2

Conduct more user research to determine how the site will function on the side of the Teachers- can there be a separate process that they can use to plan more empathy lessons on their end?

3

Conduct more user research to determine if users would like to be able to interact directly with one another more through the app.

Let's connect!

Thank you for your time reviewing my work on the *frens* project!
If you'd like to see more or get in touch, my contact information is provided below.

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