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CART 360 - Tangible media

Proposal

Github repository:

https://github.com/DionRosemarie/CART360-2019

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When it came the time to think about this proposal, I started to relfect on my life. What is an issue right now, and moreover, what is a problem that I share with the rest of my entourage. Stress and anxiety are taboo subjects that most students go through at least once in their life but won't talk about it. My project, named Theo, would be a little robotic plant that would help people feel better.

It is not a surprise when it comes to studying, students are pros at procrastination. Compare to adults, we often have difficulty to manage the different spheres of our life. The real answer to this problem would be organization. Everything is possible and accomplishable if we were following a schedule and be prepared. Due to this situation, more and more young adults and children start to feel anxious. Ours unbalance life cause stressful situations in which can result in various problems. Of course, we can't change our bad habits just like that. We need a little bit of discipline and help to get there. This is where Theo comes into place. This project would be used during a student's study sessions for example. Due to their busy schedules, they will always do everything last minute. By putting the robot next to their books, this little helper would try to teach them relaxation methods. The brain needs breaks; otherwise, it won't be useful. By having it close to them, when stressed out, the user can take in his hand, and Theo would help them relax. It may sound a little childish, but this project would be for students studying at their desks or even young children to fall asleep. Theo needs to be seen as a supporter and not a solution. Everybody is different and has its ways to succeed. This is why this project is intended as a reminder of changing habits instead of forcing them on the users.

In this state of mind, the relationship between the project and the user needs to be an independent one. Theo is guiding the user by suggesting techniques to relax instead of forcing it on him. Otherwise, the problem would never be solved, and the project would have no purpose. This why Theo would be passing by, and once the user feels better, he can give it to someone else in need of a little help. With this intent, the project would make the users understand that they can accomplish day to day task that seems impossible if they take the time and adopt the right attitude. By giving Theo to another person once they are feeling better, this action would make them reflect on how anxiety is more present than they might think. Everybody is overwhelmed at some points, and we may feel alone when it arrives. By acknowledging the crisis, the hope for this project is to make the stigma disappear. The gesture of taking the happiness of their peer into consideration would make people more comfortable to talk about the situation. By receiving Theo, people would talk about their anxiety, and this would help them feel better without even realizing it. This project would only be the beginning of a long healing process. This little helper would be there to support the user, but like

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mentioned before, we all have different ways to see things. For some people, Theo would just be a tool to take a break while studying. For others, it would their first step to feeling better.

This project does not have a specific solution for every problems. If it were the case, it would only reach out to a small portion of our society. It needs that have general functions just like distracting or relax the user. But with these two settings, the users can use them at their advantage. For some people, it could be a friendly attention during their day; for others, it would be a moment to take their mind off and reflect on their day. Like mentioned before, Theo does not have the intention to force the users to do something in a specific way. In another way, it would challenge them to rethink their habits. If Theo is there with you, probably something could be better in your life. Just having next to you may bring up some questions about your mental health and lifestyle. This project would only be the starting point of the equation. It would help physically be being there and distracting and helping you to relax, but also to reflect on yourself. Maybe you don't want to have this object next to you all the time, so what can you do to help you feel better by yourself? This project is meant to start a discussion and be the trigger to evolve as a better version of yourself. It is rare that we reach for help and put ourselves in a vulnerable position. Theo would be the first step: accepting that something does not feel right. This realization would challenge the users to take measures in their hands and find a solution by themselves. It is more gratifying to succeed on our own than the following solution made for everyone.

Growing up, I never felt stress. I would go to school, to my extracurricular activities and then would have time to hang out with my friends. Being used to this lifestyle, I never changed it. I slowly started to feel like I was suffocating times to times, but I never considered it. A few years later, I was in a stressful situation and was not able to calm myself down. When I have a problem, I always find a solution, but this time was different. It took me a long time before I reached out for help, which caused unwanted situations. Looking back, I would have like to have a tool to help me manage my anxiety. Realizing it sooner would have been better for my health. I am now growing mentally by finding solutions by myself and also by talking about it. By opening up to my entourage, I have come to realize that I am not alone in this situation. From this whole situation, I have come up with this project. With Theo, I want it to tell people that they can be a better version of themselves if they take the time for it. That with everything that goes on in your life, you just have to take a break and think about yourself. Mental health has been a growing issue in scholar institutions in the last few years. Not because it was not existing, but just because we are taking it more and more into consideration. This

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project was designed in this state of mind. Not to force people and put more stress on them, but make them understand their situation. Theo is a robotic plant that would be a reminder that would help you understand that even if you have a busy lifestyle, your well being should not be pushed aside.

With all of this in mind, Theo is a little companion during your day. Either while you are studying or trying to relax, this object will be there if you needed. Activated by touch with the help of sensors, Theo would wake up and ask you what you want. With the help of speech recognition, the user would have to say either "distract me" or "relax me." For the first command, Theo would dance a little to put a smile on the user's face. For the second one, he would project light to help the user takes deep breaths. I am not sure yet how this project will look like, but for now, we can see it has a small plant in a round vase to be easy to hold in their hands and leaves for movements and distract. The physical aspect is not determined entirely but would turn around the same idea to fit in the decor and not look like a stressless object.

There is a lot of toys or objects that have been created in the past few years that can reproduce human interactions. For example, Siri, which was designed to help its users, can also have a conversation if desired. The power of artificial intelligence and technological advancements lead us to some fascinating new ideas, just like Leka: the interactive smart toy. At first look, this invention can seem boring since it is a white plastic ball. But once it is activated, there is a new world opening up to us. Leka can move around on the floor and go where ever it wants to go. Activated by the touch of our hands, this toy offers many options to interact with its users. Games can be played with our without Leka with the help of an iPad next to it. For example, Leka will display an image on his screen, and the user has to recognize which one it is on his screen. This toy was intended to be fun for the children, but also help kids with specials needs. It encourages social interactions on long term steps by steps. In addition to this function, there are lights, sounds, and vibration coming off the robot to explore different senses. Overall, Theo would be seen as the brother of Leka. Both are robotic toys that are intended to help their users by distracting them. They both have emotional value incorporated into their conception to make the user feel better. Leka, the Interactive smart toy combines both worlds to please everyone: healing and amusement.

https://thegadgetflow.com/portfolio/interactive-smart-toy/

One of the contributed factors to anxiety and stress starts with a bad night. Without the right amount of sleep, we often become angrier and more sensible to little things. This scenario can also be flip in the way that if

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you had a stressful day, your night of sleep will not be as fulfilling that it should be. With this in mind, sleep deprivation is an infinite circle. Situations can grow out of proportion if we are too tired. Our crazy schedules are often one of the main reasons for our lack of sleep. Just like every one of us, Mark Zuckerberg's wife, Priscilla Chan, had difficulty to sleep. To help her, the creator of Facebook decided to create a tool that would resolve this situation. Simple but efficient, the idea was a smart light that would light up if it was time to get up. When we wake up in the middle of the night, we look at our clock and then calculate how much time we have left. This action can result in not sleeping at all because we know that we do not have a lot of time left. Instead of telling the time with numbers, the Smart Lighting Sleep System is telling the user with light. With the help of an app, the colors and the time can be adjusted depending on their preferences. This little box is a nice gadget to have on your nightstand if you wake up often during the night and wondering how much time left you have. This creation is pretty simple, but sometimes, simple objects are better than the one with a hundred features that are not useful in the end.

https://thegadgetflow.com/portfolio/smart-lighting-sleep-system/

Kids or even adults are always attracted to the unordinary. We still want more and want the best of everything. When it comes to technology, it is the same situation. Why have an ordinary toy when you can have one that has lighted up that can interact with you? As simple as that, companies started to develop new objects that would respond to those new criteria. When it comes to children, the possibilities are endless. Fascinated with the simplest thing, coming up with a new product is not that complicated. Echo has known success, and it does not come as a surprise that Amazon wanted to take advantage of this situation. This is why Amazon Echo Glow Companion Lamp came to life. This little sphere is a light that is meant to distract children, either if they are going to sleep or they want to have fun! By touching the top of the lamp, Echo will display a different range of colors. If wanted, they can be adjusted for the desired ambiance. Even though it seems designed for a younger public, it can also be used by adults. It can be useful as a nightstand light to help you go to sleep instead of having a big light up. The range of colors changing slowly can be seen as an excellent tool to help relax or escape your mind. This multifunctional lamp is a fun little addition to your day for your children to have fun, or even for you to relax after a long day at work!

https://thegadgetflow.com/portfolio/amazon-echo-glow/

These three similar projects have provided me information and inspiration for mine. I knew at the beginning that Theo would not be a first seen type of creation. After looking up for these inventions, I asked myself how

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can mine be different? How can the user benefit from mine, and what could it offers that the others do not? They all have good intentions in mind, but the one thing that they do not provide is the well being of the user. In my opinion, what is the most important thing is the human being, the object, and not the money. Those projects want to become part of their life so they can sell them more products. My project has the philosophy of only passing by, help the user, and then help somebody in need. All those projects offer specific solutions to intervene in a situation. It is the opposite of Theo. His functions are simple, but the users can do and think what they want. They only want to be distracted, then look at him move. They want to calm down, takes a deep breath by following its movements. It will not only help the user but also ask him to reflect on himself to find solutions by himself. My project has the same function as the others, but compare to them; mine offers the possibility to learn something from it and grow for there. We are better at realizing our bad habits
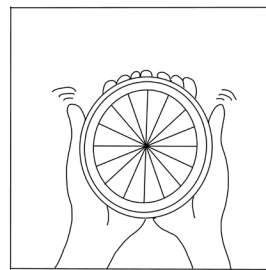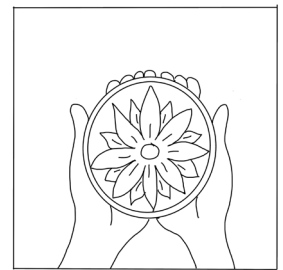
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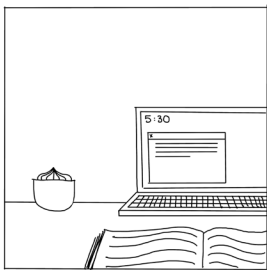
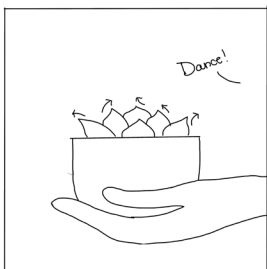The student
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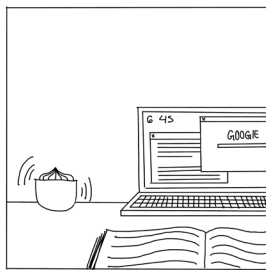
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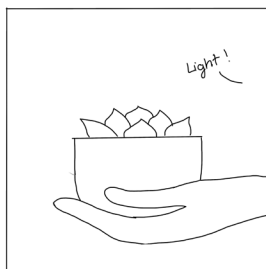The student takes it
if he needs to.

The sensors feel
there is somebody
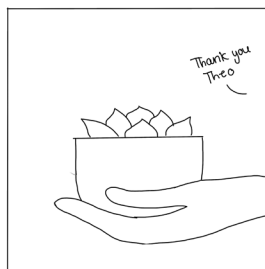and it's now listening.
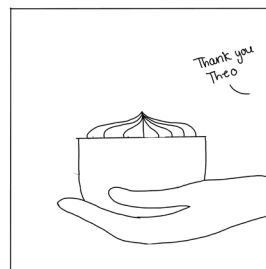
By saying hi, Theo
wakes up and
open up.

The student ask it to
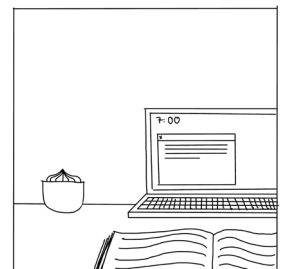dance. The leaves
starts moving.

The student ask it
to light up. The pot
is showing different
colors.

When finished, the
student says thank
you to Theo.

Theo close up.

The studend can go
back to studying.