Technology as a Functional Tool in the Grieving Process

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Abstract

There is little technology aimed specifically at the bereaved to support them through their grief journey. Based on information provided by people who have participated in or moderated grief support groups, we have prototyped a mobile application to support the bereaved.

Background

Loss and grief are unfortunate events that everyone will experience in their lifetime. In such a sensitive time, the bereaved need support and tools to help them through their grieving process. Grief is often treated as a taboo subject and many people do not know how to handle their grief or support others who are grieving.

Methods

- 95 participants who had attended in-person and/or online grief support groups completed a survey about their grief and technology use.
- We conducted interviews with 8 participants and 2 support group coordinators.
- We used iterative, inductive analysis to identify prominent themes regarding patient's grief.
- These themes influenced our app design as we wanted to support of a variety of grievers and their loved ones.

Prototype of Application
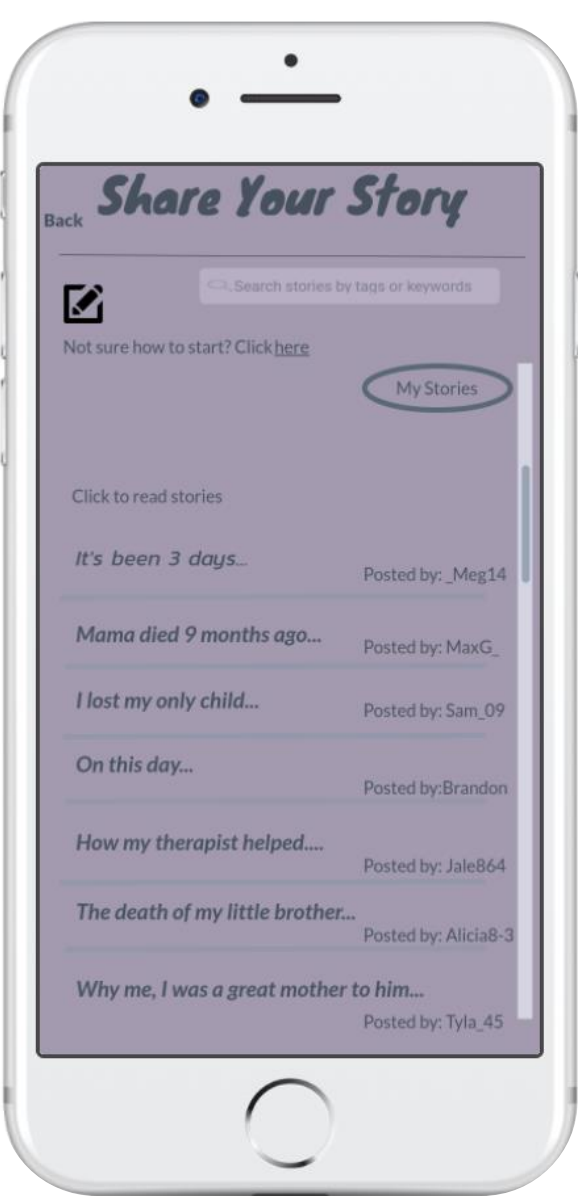

Fig. 1. Rate Your Day
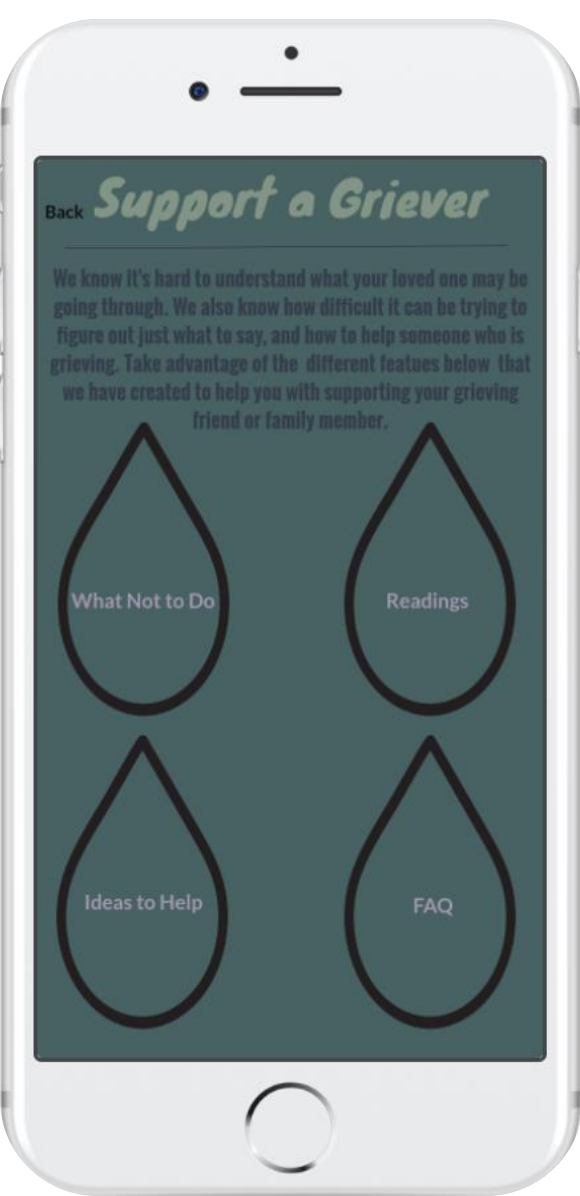
Fig. 2. Share Your Story

Fig. 3. Support a Griever

Participant Quotes

"I've mostly used technology to read about suicide, the grieving process, and online support groups."-Participant 18

"Just knowing others feel the same things [I] do, helps." -Participant 28

Acknowledgements

Findings

4 main themes
1. Connection- grievers want to know that they are not alone and there are other people who understand their experience
2. Reading- reading articles and other griever's stories was very important to our participants
3. Legacy- even though someone has passed away, their memory lives on
4. Flexibility- participants liked having the ability to find the best fit for them within online and in-person support groups

Implications for Design

Based on data from survey results and interviews, to support grievers we prototyped a mobile application. We incorporated the common themes of the survey responses into the app to best meet the needs of potential users. Some features include rate how you're feeling, readings about grief, a place to write and read stories, and support a griever.

Future Work

Future work in this area will focus on building and testing the effectiveness of our application. Additionally, we would like to investigate the use of music within the grieving process and integrate it into our application.