Desk Research

Blog: Takk App: Managing Mental Load in Long-Term Relationships

In this article about the "Takk App," the design process of a mobile app for managing mental load in long-term relationships is described. It's very interesting to see what steps the author took and their experience with the design process.

First, the author states the problem that "mental load frequently falls disproportionately on women" and then sets the goal of tackling "mental load in long-term relationships by promoting a culture of appreciation." The second section highlights key features in the final product, like a chat, animated gratitude interactions, and household management tools. Then, there's the main section on the UX Design Process, starting with interviews of users and experts, analysis, ideation, wireframing, testing, and even some branding, followed by Hi-Fi prototyping with more testing. The main takeaways are that there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution when it comes to parenting, and that you shouldn't focus too much on the first idea (here: a home management tool and educational resource on mental load) but instead explore more ideas and get inspired by research and interviews.

I think these main takeaways will also be important for our product: not to fall into the trap of trying to satisfy all users, and to explore ideas before fixating on one. A more specific insight about visualization is that mental load isn't just about the actual amount of labor but also about how we perceive it, for example, whether we feel it's fairly divided and if we feel appreciated.

https://www.magdalena-guranova.com/takk-app-design

Blog: How my Husband and I use Productivity Apps to Share the "Mental Load"

A woman explains in this blog how she and her husband manage mental load and the productivity apps they use. She describes tools like Google Calendar, Todoist, Anylist, and Google Docs. The key feature is their ability to share information, such as having a common calendar and the ability to see each other's events, which allows them to fix events together without having to ask if the other is available. They can also add items to a shared shopping list.

In my opinion, this takes away a lot of the managing work but doesn't address emotions or interpersonal conflicts, which can also play a big role in mental load.

https://medium.com/@nishachittal/how-my-husband-and-i-use-productivity-apps-to-share-the-mental-load-2d62567eb78a

Test: Mental Load - Do you Equal Care?

On this website you can find a mental load test for your household. All members have to make crosses on all different types of tasks in the household, depending if the person does or thinks about the given task. Different types of tasks give different amounts of points and in the end you sum up all your points and compare them to the points of the other members of the household.

https://equalcareday.org/mental-load/

App: Tadoo

The App Tadoo is an app made for household organization. In the app you can create todos and notes, which all household members can see. There is also a shopping list and an expense tracker. But the main part of the app is a household task tracker. The users of the app can enter the tasks that they have done, together with the duration and the type of the task. For every task the user then gets stars. The total number of stars can be compared with the other members of the household.

https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ch.thiapps.tadoo&pcampaignid=web_share&pli=1

https://apps.apple.com/ch/app/tadoo/id6482297151

Article: The Mental Load

This Website focuses on different Mental Load Types (Professional, Personal and Emotional), signs that hint somebody having issues with Mental Load (Physical/Mental fatigue, sleep disorder, poor management of emotions, memory problems, greater anxiety, tension with people, lower efficiency) and possible ways to solve them (become aware, practice assertiveness, communication, delegate, take care of yourself, sort your task, use modern tools, seek help from therapist).

http://www.c2.care/en/the-mental-load/

Event ZHAW: Der ständige Stress im Kopf – Mental Load erkennen und reduzieren

At ZHAW, there was an event earlier this year (link to slides at bottom) which was trying to use a more visual approach about mental load, either with a consultant or on their own. They consist of cards representing drawings on scenarios and possible questions to ponder on the backsides. These cards are divided into seven categories:

1. Me
2. Concrete Tasks
3. Management Thinking
4. Emotional Load
5. Metaparenting
6. Anything else?
7. Strategies

The idea was to pick any fitting scenarios from categories 1-5, each category colored differently, to describe their feeling or a situation they wanted to analyze and figure out by separating the cards how much they affect each other. Then, we can choose cards from 6 and, if needed at any point, also turn those cards around to think more about the scenarios represented. At the end they can use the strategy cards to figure out how to reduce mental load. If possible, the affected person can then talk to their partner or family members to figure out how they can assist each other.

https://www.zhaw.ch/de/psychologie/studium/daten/event-detailansicht/event-news/event-reihe-raum-fuer-psychologie-mental-load-erkennen-und-reduzieren/

Article: How to Manage Mental Load: 10 Strategies to Achieve Balance

The article explains symptoms of mental load and how to overcome or prevent it in the future. The symptoms include stress, fatigue, burnout, reduced performance, anxiety, burnout, sleep deprivation and health-related issues. Among others, the most important strategies to overcome mental load include not to be a perfectionist, learn to trust others and delegate work, regularly communicate with other people in the household, establish regular routines, break large tasks into smaller milestones and finally, adapt responsibilities, commitments and tasks regularly according to one's mental state. Besides that, the author also defines three types of mental load stated in research (https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10648-010-9128-5). The first being intrinsic load which is created due to the complexity of a task which overwhelms a person due to its difficulty and/or amount of information. Next, unnecessary cognitive effort caused by external distractions (like cooking a new recipe while trying to multitask) causes extraneous load. Finally, germane load is induced by cognitive effort needed to learn or understand new information or a new skill.

https://www.scienceofpeople.com/mental-load/

Blog: How We Manage Chores (Without Losing Our Minds)

In the blog post a couple shares its strategy for managing tasks after having kids and being overwhelmed with the mental load. The strategy consists of creating a spreadsheet together where all tasks are sorted in two groups of tasks: the evergreen tasks which are tasks that the same person does every time since he/she might like to do it or might be better at doing it; The other category are the swap system tasks which encompasses all tasks that are too

daunting to do every week. These are put in two groups of tasks which alternate between the couple. However, the probably most important insight is that one should constantly adapt the tasks and the plan according to the current situation by communicating with the partner. Besides that, the comments also contained some interesting insights like that some people might not like planning everything; One must set priorities to tasks and if one is overwhelmed; the lower priority tasks can be left undone; Certain rules like "if one cooks, the other cleans" can also help spread the workload.

https://downtime.substack.com/p/how-we-manage-chores-without-losing

Reddit Post: App that distributes mental load equally for couples???

On the Reddit post users describe how they deal with mental load in a partner relationship and give specific reasons why they like or dislike given options. The two most relevant apps were Sweepy and Nipto. Further researching in the web and Google Play Store gave the following information:

- Sweepy is an app designed to help manage household chores (with focus on cleaning) by distributing tasks among cohabitants. Users can create tasks, assign effort levels, and track completion through a point-based system. From reviews we found that users like that the app can auto-suggest tasks based on the current state of cleanliness and allows for customization of task frequency. It provides visual cues and reminders to help keep the home clean and organized. Users have found it effective in reducing the mental load associated with household management.

- Nipto is an app designed to help households distribute household chores fairer by assigning point values to tasks and make cohabitants compete for the most points. This gamification approach encourages participation by making chores a fun and competitive activity. Users like that they can set notifications to remind each other of tasks, ensuring that responsibilities are shared and completed regularly.

https://www.reddit.com/r/adhdwomen/comments/165dj0n/app_that_distributes_mental_load_equally_for/

Blog: Sharing tasks and the mental load

This blog discusses the hidden tasks contributing to mental load in families and offers solutions to reduce it. The blog emphasizes the importance of a fair division of tasks in the family and how this can reduce stress and make family life easier. It shows the benefits of sharing tasks and responsibilities equally between parents, including a stronger parent-child bond and improved relationships between the parents. Additionally, it addresses the negative impacts of an unfair mental load distribution such as stress, fatigue and mental health issues such as anxiety and depression.

https://naitreetgrandir.com/en/step/0-12-months/family-life/sharing-tasks-and-the-mental-load/

Deck of Cards: Fair Plain Life

The Cards | Fair Play Life is a deck of cards with household tasks on each card. Partners first decide which cards apply to them and add them to their working deck. Then they divide the cards between themselves according to their preferences, availability and capabilities. Each task should be handled in its entirety, including conception, planning and execution. To manage expectations, a „minimum standard of care" should be decided on. Both can also include an extra card to plan individual time for hobbies or the like. The cards can always be changed if something is not working well and also don't have to be divided 50/50. They give a space and guideline for couples to manage household tasks and facilitate communication. They serve as a visual representation of who does what. And ensure that not one partner is left with all of the planning.

https://www.fairplaylife.com/the-cards

App: Tody

Tody is an app for managing household tasks. First all tasks need to be added or chosen from suggestions and decided on how frequently it should get done. Tasks can get rotated or also assigned to specific members. Once completed, the task can get checked off. Everyone can see who is assigned to which task and when it gets completed. This seems to work quite well for managing tasks that have to get done regularly, but not necessarily for planning or not easily captured tasks. So it might not help that much with addressing mental load specifically.

https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.looploop.tody&hl=en-US

Images (From ZHAW Presentation):
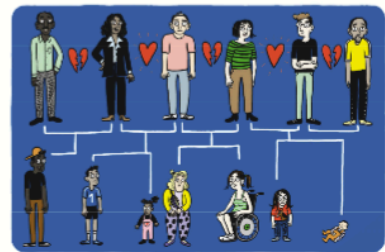
Besides the above apps, blogs and articles, the following apps might be a useful source for comparing and taking inspiration from in the future:

OurFlat - a Household & Chores app

PlayPixels - a mood tracking app

Bring - a shopping list app