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# Table of Contents

Project Overview	3
Research and Ideation	4
Production and Development	10
Conclusion	17
References	18

# Project Overview

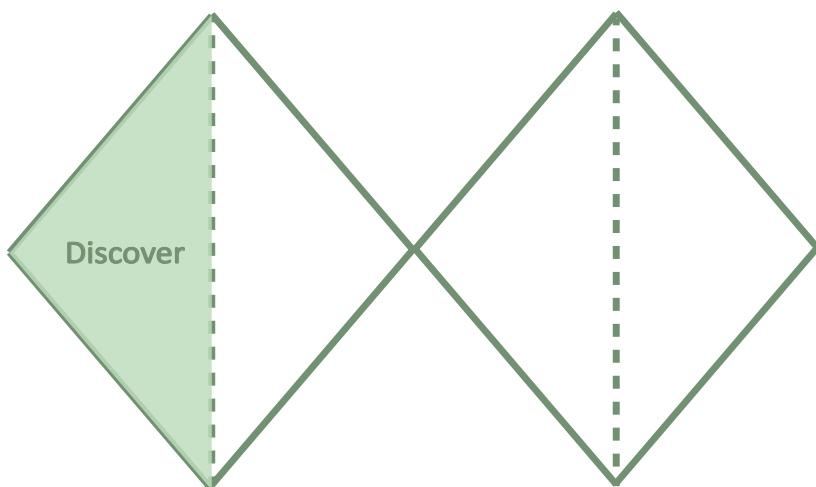
*BloomBook* is a mobile app designed to help adults reconnect with childhood joy and relaxation through nature and creativity. Each Sunday, users take a 20-minute walk in a natural setting, guided by themes like “Textured Patterns” or “Seasonal Colors.” They capture three theme-related photos, which are transformed into sticker-like visuals using edge detection. Users then create scrapbook pages with these stickers, illustrated templates, and optional sound recordings of natural elements like birds or rustling leaves.

The app emphasizes accessibility and creative freedom, offering tools like photo cropping, sticker customization, and weekly challenges. Inspired by artists like John Muir Laws and Andy Goldsworthy, BloomBook blends art and nature appreciation, encouraging users to pause and explore their environment with curiosity.

Rooted in Kaplan’s Attention Restoration Theory and Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of “Flow,” BloomBook is designed to reduce mental fatigue and foster creativity. These frameworks emphasize the benefits of engaging with nature and intrinsically rewarding activities, aligning with BloomBook’s goal of promoting relaxation and mindfulness.

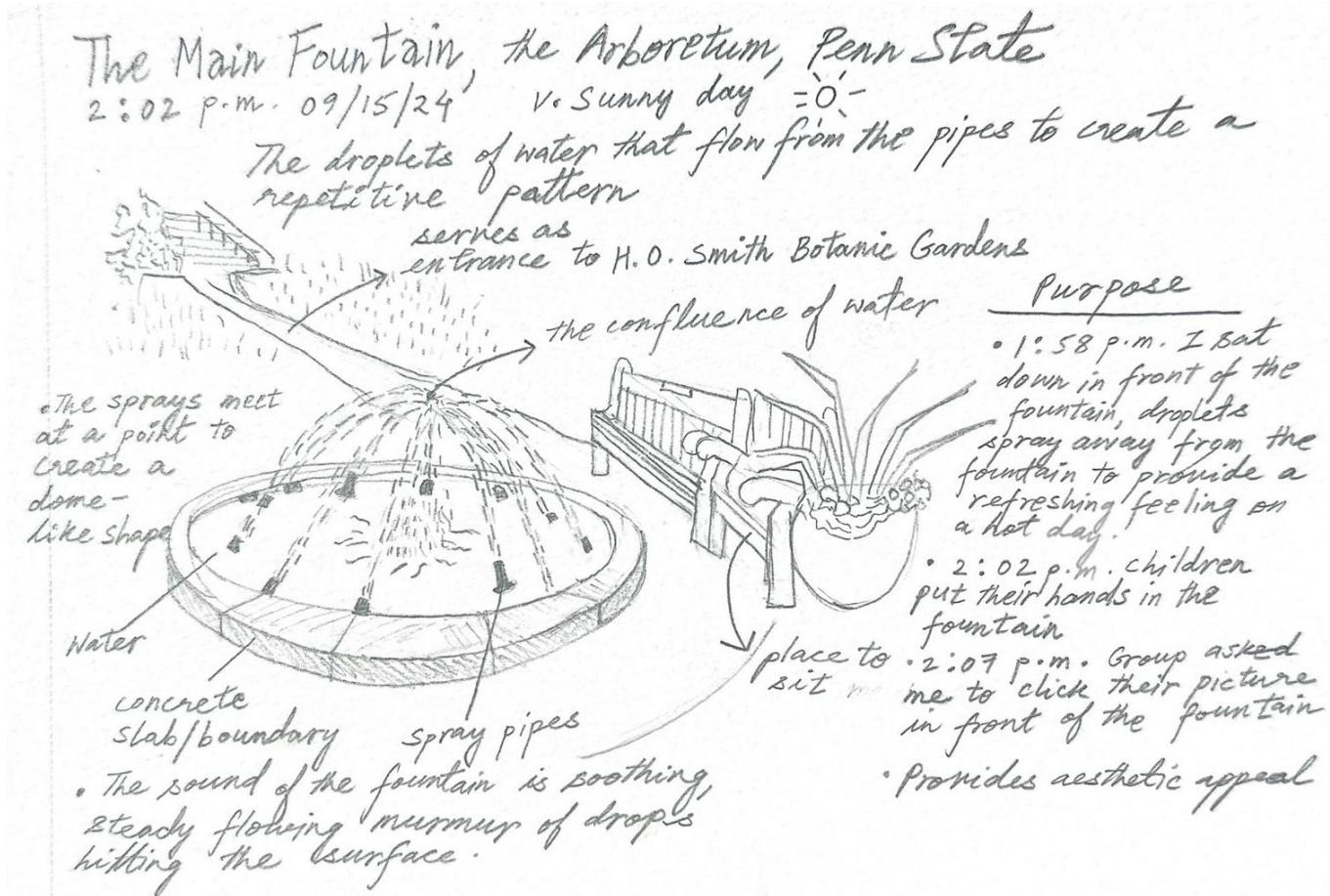
BloomBook encourages non-competitive creativity, giving users space to preserve meaningful moments in scrapbook pages that combine photos, stickers, and reflections. Optional features like sound recordings and doodling add personal touches. By merging art, mindfulness, and nature exploration, BloomBook offers adults a unique way to step back from daily pressures and rediscover the carefree wonder of childhood.

# Research and Ideation



## Overview of Research Process

The discover phase began with observing the fountain at the Arboretum on Penn State's campus. I chose a bright Sunday afternoon to experience the environment and interactions around the fountain. Sitting near it, I noticed key sensory details: the soothing sound of water, the cold droplets refreshing me in the heat, and the visual appeal of the dome-like spray pattern. The space attracted families, children, and older adults, with benches often occupied, highlighting the fountain's role as a place of rest, engagement, and social interaction.



Sketchbook observation of the Fountain at the Arboretum

Following this observation, I extracted word pairs related to the fountain, focusing on themes such as relaxation, aesthetic enjoyment, sensory experience, and socializing. I chose “relaxation” for further exploration and conducted an interview to understand how individuals relate to the concept of relaxation. During the interview, the participant shared how their ability to relax has diminished over time due to increased responsibilities. They emphasized the importance of relaxation for emotional well-being and noted how nature, mindfulness, and technology can aid in achieving a state of calm. However, they also expressed challenges in balancing relaxation with daily demands, as well as the dual role of technology, which can either support or hinder relaxation.

RITUAL PROJECT: WORD PAIRS . . .

object : Fountain

1. Fountain is for the purpose of **relaxation**.
2. Fountain is for the purpose of **aesthetic - enjoyment**.
3. Fountain is for the purpose of **sensory experience**.
4. Fountain is for the purpose of **photography**.
5. Fountain is for the purpose of **resting**.
6. Fountain is for the purpose of **engagement**.
7. Fountain is for the purpose of **cooling**.
8. Fountain is for the purpose of **playing**.
9. Fountain is for the purpose of **socializing**.

**RELAXATION** - intervention

**AESTHETIC - ENJOYMENT** - intervention

**SENSORY - EXPERIENCE** - intervention

**PHOTOGRAPHY** - intervention

**RESTING** - intervention

**ENGAGEMENT** - intervention

**COOLING** - intervention

**PLAYING** - intervention

**SOCIALIZING** - intervention

# Transcribed Interview

Can you tell me about your relationship with relaxation?

Ans: I don't get to do it enough.

Does your work ever relax you?

Ans: Not usually.

How has your ability to relax changed over the years?

Ans: I try to give myself an hour of free time to read before bed. It was easier to relax as a kid.

What does relaxation mean to you?

Ans: It is really important. It is kind of resetting in a way.

Follow-up: Is sleep a relaxing activity then?

Ans: Sleep is relaxing, but not consciously relaxing.

When was the last time you relaxed?

Ans: Over the weekend, I kicked back and watched a documentary for an hour or two. I try to schedule some time for relaxation during the weekend.

If you could change something about your relationship with relaxation, what would it be?

Ans: More time for it.

Follow-up: Why?

Ans: Because it is necessary.

Follow-up: Why?

Ans: It is necessary because it is essential for your well-being. Relaxation should be at a higher spot in the hierarchy of needs. Relaxation falls under emotional needs.

Do you value relaxation?

Ans: Very much.

Follow-up: Why?

Ans: It makes you a better person. Personally, it makes me patient, makes me handle any stress thrown my way a lot better. I get the downtime to reset. In college, you are always taking your work home with you, which makes this time even more important.

Do you think about relaxation in your daily life, or is it just during the weekends? Ans: I start planning for it around Thursday. Sometimes too much relaxation can turn into a toxic thing because you can fall behind.

What role does technology play in your relaxation?

Ans: It can kind of help. My version of relaxing is listening to an audiobook or watching a documentary, and technology is essential to do those things. But sometimes staying away from it can also help.

Why should we stay away from technology? Is it because of addiction?

Ans: Yes, it can be an addiction or can interfere with your relaxation time.

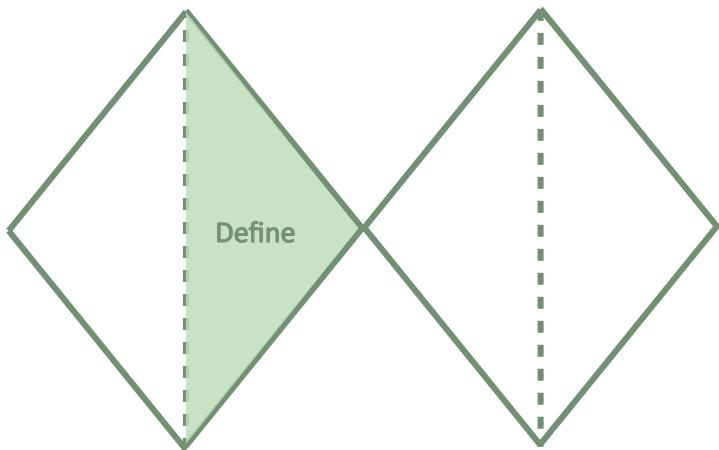
Do you interact with nature?

Ans: Sometimes I go on hikes, or go for a walk, or draw. That's what I do when I don't use technology.

Are there any unique ways in which you relax?

Ans: No, but I would love to try them.

# Main Issues, Themes and Ideas



1. **The Role of Nature in Relaxation:** Observing the calming effect of natural elements, like flowing water, highlighted the connection between relaxation and sensory experiences.
2. **Balancing Relaxation with Productivity:** Many people feel conflicted about taking time to relax, fearing they may fall behind on tasks.
3. **Technology's Dual Role:** While technology aids relaxation (e.g., music or audiobooks), it can also distract or interfere with mindful relaxation.

These insights informed the **How Might We (HMW) question:** *How might we help a person discover the ease of relaxation they had as a child when they feel overwhelmed by adult responsibilities?*

## Concept Development Influences

Contemporary issues such as **work-life balance challenges** and the increased emphasis on **mindfulness** and **mental health** were key influences for this project. Research by Brown and Ryan (2003) highlights the importance of mindfulness practices in fostering psychological well-being, which aligns with the project's aim to incorporate sensory experiences, like the sound of flowing water, to promote relaxation. Additionally, Taylor (2014) discusses how achieving a balance between work and life is essential for mental health, a concept mirrored in the interview insights where the participant expressed a desire for more relaxation time amidst a busy schedule.

Historical perspectives on relaxation also played a role, particularly in how playful activities and unstructured time contribute to mental well-being. Stress management methods for children, as outlined by Ginsburg et al. (2007), emphasize the restorative power of free play and sensory engagement. Similarly, interventions discussed by Anderson and Shivakumar (2013) highlight the effectiveness of combining physical and sensory activities to alleviate stress. These findings connect directly to the fountain's dual appeal as a place of playful interaction and tranquility.

The interview and observational insights guided the ideation process by reinforcing the value of mindfulness and nature-inspired interventions. The resulting "How Might We" question seeks to address the challenges of adult stress through creative, playful solutions that reconnect individuals with the carefree ease of childhood relaxation. This approach combines contemporary challenges with evidence-based methods for promoting well-being.

## HOW MIGHT WE . . . ?

1. How might we (balance relaxation with productivity, (for someone who feels overwhelmed by downtime) (when they need to relax but are worried about falling behind in their tasks)?
2. How might we (create a healthier relationship with technology) (for someone who feels their relaxation time is negatively impacted by addiction, (when they are trying to unwind through digital media)?
3. How might we (help a person discover the ease of relaxation they had as a child) (when they feel overwhelmed by adult responsibilities) (in their daily life filled with work and stress)?

Potential Questions Concept Development

## Core Insights

### Connection to Nature

My interviewee feels that spending time in nature, whether it's going for a hike or simply taking a walk, helps her disconnect from her work and find peace. When she's in nature, she feels more grounded, refreshed, and free from the pressures of her daily life. However, her work schedule is often so busy and demanding that she struggles to find time to engage in outdoor activities. By the time she finishes work, she is too tired to make efforts to plan trips into nature. I wish to help her more easily plan and prioritize nature so that it becomes a regular and effortless part of her relaxation routine, no matter how busy work life gets.

### Technology and Relaxation

My interviewee feels mentally refreshed and relaxed when she engages with technology by listening to audiobooks or watching documentaries. These activities provide her with an easy way to unwind after a long day of work. But over time, she has noticed that her reliance on technology can turn into a distraction, pulling her away from more meaningful relaxation or even being present in the moment. She sometimes feels that using technology to relax becomes addictive, which makes it harder to truly unwind. I wish there was a way to help her maintain a balanced relationship with technology during her relaxation time, allowing her to enjoy its benefits without

it becoming a source of stress or distraction.

### The Importance of Relaxation

My interviewee strongly believes that relaxation is essential for her emotional well-being and overall mental health. Taking time to rest and unwind helps her to reset, manage stress better, and approach her work and responsibilities with a clearer mind. But despite understanding the value of relaxation, she often feels guilty when she takes too much time to relax, feeling that she's falling behind on her tasks. This constant feeling of guilt undermines her ability to fully enjoy her downtime. I wish there was a way to help her find a healthier balance between relaxation and productivity so that she can relax and still feel confident that she's on track with her work and responsibilities.

## THEMES & INSIGHTS

### THEMES

#### PATTERNS

- Planning relaxation around weekends
- Tech as a double-edged sword
- Balance work and downtime
- Nature as peaceful escape
- Anxiety about falling behind

WORK-LIFE BALANCE  
TIME MANAGEMENT  
RELAXATION ANXIETY  
EMOTIONAL WELLBEING  
TECH DEPENDENCE  
NATURE INTERACTION

#### SURPRISING

- Reliance on tech for relaxation while calling it distracting at the same time
- Guilt + anxiety about relaxation

#### AMUSING, DISHEARTENING

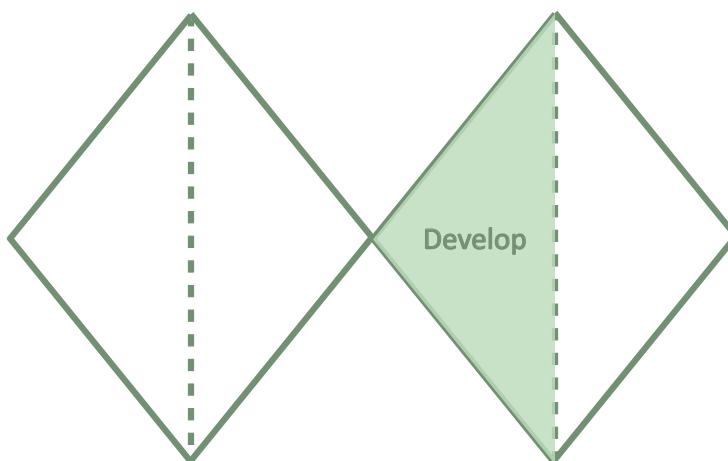
- Irony of tech to relax
- Relaxation as a potential setback
- Relaxation as a task

#### OTHER

- Relaxation essential for well-being
- Pressure of adult responsibilities
- Longing for simplicity
- Peace in nature

Themes and Insights

# Production and Development



The Develop phase began with extensive brainstorming and creating a journey map to visualize the user's interaction with BloomBook. This process was rooted in insights gathered during the Discovery and Define phases, where core user needs and challenges were identified, such as the struggle to relax, reliance on technology, and the desire to reconnect with nature and creativity.

The brainstorming session focused on the How Might We (HMW) question: How might we help someone rediscover the ease of childhood relaxation when overwhelmed by adult responsibilities and daily stress? During this session, ideas were categorized into two themes:

**Play and Exploration:** Activities that encourage outdoor engagement, sensory stimulation, and creative freedom. For example, users could rediscover childhood joy by capturing natural textures, exploring parks, or playing with digital stickers derived from their photographs.

**Thinking and Reflecting:** Activities designed to invoke introspection, nostalgia, and mindfulness. Suggestions included creating personalized time capsules, journaling with prompts, and engaging with nostalgic media like childhood songs or videos.

## Journey Mapping

The journey map outlined the key phases users might go through while engaging with BloomBook. Each phase was broken into:

**Core Moments:** The primary activities, such as taking a walk, photographing natural elements, and creating a scrapbook.

**Feelings and Thoughts:** Emotional states users might experience, such as nostalgia while reflecting on childhood or calmness from engaging with nature.

**Decisions:** Choices users make, like selecting which items to photograph or how to arrange elements on their scrapbook page.

**Outcomes:** The results of these actions, including a completed digital scrapbook page, enhanced relaxation, and a sense of personal accomplishment.

For example, the journey might begin with a user feeling overwhelmed by stress and deciding to open the BloomBook app. They are guided to take a walk outdoors (core moment), which invokes feelings of calm and curiosity. They might reflect on the joy of simple sensory experiences while choosing natural elements to photograph (decision). This culminates in creating a scrapbook page that preserves their experience and provides a tangible memory to revisit during future stressful moments (outcome).

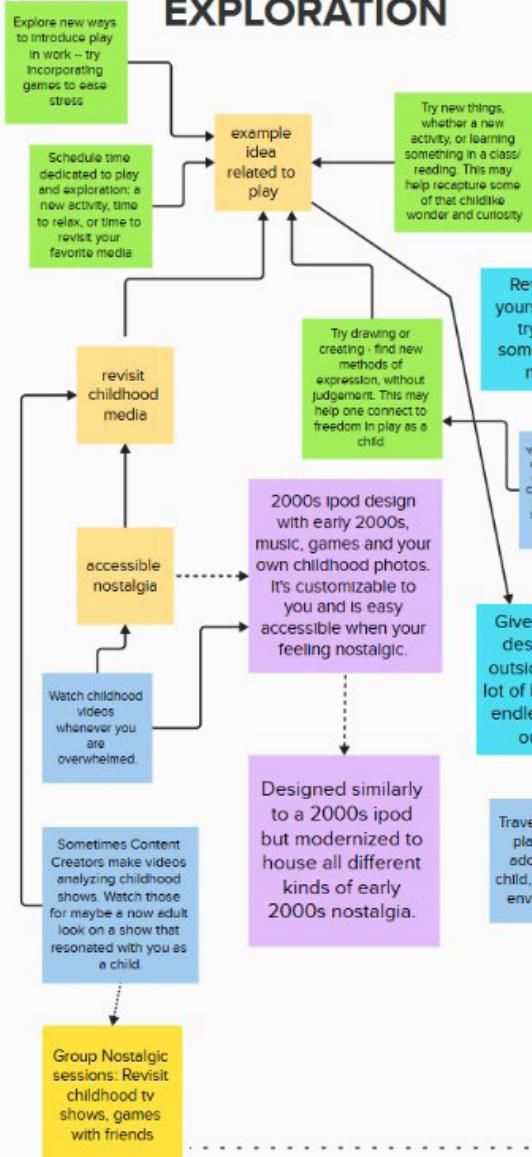
## QUESTION

**How might we help someone rediscover the ease of childhood relaxation when overwhelmed by adult responsibilities and daily stress?**

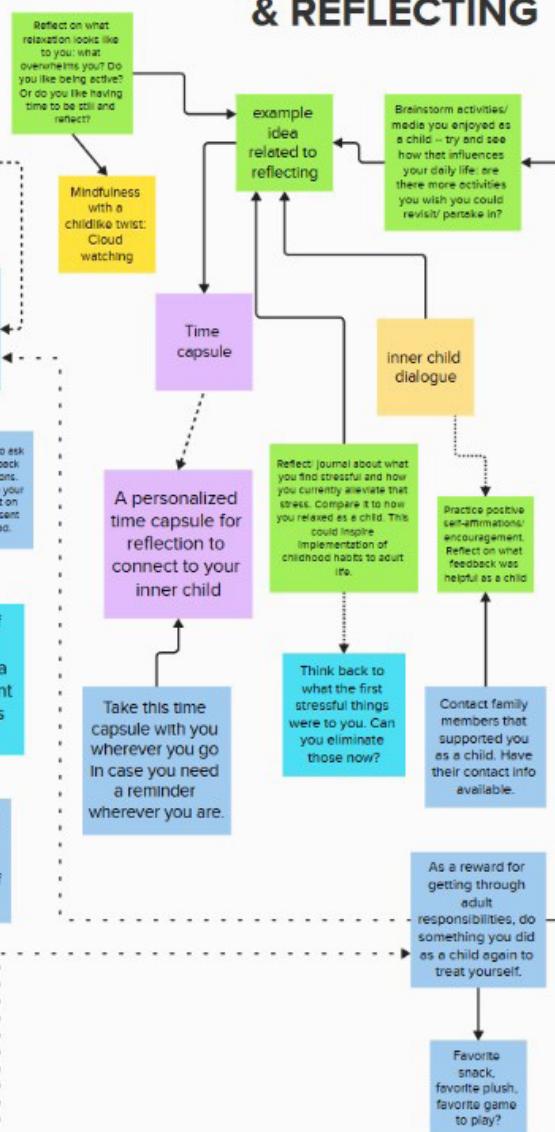
## ORGANIZE

Through

### PLAY & EXPLORATION



### THINKING & REFLECTING



Brainstorming for HMW

#### JOURNEY MAP

- Rediscover nostalgic childhood media
- Reconnect with forgotten interests (time travel to the past)
- Create a personalized time capsule (curiosity and reflection)
- Engage in outdoor activities (physical engagement)
- Reconnect with friends and family (social engagement)
- Achieve mental and physical Balance (channeling thoughts positively)



# Key Journey Map Insights

**Rediscovering Childhood Media:** Users could reconnect with past experiences by incorporating nostalgic prompts, such as reflecting on favorite activities or revisiting old songs and photos.

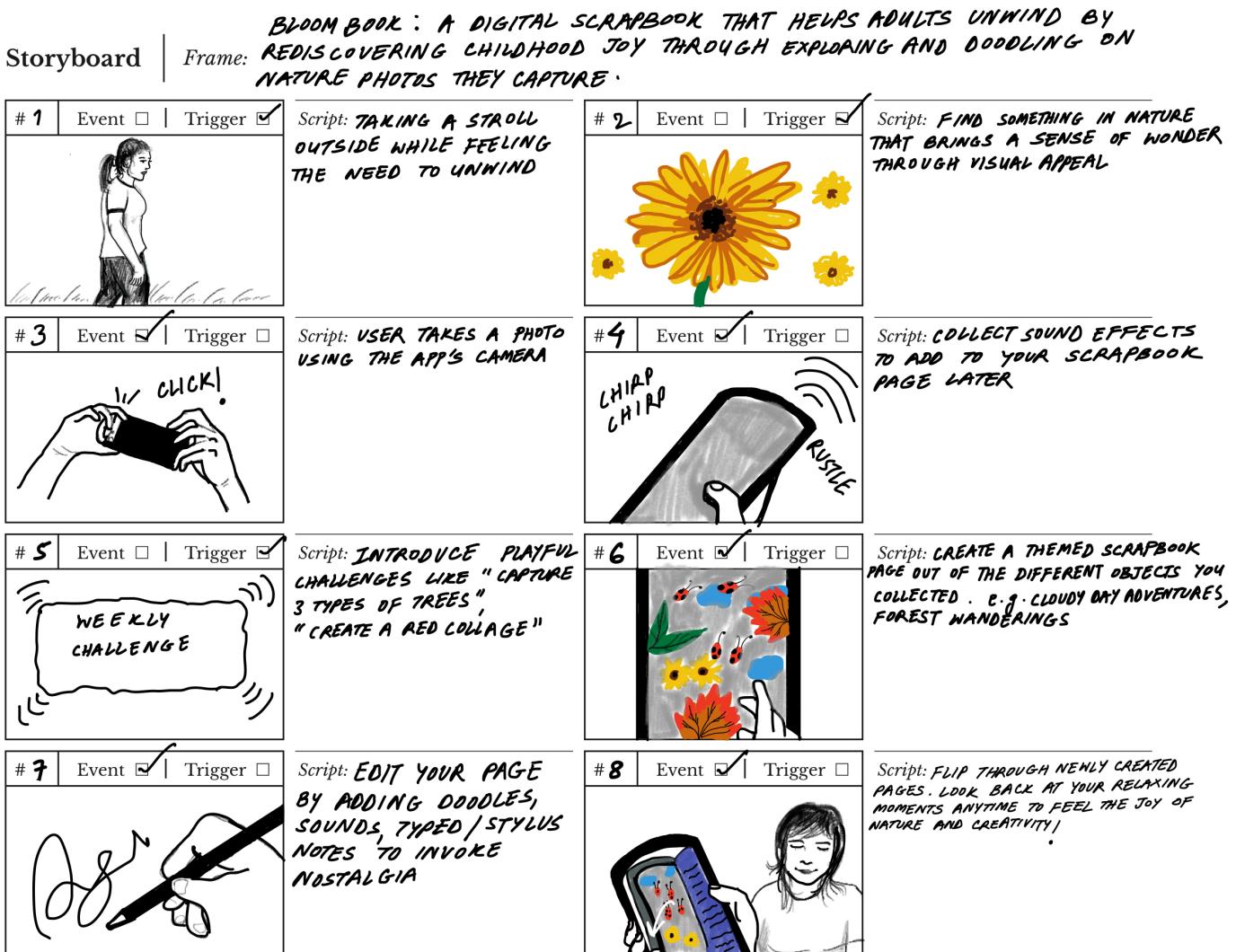
**Engaging in Outdoor Activities:** Spending time in nature was identified as a core restorative activity. Capturing photos and sounds creates opportunities for sensory engagement and mindful exploration.

**Creative Reflection:** Incorporating personal growth through reflection and artistic expression, such as designing scrapbook pages with digital tools, allows users to connect with their inner child and relive moments of carefree creativity.

These insights informed the app's design and features, ensuring every interaction fosters a balance of mindful reflection and playful exploration. By focusing on the user's emotional journey, BloomBook transitions from being just an app to an experience that reconnects users with the simple joys of childhood, addressing both emotional and creative needs.

## Storyboard

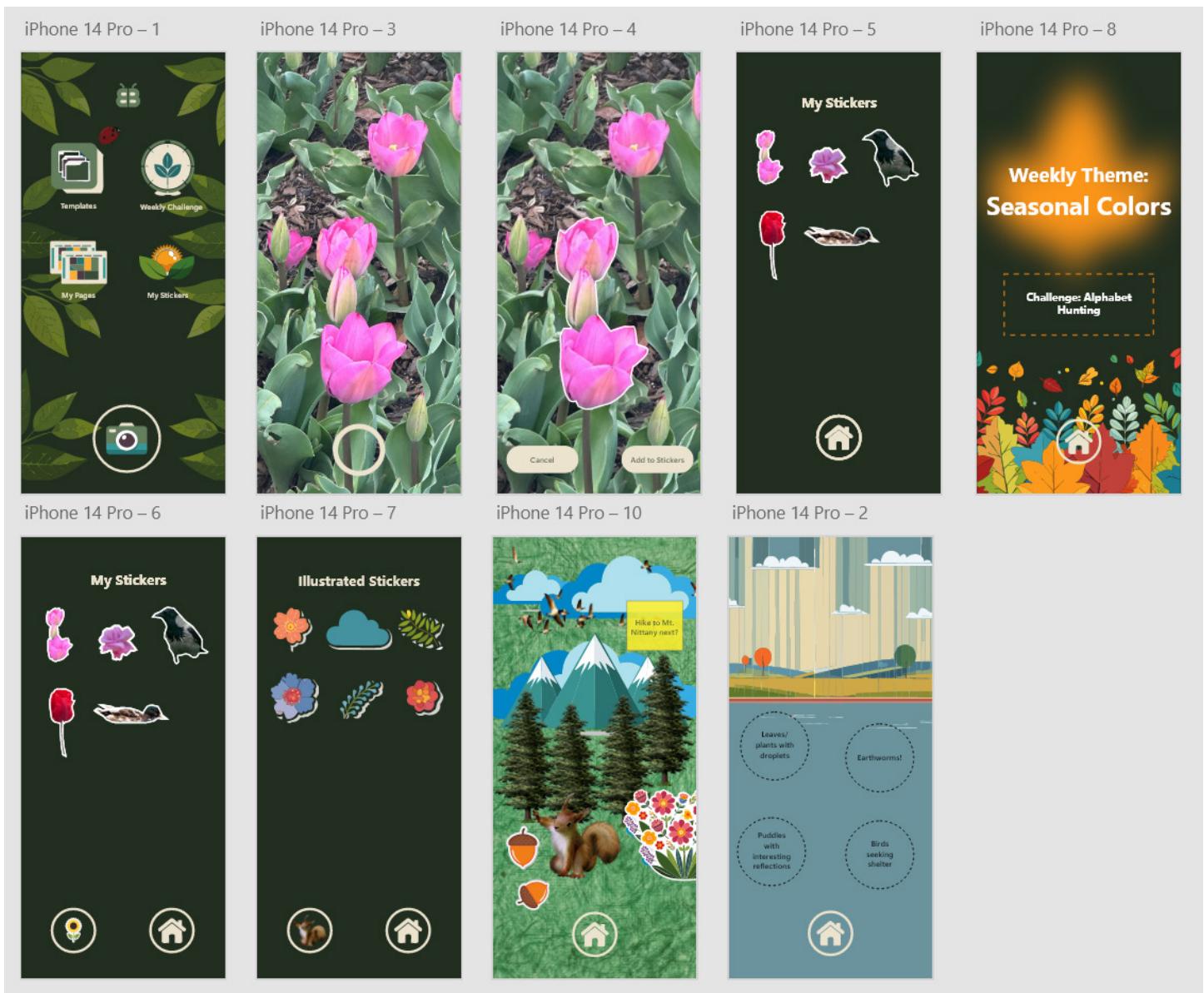
From this foundation, a storyboard was created to visualize the user's experience with the app. The storyboard outlines key moments, from taking a stroll to capturing photos, customizing scrapbook pages, and revisiting nostalgic moments. This visual narrative helped refine the app's core features and ensure alignment with the project's goals.



Storyboard for BloomBook

# Media and UI Development

Following the storyboard, the first prototype of BloomBook was developed. This included the instructions for the weekly ritual, defining the required materials, environment, and the sequence of activities. The app design emphasizes simplicity and fun, incorporating features like photo-to-sticker conversion, optional sound recordings, and playful challenges.



UI Layouts created using Adobe XD

Screens include:

1. A **home interface** with options like templates, weekly challenges, and sticker customization.
2. **Camera** functionality for capturing photos and converting them into stickers.
3. **Scrapbook creation templates** to arrange photos, stickers, and notes.
4. Playful **illustrated stickers** and interactive **weekly themes**, such as "Seasonal Colors" or "Alphabet Hunting," enhance the user experience.
5. **Sample scrapbook page** with illustrated and camera-captured stickers.

The media output communicates the app's playful and nostalgic tone through vibrant visuals, clean navigation, and minimalistic layouts. This ensures an accessible, relaxing experience that resonates with the project's theme.

A playthrough of the BloomBook App Prototype

## Instructions for Prototype Experience

Creating the instruction document for the BloomBook prototype was an insightful and iterative process that required careful consideration of both user experience and clarity. The objective was to provide testers with a structured, step-by-step guide to help them navigate the app's features while capturing valuable feedback on its usability and functionality.

### **BloomBook: Rediscovering Childhood Relaxation Through Nature Exploration**

Welcome to 'BloomBook', a guided weekly ritual that helps you rediscover childhood joy through exploring nature, capturing images, and creating themed digital scrapbooks. This ritual is designed to be simple, relaxing, and fun, bringing a sense of playfulness to your week.

#### **Expected Time to Complete**

Approximately 50 minutes per week. The time can be adjusted based on personal preference, but the suggested duration allows for a relaxed yet meaningful exploration.

#### **Supplies, Equipment, or Materials Needed**

Before you begin, make sure you have the following items ready:

1. Smartphone with the 'BloomBook' app installed
2. Comfortable walking shoes
3. Access to a natural setting (e.g., park, garden, forest, or backyard)
4. Optional: Drawing pad or tablet (for more precise customization)

#### **Location**

This ritual is best performed in an outdoor natural environment, such as a local park, garden, forest, or any area with visible natural elements. You will need to find three specific items related to the weekly theme, so choose a location with a variety of natural features.

## Instructions

Follow these steps to complete the 'BloomBook' ritual each week:

1. Start Your Weekly Walk: On Sunday, take a 20-minute walk in your chosen natural setting. As you walk, keep an eye out for three specific natural elements that match this week's theme. This week's theme is 'Textured Patterns'.
2. Capture Photos: Take close-up photos of different natural textures, such as tree bark, moss, rocks and petals to build a tactile-inspired page. Take photos of the three items you find. (Three is necessary, if you want to include more, feel free to). Crop the images to use them like stickers for your page.
3. Optional Sound Recording: If you wish to add sound elements, use the app to record up to 30 seconds of natural sounds that match the theme (e.g., birds chirping, leaves rustling).
4. Complete the Weekly Challenge: Each week, the app will also provide a playful challenge related to the theme that you are encouraged to complete. This week's challenge is "Nature's Weavings": Hunt for examples of natural weaves and layers like bird nests, spider webs or intertwined branches and vines. Look for organic patterns.
5. Create a Themed Scrapbook Page: After the walk, come back home or sit down to spend 20-30 mins on your scrapbook page. Paste your cropped images on Illustrator or a preferred application of your choice. Look for illustrated stickers you can use to combine with the pictures.
6. Optional Drawing Pad: If you have access to a drawing pad or tablet, you can use it for more precise customization such as freehand doodling. However, this step is entirely optional as per your convenience.

## Reflections on User Feedback

The feedback from the user tested and confirmed the effectiveness of "BloomBook" in fostering childhood wonder and relaxation, with tasks that felt like a scavenger hunt and evoked joy and mindfulness. The instructions were clear and easy to follow, allowing her to replicate the experience and feel more connected to her surroundings, even beyond the activity. The project's alignment with its goal of rediscovering relaxation was evident, with emotional and sensory impacts like feelings of lightness and happiness. The user suggested integrating the scrapbook and sticker feature directly into the app with an optional tutorial, making it more accessible for users less comfortable with manual tools. While the absence of a functional app was understandable at this stage, future iterations could include basic interactivity to enhance immersion. Overall, the feedback affirms the project's strengths and provides actionable insights for refining and expanding its potential.

# Conclusion

Developing BloomBook has been a valuable and insightful journey, from the initial brainstorming and research to creating and testing the prototype. The project began with observations and interviews to understand how people experience relaxation and how they struggle to reconnect with a sense of playfulness as adults. These early steps were critical in shaping the concept of BloomBook, with its focus on nature, mindfulness, and creativity. The “How Might We” question guided every decision, helping to refine the project’s purpose: rediscovering childhood relaxation through simple and accessible activities.

The process of designing the user journey and prototype was both challenging and rewarding. Translating abstract ideas into practical steps required careful planning, especially in crafting clear instructions for the user to test the concept. The emphasis on engaging with nature, capturing photos, and creating scrapbook pages was designed to balance structure with freedom, allowing users to personalize their experience. Testing the prototype showed that these elements worked well in creating a relaxing and enjoyable experience.

The feedback also provided valuable insights for improvement. While the instructions were easy to follow and the experience felt intuitive, integrating in-app scrapbooking features and tutorials was suggested to make the process more seamless and accessible. These suggestions will guide future iterations of the project.

Overall, the journey of developing BloomBook highlighted the importance of user-centered design, clear communication, and iterative refinement. The insights gained have not only improved the project but also deepened my understanding of how design can foster meaningful experiences. Moving forward, I’m excited to continue refining BloomBook to make it a more impactful tool for mindfulness and creativity.

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