PUI Assignment 5: Web HTML & CSS Prototypes (Fluff Stuff)

PART I: Prototype Evaluation Findings

Usability Problem #1: The "Add to Likes" button is below the "Add to Cart" button, which defies user expectations and may lead users to select "Add to Likes" instead of "Add to Cart."
Location: Product Details Page (Round Knit Pouf)
Heuristic Violated: Consistency & Standards
Solution: Place Add to Likes to the left of Add to Cart. Placing a button on the right bottom side of a page indicates moving forward, and thus, Add to Cart will be an easier, more effortless target for users to select.

Before:
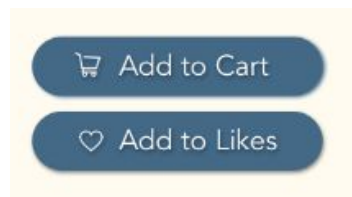
After:

Usability Problem #2: The price of the product is slightly too far from the product name. This distance reduces readability and increases user workload.
Location: Product Details Page (Round Knit Pouf)
Heuristic Violated: Recognition Rather Than Recall
Solution: Decrease the distance between price and product name for tighter visual coupling between these elements, and reduced cognitive load.
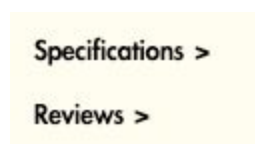
Before:

After:

Usability Problem #3: The text color of "Specifications" and "Reviews" is too light, resulting in poor visibility.
Location: Product Details Page (Round Knit Pouf).
Heuristic Violated: Recognition Rather Than Recall
Solution: Change the text color to black.

Before:

After:

PART II: Implementation Challenges

Because I had virtually no programming experience, I encountered many challenges, or "bugs," during this assignment. Overall, I credit my peers, W3schools.com, stackoverflow.com, and YouTube, for helping me understand and overcome issues. For example, I spent hours(!) trying to fit content into a specific layout using a CSS Grid. I watched various YouTube videos and referenced many web sources, but my grid still just wouldn't behave as I wanted it to. So I asked my peers, who suggested using Flexboxes, which were supposedly simple and easy to use. I heeded their advice and switched from Grids to Flexboxes, which I found very straightforward and effective, to my relief.

Undesirable grouping, and/or *lack* of desirable grouping, was also a consistent issue for me. For example, in my Product Browsing page flexbox, I expected product names & prices to appear below images, but instead, they were placed adjacent to their respective images. This resulted in an extremely unpleasant aesthetic for my website, and panic for me. I tried to fix this by adjusting float, alignment, and more, but nothing worked until I asked a former software engineer peer for help. He explained that grouping elements together in one class communicates my need for visual grouping to CSS. This was revolutionary -- I applied this concept successfully throughout the rest of my code. Classes in classes in classes.

Coding buttons properly was another lesson I learned the hard way. In my Product Details Page, I opted to create text hyperlinks for the color and filling options. I placed bordered boxes around them to mimic the buttons in my prototype. However, this resulted in only the text area being clickable when I actually wanted the entire object (box, border, and inner text) to be selectable. Later, when I coded the "Add to Cart" and "Add to Likes" buttons, I used the "button" class/attribute, which achieved everything that my previous button attempt did not.

Overall, placement and alignment of elements was tedious and confusing. It seemed that HTML and/or CSS used arbitrary, nonsensical rules when deciding on element placement. Generally, I used padding and margins to reorient elements to their desired locations; however, I would like to improve my understanding of controlling placement/alignment with clean code, correctly, from the start.

PART III: Brand Identity via Design Choices

The Fluff Stuff brand identity reflects the casual comfort, softness, and soothing effect of it product: pillows. The design choices of this website were carefully determined to reflect this identity by embodying calmness and comfort.

- **Bubbly font** was used throughout the site to reflect the bulbous, cloudlike, fluffy characteristics of pillows. A "fluffy" font, it also reinforced the cuteness of the name "Fluff Stuff."
- **Pastel / Soft / Pale colors,** such as very pale yellow (background), teal (font) + buttons, and gray (font), were used to create a comfortable, soothing, and gentle experience, just like the experience of Fluff Stuff pillows.
- **Minimalism** was the overarching aesthetic of the website. Icons and fonts were without frills. Left and right margins were spacious. Shapes were clean. Again, this exemplifies a calming and soothing vibe. Were the website not minimalist, it would have conveyed a sense of calamity, busy-ness, and stress antithetical to the comforting nature of Fluff Stuff pillows.