Buds:
A UX Case Study on Loneliness

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Project Details

Title: Project Lonely

UX Designers: Casey Davis, Luke Van Dyke, Nadine Sarraj, Shruthi Nagaraja

Tools: Figma, Miro, Google, Trello, Slack

Dates: 3/8/22-3/26/22

Agenda

- Project Overview & Background
- Research
- Define & Ideate
- Prototype
- Test
- Conclusions & Next Steps

Project Overview
&
Background

Problem

Loneliness has had negative health effects on most adults since the pandemic, especially with some transitioning to remote work.

Solution

Our solution is "Buds" : a friend
finding app that
facilitates introductions and
connections between
users with shared interests.

Impact

We believe fostering social connection could mitigate the health risks associated with loneliness.

Loneliness has been compared to smoking and obesity in terms of the detrimental effect it has on people's health.

Health risks of loneliness

- Heart disease
- Stroke
- High blood pressure
- Cognitive decline
- Dementia
- Depression
- Suicide

"There is now substantial evidence that having a lack of social connections significantly increases the risk of *premature mortality*."

-Campaign to End Loneliness

Research

Research Plan

Objective: To understand the factors behind people's loneliness

Methods:

5 one-on-one interviews

2 Surveys (42 & 46 participants)

Interview Discussion Guide

Relationships + Connections

What do the users' current relationships and emotional connections look like?

Loneliness

What are users' current feelings of loneliness?

Friendships

What are the users' existing friendships like?
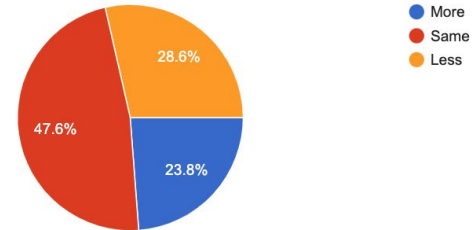
Socialization Habits

How, when, and where do users typically socialize?

Survey 1

42 total participants including friends, family members, classmates

Questions focused on quality and quantity of friendships, and frequency of feelings of loneliness

How has the number of close friends you have changed in the past five years?

42 responses

● More
● Same
● Less

28.6%
47.6%
23.8%

Do you want more friends?

42 responses

● Yes
● No

26.2%
73.8%
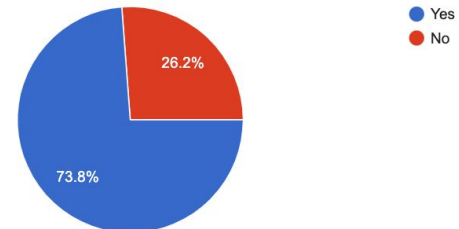
Survey 2

47 participants including members of Reddit thread: r/lonely, friends and family members

Questions were focused on the leading factors of loneliness, and attitudes towards using an app to assist them with managing loneliness
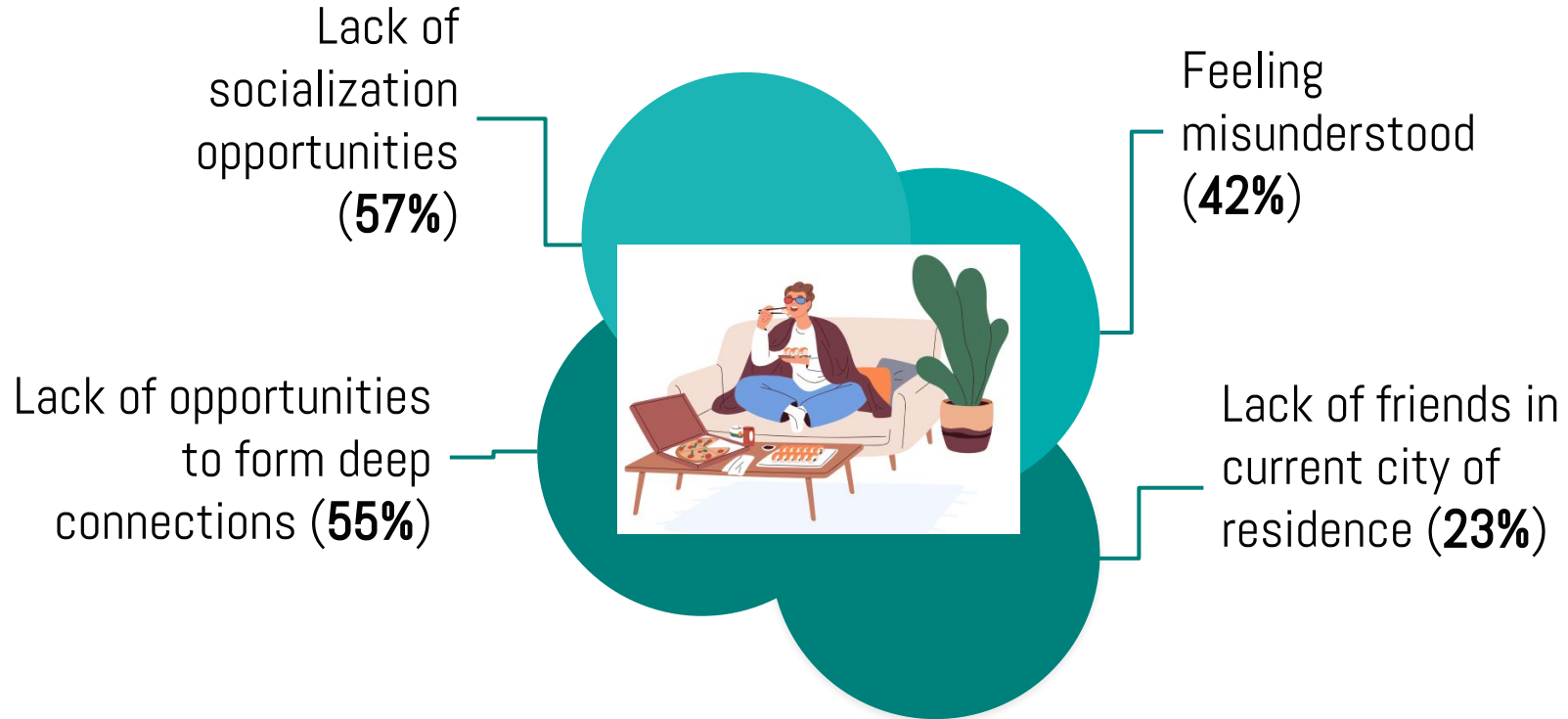
Why do you think you feel lonely? Select all that apply.   Copy

47 responses

Factor	Count (%)
Not enough socialization op…	27 (57.4%)
Remote work setting elimina…	5 (10.6%)
Too busy with family	6 (12.8%)
Too busy with work	10 (21.3%)
Lack of opportunities to conn…	26 (55.3%)
Don't know enough people i…	11 (23.4%)
Existing friends are superfici…	15 (31.9%)
No significant other	23 (48.9%)
Live alone	11 (23.4%)
No family	2 (4.3%)
Mental health reasons	19 (40.4%)
Touch starvation (not enoug…	11 (23.4%)
Feeling that no one understa…	20 (42.6%)
Other	3 (6.4%)
"Touch starvation" (not enou…	11 (23.4%)
Not enough friends	6 (12.8%)
Feel like an outsider, don't "fi…	1 (2.1%)
Most of these apply.	1 (2.1%)

Factors Contributing to Loneliness

Lack of socialization opportunities (**57%**)

Feeling misunderstood (**42%**)

Lack of opportunities to form deep connections (**55%**)

Lack of friends in current city of residence (**23%**)

73%

Feel lonely at least sometimes

69%

Say their feelings of loneliness increased through the pandemic

79%

Say loneliness has had a negative impact on their mental health

74%

Want more friends

> **"I can be in a room full of people and still feel lonely."**

—Shannon Sims,
User Interviews
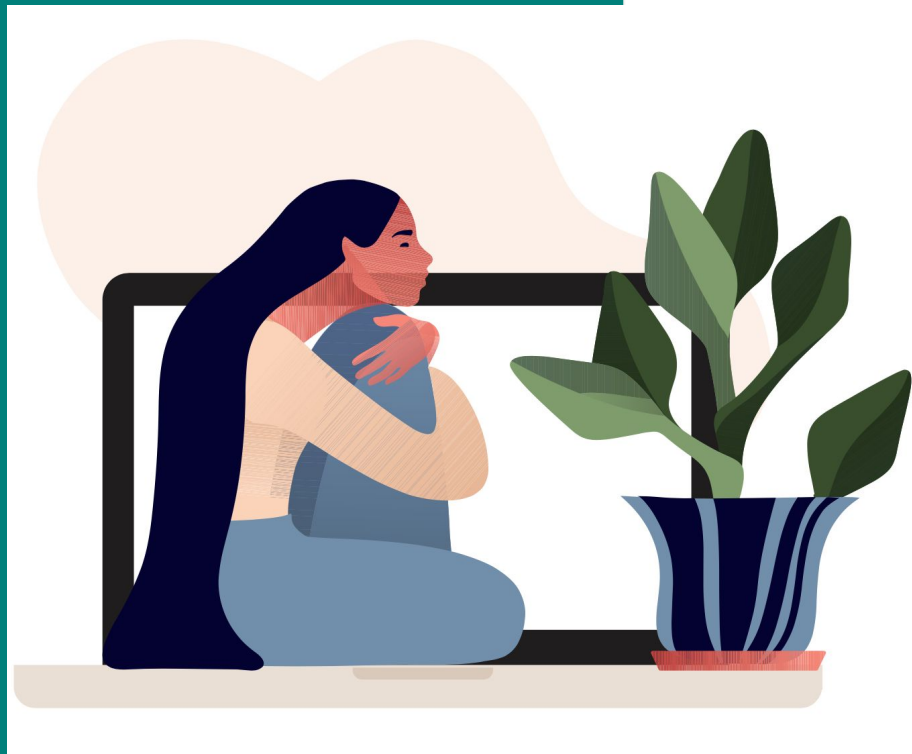
Key Research Findings

1) People want more friends

2) Lack of opportunities to meet and connect with new friends

Define & Ideate

Problem Statement

Young adults are experiencing **high levels of loneliness**, which is **negatively affecting their physical and mental health**. If we create a way for people to meet quality new friends and connect deeply over shared interests, it would **alleviate feelings of loneliness and expand users' friend groups**.

Gen Z User Persona

Millennial User Persona

Graham Johnson
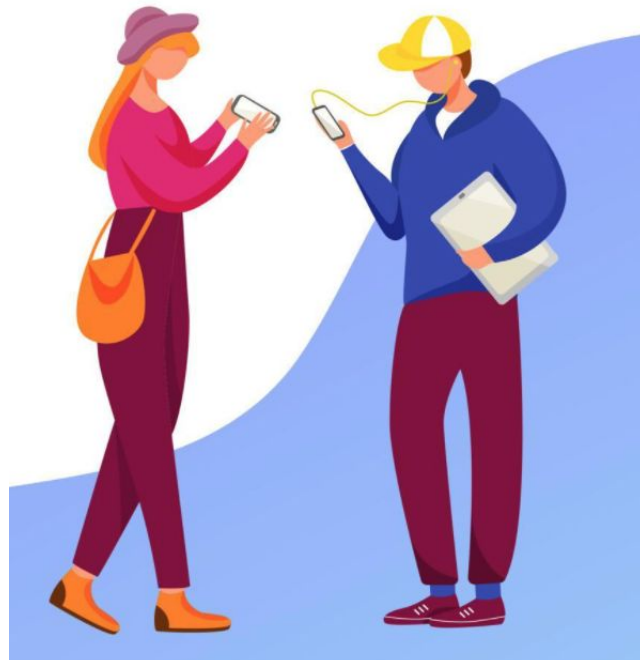
Occupation
Software Engineer

Location
Austin, Texas

Age
32

Family
Single

Tech

Internet

Social Media

Online Shopping

Biography

Graham is a single software engineer who just moved to Austin from Chicago. He was excited about living in a new city and the promise of a bustling new social life, but so far it hasn't been what he expected. Graham has been working remotely since the pandemic and no longer goes into an office every day. He's struggling to make new friends in Austin and doesn't know how or where to connect with people with similar interests.

Needs

- More day to day social interaction
- To find buddies to play basketball with
- To be able to connect with others in the tech world about his engineer position

Pain Points

Graham needs to be able to make social connections in his new city. His all-remote working environment has had a negative affect on his social life; he doesn't meet new people very often and wants to find friends with common interests. Graham is feeling disheartened and worried that his move to Austin wasn't the right choice.

"Since I work remotely, making friends in this new city is a lot harder than I thought it would be."
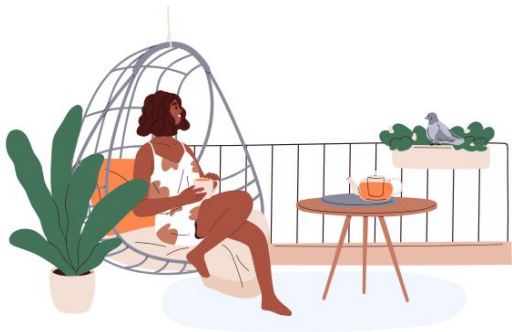
Feature Prioritization Matrix
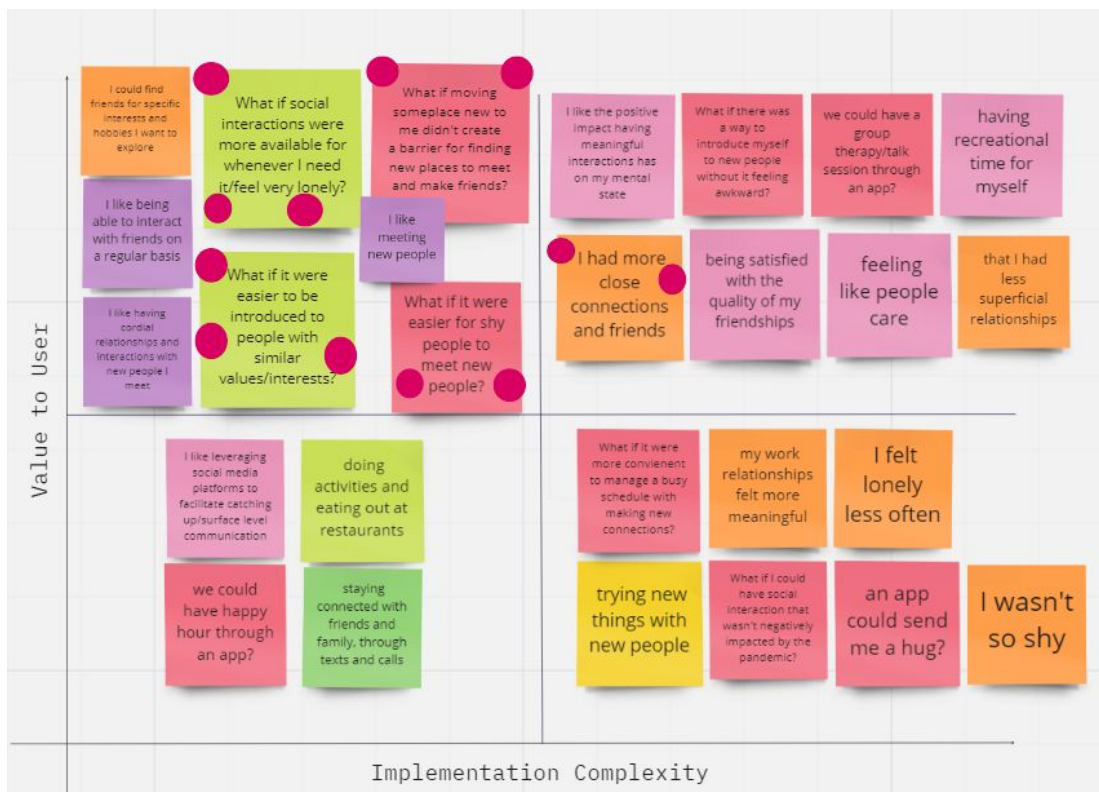
Priority Features

1. Helping people meet new friends

2. Connecting people with shared interests

Storyboard

5pm: quittin' time! Graham's excited for a Friday in his new city: Austin!

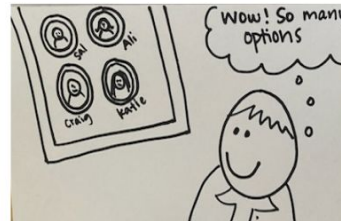But Graham works remotely and doesn't know anyone in Austin.

Graham misses Friday happy hour with his old buddies in Chicago.

Then he remembers this friendship app, Buds.

Graham searches by interest: basketball and craft beer.

Graham is surprised by how many potential friend matches he sees.

He clicks on a profile: Sal seems cool, and he likes the Bulls too!

Sal doesn't have plans tonight either and he's down to grab a beer!

Graham and Sal have a fun Friday night as new buds.

Competitor Analysis

Direct

Indirect

Meetup

Value prop touts "real" connections

Celebrating 20 years of real connections on Meetup

Whatever you're looking to do this year, Meetup can help. For 20 years, people have turned to Meetup to meet people, make friends, find support, grow a business, and explore their interests. Thousands of events are happening every day—join the fun.
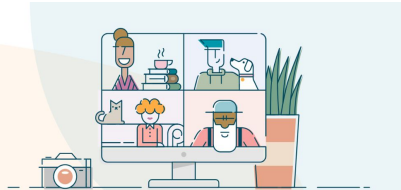
Make new friends →

Explore the outdoors →
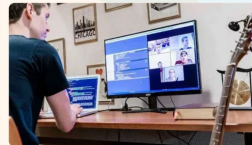
Connect over tech →

Boost your career | Find your zen | Get moving | Share language + culture | Read with friends | Write together | Hone your craft

What do you want to do?

Search for "tennis"

Location

Search

See what's happening

Starting soon | Today | Tomorrow | This week

Online | In person | Trending near you

How Meetup works

Meet new people who share your interests through online and in-person events. It's free to create an account.

Join a group
Do what you love, meet others who love it, find your community. The rest is history!

Find an event
Events are happening on just about any topic you can think of, from online gaming and photography to yoga and hiking.

Start a group
You don't have to be an expert to gather people together and explore shared interests.

Join Meetup

Group focused connections, no opportunity for individual friend finding

Bumble BFF
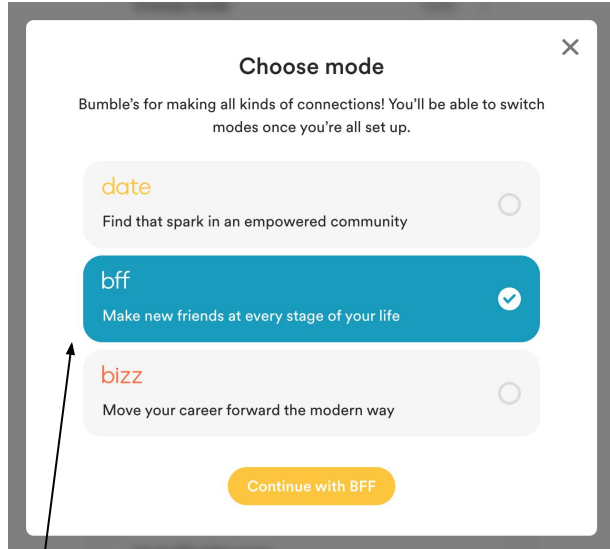
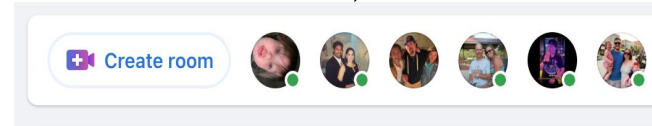"BFF" mode hard to find, same profile for BFF and dating mode

Stephanie, 30 ☑ Photo verified

Digital strategist at Digital Marketing
University of Florida 2013

⚐ Block & report
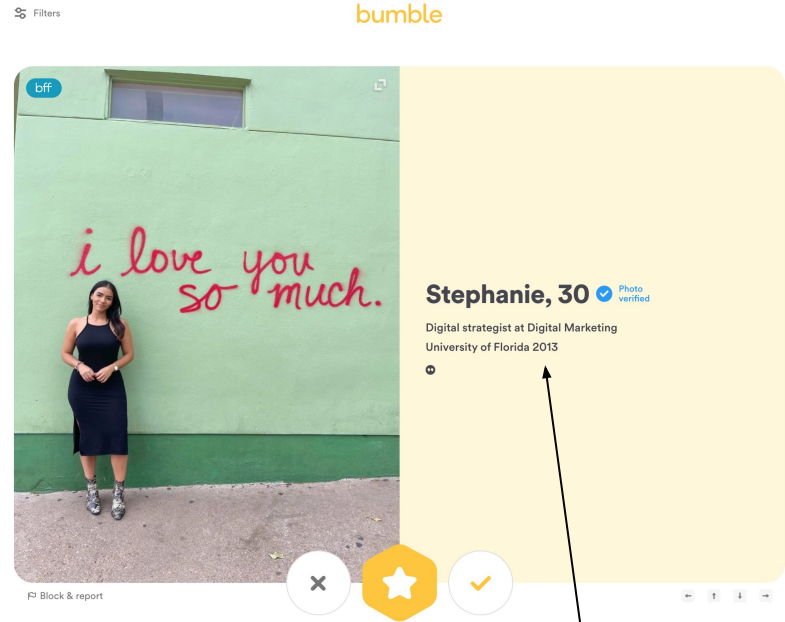
One match shown at a time, no group socialization opportunities

Facebook

Feature to create video chat room with online friends
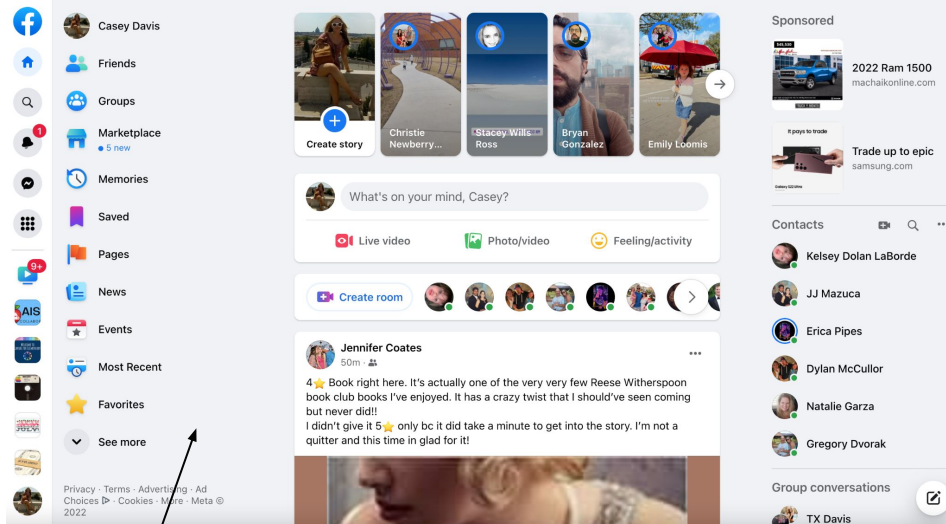
Cluttered interface, too much content

Whatsapp

Simple. Secure. Reliable messaging.

With WhatsApp, you'll get fast, simple, secure messaging and calling for free*, available on phones all over the world.

* Data charges may apply. Contact your provider for details.

 Android >

 iPhone >

 Mac or Windows PC >
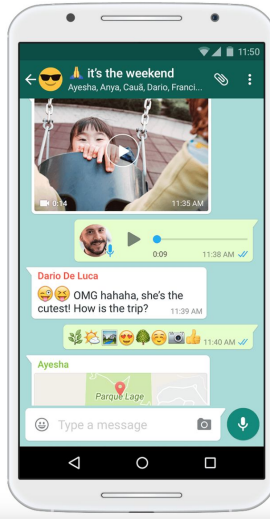
iPhone Screenshots

Simple.
Reliable.
Private.

Message privately with end-to-end encryption

Make calls across the world

Group chat with friends and family
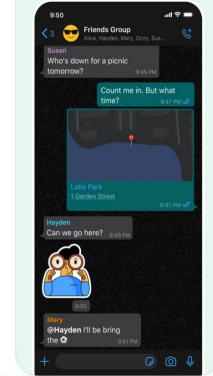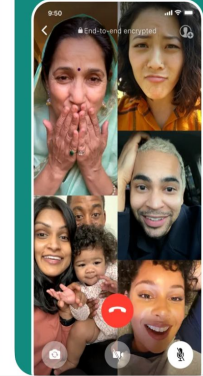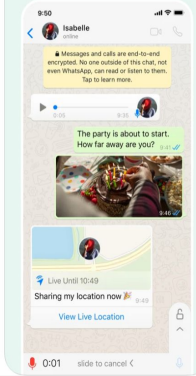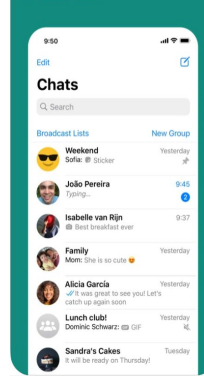
Competitor Analysis Takeaways

Prototype

buds
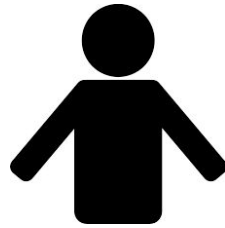
sprouting

new

friendships

Paper Prototypes
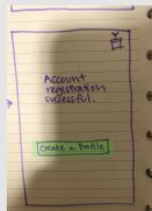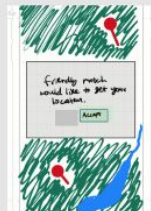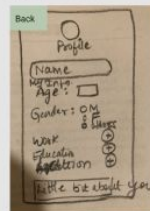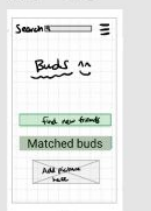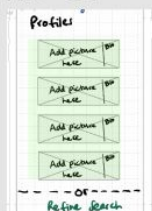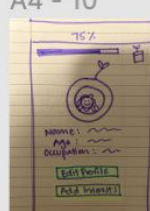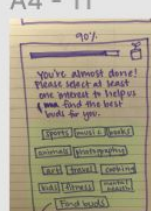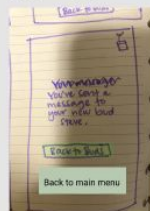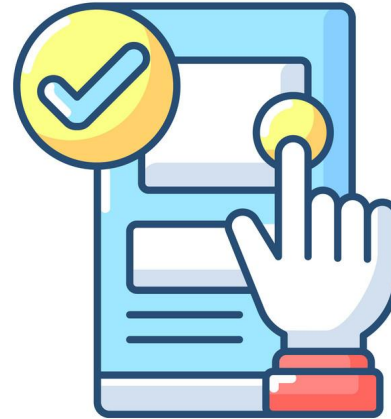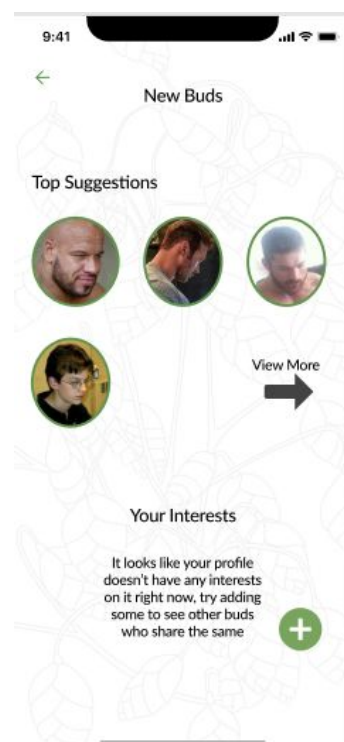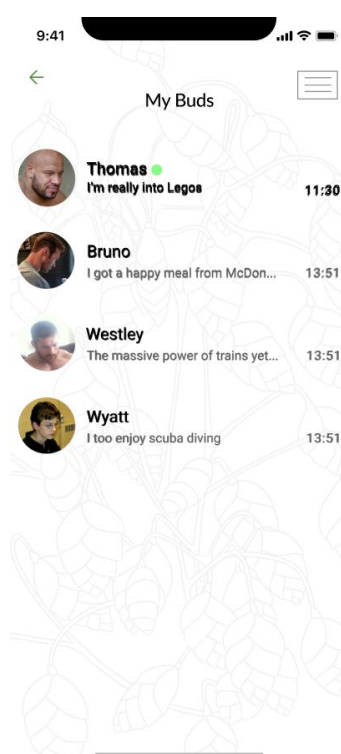
Usability Testing

Main user feedback included:

- prototype flow errors
- disproportionate buttons
- missing back buttons
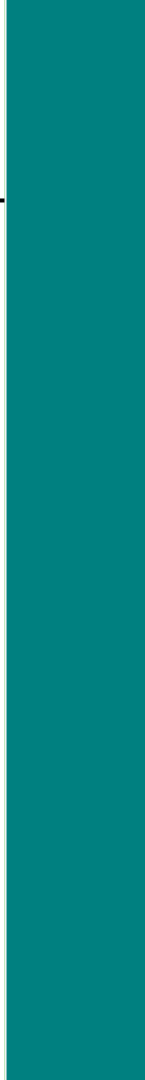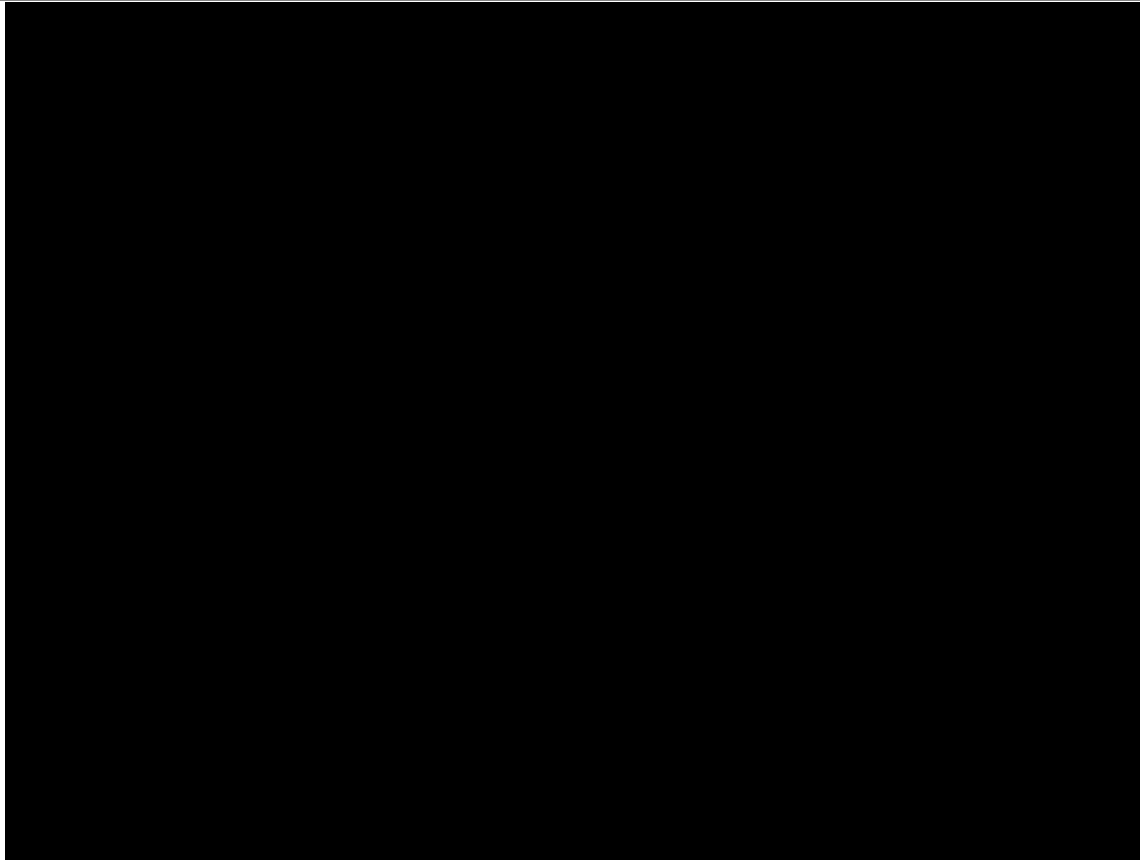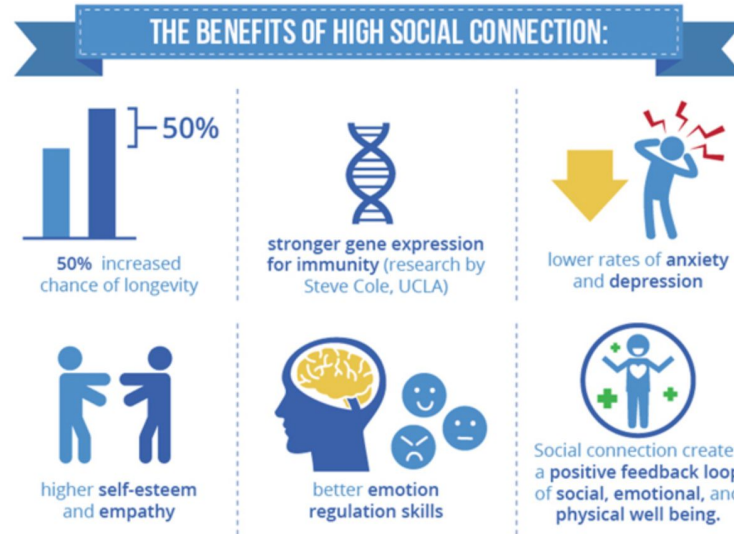- GPS concerns
- organization

iOS Prototype

iOS Flow

Conclusions

THE BENEFITS OF HIGH SOCIAL CONNECTION:

50% increased chance of longevity

stronger gene expression for immunity (research by Steve Cole, UCLA)

lower rates of anxiety and depression

higher self-esteem and empathy

better emotion regulation skills

Social connection creates a positive feedback loop of social, emotional, and physical well being.

Harvard Health found that social connections help "relieve harmful levels of stress, which can adversely affect coronary arteries, gut function, insulin regulation, and the immune system." [1]

[1] https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/the-health-benefits-of-strong-relationships

Next Steps

Expanded interests section (ie: interest entry field)

Personalized UI for users

"Social battery" visual feature for self assessment

Event hosting/event recommendations

"Flags" for misconduct

THANKS!

Questions?