

3-Minute Video (<https://youtu.be/WMKj9VgsUiA>)

Problem: The COVID-19 pandemic spurred a massive shift to remote work with many professionals transitioning to work-from-home (WFH) arrangements. In subjecting the majority of the workforce into involuntary remote work, the COVID-19 pandemic heightened precarity with work-life balance and sustained wellbeing ([Warren & Bordoloi, 2020](#), [Hayes et al., 2020](#)). These remote workers face new challenges as WFH arrangements blur the lines between work and home and physically isolate coworkers (Yeo & Li, 2022). Such challenges and lack of coping mechanisms have led to increased social isolation, feelings of loneliness, anxiety, distractions, burnout and frustration in regards to work performance and mental health (Yeo & Li, 2022). In addition to the negative impact on one's quality of life, emotional well-being and a healthy work-life balance have been shown to have significant impact on performance outcomes (Yarberry & Sims, 2021). Employers need to provide resources to help remote employees tackle the social and emotional challenges of the remote workplace.

Audience: Our users are young professionals who have recently transitioned to remote or hybrid work, and are now experiencing an unwieldy work-life balance. This affects their sense of rest and produces anxiety in relation to perceived productivity and performance, and therefore their ability to relax at home ([Lusinski, 2019](#), [Hayes et al, 2021](#), [Chu et al., 2022](#)) and regulate their physical and mental health ([Oakman et al., 2020](#)), especially during a time of crisis ([Toniolo-Barrios & Pitt, 2021](#), [Al-Habaibeh, 2021](#)). During the pandemic, online media consumption behaviors for our users increased and included gaming, erotic, social media, information research, and streaming (Lemenager et al., 2021). Common platforms include social media and XR. Our users are in the workforce and are presumed to have access to and working familiarity with home and workplace technologies, such as a desktop or laptop, smartphone, and reliable Internet connectivity. In most cases, the remote workplace requires some form of communication technology, such as seen in a sharp increase of preferred video chat service (Mintel, 2020) and these new methods and tools for communication have been shown to cause psychological side effects (Cakula & Pratt, 2021).

Goal: Remote workers will engage in self-disclosure, thereby bettering social connectedness and well-being.

Design Rationale: Our design supports social connectedness in order to improve employee well-being. Both regulation of emotions and genuine self-disclosure have been shown to enhance one's well-being (Luo & Hancock, 2020; Restubog et al., 2020). In having a place to share and participate in shared pain points of remote work isolation and mental wellness, remote workers can partake in a larger community and have access to advice on mental wellness in the remote workspace. Authenticity is promoted by capturing information from users at random moments in their life with time-based and optionally private responses to prompts.

Self-Disclosure

Mobile prompts encourage users to share “snapshots” of emotions, which then manifest in their balconies.

Anonymity in voice and text is used to increase comfort with emotional disclosure (Huang et al., 2014).

Wellness phone booths are a built-in hotline for users to get advice or help.

Wishing Waters are a communal space where users can leave notes of their hopes for their remote futures.

Social Connectedness

Using **Virtual Reality (VR)** increases the feeling of connectedness to other users (Shin 2017).

Users can **visit others' balconies and leave notes** in response to each other in text, voice-to-text, or voice.

At the city **campfire**, users can access often-asked community questions answered by wellness professionals.

Users will populate their **personal balcony gardens** by creating connections between one's own wellness snapshots with snapshots from others. Grow connections over time.

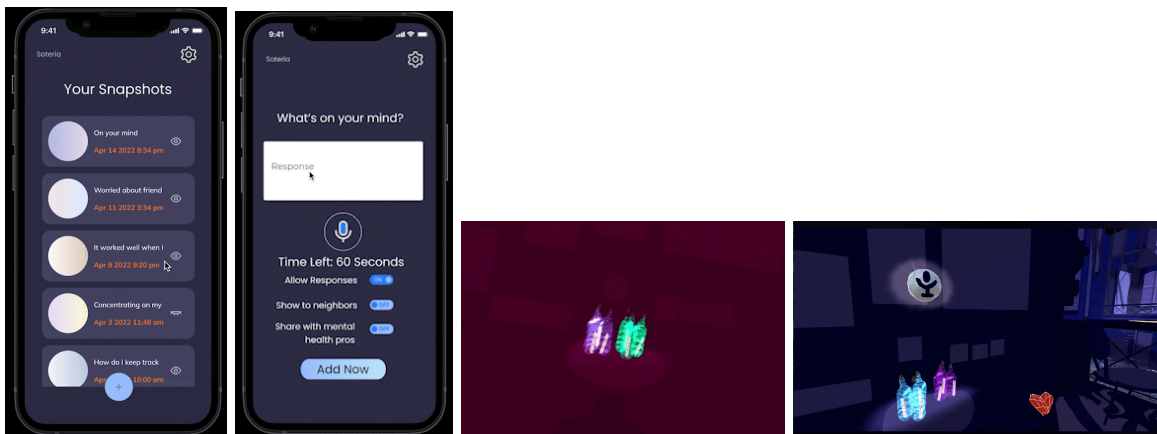
Market & Business Model:

In the United States alone, the Corporate Wellness Services Industry is estimated to reach \$7.3 billion in 2026 (Cook, 2021). The global workplace wellness market is estimated by GWI at \$48.5 billion in 2020. More than half of companies globally are hybrid or fully remote ([Babu, 2021](#)), we foresee opportunities for SOTERIA to grow as a community through a **tiered subscription model**. Companies will then distribute unique access codes to their workers. We therefore expect to expand the virtual landscape in SOTERIA PLUS, allowing users to engage in further networking and socializing in different districts of SOTERIA CITY, with extensions in VR game rooms and hobbyist channels.

Media



Balcony with rain generated based on mobile input (opt-ins, biometrics, prompts, user community interactions)



Mobile wellness Snapshots & wellness prompt (left) and responses in another user's balcony where users can leave encouraging notes (right)



Personal garden for connecting one's emotion snapshots with snapshots from other users (left), phone booth (right)



Paper boat with wish (left), wish boats shared in city waters (right)

Resources

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