NotToday

Self-Defense Against Suicidal Ideation

Art by C.W. Moss

Overview

NotToday is a mobile app for people who suffer from chronic suicidal thoughts. The goal of the app is to provide support for not moving from thought to action in any given day.

The problem

Having **chronic suicidal thoughts is distinct from being in a suicidal crisis** which may lead to an immediate attempt.

The problem is that it is a risk factor for attempting suicide, which should not be ignored.

It can also be a painful and disabling lifelong issue.

The concept

**NotToday** will remind the user that a suicidal mental state is not endless.

Instead, they will remember that **suicidal thoughts are a symptom** that has come and gone for them many times before, and that it does not define them.

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How does NotToday work?

NotToday is an app that enables users to create a personal repository of life-affirming content using their own words, thoughts, images and/or videos.

A reminder to view their content is then delivered to the user daily via automatic notifications. This ensures it will be seen during suicidal periods, without the requirement that the user open the app while they are feeling more prone to harm than help themselves.
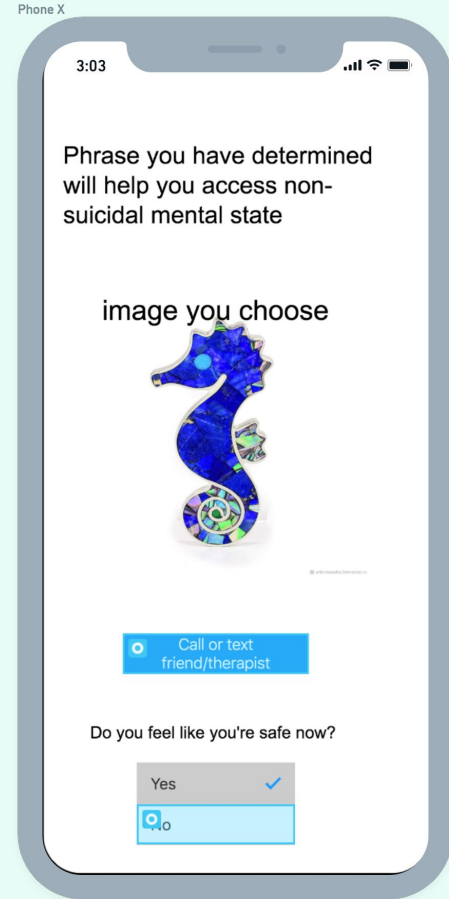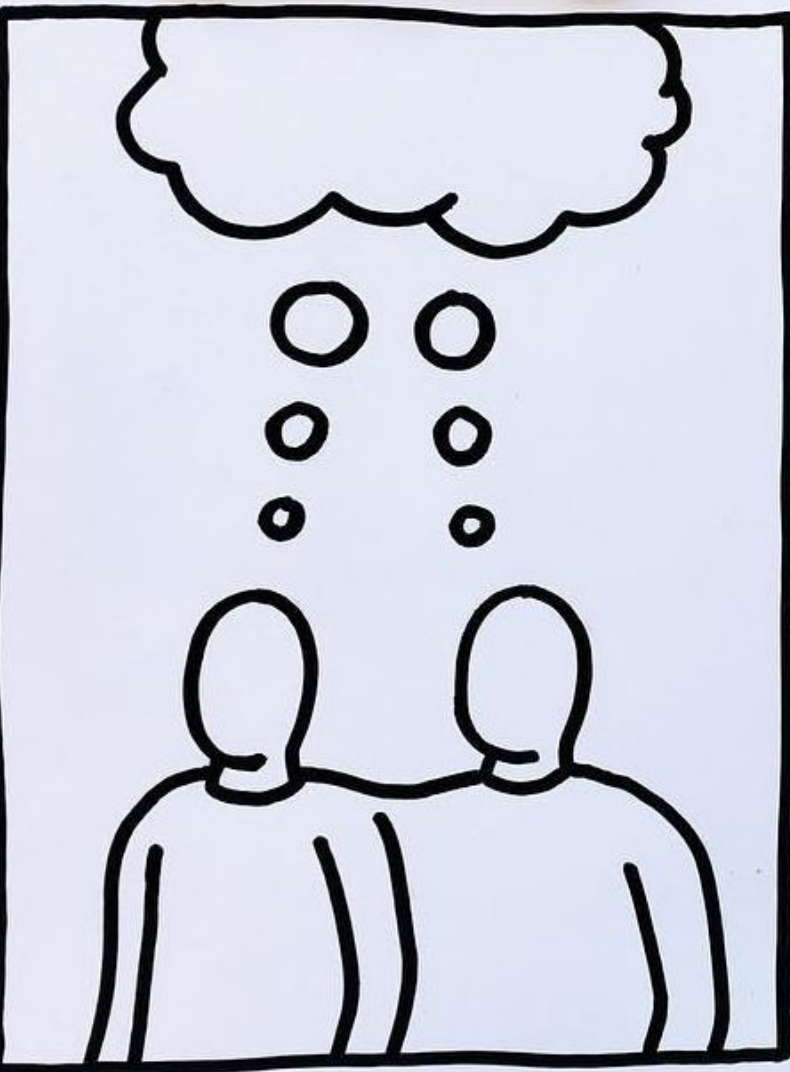
What are chronic suicidal thoughts?

Trauma causes **dissociation**, which is linked to how the chronic suicidal ideation can be experienced.

Dissociation is a mental defense mechanism that leads to a lack of continuity in thoughts, memory and sense of identity.

4.3% of the adult population. That's <u>14 million people</u>

What contributes to this problem?

Chronic suicidal ideation is often linked to **trauma**
- PTSD—a single traumatic incident
- "Complex PTSD"—prolonged, repeated experience of trauma

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What are chronic suicidal thoughts?

The mental state in which a person has suicidal thoughts may be dissociated, i.e. not connected to their non-suicidal state.

Their thoughts and feelings can be completely different between the two. When they are suicidal, they will not be able to remember how things felt during times they were OK, and vice versa.

This is why a reminder passed from the non-suicidal state to the suicidal one may be helpful.
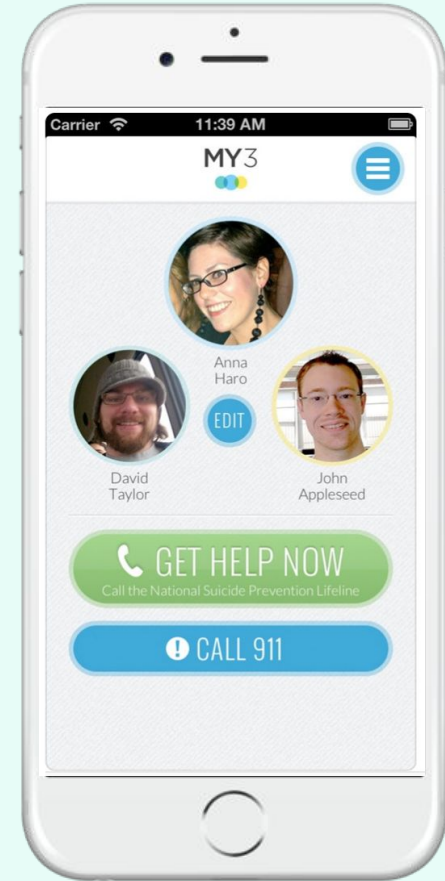
What do other apps do?

Suicide Safety Plan

- Created by: Duke University students and faculty
- User creates a plan to "help guide [them] through difficult moments… help [them] cope and keep you safe."
- **What's missing:** Directive, medicalized; tone can seem mismatched to a frightening and excruciating experience
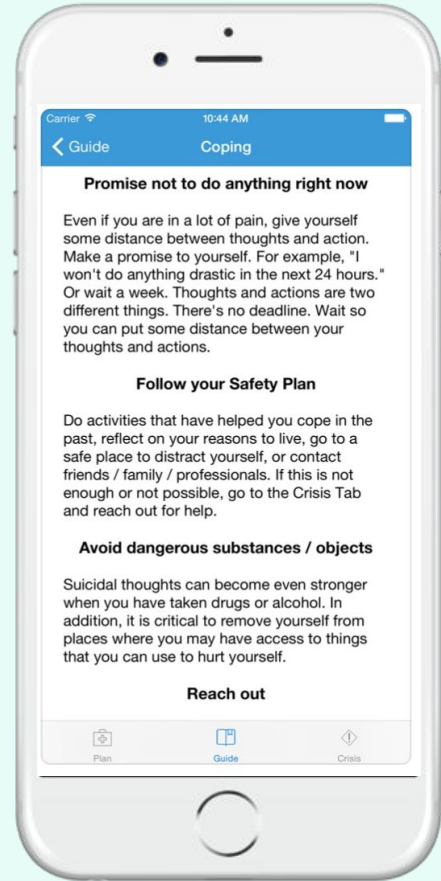
What do other apps do?

MY3 - Support Network

- Created by: California Mental Health Services Authority and the Link2Health Solutions
- "Stay connected to your network when you are in a time of crisis with MY3"
- **What's missing:** Exclusive focus on social connection may not helpful—or can even be harmful—to users who are isolated, being abused, or are ashamed and secretive about their suicidal thoughts

What do other apps do?

Virtual Hope Box
- Created by: National Center for Telehealth & Technology
- For use by "patients and their behavioral health providers as an accessory to treatment"
- **What's missing:** Medicalized; app has so many features it can lead to choice paralysis or discouragement; aesthetic is highly unappealing

User journeys

TBD post-survey

How does NotToday help?

NotToday: Self-Defense Against Suicidal Ideation helps people to create continuity in their desire to live across suicidal/non-suicidal dissociated mental states.

When they are in a state of mind where they want to live, the user can create a repository of their own text, images, links, and/or the ability to message or call friends or therapists, they they themselves choose as helpful.
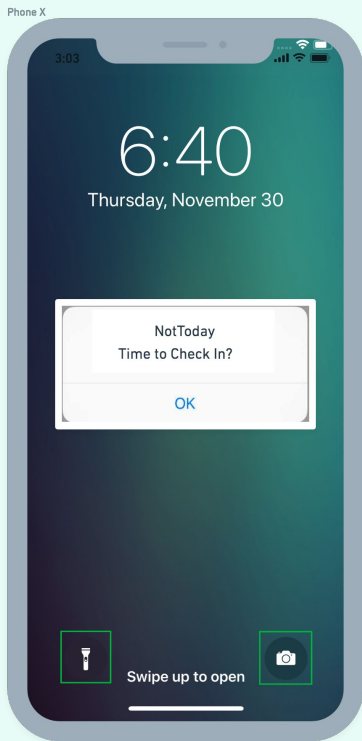
How does NotToday help?

The app sends the user a **daily notification** asking if they need to access their content.

This ensures the note is available to them during times when they may not be able to remember they downloaded the app, or may not feel enough desire to survive/have enough self-worth to open it.

How does NotToday help?

Even if they don't look at their content, the existence of the notification reminds them of their initial interaction with the app.

The fact that they downloaded and set it up is evidence that they have a state of mind where they do want to live, and if they can wait out the suicidal period, they will return to it.

How does NotToday help?

A person with chronic suicidal ideation may not be able to say they'll never kill themselves.

But they can say, Not Today.

Minimum viable product

Push Notifications:
- Should be user controllable and be able to put on "snooze," but not be turned off completely unless the app is deleted

User-chosen content:
- Includes text, images, links, and ability to call or SMS
- Should be stored locally; no account should be required (privacy is key)

Safety features:
- Crisis text lines, 911, other services should be accessible from anywhere in the app
- Provides standard guidance on when higher level of intervention is necessary

Accessibility:
- Works on both Android and iOS
- Conforms to current Accessibility standards

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What was the inspiration for NotToday?

The idea for the app occurred to a lifelong chronic suicidal ideation sufferer while writing in their journal after going through the cycle many times over 20 years.

5:37pm. mood holding steady at "alive." man i forget how great that feels, and i am incredibly shocked at how the other state feels. and how i cannot remember then that this state exists and what a sad thing it would be if i did die while in the other one. yikes. maybe this time i'll remember? i wish i could somehow set a trigger to remind me of that fact when my mood is that bad. actually that is a fairly easy app, if you actually stick with rating every day, it could easily trigger push reminders that it isn't always that way.

Document + project contributors

Product Manager - Mya Stark

C.W. Moss - Illustration & Graphic Design

Maile Malin - UX coaching

Bonnie Wolfe - Project Startup (Github, Onboarding, etc.)

Academic advisors

Dr. Nicholas Bendit, Centre for Psychotherapy, James Fletcher Hospital, Australia

Join the team!

How to get started
- Review this slide deck
- Review wireframes
- Review the kanban project board on NotToday's github account for items in the prioritized backlog
- Additional reading: Scientific context