

Background

Mental health issues affect 1 in 4 people in Korea, with socioeconomic costs expected to increase by 10% annually.

VR technology is being explored for mental health improvement, including treatments for PTSD and anxiety disorders.

Current VR solutions often focus on exposure therapy, but recent studies suggest personalized guidance and feedback are crucial for effectiveness.

Our project aims to leverage VR to provide personalized grounding technique practice, addressing the limitations of existing solutions and potentially reducing societal costs associated with mental health issues.

Journey

Project Overview

UX Research Process

Design

'Be': Personalized VR Guidance and Shelter Creation for Mental Health.

Jiyeon Jung Portfolio

학술대회 발표논문집

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정신건강 증진을 위한 맞춤형 가이드 및 셸터 제작 VR 서비스 'Be' 제안 'Be': Personalized VR Guidance and Shelter Creation for Mental Health

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요약문

최근 정신건강 증진을 위한 VR(Virtual Reality) 서비스에 관한 다양한 연구들이 진행되고 있다. 기존의 연구들은 주로 자연환경에서 간단한 음성 가이드와 함께 단순한 상호작용을 제공하고, 개인화된 자극을 제공할 때는 조박자가 필요한 경우가 많았다. 하지만 단순한 상호작용과 낮은 수준의 개인화만으로는 현실 치료에 비해 유의미하게 높은 효과를 보기 어렵다. 또, 정신질환 보유자들이 개인화된 자극이 필요할 때마다 조박자와 함께하는 것이 현실적으로 어려운 경우가 많다. 따라서 본 연구는 외상 후 스트레스 장애(Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, 이하 PTSD), 불안장애와 같은 다양한 정신질환에 효과적인 그라운드팅 기법을 VR 에 접목해 사용자들에게 개인화된 연습과 안전한 공간을 제공하는 서비스를 기획한다. 사용자는 나만의 연습 방법과 가상 환경을 손쉽게 개인화할 수 있고, 구체적인 가이드와 함께 그라운드팅을 연습할 수 있다. 본 서비스는 상담자와 함께한다면 그 효과가 크게 증대할 수 있어 치료 현장에서의 활용 또한 기대할 수 있다. 더 나아가, 정신건강 증진에 따른 사회경제적 비용 절감에 도움이 되고자 한다.

주제어

VR, AR, 외상 후 스트레스 장애, 불안장애, 그라운드팅

1. 서론

1.1 연구 배경과 목적

2023 년 1 월 공개된 국가정신건강현황보고서에 따르면, 국민의 4 명 중 1 명이 심정서 1 번 이상 정신 질환을 경험하는 것으로 드러났다. 정신질환으로 인한 사회경제적 비용은 2015 년 기준 11 조 3000 억원으로 추정되며, 그 비용은 연평균 10% 이상씩 증가할 것으로 예상된다[1]. 한편, VR 기술이 발전하며 정신건강 증진을 위한 연구들이 지속되고 있다[2]. VR 을 활용한 명상 서비스에 관한 연구들을 비롯해 PTSD 나 불안장애와 같은 정신질환을 치료하고자 하는

연구들 또한 찾아볼 수 있다. 국내의 대표적인 예시로는 상성에서 개발한 공포증 치료를 위한 'Be Fearless'가 있다[3]. Be Fearless 를 비롯하여 전문한 정신질환을 대상으로 하는 경우는 주로 노출치료를 활용한다. 노출치료란 환자가 두려워하는 자극에 노출되었을 때 환자가 두려워하는 결과가 발생하지 않고 조건화된 공포 반응이 감소하는 것을 학습시키는 치료법이다[4]. 이때 환자들이 힘든 기억을 떠올리기가 어려운데, VR 에서 가상 공간을 제공하여 치료를 돕는 것이다[2]. 하지만 최근 VR 에서의 노출치료 연구를 분석한 몇몇 연구들에서는 개인화된 가이드나 피드백이 없으면 전통적인 노출치료와 비교하여 효과에서 큰 차이가 없다는 주장이 제기되고 있다[5-8]. 이점에 착안하여 노출치료에서 더 나아가 개인화된 가이드와 피드백을 반영하는 VR 서비스를 제공한다. PTSD 를 비롯한 다양한 정신질환에 효과적인 치료법이지만 부담된 노력 없이도 활용이 어려운 그라운드팅 기법을 VR 에 접목하고, 이 서비스를 통해 사용자들의 정신건강 증진과 사회경제적 비용 절감에 도움이 되고자 한다.

1.2 연구 방법

본 연구는 관련 선행연구 조사, 사용자 분석, 서비스 제안 3 가지 단계로 구성된다. 첫째, 그라운드팅의 정신질환 치료 효과와 VR 을 활용해 정신건강을 증진하고자 하는 사례들을 통해 본 서비스의 적용할 요소들을 살펴본다. 둘째, 디자인 평정 방법론을 활용해 유관 정신질환 보유자들과 심층 인터뷰를 진행, 사용자들의 구체적인 페인 포인트와 니즈를 분석하는 어피니티 다이어그램을 작성해 답변을 정리하고 자문 결과를 분석한다. 이후 유치 페르소나와 함께 서비스 콘셉트를 구체화한다. 마지막으로, 유치 클로우와 Unity, Figma 를 활용한 콘셉트 이미지 및 프로토타입과 함께 구체적인 서비스를 제안한다.

2. 연구내용

2.1 선행연구

2.1.1 정신질환과 그라운드팅

When PTSD, panic, or anxiety strikes, every second counts.

Have you ever felt overwhelmed by anxiety or panic, wishing for a way to instantly ground yourself?

How can we help people to escape these mental health emergencies instantly, without relying on a therapist's presence?

How It Began

It started when my friend asked me to join a research project for an academic conference. It was about 'grounding technique', something I'd never heard of.

Turns out, it's a powerful tool for people with PTSD, panic disorder, or anxiety. When they're hit with flashbacks or panic attacks, grounding helps them snap back to reality. It acts as both an emergency brake for the mind and an emotional anchor, pulling them back to the present.

The problem is while it is very effective, mastering grounding takes tons of practice, and many people struggle to find a safe, comfortable place to do it. And turns out this was also true for some of our friends struggling with their conditions.

That's when we had our lightbulb moment. What if we could use VR to create the a safe, personalized environment for practice?

Our goal became clear: develop a VR service to help people master grounding techniques, empowering them to reclaim control in their most challenging moments.

Project Overview

Designing a **VR-based mental health service** that incorporates **personalized grounding techniques practice for individuals with mental disorders** such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or anxiety disorders.

This innovative approach aims to provide users with two main functions:

1. Guided and interactive grounding practice sessions
2. Personalized virtual environments and grounding routines

By offering these features, we strive to enhance treatment efficacy and reduce societal costs associated with mental health issues.

Team

Team: Suyeon Lead, Jiyeon

Project Duration: 4 Months October 2023 - January 2024

My Role

Lead UX Researcher and Designer, Co-author

What I did (Scope of work)

- **Conducted comprehensive literature review:** • Analyzed 30+ peer-reviewed academic papers on grounding techniques and VR applications in mental health • Synthesized key findings to inform evidence-based design decisions
- Market research
- In-depth user interviews • Analyzed user data • user personas • Task flows • Information architecture design • low-fidelity wireframes and high-fidelity mockups • user flow • make prototype

Who is it for?

Target Audience for 'BE':

- People dealing with various mental health challenges
- Specifically, those with **PTSD, panic, or anxiety disorders**
- Individuals who want to learn and **practice grounding techniques**



PTSD

Anxiety
Disorders

Want to
practice
grounding

Process



Literature Review

- Case studies of VR applications in mental health improvement
- Efficacy of grounding techniques in treating mental illnesses



User Research

- In-depth interviews with individuals having relevant mental health conditions
- Pain point and needs analysis (Affinity Diagramming)
- Expert consultation
- User Persona development



Service Design

- User Flow Creation
- Concept images using Figma
- Interactive prototype using Unity

Challenges from the start

Challenge

1. I had no experience with building VR services.
2. I didn't know what grounding was.
3. We aimed to submit to a HCI conference, so it had to be thoroughly examined to have academic value.



If you never heard of grounding, that's where I started the project.

Challenge

1. I had no experience with building VR services.
2. I didn't know what grounding was.
3. We aimed to submit to a HCI conference, so it had to be thoroughly examined to have academic value.

If you never heard of grounding, that's where I started the project.

Literature Review

- Literature Review
 - Case studies of VR applications in mental health improvement
 - Read all related papers in related topic in korean, english
- What is Grounding
 - How: book
 - Efficacy of grounding techniques in treating mental illnesses
- Market research
 - Learn about the VR mental related services out there
 - How: We analysed 20+ VR apps out there in meditation, exp

Research Finding

VR technology is being explored for mental health improvement, including treatments for PTSD and anxiety disorders.

There are many attempts to improve the mental health using VR.

Summary:

1. Current VR solutions mostly focus on exposure therapy.
2. utilizes natural environments
3. Offers simple voice guidance and basic interactions.
4. Usually requires an assistant when providing personalized stimuli

Exposure therapy: A therapeutic technique that safely exposes users to feared situations, helping them overcome anxiety through controlled, repeated encounters in a virtual environment.

Research Finding: Limitation of exposure therapy VR

1. While many VR services aim to improve mental health, their effectiveness often falls short of traditional treatments, offering little advantage over conventional therapy methods.
 - a. but recent studies suggest personalized guidance and feedback are crucial for effectiveness.
 - b. Existing solutions offer only simple interactions and minimal personalization
 - c. =This is not really effective compared to the traditional exposure therapy
2. Also it is realistically challenging for individuals with mental health conditions to be with an assistant whenever they need personalized stimuli

Challenge Solved: Goal one sentence

And there were no VR services that utilize grounding technique

Building on this insight, we're developing a VR service that goes beyond traditional exposure therapy by incorporating personalized guidance and feedback, integrating grounding technique into VR

With 2 main func:

- Safe virtual spaces
- Rich interactions and specific guidance without constant human assistance

What is Grounding technique

Grounding is an effective technique to immediately reduce discomfort caused by these conditions.

Three types of grounding: mental, physical, and soothing.



Mental

Physical

Soothing

Eyes remain open during grounding = Focus on awareness rather than relaxation (difference between grounding and meditation)

Improvement strategies:

- Frequent practice
- Creating personalized grounding methods
- Developing guided sessions (often with help from others)

Challenge of

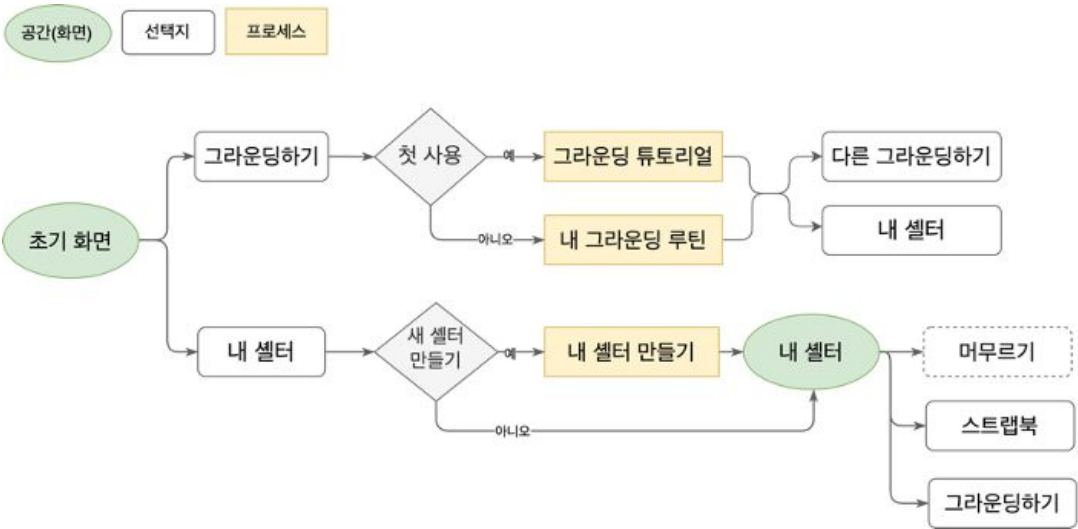
Grounding techniques are effective for mental health but difficult to utilize without significant effort.

Proposed Solution Goal one sentence

Planning a mental health promotion service that applies grounding techniques, which are effective for various mental disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety disorders, to VR. This service goes beyond simple exposure therapy or meditation to provide users with personalized practice and a safe space.

base d on that, 앱디자인1

- 그라운드 루틴, (사전감정평가 등)
- 셸터의 기능, 모바일앱 연동 스크랩북



Research User interview

Target group:

- PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder)
- Anxiety disorders, including panic disorder
- Four mid-20s female subjects

Challenge:

Need to find people with specific conditions, who has experience using grounding. Also need to be willing to talk about their experience

User Interview - come up with questions

Functional Aspects

- Have you ever experienced grounding?
- What parts were difficult and what parts were good when you did? What effects did it have?
- What were the challenging points?

Usage Time Aspects

- When do you typically perform cognitive behavioral therapy to reduce discomfort caused by mental illness?

Usage Environment Aspects

- What kind of environment do you prefer when doing grounding (if you do)?
- If it's an environment where you feel comfortable, in what kind of environments do you

User analysis Result

- Use of grounding techniques in emergency situations and daily life
- Feels the need for practice but finding it difficult to do alone
- Preferred spaces for grounding differs per individual
- Wants specific guiding, tactile stimulation, and safe space creation features
- Does not like visual elements and interactive mechanisms that disturbs immersion

User analysis -> User Persona challenge

Based on the affinity diagramming and user research, I developed two distinct user personas, differentiated by their proficiency in grounding techniques:

At first, one persona ->

1차 페인포인트, 유저니즈, 목표 설정 (페르소나와 저니맵 이후 다시 설정)

Pain point

- 그라운드링을 써야하는 상황이 많은데 쓰기 어렵다 (연습이 필요하다)
- 그러나 그라운드링은 연습하기도 어렵다. 특히 혼자서 할때 어렵다.
- 응급상황에서 신체적 그라운드링을 많이 쓰는데, 이것도 아주 확실히 쓰기 어렵다.

User needs

- 확실한 그라운드링 가이드가 필요하다. 옆에서함께 연습을 도와줄. 지시를해줄.
- 신체적 그라운드링에 더욱 효과를 보기 위 햅틱 등 자극을 이용해서 할 수 있으면 좋겠다.
- 안전함을 느끼는 장소에서 그라운드링을 연습하면 좋겠다.

Goal

1. 그라운드링 연습을 돕기 위해 확실한 가이드가 있는, 안전한 공간을 제공할 수 있는 앱을 만든다.
2. 또한 가이드에 신체적 그라운드링에 효과를 내기 위해 물리적 자극, 촉각을 잘 활용하도록 디자인한다.

Chanllenge: it was hard to .. didnt feel right, didnt feel like im capturing all the things.

New User Personas

Beginner Users:

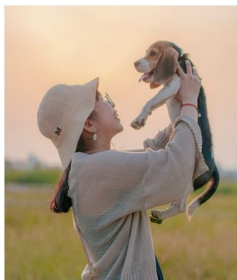
- Lack of confidence in applying grounding techniques during crises
- Absence of readily available safe spaces for practice

Experienced Users:

- Limited opportunities to expand grounding technique repertoire
- Need for more personalized, comforting virtual environments

Beginner User

Novice User: Kim Chobo • Struggles to use grounding techniques in emergency situations • Finds it difficult to identify safe spaces in real life



김초보 (22) 여, 대학생

정신 질환

PTSD, 공황, 불안, 우울

About

어릴 적 가정폭력을 겪은 트라우마로 인해 플래시백, 공황 등의 응급상황을 마주한다. 응급상황에 그라운딩을 사용할 때 어려움을 겪는다. 좋은 기억을 기념품으로 간직하는 것을 좋아한다.

그라운딩 이용 실태



동기 Motivation

- 평소 내원하던 병원에서 그라운딩 연습용으로 추천을 받아 사용 시작
- 그라운딩의 필요성을 느끼지만 익숙하지 않아 사용이 어려움

불만사항 Pain Point

- 응급상황에서 빠르게 대처하기 힘들
- 응급상황에 혼자 있을 때 사용할 수 있는 가이드가 없음
- 누군가 옆에서 함께 해주지 않으면 연습이 어려움
- 안전하다고 느끼는 공간에서 그라운딩을 연습하고 싶으나 현실에서 그런 공간을 찾기가 쉽지 않음
- 시중에 나와있는 명상 앱을 사용해보았으나 불안함만 상승하고 효과가 없었음

니즈 Needs

- 혼자서도 그라운딩을 연습할 수 있는 구체적인 가이드
- 트라우마와 관련되지 않은 안전한 연습 공간
- 응급상황에 혼자서 빠르게 대처할 수 있는 그라운딩 실력
- 응급상황에서 가이드를 이용할 수 있는 모바일 연동된 서비스

목적 Goal

- 그라운딩을 충분히 연습하여 응급상황에서 빠르게 대처할 수 있는 능력 키우기
- 나만의 안전한 장소를 만들기

Experienced User

Experienced User: Park Neungsuk • Can use grounding in emergencies but wants to practice other types • Desires a customized safe space with favorite objects and environments



박능숙 (26) 여, 회사원

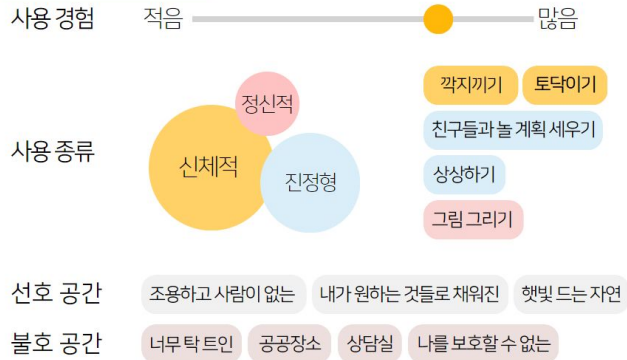
정신 질환

공황, 불안, ADHD, 우울

About

불안 및 스트레스 상황, 혹은 일상생활에서도 종종 집중 향상과 진정을 위해 그라운딩을 사용한다.
스스로를 잘 파악하고 자신에게 맞는 여러 루틴이 있다.
그림, 글 작업을 통해 자신을 알아가는 것을 좋아한다.

그라운딩 이용 실태



동기 Motivation

- 그라운딩으로 최소한의 응급처치가 가능하지만 더 능숙해지고 싶음
- 평소에 상상하는 안전 공간들을 가상공간에서 실현해보고 싶음

불만사항 Pain Point

- 상태가 좋지 않을 때는 정신적, 진정형 그라운딩을 사용하기 어려움
- 그라운딩으로 최소한의 응급처치는 가능하나 능동적으로, 자유자재로 사용하는 것은 어려움
- 자연을 좋아하나 너무 탁 트인 곳에서는 압도되는 경우도 있어 자연 환경을 즐기기 힘들

니즈 Needs

- 어려운 종류의 그라운딩 연습을 이끌어줄 구체적이고 명료한 가이드
- 나를 진정시킬 수 있는 것을 한곳에 모아두고 확인하기
- 신체적인 그라운딩을 할 때 햅틱 가이드와 함께 자극에 집중하기
- 그라운딩 종류와 지속 시간 조정을 통해 나에게 맞는 맞춤형 그라운딩 루틴 만들기

목적 Goal

- 다양한 상황에서 다양한 그라운딩을 자유자재로 활용해 삶의 안정성을 높이기
- 나에게 맞는 루틴과 물건들을 한데 모아두고 활용하기

These personas and pain points guided our design decisions, ensuring we addressed the needs of users across the spectrum of grounding proficiency.

Also got 자문

To address the limitations of our small interview sample and validate our approach, we sought expert insight:

- Consulted Dr. Ju Hye-sun, Director of the Korean Trauma Research and Education Institute

Key Benefits:

1. Incorporated insights from years of professional experience consulting mental health patients
2. Validated the potential effectiveness of our service
3. Ensured we were on the right track despite our initial limited information

Based on these, I created drafts of the app design

콘셉 제안: 두 가지 기능 (동그라미 두개)

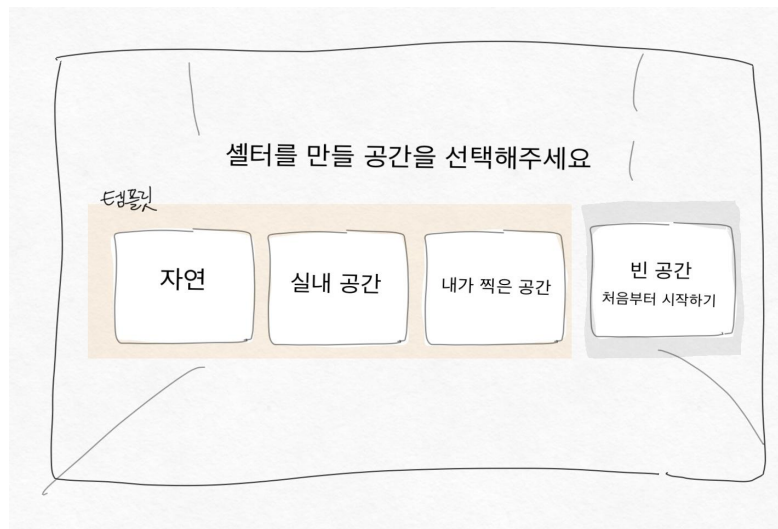
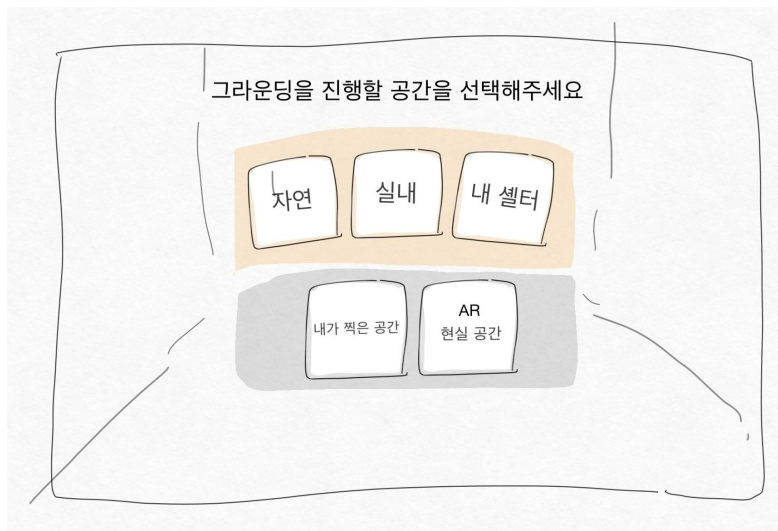
Key Features:

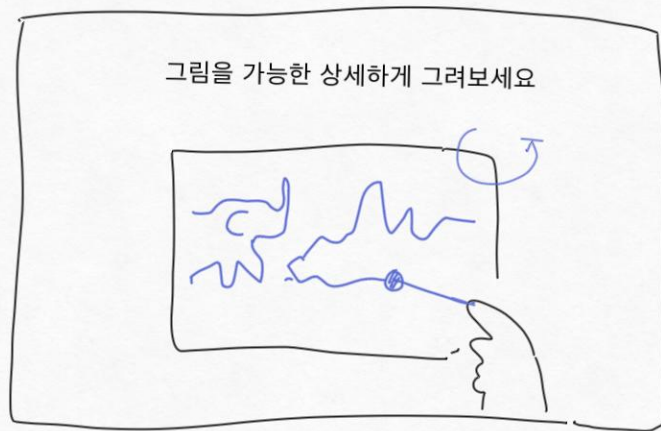
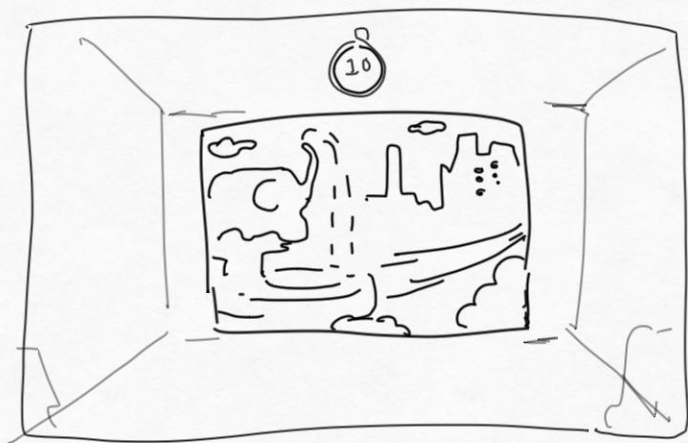
1. Customizable Grounding Exercises
2. Personalized Safe Space 'Shelter': • 3D scanning integration • Scrapbook feature (synced with mobile app for real-world emergency assistance)

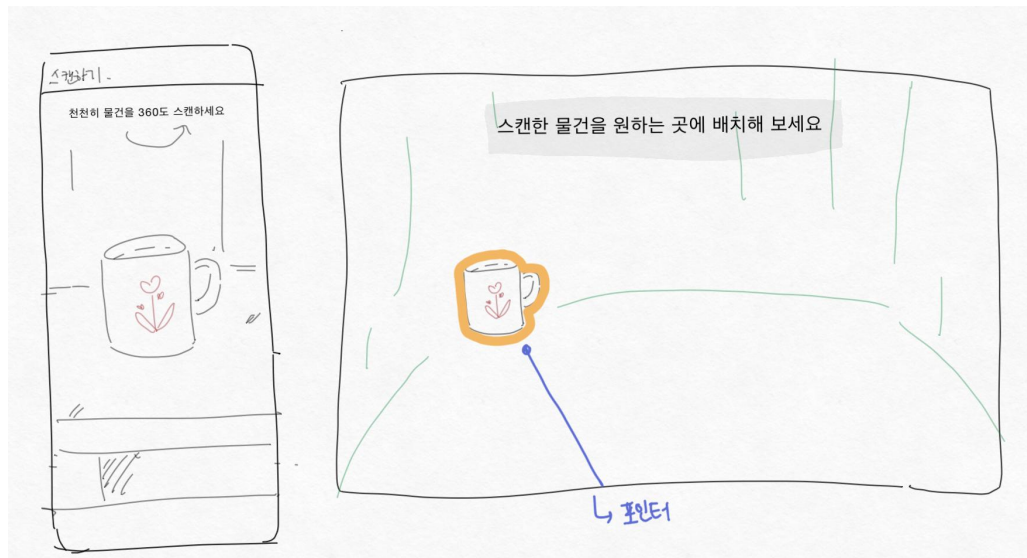
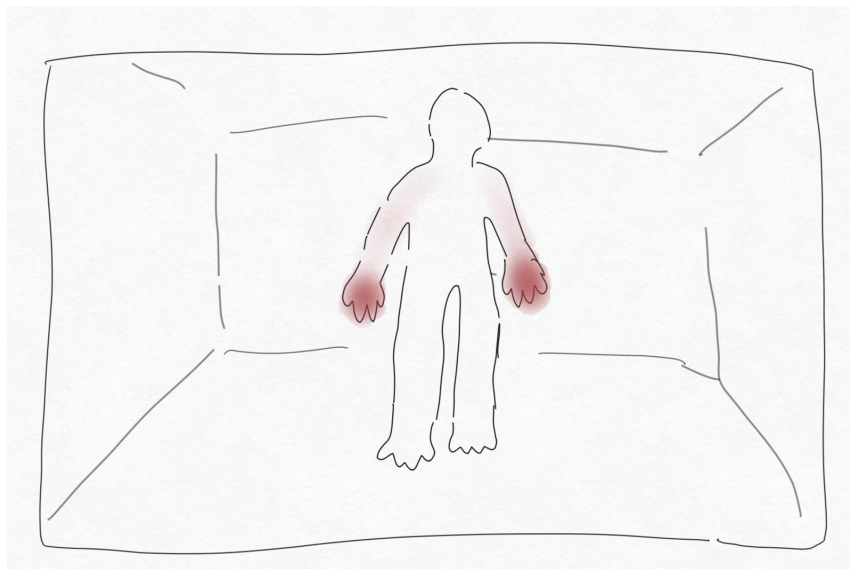
아패 스샷 - app flow 그린거 넣기

앱 플로우 1차

아패 그림?







Challenge: Shelter

Problem: Users need a safe space for grounding, but new users might not have one. Should they create a space first or start grounding immediately?

그림 장 단점

Options Considered:

1. Create Shelter -> Start Grounding Pro: Personalized space from the beginning Con: Potential overwhelm for new users, creating a barrier to entry
 2. Start Grounding -> Create Shelter Pro: Immediate access to grounding techniques Con: Might not cater to users primarily interested in creating their space
- 이건 중요한 질문이었다. 그 이유는 중간에 포기하지않도록 잘 짜야하기 때문이다.

Key Insight: Our user personas revealed that our primary focus should be on first-time users like "Kim Chobo".

Solution:

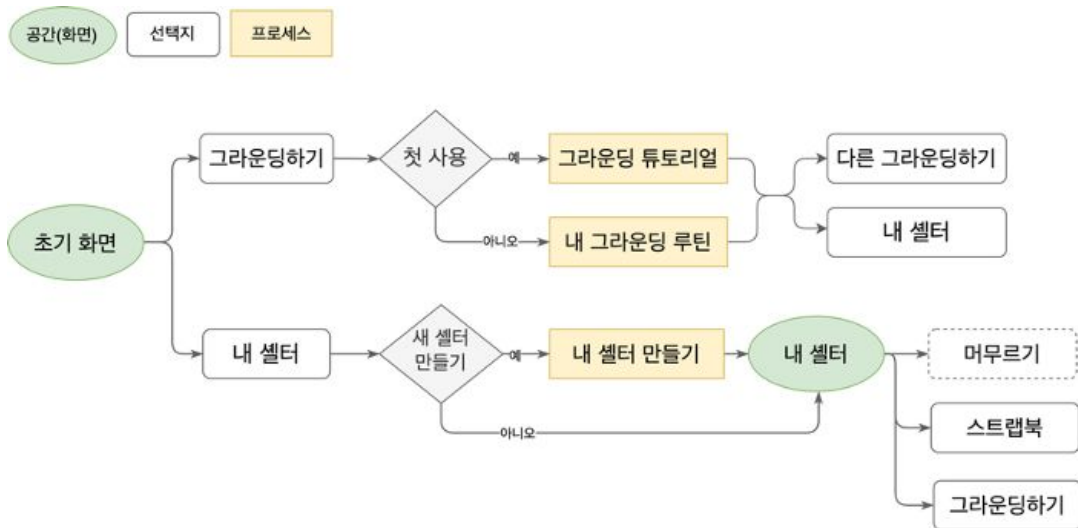
- Introduce shelter creation during the tutorial, specifically in the soothing grounding section
- Provide a temporary starting space for immediate grounding practice
- Allow users to create their personalized shelter later

Final Service design - app flowuser flow

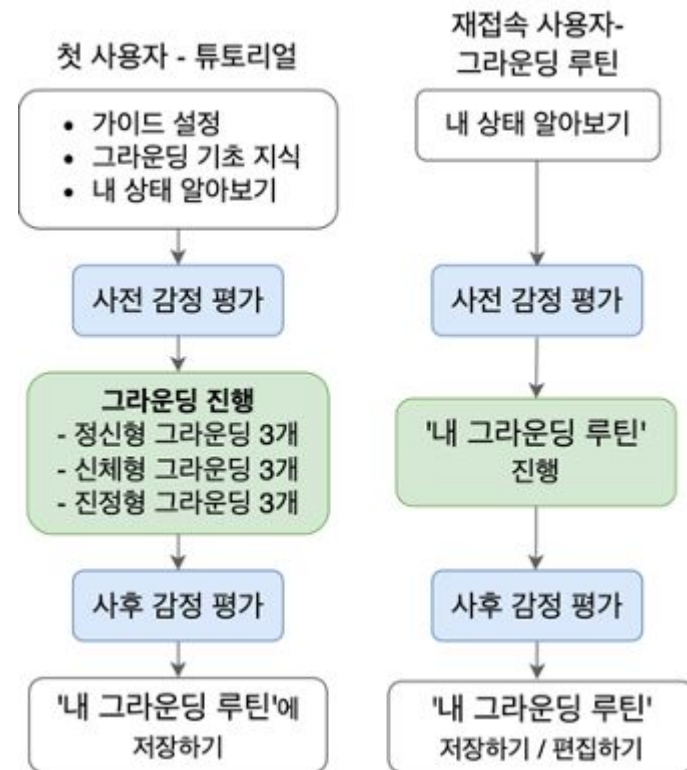
Simple is important, 유저특성상 다른 것은 다 빼거, 세일즈 포인트도 제거

- 그라운드링 하기: 또 마음에 드는 것을 퍼서널라이제이션 할 수 있는 기능의 플로우가 매끄러운지

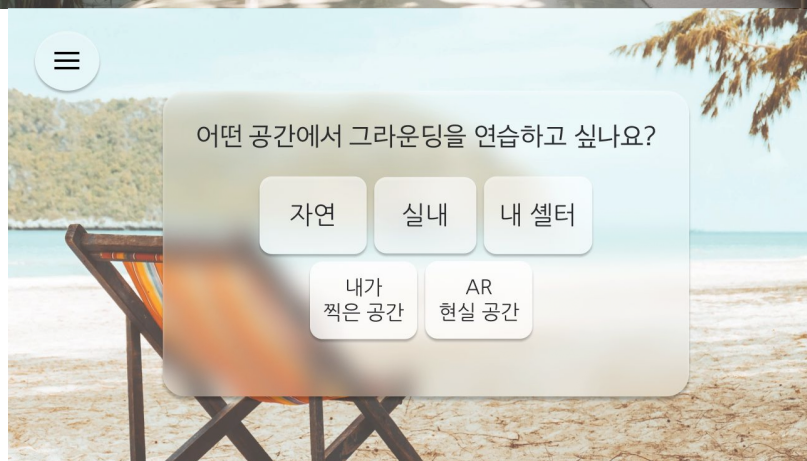
- 셸터: 만들 수 있는지



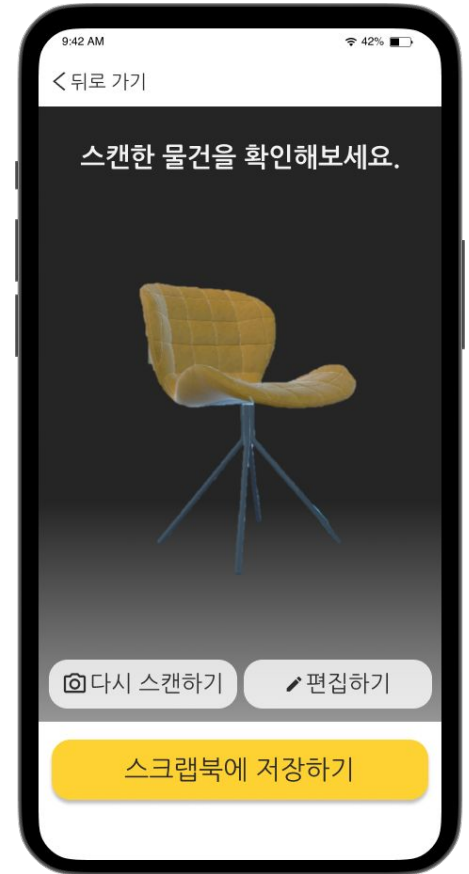
Grounding Flow



Final Result







Solution

Therefore, this study plans to design a service that incorporates grounding techniques, which are effective for various mental disorders such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and anxiety disorders, into VR to provide users with personalized practice and safe spaces

We're developing a VR-based mental health service that:

1. Incorporates effective grounding techniques for PTSD, anxiety disorders, and other mental health conditions
2. Offers personalized practice sessions tailored to individual needs
3. Provides safe, virtual environments for users to engage in therapeutic activities

Solution service proposal!

- Interactive Guidance:
 - Utilizes voice, visual elements, and haptic feedback
 - Provides concrete, step-by-step instructions for effective grounding practice
- Customizable Grounding Routines:
 - Three types of grounding techniques available
 - Users can create personalized routines
 - Tutorial available to understand significance and experience each type
- Personalized Safe Space:
 - 'Shelter' feature: Customizable virtual environment
- Personal Object Integration:

Result

- Our work was accepted for an oral presentation at HCI Conference 2024, placing it among the top submissions for that year
- It was published in the conference proceedings
- This conference is considered the most prestigious domestic conference in the field of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) in Korea.

What I learned

- Why we do interview,
- Why we need affinity
- Why we need user persona, and how to do them
- Really need to learn what I'm using, like reading all the paper