HLAC ePortfolio Signature Assignment – Share-An-App

     I am to share an app that I found helpful in my wellness journey this semester. You can expect me to tell you about it, what it does, how to use it, and what outcomes I saw through it. You'll also find speculation on how it might be integrated into a course like strength training, and what value might be had from doing so. Finally, you will find my reflection on the impact of lifelong wellness concepts in my life, specific implementations of those concepts learned during my semester of strength training, and any general ideas I manage to come up with toward improving the course.

     The app that I have in mind is called Complice, and you can find it (as of this writing) at:

https://complice.co/

     It is a subscription-based online goal tracking application. It has a free 14-day trial, does not require any sort of credit card information during that trial, and is pretty intuitive, if you feel like jumping in while reading this.
     This is more than just a to-do list that you pay for. It is designed, first and foremost, to connect your Big Ideas, or Major Goals, with your day-to-day goings-on. Specifically, you set major goals that you are working towards (reaching some milestone in your workout, running a marathon, achieving a particular grade, write a certain amount over a period of time), then specify the top priority necessary to work towards achieving this major goal (increase 1-rep max weight by 25lbs, run 1k at lunch, read ahead in a textbook, reach a particular word count), and set a specific date where you want to check this top priority off by.

     There are some interesting details here worth mentioning. You can only set up 8 major goals. This isn't because a person can't have more than 8 things going on at a time, but that Complice is intended to keep you on track for the Big Picture items in your life.
     You might have a workout, a diet routine, a job, 5 classes in school, an instrument to keep up practice on, and more, but these are not goals. Achieving a certain gpa, or performing a recital, or optimizing a chunk of office work-flow would be. These broader ideas tend to eat up the details of the specifics enough that having more than 8 such things is difficult while still being able to claim that you are making active progress. Often times you'll find that you're being too specific, or that you're not actually actively working toward all of these things simultaneously.
     When you make a major goal, you are immediately asked to describe what it is you are trying to achieve. What does it mean to say you want to optimize that office work-flow? Sometimes it is pretty obvious (a certain gpa is pretty unambiguous, for example), but not always. Making this clear up front can help clarify things a bit if you're not completely clear on what you're trying to do. For example, a goal like "Fitness" could mean all sorts of things. If you enter a description saying "Build a biweekly routine for exercise using dumbbells and body weight routines", that is a meaningful, specific thing that you can say you've achieved.
     When it comes to deciding on a top priority for a goal, you can only set one per goal, as opposed to creating a roadmap or list of objectives. This is to emphasize the need for occasional reflection. You should be fluid in your work, constantly reevaluating what you've done and what you need to do to best reach your goal. The rest of Complice's many features emphasizes this further.

     Once you have goals and top priorities identified, the next order of business is to specify your intentions for today. What do you plan to do today, specifically, towards your goals? This is your to-do

list where you lay out up front what you intend to do. It clearly displays your goals and also relevant top priorities and their projected completion dates, which helps to keep in mind what it is you're working towards. These daily intentions can be ordered however you like, checked off as you complete them, and even crossed out if you find you probably can't get everything done in a given day. If you find you've forgotten something, you can add extra items to the list as they come to mind, or as they're presented to you. What's more, you can add items to the list that do not directly relate to your goals (miscellaneous tasks), so that you can keep everything you need to do in one place, including more mundane things that come up (doing dishes, finishing a report, remembering to floss).

The next feature of Complice further emphasize its purpose for helping you achieve your goals. Once you have specified what you intend to do during a particular day, you can flip over to a Next Action tab which simply displays the current action at the top of your list of intentions with a big button labeled Done which, when clicked, checks the item off your list and displays the next item. This makes it quite easy to see exactly what you need to do next without getting bogged down in details. A simple action to do, and nothing more.

Another useful feature of the daily intentions page is a built-in timer to help you stay focused and also to remind you to take breaks. By default, it will run for 25 minutes, and then ask if you've managed to stay on-task for the duration. If you have, it will start a 5 minute countdown while you take a break and step away from your work for a moment to help refocus your mind. If you haven't stayed on task, it is straight back to work! There is an optional continuous mode which just automatically cycles between 25 minute work-mode and 5 minute break-mode countdowns, which is great if you're focusing on a single thing for a long period of time, but still need to make sure you occasionally remember to stand up, or drink water.

Once you are done for the day and have marked everything on your intentions list as either completed, or as not expected to be completed this day, you move on to submit your daily outcomes. You reflect on what you've accomplished, stating where you've done enough toward a given goal, or where you've fallen short. It doesn't have to be much, a single word can be sufficient, or a short sentence for clarity.

When you've submitted your outcomes for the day, you are immediately asked to enter your intentions for the coming day. This sets you up to easily take into account the reflection on your progress today when deciding on what to do tomorrow. Did you notice that you failed to finish reading a chapter? Sounds like an obvious candidate for tomorrow's list, wouldn't you say?

This pattern of creating daily to-do lists and recording your results is bracketed by the deadlines you set for yourself when you decided on your top priorities for your major goals. As they come due, they'll show up above your list of daily intentions, as reminders that they're due that day. You can then easily select these priorities, and either mark them as complete (earlier than their due date, if you manage it), or you can push the date back, if necessary (you don't even strictly need a date, but it is useful for keeping accountability towards progress).

When you mark a top priority as complete, you are asked to reflect on it. What did you actually achieve? What went well? What didn't go according to plan? What would you do different? Things like this help you refine your plans towards achieving your goals. After entering this reflection, you're asked to enter a new Top Priority for the given Major Goal, along with accompanying description, and short explanation of what needs to be done, what doesn't need to be done, and a due date.

Beyond all of this daily back-and-forth, with occasional priority completion, you are given the opportunity to reflect on your progress weekly, monthly, and even yearly. These are powerful tools for not only reflecting on your progress, and refining your approach towards achieving your goals, but also provides a record of what you have done, available at a glance.

Every week, you are shown what you accomplished (or didn't, as the case may be) each day that week for each goal individually. You're also shown your outcomes for that day (whether you said that you did enough, or if you mention forgetting this or that task, it'll show up here, clearly highlighted for you). You are then asked to reflect on each goal. What went well? What didn't? What did you learn? What's next? After this is done for each goal, you can enter some general remarks on how to feel the week as a whole went.

Each month you get a bird's-eye view of your progress. Each major goal is displayed on their own monthly calendar, showing how many intentions toward that goal was entered, and how many actually were achieved, clearly color-coded with a tally and percentage to one side. This provides plenty of information at a glance for judging your progress. Further more, you are asked some questions for each goal, depending on the circumstances. If it is a newly started goal, you'll be asked about your key objectives. If you've achieved a goal, you'll be asked to reflect on how well the results matched your expectations. If the goal is on-going, you'll be asked about how you are doing relative to your objectives. In addition to these questions, you'll be asked about what you need to do in the coming month to stay on track, or to consider resources to aid in achieving your goal, or what you learned from the goal's completion. All of this is done for each goal, and the whole monthly review is capped with a general remark about how you did for the month as a whole. This is extremely useful for strategic planning towards achieving your goals.

As if monthly reviews were not enough, there are yearly reviews as well. You are given a chance to remark on how the year as a whole went. For each of your goals, you are shown the total number of intentions you completed for that goal, the longest streak you managed (every day you do something towards a goal is counted toward such a streak), and the description of the goal is given. You are asked to reflect on your progress over the past year toward this goal, and also to state, at a high level, what your plans are for the coming year. This is done for each goal in turn, and provides a great view of all of your work, allowing you to get a sense of your progress over time.

In addition to these reflections on your goals over the course of a year, the yearly review asks questions about multiple areas of your life, based on Alex Vermeer's workbook on annual reflection, 8,760 Hours. You'll be asked to rate how different areas in your life are going, to reflect on the last year, and to envision the coming year. These areas range from worldview, money, relationships, impact in the world, your health, your career, your education, and more. It is very high-level, but quite thorough in its coverage.

All of these reviews, daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, result in a tapestry of your progress in all aspects of life that you care about. This can result in a wonderful source of personal reflection, and a real sense of progress as you look back and see what you have done. What's more, the frequency and detail of the questions result in useful refinement of your goals, allowing you to keep on target far more effectively than if you just wing it.

Complice has one last major feature, and several smaller features worth mentioning. The major feature is one called Rooms. These are chat rooms with a built-in timer, like what is found on the daily intentions page. The chat room also shows the current intention of everyone in the room (the item at the top of your daily to-do list). The timer is a feature of the room, rather than any one person, so

everyone is on the same schedule. The general idea is that everyone works on their current task, whatever it happens to be, at the same time, and then everyone takes a break, possibly away from the computer entirely, at the same time. This reinforces a social pressure towards progress, while also providing some social interaction by meeting new people with goals of their own.

Smaller features of Complice include choosing your own questions to be asked during reviews or completion of priorities, or the automated enabling/disabling of email reminders if you fail/continue to fill out and complete items on your daily checklist. Such things are niceties, for sure, but aren't directly, in and of themselves useful features.

Finally, Complice has an amazingly responsive developer behind it, who personally replies to questions and emails directed at them. This is great, and also rare. Again, not exactly a feature of the application, but useful and worth mentioning.

Now that I've explained what Complice can do, allow me to explain how I've used it during my wellness journey this semester. Complice has allowed me to have an easier time of tracking my workout, and my goals for my workout routine, over the course of the semester. It has not only allowed me to keep track of simple things like whether or not I worked out, or what my routine was in a given day, but it gave me the necessary reminders and prompting to reflect on my progress, and to make sure my actual progress was moving in the direction I needed it to, with the speed I expected.

Complice is a useful tool for any sort of goal one wishes to achieve, and there are many such planner services out there. Complice, however, seems unique in its reliance on personal reflection, and continual refinement of plans rather than marching to the beat of a roadmap built in the early stages of a project. This is particularly relevant for a Lifelong Wellness course, where your progress and goals aren't limited to just the heartbeat of the semester, but also your own personal pacing. How much you can lift, or how far you can run are more directly relevant than whether the class's agenda is to do deadlifts or hit the track. Complice seems to be uniquely suited for providing the necessary tools to actually reflect upon and refine your progress towards a healthier, better lifestyle.

It has certainly helped me, and I recommend anyone with a long-term desire for a healthy lifestyle to take advantage of this effective tool.

Without proper use of a transitional phrase from Complice toward this new subject, allow me to mention how the concepts of lifelong wellness have impacted my life, how specific concepts have been implemented, and any ideas for improving my strength training course that come to mind. This might come across as a complete non sequitur from previous pages detailing Complice, but such is the life of an ePortfolio assignment.

Let us work in reverse. The one thing that I feel would improve the course most would be more feedback on the results of specific workouts. We are given the tools to design our own workouts, and are also provided with specific adjustments or alternatives to specific exercises if individuals show themselves unable to do their routine with good form, but we are not given a good sense of where a plan will take us. I, personally, came up with a plan with a particular intention toward a home workout in mind, only to end up without a single exercise in my plan capable of being performed without the use of gym equipment that I lack. This has mostly been due to exercises being swapped out for machine variants in order to work on endurance over the semester, but this has actually not helped me

achieve my actual desired goal of having a full workout that I can comfortably do at home. I'm not sure on the feasibility of this, though, or whether this would even make sense when every student comes with a different plan, different goals, and even different degrees of clarity toward those goals ("I want to be stronger" vs "I want to have a workout that I can perform safely with a set of dumbbells up to 80lbs each, from the comfort of my home with an office chair as the closest thing to a bench available").

As far as specific lifelong wellness concepts learned in the course, I've learned the value of constant vigilance on good form during exercises, regardless of how routine or easy they may be, and also the value of good nutrition. Toward these ends, I am careful to pay attention to each movement of an exercise, to move purposefully through the motions of the exercise, and to be mindful of the movements such that it is me performing the motion rather than simple momentum. I have begun tracking my food intake, the quality of the food, the ratios of things such as veggies to meat, protein to fat, and other measures of a balanced diet.

Applying these concepts of careful, purposeful exercise, and attentive dieting has resulted in a clear improvement in some preexisting back issues due to careful strengthening of relevant muscle groups, and a marked improvement in the quality of my food (mostly home cooked versus the nearly entirely fast-food diet I had prior, always "special exceptions", of course).

I value the changes I've made, and the concepts that I've learned that made these changes possible. I intend to take them forward into the future, and improve myself beyond where I am now.