

Music Wellness Application

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Introduction

Feeling anxious, stressed, or in any way upset can have effects on your productivity, sociability, and overall well-being. Ever been nervous about that big exam you have tomorrow, scared that your medical testing will spell bad news, or concerned that you'll never be able to get over that relationship that seemed just right? I have definitely been in those situations in some form or another, and I'm sure others have too. Although I have been fortunate enough to have people to help me cope with stress, others may not have that luxury.

That is where my proposed app, VibeCheck, comes in. It gives people going through tough times a safe environment to talk about their feelings. There is also a secondary, but just as important goal, which is to provide a source of healing in one of the most universal ways possible: music. Through this app, users will be able to journal and complete check-ins about their wellness, and in turn will receive recommendations for songs that can help them achieve or match a desired mood.

Design Process

When working on a personal project like this, I always intend to start with research as a means to find inspiration. As a music producer and songwriter for the last five years, I have found value in imitating others and finding my own style along the way. Design is not much different in that aspect.

After researching, I then proceed to planning the layout of the application and designing possible interactions. This comes in the form of making lower level wireframes that allow me to map out where final details will go as well as test out potential color schemes. This stage of my design process is times the most time consuming, but important as iteration is key to landing on ideas that are successful and impactful.

The last step is to fill everything in, and make sure that all the specifics of the app are in the right places and look polished and in-line with the goals of the app.

Research

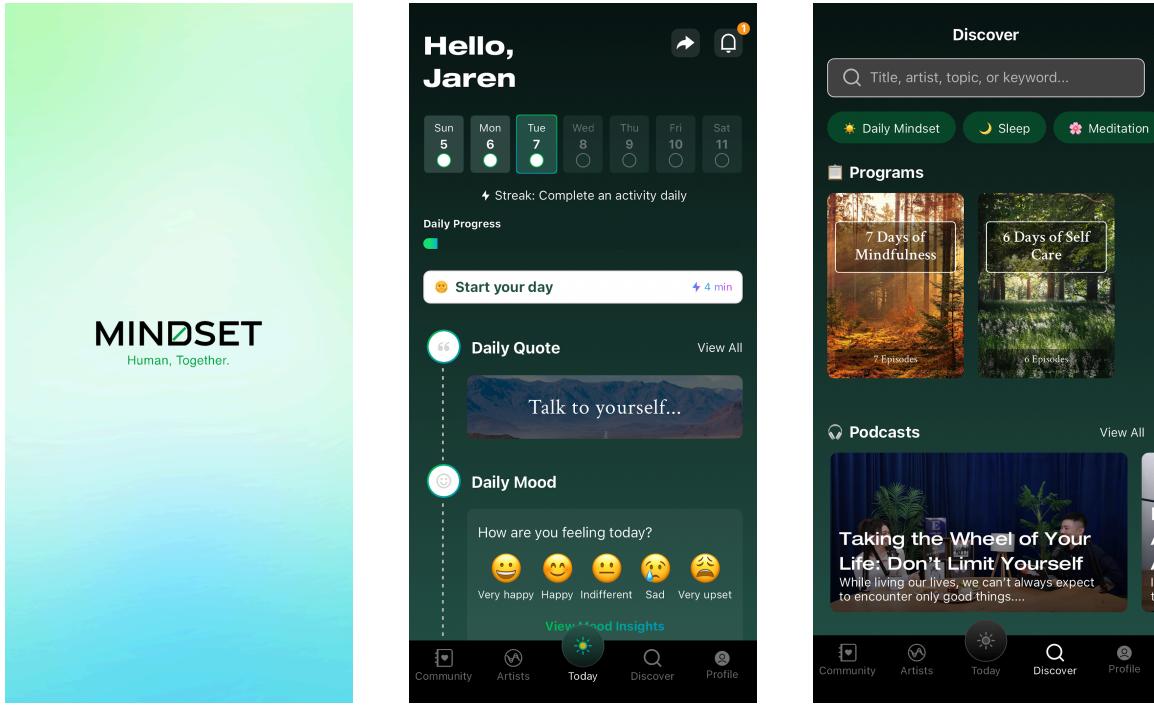
For the research part of this project, I knew that it could be challenging to find an app that serves the exact purpose that mine does. However, I know of many wellness apps that exist, so I decided to go with an app that I have actually used: Mindset by Dive Studios. It is a daily wellness app where people can complete checkins as well as find content such as soundscapes or podcasts that can help people meditate, sleep, or simply relax.

One finding from using Mindset that I plan to use in my application is the use of gradients. The backgrounds for most of the screens in the app are gradients with some of the buttons that you can tap on being the same.

Mindset also uses a grid-like structure quite a bit, and given that most of the elements are rectangular, using variations of a grid to display those elements makes everything stack well on each other and it creates a sense of organization.

Content was also grouped intuitively on each page which allows users to find what they're looking for without having to scroll through histories or long menus. Although, I don't intend on having that much content in my app, grouping can create less clutter.

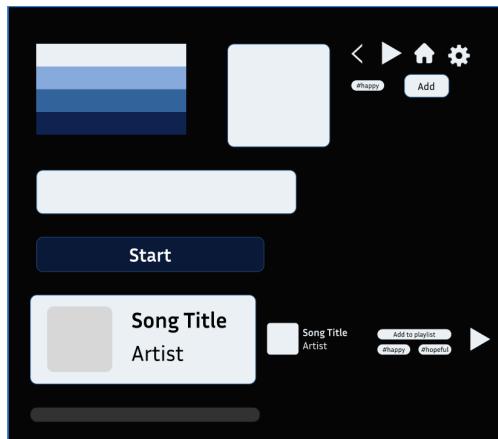
Lastly, what I would do differently than Mindset is put less content on a single screen. There are some pages in Mindset that have a lot of elements that are somewhat close together. I would attempt to create screens that have layouts that breathe and don't overwhelm the user.



Layout and Interaction Design

Element Library

For most projects that I work on, I typically start with a moodboard followed by an element library. However, since I already knew what I wanted the app to look like conceptually, I decided to start working on the library which would hold basic components of the app that I can refer back to for consistency. It also contains any relevant colors so there is no need to memorize hex codes or wonder about whether or not colors go well with each other.

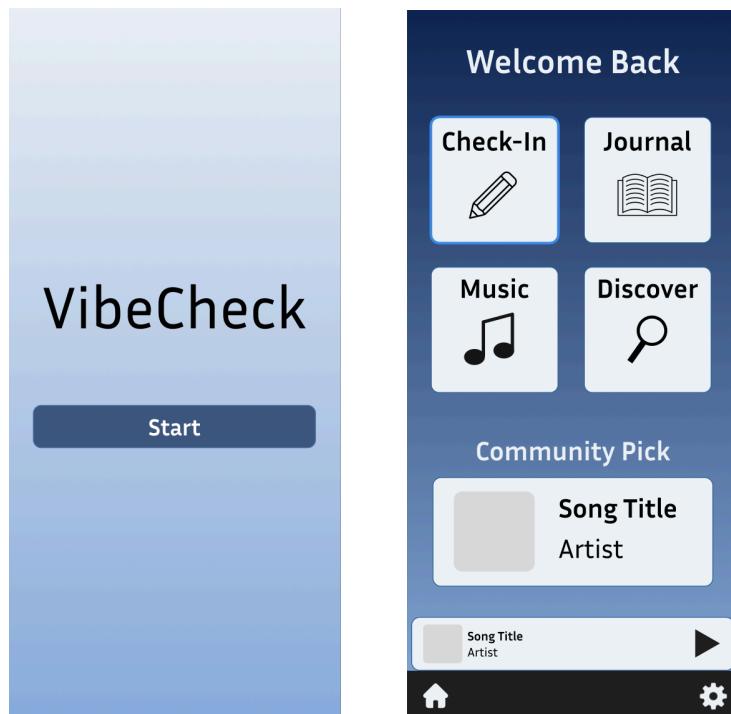


Home Screen

The home screen is probably the most important screen of the entire application.

Everything stems from the home screen, and without an intuitive design that allows for easy navigation, people can steer clear of the app even before learning of its key features.

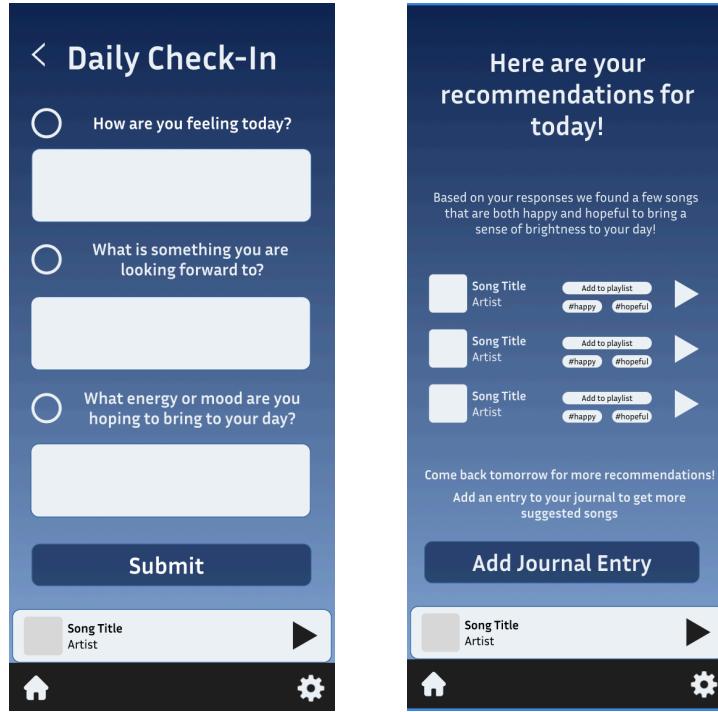
With that in mind, I wanted the home screen to be relatively minimalist with only the necessary details included to allow users to get where they want to as fast as possible. That is why the four main features of the app are very central to this screen, and are one of the first elements that the user sees. However, since this is also a music application, I wanted the interface to allude to other music streaming applications so the user doesn't have to relearn where everything typically is. This was the reasoning for keeping the song information of the current or last played song at the bottom of the screen because this is what other apps such as Spotify and Apple Music utilize. Additionally, I included a Community Pick section that would mimic specially curated playlists and song recommendations that are also prevalent on streaming platforms.



Daily Check-In

The daily check in is one of the habit-building aspects of VibeCheck. This three question survey encourages users to think positively whether it be in times of hardship or not. The example check-in provided asks open-ended questions that might force someone to tap into thoughts that they may want to avoid, but I have found that having that sense of vulnerability and feeling like my thoughts are important are effective in finding ways to overcome roadblocks. The other questions are meant to be positive and invoke feelings of healing. Even if for a short moment, being able to escape from anxiety, stress, and even sadness can be beneficial for your overall well-being. The questions can be difficult to answer, and if the user has to take time to think about an appropriate answer, they won't be cycling though other (possibly negative) thoughts.

The overall look of the check-in page is also meant to be minimalistic, furthering the goal of not overwhelming and creating a simple, easy to use interface. Once the user completes the survey, they are navigated to another screen that shows song recommendations based on their responses. This is the core functionality of VibeCheck. Users should feel motivated to accurately communicate their feelings and thoughts to receive songs that truly have the ability to better their day. However, these recommendations can only be given once a day to encourage the user to come back the next day.

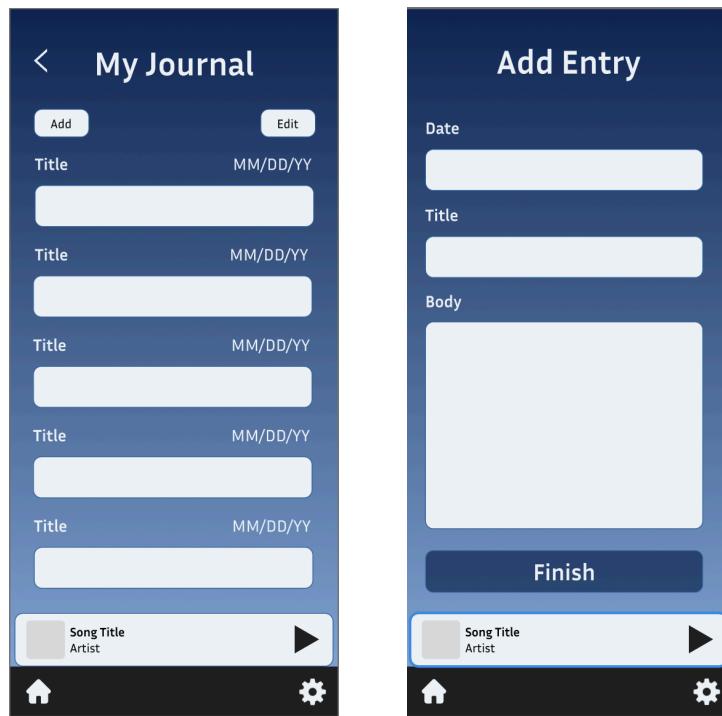


Journaling

The journal section is the other habit-builder in VibeCheck. Although more “optional,” the journal allows users to more openly speak about and track their feelings. There are no prompts, and the interface shows your journal history along with the ability to remove, edit, and add entries. Choosing to add a journal entry takes you to another screen where the date, title of entry, and the entry itself are provided. VibeCheck incentivizes the use of the journal by offering more song recommendations if they complete an entry so they don’t have to wait another day to get more if they have filled out the daily check-in already.

The question then becomes, why even design a journal feature in the first place if you have the check-ins? Although the check-ins could be sufficient, some users may feel more committed to the app’s functionality, and if they wish for an outlet to further talk about their feelings, VibeCheck can help them. Journaling allows for the externalization of conceptual

thought which is a great alternative to keeping them internal. Just like physical journals, this feature in VibeCheck is private to the user which provides a judge-free environment for honesty. Additionally, all journals don't have to be about struggle and can be creative and inspiring. Users have a lot of agency in terms of how much or little of the app they use, and the journal can truly personalize each person's experience in ways that the check-in may not be able to.

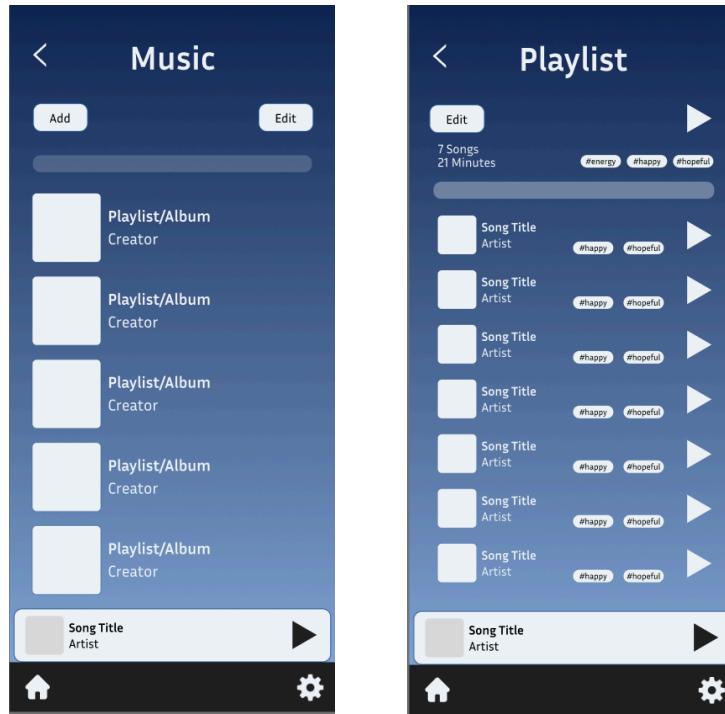


Music

The music section is very similar to other streaming platforms. Users will first encounter their library where they can edit and access their playlists. You can add, delete, and search for certain playlists here. If you tap on a playlist, you will be taken to another screen that displays the actual contents of that playlist.

When viewing a playlist, you can see how many songs are in the list or album and find the total runtime. There are also options to use search filters here. Each song in VibeCheck is

attached to a group of tags such as #happy or #energetic that can correlate to feelings communicated in a check-in or journal. You can use these tags to quickly search for relevant songs in your playlist without using the search bar.



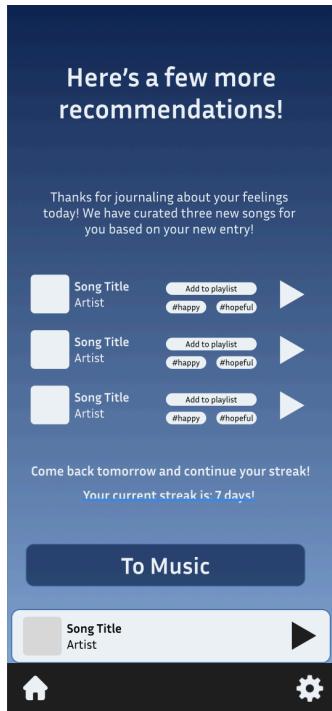
Discover

Sometimes looking around in a “New for You” or “Similar to...” section can introduce you to content that is quite enjoyable. That is what the Discover section is for. Here is where users will find new releases, songs that fit certain vibes, and short videos that encourage relaxation and calmness. The layout of this page is meant to mimic similar sections in already existing apps. Here, images are the main point of communication so users can explore content they find interesting based on what they see rather than what they read.



Song Recommendations

Song recommendations are given after the completion of daily check-ins or journals. Like stated before, the tracks recommended are curated based on user responses and are accompanied by a message that explains what vibe the songs are trying to match. When given recommendations, the user can both listen to the songs and add them to their playlist directly from this screen and don't have to go elsewhere to do so. This is to allow for convenience and almost guarantees that liked songs are saved so nobody has to go through the struggle of remembering a song they heard earlier.



Review

This app is merely a concept and has yet to be taken into user testing. It is meant to communicate and prototype the basic functionalities of an app that I hope to bring to life in the future. That being said, there are definitely shortcomings and ways that the interface can be improved, but the overall purpose of this case study was to communicate my approach to prototyping and how I think about the ways in which users would interact with an app like VibeCheck.