Tethered

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Why Tethered?

Tethered exists to help couples...

- Build deeper emotional connection through meaningful conversation
- Develop healthier communication habits
- Feel more secure and supported in their relationship

What makes it different?

- Research-based question prompts
- Gentle nudges to keep the connection going
- Personalization to match each couple's dynamic

Problem Statement

- ♥ Existing Tool: Apps like Paired target relationships

- ♥ Gaps: Few apps adapt interactions based on partner alignment

- ♥ Research: Daily intentional communication strengthens relationships

User Needs & Pain Points

🔶 **Common Frustrations**

🕐 Lack of time or structure for intentional communication

📦 Tools feel clinical or awkward

🛠️ Too focused on problem-solving, not daily connection

❤️ **Emotional Needs:**

🤗 Comfort

💬 Affirmation

🔒 Trust

🧠 **Functional Needs:**

⚙️ Simplicity

⏱️ Low time investment

🎨 Personalization

Summary of Research & Findings

Current Landscape (Apps Today)

- 📱 Paired, Lasting = structured, helpful
- ❌ Often rigid, not personalized
- 🎉 Focus on either fun OR conflict — not both

Research Insights + Opportunities

- 🧠 Daily micro-reflections build deeper connection
- 🔁 Missed opportunity in tools that *only* do one thing
- 🤖 AI + behavior-based systems = promising future

Existing Solutions & Market Gaps

Paired

- Daily questions, games, expert advice
- ✔️Engaging
- ❌ Lacks conflict resolution

Lasting

- Therapist-designed programs
- ✔️ Deep work
- ❌ Rigid, clinical feel

Coral

- Focused on intimacy education
- ✔️ Addresses sex/intimacy
- ❌ Lacks emotional breadth

Key Limitations Identified:

- ❌ Few tools for daily emotional maintenance
- ❌ Little support for real-time, shared goal-setting
- ❌ Poor balance of privacy + transparency
- ❌ Overemphasis on either fun or conflict—not both

Design Goals

Our goal is to create a solution that helps couples strengthen their bond in a way that's consistent, enjoyable, and easy.

- How can we gently prompt couples to check in each day?
- How can we keep it engaging even when answers differ?
- How do we encourage habit-building without feeling demanding?
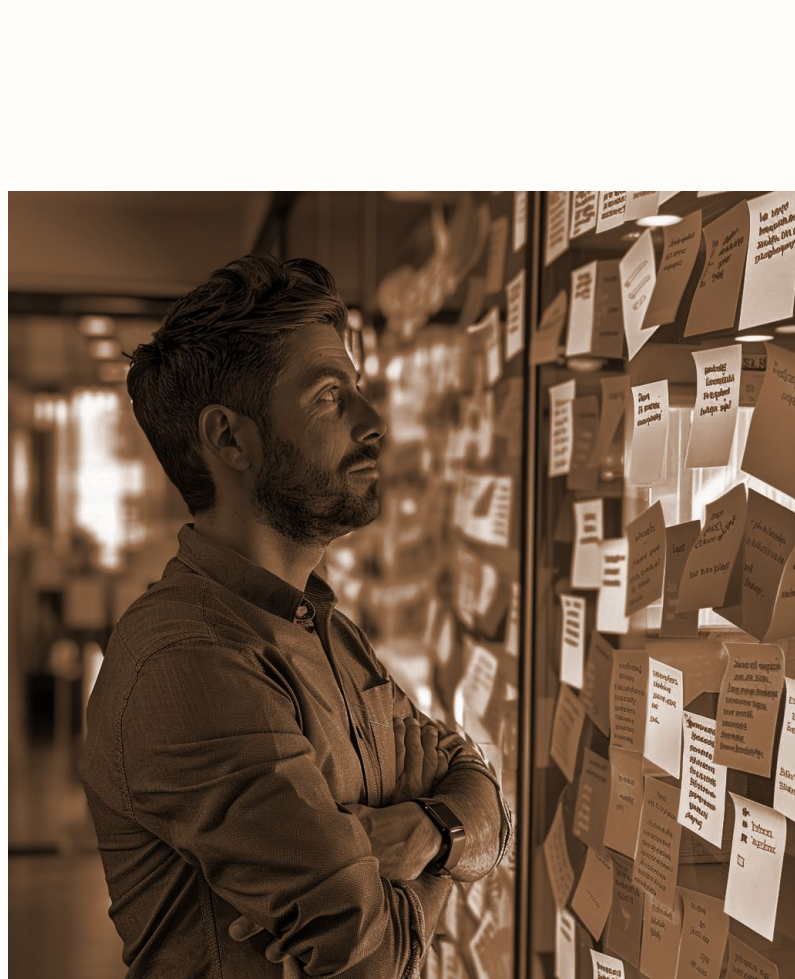
How Tethered Works

📝 **Daily Question**
Each partner responds to the same daily prompt.

🔒 **Private Until Both Answer**
Responses stay private until both have replied.

✅ **Matching Answers → Fun Activity**
Suggestions like a playlist, game night, or walk.

🔄 **Different Answers → Growth Activity**
Gentle prompts like journaling or empathy exercises.

⏰ **Reminders**
Custom-timed nudges to encourage consistency.

🔔 **Notifications**
You'll be notified when your partner answers (not optional).

Design and Planning Approach

🎯 Design Goals

- Support emotional intimacy with low-pressure, daily prompts
- Encourage habit formation through gentle nudges
- Maintain a balance of individual space and shared experience

🌍 User Considerations

- Inclusive of long-distance and neurodiverse couples
- Language designed to be warm, flexible, and affirming
- Prioritized emotional safety and accessibility

🔍 Inspiration & Research

- Analyzed apps like Paired, Lasting, Coral
- Identified gaps in personalization and tone
- Grounded in relationship science and user behavior patterns

Design Process: Refining the Concept

🛠️ **Initial Concept**

- Focused on structured conflict resolution
- Designed with expert-style modules and prompts
- Early version felt too rigid and "therapeutic"

🔁 **Feedback & Pivot**

- Informal feedback from peers suggested a desire for lighter daily interaction
- Shifted to micro-reflection model: quicker, more engaging, less clinical

🎨 **Refined Design Choices**

- Simplified UI to reduce friction
- Adjusted tone to feel more empathetic and casual
- Balanced shared transparency with personal privacy

Tethered: Pseudocode - Relationship Check-In

```
If new_day:
    prompt_user1 = generate_prompt()
    prompt_user2 = generate_prompt()
    send_to_users(prompt_user1,
prompt_user2)

If response_received:
    store_response(user_id, timestamp)
    check_if_both_responded()
        if yes:
            unlock_joint_reflection()
```

Pseudocode – Response Handling Logic


```
If both_users_responded:

    reveal_answers_to_each_other()

    if responses_match():

suggest_activity(type="shared_fun")
    else:

suggest_activity(type="growth_reflect
ion")

    update_daily_streaks()
    log_check_in_complete()
```

Pseudocode – Notification & Reminder Flow

```
If new_day:

    schedule_prompt_for_both_users()

    if user_has_not_responded by reminder_time:
        send_reminder_notification(user)


    if partner_submits_response:
        notify_other_partner("Your partner answered
today's question!")
```

User Journey

🔔 **Morning**

"Today's reflection is ready: What's something you're proud of this week?"

Partner A answers privately and continues their day.

⏰ **Afternoon**

Partner B receives a reminder and answers.

✨ Both responses are now viewable side-by-side.

🌙 **Evening**

Since answers differ slightly, Tethered suggests:

"What's one small win you can celebrate together?"

They reflect asynchronously in the shared journal.

Real-World Applications

Use Cases

- Daily Emotional Check-Ins
  Quick reflections keep couples aligned in just 2–3 minutes/day.

- Long-Distance Relationships
  Asynchronous sharing helps maintain emotional closeness.

- Post-Conflict Processing
  Private reflections reduce tension before re-engaging.

Broader Impact

- Supports couples during life transitions (ne jobs, moving, parenthood).

- Helpful tool for therapists and marriage counselors.

- Promotes ongoing intimacy without overwhelming users.

Still Exploring: Open Questions

🔐 Balancing Privacy & Transparency

- How can shared journaling feel emotionally safe, especially during conflict?
- What features could let partners opt into different levels of visibility?

🧠 Designing for Inclusivity

- How can we ensure Tethered is affirming for non-traditional relationships (e.g., polyamorous, non-romantic)?
- What adaptive features support neurodiverse communication needs?

💬 Supporting Conflict & Repair

- What kinds of prompts or activities best support post-conflict reflection?
- How do we avoid adding pressure or stress through reminder and reflections?

UI Mockups

Daily Check-In

How are you feeling today?

What's something your partner did that you appreciated?

Continue

Conflict Pause

Take a moment before reacting

What are you feeling right now?

What's your perspective on the conflict?

What do you need to feel heard?

Submit

Goal Tracker

Working toward relationship goals together

Plan weekly date night
in progress

2 of 8 weeks

+ Add a milestone

New Goal

Citations

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Thank You

"Connection is why we're here." – Brené Brown