

Empathy Explorers: A Project For Social Good

Megan Plunkett

Project overview



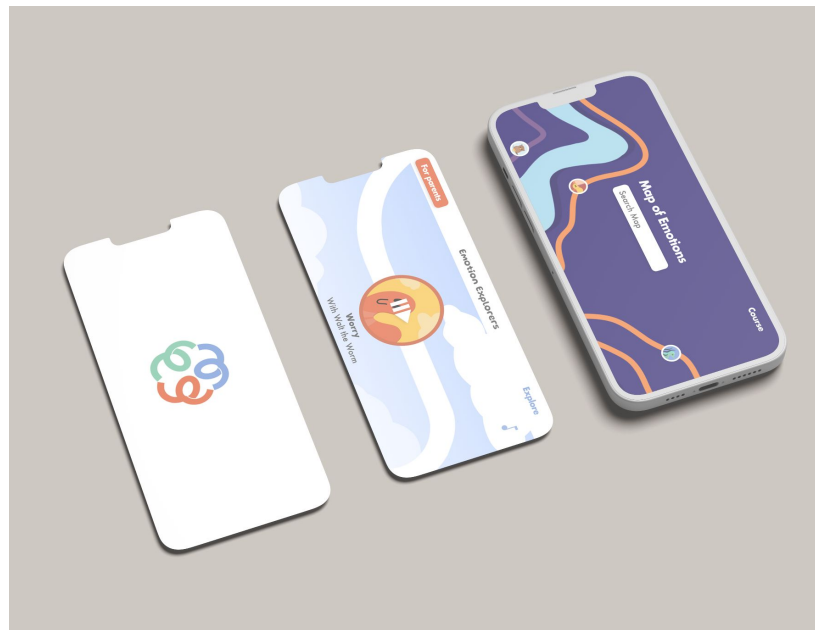
The product:

Emotion Explorers is an app for kids featuring courses taught by characters like Walt the Worry Worm. Includes an interactive Map of Emotions, plus a parent mode for tracking progress.



Project duration:

August 2023 - September 2023



Project overview



The problem:

Emotion Explorers tackles the issue of inadequate emotional education for young children. The app is filled with social emotional learning (SEL) methods and even tips for parents.



The goal:

Emotion Explorers aims to address the challenge of teaching young children essential emotional and social skills in a fun and engaging way. The app helps them navigate their emotional world while fostering empathy and self-awareness.

Project overview



My role:

Megan Plunkett: UX researcher, UX Designer



Responsibilities:

UX research, wireframing, low-fidelity and high-fidelity prototyping, creating mockups

Understanding the user

- User research
- Personas
- Problem statements

User research: summary



We are collecting our data through a moderated usability study with 10 participants' contribution. Our participants are a mix of kids, in the pre-K to 3rd-grade age range, parents, whose children would use the program, and educators.

After conducting our usability testing, there are pain points that still need addressed- namely simplifying number of objects on screen and enlarging important elements, switching from a partially vertical and partially horizontal format to one or the other, and adding an audio overlay.

Persona 1: Winston Davis

Problem statement:

Winston is a routine-oriented 2nd grader who needs a way to manage his anxiety, because the lack of routine makes him uneasy.



Winston Davis

Age: 7 years old

Education: 2nd grade

Hometown: Cupertino, CA

Family: Oldest of 3

Occupation: Student

"I get stressed when it's summer... what can I do without a plan? It's a lot."

Goals

- Wants to seek tools to help process his easily-induced stress and need for routine.
- Learn to enjoy less busy moments

Frustrations

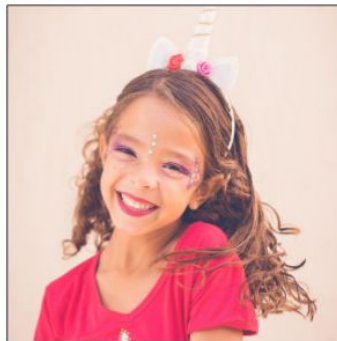
- Becomes anxious and shut off when without routine
- Cannot be understood by his less anxious and routine-oriented peers

Winston Davis is a happy and curious 2nd grader from Cupertino, California. He loves cars, building, and playing with his younger siblings. He sometimes struggles when not engaged in activities, and easily becomes anxious and sensitive to others in moments of downtime.

Persona 2: Esther Larsson

Problem statement:

Esther is an adventurous 1st grader who needs a tool to help her understand and communicate her emotions because she wants to avoid misguided emotions and connect with her family.



Esther Larsson

Age: 6 years old
Education: 1st grade
Hometown: Fairfield, CT
Family: 2nd oldest of 4
Occupation: Student

“Sometimes, I don’t know what I’m feeling- and then I get so sad, because I can’t explain it.”

Goals

- She wants to be able to communicate her feelings - especially in moments of frustration.

Frustrations

- She occasionally finds it hard to connect with others, because she can’t explain how she feels.

Esther Larsson is a determined and adventurous 1st grader. She loves to play soccer, visit the animal shelter, and play with her dog, Mouse. She develops big feelings and has a tough time understanding or communicating them. This results in misguided emotions and feelings of being overwhelmed.

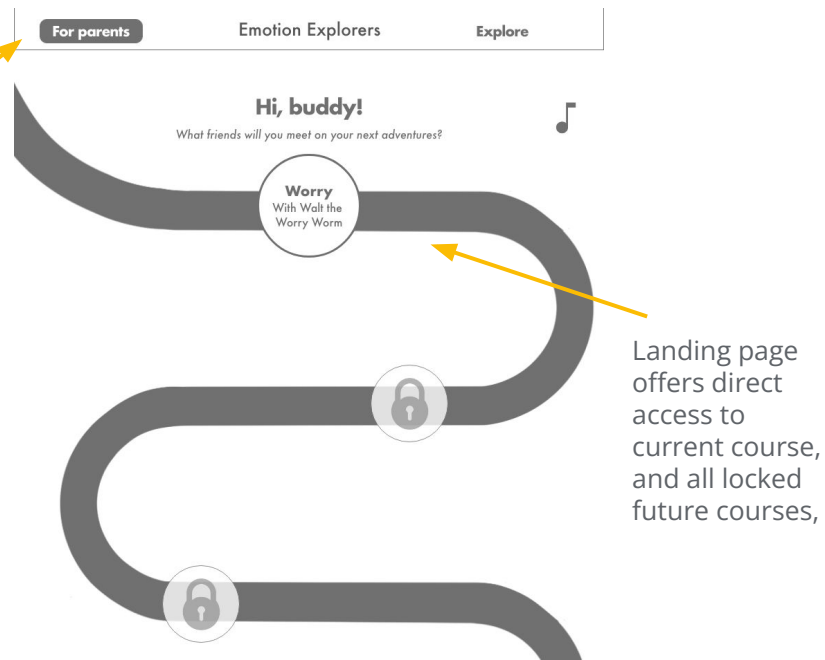
Starting the design

- Digital wireframes
- Low-fidelity prototype
- Usability studies

Digital wireframes

The initial design included more elements on the home screen. Following user research, a main pain point was too many elements being displayed at once. The orientation has also become horizontal across all screens

Navigation bar offers two options:
1) A parent mode with child lock and
2) An explore map to find other courses through an interactive map

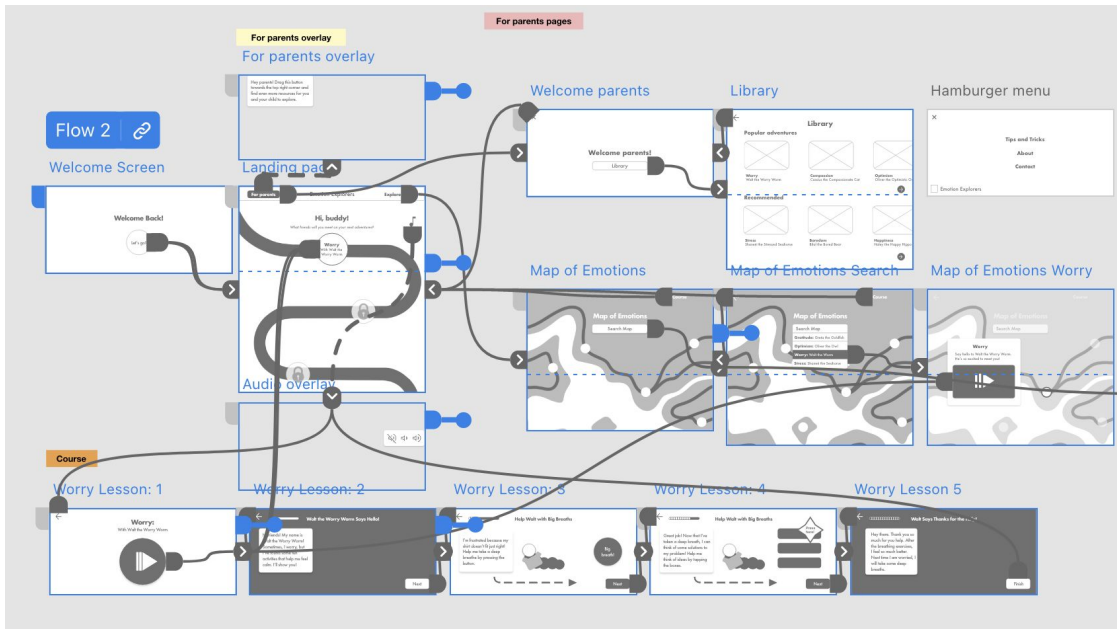


Landing page offers direct access to current course, and all locked future courses,

Low-fidelity prototype

[Link to low-fidelity prototype](#)

From the first iteration to second iteration of the wireframes, the orientation of all screens has been changed to horizontal. In addition, all screens have been simplified and an audio overlay has been included.



Usability study: parameters



Study type:

Moderated usability study



Location:

Seattle, Washington, Remote



Participants:

10 participants



Length:

30-60 minutes

Usability study: findings

The moderated usability study found three main pain points for users.

1

Simplicity

Users want a simpler interface, with more emphasis on the important buttons.

2

Audio

2 participants commented on their inability to change the volume, or choose a mute option, more directly.

3

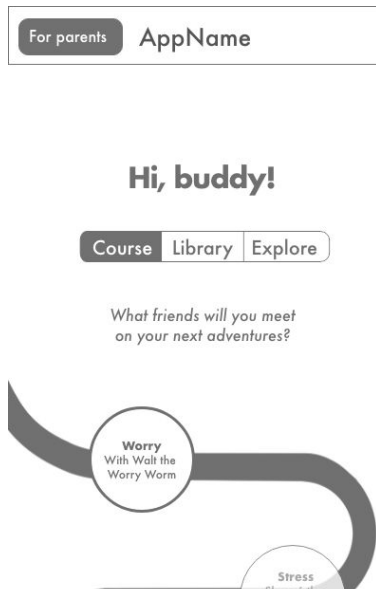
Orientation

Users prefer a consistent orientation - horizontal or vertical.

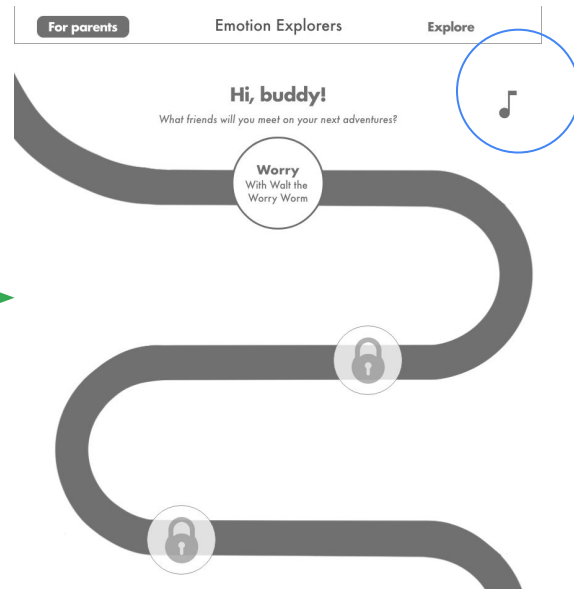
Mockups

Implementing feedback from our user participants, we have opted for a simpler user interface, centering our most important button and offering less clicking options.

Before usability study



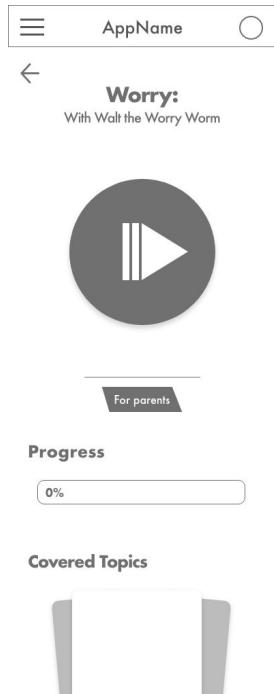
After usability study



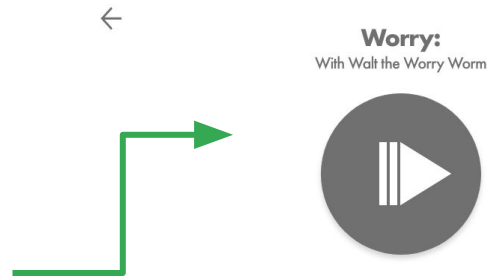
Mockups

We have simplified the play screen, removing the option to look at progress and covered topics. Both of these topics have been moved to the “parent” section, where parents and guardians can look over their child’s work.

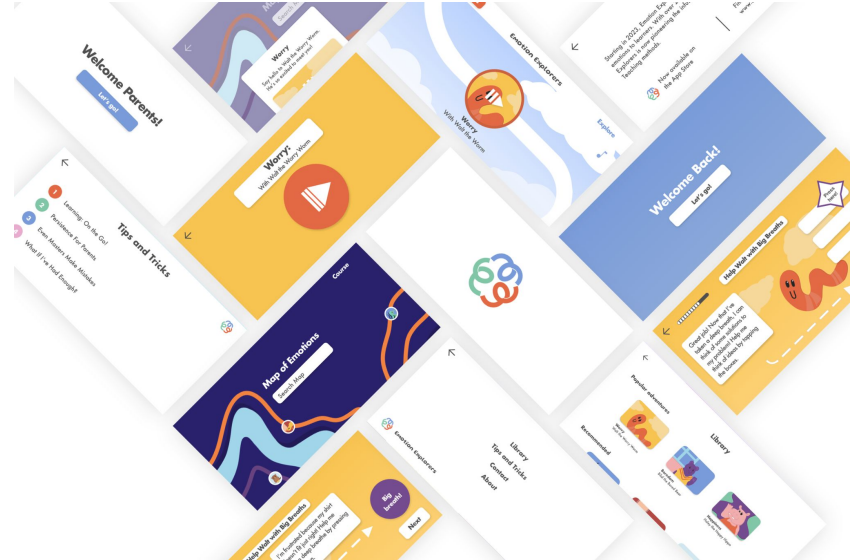
Before usability study



After usability study

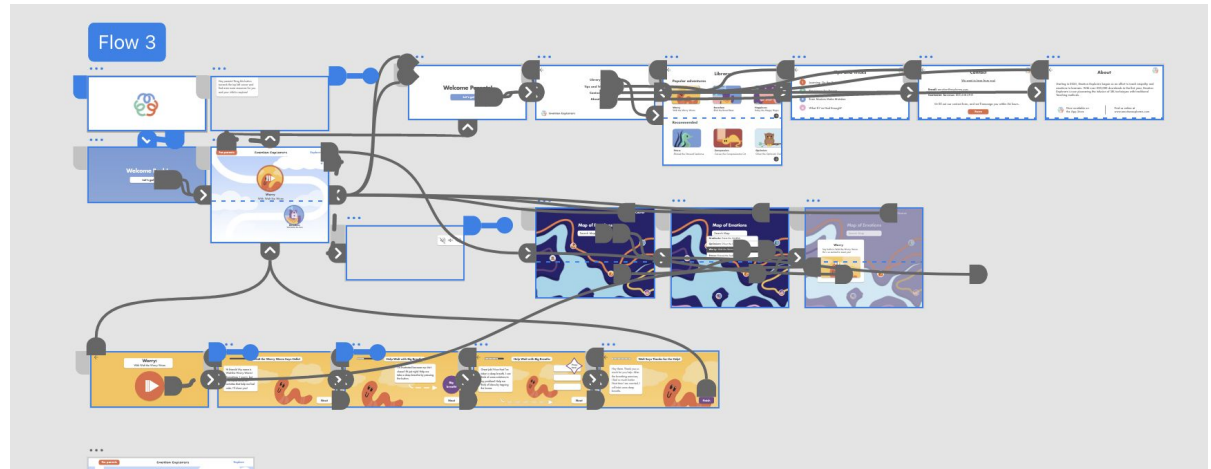


Mockups



High-fidelity prototype

We have implemented an overall simpler user interface with fewer clickable buttons. In addition, we have added an audio setting on the landing page, and have made the orientation consistently horizontal.



Accessibility considerations

1

We have increased font size and color contrast throughout our website to make our content readable for all users.

2

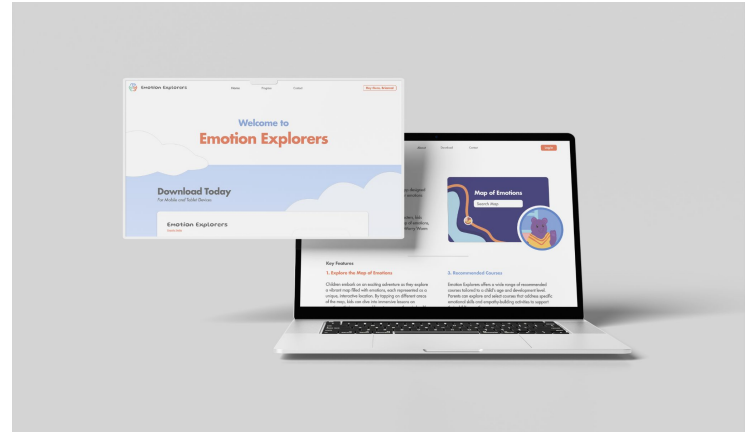
All icons and buttons are selected with accessibility in mind. We have also emphasized focus indicators throughout all screens to ensure clear navigation via keyboard or screen readers.

3

We referenced the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) when selecting our color palette, and color-to-text ratios to achieve AAA compliance.

Responsive designs

Emotion Explorers has been designed with all screens in mind. Beginning our process on mobile screens, Emotions Explorers can now be accessed on phones, tablet, and laptop and desktop computers.



Going forward

- Takeaways
- Next steps

Takeaways



Impact:

“ I’m so grateful to Emotion Explorers. I’ve been looking for a program like this for quite a while and I’m so happy to say I’m optimistic about what the future brings for my child. I will recommend this service far and wide and will continue using it for all of my children. Thank you!”



What I learned:

This project stretched my creative thinking immensely. Not only is this a product with fewer competitors, but I felt inclined to illustrate the whole Emotion Explorers world myself. I now know I can combine by illustrations and UX to build beautiful products.

Next steps

1

Following our completion of this project, we will continue to conduct more usability studies to understand our user base and potential pain points.

2

We will continue our research on social emotional learning and adapt our program to optimize learning.

3

We will research new and exciting elements to include in our website that have not been considered before to keep our website exciting and usable to users.

Let's connect!



Thank you for taking the time to look at this case study. I am open to work and ready to connect!

Contact Info

Phone: 559-284-9740

Email: mjamesplunkett@gmail.com

Portfolio: meganjamesplunkett.com