SPECIFIC
INCREASING
EMOTIONAL LITERACY
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As society progresses, lives lengthen, and values alter, phases of development and expectations for specific age groups shift. Just as childhood and adolescence were not always defined stages of development, “Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, a psychology professor at Clark University in Worcester, Mass., is leading the movement to view the 20s as a distinct life stage, which he calls “emerging adulthood” (Henig). Describing a period in life when previous generations would have settled down into their marriages, suburban homes, careers, and gender-dictated roles, millennials take this time to “find themselves” in a semi-organic way that, to the overcritical, unfamiliar eye, may look like floating aimlessly with no direction, propelled by both the belief that something better is out there and the fear that it may not be (Henig). While this formative process is becoming a more accepted and natural step, many are standing in their own way, unable to fully capitalize on this concept of graduated adulthood.

This time of self-discovery and experimentation has the potential to be incredibly exciting and beneficial however, lack of self-awareness, over-sheltered childhoods, and ‘zero-defect’ mentalities (aka I have to be perfect, you have to be perfect, and so does everything else or it’s all unsatisfactory) have left today’s young people mal prepared for many experiences they will inevitably face in the quote unquote real world. The assertion is “many of them would not be ready to take on the trappings of adulthood any earlier even if the opportunity arose; they haven’t braced themselves for it” (Henig). Many enter into less than healthy patterns of belief and behavior often resulting in less than healthy mental and even physical health. “Lacking any means of emotion regulation and generationally bred on the immediacy of having needs met, they know no middle psychic ground: Mere frustration catapults them into crisis” (Marano). Additionally, “in the absence of basic coping skills, everything is a stressor” (Marano). The effects of this inability to accurately process and deal with stressors combined with the ever changing, not always kind, realities of the world lead to issues that are not just individual but communal with far reaching social and societal impacts.

Countless negative cycles begin with the pursuit of perfection and end with overwhelming feelings of failure—that is if the cycles are even allowed to start and did not fall prey to paralyzing anxiety (Marano). If today’s emerging adults could learn to stop that cycle or at least begin to understand it and cope with it, if they could learn they make choices and have control over what they believe about themselves, outcomes, others, and the world, they would be better equipped to progress through life. Arnett’s feelings on this possibilities afforded during this life phase seem in line with this conclusion. “During the timeout they are granted from nonstop, often tedious and dispiriting responsibilities, emerging adults develop skills for daily living, gain a better understanding of who they are and what they want from life and begin to build a foundation for their adult lives”” (Henig).
In a phase where reflection, introspection, and exploration are beginning to be expected and encouraged, it is a prime opportunity for young people to not only try out multiple jobs, cities, or romantic partners, but also to step back and increase their emotional literacy. “Emotions are chemicals, a form of neurotransmitter, that provide data about yourself and others; emotions are a feedback system delivering information that drives behavior and decisions. Emotional literacy is the capacity to access and interpret that data” (“Enhance Emotional Literacy”).

The aim of this project is to assist emerging adults along a journey of self-awareness and help them learn to make use of the aforementioned emotional data. This skill will ultimately lead to improved mental and physical health and a better understanding of how to process and respond to even harsh realities, get the most out of this time in their lives, and adjust as healthy individuals in society.

There are a lot of questions when one comes face to face with emotions and mental wellbeing. What causes emotions? How should I respond? What are my core beliefs? (Who knew I should even ask that?) Why do I feel this way? Is this normal? Is this healthy? Why do I just want to sleep? Why am I so afraid? Why aren’t I good enough? How come other people seem to have it all together? It is my goal to empower emerging adults to better understand and manage their emotional responses and maybe answer some of those questions above. I am interested in exploring different ways to visualize information, especially data that could be illusive/intangible such as emotion.

It is my intent to design a mobile application that includes structured activities and a data visualization system to present and simplify personal data and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy tools, tips, and techniques. These components will increase understanding and awareness, and actively engage users in their mental and emotional processes. Users will identify how they currently perceive their emotional state and their core beliefs. From there users will discover the general aspect of life where their issues typically arise and their automatic negative thoughts. The purpose is to help not to hinder and as such the focus is more on observation and discovery than ascribing judgment or value to emotional states and responses.

The app is mobile because emotions happen anywhere and everywhere, often when we are out engaging with the world. The target audience values both structure and independence so the program is flexible, designed for individualistic practices depending on the wants, needs, depth, and goals of a particular user.
Quantified Self is a way of collecting, structuring, and organizing data collected from personal, mini, scientific experiments. Today’s technology allows individuals, normal people, some with a simple curiosity or, in some cases, a goal, to record...Well anything, all for the sake of self-awareness and often self-improvement.

While there is merit and just cause for the Quantified Self craze, there are some serious pros and cons to digitally tracking personal data. The chart at right details the former and the latter, things to be considered when employing this method.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>+</th>
<th>Δ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>no pressure to “lie” to people-individual/personal-elimination of “shame”</td>
<td>potential to become obsession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consistent, objective, reliable-eliminates reliance on memory and bias</td>
<td>doesn’t have feelings, just data—does bad things to self esteem—defeats purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mobile and digital collection-sharable</td>
<td>effort/loss of novelty—inconsistency in participation/use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>potential for effortless data collection control/customizable-positive/empowering</td>
<td>aimless—not goal motivated—what are you doing it for?—follow through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>potential to connect seemingly disparate variables</td>
<td>interpersonal interaction-limits/eliminates (potentially)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overwhelming—too much—don’t know what to do with it/what it means</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MILLENNIALS

Each generation is faced with new circumstances and conditions of society and as such, the way they view the world and interact with it changes. The chart at right situates millennials in the world and highlights some of the main reasons emerging adult millennials are in the perfect position to think about their thinking and place an emphasis on their emotional well-being.

Emerging adults, a subset of the larger group of millennials, are the target audience of _Spective. This group of young people share the millennial experiences described but are also quite literally “in between” adolescence and adulthood.
COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is based on the idea that thoughts lead to feelings that lead to behaviors. Thinking critically about one’s thinking can ensure thoughts are rational and lead to appropriate feelings and, in turn, behaviors.

Studies are showing that CBT can be effective outside of traditional therapy settings, good news for millennials who may have insufficient funds to attend regular sessions. Both CBT methods and the digital format allow for both structure and flexibility, significant dichotomous values of millennials.

TECHNIQUES + EXERCISES + METHODS

ABC METHOD

Similar to laddering the ABC method challenges one to identify A. the activating event, B. the belief held, and C. the consequences of A+B. Through this method one realizes it is not the A’s in life that cause poor C’s but the B’s.

LADDERING

By continually asking the question “so what if that happened”, laddering takes simple negative responses, fears, etc and identifies the core belief at the root. Through these connections one realizes it’s not about an inciting circumstance but rather a deep-seated belief about what it means.

TRACKING ANTS

Tracking ANTS is the process of identifying and recording automatic negative thoughts and triggers. This record can illuminate faulty hardwiring in one’s cognition, or in other words, errors in one’s logic.

SMALL MEASURABLE TASKS (HOMEWORK)

For the most part, CBT is thinking about internal mental processes and making very intangible progress in thoughts and moods. It is however beneficial to attempt (and accomplish) real world activities and apply any new-found knowledge.
Quantified Self is not new. Data tracking, even emotion tracking apps are not a novel concept. CBT is being used digitally in increasing measure. Some things are working and some things, not so much. Below are some conclusions reached after investigating existing applications in the realm of _Spective._

1. structure and simplicity are key to success and usability
2. user control and flexibility are also important factors
3. a balance between real world and digital activities should be reached
4. many apps in this realm are “function over form” + lack visual appeal
5. recording emotional data requires active user participation

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### COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

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### RESEARCH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JOYABLE</th>
<th>HAPPIFY</th>
<th>OPTIMISM</th>
<th>MOODSCOPE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 week CBT program</td>
<td>set “tracks” of activities</td>
<td>user controlled</td>
<td>daily survey over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>real-world application</td>
<td>positive distractions</td>
<td>identifying/strategizing</td>
<td>mood flip cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>planning/goal setting</td>
<td>establishing baseline</td>
<td>recording “core data”</td>
<td>daily survey over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPIN score graph</td>
<td>digital “scrapbook”</td>
<td>charts and reports</td>
<td>mood graphs over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matched w/counselor</td>
<td>user community</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>buddy system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>required component</td>
<td>optional sharing</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>required component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>structured program</td>
<td>positive distractions</td>
<td>focus on proactivity</td>
<td>overall simplicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>real-world application</td>
<td>establishing baseline</td>
<td>identifying correlations</td>
<td>mood graphs over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBT</td>
<td>digital “scrapbook”</td>
<td>user control/empowerment</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SYNTHESIS
PERSONAS

_Spective is not didactic. The program is self-prescribed, focusing on noticing and understanding trends and connections in thoughts and emotions. This approach allows for a wider variety of potential users all with varying levels of concern with progress and increasing awareness.

The personas chosen represent opposite ends of the user spectrum(s). No matter the motive or starting point, everyone has something to gain from a _Spective experience.
PERSONAS

Leo has made it this far and has rarely given any thought to his emotional wellbeing. His emotions rarely manifest so he never really saw the need. He is very laid back and analytical. He was recently introduced to Spective through a colleague at his new job. Leo played baseball in high school so he was used to tracking physical stats for records and improvement. The concept made sense, it was the application he’d never thought of. He knows there is always things to learn and he will try anything once. Always curious, Leo decided to see what it was all about.

Name: Harper Martin
Age: 22

Since childhood, Harper has always been a little anxious, worried, and stressed. She strived for perfection and the positive attention and acceptance “being good” got her. She is very capable and creative but something always holds her back from taking risks, from social outings, and sometimes even reaching her full potential. (News flash: it’s herself and she, to some degree, knows it. Harper is very introspective.) It seems that her anxiety, negativity, and over analyzing has increased over the years while her self-confidence has dropped. While she still seeks perfection and acceptance, fear of failure now stifles her motivation to attempt to attain the desired “good enough”. She knows deep down that she could do all the things she wants and she has reached a point where she’s tired of the negative and inhibiting effects her emotional responses are having on her life. As she prepares for the next phase in her life, Harper is ready for a change. She knows the future can be even better than the past.

Name: Keira Downey
Age: 27

Keira has graduated and been living on her own for a few years now. She has a steady job and is overall successful and generally happy. Issues in her childhood left her with some degree of inability to cope with disappointment and failure. She is constantly seeking the approval of others, does not handle rejection well and takes almost everything personally. Keira has been attending counseling sessions on and off for the past few years. The cost keeps her from going as frequently as she would like and now she only schedules appointments when things are almost unbearable. The rest of the time she skates by, sometimes ignoring issues, sometimes applying things she’s learned, and other times she reverts to poor coping mechanisms and loses her cool. Keira often time feels discouraged. Things grow hazy and lose their saliency with sessions being so few and far between. The inconsistency disrupts her life and keeps her from celebrating or even acknowledging the improvements and changes she has made.

Name: Sheena Andrews
Age: 19

Sheena is just starting her second year at college and things are a little crazy. She has recently added another part-time job into her already busy schedule. She is intelligent and energetic but often lacks motivation for daily, trivial tasks. In addition to what sometimes feels like chronic apathy, she struggles with self-worth and with setting aside time for self-care. Just a few months ago, over summer break, she had been making a lot of progress in these areas, establishing a morning routine, taking time to practice mindfulness, taking time to journal and process the events of the day. Since she returned to school, however, she has fallen back into old habits and patterns, something she finds discouraging, making it even harder for her to get back on track.
SCENARIOS

Driven by user input, the more honest, thorough, and consistent a user is the more they will begin to develop and accurate picture of their beliefs, feelings, and thoughts. It is within these three main categories that users will add and access graphical and textual representations of their emotions. The scenarios listed below represent some of the main features and uses of _Spective.

1. identifying irrational beliefs
2. tracking feelings and events
3. feelings, strings, and notes
4. sharing and sorting thoughts
Scenario 1: Identifying Irrational Beliefs

Leo is new to Spective. To begin, he created a profile, established emotional and cognitive baselines and now, most importantly, he is taking an irrational beliefs assessment. Leo is asked to rate how much he agrees with a list of twenty-five most common irrational beliefs. From there the app will sort his answers by category and percentage. He can drill into each of his responses to see the belief and, in the future when he has recorded more data, feelings, thoughts, and other beliefs connected and associated with each.
All the problems in the world can be solved and we must find the solutions. Everyone and everything could and should be better than they are.

There is a right way to do things and things must be done this way.

I hate it when things don’t go my way. I hate being frustrated or having my plans interrupted. For me to enjoy it, my life must be easy and happy.

If everyone doesn’t love me, I am unlovable. I need to be approved of and loved by everyone who matters to me. If I don’t do well and do not receive approval from others I feel worthless. I need to be dependent on someone stronger than myself. I can’t do life on my own, I need others to depend on. Everyone must treat each other kindly and fairly. No one should behave poorly, if they do they should face consequences. Other people’s problems must affect me.

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I see the influence of my past a lot in my present. Things that affected me in the past have to still affect me today.

To be competent, I must do everything well. Worth corresponds with achievement and success. I am not in control of my happiness. When I’m under pressure and things are tough, there’s nothing I can do about it and I am miserable. Happiness is the path of least resistance. Being comfortable and content means avoiding difficulty and responsibility. I am constantly concerned or worried about dealing with difficult or negative situations. I obsess over possible outcomes and always attempt to avoid discomfort.
Pie charts created by the responses to the beliefs assessment will first be shown sorted by category so it is easy to see where most issues lie.

The belief associated with a particular chart can be viewed by tapping a chart.

By swiping left, beliefs can also be viewed by percentage agreed. This view can be helpful in prioritizing energy, focus, and goals.

As before, the belief associated with a particular chart can be viewed by tapping a chart.
He canceled on me again as always. He’s so inconsistent and inconsiderate. What am I going to do now?

Everyone must treat each other kindly and fairly

magnification/overgeneralization

FRUSTRATED

DISAPPOINTED

STRESSED
SCENARIO 2: TRACKING FEELINGS AND EVENTS

Sheena is having a mini-meltdown. Using the app, she identifies exactly what she is feeling and “talks it out” through a combination of checking all that apply and verbally detailing what is happening and what she is thinking. She processes through the ABC’s, ANTS, and errors in her logic.
Users can rate their feelings by moving the sliders right creating an emotional bar chart.

_Spective is smart and will sort the emotions list based on previous responses, bringing commonly rated emotions to the top.

Users will be asked to choose a predominate emotion if they rate their top two the same.
Users are asked to verbally describe the activating event, any ANTS, and choose which categories of beliefs are at play in this situation.

This activity, while it can be skipped, encourages users to slow down and think deeply about their emotional responses.

Irrational beliefs from the categories previously selected appear for the user to choose from.

At this stage, users can select multiple beliefs at play. They may begin to notice certain beliefs are often intertwined.
Core beliefs are identified from the narrowed list of beliefs. Selecting I don't know leads to a laddering exercise to help identify the belief.

Identifying errors in logic helps put the situation in perspective and allows users to really analyze their emotional response.

From this screen, users see all of their responses and have the option to add notes or goals to this entry.
**SCENARIO 3: FEELINGS, STRINGS, AND NOTES**

Harper is viewing the feeling data she has collected over time. She notices strings of days where she experienced the same primary emotion. By selecting these strings of days Harper views the “data” she collected each day and adds notes based on trends she identifies in the content.
Feelings are first viewed in a loose, random configuration. From this level, it is easy to see any dominance or trends in the colors. Tapping one of the dots will reveal the date and emotion the dot is associated with. Another tap to a selected dot will bring up a more detailed view of the emotion selected. By swiping left, the jumble of dots are shown sorted into bar graphs of sorts and labeled by the feeling they represent.
**SORTING BY TIME**

Swiping left again, the dots will sort by time, a configuration that allows users to identify any patterns especially strings.

**SELECTING A STRING**

Strings occur when the same feeling is dominant on consecutive days. By connecting the dots in a string more information can be accessed.

**VIEWING A STRING**

From this view, users can see what events and other emotions occurred concurrently with the dominant emotion on these consecutive days.

**ADDING NOTES**

Users can add notes to the strings if trends in emotions that occur or events connected to the dominant emotion are noticed.
**SCENARIO 4: SHARING AND SORTING THOUGHTS**

Keira is at one of her monthly appointments with her counselor. Because it has been so long since her last session, Keira opens the thoughts section of the app to relay events and emotions she has recorded in general. The discussion shifts to Keira’s struggle with constantly feeling rejected. She easily filters her notes to only show applicable entries.
Thought pages are automatically sorted chronologically (most current first) and show all information recorded on a particular date.

A RECORD OF THOUGHTS

ACCESSING THE NAVIGATION

Users can tap the _Spective logo and use the icons or search bar to filter the page they are on.

FILTER BY FEELING

Results on the screen change to match the filter request. By tapping the _Spective logo again, the menu will retract.
LITERATURE REVIEW


Illuminating the power of mindset, this TED talk provides examples of experiments that show how one decides to perceive a situation, event, stress, or even a milkshake can have a tremendous effect on physical and emotional responses.


A definition of emotional literacy as well as information on its importance were accessed here.


Explaining in detail emerging adulthood, this article includes the definition, cultural context, causes and effects, and both questions and affirms the validity of this new phase of adulthood.


Presenting the phrase “negative emotions” as a “misnomer” this article flies common conceptions of emotions typically considered adverse and describes what purpose they serve, why they are actually beneficial in many circumstances, and how they can contribute to our happiness.


Discussing the current emotional state of college students as a whole, this article presents causes, effects, and eludes to solutions to the rise in low frustration tolerance and anxiety in today’s university setting.


This article explains in depth CBT, what it is, techniques, and assumptions, as well as common irrational beliefs and errors in logic. It additionally discusses REBT (Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy) and Beck’s Cognitive Therapy.


A list of common irrational beliefs was accessed here.

Winch, Guy. "Transcript of "Why We All Need to Practice Emotional First Aid"" Guy Winch: Why We All Need to Practice Emotional First Aid. TED Conferences LLC, Nov. 2014. Web. 21 Sept. 2015.

Though we are taught to care for our physical bodies from childhood few, if any, of us are conditioned to care for our minds. This TED talk discusses some common unhealthy habits and how they can be detrimental to our psychological/emotional wellbeing. Some mention is made to techniques one could use to break some negative emotional cycles, specifically rumination.


Information gathered from this article illuminated some pros and cons to self-tracking as well as suggesting the how and why some get into collecting data about themselves.

Information on the preferences and behavior patterns of millennials in the workplace offer insights into how they operate and what they value.


A list of common irrational beliefs was accessed here.

**CASE STUDIES**

**Joyable (https://joyable.com/)**

This application uses a 12-week CBT program to help users overcome social anxiety with the help of a coach.

**Happify (http://www.happify.com/)**

This application uses scientifically developed games and activities to help users deal with stress and lighten their mood.

**Moodscope (https://www.moodscope.com/)**

Users of Moodscope are asked to rate their emotions on a daily basis through the use of flip cards and share their emotional data with specified confidants.

**Optimism (http://www.findingoptimism.com/)**

This application focuses on identifying triggers of negativity etc and strategies for change and sustained progress.