Cultivate Self-Care Rituals Among Young Adults Through Gamified Intervention

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Abstract

Young adults encounter various challenges such as academic, financial, and social pressures, which profoundly impact their well-being, often resulting in stress and anxiety. The practice of self-care rituals presents an opportunity to help them navigate challenges and achieve sustained well-being. This graduation project aims to cultivate self-care rituals among young adults through gamified intervention to promote well-being via a meaningful and engaging experience.

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Using qualitative methods, research began with a literature analysis to understand what self-care rituals are. Based on the theoretical foundation, user research continued to investigate the benefits of self-care rituals, along with the mechanisms of meaning-making that enable these benefits, and their natural processes of creation and sustenance. The findings highlighted the necessity of design intervention to support the creation of self-care rituals and also to facilitate their maintenance and refinement, informing a series of design directions and strategies. An initial flow for the intervention was then established. Further research explored the integration of gamification to enhance engagement in cultivating self-care rituals. Gamification strategies and an interaction vision were developed to shape the overall gamified experience.

Through three rounds of prototyping and iteration, a final design intervention was developed, based on findings from the research and design explorations. It includes a "Ritual Weaver" toolkit and an interactive guidance system, empowering users to create and sustain self-care rituals that align with their needs and values through a gamified, magical, and collaborative experience. The intervention was evaluated for both its functionality and user experience, focusing on meeting the design goals of being self-explanatory, meaningful and engaging. Evaluation results demonstrated the intervention's effectiveness in cultivating self-care rituals to promote well-being and informed recommendations for further improvement.

The final conclusion summarizes the project's findings, contributions, limitations, and future opportunities.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Young adults (18-25 years old) navigate a critical transitional phase from late adolescence to adulthood, during which they must independently manage academic, financial, and social pressures (Arnett, 2004). These challenges can significantly influence their well-being, and often lead to stress and anxiety (Smith & McLellan, 2023). In response to these issues, young adults adopt various coping strategies. Some choose avoidance to passively deal with their problems. Although avoidance may provide temporary relief, it does not address the root cause. In some cases, such maladaptive coping strategies not only fail to improve the situation but even make it worse (Hall, 2012). Others actively seek support and solutions, with common practices including regular exercise to manage stress levels (Nguyen-Michel et al., 2006) and meditation to reduce anxiety (Coppola & Spector, 2009). However, even when these effectual practices are implemented, sustaining them remains a challenge (Bouton, 2014). To promote well-being among young adults, it is essential to encourage and support them to actively seek sustainable coping practices that suit themselves. Therefore, designing to facilitate the development of self-care rituals offers a viable approach to supporting individual well-being.

Self-care refers to the ability to care for oneself through awareness, self-control, and self-reliance to achieve optimal well-being (Martinez et al., 2021). Meanwhile, ritual is a structured sequence of symbolic actions (Bell & Kreinath, 2021). Though commonly recognized rituals are usually communal, such as religious rituals or cultural events like graduation ceremonies, people also construct personal rituals for self-care purposes(Hilty, 2023). For example, a morning coffee ritual can serve as a form of self-care, helping to start the day with lower stress levels. An evening bath ritual can also provide self-care by soothing accumulated anxiety. While these practices may resemble routines, the key difference is that self-care rituals assign symbolic meaning to daily actions (Hobson et al., 2017)The act of drinking coffee is symbolized as a moment of stillness to appreciate life, whereas the act of bathing is symbolized as relaxation and emotional balance. By autonomously bringing meaning to everyday actions, self-care rituals foster intrinsic motivation, allowing individuals to sustain their well-being practices (Sherman & Mitty, 2008; Liu et al., 2023).

Therefore, cultivating self-care rituals among young adults presents an opportunity to help them navigate challenges and achieve long-term well-being. To cultivate self-care rituals, guidance is needed to raise awareness, and support them in integrating resources and personal needs to build meaningful practices (Martinez et al., 2021; Truscott et al., 2023). However, there is currently a lack of targeted guidance. Existing ritual design toolkits vary in focus—some are primarily designed to for communities to address social connections (Interaction Foundry, 2014), while others, despite incorporating self-care rituals, do not specifically focus on this aspect (Menter & Venkataramani, 2025).

1.2 Design opportunity

The role of self-care rituals in achieving long-term well-being for young adults, combined with the lack of targeted guidance, presents an opportunity for design intervention to cultivate self-care rituals among young adults. The intervention should guide young adults to actively create and sustain their meaningful self-care rituals.

To facilitate such active involvement, it is essential to provide an engaging experience (Omaghomi et al., 2023). The integration of gamification offers a compelling approach. Gamification is a design approach that enhances engagement in non-entertainment systems by leveraging motivational and emotional dynamics from games (Marache-Francisco & Brangier, 2014). Studies have shown that gamified interventions can significantly increase engagement, along with positive emotions like interest and inspiration, compared to non-gamified versions (Kelders et al., 2018).

Therefore, this project explores how to cultivate self-care rituals among young adults through gamified intervention. It aims to provide a both meaningful and engaging experience, guiding young adults to create and sustain their self-care rituals to promote well-being.

1.3 Design Goals & Research Questions

To cultivate self-care rituals among young adults, two key design goals are identified: Meaningful and Engaging. These goals address how meaningful self-care rituals can be created and sustained to promote well-being, and how gamification can be integrated to enhance the engagement of the process.

Research questions have emerged accordingly:

Q1. What are self-care rituals?

To explore the theoretical foundation of self-care rituals.

Q2. What self-care rituals do young adults practice? Why and how?

To explore the self-care rituals young adults already do in their lives, what well-being benefits they provide, and how those benefits are realized through ritual behaviors.

Q3. How do young adults naturally create and sustain their self-care rituals?

To explore how young adults naturally create their self-care rituals, the motivations and challenges during their sustenance, and how this process can be better supported and guided.

Q4. How can gamification be integrated into the cultivation of self-care rituals?

To examine the relationship between gamification and self-care rituals, and explore how gamification could be used to create an engaging experience for the cultivation of self-care rituals.

1.4 Process

This report is structured to mirror the process I followed during the project. Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 together explore how meaningful self-care rituals can be created and sustained to promote well-being: Chapter 2 answers Q1: "What are self-care rituals?" through literature analysis. It begins by examining rituals as a broader concept. Then, it defines the position of self-care rituals within this broader concept, leading to a more specific understanding of what self-care rituals are. Chapter 3 builds upon the theoretical foundation established in Chapter 2. It addresses Q2: "What self-care rituals do young adults practice? Why and how?" and Q3: "How do young adults naturally create and sustain their self-care rituals?" through user research. The insights gained informed design directions and strategies for the intervention, ultimately leading to the development of an initial flow for the guidance process. Chapter 4 then addresses Q4: "How can gamification be integrated into the cultivation of self-care rituals?" Gamification strategies are developed, and an interaction vision is established to shape the overall gamified experience and ground the strategies. In Chapter 5, findings from the previous chapters were integrated into an initial concept, which was iterated through three rounds of prototyping and testing, ultimately paving the way for the final design. Chapter6 introduces the final design and the evaluation of it, informing recommendations for further improvement. In the last chapter, I conclude the thesis with reflection on its findings and contributions, limitations and future opportunities.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE ANALYSIS

Introduction

Self-care rituals are an understudied subsection of ritual behavior. While extensive research exists on rituals, much of it focuses on communal rituals such as the religious ones, leaving a gap in understanding rituals that are practiced for self-care. This does not mean that they are entirely unexplored, with some studies in the field of ritual psychology offering valuable theoretical support for understanding them.

In this chapter, I conduct a literature analysis to explore Q1: "What are self-care rituals?" The chapter is structured into three sections. Section 2.1 examines rituals as a broader concept by analyzing their characteristics and processes. Section 2.2 investigates the concept of self-care, to establish the positioning of self-care rituals within the broader concept of rituals. Building on this unique positioning, the characteristics and process model are adapted to develop a more precise understanding of self-care rituals. Finally, Section 2.3 concludes these insights into an explanation of what self-care rituals are, as a foundation for subsequent research, and identified questions for further exploration.

2.1 What are Rituals

In response to the question of what rituals are, I conducted a literature analysis from two aspects: understanding the characteristics of rituals and the process by which they are conducted.

2.1.1 Understanding the characteristics of rituals

Rituals are highly diverse with a wide range of practice. The focus of study also differs significantly. Therefore, there is no universally accepted definition, or framework for the characteristics of rituals (Wu, 2018). In this part, I attempted to define the characteristics of rituals. It is worth noting that this research does not aim to establish a rigorous theoretical framework for the concept of rituals. Instead, it serves this project specifically, helping to further build an understanding of what self-care rituals are.

A key theoretical reference is Bell (1997). In Ritual: Perspective and Dimensions, she

argues that rituals can be characterized by formalism, traditionalism, invariance, rule-governance, sacral symbolism, and performance. This framework is widely accepted, but it focuses too much on religious rituals. As Wu (2018) states, only by abstracting the common characteristics of various rituals can we understand the essence of rituals.

To develop a more inclusive set of characteristics beyond the religious context, as a basis for further examining the self-care rituals, I built on Bell's work by refining and integrating some of her categories to better fit a broader context. I retained the category of "performance" as it can apply to all types of rituals; "Sacral symbolism" was adapted to reduce its focus on religious aspects; I combined 'formalism' and "rule-governance" , as well as "traditionalism" and "invariance", because these pairs share strong overlaps and the integration makes them more applicable to non-religious rituals. Throughout the process, I also used definitions of ritual characteristics from other literature as support. As a result, the four characteristics that define rituals are identified as follows, including rule-governed, repetitive, performative and meaningful:

Rituals are Rule-governed

Rituals are governed by pre-set rules. This characteristic comes from the combination of "rule-governance" and "formalism" in Bell's theoretical framework. She states that rules bring order to chaotic behavior by either setting boundaries for what is acceptable or guiding actions in a structured way. In communal rituals, these rules come from an authority, and participants are required to follow them. Bell also notes that these rules often carry a high level of formalism, using a limited and rigidly organized set of expressions to further maintain the community's hierarchy and authority structures. For example, in a Catholic Mass (Figure1), participants follow strict rules for prayers and gestures, reinforcing the Church's authority.

Figure1. Catholic Mass

Rituals are Repetitive

Rituals are characterized by repetition as a combination of "traditionalism" and "invariance" from Bell's theory. This perspective is supported by Hobson et al. (2017), who describe rituals as predefined sequences distinguished by their repetitiveness. This repetition operates on two levels: First, it refers to the repetition of rituals over time. Bell describes this as traditionalism, where rituals continue historical precedents, religious rites, mores, or ceremonies with accuracy. For instance, the Japanese tea ritual (Figure2) preserves across generations, maintaining cultural identity.

Figure2. Japanese tea ritual

Second, it refers to the repetition of bodily movements within the ritual itself. Bell believes that the repetition of bodily movements in rituals through careful choreography aims to shape character and emotions. Take Tibetan Buddhist prostration prayers (Figure3) as an example, they use repeated full-body bows to cultivate spiritual focus.
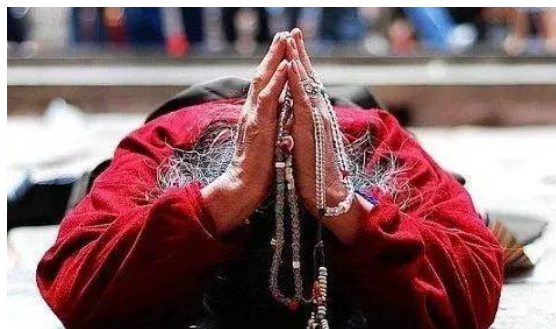
Figure3. Tibetan Buddhist prostration prayer

Rituals are Performative

Rituals create a theatrical-like frame around actions. Delattre (1978) describes ritual as "carefully rehearsed symbolic motions and gestures." This rehearsal organizes fragmented roles, movements, items, and quotes into a cohesive ritual performance. Through performance, rituals provide a theatrical framework that integrates these actions into a unified whole. As Bell notes, in this way it simplifies the complexity of life by

imposing a coherent system of meaning onto it. Wedding ceremonies (Figure4) reflect the performative nature, which transform ordinary actions—exchanging rings, signing a document—into symbolic acts through a theatrical-like ritual, representing love and commitment.

Figure4. Wedding ceremony

Rituals are Meaningful

Meaningfulness is the key element that distinguishes rituals from ordinary behaviors. Wu (2018) defines rituals as patterned human activities imbued with deep meaning, with each group assigning its own distinct significance. Without meaningfulness, the rituals we are accustomed to would become trivial and random actions, like blowing out birthday candles without the meaning of making a wish.

Meaningfulness brings out effects of the ritual. Leach (2021) describes rituals as "those aspects of prescribed formal behavior which have no direct technological consequence." But how do rituals create value and become so popular in human societies? The answer lies in meaning-making. Characterizing fundamental behaviors as rituals yields specific effects, such as the regulation of negative emotions and the enhancement of personal control, because individuals believe that rituals inherently convey meaning (Hobson et al., 2017). For example, the act of blowing out candles carries good wishes, bringing joy and anticipation for the future (Figure5).

Figure5. Ritual of blowing off candles on birthday cake

2.1.2 Understanding the process of rituals

To understand the process by which rituals are conducted, this study uses Arnold Van Gennep's "rites of passage" theory (1909) and Victor Turner's concept of "liminality" (1967), which are foundational in ritual studies (Yılmaz, 2020). Together, these theories formulate a three-stage model that explains the process of rituals.

The Three-Stage Process Model of Ritual

In his "rites of passage" theory, Arnold Van Gennep proposes a three-stage model that structures the significant transitions in individual lives within a cultural and social context. He states that all rituals involving passage from one state, place, social position or age to another share a structure of separation from one status and reincorporation into a new one. It applies broadly to different kinds of rituals, such as coming-of-age ceremonies, marriages, and funerals.

The three stages are defined as follows, which will be introduced along with the examples of funeral rituals from Bristow's (2001) study in "Behaviour and belief in mortuary ritual: attitudes to the disposal of the dead in southern Britain 3500bc-AD43," which examines funeral rituals under the theoretical framework of Gennep:

- **Separation** (Preliminal Stage)**:** Individuals are separated from their previous status and begin the process of transition. This might involve symbolic behaviors like entering a particular physical space.

  For instance, in funeral rituals, the separation stage often involves dressing the deceased in special garments and placing them in a sealed coffin, symbolically separating them from the living and marking the beginning of their transition to the afterlife.

- **Transition** (Liminal Stage): During this phase, individuals are in a threshold state, no longer holding their previous status but not yet having acquired the new one. They often experience various symbolic acts that prepare them for their new status.

  For example, in the transition phase of funeral rituals among the Lamalera, a period of restriction takes place following burial on the day of death. During the time, the

person who had died was seen as neither alive nor finally dead. Relatives attend guarding rites, until mourning is over after six nights.

- **Incorporation** (Postliminal Stage): In this final stage, individuals are formally admitted into their new status with new identities, responsibilities, and attire that signify their new position within the community. This stage completes the transition and is often marked by celebrations.

  For example, in Classical Athens, mourning concluded with the 'thirtieth day' rite. On the thirtieth day, it was believed that the deceased hosted the funeral feast. It marked the end of the transition period. After the rite, the deceased would arrive in the land of the ancestors.

Victor Turner expanded on Gennep's model, emphasizing the liminal stage as a powerful space for transformation. He argues that rituals are not merely superficial markers of transition, but active forces that meaningfully reshape individuals.

2.2 What are Self-Care Rituals

In the former section, the characteristics and procedural model of rituals are examined. Although they are universally applicable, the research towards them have largely focused on communal rituals. Therefore, self-care rituals still require more targeted research, to understand their distinct aspects.

To conduct a more targeted investigation into what self-care rituals are, it is essential to first address what differentiates self-care rituals from the extensively studied communal rituals. In other words, what is the specific positioning of self-care rituals within the broader concept of rituals?

Therefore, this section begins by explaining what self-care is, aiming to define the unique positioning of self-care rituals within the broader concept of rituals. By comparing self-care rituals with communal rituals, I identified the characteristics and aspects of the process model that require adaptation to better align with the nature of self-care rituals. These adjustments are specifically discussed in section2.2.2 and section2.2.3 incorporating literature about ritual psychology.

2.2.1 Positioning self-care rituals within the broader concept of rituals

Martinez et al. (2021), in Self-care: A Concept Analysis, define self-care as "the ability to care for oneself through awareness, self-control, and self-reliance in order to achieve well-being." The World Health Organization (WHO) further identifies fundamental principles of self-care, including autonomy, self-efficacy, and empowerment, all of which emphasize the role of personal agency in self-care.

Martinez et al (2021). also highlight that the concept of self-care can be applied across various domains, including nursing and nursing theory, medicine, psychology, business, and lifestyle. My project mainly focuses on well-being, which is related to self-care in the psychology and lifestyle domains, situating it within the context of everyday life.

Truscott et al. (2023) describe self-care as "a continuous, individual process that uses specific strategies guided by self-awareness to meet mental health needs." They state that self-care is unique to each person, seeking balance through self-compassionate. It highlights that the transformation self-care brings is an inner process of self-exploration and balancing.

When rituals are applied as a practice in self-care, they align with these characteristics. Therefore, within the broader concept of rituals, self-care rituals are positioned as personal rituals conducted in the context of everyday life to bring out inner transformation for well-being. They differ from communal rituals in three key aspects:

- **Agency:** Self-care rituals are personal, created and conducted by the individual. Unlike communal rituals, self-care rituals replace community involvement with individual agency, emphasizing personal autonomy. This results in several community-related characteristics requiring corresponding adaptations to align with this nature.
- **Context:** Self-care rituals take place within the context of everyday life. This characteristic implies that the settings in which self-care rituals take place and the objects used are different from communal rituals, which often require specific locations and unique ritualistic props. This aspect will be further elaborated by integrating the characteristics and the process model.

● **Effects:** Both self-care rituals and communal rituals lead to state transitions, but the key distinction lies in their focus. Therefore, although self-care rituals also align with the three-stage process model, self-care rituals primarily facilitate inner transformation.

2.2.2 Adapting Ritual Characteristics for Self-Care Rituals

Building on the differences between self-care rituals and communal rituals, this part explores how the characteristics of rituals identified in section2.1.1 need to be adapted to align with the unique positioning of self-care rituals.

To refine this adaptation, I integrate insights from ritual psychology, examining how these modifications influence the experience and effects of self-care rituals. In this way, I aim to establish a more specific understanding of self-care rituals.

Self-care rituals are Rule-governed

With the nature of personal agency replacing community involvement, self-care rituals are also governed by pre-set rules, but the rules are set by individuals themselves. The personal nature of self-care rituals removes hierarchy or authority from the characteristic. Instead, the rules are authentic to individuals themselves. Harrold (2023) argues that this self-set process makes the rituals resonate with individuals internally. The internal resonance fosters inner motivation to sustaining the self-care rituals, since it is seen as a part of their own personalities.

Self-care rituals are Repetitive

For self-care rituals, they are also characterized by repetition. This repetition, when applied to self-care, fosters inner transformation on two levels as well, providing stability in an individual's life. On one hand, repetition of the fixed ritual behavior in their routine grounds people in a chaotic world, helps them to deal with the uncertainty everyday, and make life reliable (Hobson, 2017). On the other hand, the transformation effects on emotions through repeating bodily movement are also outstanding, which works to reduce stress level by evoking a sense of order (Hobson et al., 2017). Overall, the fixed nature of self-care rituals helps people to gain a sense of control over the life through both their consistent presence and repetitive actions during the process.

Self-care rituals are Performative

Within the everyday context, self-care rituals create a theatrical-like frame around daily actions and items. It functions to make the ordinary actions and items from daily life symbolic through giving them a coherent narrative, stead of just a scattered combination of behaviors (Hobson et al., 2017). The sense of performance also raises a high level of awareness during the process, with bodily movement carefully designed taking individuals out of ordinary life, slowing down and arousing a special attitude (Myerhoff & Moore, 1977). Combined, the two aspects construct a "stage" for the performance of rituals—a special space where rituals take place, distinct from ordinary life.

Self-care rituals are Meaningful

The formation of symbolism in the performance with a high level of awareness enables the actions within a ritual to go beyond ordinary behaviors, realizing the meaning-making (Turner, 1969). As discussed in 2.1.1, the meaningfulness of rituals enables their intended effects. This also applies to self-care rituals, where meaningfulness facilitates inner transformation and promotes well-being.

2.2.3 Adapting Ritual Process Model for Self-Care Rituals

Considering that self-care rituals undergo transitions within the context of everyday life and facilitate inner transformation, along with the insights gained from adapting the four characteristics, I also adapt the process model of rituals to better align with self-care rituals. Using the example of a relaxing ritual after work, the revised model is introduced as follows:

- **Separation** (Preliminal Stage)**:** During self-care rituals, individuals are also separated from their previous status and begin the process of transition. Individuals enter a "special ritual space" formed by themselves with a sense of performance, which is not necessarily separated physically but mentally.

  For instance, in a relaxing ritual after work, turning on smoothing music signals entry into a mentally separated ritual space at the beginning of a relaxing ritual after work.

- **Transition** (Liminal Stage)**:** During the transition stage of self-care rituals, individuals also experience a series of symbolic acts which are usually ordinary actions symbolized through a sense of performance. The process prepares them for a

refreshed inner state after the ritual practice. Turner's theory on active forces and meaningful transformation also applies here: these acts must be done with high awareness to foster inner transformation.

Following the example of relaxing ritual after work, upon entry the ritual space, an individual may drink wine. Simply gulping it down is very different from carefully preparing a cheese plate, selecting a wine glass, pouring the wine, and slowly savoring it with the music. The first is just a simple behavior between work and sleep, while the second is symbolized into a narrative of enjoying one's life with the high level of awareness. It adds meaning, bringing relaxation, and realizing self-care.

- **Incorporation** (Postliminal Stage)**:** In this final stage of self-care rituals, individuals return to their ordinary life. Instead of gaining a "new position" in communal rituals, individuals achieve a refreshed inner state through the transition in their daily life with inner transformation.

After the relaxing ritual, the individual turns off the music, leaves the ritual space and enjoy a nice sleep in a peaceful state.

2.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, through literature analysis, the research question of Q1. "what are self-care rituals" is properly answered. An understanding of self-care rituals was gained including their characteristics and process by which they are conducted.

A specific explanation of what self-care ritual is is achieved accordingly incorporating the characteristics, process model, along with examples to make it more understandable. It will be used to convey the concept to the participants in a vivid way later in the user research:

Explanation of Self-care rituals

Self-care rituals are actions you do repetitively usually at a fixed time in a day.

When you experience the "ritual moment", you will slow the pace down, briefly step away from ordinary life and enter a ritual space of your own creation, where you experience a sequence of meaningful actions with awareness, and then return to your life with a transformation effect.

Following some "rules" set by yourself, the actions might be somehow "dramatic", where you perform acts out with set of roles, use of objects and your own movements, such as your special steps of preparing a relaxing hot bath with essential oils, flowers, music and drinks.

Self-care rituals usually works as transition from one phase of life to another, for example, enjoying morning coffee is a transition from sleep mode to daytime mode; and also contribute to transformation, making your life meaningful and promoting well-being.

At the same time, literature analysis also provides initial insights into the research question of Q2. "What self-care rituals do young adults practice? Why and how?" through the exploration of self-care rituals' characteristics, their impact, and how the three-stage

process facilitates transitions.

The process model suggests that self-care rituals bring out transition & transformation effects. Meanwhile, the characteristics of repetitive highlights their ability to stabilize life and resonate with personalities. These insights give rise to follow-up questions, which shall be explored in the further research process.

- What are the transition and transformation effects brought out by self-care rituals exactly?
- How do self-care ritual function to help individuals deal with the uncertainty everyday?

Meanwhile, findings on the performative and meaningful characteristics of self-care rituals, along with the process model, indicate that self-care rituals bring out the intended effects following this progression: A sense of performance with its high level of awareness and narrative creates a special ritual space, where individuals make actions symbolic rather than just a sequence of behaviors. Meaning-making is thus realized, which brings out intended effects to promote well-being. However, this understanding of progression remains at a very abstract level. To gain a clearer insight into how self-care rituals imbue everyday actions with meaning to promote well-being, the following questions require further exploration:

- How is the sense of performance created?
- How do individuals make things symbolic to imbue their ritual with meaningfulness?
- Why does this process of meaning-making brings out effects of rituals?

The study of the rule-governed characteristic of self-care rituals also provides partial insights into Q3: "How do young adults naturally create and sustain their self-care rituals?" The fact that self-care rituals are shaped by individuals, who set their own rules, makes these rituals inherently resonate with their inner selves, generating intrinsic motivation to sustain these practices.

CHAPTER 3 USER RESEARCH

Introduction

While literature analysis provided a theoretical foundation for understanding what self-care rituals are, along with some initial knowledge regarding Q2 and Q3. However, knowledge gaps still exist. More primary data is needed to further gain insights about the two questions. Therefore, in this chapter, user research was conducted through interview and focus group to gather new data based on the theoretical foundation. The findings were synthesized into five themes: The benefits self-care rituals bring out to promote well-being; How meanings are imbued to realize the effects *;* Origins of self-care rituals; Motivations and challenges to sustain self-care rituals; And effective settings to facilitate discussion on self-care rituals.

These insights informed design directions and strategies in the discussion. After making decisions among some design directions through follow-up research, an initial flow integrating design strategies for the intervention was developed.

3.1 Research Questions

This chapter centers on two primary research questions:
- "What self-care rituals do young adults practice? Why and how?"
- "How do young adults naturally create and sustain their self-care rituals?"

From the literature analysis in the previous chapter, some insights emerged regarding the 'why' behind self-care rituals. Specifically, these rituals bring about transitions and transformations and help stabilize daily life. This understanding offers a starting point for further exploration into the nature of these transformations and the mechanisms through which life stabilization occurs.

In terms of "how" self-care rituals realize their effects, the literature analysis indicates that meaning-making is crucial. This meaningfulness arises through the sense of performance, transforming ordinary actions into symbolic ones. However, mechanisms behind the meaning-making process are still unclear, such as how the sense of performance is created in actual practice and what bridges the performance and the intended effects.

These questions require more concrete investigation through user research.

Finally, the second research focus—how young adults create and sustain self-care rituals—remained almost unexplored. Thus, both research questions guide the study presented in this chapter, aiming to fill current knowledge gaps and inform how to guide the meaningful cultivation of self-care rituals among young adults.

3.2 Methods

3.2.1 Research Set-up

This study employed semi-structured interviews and a focus group. These methods were selected for their complementary strengths: interviews provided personal insights. The focus group, beyond personal insights, allowed for the observation of how interpersonal communication shapes discussions on self-care rituals.

3.2.2 Recruitment

It involved eight participants, all young adults aged 18–25. Among them, seven are master's students, three of whom are currently undertaking internships. The remaining participant has recently graduated and is actively seeking employment.

3.2.3 Interview Process

Since participants might not be familiar with the concept of self-care rituals, the interviews began with an explanation of self-care rituals concluded at the end of Chapter2 to help them understand the concept. Examples were provided as optional references, allowing participants to decide whether they needed additional clarification. This ensured that the concept was effectively communicated while minimizing the risk of limiting their thoughts to the given examples, encouraging more personal reflections.

The interview questions started from exploring the first research questions, "What self-care rituals do young adults practice? Why and how?". The interviews followed a semi-structured approach, where the researcher conducted inquiries within the WHAT, WHY & HOW framework. Based on participants' responses, the researcher could further

explore specific points into individual experiences.

WHAT：Participants were first asked to reflect on their lives and identify a "ritual moment". The Ritual Process Model summarized in Chapter2 was presented as a template guiding participants to talk about what they do during their ritual behavior.

WHY：Based on the template, they were also guided to talk about how they feel differently before and after the self-care rituals, to look into the transition and transformation effects in real practices. Next, participants were asked about their reasons for engaging in their self-care rituals. Additionally, questions regarding how these rituals contribute to stabilizing their lives were also introduced in this section.

HOW：Then, they were asked to explain what special meanings were imbued into their rituals and how they realized the meaning-making.

After this, towards the second research question, "How do young adults naturally build and maintain their self-care rituals?", participants reflected on the origins and practices of their self-care rituals, discussing how they were created and sustained.

The detailed interview questions could be found in Appendix A.

3.2.4 Focus Group Process

The focus group followed a structure similar to the interviews but involved three participants engaging in a group discussion. The primary goal was to examine how interpersonal communication influences discussions on self-care rituals.

During the discussion, participants were encouraged to share their own experiences and respond to others' perspectives. Observations from the focus group were then compared with interview findings to identify differences in how participants communicate their self-care rituals in a social context.

3.2.5 Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews and the focus group were audio-recorded with participants' consent to ensure accuracy in capturing their responses. Additionally, notes were taken during the sessions

to document key points and results of the observation in the focus group.

After that a thematic analysis was conducted. The analysis followed these steps:

- Familiarization with the Data: Listening to recordings, reading through the notes, and noting initial impressions.
- Generating Initial Codes: Segments of data were labeled based on emerging topics.
- Identifying Themes: Codes were grouped into broader themes in response to the research questions.
- Synthesizing Findings: Themes were organized to address the research questions as foundation for the discussion later.

3.3 Results

During the interview and focus group, participants shared diverse rituals, including tidying the room up when feeling wasting time (participant1); Pretending being interviewed for a successful career everyday after work (participant2); Hugging and kissing all the toys before bedtime (participant3); Pooping with a careful attitude (participant4); Enjoying a nice cup of coffee in the morning (participant5); Starting the day with a small programming exercise (participant6); Taking a shower while listening to videos on Youtube (participant7); Painting Warhammer chess pieces while listening to the narrative of Warhammer(participant8). The variety of the ritual contents highlight the personal nature of self-care rituals. The detailed results are listed in Figure6.
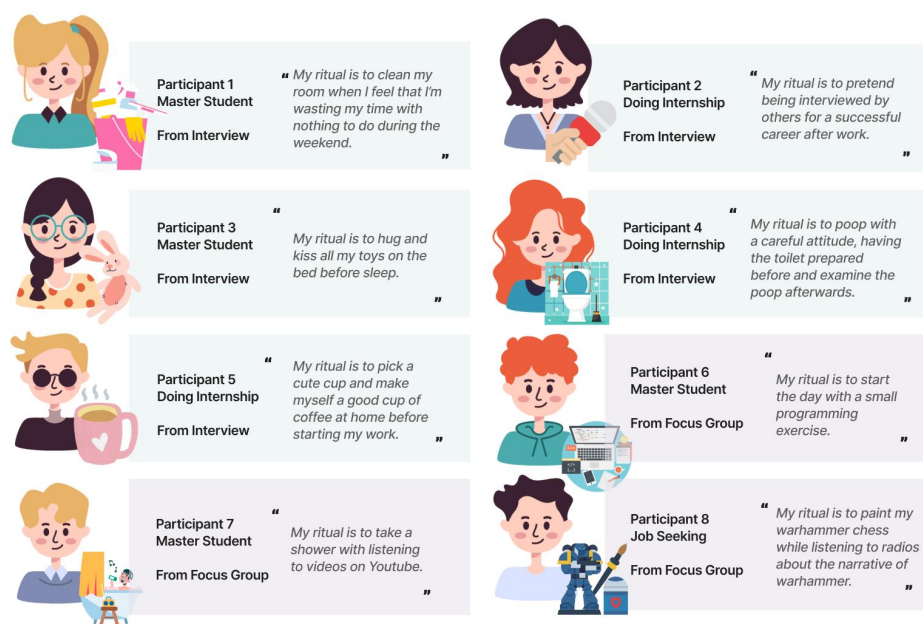
Figure6. Self-care rituals of the 8 participants

The analysis of the data results in 5 themes.The first 2 themes are related to Research Question2:

- "What self-care rituals do young adults practice? Why and how?"

Theme1 The benefits self-care rituals bring out to promote well-being.

Theme2 How meanings are imbued to realize the effects.

The 3rd and 4th respond to Research Question3:

- "How do young adults naturally create and sustain their self-care rituals?"

Theme3 Origins of self-care rituals.

Theme4 Motivations and challenges to sustain self-care rituals.

The other one is about settings that prove effective to facilitate discussion during the research process.

Theme5 Effective settings to facilitate discussion on self-care rituals.

The specific insights within each theme are outlined as follows:

Theme1 The benefits self-care rituals bring out to promote well-being

From analyzing the results of user research, it was found that self-care rituals benefit young adults in two different ways:

Insight1.1 Self-care rituals set a fixed "solution" for navigating life through the transition & transformation effect

The repetitive characteristic of self-care rituals works to stabilize individual's life and reduce stress level, helping them gain a sense of control. Participants view rituals as a fixed "solution" for navigating life：

> *"Rituals are my anchor—they remind me that no matter how uncertain life gets, there's always a way to face challenges."—Participant2*

Self-care rituals "face challenges" through the transition and transformation effects. Transition and transformation effects were evident for 7 of participants and were identified by themselves as the purposes behind the rituals behaviors. They provide a fixed solution while facing challenges, such as sadness, anxiety or low energy in their life. Although the ritual contents vary due to the personal nature, they generally work in four different ways under two main directions:

The first direction is to manage a negative state before the ritual.

1. For three of the participants, they used the ritual to deal with negative feelings. It is treated as a way to release their sadness, loneliness or stress and achieve a better mood state.

   "It helps me to release my stress after work. After doing the ritual, I get relaxed and amused by myself. It also works as a way to deal with the problem of loneliness since I live alone now." —- Participant2, whose rituals is to pretend being interviewed

2. For another one, rituals are seen as a way to bring order to their chaotic life state. Throughout the ritual process, she gets to clear her mind and feel more organized.

   "When I'm cleaning the room, I feel in control of myself. And with a tidy room, my mind also gets clearer, knowing what to do next instead of just sitting there wasting my weekend." —- Participant1, whose ritual is to tidy the room up

The second direction is to prepare for an upcoming phase in their life:

1. Two participants use the self-care rituals as a way to help themselves get boosted for the next activity. They tend to feel "not in the right mood or even reluctant" to the upcoming activity before the ritual, while the ritual process helps them to get prepared.

   "It's kind of like a regular booster, helping me shift from the sleepy state to an energetic one for my work. Knowing that I have this to do at a set time gives me something to look forward to." — Participant 5, whose ritual is to enjoy a morning coffee

2. Sometimes self-care rituals could also function to create a lasting emotional uplift, for example, for the whole day by pre-setting a nice emotional state. It was evident in one participant's practice.

   "After doing it, I feel delighted. It enables me to enjoy a longer lunch break, cause I feel a sense of achievement out of the ritual, and it succeeds to set a productive base for the day." — Participant 6, whose ritual is to start the day with a programming exercise

In summary, even though the specific effects differ for everyone, self-care rituals generally help individuals navigate life's uncertainties by setting fixed "solutions" through managing negative states or preparing for upcoming phases. In this way, they provide stability and a sense of control to promote well-being.

Insight1.2 Self-care rituals serve as a medium for establishing relationships

Besides, rituals serve as a medium for helping individuals establish relationships with themselves, objects, or "higher beings" **:**

1.Self-care rituals help individuals relate to their inner self: User research reveals that rituals help individuals relate to their inner self in three different ways:

- Reconnect to their personalities: Self-care rituals help some participants to "return to themselves", enabling a moment of self-alignment in their daily lives:

  "Taking a shower is my time to let my nature run. Listening to videos I like as part of the ritual strengthens this effect, letting me fully be myself." — Participant 7, whose ritual is to take a shower while listening to videos on Youtube

- Try beyond the personalities: Rituals also provide participants with an opportunity to step beyond their natural tendencies, in a safe environment set by themselves. This offers a chance to explore other possibilities of their inner self, enabling them to address needs and emotions that they would otherwise struggle to manage in their usual ways.

  "I'm an introvert, but sometimes I feel the need to express myself freely. Pretending to be interviewed gives me a safe, self-created space to be open to 'others'." — Participant 2, whose rituals is to pretend being interviewed

- Shape their personalities accordingly: Interestingly, rituals even have the potential to influence and shape personalities over time. Through repetition, the emotions and behaviors embedded in rituals might gradually become part of the individual's character:

  "For over ten years, I've kissed my toys every night. They make me feel cared for and loved, and in turn, this ritual has developed my personality to care for others. I feel like I should pass the love on." — Participant 3, whose ritual is to kiss all the toys before bed

2. Self-care rituals help individuals relate to their physical self: Some rituals allow individuals to slow down their life pace to experience their physical self in a reflective way, fostering mindfulness:

"There is rarely a situation that allows me to stay in an independent space, experience my

own body, evaluate whether I eat too uncleanly, and have the opportunity to reflect on myself." — Participant 4, whose ritual is to be careful of pooping

3. Self-care rituals help individuals relate to items： Some rituals create an emotional bond with objects, turning them into companions that provide mental support.

"I feel emotionally connected to my toys. They are not just toys but my companions. Kissing and talking to them ensures a good sleep for me." — Participant 3, whose ritual is to kiss all the toys before bed

4. Self-care rituals help individuals relate to higher beings: Self-care rituals can also invoke a sense of purpose or relationship to something greater, motivating individuals to engage in meaningful activities.

"Usually I tend to feel reluctant to start, but the radios make me feel the call of the Emperor and become more willing to do the painting." — Participant 8, whose ritual is to painting models while listening to audios about Warhammer

These relationships support individuals in promoting their spiritual well-being，fostering a sense of identity, wholeness, satisfaction, joy, contentment, beauty, love, respect, positive attitudes, inner peace and harmony, and purpose and direction in life(Gomez & Fisher, 2003).

Theme1 Takeaways

User research identifies two ways self-care rituals could benefits users:

Setting a Fixed "Solution" for Navigating Life: Self-care rituals help individuals manage negative states and prepare for upcoming phases through transition and transformation effects, offering a sense of stability and control.
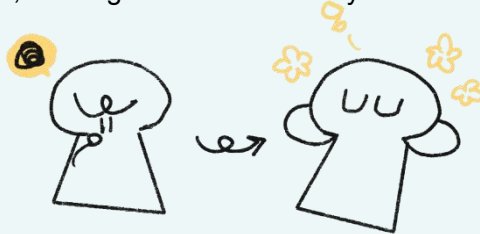
Serving as a Medium for Establishing Meaningful Relationships: Self-care rituals establish relationships with oneself (mentally and physically), objects, or higher beings. These relationships promote spiritual well-being.

Theme2 How meanings are imbued to realize the effects

Meaningfulness transforms ordinary actions into symbolic behaviors, facilitating inner transformation and brings out well-being effects. So, how are these effects achieved through the meaning-making process? The findings from user research enrich the understanding of this progression, revealing the specific mechanics involved in meaning-making.

Insight2.1 Sense of performance is created through slowing down, sensory experiences, showing off and building emotional relationships

Four key factors are identified that create the sense of performance for self-care rituals with a high level of awareness and narrative.

1. Slowing down

Slowing down is established as a one of the core factors for cultivating a sense of performance. By deliberately slowing down actions, individuals become more devoted to what they are doing, which enhances awareness.

> *"I take my time kissing each toy one by one —- No, I would never rush through the process! It is this deliberate pace that makes the ritual feel special, allowing me to fully immerse myself in the moment." — Participant 3, whose ritual is to kiss all the toys before bed.*

The heightened awareness helps to construct a "stage" for the ritual performance to take place.

2. Sensory Experiences

In addition to slowing down their actions, some people focus on their sensory experience :

> *"When I kiss all my toys before bedtime, my senses are fully engaged. I feel their soft and cozy texture, notice their pleasant scents, and, of course, appreciate their visually comforting appearance." — Participant 3, whose ritual is to kiss all the toys before bed*

This immersive sensory experience allows her to focus entirely on the moment, fostering a sense of mindfulness, increasing the awareness level and strengthening the sense of performance.

3. Showing off

Different from the performance of communal rituals, with people being audience to each other, for self-care rituals individuals also have their own "audience". The core of such kind of performance is a feeling of "showing off":

> *"The entire process of selecting a cute cup, carefully preparing coffee, and enjoying it feels as if there's an invisible audience appreciating my actions. It gives me a sense of positive vanity, which brings feelings of satisfaction and pride." — Participant 4, whose ritual is to enjoy morning coffee*

When the "audience" is present, the series of actions naturally weave into a narrative-driven performance for "them". Meanwhile, much attention is needed for completing the full performance for the "audience", thus ensure the high level of awareness.

4. Building Emotional Connections

Moreover, building emotional connections with something also helps to shape the ritual performance:

> *"As a child, I loved the texture of my toys and always held onto them. Gradually, I gave them life, and it became more than just the comfort of their soft touch—it evolved into an emotional connection and resonance. Now kissing them is not just playing with toys, but caring for my friends." — Participant 3, whose ritual is to kiss all the toys before bed*

She managed to create a special narrative around the items through emotional conncetion. It works to strengthen her ritual with the emotional connection becoming tighter and tighter over time—it has been more than 15 years since she started it.

The four factors, "Slowing Down", "Sensory Experiences", "Showing Off" and "Emotional Connection" enhance the level of awareness or building narrative around ordinary actions in different ways during self-care rituals, which work together to create a sense of performance, constructing the "stage" as a special space for the ritual to take place.

These elements do not necessarily coexist within a single ritual. For example, Participant 3, who focuses on emotional connection, also benefits from slowing down (intentionally setting aside time to kiss each toy one by one) and sensory experiences(immersing in the soft sensations and the fabric's scent). However, she does not exhibit the factor of showing off. Instead, her ritual emphasizes a private and intimate interaction with her "companions."

Insight2.2 "Role-playing" is the underlying mechanism of meaning-making

Performing the ritual out make ordinary actions symbolic and thus imbue rituals with special meanings to bring out the intended effects. Further analysis of the participants' rituals suggests that role-playing may be an underlying mechanism of the meaning making process.

It can be observed that through performance, they symbolize normal actions into various forms of meaningful behaviors which brings out the effects discussed in Theme1. One key mechanism behind this transformation is "role-playing": In the special ritual space they created, individuals themselves also become a special version of "themselves". In their narratives, they engage in "role-playing", temporarily stepping away from their ordinary lives and become the protagonist of the narrative they have constructed. These roles reflect the intentions they expect the ritual to fulfill.

- For some, this role aligns with their aspirations for a better future:

  "I become the successful, future 'me' in the ritual space." — Participant 2, who turns the ordinary action of imagining and playing into a meaningful behavior of longing for a brighter future.

- Others embody a role that reflects their emotional desires:

  "I become the master of the world in the ritual space." — Participant 1, who turns the ordinary action of tidying the room up into a meaningful behavior of gaining control over her mind and life.

  "I become a free and real myself in the ritual space." — Participant 7, who turns a ordinary action of taking a shower into a meaningful behavior of releasing his nature.

- Some even become "super heroes" of an imaginary narrative :

  "I become a hero and win the 'game' in the ritual space." — Participant 6, who gamifies exercise, turning it into an act of self-challenge and triumph.

  "I become a warrior for the emperor in the ritual space." — Participant 8, who paints models imagining himself bearing the responsibility of expanding the Emperor's army.

The ritual performance is thus built around the roles to generate effects that fulfill these intentions. Role-playing realizes the symbolization of elements within the performance, by

naturally transforming ordinary objects and actions into special props and movements aligning with the storytelling around the roles.

- Daily items such as toys could be symbolized into "companions" with a strong emotional bound, to build the narrative around the role. The symbolization thus realize the meaning-making process, making the ritual of interacting with the items a way to generate the intended effect of feeling supported by the items:

  "I become a friend of my fluffy cuties in the ritual space." — Participant 3, who turns the ordinary action of kissing toys before bed into a meaningful behavior of caring for them and feeling their care in return.

- Simple daily actions like drinking coffee could also be symbolized into special movements of enjoying a elegant lifestyle, to craft the self-image. The symbolization thus realize the meaning-making process, making the ritual of doing the actions a way to generate the intended effect of getting a positive attitude towards life:

  "I become an elegant life-enjoyer in the ritual space." — Participant 5, who turns the ordinary action of coffee drinking into a meaningful behavior of starting the daytime with a positive attitude towards life.

Overall, role-playing realizes symbolization in the performance by transforming the ordinary items and acts into special props and movements to form the narrative around the role. The intention roles reflect serves as a bridge between the symbolization and the intended effects, to realize meaning-making.

Insight2.3 Belief and personalization are essential for realizing meaningfulness

Besides role-playing, the realization of meaningfulness in rituals also requires the integration of other factors. During user research, some participants highlighted the importance of personal belief in rituals, stating, "I have to believe it is a ritual to make it work." Others emphasized the need for personalization, remarking, "I can't accept a 'ritual' dictated by others; it must be personal."

These insights underline two critical factors for meaning-making in rituals: belief and personalization. Believing the ritual would work is essential for realizing the meaning-making, while personalization ensures that the ritual feels uniquely significant to the individual.

Theme2 Takeaways

From user research, the progression of meaning-making to realize intended effects through ritual performance works in this way:

The four factors, including slowing down, sensory experiences, showing off and building emotional relationships, create a sense of performance and construct a "stage" as the special ritual place separated from ordinary life;

In the ritual space, individuals do role-playing in the performance, the role reflecting their intention of the ritual. Role-playing naturally symbolizes the ordinary items and acts into special props and movements to form the narrative they build around the role, aligning with their intentions. The symbolization thus realizes meaning-making and brings out intended effects when they return to real life.

The meaningfulness is ensured and enhanced by belief and personalization.
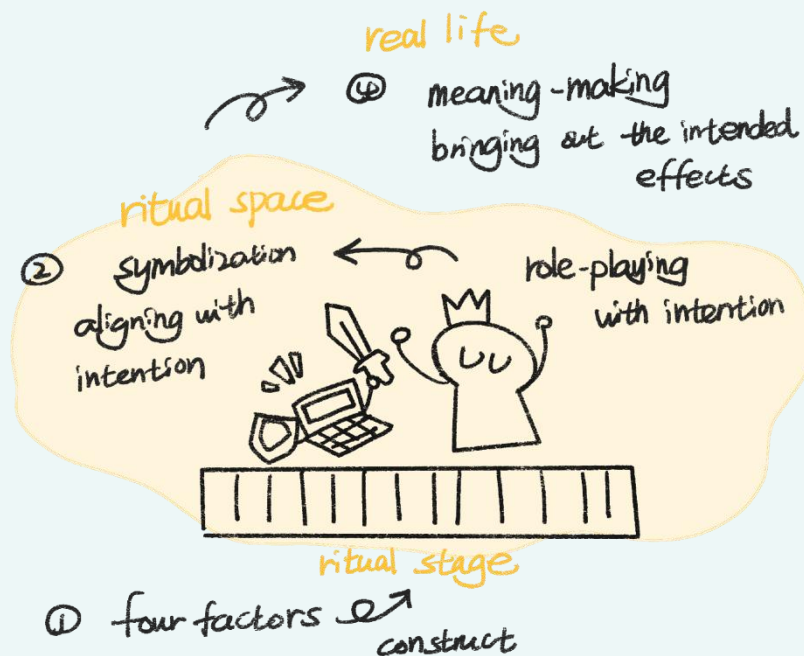
Theme3 Origins of self-care rituals

How were these self-care rituals initially established? Through an analysis of the results, I identified several ways in which self-care rituals naturally emerge and uncovered the problems within the natural process.

Insight3.1 Self-care rituals often emerge naturally through daily life

The research revealed that people's self-care rituals are typically created in three different ways:

1.Emerge From Ordinary Actions: Some rituals emerge from everyday activities that initially serve a practical purpose. Over time, as individuals recognize their unique benefits, they begin to assign deeper meaning and develop them into rituals.

> *"At first, I only cleaned my room to make it tidier. But when I realized its calming effect, I started to see it as a personal ritual." – Participant 1, whose ritual is to tidy the room up*

2. Adapt Observed Behaviors: Some individuals draw inspiration from others and adapt them into personal rituals afterwards.

> *"I first saw similar practices in videos and imagined myself doing the same. Over time, I shaped it into my own ritual." – Participant 2, whose rituals is to pretend being interviewed*

3. Transform Existing Routines: Others modify existing routines by introducing new elements or perspectives, turning them into refreshed rituals with added meaning.

> *"I used to just listen to music while showering, but it felt dull. Switching to YouTube videos made the experience more engaging and meaningful." – Participant 7, whose ritual is to take a shower while listening to videos on Youtube*

For the natural process of ritual creation, inspirations were gained from daily practices or others, and developed into rituals naturally afterwards.

Insight3.2 There lacks awareness and strategy to actively use self-care rituals to cope with real-life challenges

Although participants recognize the various benefits of self-care rituals discussed in Theme 1, their awareness of actively creating new rituals to address challenges remains

low. As noted in Insight 3.1, most existing self-care rituals develop naturally over time, rather than being intentionally designed to serve a specific purpose.

At the end of the interviews and focus group discussions, participants were asked whether, after reflecting on their existing self-care rituals, they identified other areas in their lives that could benefit from creating new rituals. Most of them responded positively. For instance, Participant 7, who is currently seeking employment, acknowledged:"Finding a job is urgent, but every day, I just don't feel like taking action. If I could establish a ritual to boost my motivation and help me apply for jobs more proactively, I think it would be really beneficial. Despite recognizing the potential value of such a ritual, he expressed uncertainty about how to create one:"I don't know how to build a ritual like this. I feel lost."

This suggests that while participants acknowledge the power of self-care rituals, they often lack the practical awareness and strategies to intentionally design rituals to address the challenges in their lives.

Theme3 Takeaways

User research revealed that self-care rituals naturally emerge through daily life. However, lack of awareness and strategies limits their potential to deal with life challenges.

These findings highlight the need for helping individuals consciously create self-care rituals, through raising their awareness and providing them with useful strategies.

Theme4 Motivations and Challenges to sustain self-care rituals

After creating these rituals, how do young adults sustain them? Interestingly, I did not gather much useful information regarding the "how". The consciousness of actively sustaining self-care rituals among them is notably low.

Insight4.1 The Meaningful Nature of Self-Care Rituals Leads to a Lack of Awareness About Sustenance

The meaningfulness of self-care rituals makes users feel that deliberate sustenance is unnecessary. Many participants viewed their rituals as self-driven acts that should be performed voluntarily rather than something that requires conscious effort to sustain. They believed that intrinsic motivation alone—from the sense of control rituals provide, their reflection of the inner self, and their emotional significance—was sufficient to sustain these practices. As a result, they rarely considered the need to actively maintain their rituals.

"The idea of 'maintaining' a ritual feels passive to me. It just doesn't feel right. I believe rituals should be self-driven, since it reflects my inner self. Why would I need to 'force' myself to follow my heart?" —- Participant5

Insight4.2 The Need for Maintenance and Refinement Still Exists

However, many also admitted to abandoning rituals they once found beneficial due to difficulties in maintaining them, but they struggled to recall specific experiences. This means, the rituals they shared in the study are, in a sense, the "survivors"—while many meaningful behaviors failed to persist. This highlights the importance of maintenance in sustaining the meaningful ritual behaviors.

Another key challenge is that users rarely consider how to refine their rituals when issues arise. When asked whether they had a process for developing or adjusting their rituals over time, participants responded that they did not—they simply remained as they were. This lack of intentional adaptation may explain why some rituals are not sustained to some extent: when participants found a ritual overwhelming, or unable to fulfill their needs, they did not modify it. Instead, they simply abandoned it.

Theme4 Takeaways

User research revealed that young adults rarely think about actively sustaining self-care rituals. They believe that the meaningful nature of self-care rituals conflicts with the passive feeling of maintaining them, yet the need for maintenance objectively exists, as many people have abandoned beneficial rituals. Additionally, when their rituals no longer properly serve their needs, they do not modify them naturally. These findings suggest that the meaningfulness itself it not enough for sustaining the ritual practices. Guidance for maintenance and refinement is still

Theme5 Effective settings to facilitate discussion on self-care rituals

During the user research process itself, insights were gained on how to effectively facilitate discussions on the topic of self-care rituals.

Insight5.1 Explanation of the concept and examples help participants understand the concept effectively

The explanation summarized in the previous chapter and examples of the self-care ritual concept effectively helped participants understand the concept at the very beginning and support their discussion afterwards.

Insight5.2 interpersonal communication promotes discussion

In the focus group, it was observed that conversations with others, especially familiar friends, made discussions richer. For example, Participant 8, who initially thought he had no rituals, realized through the conversation that he actually had ritual behaviors that he was unaware of. During discussions about ritual characteristics, participants also naturally pointed out traits in each other.

So far, these positive effects of communication have only been observed when discussing existing rituals. Figuring out how to use these dynamics to improve the effectiveness of creating and sustaining new rituals will require further experimentation.

Theme5 Takeaways

Preparing participants with the definition and examples of self-care rituals helps to facilitate the discussion effectively. Group communication also functions quite well. These setting shall be experimented with further for ritual creation.

3.4 Discussion

Through user research, I answered the research questions Q2. "What self-care rituals do young adults practice? Why and how?": The self-care rituals young adults practice show a high level of variety, indicating their personal nature. The well-being benefits they bring out lie in two main directions: Setting a fixed "solution" for navigating life through the transition & transformation effect, and helping to establish meaningful relationships with oneself, items and higher beings. The progression of meaning-making works with four key factors, including slowing down, sensory experiences, showing off and building emotional connections creating a sense of performance, role-playing imbuing elements in the performance with symbolic meanings aligning with individuals' intention, and belief along with personalization ensuring the meaningfulness.

Q3. "How do young adults naturally create and sustain their self-care rituals?" has also been addressed. While young adults are capable of creating their own self-care rituals naturally, these rituals are not created with a clear intention or under a deliberate process. Instead, they emerge naturally over time through daily life. Therefore, when faced with new challenges, young adults often lack the awareness and strategies to create new rituals as solutions.

These findings informed design directions and strategies to address the first goal of guiding the creation and sustaining of meaningful self-care rituals to promote well-being.

Guiding the creation of meaningful self-care rituals

Findings from Theme 3: Origins of Self-Care Rituals highlight the need for guidance in ritual creation in both raising awareness and providing strategies. I decide to start the creation process from identifying the intention. Insights from Theme 2 also emphasize the significant role of intention in creating a meaningful ritual performance. With a clear intention, users can purposefully create rituals to deal with challenges in their life and promote well-being.

Regarding how to gather elements to build the ritual around intention, the natural process of ritual creation shows that there are many valuable activities in life, that can become a ritual when they are captured and imbued meaning by people: among the three types, some capture ordinary behaviors in daily life that can satisfy intention, some get

inspiration from what others do, and some transform old routines to make them more meaningful. In natural creation, this process is spontaneous and low-conscious, and often requires a considerable amount of time to develop. Through my intervention, I hope that users can capture these valuable activities in a targeted manner with guidance, by recalling their own lives or drawing inspiration from others.

Design Implications:

A basic flow for the guiding the creation of self-care rituals is then developed, incorporating the strategies concluded above:

i.   **Intention Exploration** : The process starts with identifying opportunities for rituals, clarifying the intention behind a self-care ritual: Why do I want to establish this ritual?

ii. **Element Mapping**: Once the intention is set, the next step is to gather elements to make up the ritual, by identifying actions that brought out the intended effects before, or gaining inspiration from others' experiences.

iii. **Ritual Building**: After gathering the elements, a self-care ritual will be built that aligns with the identified intention.

Among the three steps, basic design strategies has already been established for guiding the second step. Meanwhile, the discussion in Theme 1 on the benefits of self-care rituals informs design directions for guiding the identification of intention in Step 1:

Design Implications:

Two main directions are suggested for guiding the identification of intention for the ritual, from the two types of benefits:

i.   Guiding users to figure out transition&transformation effects to set a fixed "solution" dealing with challenges in life;

ii. Guiding users to seek for opportunities of establishing meaningful connections.

These two directions differ in intent: the first focuses on solving existing problems, while the second leans toward exploring new possibilities in life. They will also impact the guidance strategies in the following steps. Therefore, before moving into concept development process, it is necessary to conduct a follow-up research and make a choice between them. The results of the research will be introduced in section3.5.

Meanwhile, Theme 2 identified the mechanics of symbolizing elements in the ritual performance to realize meaning-making, which informs the design strategies for Step 3: Guiding Ritual Building:

Design Implications:

i. The four factors, "Slowing Down", "Sensory Experiences", "Showing Off" and "Emotional Connection" could serve as key methods for users to generate the elements into a ritual performance with a high level of awareness and narrative.

ii. To support meaning-making process in rituals, the sense of "role-playing" shall be emphasized, enabling individuals to symbolize the elements around roles which reflect their intentions.

iii. Meanwhile, users shall be guided to create a ritual that they themselves believe in, and is personalized enough to ensure the meaningfulness and successfully promote well-being.

Guiding the sustenance of meaningful self-care rituals

Considering the tension between users' concerns that ritual maintenance might threaten meaningfulness and the practical need to sustain rituals, it is essential to find a balance to help users maintain their rituals in a meaningful way. Moreover, the lack of awareness highlights the need for a design intervention to guide the refinement of their rituals to ensure the lasting benefits.

Design Implications:

Therefore, after the ritual creation, the intervention should also guide users on how to sustain their self-care rituals in terms of maintenance and refinement. The whole flow follows a Creation-Maintenance-Refinement structure.

Due to the lack of data on maintenance and refinement in natural ritual practices, actionable strategies to support them remain unexplored. I decided to leave further exploration in the prototyping and testing phase, where user will try to maintain and refine their newly-created rituals.

3.5 Follow-Up Research on the Two Intention Directions

Before moving into concept development, there was still one important design decision that has yet to be made: the two directions for intention exploration, either guiding users to figure out the transition&transformation effects to set a fixed "solution" navigating challenges in life, or guiding users to seek for opportunities of establishing meaningful relationships, were quite different. Therefore, a choice is needed before further design work. To make this design decision, I conducted a follow-up interview with the participants to examine the feasibility of both directions. It involved the same participants as before and focused on the following questions:

1. Are they aware of either the two types of effects during their rituals?
2. If so, are they intentional or not?
3. Do they have an intention to realize new transition&transformation effect, or establish new relationships through ritual creation?

Results

Most participants were clearly aware of the transition and transformation effects brought by their rituals, and treated them as the reason why they continuously do the rituals.

> *"For me the reason I keep doing my ritual is the shift it brings—it helps me transition from a tired, sleepy myself and prepares me for whole day's work." —- Particpant5, whose ritual is to enjoy morning coffee*

Meanwhile, findings indicate that building relationships was not perceived as an intention by participants, even though it is present in their ritual behaviors. They found it more difficult to resonate with the concept of "relationship" compared to "transition." relationship was seen more as a tool within the ritual rather than a primary goal.

> *"I never really thought about 'relationship' as the purpose of my ritual—it's just something that happens along the way but it did help me to realize my intention." —Participant 8, whose ritual is to paint models while listening to the narrative of Warharmer*

Discussion

Based on the findings, I decided to focus on the first direction, guiding users to start from exploring their intentions about the transition&transformation effects they want to achieve. Meanwhile, establishing relationships would be positioned as a method rather than a goal.

The relationship with items has already been addressed to some extent, within the factor of Building Emotional relationship. The relationship with oneself and with a higher being would be incorporated as design strategies for the steps of element mapping and ritual building. It is important to note that this does not mean interventions aimed at establishing relationships cannot be developed or lack value. Rather, in this project, this design decision was made based on measurement of design feasibility.

3.6 Follow-Up Research on Sub-Directions

After deciding on the main direction, new questions emerged afterwards: how can users be guided effectively to identify their intention of transition&transformation effects? Three sub-directions were came up with:

1. Starting by discussing their existing rituals, with the aim of improving, enhancing, or rebuilding them;

2. Directly exploring the desired transformation effect to create a new ritual;

3. Selecting a specific time of day to establish a transition ritual.

To explore these sub-directions, I conducted a small interview with eight of the previous participants, focusing on the first sub-direction: Are you satisfied with your ritual behavior? Do you feel like making any changes?

Results

Six participants expressed confidence in their rituals, describing them as both effective in achieving transformation and reflective of their personality. For them, rituals weren't just activities—they felt like a part of who they were.

> *"My ritual just fits me. It works, and it feels like something that truly belongs to me. The idea of changing it feels weird" —- Participant1, whose ritual is to tidy the room up*

Meanwhile, two participants expressed a desire for change.

> *"There's a sense of disconnect when I return to reality—it makes me even more reluctant to face it. Therefore I feel like finding a new way to deal with the problem" — Participant 2, whose ritual is to pretend being interviewed*

Discussion

Based on these findings, I decided to offer "starting with a discussion of their existing rituals to improve, enhance, or rebuild them" as an option for users. This choice reflects the observation that most participants have strong confidence and emotional attachment to their rituals, while some still show willingness to change. I also realized that beginning

with a reflection on existing rituals before moving into the creation process might be an effective entry point. It not only provides a smooth way to start the conversation but also acts as a "warm-up," sensitizing users for ritual creation later. As a result, a new step was introduced prior to the Intention Exploration step to facilitate discussion about existing ritual behaviors. As for the second and third sub-directions, I decided to keep them open in this stage and explore all possibilities during the prototyping phase.

3.7 Conclusion

Based on the design decisions from the follow-up research and incorporating the insights from Theme 5, an initial flow (Figure7) for guiding the creation of self-care rituals has been developed. This flow integrates design strategies for each step:

Existing Ritual Discussion	Intention Exploration	Element Mapping	Ritual Building
Introduce the concept of self-care rituals with examples Guide users to talk abou their existing ritual behaviors	Identify their intention for the self-care ritual about what transition& transformation they wanna realize By 1.Adapting the existing one; 2.Figuring out the transformation effect they wanna bring to their life; 3.Finding out a specific time of a day when transition is needed.	Gather elements that align with the identified intention through: 1.Recalling past actions that have already fulfilled this intention; 2.Gaining ideas from others' experiences or established practices. Relating to personalities might also help.	1.Use the four factors along with connection to higher beings to assist users generate elements into a ritual performance; 2.Construct the ritual performance towards the intended effects through "role-playing" 3.Make it feel believable and personalized enough to ensure the meaningfulness
Interpersonal communication might help with the creation throughout the process .			

Figure7. The Initial flow for ritual creation phase

The whole flow follows a **Creation-Maintenance-Refinement** structure. Due to the lack of

insights on how to maintain and refine rituals, I decide to focus the intial concept on the creation phase. After users interact with the intervention and construct their own self-care rituals, follow-up studies will be conducted on their maintenance and refinement practices. These investigations will inform design strategies for the intervention's maintenance and refinement stages.

CHAPTER 4 GAMIFICATION

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I developed an initial flow for the guidance based on user research findings. To enhance the engagement with this flow, this chapter explores the research question of Q4: "How can gamification be integrated into the cultivation of self-care rituals?"

This chapter begins by examining the relationship between gamification and rituals in section4.1, revealing a conflict between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, as well as a shared consistency in rule governance and dual-world transition. To better integrate gamification into rituals, it is necessary to reduce the conflict and use this interesting consistency to create an experience that is both engaging and meaningful.

Accordingly, gamification strategies are developed based on a selected theoretical framework to address the conflict in section4.2. Meanwhile, an interaction vision is established, making use of the consistency, to ground the strategies in section4.3. Together, they guide the upcoming concept development process.

4.1 The Relationship between Gamification and Self-Care Rituals

To explore how gamification can be integrated into the cultivation of self-care rituals, I began by examining the relationship between the two concepts.

Conflict between gamification and self-care rituals

Gamification has been widely adopted and proven effective in enhancing well-being (Johnson et al., 2016). According to Hamari et al. (2014), gamification usually motivates individuals through external rewards such as points, badges, and leaderboards, which effectively generate short-term benefits(Niemiec et al., 2010). However, Deci et al. (1999) argue that the reliance on extrinsic motivation may diminish or even threaten the intrinsic motivation of well-being practices themselves.

This conflicts with the intent of self-care rituals, which depend on their meaningful nature to foster intrinsic motivation for sustaining practices. Therefore, design strategies are needed to balance this conflict, ensuring that while gamification creates an engaging experience, it doesn't disturb the intrinsic motivation of the self-care rituals. Instead of disrupting each other, gamification and self-care rituals should be integrated to form new interactions together.

Consistency shared by games and rituals

Interestingly, research also suggests that, despite conflict exists between gamification and self-care rituals, games and rituals share significant consistency. Gazzard and Peacock (2011), in their paper Repetition and Ritual Logic in Video Games, explored the ritual logic in games.

On one hand, both games and rituals share a structured system governed by rules. Rules function as the defining feature of games(Salen & Zimmerman, 2004)—players follow pre-set rules and receive feedback in the form of changes in the game world. Similarly, rituals are also structured by rules. Following these rules leads to transformation effects. On the other hand, both rituals and games share a nature of transition between two worlds. As mentioned earlier, rituals involve entering a special space distinct from the ordinary world. In the same way, games transport players into a separate game world.

In this sense, they both follow the three-stage model of separation, transition, incorporation to some extent: Participants in rituals/players in games leave their everyday lives, act within the ritual space/game world following specific rules, and experience transformation. The difference lies in the impact: transformations in games remain within the game world, while transformations in rituals can be brought back to the real world, creating a meaningful impact on people's well-being.

If this consistency could be made use of to integrate gamification and the cultivation of self-care rituals, it has the potential to create interesting interaction to not only boost engagement but also address the conflict between extrinsic and intrinsic motivations.

Discussion

Through the study of the relationship between gamification and self-care rituals, I observed a dialectical unity between the two. There is a conflict between gamification's

reliance on extrinsic motivation and self-care rituals' meaningful nature, which fosters intrinsic motivation. At the same time, an interesting consistency exists between games and rituals in terms of rule governance and dual-world transition.

To resolve this conflict while making use of the consistency, specific gamification strategies are needed to create a both meaningful and engaging experience. In Section 4.2, I present the theoretical framework, and develop strategies depending on it to reduce gamification's potential threat to intrinsic motivation. In Section 4.3, I draw upon the consistency between games and rituals to establish an interaction vision—an overarching outline of the gamified experience I plan to develop.

4.2 Gamification Strategies

Theoretical Framework

Chou's (2019) Octalysis Framework (Figure8) as the theoretical framework for gamification. Unlike certain other models that focus on techniques, this framework defines eight Core Drives, revealing the fundamental types of motivation behind gamification, upon which game mechanics can be built. This model was chosen because its revelation of drive types can help me explore the balance between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in guiding the cultivation of rituals.
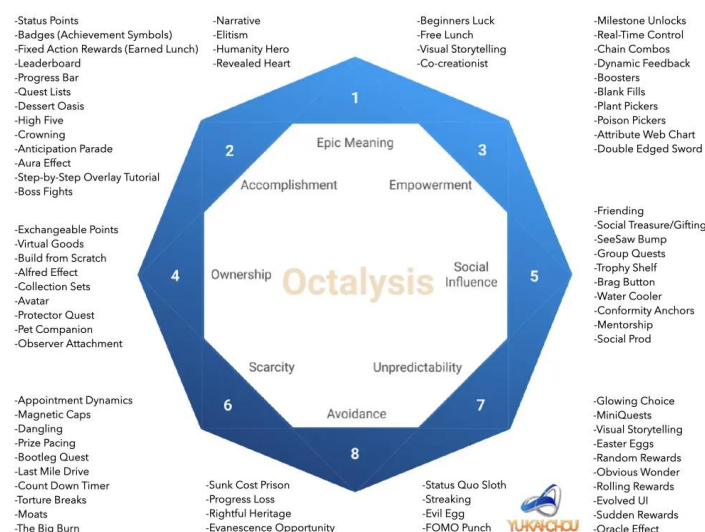
Figure8. Octalysis Framework(Chou, 2019)

8 core drives exist in Octalysis framework:

Drive1 Epic Meaning & Calling: To have a feeling that you are the protagonist of a grand story, tasked with carrying out a meaningful mission.

Drive2 Development & Accomplishment: To experience a sense of progress and success. Mechanics like leaderboards or badges are used towards this.

Drive3 Empowerment of Creativity & Feedback: To express their creativity and receive feedback such as playing Lego or Minecraft.

Drive4 Ownership & Possession: To own a sense of control and attachment through virtual items or currencies.

Drive5 Social Connection & Influence: To benefit from the social aspects. For example, the desire to join friends who are playing can motivate participation.

Drive6 Scarcity & Anticipation: Scarce opportunities tend to increase their perceived value.

Drive7 Unpredictability & Curiosity: The uncertainty of outcomes can be highly engaging. People are more inclined to participate when the reward is unpredictable.

Drive8 Loss & Avoidance: People are often motivated by the fear of losing something they've invested in.

Application of the Theoretical Framework

Based on this theoretical framework, I began exploring how to combine the Core Drives with the needs and intrinsic motivators of the self-care rituals cultivation process. In the creation phase, while using gamified mechanics to spark interest and encourage people to to complete the "tasks" of building their own self-care rituals, it is also important to help them truly recognize their need to cope with life challenges and build meaningful self-care rituals to fulfill the need. This way, intrinsic motivation will be fostered to practice them. In the sustain phase, game mechanics should go hand in hand with these intrinsic motivations, working together to support long-term well-being. Gamification strategies to achieve balance are developed to enhance engagement while maintaining or even strengthening meaningfulness.

Strategy1: Combining Drive 1: Epic Meaning & Calling with the emphasis on the "epic meaning" of creating self-care rituals has the potential to help individuals recognize its significance and stimulate their intrinsic motivation to actively create rituals at the beginning of the process.

Strategy2: Drive 3: Empowerment of Creativity & Feedback aligns with the sense of

empowerment in setting rules for self-care rituals by themselves. Game mechanics can use interactive and visual feedback to leverage this drive, further enhancing intrinsic motivation regarding autonomy, creativity and feedback.

Strategy3: Drive 2: Development & Accomplishment can be linked to the maintenance and refinement of self-care rituals, which allow individuals to experience a developing well-being state. The application of this drive should balance both extrinsic and intrinsic sides, making them feel driven by a sense of progress and growth through both game mechanics and self-perception.

Strategy4: Drive 5: Social Connection & Influence has the potential to build a system of mutual support among individuals, encouraging them to genuinely provide advice and help for each other, rather than simply acting to complete game "tasks".

The other core drives will also be used in the upcoming concept development process, to further enhance engagement. With these strategies as a foundation to ensure intrinsic motivation, incorporating other possible mechanics will not significantly weaken meaningfulness. However, at this stage, these strategies are still at a very vague level. To translate them into concrete game mechanics, it is necessary to first define the overarching outline of gamified experience through an interaction vision.

4.3 Interaction Vision

For the gamified experience I design for my intervention, I want to reflect the consistency shard by games and rituals: the gamified experience isn't just a process to guide the cultivation of self-care rituals—**it will be designed as a ritual-like experience itself**.

This design decision is grounded in four key assumptions, which will be validated through testing:

1. **To enhance engagement:** The novel design combining game and ritual is more attractive than simply gamification. This assumption is supported by studies in gamification, which indicate that experiences with strong narrative and symbolic elements tend to be more engaging than those relying on extrinsic rewards(Deterding et al., 2011). The integration of a ritual theme into gamification provides a unified narrative for the experience (which will be explored further in the following section). Additionally, its symbolic elements further enhance engagement.

2. **To provide structure:** The unified narrative around the ritual theme also provides a

structure to organize the design strategies in the initial flow, which is now scattered.

3. **To strengthen awareness and meaning:** The form of ritual itself naturally involves high awareness and meaningfulness, encouraging users to take self-care ritual construction more seriously. This assumption bases on the findings from Chapter2, that when something is regarded as a ritual, it naturally carries a stronger sense of meaning than other activities. It works to reduce the threaten gamification poses to intrinsic motivations.

4. **To facilitate intuitive understanding**: Interacting with the intervention ritualistically helps users grasp the concept of rituals naturally, helping their own ritual creation. Studies on experiential learning (Kolb, 2015) supports the assumption, suggesting that learning through structured experiences (rather than abstract instruction) enhances comprehension.

Interaction Vision: a "Make-Believe Play" of Ritual

The interaction with my design should feel like a make-believe play—a type of imaginative game where individuals play assuming roles, act out scenarios and interact with objects as if they were something else. For example, two children pretending to run a café—one acting as the chef and the other enjoying a pretend coffee—illustrates the nature of make-believe play (Figure 9).

figure9. Example of make-believe play

The intervention shall guide users through the make-believe play: It leads users into a special "ritual-game space", where they pretend performing ″rituals″ by playing virtual roles, interacting with "ritual props" and follow the ″ritual rules". Finally, they return to the real world with the self-care ritual they have created as the transformation the "ritual" brings out. With the interaction vision, the strategies in section4.2 could be grounded, which in turn refine the vision to be more concrete.

Narrative theme: Magic Ritual

As previously mentioned, integrating a ritual theme into gamification help create a unified narrative for the experience. However, since rituals come in many forms, they do not share a specific narrative theme. Therefore, it is necessary to choose a particular type of ritual. I choose magic rituals as the narrative theme for two reasons :

1. It is attractive: Magic is a timeless theme in both games and real life. Many video games feature magical rituals. For example, in Baldur's Gate 3, placing an sacrifices opens a magic circle that leads to Hell (Larian Studios, 2023). In real life, some online communities are also fascinated by magical rituals. This theme strongly resonates with young adults, capturing their curiosity and interest. Meanwhile, these games and practices related to magical rituals also provide inspiration for the design of specific game elements.

2. It minimizes potential discomfort: While the theme of religious rituals are also commonly used in games like Cult of the Lamb (Massive Monster, 2022), they may not be suitable for all users due to personal beliefs.

It grounds the first three gamification strategies, making them more actionable :

Strategy1: At the very beginning of the narrative, emphasizing the "epic meaning" of pursuing their own "magical" self-care rituals helps users vividly recognize its significance, encouraging them to take the creation process more seriously.

Strategy2: The magic ritual narrative theme provides a frame for creating "magical" interactions and fancy visual feedback during the ritual-building step. Elements such as voodoo dolls, rune stones and crystals could be used. It allows users to be driven by creativity, making them more immersed and invested in the process.

Strategy3: The maintenance and refinement process can be framed as the accumulation and upgrading of magical power, allowing users to vividly experience the gradual strengthening of their well-being within this metaphor and get motivated both extrinsically and intrinsically.

In this way, the interaction vision becomes more concrete: In this make-believe play, users will take on the role of a magician and experience a series of "magic rituals" to build their own "magical" self-care rituals. They will then maintain and refine them to get more magic power.

Multiplayer Game

As discussed in Chapter2, interpersonal communication can enrich discussions on the personal topic of self-care rituals, as participants are able to inspire each other especially between familiar friends. This aligns closely with the **Strategy4** regarding Core Drive 5: Social Connection & Influence, which works to foster the intrinsic motivation to support each other.

Therefore, my make-believe play is designed as a multiplayer game, where two "magicians" who are friends collaborate to help each other through the process of creating self-care rituals. The decision to limit the experience to two "players" was made to reduce system complexity, ensuring smooth interpersonal interaction.

4.4 Conclusion

In order to integrate gamification into the initial self-care ritual creation flow, Chou's Octalysis Framework is chosen as the theoretical foundation to build game mechanics upon. Gamification strategies are developed based on four of the core drives within the framework to balance between the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to ensure meaningful engagement.

To clarify the overall gamified experience, an interaction vision was established by using the consistency of rituals and games. Initially framed as a make-believe play of rituals, the vision then helps to ground the gamification strategies to be more actionable, which in turn further enrich the vision, through two design decisions—the introduction of a "magic ritual" narrative theme and a multiplayer format.

Ultimately, the interaction vision evolved into a "Make-Believe Play of Magic Rituals", where users engage in a ritual-like experience, entering the "ritual-game space", playing the role of a magician and pretending to perform "magic rituals" along with their partners to cultivate their own self-care rituals (Figure10).
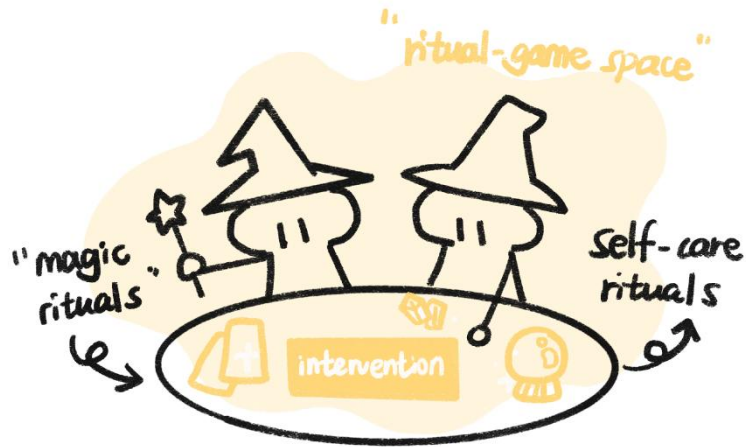
Figure10. Interaction vision: Make-believe play of magic ritual with a partner

After establishing the initial gamification strategies and interaction vision, this chapter has addressed the research question: "How can gamification be integrated into the cultivation of self-care rituals?"

The upcoming concept development process will put the theoretical framework and gamification strategies into practice to develop specific game mechanics. It will align the design strategies from the initial flow with gamified elements from the narrative theme of Magic Rituals. All of this will be guided by the experience tone set by the interaction vision.

CHAPTER 5 CONCEPTING, PROTOTYPING & ITERATION

Introduction

Since the previous steps have enabled me to accumulated rich insights into self-care rituals and how gamification could be integrated, the rest of the report switch the focus on the conceptualization, prototyping and iteration, based on the insights learned.

In this chapter, I focus on combining the findings from previous chapters and exploring how to provide a both meaningful and engaging experience, guiding young adults to create and sustain their self-care rituals to promote well-being. Building on the initial flow established in Chapter 3, along with the theoretical framework, gamification strategies and interaction vision from Chapter 4, it begins with the development of an initial concept of Ritual Creation. This initial concept then went through three rounds of prototyping, testing, and iteration. Phases of Ritual Maintenance and Refinement were designed and tested based on findings from follow-up research after the first round of testing, during which users tried out their newly created rituals. Insights were gathered and analyzed, gradually shaping the final design intervention step by step.

5.1 Prototype1.0

5.1.1 Initial Concept Development

Aesthetics

In the development of my initial concept, although I originally planned to start with a rough, low-fidelity version, I finally decided to prioritize visual design. This was because creating a magic ritual atmosphere for the entire make-believe play required fitting game aesthetics. Such visuals are essential for making the iteration more effective, which reduce the negative impact that rough visuals might have on the game experience, allowing a clearer focus on evaluating the design itself.

The entire visual design is centered around the theme of magic rituals, with black as the

primary color, complemented by dark gold and white to create an overall atmosphere of mystery. Visual elements such as stars, crystals, potions, and spices are incorporated to enhance it. Below are the mood board (Figure11) and sketches(Figure12). The detailed visual design for the concept will be displayed in the next subsection.
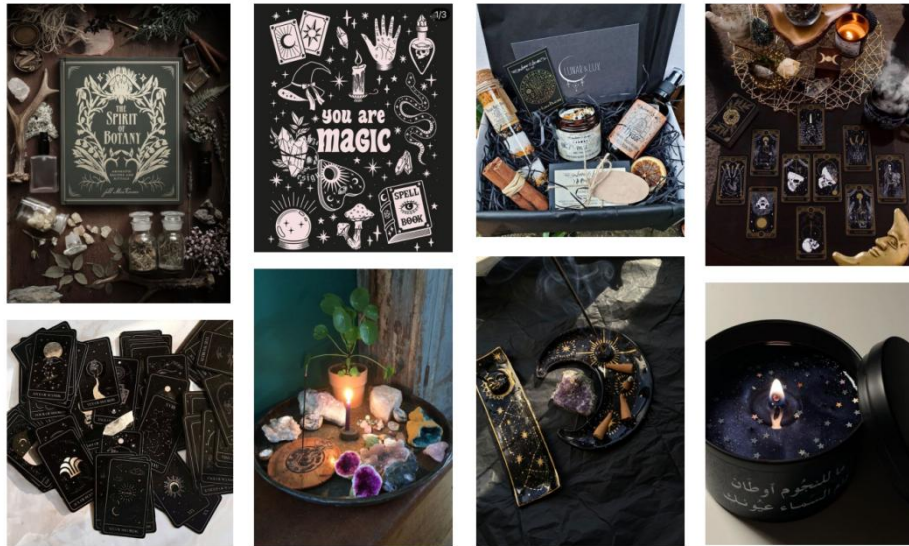
Figure11. Mood board
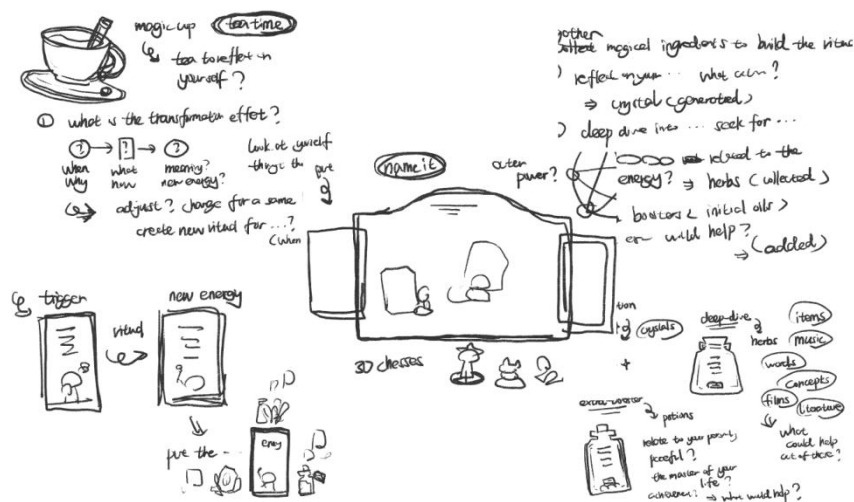
Figure12. Sketches

Concepting Ritual Creation

As established in Chapter 3, the initial flow of ritual creation consists of four steps: **Existing Ritual Discussion, Intention Exploration, Element Mapping, and Ritual Building**. Building on this, the concept development in this chapter integrates the interaction vision, gamification strategies and Octalysis Framework introduced in Chapter 4. The design strategies incorporated in the flow are combined with gamified and ritualistic elements to make the experience both engaging and meaningful.

The initial concept for the Ritual Creation Stage is a "magic ritual" toolkit, which guides users to play the role of magicians to create their own "magical" self-care rituals. It is introduced following the structure of the four steps. More detailed design could be seen in Appendix B.

Step1: Existing Ritual Discussion

Figure13. The initial concept for Existing Ritual Discussion

The Existing Ritual Discussion(Figure13) now serves as the opening step of the make-believe play of magic rituals. In this step, users:

1. **Begin by being introduced to the "mission"** of playing the role of a magician, collaborating with their partner to gather magic power and build their own "magical" self-care rituals, according to Gamification Strategy 1 regarding the Drive of epic meaning & calling.

2. **Listen to the explanation** of self-care rituals as suggested in the initial flow. Examples are not included in the toolkit out of consideration for not limiting the users'

thinking.

3. **Then discuss about their current ritual behaviors following tarot cards**. The cards guide users through a structured reflection on their rituals in four topics:

   a. When the ritual happens and the emotions before it begins.

   b. What they do during the ritual that makes it special

   c. The benefits and changes the ritual brings

   d. The creation and evolution of the ritual

   After discussion, gradually **light magical candles** corresponding to each topic to prepare the ritual space through lighting it up.

This step uses Core Drive 2: Development & Accomplishment from the Octalysis Framework to implement the design strategy of discussing existing ritual behaviors, as outlined in the foundational flow. The process of gradually lighting magical candles aligns with people's desire for progress. Completing the preparation by lighting all the candles provides a sense of achievement.

The props are inspired by tarot cards used as guidance tools and scented candles to purify the ritual space (Figure14). They introduce ritualistic elements to the simple behavior of discussion, emphasizing the magical theme and enhancing engagement.

Figure14. Inspirations: Tarot cards and scented candles

In this way, it sensitizes users to the concept of self-care rituals and helps them reflect on their existing ritual behaviors, which serve as one of the sources for the intention exploration in the next step. Moreover, as the opening act of the make-believe play, this step symbolizes the user's transition from the real world into a magic ritual space, setting the stage for an immersive gamified experience.

Step2: Intention Exploration

Figure15. The initial concept for Intention Exploration

In the make-believe play of magic rituals, the Intention Exploration step is treated as a step to identify the moment and new energy of the "magical" self-care ritual they aim to create.

1. As concluded in the initial flow, users start by reflecting on whether they intend to make changes to their existing rituals. If not, they are encouraged to explore new opportunities, focusing on either the transformation effects they wish to achieve or the transition time of the day they want to improve.

For the sub-direction of exploring the transition time, an Time Wheel (Figure15) is added, where users put crystals to map the opportunities in a visual and dynamic way. It is inspired by the astrology wheel (Figure16), which magicians use for divination. On one hand it enhances the magic ritual atmosphere, and on the other hand, it aligns with the action of mapping opportunities.

Figure16. Inspiration: Astrology Wheel

2. After coming up with the opportunity, they are then asked to note it down is terms of the **Trigger Moment** (When I...) and **New Energy** they wanna bring about through the ritual (I want to...) on two cards.

This step helps them clarify what they hope to achieve through the creation of their ritual.

Step3: Element Mapping

Figure17. The initial concept for Element Mapping

After identifying the intention, users move into brainstorming, gathering elements that align with their intended effects. The Element Mapping process from the initial flow is designed as ingredient collection tasks (Figure17):

1. The process is guided by three collecting tasks, following the narrative where users act as magicians going through adventures together and collecting "ingredients" for their magical self-care ritual:
   a. **Form crystals from the memory Geode:** Reflect on past actions that brought out the intended transformation effect.
   b. **Harvest herbs from the nearby forest:** Use item cards to identify things that resonate with the energy they want to bring into the ritual.
   c. **Add potion as extra augments:** Consider universal feelings like achievement or stability and relate them to their personalities to enhance the ritual.
2. During the collecting, users are encouraged to communicate and gain inspiration from each other. Afterwards they write down the ingredients on the tokens.
3. Completing each task awards a tangible collectible item (crystals, herbs, or potions).

The collecting tasks along with the tangible collectible items incorporate Core Drive 4: Ownership & Possession from the Octalysis Framework, with the popular "collecting quest" mechanic in video games (Figure18).
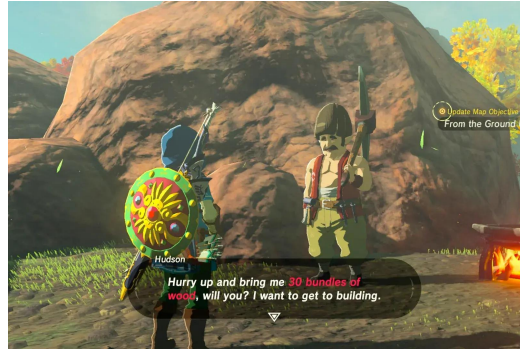
Figure18. Inspiration: Collecting quests in video games

The content of three tasks draws on the design strategies from Chapter 3, including recalling past actions and gaining inspiration from others. The task "Add potion as extra augments" incorporates insights reflecting the universal feelings that participants hope to achieve through rituals, such as control, stability, and achievement. Combined with the effect of relating to personalities, this task is designed to explore whether these universal factors could effectively support the ritual creation process.

This step engages users in an imaginative yet structured process to gather elements for building their ritual performance in the next phase.

Step4: Ritual Building

Figure19. The initial concept for Ritual Dollhouse

The Ritual Building step from the initial flow is designed as Ritual Dollhouse Weaving in the magic ritual narrative (Figure19). This step immerses users into another layer of the make-believe play by introducing a ritual dollhouse, where they create their self-care ritual performance using the elements collected in the previous step.

1. Users select a magician's miniature to represent themselves and freely combine the collected ingredient tokens with magic prop miniatures within the dollhouse to construct their ritual. This design comes from a combination of the design strategy of constructing the ritual performance towards the intended effects through "role-playing" and Gamification strategy 2 regarding Core Drive 3: Empowerment of Creativity & Feedback. It allows users to embody a virtual character representing themselves and build a story around it, with their own creativity in a virtual environment. The magic prop miniatures enhance the process of symbolization under the narrative theme. The dollhouse itself is inspired by magician altars and retro dollhouses (Figure20), serves as a symbolic and interactive space.
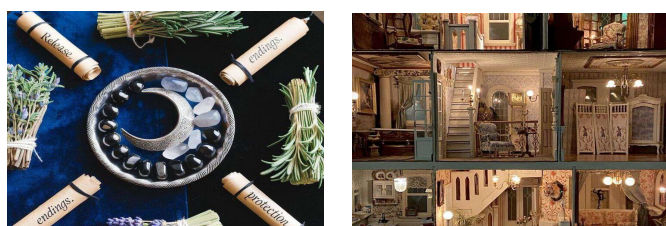
Figure20. Inspirations: Altar and retro dollhouse

To enhance the creation process, an enchantment system (Figure21) is added. Users use enchantment stones representing factors including Show Off, Sensory Experiences, Emotional Connection, Slow Down, and Connect to Outer Power to guide the weaving of their ritual performance.

Figure21. Enchantment system

2. Once users complete their ritual in the dollhouse, they finalize the process by combining it with the Trigger & Energy cards from Step 2 to form a ritual statement, summarizing their self-care ritual.

Overall, this gamified design, which includes the ritual dollhouse and enchantment system, achieves two key objectives：

First, it translates the three previously vague design strategies for ritual building into a concrete, engaging, and testable experience:

● Use the four factors to help generating ritual performance through enchantment stones.

● Realize meaning-making around the intended effects through "role-playing" and symbolization on the "stage" through the ritual dollhouse, characters and magic prop miniatures.

● Ensure meaningfulness through belief and personalization by making the ritual statement.

Second, it provides a narrative conclusion to the make-believe play in the Ritual Creation phase. The act of entering the dollhouse, arranging miniatures, and weaving the ritual feels inherently magical, which also works as the "result" of all the previous process.

5.1.2 Prototyping

The first version of the prototype (Figure22) was kept in a relatively low-fi state, prioritizing functionality testing while ensuring the magic ritual atmosphere was conveyed.

Most prototypes were made using simple printed paper, such as a flat sheet symbolizing the ritual dollhouse, to focus on testing core functions before considering further enhancements. "Crystals" used to mark time in step2 and tangible collectible items in step3 were also crafted using basic materials: Rock sugar was used to represent "crystals," while bay leaves and cinnamon sticks were tied together to form "herbs."

Figure22. Prototype1.0

5.1.3 Testing

In the first iteration, everything was still in an uncertain state. None of the designs had been validated yet, and many elements of the toolkit remained vague and undefined. These needed to be further explored through observing users' actual interaction experiences and conducting interviews.

Research Objectives

Maintaining the exploratory attitude, the first round of testing primarily focused on the following objectives on three levels:

A. **RITUAL LEVEL:** Assess whether the current guidance effectively supports meaningful ritual creation;

B. **GAMIFICATION LEVEL:** Experiment with the game mechanics, validate the assumptions about interaction vision in section 4.2 and evaluate whether the gamification strategies succeeds to balance between engagement and meaningful;

C. **COMMUNICATION LEVEL:** Explore the role of interpersonal communication in ritual creation.

Test Set-Up

This round of testing (Figure23) involved four pairs of participants, with each pair acting as partners.

Instead of trying to make the prototype self-explanatory in this phase, I played the role of a facilitator guiding users throughout the make-believe play. During the testing process, adjustments were already made to the guidance and a few design elements to enhance the efficiency of the experiments.

Considering the fact that the prototype is still in a very early stage, and many elements of the toolkit have not be fully integrated, I kept an open and exploratory approach in the first round of testing especially for the second and fourth stage:

- In the **intention exploration** stage, multiple sub-directions were tested simultaneously. As the facilitator, I guided the process flexibly based on the participants' discussion flow, aiming to identify the most effective approach.

- In the **ritual building** stage, as the guidance for integrating elements into performance was still vague, I focused on observing their natural interactions to gain further insights.

The insights gathered in this round were primarily based on observations of user interactions and relevant interview questions according to their actions with participants.

Figure23. Testing

Results

From the testing, I collected insights across the three levels (ritual, gamification, and communication) for four steps through observations and interviews. These insights highlighted what worked well, what issues needed to be addressed, and which effective design elements should be strengthened.

Step1: Existing Ritual Discussion

The first part of the prototype performed well overall, achieving its goal of triggering the motivation to actively create self-care ritual and setting the tone for the rest of the experience. The combination of ritual discussion and gamified elements effectively engaged users, though there were areas requiring improvement, particularly in providing clearer guidance.

Ritual Level

According to the observation, the process of lighting the candles effectively served its purpose of sensitizing users to self-care rituals. This step helped them understand and engage with the idea. It triggers their interest in the topic through reflection on their life, laying a foundation for actively exploring new ritual opportunities.

However, some guidance was lacking, which caused challenges for a few participants. Interview showed that even with the definition introduced at the beginning, some users still found it challenging to fully grasp what self-care ritual is, thus influence their further

exploration into the topic.

Gamification Level

Introduction to the narrative theme and "mission", along with the attractive visual design of the toolkit itself, motivates users to start the exploration. Besides, the act of lighting candles added a playful and magical touch, creating an immersive experience of entering the ritual space. As one participant noted, "I like turning on the lights. It feels like I'm entering a special space." Interview also showed that it was particularly effective in dimly lit environments, where the candles' glow enhanced the sense of entering a special space.

Communication Level

A key observation was the natural interaction between participants during this phase. They naturally started to think about their rituals in response to their partner's experiences, discussing moments in their lives that connected to each other. This led them to start comparing each other's behaviors at a very early stage, which prepares them to seek for new ritual opportunities.

Step2: Intention Exploration

In this phase, I experimented with different directions for intention exploration. Through observing user behavior and reactions, I aimed to identify an integrated guidance approach that could address the different needs.

Ritual Level

Continuing the discussion from existing rituals and asking users whether they wanted to make changes was effective. This approach encouraged participants to explore new ritual opportunities based on their current state instead of jumping into a new topic.
However, some confusion was also noted: During the interviews, users mentioned that the word "Trigger" on the cards was unclear and hard to understand. Observations also revealed that the time when a transition is needed might differ from the time when a ritual is actually performed, based on their practical creation process.

Gamification Level

It was also noticeable that the Time Wheel worked exceptionally well. Participants found thinking about transition periods visually very helpful, rather than directly focusing on transformation effects as a vague idea.

Communication Level

Communication was particularly active when discussing potential improvements to existing rituals. Participants naturally shared how they would address similar challenges themselves. Additionally, while using the Time Wheel, participants began discussing ways to help each other transition more effectively during the times selected by their partner.

Step3: Element Mapping

This step was successful in helping users collaboratively explore elements, with the interventions providing effective inspiration. Issues were observed regarding overwhelming guidance and the lack of a proper narrative bridge, as noted in user feedback and observations.

Ritual Level

The three collecting tasks and card sets were effective in inspiring users to explore new ideas. However, some participants found the cards "too text-heavy," which made the process feel overwhelming. Additionally, during observations and interviews, a few users expressed difficulty making use of the potion-related tasks. In creation phase, the tasks that introduced universal feelings felt unrelated to participants, making it difficult for them to gain practical support from them.

Gamification Level

The process of collecting tangible items resonated strongly with users and created a meaningful sense of ritual. When they were given the tangible items upon completion of one task, they expressed surprise and joy towards their little achievement.

> *"I like collecting the stuff—it makes the process feel special."*

Interviews revealed a lack of a narrative bridge between the item collection tasks and the ritual building step. Users expressed a desire for clearer storytelling to understand the purpose of the collection tasks within the overall narrative.

Communication Level

Interactions between users were found to significantly foster the generation of new ideas. In some test groups, participants actively inspired one another through collaborative discussions. However, this type of interaction was not consistently observed across all groups. This highlights the need to better emphasize and facilitate collaboration in the

next iteration.

Step4: Ritual Building

In the test, I provided a variety of unstructured elements including the dollhouse, miniatures and enchantment stones to observe how users spontaneously applied them to build their self-care rituals. This approach helped uncover areas where and how more effective guidance could be introduced.

Ritual Level

During this phase, various methods users applied to create their self-care rituals were observed. One particularly effective approach was "telling the story out loud by playing with chess pieces and tokens together in the dollhouse." Clearer guidance is needed to make this process more approachable. Additionally, users mentioned that an extra step to reflect on the collected elements would be helpful to better organize their thoughts.

Another issue observed was the lack of emphasis on the belief of the final ritual. Without this step, some users settled their ritual down too casually, diminishing the sense of meaningfulness.

Gamification Level

The "dollhouse" setup was well-received by users. They appreciated the overall design, particularly the cute miniatures. Many expressed a desire for a more polished and visually appealing version of the dollhouse to enhance the experience.

> *"This is absolutely adorable, especially those little models! I can't wait to see it truly take the shape of a dollhouse."*

The enchantment system was also helpful in organizing their ideas and turning them into a cohesive ritual performance. However, users felt it needed further refinement to enhance its functionality since now the system is just presented to them without much guidance to see their natural reaction.

Communication Level

Users supported each other during this phase by selecting chess pieces and sparking new ideas. This natural interaction provided valuable inspiration. Exploring ways to enhance and guide these interactions could make the ritual-building process even more effective.

Discussion

Through testing, all three objectives were well explored.

A. **RITUAL LEVEL:**

The current guidance to support meaningful ritual creation has been assessed for all four steps, informing directions for further improvement. Interestingly, beyond guiding users to create their own meaningful self-care rituals, the intervention yielded an unexpected effect: in the process of reflecting on their behaviors, intentions, and values, users reported gaining a deeper understanding of themselves and each other. This added an extra layer of value to the intervention, extending the meaningful design goal beyond the behavioral level to also encompass the perceptual level of meaning.

B. **GAMIFICATION LEVEL:**

Most of the game mechanics turned out to be effective in creating an engaging exprience.

Assumptions about interaction vision

The assumptions about interaction vision have been examined and supported:

1. **To enhance engagement:** The novel design combining game and ritual is attractive to the users. They showed a high level of the interest when they first saw the toolkit's art style before really interacting with it. During the interaction, they kept expressing surprises and joy towards the ritualistic game elements. For example, most of the participants told me that they enjoy the process of lighting up the magical candles one by one, feeling that it "creates a special feeling".

2. **To providing structure:** The narrative theme of magic ritual theme does provide a structure to organize the design strategies in the inital flow, which has already been proven during the concept development process.

3. **To strengthen awareness and meaning:** Participants demonstrated a high level of focus and seriousness while interacting with the toolkit, providing evidence that the ritual-like experience effectively fostered awareness and meaning and enhanced intrinsic motivation.

4. As for the fourth point, **"To facilitate intuitive understanding,"** the testing did not provide evidence to support this assumption. Participants primarily perceived the ritual-like experience as enhancing engagement, rather than recognizing the impact of experiential learning. This may be due to the strong emphasis on the entertaining aspects

of the magical ritual theme, which overshadowed its role in facilitating intuitive understanding.

However, the support for the first three assumptions is sufficient to validate the design decision of using a ritual-like experience to guiden the creation of self-care rituals. It effectively integrates fragmented design strategies, using an engaging narrative and immersive experience to support the meaningful creation of rituals.

Gamification strategies to achieve balance

Meanwhile, three of the gamification strategies aimed at balancing extrinsic and intrinsic motivation have proven effective:

Strategy 1: Emphasizing the "epic meaning" of pursuing personal "magical" self-care rituals at the beginning—combined with the overall magical ambiance and discussions of existing self-care practices—motivated users to actively engage in ritual exploration, driving them on both extrinsic and intrinsic levels.

Strategy 2: During the ritual-building step, setting up a "ritual dollhouse" and using miniatures alongside collected elements to construct the ritual performance triggers an intrinsic motivation for creativity and autonomy. This approach keeps participants immersed while meaningfully organizing their own self-care rituals.

Strategy 4: Allowing two "magicians" to collaborate on creating a ritual proved very effective across all four steps. The spirit of mutual support prompted users to take the process more seriously and genuinely, fostering more efficient intention identification, richer and deeper element brainstorming, and a more engaging ritual-building experience.

Overall, when these strategies were applied to actual game mechanics, they successfully achieved their objectives: creating an engaging experience while preserving—and even enhancing—its meaningfulness.

C. **COMMUNICATION LEVEL:**

Interpersonal communication in the creation of self-care rituals was proven to be effective, which should be better made use of.

This process led to insightful findings, which informed the next iteration of the concept. Directions for improvement are listed as follows for each step of the creation phase:

Step1 Directions for Improvement

Improve the Explanation of Self-Care Rituals

The approach to explaining self-care rituals shall be enhanced to ensure better understanding.

Step2 Directions for Improvement

Settle down the Guidance Approach for Intention Exploration

The most effective approach to guiding intention exploration proven in the test combines reflecting on existing rituals with the Time Wheel, which shall be applied in the next version of prototype.

Clarify the Concepts of Transition and Ritual Moments

It is important to distinguish between the "Transition Moment" and the "Ritual Moment." Guide users to first identify their transition moments—when a change is needed—before explore when rituals take place.

Step3 Directions for Improvement

Simplify the tasks

The tasks and cards should be simplified to ensure a smoother flow and to make the process more manageable and engaging for users.

Reposition Universal and Personality-Related Factors

Users found it difficult to connect with universal and personality-related factors during the creation phase. These factors might fit better in the refinement stage.

Incorporate a Narrative Bridge

To better connect the collection tasks with the ritual buidling, new game mechanics should be added to establish a stronger narrative bridge, providing users with a clearer sense of purpose and continuity in the storyline.

Emphasize Collaboration

The collaborative dynamics between users should be further encouraged.

Step4 Directions for Improvement

Add a step of looking back

Introduce an additional step before the ritual building, allowing users to review the elements they collected to better prepare them for ritual building.

Provide clearer storytelling guidance

Clear and structured guidance should be introduced to help users "tell the narrative of their ritual" through the use of miniatures and elements.

Emphasize naming and believing

After the dollhouse phase, place more emphasis on naming the ritual and imbuing it with meaning. This step ensures users fully connect with what they've created, turning the ritual into something they truly believe in, rather than treating the process casually.

Enhance the dollhouse feeling

Transform the ritual dollhouse into a tangible and visually engaging "dollhouse" rather than a flat, paper-based representation to enhance immersion.

Redesign the enchantment system carefully

Put more efforts into the enchantment system design to fulfill its functionality.

5.2 Exploring Ritual Maintenance & Refinement

As previously mentioned, the exploration of ritual maintenance and refinement was postponed after the first round of prototyping and testing. By observing participants' experiences in maintaining and refining their newly created rituals, I gathered insights into their motivations, challenges, and needs.

Methods

After testing the ritual creation intervention, participants created their own self-care rituals. They were then required to practice their rituals over the following week, paying attention to their experience, the effects of the ritual, and the effectiveness of its elements.

A week later, a follow-up interview was conducted to explore their maintenance experiences and refinement needs that emerged. Interview questions focused on their experience, challenges, motivation, and strategies for consistency. Their preferences were also explored for external support, aiming to identify ways to enhance engagement and sustain their rituals. The detailed interview questions are listed in Appendix C.

Results

The findings are categorized into four main themes: challenges in maintaining rituals, needs for reflection and tracking, willingness for sharing and collaboration, and self-reflection fostering refinement. Based on these findings, I identified specific design directions and strategies for the intervention.

Theme1 Challenges in Maintaining Rituals

Several participants highlighted challenges in maintaining their rituals, especially during busy or stressful periods. One participant mentioned that during busy days, it was hard for him to keep doing the ritual. Additionally, participants found it challenging to treat their rituals as meaningful during busy days. Instead, they just repeat it casually with a low level of awareness. This suggested that reminders or tools to emphasize the significance of the ritual could be beneficial.

> *"I need a reminder to keep doing the ritual everyday."*

Theme2 Needs for Reflection and Tracking

Many participants expressed the need for a way to track and reflect on their ritual progress.

One participant shared that she appreciated having something simple to "look back on," which gave her a sense of continuity and achievement to see daily progress.

> *"I enjoy having something to look back on throughout the process, like the check-in system of Duolingo, which gives me a sense of achievement and proud."*

Simple tools such as sketchbooks or journals were mentioned as helpful for keeping a record of the ritual practice, since they found it hard to remember what they had done.

> *"I really need to keep a record of when I started procrastinating, as a tool for self-reflection."*

Meanwhile, others also raised concerns about potential additional effort, suggesting that tracking should remain minimal.

Theme3 Willingness to Sharing and Collaboration

Participants expressed a desire for sharing their experiences with their partner. They showed interest in holding each other accountable, sharing their ritual progress as a form of self-expression, and engaging in physical interactions with each other.

> *"I want to 'monitor' my partner, maybe with some physical interaction."*
>
> *"The feeling of sharing with each other about what I've done is nice."*

This highlights the potential of incorporating social features into the intervention design.

Theme4 Self-Reflection Fostering Refinement

The follow-up interviews also revealed that besides thoughts about ritual elements themselves, engaging in ritual practice often led to valuable self-discovery, which naturally informed improvements to the rituals.

For instance, one participant shared that through practicing her ritual of getting motivated for homework, she realized her deep need for an organized work environment to feel mentally balanced. This insight helped her refine her ritual naturally to be more effective.

> *"I realized that what really mattered was to create a clean environment for me, it helped to clear my mind."*

This demonstrates how self-reflection gained through ritual practice can serve as a foundation for meaningful refinement. By helping participants connect their rituals to deeper personal insights, the intervention can help users enhance the effectiveness and meaningfulness of their rituals.

Discussion

Specific design directions&strategies are concluded as follows:

Design Directions&Strategies

Firstly, since the findings indicate that the challenges in practicing rituals extend beyond maintenance to include tracking personal experiences for future refinement, and that the post-practice needs involve not only ritual improvement but also self-reflection, I decided to update the **Creation-Maintenance-Refinement** structure to **CREATION-TRIAL OUT-WRAP UP**.

TRIAL OUT serves as an exploratory practice phase for the rituals created during the Creation stage, incorporating both maintenance and tracking. WRAP UP then provides an opportunity for dual reflection—on both the ritual itself and the personal insights gained from the practice. This phase leads to ritual refinement and a deeper understanding of oneself.

Intervention for the TRIAL OUT phase shall:
Work as a reminder in an engaging and meaningful way;
Work as a check-in system to create a sense of coherence and achievement;
Work as a tracker to record something simple with no additional work;
Work with social features, to monitor and share.

Intervention for the WRAP UP phase shall:
Guide users to figure out what worked and what did not of the ritual as a starting point;
Guide users to reflect on themselves out of the experience and explore more "original" elements from the reflection;
Guide users to refine their self-care ritual with the insights from former steps and discuss with their partner.

5.3 Prototype2.0

5.3.1 Iteration

RITUAL CREATION

Based on the directions for improvement from 5.1, I iterated on the RITUAL CREATION phase of the prototype. This section mainly outlines the changes that were made and the reasons behind them. The detailed design could be seen in Appendix D.

Step1: Existing Ritual Discussion

Figure24. Archive of Rituals

To help users better understand the concept of self-care rituals at the very beginning, an "Archive of Rituals" (Figure24) is included in Prototype 2.0, providing simple examples to offer more vivid references.

Step2: Intention Exploration

Figure25. Guidance system based on the Time Wheel with transformation effect cards

According to the findings in the last round of prototyping&testing, the guidance system of intention exploration was finalized based on the Time Whee (Figure25): First, users are asked whether they want to modify an existing ritual or discover a new ritual opportunity. Next, they are presented with the Time Wheel, where they use crystal stones to mark the moments they wish to experience a transition effect (either by altering an existing ritual or creating a new one).

To clarify the transition moment and when ritual takes place which might differ, I introduced **transformation effect tokens**. These tokens allow users to write down the general intended effects of the self-care ritual and place them alongside the crystal stones indicating the transition moment, rather than immediately defining the ritual moment and new energy at this stage.

Step3: Element Mapping
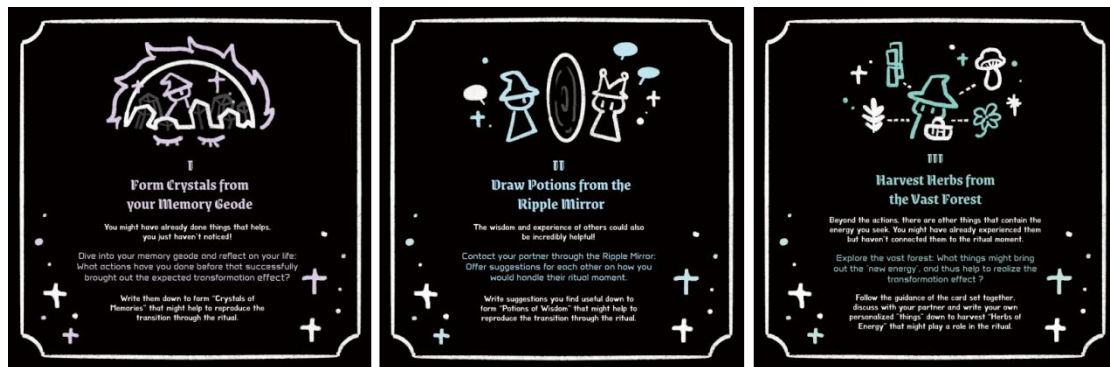
Figure26. Adjusted collecting tasks

To address the need for process simplification and to enhance the effectiveness of mutual inspiration between partners, I adjusted the collecting tasks to focus on the following three activities(Figure26):

1. **Crystal Formation:** Form crystals by seeking behaviors in their own memories that can produce the desired effects.
2. **Potion Drawing:** Engage in a magical communication through the Ripple Mirror with their partner to draw inspirations.
3. **Herb Harvest:** Gather herbs guided by "thing" cards, which have also been simplified to improve clarity.

Figure27. Alchemy Magic Circle

An **Alchemy Magic Circle** (Figure27) was introduced to create a narrative bridge

between the collecting tasks and ritual dollhouse weaving. This serves as the game mechanism for integrating the tangible collectibles. After completing tasks and obtaining the tangible items, users place them in corresponding positions on the magic circle. Once all items are placed correctly, a key is revealed at the center of the circle to unlock the ritual dollhouse.

This design is a further development of the initial inspiration of "collecting quest." (Figure28) There also exist such collecting missions in magic rituals, often combined with a magic circle. Offering a complete "sacrifice" can trigger a form of "summoning." I incorporated it into my intervention to enhance the narrative.
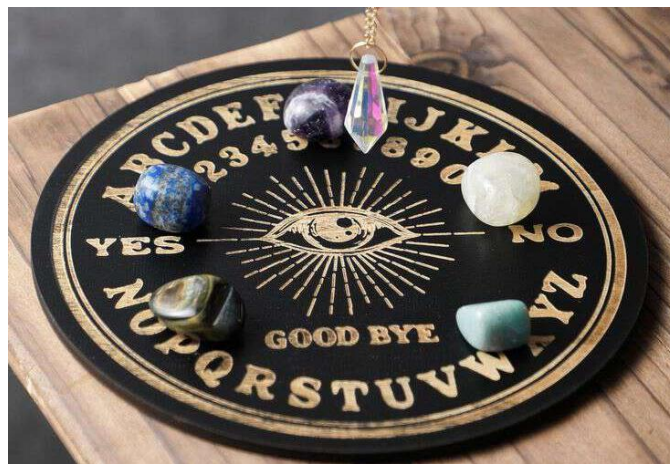
Figure28. Inspiration: Collecting missions in magic rituals

Step4: Ritual Building

● **Clustering and Enchantment**
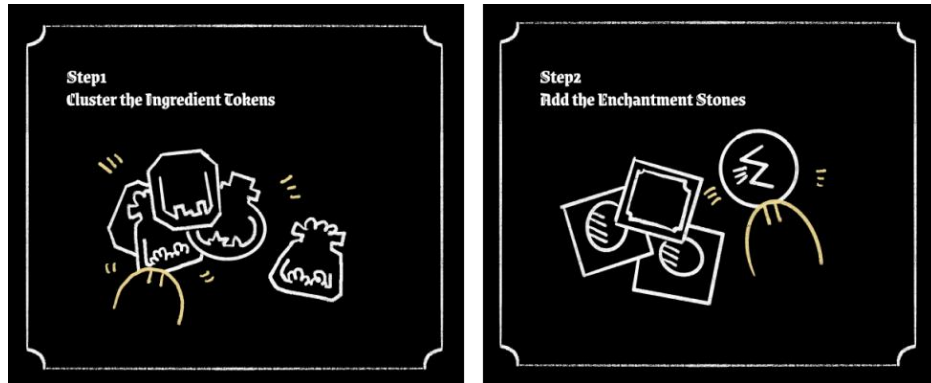
Figure29. Two new sub-steps

Based on the improvement directions of "Add a step of looking back" and "Redesign the enchantment system carefully", before constructing the ritual performance using miniatures and elements two new sub-steps have been introduced (Figure29). These steps allow for a deeper reflection on the collected elements.

1. First, users are required to reflect on collected tokens, identify essentials, group them into clusters, and share insights with their partner.

2. Then, they can enhance the magical power of their completed clusters by using enchantment stones. The enchantment system is redesigned as a way to guide their perception to a deeper level.

After the two steps users will have a set of clusters with enchantments (Figure30) in preparation for the next part of ritual building.

Figure30. The clusters with enchantments

● **Dollhouse Weaving and Naming**

Figure31. Ritual Dollhouse Box

In order to enhance the "dollhouse feeling", the Ritual Place has been upgraded from a sheet of paper to a **dollhouse box** (Figure31), combining the visual elements of wizard's cottage for the narrative, chessboard for the sense of free placement, and stained glass windows to emphasize them (Figure32).
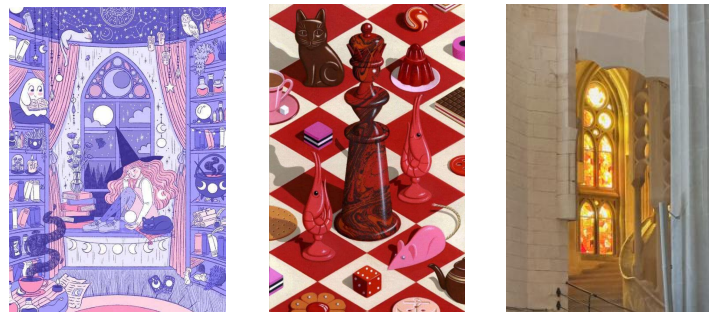
Figure32. Inspirations: Wizard's cottage, chessboard and stained glass windows

The next steps (Figure33) take place in the dollhouse box:

Figure33. The next two sub-steps

1. As a clearer storytelling guidance, users first pick up miniatures (Figure34) from the toolkit—which, unlike the messy state in Prototype 1, are now organized into categories such as characters, companions, items, and spells. They then assign roles to these miniatures and perform their ritual out for their partner.

Figure34. Organized miniatures   Figure35. Ritual Statement and naming

2. The determination of the Ritual Moment and New Energy has been moved to this phase, forming a complete Ritual Statement alongside the Ritual Performance. The naming process has been given great emphasis. Users are required to carefully name their ritual in the center of the stained glass window and proudly present it to their partner(Figure35) . This process is expected to strengthen their belief in their ritual, thereby enhancing its meaningfulness.

After writing and naming their ritual statement, users attach these boards to the stained-glass windows of the dollhouse, completing the setup of their ritual dollhouse.

RITUAL TRAIL OUT

Based on the design directions & strategies summarized in 5.2, the Ritual Trial Out phase was incorporated into this version of the prototype. Based on the Gamification Strategy 3 regarding Drive 2: Development & Accomplishment, the entire experience is narratively framed as a journey where users accumulate magical power and collect inspiration fragments, through the consistent practice and recording of their ritual. For each design strategies, three steps were designed (Figure36):
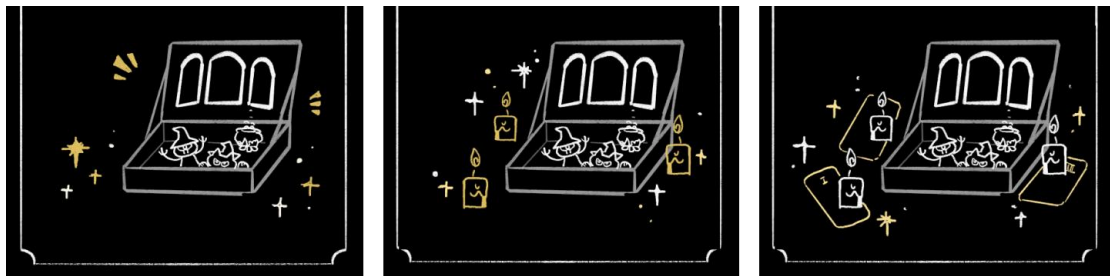
Figure36. Three steps of ritual trial out

1. **As a reminder in an engaging and meaningful way:** Users are asked to take the dollhouse home and place it in a location that best reminds them to perform the ritual, serving as their personal "altar."(Figure37) It puts emphasis on maintaining the ritual practice through making users feel resonate with the narrative.

2. **As a check-in system to create a sense of coherence and achievement:** Each time they complete the ritual, users light a candle. It's like a check-in system: the gradual illuminated altar displays the accumulation of growing magical power, representing the development of users' well-being status. It works to provide motivation on both extrinsic and intrinsic levels.

3. **As a tracker to record something simple with no additional work:** Blank tarot cards are provided for users to record their reflections, serving as a collection of enlightenment stars. It is not compulsory, but works as a chance for those who feel the need to keep tracking of their moods and thoughts.

Figure37. The altar with candles and cards

This process lays the foundation for the subsequent WRAP UP phase. Social features have not been included yet in this prototype, since I wanted to focus on the three more individual aspects first.

RITUAL WRAP UP

In the WRAP UP phase, three reflective steps guide users in refining their ritual. The first two are based on the design directions&strategies established in 5.2:

1. **Element Evaluation:** Users discuss their experiences, evaluating which parts of the ritual were effective and which were not.
2. **Self Reflection:** Users reflect on the deeper self-understanding gained from the ritual practice and consider how these insights can inspire refinements to their ritual.

Moreover, the universal and personality-related factors were re-positioned here to form the third step:

3. **Side Effects Resonance:** Users resonate with four identified side effects including sense of stability, control, achievement and relating to personalities. They are asked to think about whether they experienced them, whether they want to enhance them, or whether they felt something was missing and wish to address it.

The narrative is designed around collecting materials for refinement through three reflection tasks:

1. Element Evaluation → **Fragments of Star**
2. Self Reflection → **Reflection of Moon**
3. Side Effects Resonance → **Glow of Cosmos**

The image below shows the three types of tokens used for recording these reflections (Figure38) and the guidance cards for the third task (Figure39).

Figure38. Three types of tokens for recording

Figure39. Guidance cards for the third task

After gathering insights from these three steps, users refine their ritual, rewrite the ritual statement, and give it a new name.

5.3.2 Testing

Test was conducted within two groups of users, totaling four participants (Figure40). After completing the creation phase, they were asked to take the ritual dollhouse home and set it up as a small altar. Due to the Christmas holiday, the WRAP UP testing was conducted two weeks later.

Figure40. Pictures from the testing sessions

Results

In this round of testing, I focused on gathering insights about the new design iterations through observation and small interviews. Further directions for improvement were established from the findings:

RITUAL CREATION

Step1: Existing Ritual Discussion

The Archive of Rituals succeeded to provide users with a clearer entry point.

> *"The examples make the concept of ritual more concrete. Without it, it would be hard to understand it all at once."*

Step2: Intention Exploration

Overall, the updated flow of intention exploration is smooth according to the observation. Discussing ritual opportunities together on the Time Wheel also facilitated more natural

communication and inspiration between participants.

The only issue was that, during the first group's test, the number of transformation effect tokens was not limited, leading participants to propose multiple possibilities. This caused confusion in the subsequent phases about which is the intended effect. In the second group's test, I managed to solve the problem this by limiting each participant to one token. Each token was then carried into the next phase, further emphasizing the intention.

Step3: Element Mapping

Observation indicated that the simplified process made element collection clearer for users. The addition of the second task, emphasizing mutual inspiration, also worked well to trigger richer ideas.

The introduction of Alchemy Magic Circle managed to create a connection between the collecting tasks and entering ritual dollhouse. Participants showed anticipation for the rewards upon completing the alchemy magic circle. The key-revealing moment to unlock the dollhouse brought them a sense of surprise.

"As I completed each collection task, I was really looking forward to what the alchemy magic circle would bring me. When I got the key and got to see what's in the box, I was so excited!"

Although improvements have been made, the issue of redundancy still exists. During the interview, users expressed a desire for the three collection tasks to be further simplified in order to reduce the cognition burden.

Step4: Ritual Buidling

The newly introduced clustering step helps users to organize their thoughts. Compared to Prototype 1.0, it improved the efficiency and clarity of their ritual creation process according to the observation of the process and the ritual they finally built.

The use of enchantment stones in this step also yielded unexpectedly excellent results. Participants found these enhancements "very helpful," allowing them to dive deeper into the meaning behind their elements and better generate them into a meaningful ritual afterwards. During the interaction, users even assigned extra meanings to the enchantment system beyond its original design. They believed that the enchantment would make not only the elements but themselves stronger.

> *"When I add enchantments to my clusters, I feel like I've gained stronger magic. It's fascinating and makes me really happy."*

Categorizing the miniatures makes the building process more structured, as participants naturally selected them group by group. The interaction process for the statement of ritual worked well, with the naming step standing out. It made participants feel that the rituals they created were "even more special."

However, despite the addition of the clustering step and improved guidance, some users still feel a bit confused about the ritual dollhouse weaving process. Moreover, the distinctions between the four steps are not very clear, indicating a need for further improvement of the structure.

RITUAL TRIAL OUT

The altar setup effectively served as a reminder: it was impactful enough to be effective without creating a sense of pressure.

> *"I put it somewhere I can see easily. When I feel like skipping meals, it reminds me to eat properly."*
>
> *"This format doesn't feel like leaving sticky notes, which can be stressful—it's just fun."*

Although the accumulation of candles brought a sense of achievement, there are practical prototyping issues to address: electronic candles run out of battery quickly, and users need to turn them off completely before sleeping, which threatens the ritualistic feeling. Solutions to these challenges need to be explored.

The tarot cards worked to some extent, while users also showed willingness to share them with their partner:

> *"I think the tarot cards were helpful, but honestly, I was more excited to show off my ritual to her than just writing it down by myself."*

RITUAL WRAP UP

The WRAP UP phase effectively guided users to reflect on their ritual practice and identify areas for refinement. Participants found the exploration of side effects particularly impactful. Interestingly, they didn't see these as "side effects" but rather as visions for refining their rituals—changes they hoped to bring to their lives through the refined ritual.

> *"If the first two parts helped me reflect on my TRIAL OUT, the third question made me*

realize what I truly want."

OVERALL EXPERIENCE

In this round of testing, insights were also gained on the overall experience. Users highlighted the following issues during the interview:

Due to the complexity of the overall process, they sometimes felt lost. They expressed a desire to better understand which part of the game flow they were in.

"The whole experience was really fun and engaging, and it didn't feel too long. But sometimes I felt lost—I wasn't sure which step I was on because the process was a bit too complex."

On the narrative level, they hoped for a more pronounced sense of character growth, which would make the experience more exciting and motivating for them.

"When I added enchantments to my clusters, I felt stronger—it was a great feeling. I wish the other tasks gave me the same feeling because it would keep me more motivated to continue."

Discussion

In this round, the testing for the CREATION phase focused on the updated designs. Most changes proved effective, for example emphasizing naming significantly increased users' sense of ownership and belief in their rituals. Some elements, like the enchantment system, even brought unexpectedly positive results. However, some issues remained in the structure and guidance.

TRIAL OUT and WRAP UP were tested for the first time and worked well overall. Participants managed to refine their rituals naturally and gained deeper self-understanding in the end. The main issues in TRIAL OUT were about media choices and the need for social features.

Some overall process issues also came up, like feeling lost or missing a sense of progression. Improvements have been proposed—see the results sections for details.

Based on these findings, directions for improvement have been proposed:

CREATION Step3　Directions for Improvement

Further simplify the collecting task

Participants found the collecting tasks somewhat repetitive, increasing cognitive load. Simplifying these tasks would help to streamline the process.

CREATION Step4　Directions for Improvement

Provide more clear and vivid guidance

For the process of making up ritual performance with miniatures, there still lacks a clear and vivid guidance, which makes some participant feel confused;

Optimize the whole structure of steps

Optimize the structure of guidance to make the whole flow more appropriate.

TRIAL OUT　Directions for Improvement

Find a way to replace the candles

An alternative design shall be used to solve the practical problems caused by the electronic candles.

Incorprate social features

Interaction between partners shall be incorprated.

Overall Directions for Improvement

Emphasize the position in the game flow

Clearer guidance is needed to help users understand their position in the game flow.

Imbue a stronger sense of character growth

A stronger sense of character growth shall be created to enhance engagement.

5.4 Prototype3.0

5.4.1 Iteration

During the third round of prototyping and testing, I focused on redesigning the ritual creation section and gathered feedback on these changes through user testing. It was mainly because a totally new game mechanic was introduced to lead the whole process, the feasibility and efficiency of which required validation:

New Game Mechanic: Virtual Character&Growth System

The new game mechanic was introduced to address the issue of feeling lost and the absence of the sense of growth. With a virtual character obtained at the beginning and a character progression system, it enables users to understand their position within the flow and experience a sense of growth. At the start of the game, players will receive a blank virtual character and be informed that completing tasks in three magic circles is required to reach the final ritual creation place. The character gradually grows and becomes personalized throughout the gameplay.

This idea stems from users' fondness for associating the dollhouse wizard miniatures with themselves—they enjoyed selecting figurines that "represent me" and equipping them with magical tools. The new mechanic is used to enhance such feeling of "role-playing", which is an essensial factor for the meaning-making. Through giving the character miniature at the very beginning to the users and letting them develop their virtual "self" throughout the exploration, they feel more related to the "role" in the ritual dollhouse, compared with the original design where the miniature was picked in the last step. Moreover, the narrative theme of magic rituals is also emphasized to better realize the interactive vision.

The first three steps of the creation phase will be guided by three progressively intricate magic circles displayed in sequence, eventually leading to a mysterious black box (the ritual dollhouse to unlock after completing all the magic circles). Players' virtual characters will walk into these magic circles step by step, completing each task to reveive game rewards and enter the next one:

Circle1: Illuminating the Flames of Reflection

In the first magic circle "Illuminating the Flames of Reflection" (Figure41), users place their character at the center of the circle. Through discussions about existing rituals, they light candles one by one and place them in their corresponding positions. Once all "ritual items" have been placed, their character will be each awarded a magician hat, symbolizing their leaving the realm of reality and entering the special magical space.

Figure41. Circle1: Illuminating the Flames of Reflection

Circle2: Mapping the Possibilities of change

Next, users guide their characters into the second magic circle: "Mapping the Possibilities of Change." (Figure42) After marking their transition and transformation moments with crystal stones and tokens, they are invited to select outfits for their characters.

It is inspired by observations from previous sessions, where users tended to choose figurines that aligned with their ritual intentions. For instance, someone focusing on bringing a sense of calm would lean towards a meditative character design. This step symbolizes the user's realization of the specific energy they wish their ritual to embody.

Figure42. Circle2: Mapping the possibilities of changes

The design of the six costumes (Figure43) corresponds to the four types of transition and transformation effects summarized in Chapter3. However, this correspondence is not one-to-one but instead conveys a relatively vague sense of resonance, as users' intentions are often not clearly categorized.

Three of the costumes use meditative poses and elements like herbal tea, lily of the valley, and a balance scale to convey a sense of calm energy and order. The other three feature the character using a magic book, wand, and summoning spells to evoke a more boosted, dynamic energy. Through testing, I aim to observe whether users' choices align with the transformation effect they desire.

Figure43. Six Costumes to pick from

Circle3: Alchemy

The alchemy magic circle is no longer treated as an individual task for users. Instead, their characters, dressed as different kinds of magicians, stand within the circle to "brew potions" and complete it together (Figure44). After completing three tasks and obtaining the corresponding physical collectibles, they will forge a key from the cauldron that unlocks the ritual dollhouse.

Figure44. Circle3: Alchemy

The detailed visual design for the three magic circles and the enchantment crystals could be found in Appendix E.

Ritual Dollhouse

After completing the tasks for the three magic circles, the user's virtual character enters the ritual dollhouse, where they select miniatures to construct their own ritual performance.

The miniatures have also been redesigned based on user feedback from previous tests, making them easier to understand and more closely aligned with self-care ritual items that can be used in real life. They are categorized into four different types: magical companions, items to shape the ritual space, props to use and spells (Figure45).

Figure45. New miniature set

Revised Guidance Flow

The processes of the Element Mapping and Ritual Building sections have been further optimized, providing more structured and reasonable guidance.

The three tasks of Element Mapping have been integrated as one sub-task of the Alchemy Magic Circle. They, together with the clustering and enchantment tasks originally positioned in Ritual Building, shape the three steps of Alchemy: Collect "herbs", brew them into potions through clustering, and add enchantment crystals to imbue power (Figure46).

Figure46. Three sub-tasks to complete the Alchemy Circle

The guidance for Ritual Building has also been further optimized, providing clearer and more engaging instructions to help users complete the final ritual construction (Figure47).

Figure47. Guidance for Ritual Building

5.4.2 Testing

Test was conducted within one group of users, totaling two participants (Figure48). This round of testing focuses on the new game mechanics and enhanced guidance steps, aiming to evaluate their effectiveness and identify areas for further improvement.

Figure48. Testing

Results

New Game Mechanic: Virtual Character&Growth System

The newly introduced virtual character and growth system have largely achieved their design goals. The initial setup, where the three magic circles are arranged sequentially (Figure49), along with the vivid introduction to the "character mission," provided users with a clear mental expectation of what to anticipate throughout the process. This also helped them always understand their position within the overall flow instead of feeling lost.

Figure49. The arrangement of three magic circles

Additionally, users greatly enjoyed the inclusion of the virtual character. On one hand, they found the growth system highly engaging, and the rewards from each magic circle provided a strong sense of achievement and surprise. Notably, when they unlocked costumes to choose from, they showed excitement and attachment. It was interesting to see that even though I did not explicitly emphasize it, they naturally recognized the different "energy" types associated with the costumes. They then selected the ones that both aligned with their newly established intentions and resonated with their personal preferences, while also sharing their reasoning with their peers.

Figure50. Users picking costumes for their characters

This reward system also established a sense of anticipation, strengthening their drive to complete each magic circle's tasks. Especially when they finished collecting the items for the third magic circle and were about to unlock the final ritual dollhouse (Figure51), one participant excitedly shouted, "I did it!"

Figure51. Users finishing the third circle

Additionally, receiving their character miniatures from the beginning (rather than selecting one during the final ritual dollhouse weaving step) and gradually developing it through task completion allowed users to form a stronger sense of resonance with their character. They expressed that placing their character into the dollhouse at the end and starting to build self-care rituals for "them" was an incredibly exciting moment (Figure52). The series of preparatory steps also made them clearly aware that this step was for themselves—constructing a ritual space and performance centered around the magical energy they wanted to bring. This strengthened the final role-playing and symbolization processes, enhancing meaning-making more effectively.

Figure52. Users placing their character miniatures into the dollhouse

Revised Guidance Flow

The restructured guidance sequence led to a clearer and more effective ritual-building process. Users noted that the redesigned three-step alchemy process—collecting elements, brewing them into a potion through clustering, and adding enchantment—felt cohesive and inspiring. It effectively prepared them to symbolize these elements within the dollhouse, allowing them to vividly build self-care rituals.

However, a key issue remains: users still found the experience too text-heavy. While they appreciated the fun and engaging atmosphere of the toolkit, they felt that the reading burden was too high. They were reluctant to go through extensive text during playful exploration and self-discovery. This suggests that the guidance format needs further refinement to better integrate instructions in a more intuitive and engaging way.

Discussion

Starting from the initial concept, the design has gone through three rounds of prototyping, testing, and iteration. It has now reached a relatively mature stage and largely aligns with the original design goals.

However, some issues remain. The guidance format is still problematic. Users consistently reported that the experience felt too text-heavy, making them reluctant to read large amounts of text. This reduced their engagement. Additionally, in previous testing sessions, I played the role of a facilitator. However,for the final design, I aim to make it self-explanatory, so users can use it independently. Another unresolved issue is the TRIAL OUT phase. The planned improvements for this stage have not yet been implemented or tested.

Therefore, the final design, introduced in the next chapter, builds upon prototype3.0. It addresses these two issues. First, it introduces a new guidance system that is self-explanatory and presented in an engaging format. This allows users to experience the process naturally. Second, it improves and refines the TRIAL OUT phase. The final concept was then evaluated.

CHAPTER 6 FINAL DESIGN & EVALUATION

Introduction

Based on the three rounds of iteration from the previous chapter, the initial concept is developed into the final design intervention in this chapter. It introduces a new guidance system to support the self-explanatory experience, along with the "Ritual Weaver" toolkit, which is presented following the experience flow. In Section 5.2, the final design is evaluated from both functionality and experience perspectives. Design criteria is developed for each design goal, and translated into testable targets accordingly. Based on the collected data, I assessed the fulfillment of each criterion and analyzed how well the design goals were met. In Section 5.3, recommendations are proposed for further development of the design based on the evaluation findings.

6.1 Final Design

The final design consists of a "Ritual Weaver" toolkit and an interactive guidance system. In the following section, I will first provide a brief introduction to the newly-introduced guidance system. Then, I will present the final design of the toolkit following the experience flow.

The Interactive Guidance System

Figure53. The virtual character of the Magus Guide

The guidance system provides interactive instructions through a combination of voice narration, animations, and minimal text. Instead of being guided by a human facilitator, this system features a virtual character—a witch—who plays the role of a Magus Guide

(Figure53). She dynamically leads users through the entire journey, making the experience self-explanatory.

To enhance the witch persona and align with the overall magical ritual atmosphere, I used AI-generated voice narration. I selected a calm yet ethereal female voice to reinforce the mystical tone. The voice-guided instructions were created based on insights gained from previous prototyping and testing. As the narration plays, animated visuals dynamically appear on the screen, step by step, guiding users on how to interact with the toolkit. When necessary, certain steps are also accompanied by a few text instructions. This ensures that after listening to the guidance, users can efficiently complete interactions with the toolkit.

Take the guidance for toolkit setup (Figure54) and the completion of the first Magic Circle task (Figure55)—where users earn the Magician's Hat to progress to the next Circle—as an example. The Magus Guide first introduces the narrative theme of the toolkit and presents the mission to the users. Next, as the voice narration plays, animated visuals gradually appear, guiding users step by step on how to set up each part of the toolkit. She instructs users to press her once they have completed the setup to continue the journey. After users press her, the voice narration and animated guide resume, leading them to move their character miniatures into the first Magic Circle. They are then guided to take out the corresponding props (which are stored in a bag and will be explained in detail in the next section) and begin their first quest.
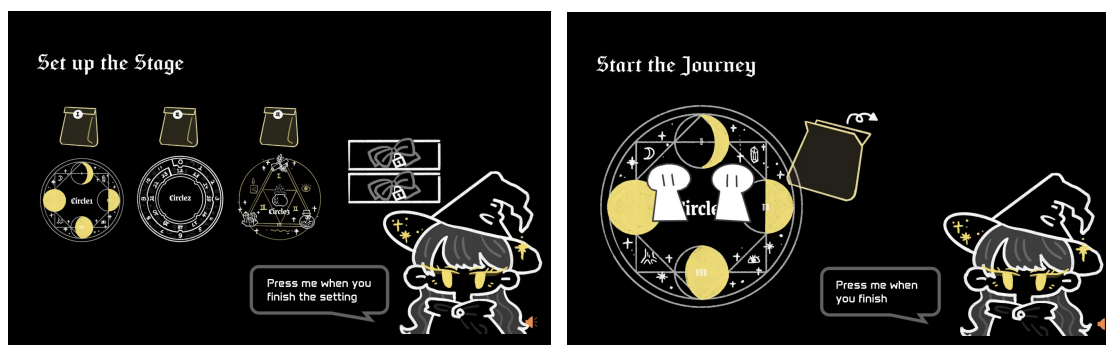
Figure54. Guidance for the toolkit set-up

Next, she begins by introducing the concept of self-care rituals before prompting users to complete the quest. Key textual guidance is provided to support users effectively. Once users complete the task and press her to continue, she congratulates them on activating the Magic Circle. She then guides them to get the Magician's hat as reward from the Magic Circle and equip it onto their miniature, marking their entry into the realm of magic.

The guidance for the other Magic Circles follows similar approach.

Figure55. Guidance for the first Magic Circle

Beyond these elements, I also incorporated background music. As users progress through the three Magic Circles and reach the final Ritual Dollhouse, the instrumental soundtrack enriches the experience and reinforces the immersive feel. Each section features a distinct piece of music, sharing a coherent magical vibe, to tell different steps apart. For instance, the opening music is calm and mysterious, leading users into the journey. In contrast, the Ritual Dollhouse phase features a more uplifting melody, inspiring them to let their creation run.

Since the guidance for the TRIAL OUT and WRAP UP phases is already very straightforward and simple in prototype2.0, the system was only applied to the CREATION phase. For prototyping, I used PowerPoint to implement all the animation effects, voice-overs, background music, and interactions. The link to experience the prototype could be found in Appendix F.

The Ritual Weaver Toolkit

Functionally, the final design concept of the toolkit largely follows Prototype 3.0, as it already effectively achieved the design goals. The main changes focus on adjustments made to ensure the experience is self-explanatory. In the following sections, I will introduce the final design concept following the experience flow, highlighting these key changes.

Figure56. Components of the magic ritual toolkit

The toolkit consists of the following components, as shown in Figure56:

- Three numbered Magic Circles
- Three prop bags
- Two character miniatures
- Two Ritual Dollhouse boxes
- One miniatures' case

During the CREATION Phase, the props for the first three quests are stored in their corresponding labeled bags, marked with stickers for easy identification. These are shared between the two users. Beyond the shared miniatures, the props for the Ritual Building phase, and the later TRIAL OUT and WRAP UP phases, are separately stored in each user's individual Ritual Dollhouse box.

CREATION Phase

Figure57. Set-up of the toolkit

The journey begins with a brief introduction of herself along with the theme from the Magus Guide:

✧ *"Welcome to the RitualWeaver! I will be your Magus Guide to lead you throughout the journey, where you will become magicians, seeking mystic power from daily life and weaving your own self-care ritual to bring new energy into your future."*

Under the Magus Guide's instructions, users complete the setup of the toolkit, arranging the Magic Circles and Ritual Dollhouse Boxes in sequence (Figure57). They also receive their character miniatures, representing themselves in the experience. They are then informed that they will collaborate with their partner to complete the three Magic Circle quests and activate them. By doing so, they will unlock the final Ritual Dollhouse, the place where their "magical" self-care rituals will finally be woven.

Circle1 Illuminating the flames of reflection

Once users move their character miniatures into the first Magic Circle and take the props out, their ritual creation journey begins. The Magus Guide first explains the concept of self-care rituals. Then, users follow the tarot card prompts to talk about their existing self-care rituals, reflecting on their timing, actions, meanings, and origins. To support their exploration, the Archive of Rituals provides examples of self-care rituals, which users can choose to read as references or not. Upon the completion of each card, they light a corresponding magical candle and place it on the Magic Circle. Once all candles are lit, the Magic Circle is activated. The final design of Circle1 with the props is shown in Figure58.

Figure58. Final design of Circle1

Lighting up the Magic Circle through discussions about their existing rituals signifies their departure from the real world and entry into the "magical realm". As a result, they can now get the Magician's hats from the Magic Circle and equip them onto their character miniatures. Notably, in Prototype 3.0 before, I, as the facilitator, manually distributed these hats. However, to enable a self-directed experience, a magnetic sticker mechanism is introduced, as shown in Figure59. With guidance from the Magus Guide, users can now discover and get the hats themselves from a hidden compartment within the double-layered Magic Circle.

Figure58. The magnetic sticker mechanism to store the magician's hats

Circle2 Mapping the Possibilities of Change

After putting on the Magician's hats, their character miniatures moves into the second Magic Circle to continue the journey, where they map the possibilities of change in their life. The Magus Guide first introduces how self-care rituals can facilitate transition and transformation. Then, users reflect on their existing rituals, considering whether they need

adaptation; or if there are other challenges that could be addressed by creating a new self-care rituals. On the time wheel of Magic Circle, they visually explore transition moments by placing stones. Finally, they write down the transformation effect they hope to achieve and show it to their partner. The final design of Circle2 with the props is shown in Figure59.

Figure59. Final design of Circle2

After that, users can take the Magician's Robes from the Magic Circle. These robes convey different types of magical energy, either elevated or calm, designed according to the two main categories of transformation effects. They are encouraged to choose a robe that resonates with their transformation goal and equip it onto their character miniature. This moment marks their success in identifying "what kind of magician they want to become through creating the ritual". Same mechanism is applied here as in Circle1 to store the robs (Figure60).

Figure60. The robs and mechanism to store them

Circle3 Alchemy

After putting on their chosen robes, users' characters, carrying their Transformation Effects Card, step into the third Magic Circle (Figure61). There, they must complete three sub-quests of alchemy to activate the circle.

Figure61. Final design concept of Circle3

Sub-Quest1 Gather magical herbs that align with the transformation effect, through:

1. Reflecting on actions that brought out the effect before, that they did not continue;
2. Exchanging the effect card with their partner and gain suggestions from each other;
3. Going through the inspiration cards (Figure62) to see any elements among them might help;

Write them down on the tokens.

Sub-Quest2 Brew them into potions through:

Reflecting on the elements, thinking about which of the herbs feels most essential, and could some of them complement each other or tell a shared story;

Group them into clusters accordingly.

Sub-Quest3 Enhance their power with the enchantment crystals (Figure63), through:

Thinking about whether the enchantment crystals could help tie the elements together into a more cohesive narrative, or offer a new perspective on the transformation;

Select those helpful to enhance the power.

Figure62. Inspiration cards   Figure63. Enchantment stones

With each completed sub-quest, users are guided to take collective items from the corresponding pockets and place them in certain spots on the Alchemy Magic Circle. Once they have placed the herbs, potion, and crystal, the Magic Circle is activated (Figure64). The alchemy process then generates two keys, unlocking the Ritual Dollhouses by lifting their seal.

Figure64. Completion of the Alchemy Magic Circle

Ritual Dollhouse

Finally, the character miniatures, symbolizing the users' intention of the self-care ritual to build and the magical power they have accumulated, step into the Ritual Dollhouse where their ritual is about to be built (Figure65). They imagine it as the space where their self-care ritual will take place. Based on the clusters they've made and enchanted, they select miniatures that represent key elements of their ritual by considering:

1. Which miniatures shape the environment;
2. Who their "magical companions" will be;
3. What "magical items" they will use an how they will interact with them.

Figure65. The final design of the ritual dollhouse with miniatures and cards

They arrange the selected miniatures in the dollhouse to construct their ritual performance (Figure66). Once arranged, they share the narrative of their ritual with their partner, explaining what each element represents and how it contributes to the transformation effect.

Figure66. Construction of the ritual performance with miniatures

After telling the narrative, they formalize it by writing their Ritual Statement on three corresponding boards:

✧ "When..." (the ritual moment)

✧ "I shall perform the Ritual of..." (the ritual performance named by themselves)

✧ "to..." (the new energy it will bring)

They then name the ritual to imbue it with meaning and place the boards on the dollhouse windows to release its power. Finally, they proudly declare their complete Ritual Statement and its name to their partner.

TRIAL OUT Phase

After the CREATION, users continue to the TRIAL OUT phase. They are guided to take the dollhouse home, and set it up as an altar, serving as a reminder of their commitment. Each time they perform their ritual, they place a Lumina Stone in front of the altar, symbolizing the growth of their power. They are also encouraged to share meaningful moments with their partner, fostering support and connection throughout the trial process. The altar along with the collection of Lumina Stones is shown as Figure67.

Figure67. The altar along with Lumina Stone collection

WRAP UP Phase

When users feel the need to refine their rituals, the toolkit also offers help through three reflective steps.

First, users assess which parts of the ritual were effective and which need adjustment, collecting their insights as Fragments of Star;

Then, they explore the self-knowledge gained through the practice and how it can shape refinements, gathering the Reflection of Moon;

Finally, they consider the impact of stability, control, achievement, and personality-connection, deciding whether and how to enhance these feelings, embracing the Glow of Cosmos.

Through these steps, they refine their ritual into something more effective and meaningful. Figure68 shows the three kinds of tokens to collect and Glows of Impacts card set.

Figure68. The WRAP UP props

Details of the final design, the changes made to prototype3.0 specifically,including visuals of the miniatures finally incorporated and props for the TRIAL OUT and WRAP UP phases are shown in Appendix G.

6.2 Evaluation

6.2.1 Evaluation Goals

The aim of the evaluation is to evaluate the final design concept on both its functionality and experience.

Functionality

On the functionality level, the main goal is to realize a self-explanatory experience though the guidance system. Therefore, the evaluation focuses on the CREATION phase. A SUS scale will be applied to access the overall usability. Moreover, three specific criteria will be tested, each translated into testable targets to evaluate the system's effectiveness (Figure69) :

Figure69. Goals, criteria and testable targets for the evaluation of funcitionality

Experience

On the experience level, I aim to evaluate if the final design concept achieves the design goals. Among the two main goals (meaningful and engaging), meaningfulness has been split up into further sub-goals based on the findings from the research process and design exploration. For meaningfulness, my initial goal was to help users create and sustain their meaningful self-care rituals through the guidance of the intervention itself. However, I later discovered that the intervention also has the potential to enable interpersonal communication, which can help to cultivate self-care rituals in a more inspiring way beyond the guidance flow. This realization led to the addition of a new sub-goal about social support. Furthermore, beyond the behavioral-level, perceptional-level meaningfulness should also be considered a sub-goal. The intervention has both the potential and necessity to help users gain an understanding of themselves and each other through the experience. For the goal of engaging, beyond considering engagement itself,

the balance between external and internal motivation is also incorporated into the criteria.

Through the sub-goals, I wish to test the criteria for each of the goals. These criteria are translated into testable targets. Figure70 displays the detailed criteria and corresponding testable targets:

GOALS	SUB-GOALS	CRITERIA	TESTABLE TARGETS
Meaningful	**On behavioral level**, the intervention itself guides users to create and sustain their meaningful self-care rituals.	**1. Meaning-Making during CREATION:** The created self-care rituals reflect users' personal intention and value, and are imbued with symbolic meanings; **2. Well-being Promotion during TRIAL OUT:** The created self-care rituals promote well-being by fostering better transition and transformation; **3. Improvement during WRAP UP:** The refined self-care rituals show improvement in effectiveness and meaning.	1.1 Users identify and clearly articulate how the ritual intention from step 2 aligns with their well-being goals, rating it as 'highly relevant' (4/5 or above) on a Likert scale; 1.2 Users successfully gather at least 8 elements helpful with their intention and report a sense of satisfaction with them (4/5 or above on a Likert scale); 1.3 Users build their rituals into a coherent and symbolic narrative, reporting that their ritual feels organized and meaningful rather than fragmented. 2.1 Users report that their ritual helped them achieve their intended outcomes, enabling users to transition better through the day. 3.1 Users report their refined rituals as more effective than the initial version in promoting well-being, rating the refined version as 'more effective' (4/5 or above on a Likert scale)
	On behavioral level, the intervention ensures social support for users to create and sustain their meaningful self-care rituals.	**4. Inspirations during CREATION:** Users feel inspired and gain actionable insights from each other through collaboration in the CREATION phase; **5. Accountability during TRIAL OUT:** Users maintain a sense of connection and accountability with each other from distance in the TRAIL OUT phase;	4.1 Users provide at least 3 inspirations to the exploration progressing of their partner during the CREATION phase. 4.2 Users report at least 1 meaningful contribution from their partner that build up their self-care rituals. 5.1 Users voluntarily share their ritual practices at least once during the TRAIL OUT phase; 5.2 Users rate their sense of connection and accountability to their partner during the TRAIL OUT phase as 4/5 or higher on a Likert scale.
	On perceptional level, users gain more meaningful understanding of themselves and each other through the experience.	**6. Self and Interpersonal Understanding:** Users gain increased self-understanding and understanding with their partner through the experience;	6.1 Users report at least 1 new personal insight after the CREATION phase; 6.2 Users gain at least one more personal insight during the WRAP UP phase from their ritual practice, being able to relate it to the refinement directions. 6.3 Users report at least 1 new insights about their partner after the CREATION phase;
Engaging	The game narrative and mechanics enhance the **engagement** of the experience while balancing the **extrinsic and intrinsic** motivation	**7. Immersive Game Narrative:** Users feel immersed in the game narrative, expressing resonance with the storytelling; **8. Enjoyable Game Mechanics:** Users enjoy the game elements and the interaction with the game mechanics; **9. Balanced Motivation:** Users feel attracted and motivated by both the game mechanics and their own needs and values to actively create, maintain and improve the self-care rituals.	7.1 Users show appreciation and interest after hearing about the story and their "mission" at the beginning of the CREATION phase; 7.1 Users show resonance with the role they play in the story. 8.1 For the game elements and mechanics in the experience, users exhibit at least 3 instances of positive emotional reactions, including surprise, anticipation, and enjoyment; 9.1 Users demonstrate focus and active participation, associating their serious attitude toward both the game mechanics and their own values. 9.2 Users participate in at least 3 check-ins during the TRAIL OUT phase, and relating the maintenance to the game mechanics.

Figure70. Goals, criteria and testable targets for the evaluation of user experience

6.2.2 Evaluation Set-up

The evaluation consists of two sessions.

In the first evaluation session, users experience the CREATION phase of the intervention. Guided by the guidance system on the phone, they are instructed to independently explore the toolkit, attempting to understand its functionality on their own and seeking assistance only when necessary. During this process, I observe their interactions. After completing the entire CREATION phase, the session concludes with a debrief, where users fill out the SUS scale as well as a Likert scale and participate in a discussion.

After the first session, users receive the tools for the TRIAL OUT and WRAP UP phases, which are stored in the Ritual Dollhouse Boxes. These include props and a simple paper-based instruction guide. Over the following week, they take the toolkit home to engage in the TRIAL OUT phase. The second evaluation session takes place a week later, where they experience the WRAP UP phase together. Afterwards, a Likert scale and discussion was used to evaluate these two phases.

Further details on the data collection methods are provided in Section 5.2.3.

6.2.3 Data Collection Plan

For the first evaluation session, the data collection plan is divided into four main categories as follows:
- Observation of user's behavior
- Likert scale at the end
- SUS scale at the end
- Debrief questions

The specific data collection plan is shown in Figure71, corresponding to the testable targets. Each part is marked by dots in different colors, representing the testable targets of functionality, three sub-goals of meaningful, and the goal of engaging in Figure69 and 70.

Functionality ● ● ● **Sub-goals of Meaningful** ● **Engaging**

Observation Checklist

● If participants grasp the instructions easily
● If participants follow instructions as intended
● Signs of confusion or hesitation
● Times that participants ask for help
● Transition between the guidance and using the toolkit

● Reaction to story and "mission" (appreciation, interest)
● Number of elements gathered during ritual building
● Inspirations provided for partner during collaboration
● Emotional responses to game mechanics (e.g., surprise, joy)
● Engagement and focus during tasks

SUS Scale ●

Likert Scale
● Alignment of ritual intention with well-being goals (1-5)
● Satisfaction with elements collected for rituals (1-5)
● Immersiveness of the narrative (1-5)
● Fun and effectiveness of game mechanics (1-5)

Debrief Questions

● Overall experience of using the system (guide + prototype)
● Points of frustration or confusion during the process and their causes
● Effectiveness of the audio-visual guide in replacing a facilitator
● Whether the instructions are clear and vivid
● Whether the flow between the guidance system and the toolkit is natural

● Does the self-care ritual created feel meaningful and organized?
● Specific contributions from partner during creation
● Insights gained about self or partner during the experience
● Does narrative enhance sense of carefulness?

Figure71. Data collection plan for the first evaluation session

For the second evaluation session, since the new guidance system was not applied to the TRIAL OUT and WRAP UP phases, the evaluation of these parts mainly focused on user experience. The data collection plan is divided into three main categories:

● Observation of user's behavior

● Likert scale at the end

● Debrief questions

The specific data collection plan is shown in Figure72, with each section marked by dots.

● ● ● **Sub-goals of Meaningful** ● **Engaging**

Observation Checklist
● Adjustments made to rituals during refinement
● Emotional reactions during refinement

Likert Scale after Tasks
● Sense of connection with partner (1-5)
● Improvement in refined ritual's well-being impact (1-5)
● Immersiveness of the narrative (1-5)
● Fun and effectiveness of game mechanics (1-5)

Debrief Questions
● Did the ritual help you transition better?
● Number of check-ins and sharings
● Did the altar help maintain your practice?
● What did you learn about yourself?
● Does narrative enhance sense of carefulness?

Figure72. Data collection plan for the second evaluation session

Detailed observation checklist, SUS scale, Likert scale and debrief questions could be found in Appendix H.

6.2.4 Results

The evaluation was conducted with two groups, totaling four participants. Based on the data collected for each testable target, the results of the evaluation are presented corresponding to each of the design criteria.

Functionality

SUS

As a result of the SUS, the final design scores 83.75 out of 100, indicating that the overall usability of the toolkit is appropriate. All participants rated the willingness to use the toolkit to create self-care rituals 5 out of 5. At the same time, they did not feel the need to learn much before using the toolkit, rating it 1 out of 5, indicating that the design has effectively integrated the necessary knowledge for creating self-care rituals. Lower score was observed in terms of complexity, which aligns with the evaluation results of the design criteria.

Criterion1: Self-Explanation

The guidance system generally achieved self-explanation. The initial toolkit setup was especially smooth and clear, giving participants a strong sense of confidence. During the evaluation session, they did not seek help. As they later mentioned in interviews, they felt they "could understand the instructions and complete the tasks correctly." Although some confusion and hesitation were observed, they relied on self-exploration and discussion to decide how to proceed. However, there were some misunderstandings of the guidance, leading to a few steps not being executed as expected. This was particularly evident in the first sub-quest of Circle3. The complexity of this process led to a chaotic state—while they largely completed the required tasks, they did not fully follow the expected flow, resulting in some valuable steps being skipped.

Criterion2: Instruction Format

The combination of voice, animation, and minimal text, integrated into the virtual Magus Guide, successfully provided clear and engaging guidance. After listening to the voice instructions and watching the animation once, participants were able to grasp the task, which is a positive sign. Before reaching Circle 3, they paid little attention to the text. But it did helped them understand the quests more efficiently afterwards when they became

more complex. They also found the Magus Guide very engaging, providing a friendly sense of guidance when a human facilitator was absent. However, in follow-up interviews, while participants acknowledged the effectiveness of this guidance format, they mentioned the issue of overwhelming. Despite multiple iterations simplifying the instructions, they still didn't feel like receiving so much information during the interaction flow, expressing, "It's nice as guidance, but I still think it's too much."

Criterion3: Transition Flow

The transition flow between the guidance system and the toolkit was generally smooth. The guidance system did not distract participants from the toolkit. Once participants received sufficient instructions, they naturally go back to exploring the toolkit further. However, some instances were observed where the toolkit caused them to overlook the guidance system. After receiving the magician's hats, participants were so excited about equipping their characters that they ignored the instructions on how to proceed to the next circle, leading to some confusion. Similarly, in Circle 3, they suddenly received a large number of props, while the step-by-step guidance did not initially explain their purpose. As a result, driven by curiosity, they started experimenting with the props instead of following the provided instructions.

Experience

Criterion1: Meaning-Making during CREATION

The final design effectively supported the ritual creation process, though minor issues remained. Regarding how well the ritual intention identified in Circle 2 aligned with their well-being goals, participants gave an average rating of 4.5 out of 5 on the Likert scale. They felt that the toolkit guided them in an inspiring way to discover an intended effect, that resonated with their needs and values. It also laid a foundation for well-being promotion afterwards. For their satisfaction with the elements collected in Circle 3, all four participants rated it 4 out of 5. Among them, three successfully gathered more than eight elements, while one collected only six. This indicates that while the toolkit provided effective support, its full potential was not always used. As for the final self-care rituals they created, three participants expressed confidence and pride, considering them meaningful and coherent. The other one found it still somewhat scattered, the elements not yet well integrated.

Criterion2:Well-being Promotion during TRIAL OUT

In the interview session of the second evaluation, after a week of practice, participants reported that the self-care rituals they created had improved their well-being in multiple ways. Regardless of the specific intention, having self-care rituals itself helped them gain a sense of stability and control over their lives. One participant said, "I feel that as long as I do this, nothing will go really wrong. It provides a standard state, so even if things get chaotic, I know where to return." This sense of control even extended beyond the ritual moments themselves, influencing other aspects of their daily lives. The participant also shared, "I want to extend this feeling of control to other things, gradually building my confidence in life and making everything feel more structured."

Additionally, practicing these rituals brought different well-being benefits on physical, mental, and spiritual levels. One participant mentioned that her self-care ritual around mindful eating not only improved her diet on a physical level but also created a moment of relax on a mental level. Interestingly, although establishing meaningful relationships was not included as a intention's direction of the final design, she still experienced a spiritual relationship with her distant family. She explained, "When performing the ritual, I think about whether my family far away is also eating well, which helps me feel emotionally connected to them."

Criterion3:Improvement during WRAP UP

After the WRAP-UP session, three participants developed a well-refined ritual through the three-step reflective tasks, while the other participant only identified a direction for improvement. This was partly related to how frequently they practiced their rituals during the TRIAL OUT period—the participant who did not achieve a detailed refinement had only practiced the ritual twice. Interestingly, not practicing the ritual itself became an insight for her refinement. She reflected, "Over the past week, I was too busy with my graduation project to complete my originally planned 1.5-hour bedtime ritual. I realized that rigid and overly complex rituals can easily become overwhelming, making me either reluctant or unable to follow through. Instead, having a set of more flexible and concise rituals might better structure my life."

Overall, participants rated the improvement of their refined rituals at an average of 3 out of 5, explaining that "I believe it will help me more, but I need time to validate it." Beyond this, they also highlighted the WRAP-UP session itself as valuable, as it provided both an opportunity and tools to arrange the scattered thoughts from their practice. The participant

who only practiced twice shared, "Before this session, I kept blaming myself for not doing it right, but I didn't know how to change. Now, I feel much better—though I don't have a fully fixed solution yet, I understand what I need to do to live a better life."

Criterion4: Inspirations during CREATION

Mutual inspiration between partners was present throughout the entire creation process. Each pair of partners provided at least three inspirations for each other. After completing their ritual creation, they were also able to recognize their partner's contributions. For example, one participant, who built an evening ritual to calm down and prepare for sleep, mentioned that her partner's suggestion about meditation became a key part of her final ritual. They also reflected, "Seeing other's life itself is already a big help."

Criterion5: Accountability during TRIAL OUT

Unfortunately, participants did not actively share their notable moments during the TRIAL OUT phase with their partners, even though these moments did occur. Interestingly, they shared them with other closer people instead. This could be due to the toolkit not emphasizing or guiding this aspect enough. Or, as they mentioned themselves, such sharing does not necessarily have to be limited to partners, and can extend to a broader social circle. One participant frequently shared her mindful eating ritual with her boyfriend, taking photos of her carefully arranged table and meals. She said this process satisfied her desire to share and enhanced the "showing off" sense of the ritual. Her boyfriend provided a sense of accountability, which did not necessarily have to come from the assigned partner.

Additionally, even though active sharing did not take place, simply knowing that their partner was also performing their ritual gave them a sense of connection. The participant who only practiced twice mentioned that she placed her Lumina Stones only on the first and last day, thinking about the upcoming discussion with her partner and not wanting to "mess up." As a result, they gave this aspect an average rating of 2.5 out of 5—a relatively decent score considering they barely contacted each other about their rituals. They also noted that, they were curious about whether their partner had actually followed through with the ritual. This "knowing" state itself would provide them with a strong sense of accountability.

Criterion6: Self and Interpersonal Understanding

The design successfully fosters Self and Interpersonal Understanding by guiding users to

reflect and talk about themselves. In the CREATION phase, all of the participants reported that they managed to gain at least one new personal insight and a new understanding of their partner. For example, one participant discovered the importance of taking action for herself. She reflected, "Through exploring rituals to boost myself, I realized that beyond what I do, the act of getting started itself is what matters most to me." They then gained more fresh self-insights during the TRIAL OUT phase and successfully informed directions of improvement for the ritual.

Criterion7: Immersive Game Narrative

On the Likert scale, participants rated the immersiveness of the overall game narrative at an average of 3.5 out of 5. Most participants appreciate the magic ritual theme, though one mentioned that she personally found it hard to relate to, adding that this was due to "personal taste." While they initially showed interest when hearing the story and their "mission," their enthusiasm leaned more toward the visual aesthetics of the toolkit rather than the narrative itself.

Meanwhile, they did feel a strong resonance with their character miniatures. The excitement was especially evident when they received magician's hats and selected robes after completing quests—one group even dressed their characters in two sets of robes at the same time because they felt it would make themselves "even stronger." This resonance contributed to a greater sense of immersion when interacting with the ritual dollhouse, as they felt they were setting up a magical ritual for "themselves". This played a role in the meaning-making process.

Criterion8: Enjoyable Game Mechanics

For how much fun the game mechanics brought them, participants rated it 4 out of 5 on average. One group shared, "Without gamification, there would be no anticipation and curiosity. The game mechanics made the experience fun and also inspiring. The visual elements encouraged us to think in a vivid way—otherwise, we would just be recalling things in a dry manner." They also highlighted how game mechanics facilitated mutual support, saying, "Helping each other wouldn't feel as natural without gamification."

Positive emotional reactions were observed throughout the flow. At the very beginning, participants displayed anticipation and curiosity, while the process of completing quests and receiving rewards became key moments where a sense of achievement was most strongly observed. When opening the ritual dollhouse, participants showed strong surprise,

and during the process of selecting miniatures to build their ritual, they expressed clear enjoyment.

Criterion9: Balanced Motivation

Interestingly, the roles of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation shifted in dominance across the three phases. In the CREATION phase, a dynamic balance was observed. Initially, participants were drawn in by the game's visuals and attractive setting, sparking their curiosity. As they progressed through the game-driven exploration, they gradually became aware of their inner desire to cultivate self-care rituals for a better life. This led to a balanced state, where they acted to fulfill both the game's quests and their own values. This aligns with the discussion in Criteria 1, where participants affirmed that their ritual intention was truly self-driven rather than imposed by the game mechanics.

In the TRIAL OUT phase, they found the altar setup provided the strongest motivation, externally, to maintain their ritual practice, as the game mechanic made them want to fill up their Lumina Stones. However, after a week of practice, this external motivation gradually internalized, as they experienced the well-being benefits and developed a desire to refine the current ritual. This desire was realized in the WRAP-UP phase, where participants focused less on the game mechanics and were instead driven by their intrinsic motivation for self-improvement.

6.2.5 Discussion

Through the evaluation of the criteria above, the final design largely achieved its intended goals on both functionality and experience levels.

The newly integrated guidance system, combined with the toolkit, effectively supported self-explanation. Users confidently interacted with the toolkit under the Magus Guide's engaging instructions, and successfully created their own self-care rituals. Remaining issues were mainly related to the complex steps, where the guidance system needs to better collaborate with the toolkit. Additionally, users still found some instructions overwhelming, suggesting further simplification.

On the experience level, the design successfully guided users to create and sustain their meaningful self-care rituals. Users discovered their ritual intentions, collected elements, and formed them into a coherent, meaningful ritual. These rituals contributed to well-being

benefits during the trial-out phase. The refinement process then effectively provided guidance, empowering them to improve their rituals towards personal needs. The main challenge lies in the WRAP-UP phase setup. While the current design, combined with the one-week trial, led to significant improvements, refinement needs vary from person to person, and it should be a long-term process. Participants felt that although the one-week circle prompted valuable reflections, it was not enough to achieve a fully refined ritual. In terms of ensuring social support, the CREATION phase successfully fostered mutual inspiration. However, improving the sense of connection and accountability during the TRIAL OUT phase remains a challenge. Participants expressed a strong desire to know about each other's progress, not through active sharing, but through a way of staying informed. Perceptually, the design managed to help them discover new understandings about themselves and each other.

For the engaging design goal, the integration of gamification effectively enhanced engagement while maintaining a balance between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Although these motivations were not always present at the same time, they dynamically balanced throughout the process, helping users actively engage in ritual cultivation.

Based on these findings, recommendations for improvement are proposed, which will be detailed in the next section.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the results of evaluation, the following recommendations are derived for further development of the design.

Recommendation1 Better match the guidance system with the toolkit

In the more complex parts of the toolkit, users found it difficult to map instructions to the various props. Therefore, I recommend incorporating clearer and more engaging instructions to better match with these parts of the toolkit. The initial step of setting up the toolkit provides a useful reference—first guiding users to place each prop in position before introducing step-by-step interactions could be an effective solution. This structured approach would help users better navigate the toolkit and reduce confusion.

Recommendation2 Further simplify the guidance system

Despite efforts to simplify the guidance through multiple iterations leading to the virtual

Magus Guide, users still felt that the information flow was overwhelming—they did not want to listen to or read so much content. Therefore, I recommend further exploring ways to simplify the instruction format, delivering only the most essential information in a concise, engaging, and vivid manner. This could help reduce cognitive load while maintaining effective guidance.

Recommendation3 Guide the element collection quest of Circle3 in a more vivid way

While the CREATION phase of the toolkit effectively guided users in building meaningful self-care rituals, some issues arose in Circle 3's element collection. As a key step in the process, this phase was not emphasized enough in the design. Besides, the guidance in the format of only text is not inspiring enough. Therefore, I recommend redesigning this phase to encourage users to slow down, expand their thinking, and thoughtfully gather valuable elements for their self-care rituals. Providing more vivid instructions could help ensure that users engage deeply with this step.

Recommendation4 Integrate an online platform to enhance accountability during the TRIAL OUT phase

In the final design, the toolkit encouraged partners to share notable moments during ritual practice, but this was not very effective. Participants preferred freely sharing with closer people rather than being limited to their partner. Additionally, they felt that simply knowing their partner was also practicing the ritual provided a strong sense of accountability. They expressed a desire to be aware of each other's progress. Therefore, I recommend integrating an online platform to facilitate connection. Specifically, within the Lumina Stones collection quest, a physical-digital interaction system can be introduced. When users physically place a Lumina Stone to signify the completion of a ritual, the online platform will visually reflect their progress, symbolizing their growing strength. Partners will be able to check each other's progress anytime, rather than feeling pressured to actively share updates. This online platform could further evolve into a ritual community, where all toolkit users can exchange experiences, insights, and inspirations, fostering a broader sense of support.

Recommendation5 Make the toolkit for refinement more flexible

In the current design, self-care ritual refinement is set as a WRAP-UP session held seven days after creation. While this setup provides a valuable improvement opportunity, it does not fully accommodate individual differences or the long-term nature of self-care rituals.

Therefore, I recommend making the refinement toolkit more flexible. Instead of restricting refinement to a fixed seven-day circle, the toolkit should empower users to recognize their own moments of needed improvement and provide them with the tools to refine their rituals. This would allow users to evolve their rituals at their own pace, making the process more sustainable and personalized.

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter concludes the exploration of this project, summarizing the project's findings and contributions, addressing its limitations, and highlighting future research opportunities.

7.1 Findings and Contributions

This project revolves around the theme of self-care rituals. Drawing on existing research about rituals as a broader concept and focusing on self-care purposes, it builds an understanding of what self-care rituals are, including their characteristics and process. Based on the theoretical foundation, primary data was collected through user research, revealing that self-care rituals provide a fixed solution to navigate life challenges through transition and transformation effects and establishing meaningful connections, to bring well-being benefits. It also uncovered how self-care rituals produce these effects through the process of meaning-making. The natural creation and sustenance of self-care rituals among young adults were explored as well, revealing their methods and challenges. These findings contribute to filling the research gaps concerning self-care rituals.

Building on this knowledge, the project explored the integration of gamification to support the cultivation of self-care rituals among young adults, and designed a gamified intervention. The final evaluation proved the effectiveness of this intervention in promoting well-being, successfully meeting the design goals and helping young adults in practical applications. During the design practice, beyond the primary focus of cultivating self-care rituals in an engaging way itself, many interesting findings were discovered in the exploration process: The supportive role of interpersonal interaction on individual behavior change; The mutual support between behavioral exploration and self-understanding; Design strategies for balancing extrinsic and intrinsic motivation when using gamification to enhance engagement. The design practice provides insights for the exploration of these aspects, supporting the development of universal design principles for these areas.

By examining the integration of gamification and self-care rituals, this project sheds new

light on innovative approaches to enhance well-being. The knowledge and design practice provide a foundation for future research in related fields, inspiring further exploration.

7.2 Limitations

One limitation of this project lies in the participant demographic during the user research, iteration testing, and final evaluation phases. The majority of participants were current or recently graduated master's students, many of whom have a background in design. This homogeneity might influence the findings, as individuals from a design background may have a higher perceptual level, potentially influencing how they perceive the effectiveness of the intervention. Therefore, the universality of the design need further testing and validation across a broader population, to ensure that the findings and the effectiveness of the interventions are applicable to young adults from various backgrounds.

Another limitation concerns the long-term impact of the design. Although sustainability in promoting well-being is an important consideration for this project, the time constraints restricted the trial out and wrap up of self-care rituals to a one-week circle. While this design provided effective guidance for sustaining self-care practices within this limited time frame, the long-term effects were not adequately considered. Future studies are needed to explore the extended impact of these interventions over a longer period to better understand their effectiveness and potential adjustments for lasting benefits.

7.3 Future Opportunities

Besides the practical recommendations for improvements from section 6.3, and directions for further study proposed by section7.2 and 7.3, this project leaves behind an area with potential: the role of rituals in helping to establish meaningful relationships to enhance spiritual well-being. This aspect was not explored further due to prioritization decisions within the project scope, but was notably reflected again during the evaluation of the final design. A future opportunity lies in building upon the findings and design practices of this project to explore how design interventions can facilitate the establishment of rituals that foster meaningful relationships, aimed at enhancing spiritual well-being.

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APPENDIX A

Detailed Interview Questions of 3.2.3

1. Do you have such a moment special out of ordinary life, when you slow down your pace and do something with a sense of ritual?
2. How do you feel before the ritual?
3. What makes up your performance during the ritual?
4. What imbues the ritual special meaning, making it different from other actions for you?
5. What changes do you experience after the ritual?
6. Why do you conduct the ritual?
7. Do you feel resonant with your ritual? Does it reflect part of your personalities?
8. Does having such a fixed practice in your daily life make you feel more stable?
9. How aware were you of the benefits of your ritual before this discussion?

10. What inspired you to start this ritual?
11. What were the steps you took in creating it?
12. Did you begin with a clear intention, or was it something that developed spontaneously?
13. How has your ritual evolved since you first started?
14. Did you experiment with different elements before settling on the current version?
15. What motivates you to maintain your ritual?
16. What challenges do you face in maintaining this ritual?
17. Do you track your rituals or reflect on how they impact your life?

APPENDIX B

Detailed Design for the Initial Concept

Step1

Step2

Step3

I
Form Crystals from your Memory Geode

Explore your memory geode and reflect on your life: Have you done any actions before that successfully brought out the expected transformation effect?

Write them down to form "crystals of memories" that might help to reproduce the transformation effect through the ritual.

CRYSTALS

II
Harvest Herbs from Your Heart Forest

Deep dive into your heart: What connects you to the transformation you seek? Listen to the guidance of Whispering Leave Cards and try to resonate with them.

Write down to harvest "herbs of hearts" that make you feel related to the transformation effect.

HERBS

III
Add Potions as Extra Augments

Some potions are provided bringing some additional effects, that might function to enhance the ritual and thus better realize the transformation.

Go through the Potion Menu Cards and pick up those of some assistance. Write your choices down to add "potions of enhancement" to your ritual as extra augments.

POTION

Whispering Leaves

Items
Toys, Photos, Cups...

Certain items in our lives carry symbolic meaning, serving as anchors that support and inspire us.

"Putting this old photo on my desk always remind me of my dream."

Which items in your daily life feel connected to your transformation effect?

Movements
Stretch, Deep Breathe, Walk...

Physical movements might reduce stress level and bring out unique feelings.

"Deep breathing helps me feel calmer and more confident."

Which movements seem to align with what you're working toward?

People
Friends, Family, Netizens...

Connection with people around us often provide support and inspiration.

"Saying good night to my best friend starts a nice sleep."

Are there people in your life who seem to reflect or support the changes you're seeking?

Scent
Piano piece, Song, Nature sound...

Scents can both evoke specific emotions or memories and set a unique atmosphere.

"A hint of this mint-like scent brings a sense of calm to my mind."

What scents helps to trigger the feeling you want?

Stories
Movies, Novels, Characters...

Films and literature can inspire us by resonating with our own experiences through the stories of others.

"Spiderman makes me become someone helpful to others."

What stories relates to your own narrative of your life desire?

Animals
Your pet, Wild birds, Walking dogs...

The presence of animals can evoke warmth, while symbolism of them might convey meaningfulness.

"Watching my cat's calmness reminds me to be more at ease with myself."

What support could animals offer, or qualities in them seem to mirror your path?

Food & Drinks
Morning coffee, Lemonade, Cake...

Food and drinks offer both physical and emotional nourishment, which might also reflect certain life vibes.

"A well-prepared coffee gives me the boost I need to start my day."

Are there foods or drinks that resonate with the transformation effect you envision?

Music
Piano piece, Song, Nature sound...

Music can evoke emotions, create atmosphere, and help us connect with our feelings.

"Preparing a nice playlist improves my efficiency of work."

What music feels in tune with your desire?

Nature
Forest, Wind, Sea...

Connection with nature brings out fresh feelings and promotes mindfulness of ourselves.

"Walking in the forest let me connect with the world and my inner self."

What stories relates to your own narrative of your life desire?

Potion Menu

Potion of Personality

Connect to your personality by either following your self-identification or try to act beyond it.

"Cleaning my room let me return to "myself" being an organized person, which brings out inner peace"

Would connection to your personality help to enhance or enrich the transformation effect and how?

Potion of Achievement

Create a sense of achievement for yourself through small accomplishments to enhance positive reinforcement of the ritual.

"Finishing small programming exercises gives me a sense of achievement, setting a positive base for the whole day."

Would a sense of achievement make you feel a better transformation effect and how to create it?

Potion of Mastering

Imbue the sense of being the master of your life, feeling in control

"The process of tidying up my room makes me feel in control of not just my home but also my life."

What makes you feel in control of your life? Does it help with the transformation effect that you want?

Potion of Stability

Let your ritual work better as the anchor of your life by enhancing the feeling of stability and reliability

"Knowing that I have such a way to release my stress brings stability to my life..."

Where does the feeling of stability and reliability come from in your life? Do they help with your ritual to create?

Step4

Sensory Experience
Pay attention your senses during the ritual. What you see, hear, touch & smell?

Show off to Yourself
Be proud of your ritual behavior and be your own audience.

Build emotional connection
Try to relate to the things in your daily life, imbue them with emotions.

Connect to Outer Power
Communicate with some outer power during your ritual process.

Slow Down
Slow your pace of life down during the ritual moment to feel it and yourself.

When I...

The Trigger

CRYSTALS

New Energy

I wanna feel...

APPENDIX C

Detailed Interview Questions of 5.2

About Experience

1. Tell me about your ritual practice! How many times did you practice it in the past week, and how did you do it?

2. Did you achieve the expected transformation effect? What changes did it bring to your overall well-being?

3. Did practicing your ritual help you gain a deeper understanding of yourself?

About Challenges

1. What challenges did you face in maintaining your ritual over the week?

2. Were there specific times or situations where it became harder to stick to your ritual? How did you handle those situations?

About Motivation

1. What kept you motivated to practice your ritual? Were there internal or external factors that helped?

2. Was there a specific moment during the week where you felt particularly fulfilled practicing your ritual? What made you feel that way?

About Consistency and Support

1. What strategies did you use to remind yourself to perform your ritual?

2. What kind of support would help you maintain consistency? Would tools like tracking systems, journals, or reminders help or feel overwhelming? Why?

3. How would you prefer to reflect on your ritual progress? Would summaries, visuals, or feedback help keep you engaged?

4. What role could a partner or community play in helping you stay consistent?

APPENDIX D

Detailed Design for Prototype2.0

RITUAL CREATION step3

Instruction cards

I

Form Crystals from your Memory Geode

You might have already done things that helps, you just haven't noticed!

Dive into your memory geode and reflect on your life: What actions have you done before that successfully brought out the expected transformation effect?

Write them down to form "Crystals of Memories" that might help to reproduce the transition through the ritual.

II

Draw Potions from the Ripple Mirror

The wisdom and experience of others could also be incredibly helpful!

Contact your partner through the Ripple Mirror: Offer suggestions for each other on how you would handle their ritual moment.

Write suggestions you find useful down to form "Potions of Wisdom" that might help to reproduce the transition through the ritual.

III

Harvest Herbs from the Vast Forest

Beyond the actions, there are other things that contain the energy you seek. You might have already experienced them but haven't connected them to the ritual moment.

Explore the vast forest: What things might bring out the "new energy", and thus help to realize the transformation effect?

Follow the guidance of the card set together, discuss with your partner and write your own personalized "things" down to harvest "Herbs of Energy" that might play a role in the ritual.

Inspiration cards

Nature
Forest, Wind, Sea...

Connection with nature brings out fresh feelings and promotes mindfulness of ourselves.

"Walking in the forest let me connect with the world and my inner self."

Stories
Movies, Novels, Characters...

Films and literature can inspire us by resonating with our own experiences through the stories of others.

"Spiderman makes me become someone helpful to others."

Scent
Piano piece, Song, Nature sound...

Scents can both evoke specific emotions or memories and set a unique atmosphere.

"A hint of this mint-like scent brings a sense of calm to my mind."

Music
Piano piece, Song, Nature sound...

Music can evoke emotions, create atmosphere, and help us connect with our feelings.

"Preparing a nice playlist improves my efficienct of work."

Food & Drinks
Morning coffee, Lemonade, Cake...

Food and drinks offer both physical and emotional nourishment, which might also reflect certain life vibes.

"A well-prepared coffee gives me the boost I need to start my day."

Animals
Your pet, Wild birds, Walking dogs...

The presence of animals can evoke warmth, while symbolism of them might convey meaningfulness.

"Watching my cat's calmness reminds me to be more at ease with myself."

People
Friends, Family, Netizens...

Connection with people around us often provide support and inspiration.

"Saying good night to my best friend starts a nice sleep."

Movements
Stretch, Deep Breathe, Walk...

Physical movements might reduce stress level and bring out unique feelings.

"Deep breathing helps me feel calmer and more confident."

Items
Toys, Photos, Cups...

Certain items in our lives carry symbolic meaning, serving as anchors that support and inspire us.

"Putting this old photo on my desk always reminds me of my dream"

Alchemy magic circle visual

Instruction cards

Step2
Add the Enchantment Stones

Before imbuing the ingredients with magic, you may choose from the Enchantment Stones to enhance the power.

Take a look at the stones with your partner and reflect on the ingredient tokens you just pick: Which kinds of enchantment could strengthen them? What could provide threads to tie them together?

Pick 1-2 that you feel most resonant with from the collection.

Step1
Cluster the Ingredient Tokens

Review the ingredient tokens you've collected. Do they feel overwhelming or complex?

Try to find a clue among them: Which ingredients feel essential to achieving the transformation you seek? Could some of them naturally come together to form a cohesive narrative?

Select the ones you find most valuable and can be connected to each other. Group them into clusters! It is all right if some of the selected ones do not belong to the any cluster if you just find them significant. Show them to your partner.

Step3
Make a 3D collage with miniatures

Keep the clusters and enchantments of each other in your mind and pick some miniatures from the toolkit accordingly together: Assign roles to them! Which ones will represent you, your companions, the "magical" props to use, the spell to chant, or the vibe to construct in your ritual?

Make a 3D collage in the dollhouse: Let them take their places in your theater and match them with corresponding ingredient tokens to create a cohesive storyline for the ritual performance.

Step4
Unleash the magic within your dollhouse

Tell the story and perform your ritual out by moving the miniatures and narrating their roles in the process. Explain the sequence of actions, the meaning behind each choice, and how everything comes together to create transformation.
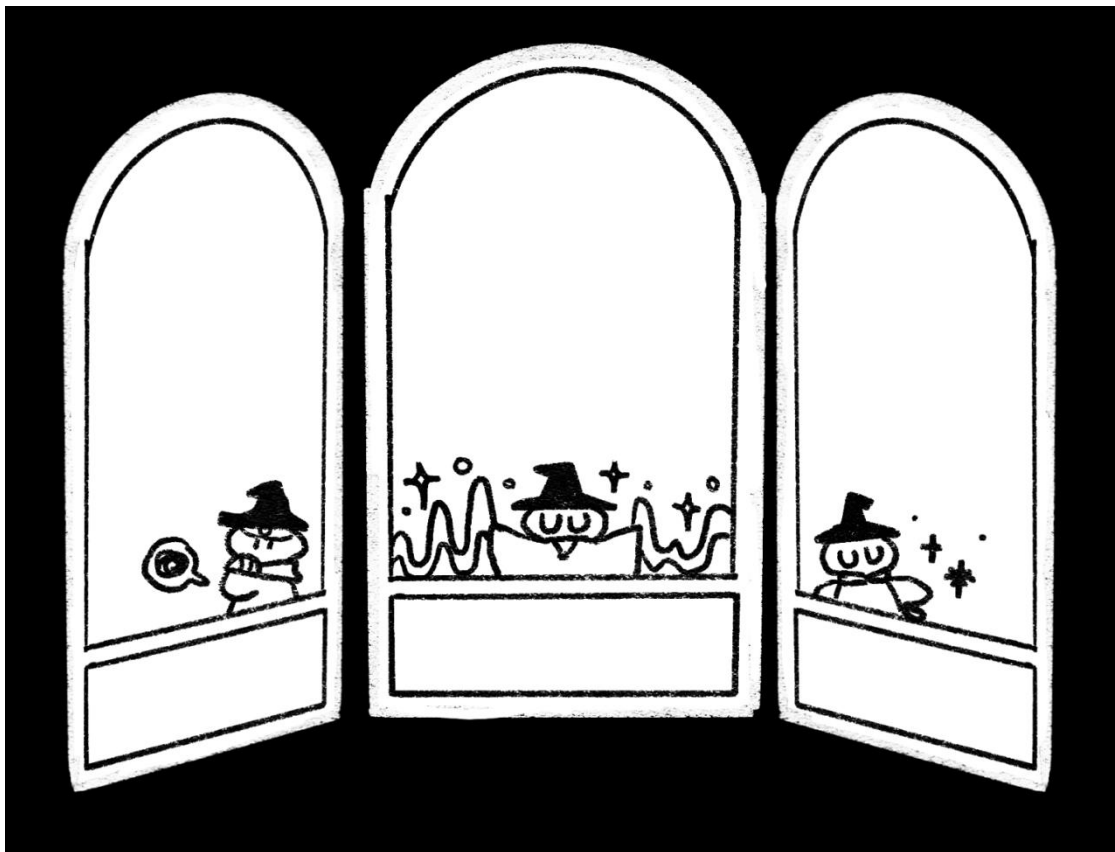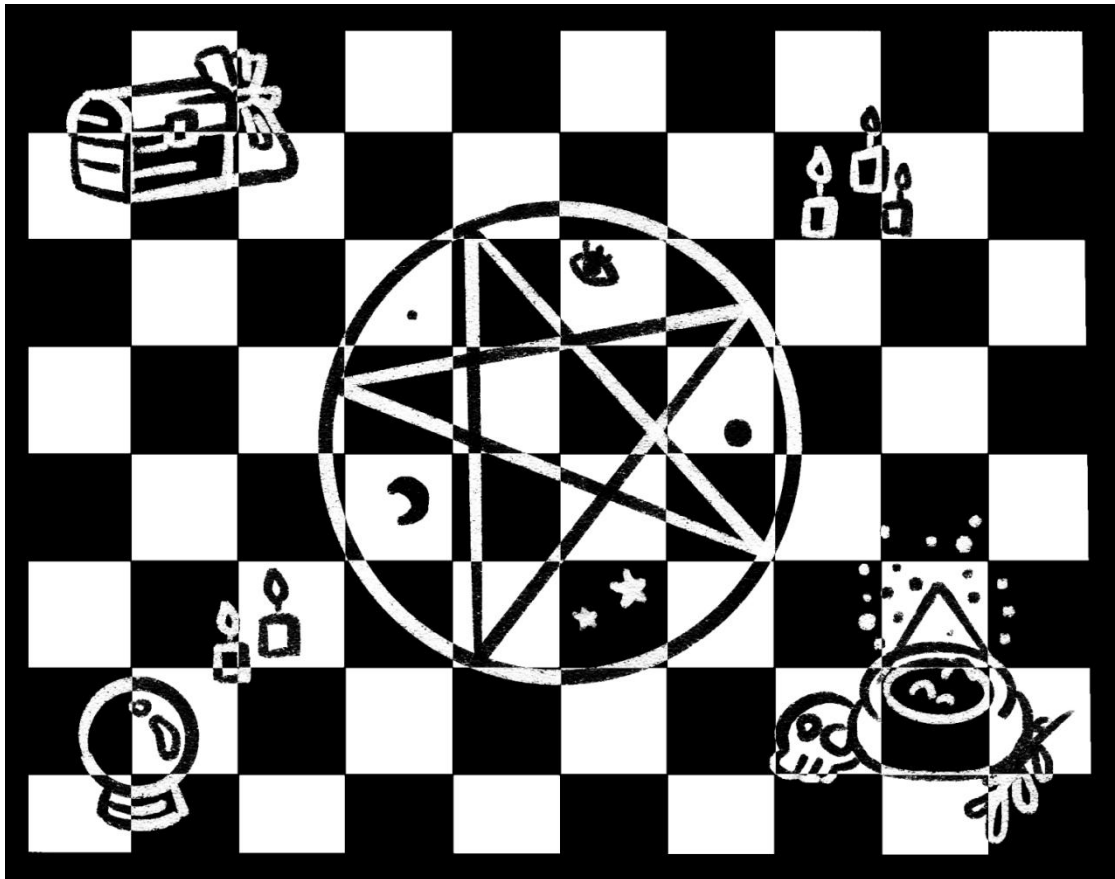
Once the performance is complete, craft your ritual statement by writing it down on the three boards in the following format:
'When... | I shall perform the Ritual of... | to....'

Finally, give it a meaningful name, and proudly place it on the windows of your dollhouse as a seal of its magic!

Ritual Dollhouse Visuals

RITUAL TRIAL OUT

Instruction cards

Step1
Set your Mage Altar

Choose a suitable spot for your altar—
somewhere in your home that best reminds
you to perform your ritual—and place your
dollhouse there.

Step2
Light the candles to gain power

Each time you complete your ritual, light one of the candles and put it on your altar. With each flame you light, your dollhouse altar glows brighter, showing the magic you've conjured and the growth of your personal power.

Step3
Collect Enlightenment Stars

Feel like making some notes for later reflection?

Draw a blank Tarot Card and write down any insights that arose during the ritual to catch the enlightenment stars. These cards become a collection of your accumulated wisdom, guiding your journey forward.

APPENDIX E

Detailed Design for Prototype3.0

The three magic circles

Enchantment crystals for Circle3

Enchantment CRYSTALS

Slow Down

Slow your pace of life down during the ritual moment to feel it and yourself

Enchantment CRYSTALS

Connect to Outer Power

Communicate with some outer power during your ritual process

Enchantment CRYSTALS

Build Emotional Connection

Try to relate to the things in your daily life, imbue them with emotions

Enchantment CRYSTALS

Show off to Yourself

Be proud of your ritual behavior and be your own audience

Enchantment CRYSTALS

Sensory Experience

Pay attention your senses during the ritual: What you see, hear, touch & smell?

APPENDIX F

Prototype for the Interactive Guidance System

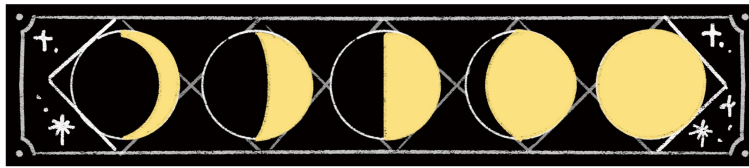https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QbdsZsxiIz73IaBllgWn0WdSyOkj4MnJ/view?usp=drive_link

APPENDIX G

Details of the Final Design

Visuals of the miniatures for building the ritual dollhouse

Props and instructions for the TRIAL OUT phase

Step1
Set your Mage Altar

Choose a suitable spot for your altar—
somewhere in your home that best reminds
you to perform your ritual—and place your
dollhouse there.

Step2
Form Lumina Gems to gain power

Set the board in front of the altar. Each time
you complete your ritual, take one Lumina
Stone from the pocket and put it on your board
to indicate the magic you've conjured and the
growth of your power.

Step3
Keep in touch with your magician partner

Wanna share something exciting about your
ritual practice? Keep in touch with your
magician partner throughout the journey by
sharing the notable moments!

Instructions for the WRAP UP phase

Step2
Capture the Reflection of Moon

Now, turn your gaze inward. Through this
process, you've likely uncovered deeper
insights about yourself—things you value,
patterns you've noticed, or things you try to
avoid.

These insights are like the moon's reflection
on still water, revealing wisdom gained from
introspection.

How would the insights help to improve your
ritual? Write new elements discovered from
these insights down on new tokens as your
Reflections of Moon. These reflections will
help expand and enrich your ritual, making it
even more meaningful and original.

Step1
Gather the Fragment of Star

Begin by revisiting the core of your ritual
journey so far. Think back to the statement
you created and the elements you included.
What didn't work? What truly brought about
the transformation you sought? And why?

Take a moment to reflect and identify these
key elements—the shining fragments that
guided your ritual's success.

Write them down on tokens as your
Fragments of Star, representing the
essence of the enlightment stardust you've
collected. Keep these fragments close—
they will be the foundation of your refined
ritual.

Step3
Harness the Glow of Cosmos

Then, Take a look at the card set and think
about the side effects you experienced
during this journey.

Did any of the effects help with your ritual
during the trial out phase? These are your
Glows of Cosmos—the radiant energy left
behind by your ritual's magic.

What elements help to enhance these
glowing sense that work for you? Write them
down on the tokens as Glow of Cosmos.
They are the final piece, bringing vibrancy
and spiritual power to your practice.

APPENDIX H

Details of the Data Collection Methods for Evaluation

Session1

Observation Checklist

- Participant grasps the instructions without pausing or rereading multiple times.

- Participant follows the instructions in the correct sequence.

- Participant completes the task without external help.

- Signs of hesitation, such as long pauses or looking around for guidance.

- Participant asks for clarification or assistance.

- Visible confusion, such as incorrect actions or verbal uncertainty.

- Smooth transition from reading/ listening to instructions to using the toolkit.

- Participant appears confident while performing the task.

- Frequency of errors or misinterpretations.

- Overall engagement level (e.g., focused, distracted, frustrated).

- Before step1: Users' reaction after hearing about the story and "mission": Do they show appreciation and interest?

- How many elements did users gather in step3?

- How many inspirations did users provide for their partner?

- How do users interact with their "role"?

- Do users talk about their "mission" during the process?

- Emotional reactions towards the game mechanics?

- Expression: focus and active?

Likert Scale

1. How does the ritual intention from step 2 align with your well-being goals?
- 1 - Not relevant at all
- 2 - Slightly relevant
- 3 - Neutral
- 4 - Somewhat relevant
- 5 - Highly relevant

2. How satisfied are you with the elements collected in step 3 and their contribution to ritual building?
- 1 - Not satisfied at all
- 2 - Slightly satisfied
- 3 - Neutral
- 4 - Somewhat satisfied
- 5 - Very satisfied

3. How immersive do you find the whole narrative?
- 1 - Not immersive at all
- 2 - Slightly immersive
- 3 - Neutral
- 4 - Somewhat immersive
- 5 - Highly immersive

4. How much fun do the game mechanics bring to you?
- 1 - No fun at all
- 2 - Slightly fun
- 3 - Neutral
- 4 - Quite fun
- 5 - Extremely fun

System Usability Scale

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5

1. I think that I would like to use this tookit to construct rituals

□ 1　□ 2　□ 3　□ 4　□ 5

2. I found the toolkit unnecessarily complex

□ 1　□ 2　□ 3　□ 4　□ 5

3. I thought the toolkit was easy to use

□ 1　□ 2　□ 3　□ 4　□ 5

4. I think that I would need the support of a technical person to be able to use this toolkit

□ 1　□ 2　□ 3　□ 4　□ 5

5. I found the various functions in this toolkit were well integrated

□ 1　□ 2　□ 3　□ 4　□ 5

6. I thought there was too much inconsistency in this toolkit

□ 1　□ 2　□ 3　□ 4　□ 5

7. I would imagine that most people would learn to use this toolkit very quickly

□ 1　□ 2　□ 3　□ 4　□ 5

8. I found the toolkit very cumbersome to use

□ 1　□ 2　□ 3　□ 4　□ 5

9. I felt very confident using the toolkit

□ 1　□ 2　□ 3　□ 4　□ 5

10. I needed to learn a lot of things before I could get going with this toolkit

□ 1　□ 2　□ 3　□ 4　□ 5

Interview

- How would you describe your overall experience using the system, including both the guide and the prototype?

- Did you encounter any points of frustration or confusion during the process? If so, what were the causes?

- How effective do you think the audio-visual guide was in replacing a facilitator? Did you feel it provided sufficient guidance?

- Were the instructions clear and easy to understand? Were there any parts that felt vague or confusing?

- Did the transition between the guidance system and the toolkit feel natural? If not, where did you experience disruptions or difficulties?

- Does your ritual feel organized and meaningful to you?

- Name some contribution your partner made to your ritual creation

- Have you gained any new understanding about yourself out of the experience? What?

- Have you gained any new understanding about your partner out of the experience? What?

- Does the game narrative make you take the whole process more seriously?

Session2

Observation Checklist

1. What adjustments did participants make to rituals during refinement?
2. How did participants react emotionally during the refinement process? (e.g., frustration, joy, confusion, satisfaction)

Likert Scale after Tasks *(1-5, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree)*

1. I felt a strong sense of connection with my partner.
2. The refined ritual improved my sense of well-being.
3. The narrative of the experience felt immersive.
4. The game mechanics were fun and effectively supported the ritual experience.

Debrief Questions

1. How did the ritual help you transition better?
2. How often did you check in or share about your experience?
3. Did the altar help maintain your practice? Why or why not?
4. What did you learn about yourself through this process?
5. Did the narrative enhance your sense of carefulness and intentionality?

Personal Project Brief – IDE Master Graduation Project

Name student _____ **Student number** _____

PROJECT TITLE, INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM DEFINITION and ASSIGNMENT
Complete all fields, keep information clear, specific and concise
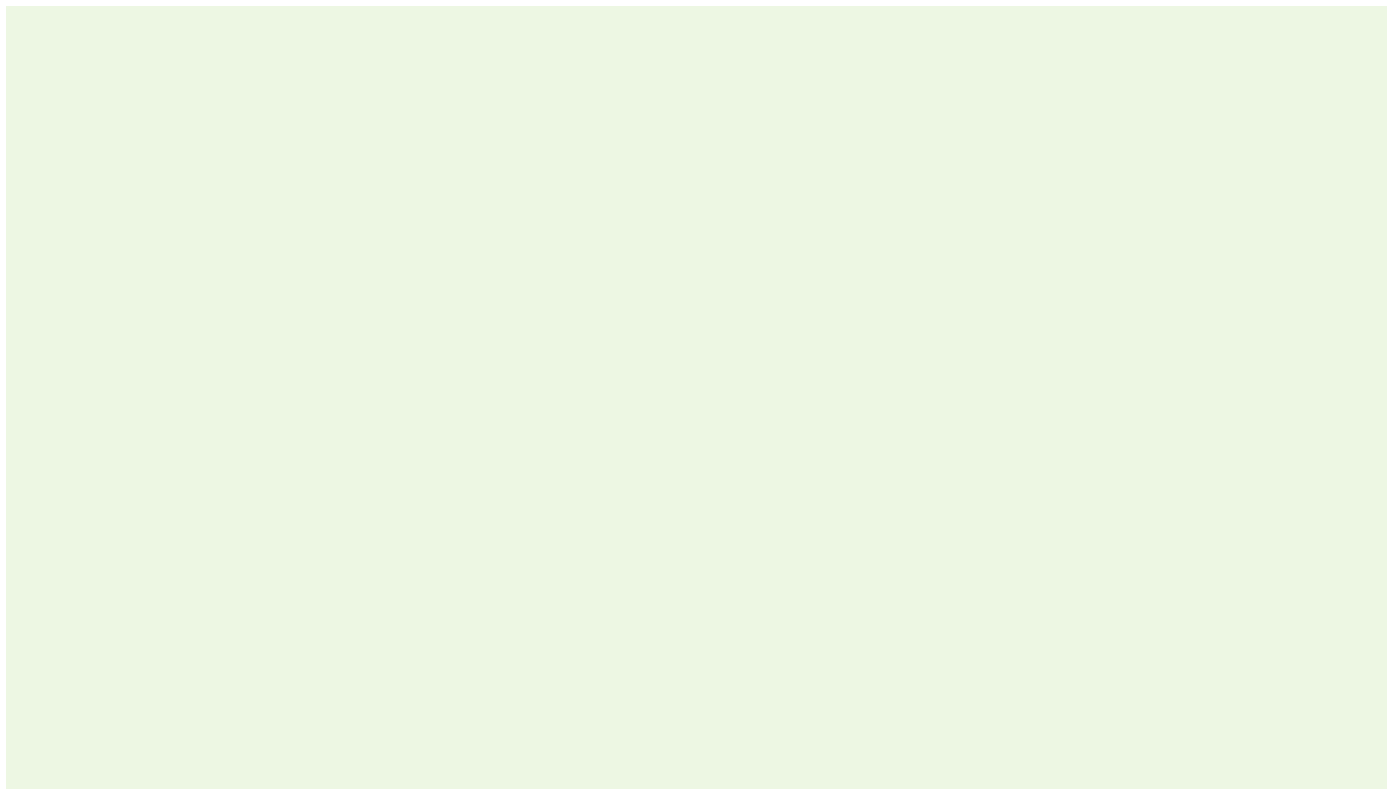
Project title _____

Please state the title of your graduation project (above). Keep the title compact and simple. Do not use abbreviations. The remainder of this document allows you to define and clarify your graduation project.

Introduction

Describe the context of your project here; What is the domain in which your project takes place? Who are the main stakeholders and what interests are at stake? Describe the opportunities (and limitations) in this domain to better serve the stakeholder interests. (max 250 words)

➜ _space available for images / figures on next page_

image / figure 1

image / figure 2

Problem Definition

What problem do you want to solve in the context described in the introduction, and within the available time frame of 100 working days? (= Master Graduation Project of 30 EC). What opportunities do you see to create added value for the described stakeholders? Substantiate your choice.
(max 200 words)

Assignment

This is the most important part of the project brief because it will give a clear direction of what you are heading for.
Formulate an assignment to yourself regarding what you expect to deliver as result at the end of your project. (1 sentence)
As you graduate as an industrial design engineer, your assignment will start with a verb (Design/Investigate/Validate/Create), and you may use the green text format:

Then explain your project approach to carrying out your graduation project and what research and design methods you plan to use to generate your design solution (max 150 words)

Project planning and key moments

*To make visible how you plan to spend your time, you must make a planning for the full project. You are advised to use a Gantt chart format to show the different phases of your project, deliverables you have in mind, meetings and in-between deadlines. Keep in mind that all activities should fit within the given run time of 100 working days. Your planning should include a **kick-off meeting, mid-term evaluation meeting, green light meeting** and **graduation ceremony**. Please indicate periods of part-time activities and/or periods of not spending time on your graduation project, if any (for instance because of holidays or parallel course activities).*

Make sure to attach the full plan to this project brief.
The four key moment dates must be filled in below

Kick off meeting _____

Mid-term evaluation _____

Green light meeting _____

Graduation ceremony _____

In exceptional cases (part of) the Graduation Project may need to be scheduled part-time. Indicate here if such applies to your project

Part of project scheduled part-time	
For how many project weeks	
Number of project days per week	

Comments:

Motivation and personal ambitions

Explain why you wish to start this project, what competencies you want to prove or develop (e.g. competencies acquired in your MSc programme, electives, extra-curricular activities or other).

Optionally, describe whether you have some personal learning ambitions which you explicitly want to address in this project, on top of the learning objectives of the Graduation Project itself. You might think of e.g. acquiring in depth knowledge on a specific subject, broadening your competencies or experimenting with a specific tool or methodology. Personal learning ambitions are limited to a maximum number of five.
(200 words max)

Project Planning & Key Moments

Task	September				October				November				December				January			
	Week1	Week2	Week3	Week4	Week5	Week6	Week7	Week8	Week9	Week10	Week11	Week12	Week13	Week14	Week15	Week16	X-mas Holidays	Week17	Week18	Week19	Week20

IDEATE ✕

Research

Initial Concept

ITERATE ✕

Prototyping, Testing&Iteration

Analysis&Conclusion

DEMONSTRATE ✕

Develop Final prototype

Evaluation

Analysis&Conclusion

FINALIZE ✕

Finalize thesis

Prepare final deliverables

Kick-off Meeting — Literature Review — Midterm Evaluation — Green Light — Graduation

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Research Thematic Blocks

What are rituals?
The definition regarding rituals along with examples, meanings and relevant design theories

- Literature Review: Rituals
- Literature Review: Slow Technology

What (health) rituals AYA's do?
What rituals stakeholders already do in their life, how and why

- Literature Review: Health Rituals
- Survey
- Interview
- Introspective Methods

Explore Ritual Building
How AYA's naturally build their rituals & How such process could be well-guided

- Survey
- Interview
- Introspective Methods
- Research through Prototyping and Testing

Explore Gamified Reflection
How gamification as a tool could help to trigger reflection and promote ritual building

- Literature Review: Gamification
- Research through Prototyping and Testing

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