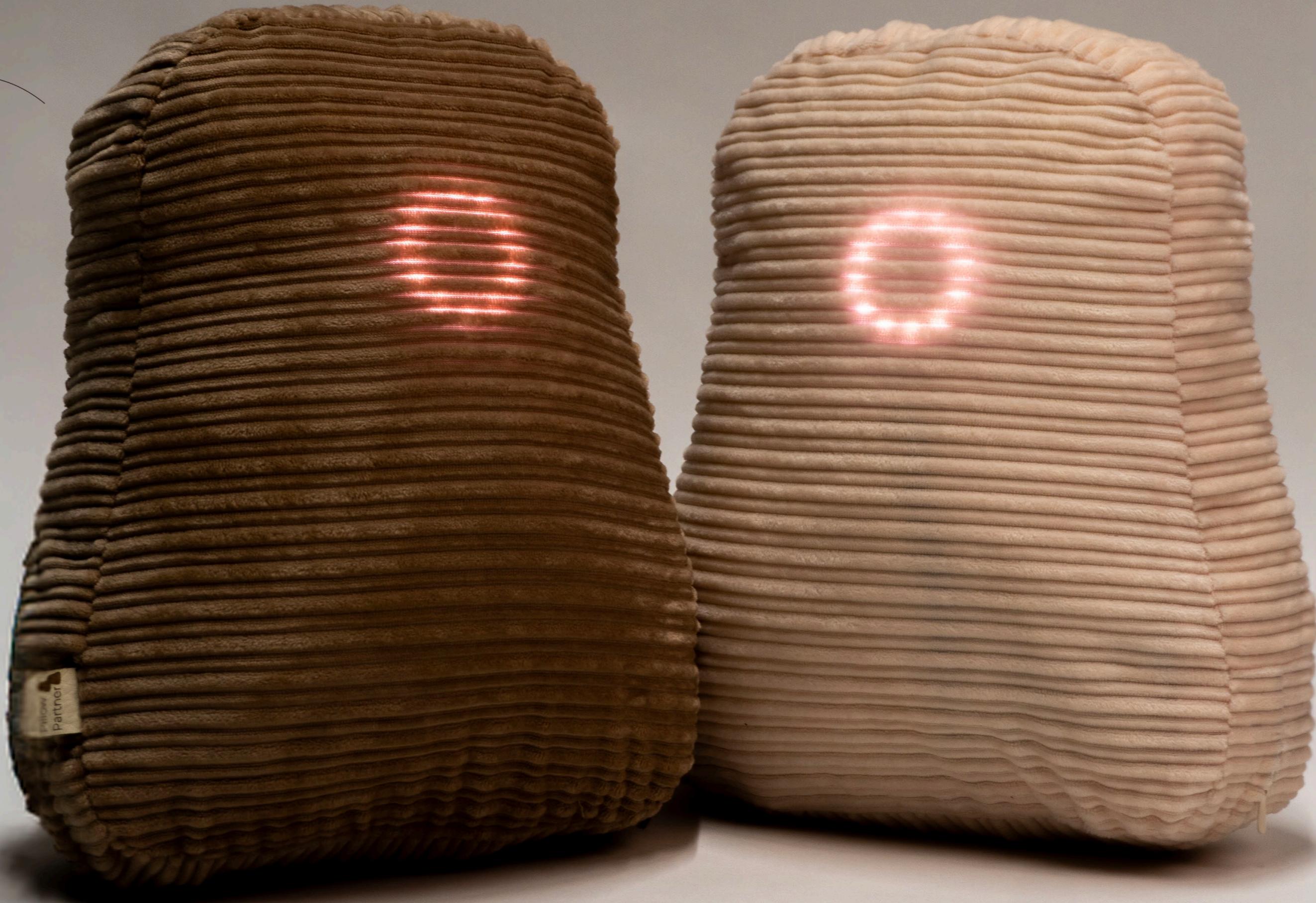


CAUGHT BETWEEN TWO SILENCES

Exploring Support for Sexual Well-being in Relationships Affected by Incurable Cancer

In relationships affected by incurable illness, partners often struggle with autonomy and communication. People may find it hard to express personal needs and emotions without guilt, while open conversations about intimacy can feel confronting or unsafe. Importantly, this struggle is often not about what to say, but about when it feels possible to say it. The emotional weight of illness, care roles, and uncertainty can make direct communication about intimacy feel mistimed or overwhelming.

Microphone enabling message recording



Speaker enabling message retrieval

The Pillow Partner supports autonomy by giving partners control over timing in both expressing and receiving messages. By allowing voice messages to be recorded and listened to at self-chosen moments, it reduces immediate pressure while keeping communication relational and embodied. The physical presence of the pillow adds comfort and closeness, helping partners stay connected even when direct conversation feels too difficult. In this way, the Pillow Partner reframes autonomy not as independence, but as having space and time to communicate in one's own moment.

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