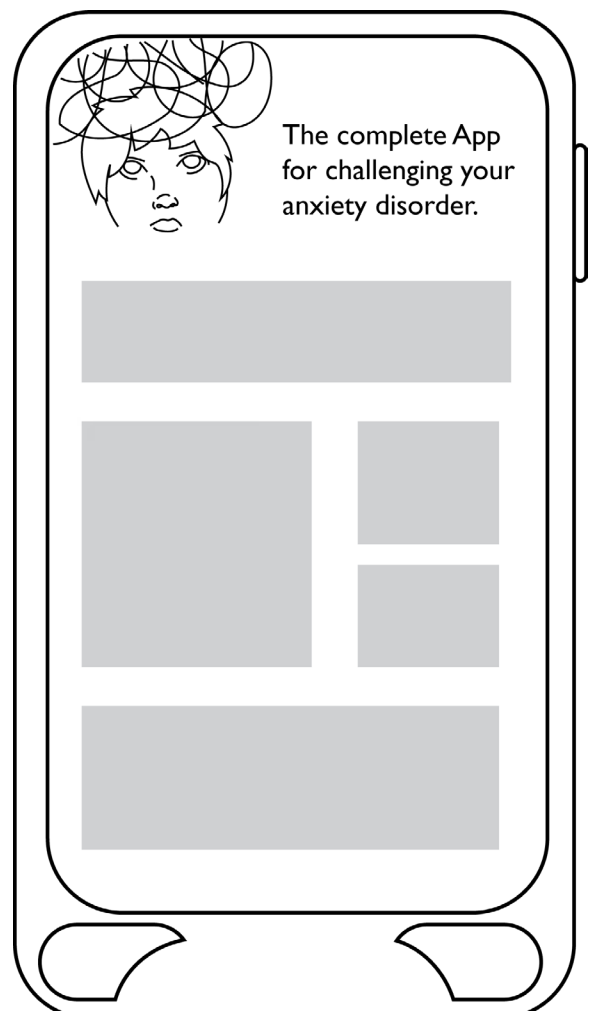# INTERACTIVE DESIGN IN THE TREATMENT OF ANXIETY DISORDERS

I've chosen the overall theme of 'Digital Doctor' to focus on in creating interactive design. With 1 in 20 people suffering from an anxiety disorder at any one time, the need to create helpful and therapeutic resources is huge. With the arrival of the digital age and the creation of new accessible platforms such as phone applications and virtual reality, developers and health professionals alike saw a gap in the market for programs targeting those with anxiety disorders and other mental health issues. Although it's heavily argued that these cannot be used to replace traditional treatments e.g. CBT or medication, they can be used in conjunction with these to make peoples day to day lives more manageable.
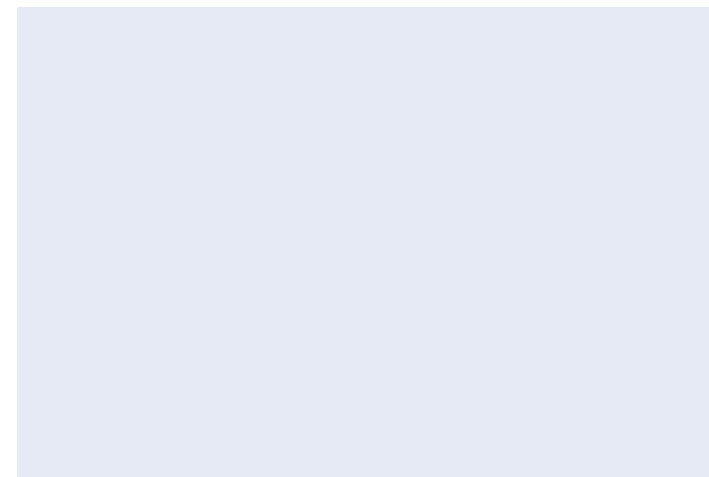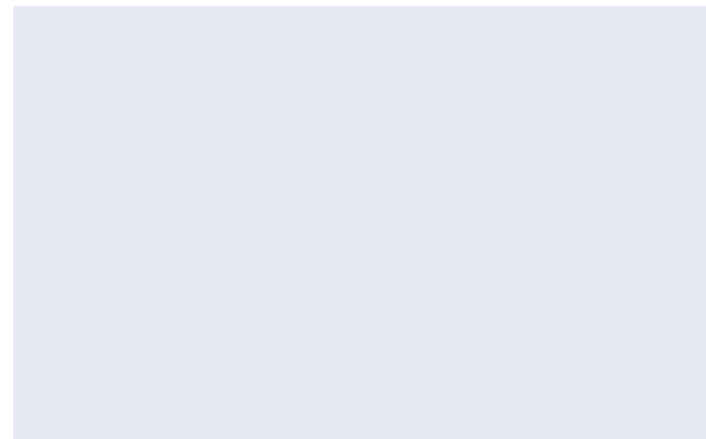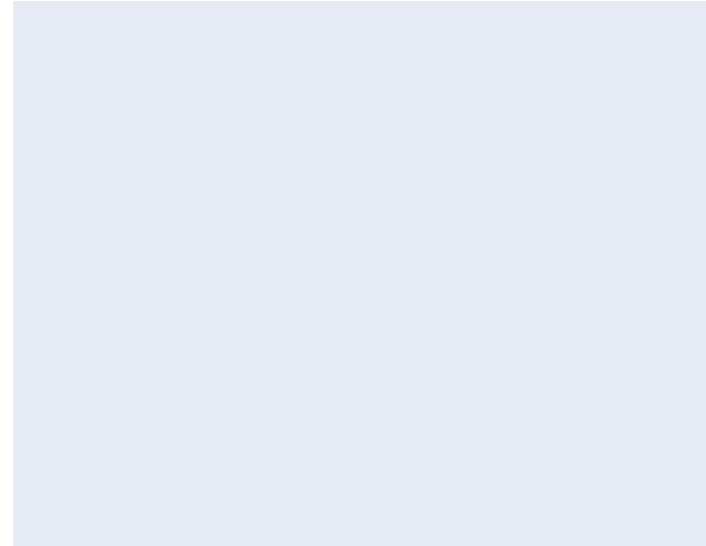
My idea for an product using interactive design is going to be focused around a phone application used to treat people with anxiety disorders. I want it to be more than interactive in the sense that the user has to do something to progress onto the next step, I want the program to be smart and use the knowledge it gains of the user to shape the app and that users experience. The benefit of this would be focus on their specific problems that they are trying to overcome.

Examples of Anxiety Disorders:

OCD

Generalised Anxiety Disorder

Panic Disorder

Agoraphobia

PTSD

Social Anxiety

Specific Phobias

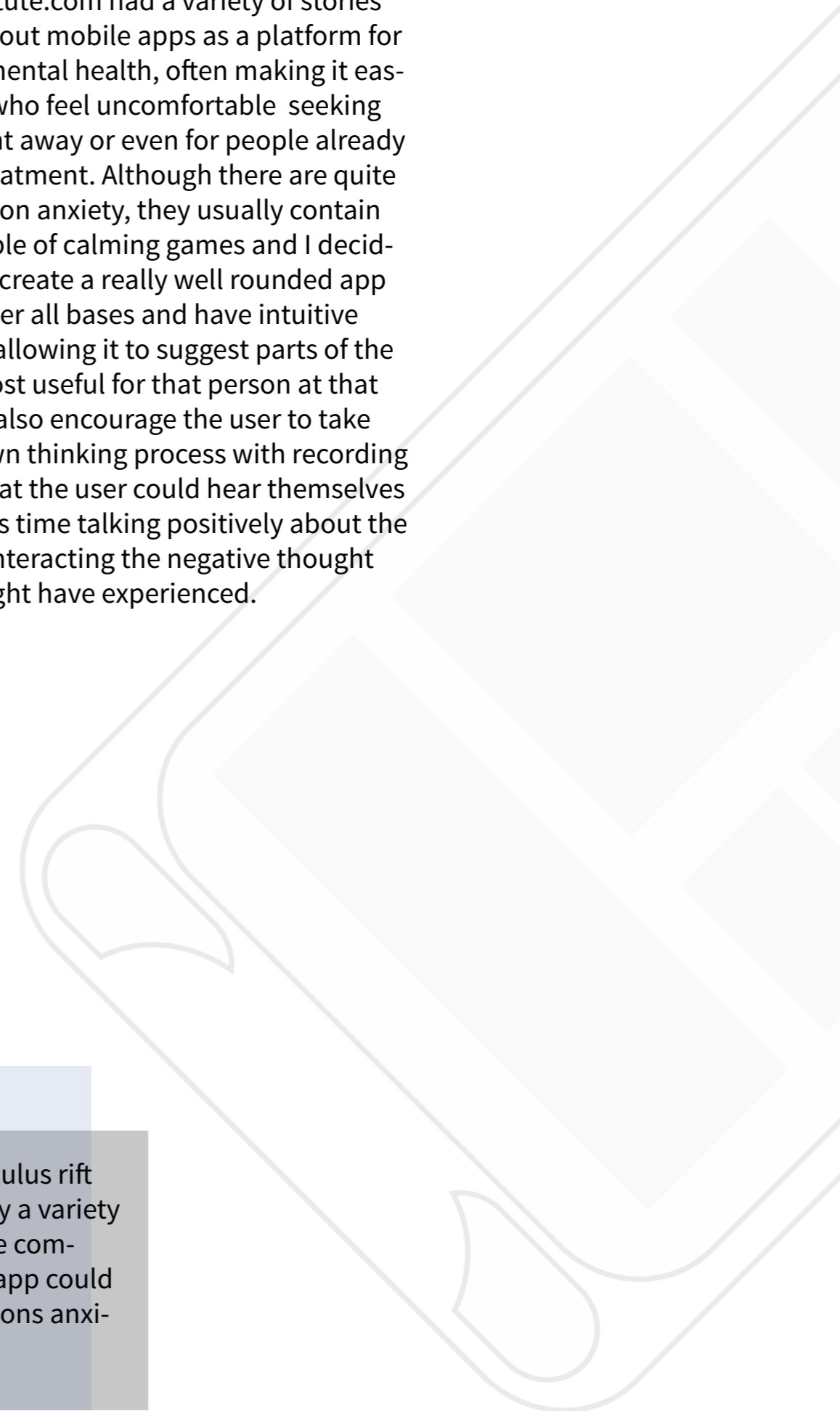The complete App for challenging your anxiety disorder.

RESEARCH INTO CURRENT USE OF ID FOR MENTAL DISORDERS

When I first started thinking about how interactive media could be used to further treatment for anxiety disorders; my immediate thought was of the Oculus Rift and how that could be used to further exposure therapy by fully immersing the wearer in the world of the program. This would allow the therapist and patient to go through exposure therapy without leaving an office environment. After a quick Google, I discovered this was already being investigated and there are programs being created for oculus rift like platforms for anxiety and other mental health disorders.

During researching this project, I found websites such as fiercemobilehealthcare.com and interactivemediainstitute.com had a variety of stories and articles about mobile apps as a platform for programs for mental health, often making it easier for people who feel uncomfortable seeking therapy straight away or even for people already undergoing treatment. Although there are quite a few focusing on anxiety, they usually contain tips and a couple of calming games and I decided I wanted to create a really well rounded app that would cover all bases and have intuitive programming allowing it to suggest parts of the application most useful for that person at that time. It would also encourage the user to take part in their own thinking process with recording elements so that the user could hear themselves from a previous time talking positively about the anxiety or counteracting the negative thought cycles they might have experienced.

There are even programs ready to download as soon as the oculus rift becomes available to the public. Seeing how there was already a variety of these products being created, I began to think about a more common and accessible platform, the mobile phone, and how an app could be created and include interactive features to help with a persons anxiety.

MY IDEA

My interactive design is that of a phone app that can be used in a variety of ways to treat, control and track anxiety disorders and the effect it has on the sufferers. It would have interactive features such as the app therapist which would take you through a range of exercises that adapt and change depending on your response meaning it can interpret how you are feeling and give you a range of exercises to be done to improve your state of mind. It would encourage mindfulness and counter-acting negative thinking by asking you to address the way you are feeling. It could feature a range of games or activities which could be used when feeling anxious to allow you to distract yourself and refocus your attention away from the anxiety. Alongside these, it would have applications such as tracking your progress in CBT allowing a quick and digital record to be made of how you feel in certain situations. It could also be connected to any range of devices such as a heartbeat monitor bracelet etc to make it simpler to identify when the anxiety peaks and when it returns back to normal.

AND IS IT POSSIBLE?

Currently, I have little knowledge of how to make a phone app but it certainly is possible with the right expertise as proven by the other apps already out. I'm not sure whether it is possible to have an intuitive program that can suggest things for the user depending on their current anxiety level though?

VERY INFORMAL REFERENCES OR JUST THINGS I READ

http://www.psychologicalscience.org/journals/cd/12_1/Taylor.cfm

http://interactivemediainstitute.com/research/anxiety-disorders/

http://interactivemediainstitute.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Springer-Book-Press-Release.pdf

http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-27186022

https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/news

http://www.fiercemobilehealthcare.com/story/new-smartphone-app-helps-patients-fight-anxiety-disorder-symptoms/2012-02-20

http://www.fiercemobilehealthcare.com/story/researchers-put-smartphones-work-treating-mental-illness/2012-02-13

http://www.patient.co.uk/health/anxiety/clinical-trials

http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-22994671