

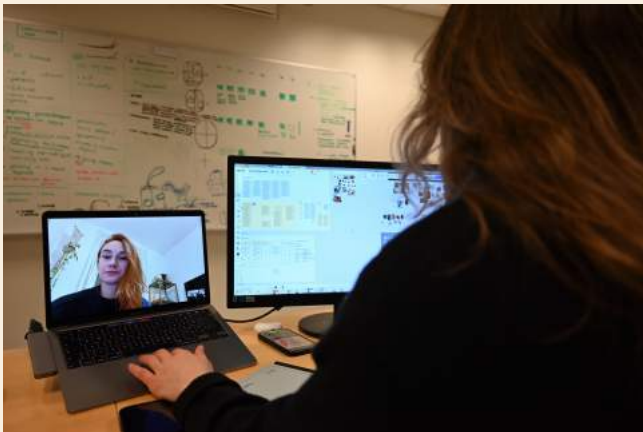
Designing allie: A Journey into Crafting a Therapeutic Experience

allie is a tangible therapeutic product designed to support children aged 5-9 who suffer from social anxiety. The project aimed to develop a solution that meets the target audience's requirements. This report provides an overview of the user research methodology, research results, and the user-centric design and development process based on the research.

Methodology

The user research methodology involved several stages in identifying the target audience's needs, behaviors, and pain points. The research methods included desk research, expert interviews, and prototype testing.

- **Desk research** was conducted to understand the current literature on mental health conditions in children, specifically social anxiety. The research helped to identify the field's key trends, challenges, and potential solutions.
- **Multiple research interviews** were conducted with a clinical therapist who works with children. The expert provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by children with social anxiety, common therapeutic approaches, and potential solutions.



- **Prototype testing** was conducted with the two children, who we also casually interviewed during the shoot for the video. The testing focused on the product's physical attributes, such as shape, size, and weight, as well as the interaction system, which included sound and pressing patches.

Research Results

The user research revealed several key findings that informed the product's design and development. The findings included:

- **Social anxiety has risen after COVID:** Through our desk research, we identified that COVID had a radical impact on the spread of social anxiety, especially among children.

This was confirmed during the interview when the therapist explained how missing the first days of school significantly impacted the children's development.

- **Children with social anxiety lack effective coping mechanisms:** The interviews revealed that children with social anxiety often struggle to manage their anxiety in stressful situations. They lack effective coping mechanisms and require support to navigate challenging scenarios.
- **Therapy is valuable but challenging:** The expert interview highlighted the value of treatment in treating social anxiety in children. However, the expert also emphasized that therapy can be difficult for children due to its abstract nature and lack of engagement.
- **Children prefer tangible therapeutic products:** The interviews revealed that children prefer tangible medicinal products that they can hold and interact with. They find connecting with and remembering tangible objects easier than abstract concepts.
- **Games engage children:** The therapist also confirmed that gamification is one of the most engaging tools used in therapy. The feeling children experience when playing games has something easy & playful, which doesn't make it feel like work.



- **Sound and tactile feedback enhance the experience:** Prototype testing revealed that sound and tactile feedback enhances the user experience and creates a more immersive experience. Children found connecting with and engaging with the product easier when it provided feedback through sound and touch.

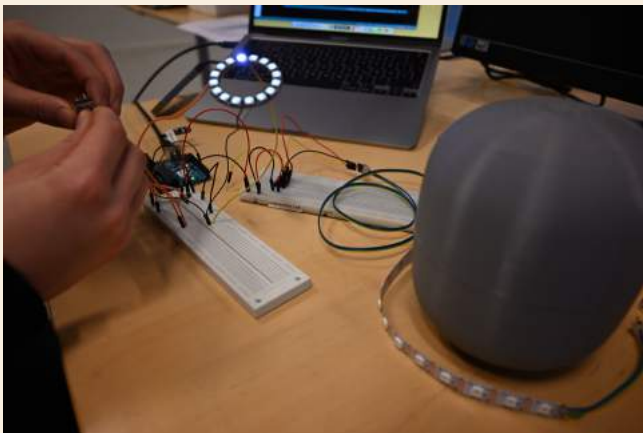
From Ideation to Implementation

The product's design and development process was user-centric based on the research findings. The following steps were taken to ensure that the product met the needs of the target audience:

- **Concept Ideation through scenarios:** Based on the research findings, a concept focused on a tangible therapeutic development that would help children manage their

social anxiety by allowing them to imagine a hero possessing all the qualities they wish they had in a tense situation. The concept was further refined through brainstorming sessions and stakeholder feedback in different scenarios. We chose to focus on three other locations to continue with our designs.

- **Prototyping:** Several product prototypes were created and tested with the two children participating in the tests. The prototypes were designed to test the product's physical attributes, such as shape, size, and weight, as well as the interaction system, which included sound and pressing patches.
- **Iterative Design:** Based on feedback from the interviews and prototype testing, the product design was iteratively improved. The physical attributes were optimized to provide a better user experience, and sound and tactile feedback were enhanced to create a more engaging and immersive experience. The design was constantly refined through user testing and feedback from stakeholders.



- **Digital Component:** A digital component was added to the product to allow parents and therapists to monitor and actively participate by playing games with the child at home. The digital feature was designed to align with the physical product to provide a unified experience.

Conclusion

The user research methodology, research results, and user-centric design and development process were critical to the success of allie. The research revealed valuable insights into the needs, behaviors, and pain points of children with social anxiety. The iterative design process optimized the product for a better user experience. The digital component allowed parents and therapists to participate actively in the process.

The final product can significantly impact children's growing prevalence of mental health issues by providing a practical therapeutic approach for children with social anxiety. The

product results from a comprehensive process involving extensive research, user-centered design, and constant refinement based on stakeholder feedback.

In conclusion, allie is an excellent example of how user-centered design can help create products that meet a target audience's needs and requirements. The product's comprehensive design and development process involved several stages to ensure that the final product was effective and met the target audience's needs. The findings from the user research highlighted the importance of providing tangible therapeutic products that offer sound and tactile feedback to enhance the user experience. The final product has the potential to significantly impact the growing prevalence of mental health issues in children by providing a practical therapeutic approach for children with social anxiety.