The Grateful App

Background:

There has been an alarming number of suicidal cases among students after the start of the academic years. Mental well-being of youngsters is of the society's concern. Many of us have learnt maladaptive thinking pattern in the course of our upbringing experiences. The Grateful App is against the tide, and promotes mental well-being among all users.

Objectives:

The App aims to encourage users to develop a grateful attitude towards life and live abundantly. Users shift their attention to positive experiences in daily lives and change their cognitive schema through repetitive practices by persistently writing expressive journals. Developing positive cognitive schema helps reduce relapse and incidence of emotional disorders, which is often characterised by rumination of negative thought.

Target group:

The general public,especially youngsters who are tech-savvy and beginners in learning emotional regulation.

Expected outcome:

There will be a significant improvement of mental health among users, reflected by more optimistic attitude toward life and tendency to experience positive emotions.

Details of the project:

Shifting attention to positive things

Three questions are popped up in a specific time set by users. They are 'What touches your heart today?, 'What inspired you today?' and 'What made you feel grateful today?' Users then answer these questions and keep record of it. These questions prompt users to shift attention to positive things happened in daily lives and become more optimistic.

Encourage journal writings through rewards

To motivate our App users to record their positive things, there will be accumulative points for writing down the journals. When more points are earned, they are indicated on bars in percentage. When bars reach 100%, heart will be created as a reward. The hearts can be given out to the users' beloved ones as gifts.

Connection between App users and the society

If users ruminate on negative things and cannot recall positive things happened, they can press on an emergency button to seek consoles from either U-Buddies or 24-hour hotline counselling service. Hence, our customers will gain easy access to resources in the campus and this ensures timely social support.

Connection between App users

Our App users can choose to upload their journals either publicly or privately. With journals that are uploaded publicly, other App users will be able to see the journal and leave comments under it. Only the journal writers can read their feedback, and in reciprocal can give feedback to their friends' journals.

Dissemination of positive quotes/short stories

Positive quotes or autobiographical short stories (Appendix 1) are designed and delivered to our App users daily or according to the users' default setting. The quotes encourage the users for self-reflection. Users may share with the feelings with the protagonists in the short stories. It is hoped that it will boost the users' empathetic feelings.

Related Principles:

Alteration of attentional bias

People with depression have attentional bias and memory bias on negative things happened in their lives. They are more likely to attend to and remember upsetting events (Gotlib, Krasnoperova, Yue & Joormann, 2004). By asking three questions that are related to positive emotions, the App aims to shift customers' attention from negative events to positive events happened in lives. This alter their attentional bias and memory bias, thus preventing relapse or occurrence of emotional disorders.

Giving is better than receiving

Studies revealed that people are actually happier when they spend money on others than spending money on themselves (Dunn, Aknin & Norton, 2008). Giving is better than receiving. The reward for users to persistently write journals is to give gifts to others than themselves. This boosts users' happiness and motivation.

Self- determination theory

Autonomy and relatedness components of self- determination theory are identified in the App. Customers can determine when the three questions are popped up in a day and to answer them. Free choice gives rise to sense of autonomy to persist in writing journals. As users connect to their friends by giving and receiving feedback, it increases relatedness of the App (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Both autonomy and relatedness boost users' intrinsic motivation in writing journals.

Expressive writing promotes mental health

Writing down positive events helps the writers to organise and structure events happened, and incorporate them to the self- schema of oneself, others and the world (Baikie & Wilhelm, 2005). This shapes cognitive schema of one's mind, body and behaviors which are interrelated, thus changing people's cognitive schema will promote physical health and practices of adaptive behaviors.

Implementation plan

Month	Activities
1st	-Cooperate with Department of Computer Science and Engineering to organize a competition to develop our proposed mobile app for both IOS and Android system -Promote competition through social media, mass mail and poster
2nd + 3rd	-Select winning project and discuss with winning group to go through specificity of the apps -App Testing -Soft Launch of mobile app
4th	-Promotion of mobile app through social media, mass mail and poster -Launching of mobile app to public

Budget plan

Expenses	Amount (HKD)
Google Play Store (One-time Payment)	~194.21 (USD $25)
Apple App Store (Per Year)	~769.08/Year (USD $99/Year)
App Developing Competition Prize	4000
Total:	~4963.29

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Reference

Baikie, K. A., & Wilhelm, K. (2005). Emotional and physical health benefits of expressive writing. *Advances in psychiatric treatment*, *11*(5), 338-346.

Dunn, E. W., Aknin, L. B., & Norton, M. I. (2008). Spending money on others promotes happiness. *Science*, *319*(5870), 1687-1688.

Gotlib, I. H., Krasnoperova, E., Yue, D. N., & Joormann, J. (2004). Attentional biases for negative interpersonal stimuli in clinical depression. *Journal of abnormal psychology*, *113*(1), 127.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being.*American psychologist*, *55*(1), 68.

Appendix 1: In-App positve quotes delivered to users

在這刻，有充裕的時間；
在這刻，你是最真實的自己；
在這刻，有著無限的可能性。

- Victoria Moran

In this moment, there is plenty of time.
In this moment, you are precisely as you should be.
In this moment, there is infinite possibility.
- Victoria Moran

如果你想盡力為
你的下一代
你的朋友
你的家人做到最好
你一定要從好好
照顧自己開始

If you want to do your best for future generations of humanity,
for your friends and family,
you must begin by taking good care of yourself.
-Tarthang Tulku Rinpoche