



**BY PROMOTING SELF-DISCOVERY THROUGH CREATIVE SELF-CARE, THE OFFLINE SOCIAL CLUB CREATES GUILT-FREE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MOMS OF CHILDREN LIVING WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS TO BOOST PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH SOCIAL INTERACTIONS.**

---

**RACHEL CHO**  
ADVISED BY MIYA OSAKI



**THE OFFLINE SOCIAL CLUB**

## PREFACE

As I began this journey, I didn't know exactly what I was going to do. At first, I was wading around in an area that I really had no interest in, in the startup workspace. I have always been interested in humans and the way we think, especially when under a certain pressure.

Mental-wellbeing has always been a key source of success in my personal day-to-day life. I've been told by many people that I seem like I'm always happy and positive and they have always asked me, "why?" My answer to them, "I try not to stress or worry about anything because it doesn't help me with any of my day-to-day activities."

Stress is a huge mental blockade for many people, and for me, I believe it is very unnecessary to worry that hard about anything because it doesn't get the job done. But back to my journey, I began to think about the way that I personally think about my life, and I wanted to find a way for people, who might have a lot of stress and anxiety, to relieve some of their stress. Around the end of 2018, I had begun volunteering at a A Free Bird Organization that helps children diagnosed with cancer pursue their dreams of being artists. It was here that I found I could help make a difference, no matter how small.



# CONTENTS

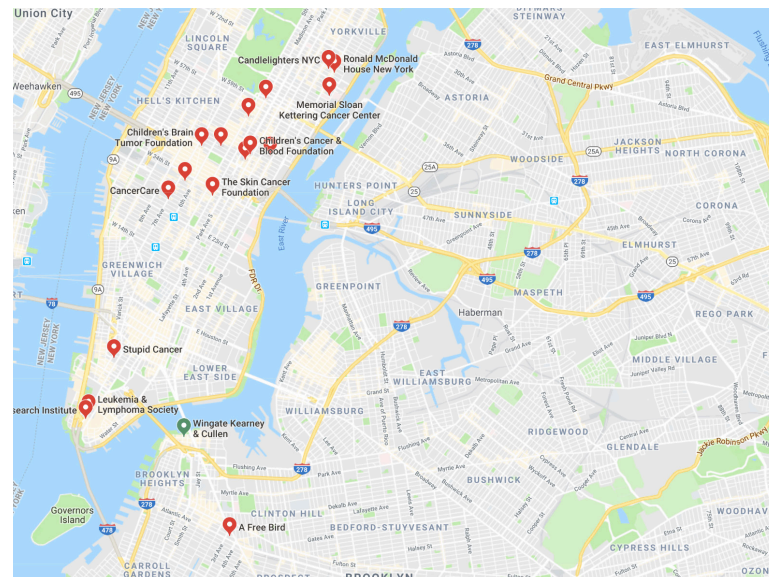
08	<b>BACKGROUND</b> A FREE BIRD ORGANIZATION PROCESS MAP PROJECT BRIEF THEORY OF CHANGE
18	<b>DESIGN PROCESS</b> USER RESEARCH & ANALYSIS IDENTIFYING THE ISSUE
26	<b>IDEATION</b> PROTOTYPES AND LEARNINGS ITERATIONS DESIGN PRINCIPLES
42	<b>INTERVENTION</b> WHAT IS IT? HOW DOES IT WORK? IMPLEMENTATION
58	<b>MEASUREMENT &amp; EVALUATION</b> PROTOTYPING QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER M&E
64	<b>REFLECTION &amp; NEXT STEPS</b>
67	<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>

---



# BACKGROUND

PROCESS MAP  
PROJECT BRIEF  
THEORY OF CHANGE



## PROBLEM FRAMING

There are 1.5 million informal caregivers in the city and over 8.6 million people who live in NYC. 2.4 million are children and adolescents under the age of 20.<sup>2</sup>

About 1,000 children under the age of 20 are diagnosed with cancer every year in New York.<sup>3</sup> That means there are twice that number of families who are affected by cancer. Guess who takes on the most burden from this news; moms. With only a handful of organizations that work with childhood cancer, moms don't have too many options to turn to for support aside from their own families.

Many of the stories were the same from each of the moms I spoke to. One of the moms told me this:

"When my son was diagnosed, everybody just disappeared, some of them just never come back, some people just don't know how to deal with illness or don't know what to say and don't want any part of it, and will disappear. Even people that we used to go to barbeques and spend weekends with, they're just gone."

*Informal caregiving* refers to the help and support family members and friends provide daily to individuals who are either temporarily or permanently unable to function independently.

**"Parents need help because when their child is diagnosed, the entire family is affected by cancer."**

**Godni Amir**  
Founder & President  
A Free Bird Organization

<sup>2</sup>United States Census Bureau, "New York Population," 2019  
<sup>3</sup>New York State Department of Health, "Childhood Cancers," 2019



## A FREE BIRD'S MISSION IS TO EMPOWER EACH CHILD TO FLY FREE WITH THE ARTS.

More than 10,000 children in the United States under the age of 15 will be diagnosed with cancer this year. We believe that access to arts education can help children in their battle against this pervasive disease, in which diagnoses are only increasing year over year.

At A Free Bird, we see firsthand every day how impactful creative expression can be during the hardest time in a child's life. The arts help them process complex emotions, find joy, and express things they can't always say in words.

Therapeutic arts have also been found to have numerous benefits to physical and mental health:

In an examination of multiple studies, researchers found that creative arts therapies significantly reduced anxiety, depression, and pain in cancer patients, and improved their overall quality of life. (JAMA Internal Medicine, May 2013)

Other studies have shown artistic interventions to improve clinical outcomes, reduce hospital stays, reduce pain and improve moods in patients contending with chronic diseases. (American Journal of Public Health, February 2010)

Beyond the health benefits, arts education gives children something to look forward to during long days at the hospital, as well as a sense of personal accomplishment, a passion they can share with others, and an enduring love for the arts.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>A Free Bird Organization, "Our Mission," 2019



## DISCOVER

THE FIRST STEP OF THE PROCESS WAS THE HARDEST. I STARTED OFF THINKING THAT I WANTED TO DO MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKING START-UP CULTURE. BUT THE CHALLENGE WAS FINDING A PROBLEM THAT I'M PASSIONATE ABOUT, A COMMUNITY THAT I WANTED TO INVEST MY TIME AND EFFORTS INTO.

## EXPLORE

WHEN I MOVED INTO THE EXPLORING PHASE OF MY RESEARCH, I EXPLORED SO MANY PATHS. I INTERVIEWED 3 STARTUP COMPANIES, ALL IN DIFFERENT FIELDS, TECH, HUMAN-CENTERED, AND NON-PROFIT.

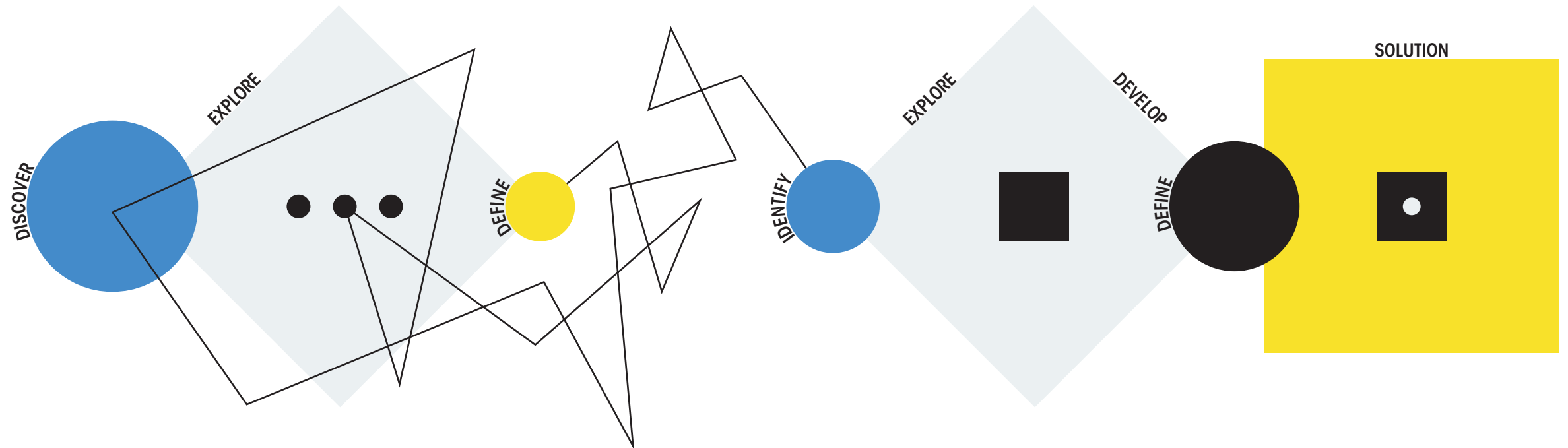
## DEFINE

SERENDIPITY TOOK OVER HERE. AT THE TIME, I HAD ALREADY BEEN WORKING FOR A NON-PROFIT, A FREE BIRD, AND THE THOUGHT STRUCK ME THAT I HAD FOUND A COMMUNITY THAT I WAS INVESTED IN ALREADY. FINALLY WITH MY COMMUNITY IN SIGHT, I HAD TO DO A FAST GOING BACK AND FORTH FROM DISCOVERY AND EXPLORING IN A SHORT TIME FRAME.

## IDENTIFY

THE FIRST THING I DID ONCE I FOUND THE COMMUNITY WAS CREATE A MAP OF THE ORGANIZATION AND INTERVIEWED ALMOST ALL OF THE MAIN MANAGERS OF THE ORGANIZATION. WHAT I FOUND WAS THAT THERE WAS A LACK OF A SUPPORT FOR THE PARENTS.

## PROCESS MAP PROJECT BRIEF THEORY OF CHANGE



## EXPLORE

ONCE I HAD IDENTIFIED THAT THERE WAS A LACK OF SUPPORT FOR PARENTS, I LOOKED TO SECONDARY RESEARCH TO HELP REALLY DEFINE MY GOALS. I LEARNED THAT MOMS ARE THE PARENT THAT TAKE ON THE MOST BURDEN, SO I INTERVIEWED THE THREE MOMS OF THE FREE BIRD EXISTING SUPPORT GROUP.

## DEVELOP

THROUGH INTERVIEWS AND ANALYSIS, I WAS ABLE TO IDENTIFY SOME OF THE MAIN PROBLEMS AND DEVELOP A NEW SORT OF SUPPORT GROUP FOR THE MOMS OF A FREE BIRD. BY LEVERAGING WHAT THE PROGRAM WAS ALREADY DOING FOR THE CHILDREN, I WAS ABLE TO TWEAK AND CREATE A NEW MORE FLEXIBLE AND FUN VERSION OF A SUPPORT GROUP.

## DEFINE

DEFINING THE FINAL PROBLEM WAS NOT EASY. THE PROBLEM WAS THAT MOMS HAD SUCH UNPREDICTABLE SCHEDULES AND TRYING TO WORK AROUND THAT WAS NOT AN EASY TASK. SOME OF THE CHALLENGES THE FINAL INTERVENTION NEEDED TO ADDRESS WERE UNPREDICTABLE SITUATIONS, INCLUSION, AND TIMING.

## SOLUTION

THE OFFLINE SOCIAL CLUB WAS THE ANSWER. MOMS NEEDED TO FEEL LIKE THEY COULD HAVE TIME TO BE THEMSELVES. WHILE 99% OF THE TIME THEY ARE BUSY BEING MOMS TO THEIR CHILDREN LIVING WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS, I FOUND THAT THEY STILL NEEDED AND WANTED THAT 1% TO BE THEMSELVES, TO BE SOCIAL AND LAUGH AND HAVE A GOOD TIME.

## A FREE BIRD

When I started working with A Free Bird Organization, I had no idea how involved I would get until I realized I had the perfect community to partner with for my thesis studies. In the beginning, I created a map of the organization to start with, to see how the organization is run, and if there were any opportunity areas for me to focus on. Upon creating the final organization map of the programs, I found that there was so much revolved around helping children but a less than active support group for the parents.

To be able to work with the children, the organization had to go through parents. And so the ultimate goal was to get the parents involved and then get the kids involved. There was my opportunity area. And so I began my research in support groups, and more specifically, the search to create a newer and better support group than there ever has been.

## CHALLENGES

### UNPREDICTABLE SITUATIONS

There were a lot of difficult challenges facing the issue that I was dealing with. A couple of those challenges were dealing with unpredictable situations, especially since the moms that I was working with already had such an unpredictable nature. Their children would get sick or their cancer/chronic illness would act up and that would then translate to the moms being unavailable for events, or times that we had scheduled for our next events and prototypes.

### TIMING

Another thing we had a hard time with was the timing of prototypes and events, this was one of the most difficult things, because they hardly had any time anyways, but were still trying to make time to come out.

### INCLUSION

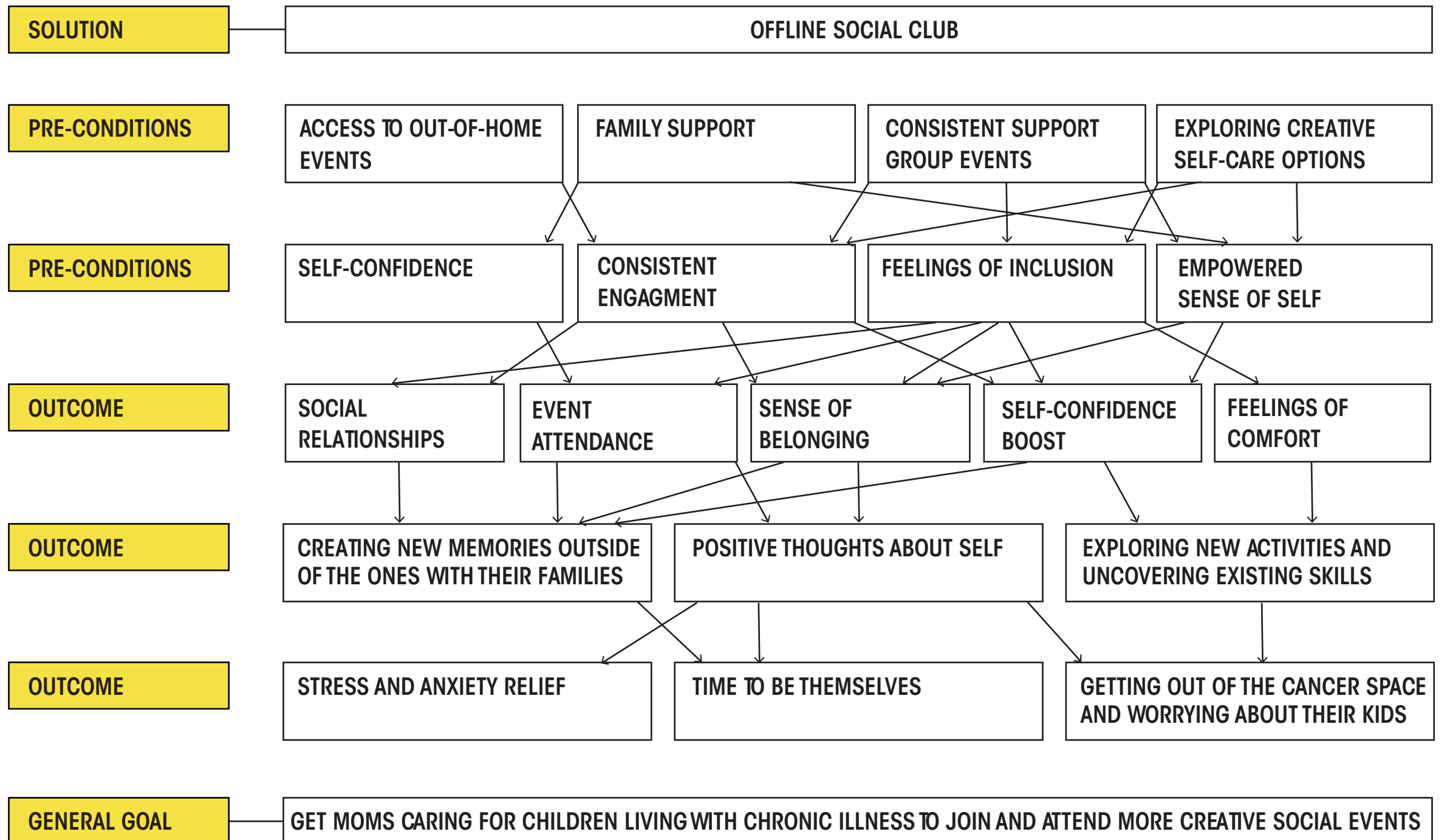
Finally, one of the overarching themes that was difficult to overcome was inclusion. Because some of the moms wouldn't be able to come out, or would call in the day of a prototype saying that their child was sick again, it was hard to make sure that each and every mom that was a part of the prototyping group was and felt included no matter if they couldn't actually make the event.

## OBJECTIVE

The overarching objective of my thesis was to make mental health a priority, but moms were unable to make their mental health a priority because of their busy schedules which resulted in them being under a lot of stress. This led to very little time for self-care. Moms had even forgotten how to care for themselves. So my final emerging objective was to provide them with a one-stop-shop resource that allows them to explore different self-care options according to their interests. Not only to provide them with this resource, but they could use it to compare with their schedule to match the best days and times to attend an event.



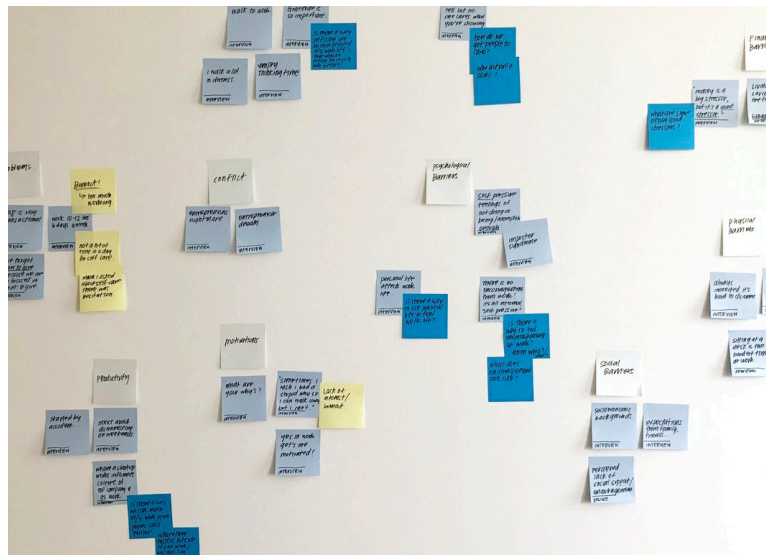
PROCESS MAP  
PROJECT BRIEF  
THEORY OF CHANGE





# DESIGN PROCESS

## USER RESEARCH ANALYSIS IDENTIFYING THE ISSUE



## INTRODUCTION

Upon identifying the organization and the problem space, there was a lot of research that needed to be done. Since by the time I had realized that A Free Bird was the organization that I could partner with, I had only been working with them for a month, and only knew my duties as a volunteer for the organization in the PR (public relations) department. So I had to get more involved, and find my footing in the organization and define my process to get to the root of the problem and find a solution.

I first started within the organization. I interviewed the founder, his assistant, the program coordinator, the PR associates, and other volunteers of the organization. Then upon realizing that there was the opportunity to create an active support group, I was able to work and gain the trust of the organization founder and ask to work in the support group department, which then they decided to make me the manager of. Once this happened, I needed access to the parents so I had to go through the programs department coordinator to get the contacts of these parents who were already a part of the organization's support group. There I conducted to start, three interviews with the existing members, and found a few common shared problems. Matching this up with my secondary research, I was able to identify the issue to create a final intervention.



## USER RESEARCH

### ANALYSIS

#### IDENTIFYING THE ISSUE

**“It’s nice to pick each other’s brains and learn things that you didn’t know. It’s validating to know that other parents are experiencing some of the same issues that me and my child were going through.”**

**Karon**  
AFB Mom

## SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Moms and families affected with cancer are not only a part of one or two organizations dedicated to children living with chronic illness, they need all the support they can get. When I was speaking with one of the moms, she told about how she was a part of all these different organizations so that she could go to events and meet other families going through the same problems.

In speaking with a few moms in A Free Bird, I also learned that there is a sense of community and affirmation/confirmation. By spending time with other families that have the same problems, both families can confirm what their child is experiencing. This creates time and opportunities to build relationships with one another through commonality and validation through shared stories.

## INSIGHTS

- *Mothers have forgotten to take care of themselves because they are busy taking care of others.*
- *Consistency contributes to better self-care because consistency offers options to moms.*
- *Parents don’t have a lot of time for relationships beyond the one with their children/family.*
- *There is built up anxiety that makes sleep difficult because moms are always worried about their children living with illness.*
- *Mothers need affirmation and support from a support system.*
- *Accountability lends itself to relationships and bonds.*

## ANALYSIS THROUGH MAPPING

When I asked moms about why they joined AFB instead of any other organization, they said that AFB had many wonderful opportunities and cared not only about the child diagnosed with cancer, but also their siblings. And the fact that it was an art exploration for their kids was a plus.

I thought about this for a moment, and read in between the lines that they joined this organization because of its unique approach to helping pediatric cancer patients cope with their situations through art.

What is so great about art? Why was this the factor for why they joined? Is art important to them? Did they have previous experiences with art that made them immediately decide that art was the best way to go? So I did a little digging into art therapy.

**Art therapy helps children, adolescents, and adults explore their emotions, improve self-esteem, manage addictions, relieve stress, improve symptoms of anxiety and depression, and cope with** a physical illness or disability. Art therapists work with individuals, couples, and groups in a variety of settings, including private counseling, hospitals, wellness centers, correctional institutions, senior centers, and other community organizations. No artistic talent is necessary for art therapy to succeed, because the therapeutic process is not about the artistic value of the work, but rather about finding associations between the creative choices made and a client's inner life. The artwork can be used as a springboard for reawakening memories and telling stories that may reveal messages and beliefs from the unconscious mind.<sup>2</sup>

Upon coming across this definition of Art Therapy, I realized that the uniqueness of the organization, using art therapy as its solution, needed to be a grounded principle going forward in my final intervention. If children could explore the arts and pursue their dreams, moms should also be able to explore the arts.



<sup>2</sup>Psychology Today Canada, "Art Therapy," 2019

USER RESEARCH  
ANALYSIS  
IDENTIFYING THE ISSUE

**Moms had forgotten how to take care of themselves because they are too busy taking care of their family.**

Instead of reinventing the wheel, since I was already working with an organization that uses art as its main direction, I thought about if there is a way for me to utilize what I am good at and what the organization already, but to pivot it towards the parents.

Since I heard from multiple moms that they would like to do other things, but they wouldn't know what to do and who to do it with. It was after hearing this from several moms that I realized that mothers have forgotten how to take care of themselves because they are too busy caring for their families.

**“I wouldn't know what to do with myself if my son wasn't sick, do I go get a mani—what do you call it? Mani-pedi?”**

**Karon**  
AFB Mom



# IDEATION

PROTOTYPES AND LEARNINGS  
ANALYSIS  
DESIGN PRINCIPLES

## HOW DO I LEARN FROM PROTOTYPES?

When we were entering the ideation and prototyping phase of the process, I wanted to test a few different things based off of what I heard from moms. Before my first prototype, I only had a list of insights, and wasn't sure how to go about testing prototypes. And once I do create a prototype, how do I learn from it and what do I do to iterate upon it?

But the first thing that needed to be done was get the first prototypes out and then learn from them. So from each of the prototypes, I was able to learn one main insight which then I pulled together to create the final intervention.

The first prototype taught me that family members gain enjoyment when mothers engage in something that is outside of the usual routine. The second prototype validated my initial finding from my previous user research that community offers validation. Finally, my final prototype before iteration was testing the learning that if mom's had somebody to go with to events and activities, would they go?

I learned that just putting something out into the world was the best way to learn anything. In this phase of my research, I was stuck, but the easiest way to get unstuck was to create something and learn from it. No matter what it is, there is always something to learn.

# PROTOTYPES AND LEARNINGS – WRECK YOUR JOURNAL

## ANALYSIS

### DESIGN PRINCIPLES

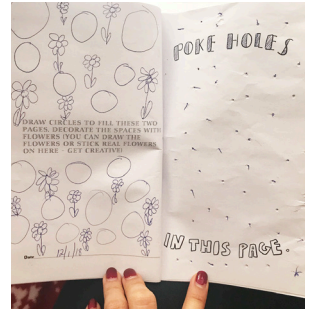
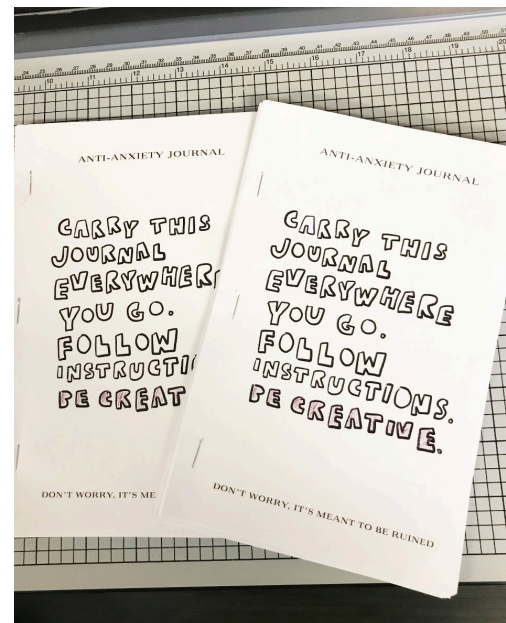
## WRECK YOUR JOURNAL

For my first prototype, I took one of my insights about how moms have forgotten how to take care of themselves and created a few objectives.

- If given prompts, will moms engage in the activities?
- How much does it take for moms to start building more relationships outside of their family?
- Can this prototype serve as a form of learning about themselves in some way?
- Can I leverage creativity (like AFB and my personal skills) in this activity/prototype?

**I wanted to test social barriers, anxiety relief, and self discovery in this prototype.**

Through a series of creative and quirky prompts, acclaimed guerilla artist Keri Smith created the “Wreck your journal” which encourages journalers to engage in destructive acts—poking holes through pages, adding photos and defacing them, painting pages with coffee, coloring outside the lines, and more—in order to experience the true creative process. With Smith’s unique sensibility, readers are introduced to a new way of art- and journal-making, discovering novel ways to escape the fear of the blank page and fully engage in the creative process.<sup>4</sup>



## LEARNINGS

If the family is happy, then I’m happy.

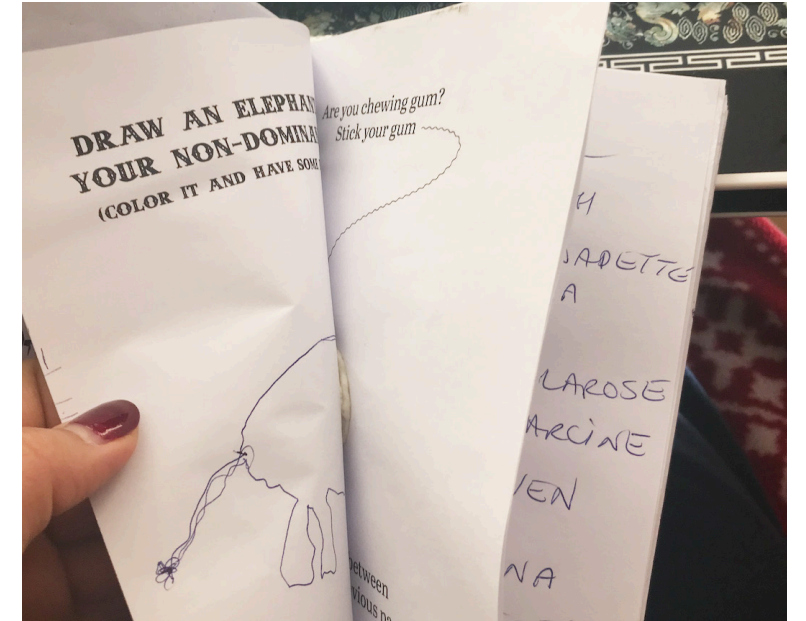
Experience should be something that is personal but also shared, which leads to a sort of full family experience.

Mothers need validation this leads into also the personal experience that can be experienced fully with the family without too much effort, a sort of good unexpected consequence.

Doing something for herself can bring delight to the entire family, which she has expressed to me previously in an interview that she is happy when her family and kids are happy.

## NEW QUESTIONS

*Validation might be able to come from other mothers as well. Is there something that mothers can share back and forth amongst themselves that contributes to social balance without having to leave their personal lives at home with their family and children?*



**“I recorded my mom jumping up and down on the book outside, it was so funny.”**

**Elijah**  
16-yr old, living with chronic illness

<sup>4</sup>Good Reads, “Wreck This Journal,” 2019

# PROTOTYPES AND LEARNINGS – INSTAGRAM COMMUNITY

## ANALYSIS DESIGN PRINCIPLES

### INSTAGRAM COMMUNITY

For my second prototype, I created an Instagram page where I posted inspirational quotes, images, and pose questions that maybe caregivers and mothers who have questions but haven't had the chance to ask them.

From this prototype, I wanted to learn just the simplest thing, how far or how much support an online community can get from just a simple thing like looking at or interacting with some instagram posts.

**I wanted to test here how much of a demand there is for something that is easy to access, as easy as logging into Instagram to find support.**

### NEW QUESTIONS

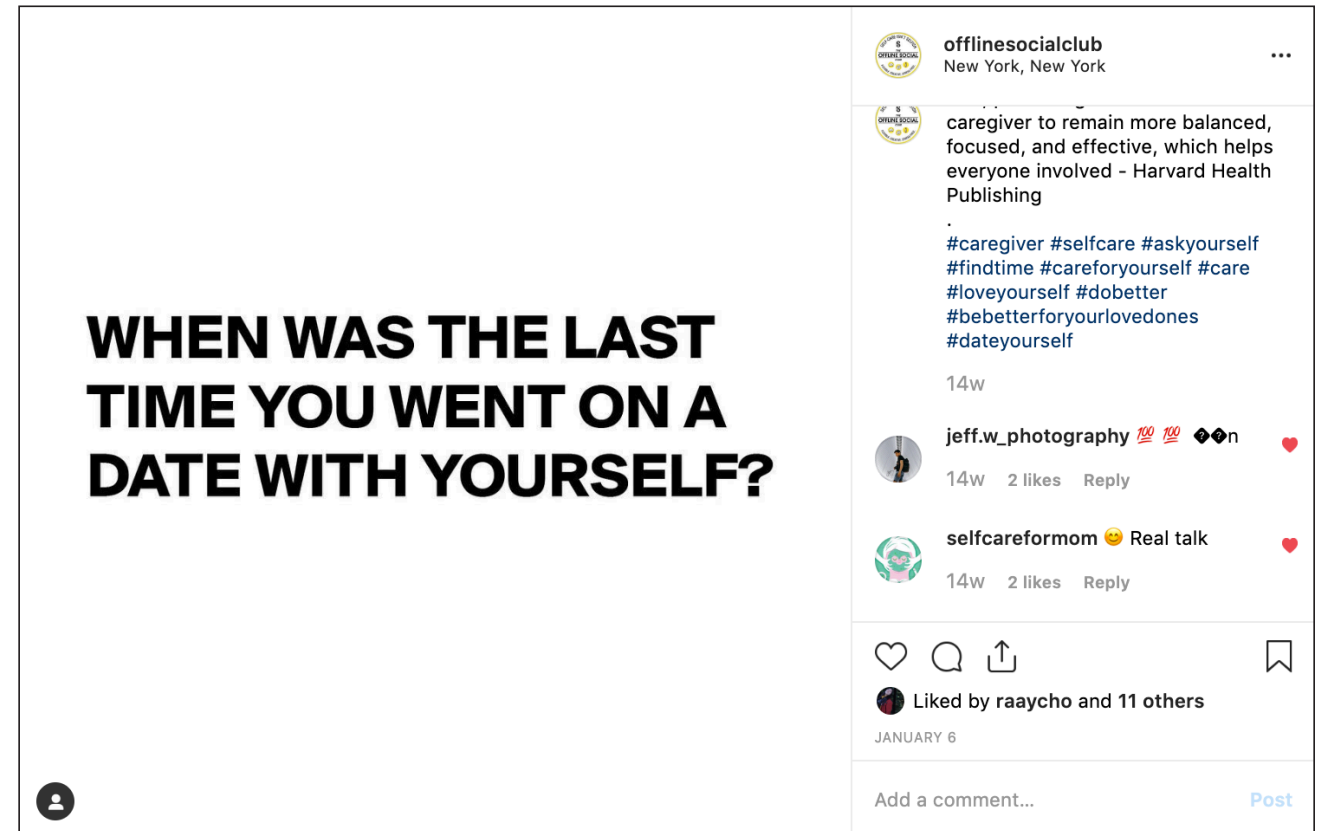
*Is there a way to get people to engage more? How might I get people to engage with each other on social media more and possibly take the discussion off of social media? Is there something that I can or encourage mothers/caregivers to share that can become encouragement from mother to mother that they can relate to and create and sustain relationships from?*

### LEARNINGS

Moms enjoy the simplicity of being told something or just simply "liking" a photo because it is easy, and it brings a bit of validation to something they might have been thinking or not been thinking but can relate to.

A simple heart or sending a 'like' brings people a bit of joy to their physical self.

Reading questions that somebody else poses, validates the questions they have because it is a question that they now know that others have as well and they are not alone.





# PROTOTYPES AND LEARNINGS – A NIGHT OUT IN THE CLUB

## ANALYSIS

## DESIGN PRINCIPLES

### A NIGHT OUT IN THE CLUB

One of the moms who RSVP'd to the NY Comedy Club Support Group Event wasn't able to come and actually emailed me while I was on my way to meet with them in front of the club. But luckily, this mother and her family were able to come out all the way from Long Island!

And since the event was only for moms and actually only for the moms of support group, only Karon and I went in and watched the show. When I asked Karon if she wanted to bring the her kids and her husband into the show, she responded:

**"This is my night! They can wait for me."**

*(Karon was confident in going to have fun because of what Elijah said about not wanting to ruin her night with his fever)*

***I wanted to test if I were to create an event outside of moms' usual environment, would they come out?***

This event validated and solved a few questions that I was having within the first few phases of my research, that moms are not making time for themselves because they are busy and they don't have anybody to go with to events and activities. But once the activities and events were planned and I was there to go with them, they made the time and were able to come out and have a little bit of fun.

But I ran into the problem of a mom not being able to make the event and so I had to iterate and think about how to set up my future iterations so that even if moms were to miss one event, they could still feel like they have more opportunities in the future.

### LEARNINGS

Moms really need time for themselves and when the opportunity presents itself, they take it! Especially since it was an event especially for the moms, it has a big impact!

But, events for moms are not the final intervention. I learned that events are a step in the process for bringing the moms the opportunities to de-stress but that was not enough.



**"Thank you for being great company to this mum who needed some time to be herself."**

**Karon**  
AFB Mom

# PROTOTYPES AND LEARNINGS – ITERATION

## ANALYSIS

## DESIGN PRINCIPLES

### PAINT LIKE VAN GOGH

A Night Out in the Club offered me valuable insights which then were used to tweak and iterate upon for this prototype. I learned that moms didn't feel like they got the right email in the last event and so didn't reply because they hadn't gotten the full onboarding of the support group yet. So this time I sent out individualized invitations to moms, and by doing so, I was able to get more of a response.

### ITERATION

The problem I saw with the last prototype was that since some of the moms just joined the Free Bird support group, they weren't sure if they too were invited to the first event of the year that A Free Bird allowed me to hold. So there was a factor of feeling like they didn't belong yet, so that was one of my main challenges that arose - Inclusion.

So in iterating upon the last event that was a success, I created more inclusive way of sending out emails; personalized invitations to our next event; Paint Night.

Another iteration that I made was in inviting another person who wasn't a part of the Support Group to the event as well to create more of a social environment. This was taken well and the conversations that came out of the night were different than I had imagined them. Both moms didn't talk about their kids at all, which provided me with another great insight that validated one of my objectives that moms need to get out of their usual environments.



### LEARNINGS

Positive encouragement happens naturally when in an arts setting. Both moms were looking over at each other's works and commenting and laughing the entire time. It was nice to see them be able to lift each other up because that's exactly what they need.

As well as moms were able to get the distraction they didn't know they needed, for a couple of hours.



**“I loved chatting and laughing with you guys and Karon and seeing how different but still beautiful our pieces came out to be.”**

**Cynthia**  
AFB Mom

PROTOTYPES AND LEARNINGS  
**ANALYSIS**  
DESIGN PRINCIPLES

**Events that are specifically targetting the moms are great and appreciated and give moms the time they need to get back to being themselves.**

*Laughing decreases a little bit of anxiety (when we first met up, her face was a bit crinkled up and looking worried for leaving her son and family, but at the end of the night, she couldn't stop laughing and smiling - and this is an obvious sign of even a little bit of anxiety lessened in her day)*

*Family gains pleasure in moms having fun (this was a good insight for me to be able to meet the family again and glean that the family also supports and wants their mom to have time for herself - this is motivation for the moms to do things for themselves). But the final intervention has to be something that makes moms want to keep coming back because it fits their schedule.*

**“Please let us know whenever the next events are because we all know Karon deserves nights like these for herself.”**

**Lennie**  
Husband of AFB mom

PROTOTYPES AND LEARNINGS  
ANALYSIS  
DESIGN PRINCIPLES

**“Laughter and comedy  
is good for the soul  
or a great distraction  
for a few hours from  
worrying about your  
child’s health.”**

**Karon**  
AFB Mom

**1. Flexible**  
**2. Creative**  
**3. Stress-free**

Through the process, I was able to come up with three design principles that I want to keep in mind going forward as the intervention starts to grow. Flexible. Creative. Stress-free. I came up with “flexible” because the moms needed to be able to fit events into their complex schedules but also if they were to miss one event, that it would be okay because there are other events that would better fit their schedules.

“Creative” is a big one to keep in mind because creativity contributes to maintenance or reconstruction of a positive identity. Not only that but individuals who engage in creative arts exhibit statistically significant improvements in various measures of physical health, reductions in visits to physicians, and better immune system functioning.<sup>5</sup>

And lastly, the third and final principle that I want to keep in mind is “stress-free.” Not in a clinical sense, but more of giving these mothers the opportunity to engage in activities outside of their usual environments, which act as great distractions from their daily lives being mothers.

---

<sup>5</sup>Medical News Today, “Benefits of Creativity,” 2019

By promoting self-discovery through creative self-care, the Offline Social Club creates guilt-free opportunities for moms of children living with chronic illness to boost productivity through social interactions.





# INTERVENTION

## WHAT IS IT?

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

## IMPLEMENTATION

## WHAT IS IT?

OSC is an an independent aggregated subscription based resource that offers moms free opportunities around the city to have a few hours to get out of their usual environments and be themselves. The Offline Social Club acts as an online resource for offline opportunities. Moms get to join a supportive community and develop meaningful relationships with others through events that are specifically tailored for moms of children living with chronic illness.

What the OSC offers moms is a time to get away, relieve some anxiety, and socialize outside of their usual circle and when they are back with their family, to be more present and productive.

One of the benefits of attending social events are having face-to-face socialization is a method of self-care because moms get to learn from one another and take knowledge and turn it into action.<sup>6</sup>

The Offline Social Club makes sure to address four of my main insights that I learned during my research with moms.

- It addresses the need to feel validated through a community
- “Night for her” empowers and encourages moms to be social therefore boosting productivity
- Social support helps to encourage moms to turn knowledge into action

<sup>6</sup>Skillshare, “Self-care for Productivity” 2019

**“This is incredibly in line with the vision I have!”**

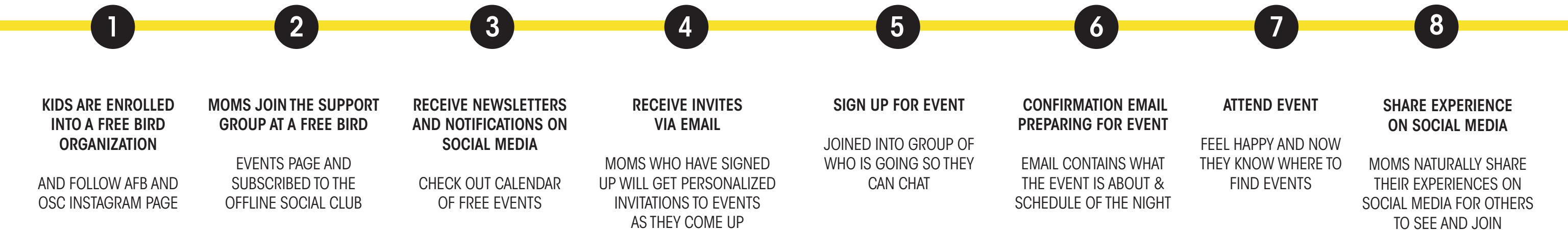
**Godni Amir**  
Founder & President  
*A Free Bird Organization*

WHAT IS IT?  
HOW DOES IT WORK?  
IMPLEMENTATION

HOW DOES IT WORK?

When moms enroll their children into A Free Bird Organization, they too are directly enrolled in the support group at A Free Bird. In the support group, they are introduced to the Offline Social Club as a resource that offers creative self-care options around the city. By having access and communication with others, moms are able to turn knowledge into action.

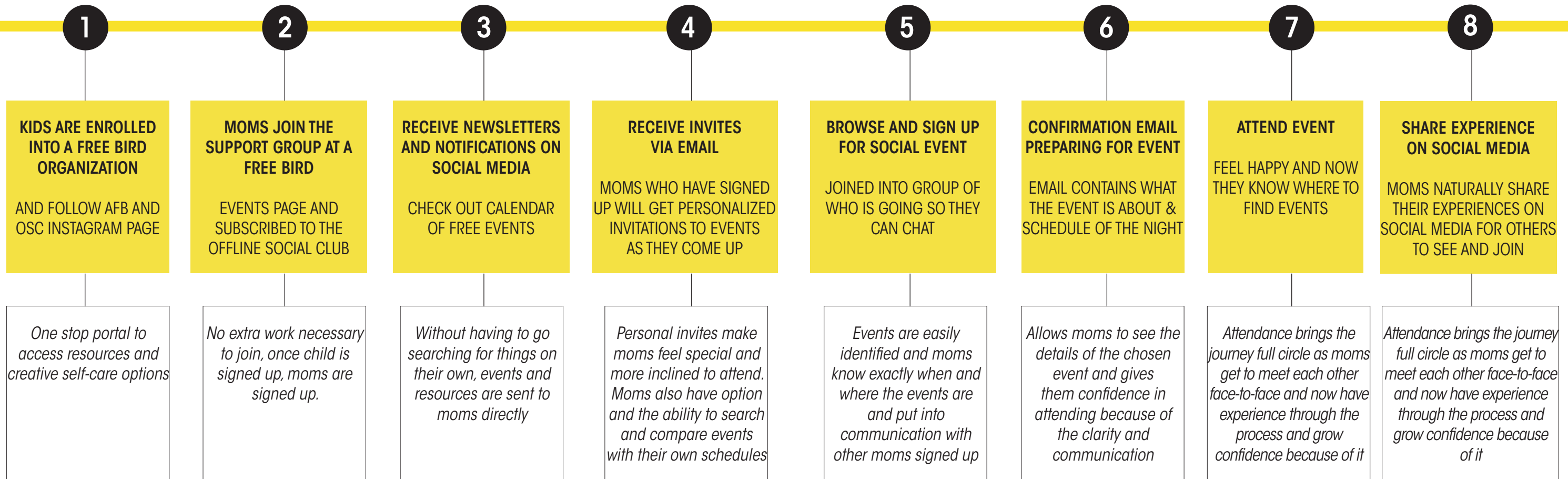
They can then go online to the Offline Social Club website and subscribe to the newsletters where then they will gain free access to the resources and multiple different events that specialize in the arts around the city. Since moms have a complex schedule, being a working mom, and taking care of their families, they don't have very much time to dedicate for themselves. So what the OSC does is it gives moms the satisfaction of knowing that they can attend an event event in whatever part of the city they are in.



WHAT IS IT?  
 HOW DOES IT WORK? – USER JOURNEY  
 IMPLEMENTATION

**USER JOURNEY**

The first row of the Journey map is what the process through from the start of when they join an organization to after they have attended an Offline Social Club event using the online resource portal. What exactly happens in each step is illustrated in the next step down where I've identified the **strengths** of each of the steps of the mom's journey in joining A Free Bird to how they get to know about Offline Social Club to what happens after they attend an event and how they feel.





WHAT IS IT?  
HOW DOES IT WORK?  
IMPLEMENTATION

## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The Offline Social Club is a new kind of support group that will be offered as a resource to moms at A Free Bird Organization – AFB – and offer support to the mothers of the children enrolled in the organization programs. Support will be provided through flexible creative self-care opportunities to decompress. These opportunities are low-stakes, offer moms time to focus on themselves guilt-free in a new environment, and come in the form of events where moms can interact with other moms who have similar experiences in a safe environment.

Flexibility and inclusivity is offered through a digital component that shows an aggregated calendar of events from around the city that moms can decide which to go to and register through the online platform. The calendar gives moms the option to go to one event, or five events. Depending on their schedules, they will be able to go on the website and decide which event fits the best to their needs. All they have to do is look at the calendar and decide to join an event through the website and at the same time have the option to send out emails to friends whom they wish to invite to the event.

After registration, the organization receives an email to their support group manager which then they will organize volunteers for the day, publicize the event through social media to invite other parents who might not have seen or know about

the event yet. Advertising the event on social media also offers moms a chance for the event to register and go with the knowing that there is another mom going as well.

The Club not only offers moms multiple different options for creative self-care, but should they miss an event, they don't have to feel like they missed out at all. Since one of the big challenges through the process was unpredictable situations, this new method takes care of those circumstances and brings an inclusive approach to these moms.

Once the event is over, moms will receive an email for evaluating their experience at the event they signed up for and attended. These evaluations will be used for future events and making sure that we are achieving the goal we have set for these moms.

## SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION

The Offline Social Club will be implemented at A Free Bird Organization as a new form of a support group. But to make it scalable, it can stand alone as a digital platform for moms and eventually families to be able to go onto and register and find free events to go to as a family affected by cancer and other chronic illnesses.



**“Afterwards, I felt relaxed and had a happy heart.”**

**Cynthia**  
AFB Mom

**“So. Much. Fun. I  
really enjoyed myself.  
Awesome evening.”**

**Karon**  
AFB Mom



**“This is beyond my expectations.  
We will reach to all parents, and  
child life with this.”**

**Godni Amir**

Founder & President  
*A Free Bird Organization*

## **SCALING**

The Offline Social Club has the opportunity to grow outwards and reach many different organizations. By creating and working with A Free Bird in developing this new club, the potential for growth is beyond just cancer organizations, but can scale out to informal caregivers in general and eventually be an informal support network for those who don't have access to the funds or pathways to being able to attend social events.

The possibilities are endless. By connecting moms through organizations for children living with chronic illness, their support system grows easily because some moms are already familiar with each other through childhood cancer organizations. The Offline Social Club is simply a bridge between organizations, a bridge for fostering new relationships and growing old ones. This low-stakes online resource provides moms a way to bring fun back into their busy lives. They can be a mom for 99% of the time, but that last 1% they can use for themselves.

Eventually, what I want is for this resource to be shared with other organizations so that we can create an informal network of support for parents throughout New York City with children who are dealing with chronic illness and eventually, for this to be a resource for informal caregivers around the city. A community of informal caregivers who can offer each other support and attend social events throughout the city and meet with each other.

**Karen King** was 🍷 drinking watching comedy with Rachel Cho at New York Comedy Club (Gramercy).  
January 27 · New York · 🌐

FUNNY Night..Lmao.  
I so needed this tonight. Every one on stage was hilarious.. 😂😂😂😂😂😂  
😂😂😂😂 I was in such awesome.company.  
Love you Rachel Chol, you are the best 🥰❤️

**New York Comedy Club (Gramercy)**  
Comedy Club · New York  
Karen King has been here

You and 4 others      1 Comment

👍 Like      💬 Comment

**Rachel Cho** ❤️  
Like · Reply · 11w

Write a comment... 🗨️ 📷 🎬 📄

**afreebirdorg** · Following

kazl82ux Thank You A Free Bird and Rachel for a much needed break doing something relaxing as well as fun after a stressful day.. I was in good company. I went home with my art work and feeling much better. 🙌👍❤️🙌

7W 2 likes Reply

emergeliteltd Thank you for sharing this.

6W 1 like Reply

beyondbeaniemh How're you dear! I am brand rep for bB, I came across your account and wanted to ask if you would like to learn and eventually join our rep

👍 🗨️ 📄 📌

Liked by kazl82ux and 58 others  
FEBRUARY 26

Add a comment... Post

---

**afreebirdorg** · Following  
New York Comedy Club

11w

kazl82ux So much Fun. I really enjoyed myself.. Awesome evening.. Laughter and Comedy is good for the soul or a great distraction for a few hours from worrying about you child's health. Rachel is awesome. Thank You A Free Bird ❤️🙌👍

11W 1 like Reply

👍 🗨️ 📄 📌

Liked by kazl82ux and 43 others  
JANUARY 29

Add a comment... Post



# MEASUREMENT & EVALUATION

## PROTOTYPING QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

M&E

## PROTOTYPING & COLLECTING

In my research and prototyping, I took a few different approaches which all added up to my final intervention idea. My first prototype was a journal where moms could use as a way to relieve some stress or “color outside the lines.” Because one of my principles was to bring childhood back into adulthood, I wanted to give them something fun, but also bring back a little bit of play into their daily lives. Using this prototype, I was able to learn that moms just need a small push and a prompt to get them to do something. Since I learned that they don’t know what to do when they have free time, this journal, gave them fun prompts to fill up small moments of their day with a little activity that was outside of their usual routine.

My second prototype was to create an instagram account where I could bring together an online community through quotes of encouragement and asking questions that maybe others may have had but were unable to ask. And my last prototype is the final prototype that turned into a part of my intervention. Flexible opportunities for events through an online platform that brings moms together offline.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How might we get moms to think about themselves more?
- What is the ideal number of moms to get together to feel like a safe space social gathering?
- What sort of information do moms need to know before they sign up for an event?
- What method of accessibility can I design for moms to feel like they are a part of a community?
- What does being a part of a community feel like?
- What does support mean for moms who have none?
- How might I design for inclusivity for moms who have no time for even themselves?
- How does access mean to moms who have no time?

**“I plan to share more information about your support group with the parents I work with!”**

**Alexandra**  
AFB Mom

## MEASUREMENT & EVALUATION

Some of the questions I asked as a measurement tool in the prototypes were as follows:

- **What do you think about the event that you just attended?**
- **How comfortable do you feel speaking about your child with cancer with other moms?**
- **How likely are you to share this platform with other families/friends?**
- **After today’s event, do you think you’d attend more events in the future?**
- **How do you feel after attending the event?**
- **What were you hoping for when you signed up for the event that you did?**

I wanted to learn about what the parents thought about the event and through their replies, I wanted to see if the measurement questions were getting me closer to my final goal.



**“I love what you’re doing, you’re doing exactly what parents need. You are connecting them, and I can tell you that that is exactly what they need.”**

**Godni Amir**  
Founder & President  
*A Free Bird Organization*





# REFLECTIONS & NEXT STEPS

## BEING A SOCIAL LEADER

I've learned a lot this year about being a social leader. A big part of it comes from my journey as a leader. I was never one to call myself a leader, but through my research and learnings, I've come to realize that being a leader isn't about being in charge of others or even being seen as a leader amongst people, it's about growth and consistent dedication to learning. In my thesis journey, I've learned a lot about myself, in terms of work ethic and building relationships with people that I would never have come in contact with if it weren't for my thesis. Being a social leader doesn't come easy, but it doesn't come hard either. Curiosity and ever changing ideal future states that are designed with people are where I see my path to being a leader in social entrepreneurship.

## DON'T STOP, KEEP TREKKING

When I ran into bumps in the road, the best way to keep moving forward, no matter how big the bump was to just create something and keep moving forward. The bumps may bring you to travel left and right instead of forward, but both sides of the process lead me down a new path that I couldn't have gotten to without moving one step to the left or two steps to the right, and even backwards sometimes. The constant movement was the best way for me to

learn something new and continue on my path to the ideal future state, in this case, to create a platform for moms to gain back some of their independence.

## DON'T BE AFRAID TO GET HELP

Help is something that I'm not good at asking for. So even when help comes my way, I have this innate response to refuse the help I am receiving. But this year, I learned to slowly accept the help from students, professors, and people around me. Because without getting help and without an outside eye, I get stuck. The fact that I was working on a thesis that had to do exactly with help was very ironic too. Support; we all need it. Being able to offer an ear, and the opportunities to moms for them to explore their needs helped shine a light on the support that I myself need. Sometimes, we are put into situations or we subconsciously choose to put ourselves into situations that mirror parts of ourselves because in a way, we know we can grow from those experiences. This was one of those experiences for me here at DSI working on my thesis.

## NEXT STEPS

With the Offline Social Club launching at A Free Bird in the next coming weeks as the official Free Bird Support Group, I plan on partnering with other organizations to be able to offer the support that mom, of children living with chronic illness, need. While the intervention started with moms of children living with chronic illness, I plan on scaling it out to informal caregivers in New York City.

## CITATIONS

<sup>1</sup>AFreeBirdOrg. (n.d.). Homepage. Retrieved from <https://afreebird.org/>

<sup>2</sup>New York Population Size. (n.d.). Retrieved from [https://www.census.gov/glossary/#term\\_Populationestimates](https://www.census.gov/glossary/#term_Populationestimates)

<sup>3</sup>Department of Health. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/cancer/childhood/>

<sup>4</sup>Keri Smith. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.kerismith.com/>

<sup>5</sup>Cohut, M. (2018, February 16). How art and creativity can improve your health. Retrieved from <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/320947.php>

<sup>6</sup>Self Care for Productivity: Creating an Action Plan for Wellness at Work | Melissa Steginus. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.skillshare.com/classes/Self-Care-for-Productivity-Creating-an-Action-Plan-for-Wellness-at-Work/137518673>

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### 엄마, 아빠 – MOM & DAD

Thank you so much for never stopping believing in me and being there to support me throughout my journey. Thank you for never letting me give up and always telling me to keep trying and that no matter what, I can do whatever I dream of doing.

### 빈나 – SISTER DEAR

Binna, you came to New York at the perfect time, packing me my breakfast when I have to rush out the door, being there, praying for me and always encouraging me with “you got this,” whenever you could and telling me to stop and pray to God and sometimes even sort of guilt-tripping me into not working on Friday nights.

### Cheryl Heller – DSI PROGRAM FOUNDER

For giving me such an amazing opportunity to be able to be at DSI and work on and learn and grow in so many ways I never thought I would.

### Miya Osaki – THESIS ADVISOR

Thank you for constantly pushing me, helping me, reeling me back in, making me cast my net wide, believing in me and helping me shape my thesis.

### Godni Amir – A FREE BIRD ORGANIZATION

You are a rockstar. You started such an amazing organization that I am so happy to be able to have worked with throughout my process.

### ALL THE MOTHERS I WORKED WITH

Thank you so much for everything that you do for your children, for your families, and for helping me achieve my goals.

### MY THESIS GROUP

I have learned so much from you guys, thank you for being with me throughout my journey, even though you had no choice, I wouldn't have had it any other way. You guys (Pratiksha, Rutvi, Jason, Lu) are amazing!

### FELLOW DSI-ers

I want to thank my DSI cohort for teaching me so much. Just listening to everybody speak and always have such intelligent things to say, really taught me a lot. But I most want to thank Pratiksha Rathi and Yun-Ang Tsai (Nic). Talking through the thesis together, mapping out our plans together, and trying to figure out what the heck most of the next steps in our thesis meant. It's been one crazy ride.

