

As Are

CONVERSATIONS IN
COMMUNITY

a creative exploration | thesis '23

DESIGN FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION

SCHOOL OF VISUAL ARTS, NEW YORK



Riddhi Sabnis

sabnisriddhi06@gmail.com

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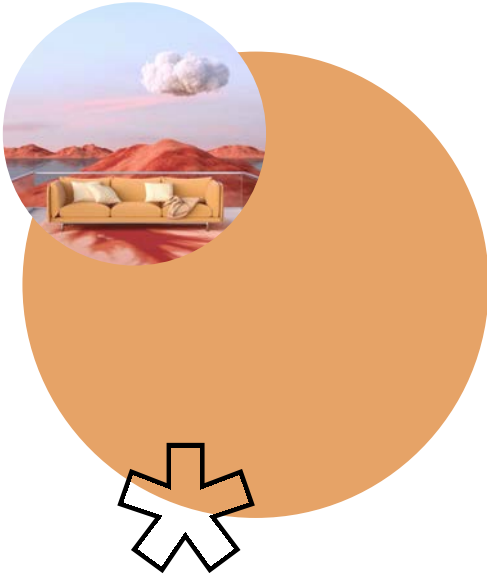
a note of care.

I'm so grateful to you for taking the time to read this.

My thesis actively addresses topics that can be overwhelming, feel intense or heavy. If you do find yourself needing to step away from the book, please don't hesitate to put it down and come back at a later time when you feel more centered. Caring for yourself and paying attention to your needs lives at the core of my thesis, and I invite you to practice it liberally and often! My work is grounded and informed by a Do-No-Harm approach, with me being mindful of any physical, virtual or emotional space I work, live and create in- along with the people in communities and their mental, physical & emotional wellbeing.

The terminology and language used in this book is informed by the ever evolving language around us - and as a result will always be a work in progress in some way or another. I welcome any feedback or suggestions you may have and I'm always excited to chat more if you'd like to get in touch!

You're welcome here - as you are!



The contents of this book does not give any medical advice/ diagnosis and should not be taken to mean as such.

This is purely an academic exploration and all opinions presented are my own.

Please contact your PCP or a health provider for more information.



for the part in you that dares
to dream, love and leap

This would work would not have been possible without the people that poured their efforts into it and guided me in ways beyond what this book can capture.

To my parents. Aai & Baba, for always believing in me, challenging me, and teaching me everything you know.

To Nishad and Anu, my eternal cheerleaders, supporters and believers!

To my absolutely magical friends. Krutika, Sophia, Pallavi & Brittany. Your softness, kindness, love and joy have truly been the thing that's seen me through this. I've learnt so much from each of you, and I'm truly grateful to know you.

To Parth for his humour, love, support, kindness and unwavering faith in me. You keep me grounded. "Like fog at an airport."

To my sister Sayalee. We may not always be in the same place, but so much of who I am is because of you. Having that to come back to has helped shape me into who I am as a person, friend, sister and designer.

To Poonam, Ajay, Sahil, Suhani, Sohan, Duke & Chase. The only home I could always go back to - your presence has kept me sane!

To Akanksha. It's like I've had a part of home here with me in this new city. I could not be more grateful.

To Karen Proctor, your vision, authenticity and love for leadership has shown me so much of the people we can and we are yet to be.

To Marc & Hanna, whose magical presence and kindness is the most wonderful thing I have known.

To Katy Weber, Rachael Dietkus and all the wonderful, brilliant women who are an inspiration everyday and embody the change they want to see in the world.

To Miya Osaki, thank you for introducing me to a world that has helped me find who I am.

I would also like to thank my thesis advisors Lona Vincent, Mari Nakano, Kara Meyer & Sahar Ghaheri. Your perspective, challenges and guidance have been tools to navigate this tricky, complex and heavy journey!

This list is nowhere close to the end. Everyone who has been a part of this journey in some way - thank you. I appreciate, love and I'm grateful for everything you've been and everything you've done for me.

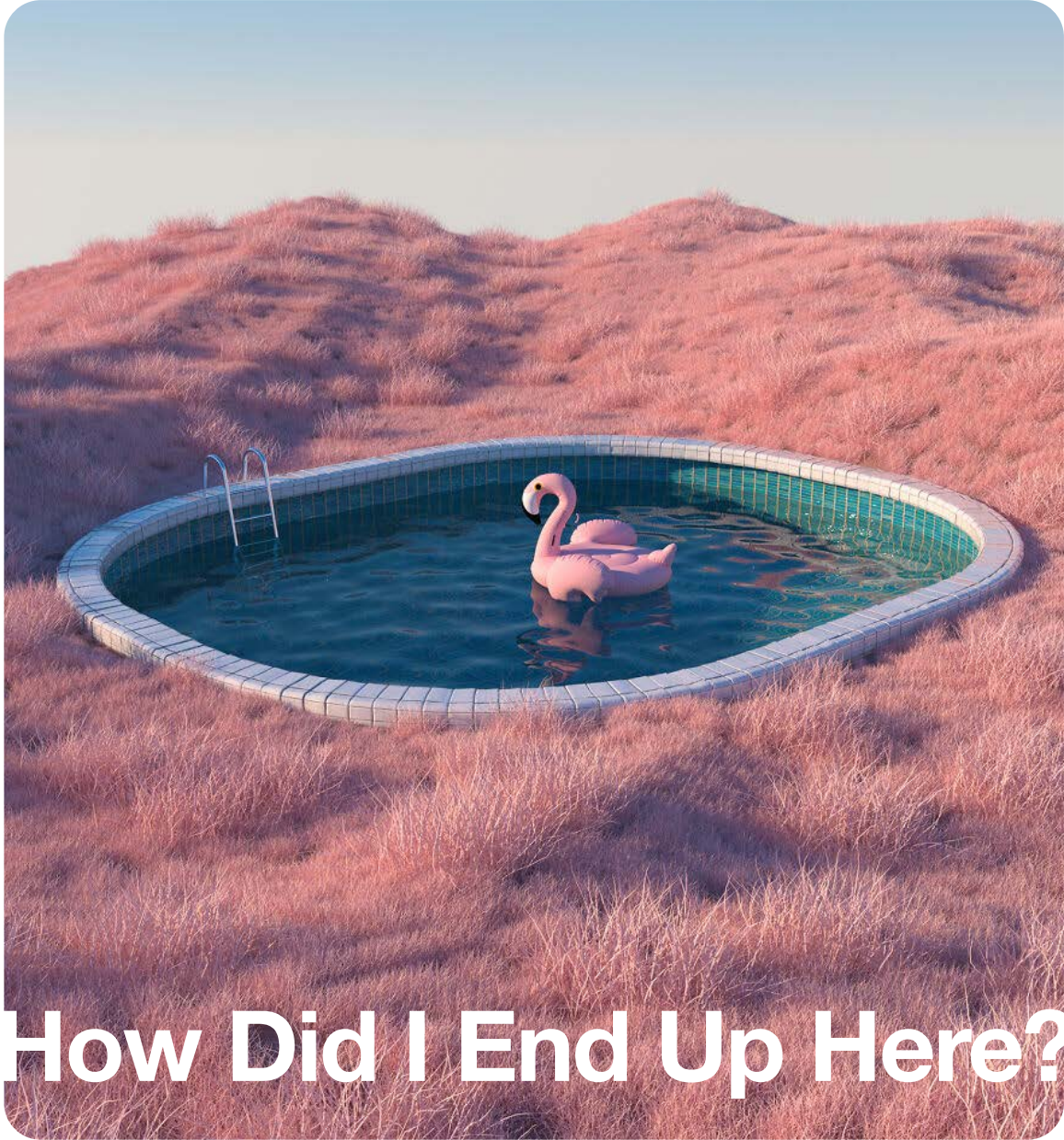
with love
riddhi



the end	—	01
everything in between	—	02
the beginning	—	03

A surreal landscape featuring a white door in a black frame, a staircase of white steps, and a sky of orange and purple clouds. The door is slightly ajar, revealing a bright light. The staircase leads up to the door. The sky is filled with soft, glowing clouds in shades of orange, yellow, and purple.

the end.



How Did I End Up Here?

Looking back on my journey, I would not have ever expected to be doing this work. To have met all the wonderful, kind and giving people that I did, and all the learnings, reflections and experiences I had along the way! It's been an exhaustive, encouraging and endearing experience- hopefully one that I can share with you!

I always knew that there was something I was missing in my life. I always felt a little out of place no matter where I went. You must be thinking, 'isn't that just how it is for everyone at some point or another?' and you would be right. Everyone feels out of place now and again, that's true. But I knew what I felt ran deeper than I could understand or even identify at the time, and I had no idea the impact it was going to have on me and alter my life the way it did.

Picking out a topic that interested me enough to work on for a year was a tricky ask- and I sat with myself for a long time debating over which one I was more drawn to. I had multiple topics in my mind. Various social issues I felt deeply about, others that I had just started to see and notice around me, and some more quieter ones, that I've carried with me everywhere I've gone for as long as I can remember. These were the ones that required the most amount of work. They were closely connected to me in a way that felt like it was woven into my very being. Of course, choosing to work with them would mean a lot of emotional work, introspection, and working closely with trauma, to say nothing of the yet undiscovered pieces!

So I came at the crossroads where I had to pick a direction (for now) and start, and what followed, is now here for you to see.

Here we go.



**everything
in
between**

02

what am I doing?

My subject of interest focuses on neurodivergent individuals, under the realm of mental health.

Simply put, “Neurodiversity is the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways.

That there isn’t one "right" way of thinking, learning, and behaving; and where differences are not viewed as deficits.

The word neurodiversity refers to the diversity of all people, but is often used in the context of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), as well as other neurological or developmental conditions such as ADHD or learning disabilities.” (1)

There are a heap of different ways in which neurodiversity can be and is defined, and I encourage you to stick with the one that speaks best to you! I really appreciated the perspective this particular way of defining neurodiversity brought to me, and it really laid the foundation of my thesis that I wanted to build upon.

Coming back to this simple idea of ‘differences are not viewed as deficits’ opened doors to making this thesis what it came to be.

Amongst the various conditions that exist on the ASD spectrum, my thesis focuses on ADHD, which stands for ‘Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder’.

ADHD is a behaviour disorder, usually first diagnosed in childhood that is characterised by inattention, impulsivity, and, in some cases, hyperactivity. These symptoms usually occur together; however, one may occur without the other(s). (2)

There are 3 major types of ADHD

Combined	Impulsive/ Hyperactive	Inattentive & Distractible
most common	least common	characterised
characterised by	characterised by	predominately by
impulsive and	impulsive and	inattention + distractibility
hyperactive	hyperactive	without hyperactivity.
behaviours +	behaviours without	
inattention and	inattention and	
distractibility.	distractibility.	

This is a brain-based biological disorder. Low levels of dopamine (a brain chemical), which is a neurotransmitter (a type of brain chemical), are found in children with ADHD. Brain imaging studies using PET scanners (positron emission tomography; a form of brain imaging that makes it possible to observe the human brain at work) show that brain metabolism in children with ADHD is lower in the areas of the brain that control attention, social judgment, and movement.

ADHD is one of the most researched areas in child and adolescent mental health. However, the precise cause of the disorder is still unknown. Available evidence suggests that ADHD is genetic. It can be managed with medication, cognitive behavioural therapy, physical exercise and other methods as advised by a medical professional.

Many parents of children with ADHD have experienced symptoms of ADHD when they were younger, but often recognise it when their children get diagnosed.

understanding ADHD

what's happening?

ADHD



attention
deficit
hyperactivity
disorder

11%
adults

5%
children

ADHD has been recorded to impact approximately 11% of children and almost 5% of adults in the U.S. according to a 2017 CDC survey. (3) Since then, this number has seen a steady increase.

Amongst those 5% my thesis focuses on adult women* living with ADHD.

(* This appears on the word 'women/woman' everywhere in my thesis. In the process of defining the term 'woman' there lies a nuance of identity. So in terms of gender identity my thesis looks at "any person who regardless of their sex assigned at birth, identifies as a woman.") (4)

There is a lot of research available that speaks about ADHD as it is experienced by women*. Many studies and articles show and talk about how it differs depending on the age, gender and a variety of other genetic factors. All of these indicators together have gathered over time enough data to give medical professionals an understanding of the way ADHD is presented in individuals. This means they know what to look for, what questions to ask & how your genes affect it.

While the actual number of people presenting symptoms of ADHD are similar by gender

Males are almost **3x**
more likely to get
diagnosed with ADHD
than females. ⁽⁵⁾

This often happens as the markers of an ADHD diagnosis are consistently associated with the symptoms presented by and recorded in males.

lingering stereotypes

referral bias

internalised
symptoms

gender role expectations

co-morbidities

hormonal fluctuations

and various other factors have complicated the presentation of ADHD in women* making it harder to be recognised.

The unintended consequences of this has left a generation of women* forced to internalise their symptoms - thinking of traits like inattentiveness, disorganisation or carelessness as personal flaws, rather than issues that require medical attention.

It also manifests in social, personal & psychological ways, affecting an individual's growth, education, relationships and sense of self, and ultimately their quality of life.

The representation of an ADHD diagnosis needs to

Diversify, not Dilute.



This wasn't a particularly easy topic to broach. As I started out, there were a lot of resources online with a lot of information on ADHD - how it's different for women* and men, how it changes and develops with age, the factors that make it worse, etc. The range is extremely diverse and the information available is excessive. Yet there isn't a consensus on which resource is the most reliable. This exists as a whole branch of healthcare that has been and continues to be neglected.

ADHD is considered an 'invisible disability' because so many of the symptoms presented have no place to be expressed or accounted for in society, because they aren't always physically visible.

My secondary research formed the base of my understanding and really helped me find my footing in the space. There are so many directions to go in and choose from- all of them equally important if not more! It was not easy identifying what I wanted to work on, but I was certain of not causing more disruption and distress in the community. Following the 'Do No Harm framework' principles allowed me to do just that!

Consciousness | Patience | Curiosity | Joy

It's by staying grounded in these values and keeping them at the core of my design practice, that I've been able to ensure whatever I create does not bring in any more trauma or harm into the community, and that the people I work alongside are prioritised and feel safe.



A serene sunset scene over a body of water. A small, dark boat is centered in the middle ground, its reflection visible on the calm water. The sky is a soft, warm orange, transitioning to a darker blue at the horizon. The water's surface is still, reflecting the colors of the sky and the surrounding foliage. On the left, there are branches with small, light-colored flowers. On the right, there is a dense, dark tree with some leaves catching the light. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

Do No Harm

a design framework

Do No Harm is a framework for design developed and presented by Pardis Shafafi, Strategic Design Lead, and Giulia Bazoli, Lead User Experience Designer, at Designit. (6)

What is Do No Harm and how does it contribute to the design space?

Do No Harm is a concept often applied in healthcare, humanitarian, academic, or NGO worlds. While it may seem unconventional, when Do No Harm is applied to the field of design, it has significant potential and broad utility.

The concept of Do No Harm comes from the Hippocratic Oath, which is the vow of ethical practice historically taken by healthcare physicians. The oath says, “The physician must be able to tell the antecedents, know the present, and foretell the future – must mediate these things, and have two special objects in view with regard to disease, namely, to do good or to do no harm.”



DNH Framework Directives

1. Not exposing people to additional risks through your actions
2. Taking a step back from an intervention to look at the broader context and mitigate potential negative effects.

In the context of design, that typically means consideration for the individual, society, economy, and environment. There are also different types of harm to consider in this framework, which can include physical, psychological, environmental, and societal, to name a few.

DNH Framework in Practice

1. Identifying risks that could happen in a specific situation
2. Coming up with appropriate measures to counterbalance them

Do No Harm is about engaging with a situation actively and intentionally. It does not mean ‘do nothing’. If the design discipline is to evolve into a safer and more conscientious version of itself, we need to develop approaches from within to be able to effectively forecast, prevent, and respond to harm. A disciplinary culture shift is in order, and the Do No Harm framework provides a way towards achieving it.

**“How can you be
more aware of your
bias, privilege,
& responsibility to
the systems you
design for?”**



DNH Framework
Designit

CORE

Understanding and looking at who is affected, we can see that at the very core are of course, the women* living with ADHD.

IMMEDIATE

Outside that exists their personal & professional network. Friends, family, caregivers.

UNSEEN

However, what sits in the shadows - that which is unseen are the larger systems at play. Healthcare, R&D, education, Innovation & productivity and civic systems have found their way into this issue as well!

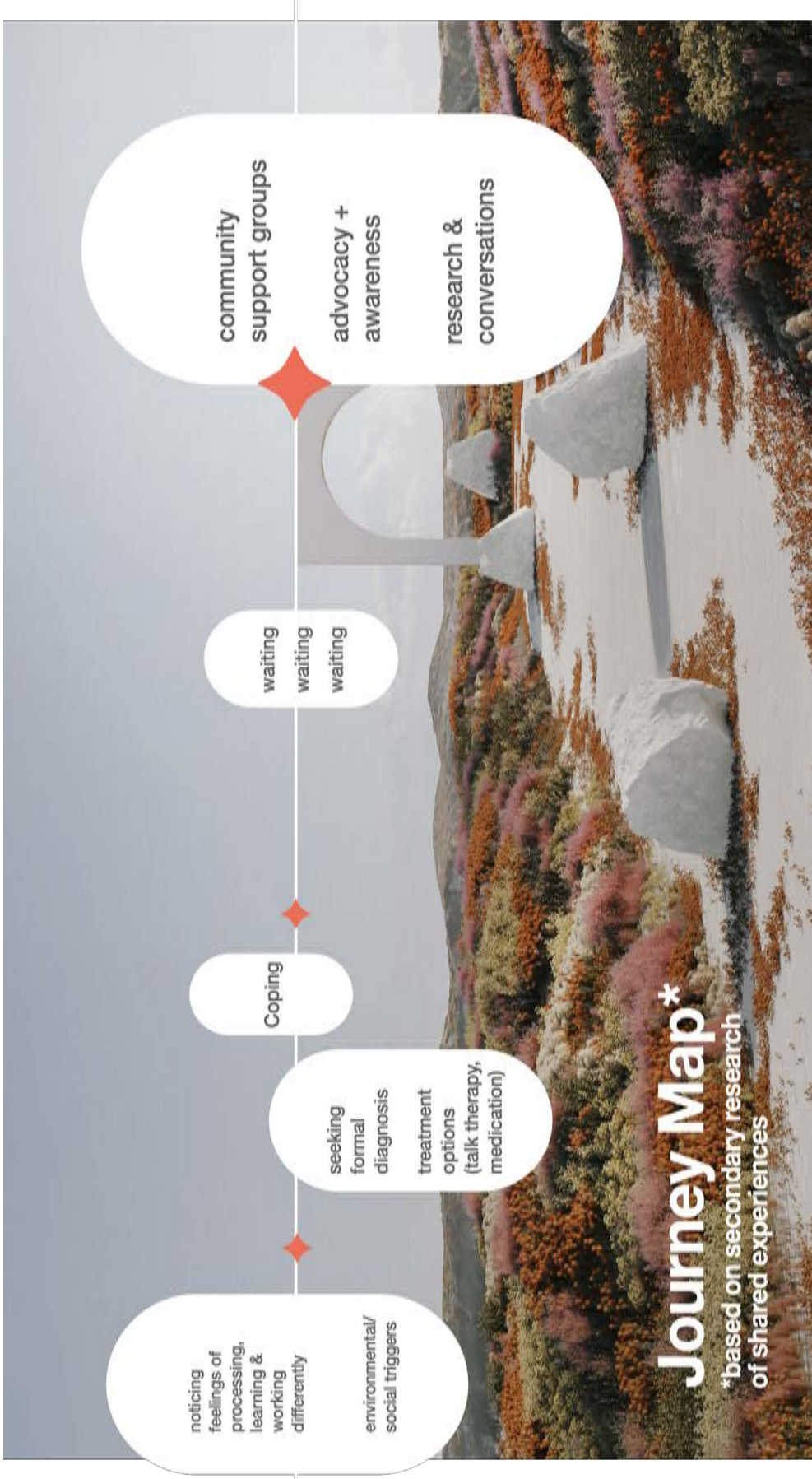
This ecosystem grows every time a new individual discovers their diagnosis, and becomes a part of the community.

**The
Unseen**

Immediate

Core

hone



Each experience is different and can be experienced in various ways. There isn't one specific path and the journey is never linear.

This map attempts to provide you with a basic understanding of the components that comprise in the journey of an ADHD diagnosis, created based on primary and secondary research and experiences.

I had the honor of working alongside strong, thoughtful and kind women*, who expressed willingness to learn, share experiences and design collaboratively. Our conversations were enlightening and reaffirming.

Rachael Dietkus who is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and the founder of Social Workers Who Design - was kind enough to agree to review any material before it went out into the community, in order to ensure that the language and content was trauma informed.

My community partner Katy Weber, is the founder of 'Women & ADHD' - an online community that provides women* living with ADHD (diagnosed or undiagnosed) the space and opportunity to connect with each other.

It is humbling to witness the reverberation of experiences in community, that serves as a reminder to recognise the ways in which what we say and do affects systems, places and people around us!

Community Partners



rachael dietkus

LCSW (Licensed Clinical Social Worker)
Founder, Chief Compassion Officer
Social Workers Who Design

katy weber

Founder
Women & ADHD

women & adhd

Online Community | Podcast
Top 0.5% Of All Podcasts Globally



In the Space

Excess of tools that are targeted to increase productivity.

When not designed with care - send a message of inadequacy.

It's truly commendable to see and experience the work people have done and the things they've created for managing living with ADHD. Ranging from tools, to support groups, to ADHD coaching, and even games! It's an expressive and exhaustive list that pretty much covers most if not all of the aspects that govern ADHD.

What currently exists in the space is an excess of these tools. There's an app or a device for practically anything. Managing time, scheduling, automating tasks - you name it! What they share however, is a common goal : optimising for time so you can remain 'focused' and get through your tasks, lists and todos.

While all of these are necessary tools, we're still lacking balance.

There's a lot of talk and encouragement to practice self- care, but a lot of the burden still falls on the individual. What currently exists in the space is an excess of tools targeted to increase productivity and maximise for efficiency in order to help with scheduling, organising, focusing, etc.

However, these tools - when not designed with care send a message of inadequacy in individuals living with ADHD, forcing them to adapt into a system that creates more problems than it solves. often in a way that trivialises the condition and the lived experience.

This isn't a personal failure, it's a systemic let down.

The most common research findings showed that there is

- **A lack of accurate resources for people to access.**
- **Unclear directions on where to seek help.**
- **A massive misinformation problem feeding into reinforcing existing stereotypes.**

insights / **opportunities**

Regardless of whether an individual chooses to get diagnosed or get medical treatment, there needs to be a foundation of information regarding ADHD, and the choices available.

Opportunities to design lie in areas that demonstrate

- **The need for more established & authentic resources.**
- **A strong desire for advocacy & awareness.**
- **Creation of tools and systems for self discovery.**

The space I chose to create in lies in self-advocacy, exploration and effective communication.



**“Does what we
create justify what
we destroy?”**

Tony Fry

ADHD looks different for everyone, and will always result in people functioning, living and learning differently.

The question isn't about "how" to fix ADHD. The real challenge lies in asking, exploring and accounting for neurodivergent individuals when designing in any space.



My design intervention centers around self care & expression. Throughout the course of my research I've explored various formats to engage & introspect, that go beyond carrying out tasks to be more productive. Instead they encourage spending time in understanding and exploring yourself.

There's a lot of talk and encouragement to practice these things, but a lot of the burden still falls on the individual.

I am mindful about not creating another 'tool' that adds to the burden experienced daily by neurodivergent individuals.

The very nature of ADHD makes it impossible to have one right 'solution'. We're always innovating & creating- but our understanding of how it shows up needs to shift from the current state to a more comprehensive, educated and informed one.



How Might We?

**Design to reimagine and
reintroduce self-expression
as a form of self care**



for women* living with ADHD



**in order to contribute to a
stronger sense of self and
better quality of life?**

p r e s e n t i n g



MoodyBoards

A space to exercise self- expression
as a form of self care.

MoodyBoards, a space to exercise self-expression as a form of self-care. It allows you to explore and build a practice to process your feelings through visuals, images, colours, shapes, etc.

Most people living with ADHD experience emotions intensely- amongst many things, and having an outlet helps with understanding, processing and regulating these emotions.

It creates a space in order to learn being kinder, offering compassion & patience to yourself for all that you are - and not resentment for the things that you're not.

What my intervention has set out to do is to encourage having more conversations to revive and remind us of the power of self expression, care & love. To treat words intentionally and weave transformation into language.

It's why I believe this work is important- making sure you give yourself the same love, care & support that you give to others.

MoodyBoards was created with the intent of personal expression and exploration, but if chosen can also be used to show someone what you want to say instead of telling them. This currently lives digitally to be used and shared online - in order to make designing a community informed approach.

I envision this to be a building block for communication and in order to better understanding ADHD. Using it in the same way we use language, songs, letters, or just about anything to communicate with each other.

It could also be a way to share with your partners, family members or others - what your ADHD looks like, in order for there to be an opportunity and space for mutual support, understanding and care in relationships.

This could very well be another thing that won't exactly work out the way it was intended or envisioned, eventually winding up with the same fate as the other 'tools' that sit forgotten on your phone. That's entirely okay. But if even a single person finds value in it, to me that is success.

By coming back to this whenever words fail us - we slowly start building the act of self expression into a practice.

**“That’s the beauty
of a framework,**



**you get to
play with it!”**

Karen Proctor

how it works

My intervention currently lives digitally, with a possibility of branching into other formats in the future. I've created this in a collaborative online tool called Figma. It allows me to facilitate workshops with individuals as I walk through the concept and explore and create with them.

The process can be described in 3 simple steps.

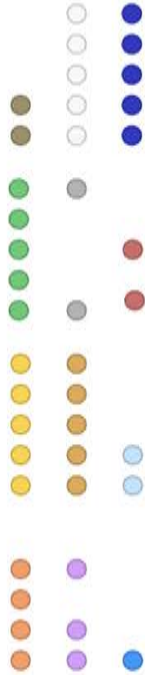
Identify, Introspect & Iterate

- 1** We start with a grounding check-in, featuring the wonderful 'Feelings Wheel' created by Dr. Gloria Willcox. Here we identify the 3 things that we're feeling at the moment, and make note of them.
- 2** Next we introspect and look for images and visuals that invoke the same feeling - while simultaneously creating your MoodyBoard- till you come to a point of a natural ending, or your timer.
- 3** Finally, we iterate.



How do you feel today?

Grab a dot and place it on a section of the wheel that represents your current emotional state.



WORK IN PROGRESS

Stuff To Remember

Recognize that feelings are not good or bad, positive or negative. Anything you feel is real, valid and welcome here!

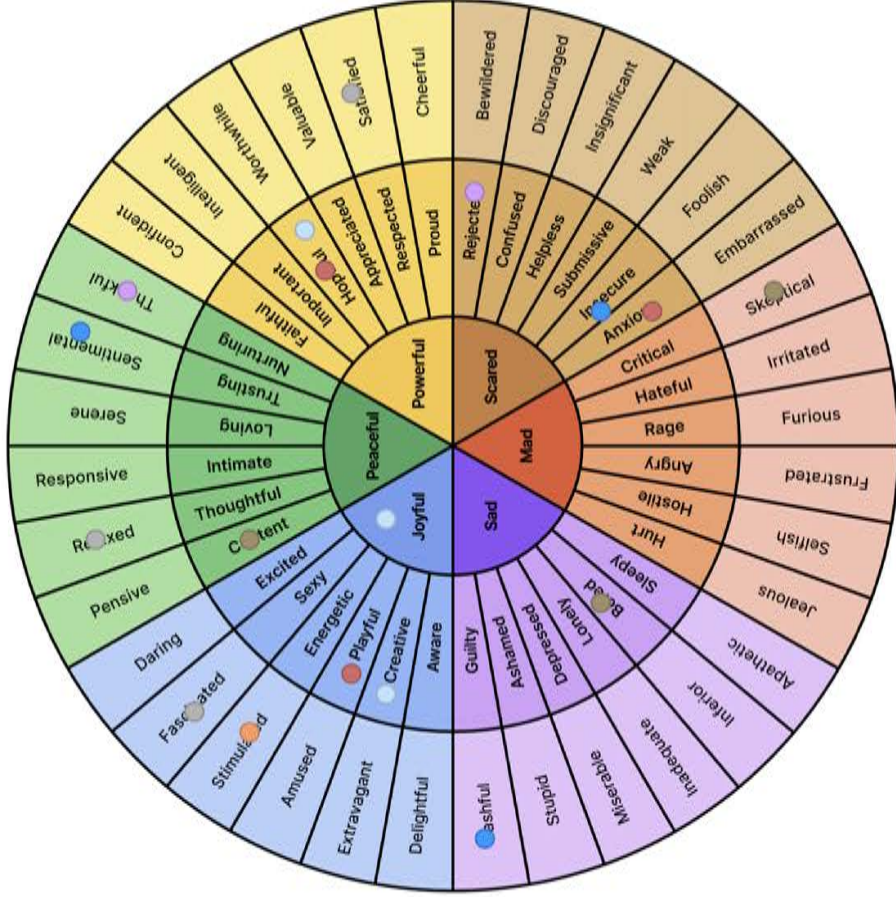


3 words/feelings

My 3 Words/ Feelings
Rejected
Stimulated
Thankful

My 3 Words/ Feelings
• happy
• anxious
• playful

My 3 Words/ Feelings
Relaxed
Satisfied
Fascinated



Feeling:

A list of words that describe what you are trying to evoke with your mood board.

ADJECTIVES Quick notes for you to jot down why you made choices about it

DESCRIPTIONS How does this feel to you?


REFERENCES What does this remind you of?

KEY List your sources here:


My 3 Words/ Feelings

Relaxed
Satisfied
Fascinated

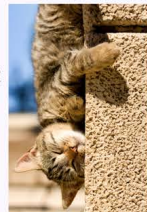
earnest



overburdened



sleepy



agitated




Image Libraries

- Unsplash
- Pinterest
- Pixabay
- Freepik

Feeling:

A list of words that describe what you are trying to evoke with your mood board.

ADJECTIVES Quick notes for you to jot down why you made choices about it


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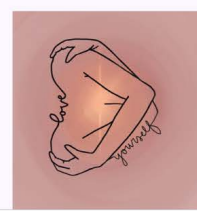
KEY List your sources here:


My 3 Words/ Feelings


Rejected
Stimulated
Thankful














Image Libraries

- Unsplash
- Pinterest
- Pixabay
- Freepik

ADJECTIVES A list of words that describe what you are trying to evoke with your mood board.


DESCRIPTION A statement detailing your concept. Describe what you think are the most important elements in your included imagery.


CREATOR Enter your name


SOURCES List your sources here


- Item 1
- Item 2

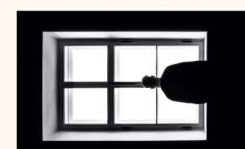
Notes!




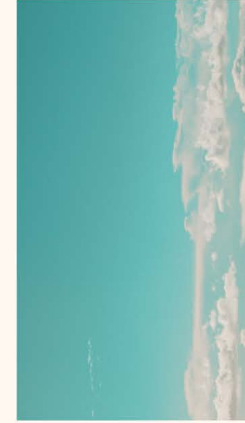


















MoodyBoards created by participants during prototyping sessions

one

The first session was a prototype testing run that explored proof of concept and identified any components that needed to be tweaked.

WHAT WORKED

- the concept of self expression and visual journalling was received well along with the grounding exercise and the playfulness of the activity
-

WHAT DIDN'T

link sharing and getting everyone set-up to start the session

FEEDBACK

- have a way to share/ access the link
- could be flashcards?
- memories/emotions that images evoke?
- logistics: people who don't know how to use these visual libraries
- affirmation card deck -> communication
- 'How might you consider bringing in your whimsical illustrations and visuals, as a card deck?'



The second session was introducing the intervention and and sharing my work with my community partner Katy Weber.

After walking her through my concept, we spoke about the importance of self-care and expression and shared our experiences with it.

That session was interesting and brought up different parts about the intervention. I walked away with a new perspective by the end of this conversation.

two



SESSION

**prototype testing
community partner**

2 PEOPLE

WHAT WORKED

- on board with the concept, validated research findings
 - conversations about the excess of tools in the space targeted towards productivity
-

FEEDBACK

thinking and wondering about the many other ways to define 'women'

three

This session was in collaboration with my community partner- the 'Women & ADHD' community.

Through the course of my work I've always ensured that I designed alongside and not for the community I was working with. Being a part of the community itself provides me with some of the lived experience, but I required more information. I reached out to Katy Weber to talk about conducting a session in order to have more conversations around self-care in ADHD. Before I knew it, I was creating an hour long facilitation for women* that I had never met before, spoken to, didn't know and was going to see for the first time on Zoom.

Katy's support was invaluable throughout the process and provided me with the courage I needed.



SESSION

**working session
women & ADHD**

7 PEOPLE

WHAT WORKED

- enjoyed doing this activity with music in the background
 - started a conversation to reflect on how many times this was actually done
 - looking at personal self-care practices
-

WHAT DIDN'T

activity set-up

verbal instructions and
online facilitation

FEEDBACK

- can it be an app?
- how can I access this outside of here?
- is it only digital?
- recording video instructions to help understand what we need to do
- 'I already have too many apps on my phone that I've forgotten!'

I realised that my hypothesis for creating a visual representation of your feelings, thoughts or mood was relaxing, playful and an introspective way to sit with them. Every session that I did revealed more of this and emphasised just how important and urgent this is.

These interactions were a wonderful way to bookend the experience. But, the work isn't done yet!



It's been heartbreaking to see, know and listen to the experiences of people in community, most commonly feeling like they've lost time - due to inadequate care, awareness and resources. My intervention is an exercise that centers self expression and prioritises self-care. It aims to remind us that self-care isn't selfish and self expression is essential.

In a world where productivity and progress at the cost of self is accepted as the norm, there lies value and power in reclamation and reinvention.

remembering



I remember the first time I saw and knew that this was what I had been looking for.

In the chaos I noticed a little structure that looked a little dusty and forgotten, where it stood. It was evident that the place wasn't frequented by people, which was strange because it stood right in the middle of it all. Now and again someone would stop by, standing and looking from a distance. They would contemplate coming close for a little while and then walk away. I sat there all evening and observed, as more and more people did the same thing.

I came back the next day, and the day after that, and the day after that. And everyday I was greeted with the same sight. The same shuffling motion at the edge, the hesitancy and then finally turning and leaving. I didn't understand. Was it not safe? Was there something there that was not supposed to be seen? My curiosity quickly turned into elation when I realised that I could go look at it myself!

There were no barriers that kept me from exploring what it was. As soon as I stepped inside I recognised the place. I'd been here before, several years ago. It pretty much looked the same, but also a little different. I noticed that there were some new things I hadn't seen before. It was interesting. It felt uncomfortable at first and I could see why people didn't want to come in, but I realised that the longer I stayed- the calmer I felt.

In that moment, I met every emotion, thought and feeling I ever had, and it made me realise that I always have time.

Measuring Impact



In order to keep iterating and improving, we need to know how the intervention is currently doing. What are the specific indicators that point to either the success or failure of the design.

This section touches upon some key monitoring and evaluation components that are necessary to measure impact and lay the groundwork for efficient, informed and effective design.

What It Is

A digital space that cultivates a culture and practice of self-care by encouraging expression primarily through images, shapes, colours, etc. for women* living with ADHD.

Objective

Creating a space for individuals to practice self-expression through visuals as a form of self care.

Understanding if the MoodyBoard approach is an effective, intuitive and sustainable way to express oneself as a self-care method.

Monitoring



Key Monitoring Question

How do women* living with ADHD practice self-care and expression by engaging with MoodyBoards?

Quantitative Indicators

- no. of people engaging with workshop (participants)
- no. of boards created (total - all users)
- no. of moodboard entries (per person)
- duration of engagement
- no. of new users
- no. of retained users (after introduction)
- no. of continued users (kept using & coming back)
- no. of users lost/ discontinued (useful for feedback to improve)
- time of the day - when interacted
- places used (location)
- no. of communities co-designed with

Evaluation



Key Evaluation Question

How does creating MoodyBoards help with self-expression through visuals as a form of self-care?

Qualitative Indicators

- quality of reflection experiences
- depth of post activity conversations
- increased sense of stability
- improved communication
- expanded reach (recruitment)
- community support & sharing

TOC Narrative

The What, How & Why

MoodyBoards is an intervention that aims to create a space that exists to encourage self-expression through visuals as a form of self-care, for women* living with ADHD. It offers alternate ways to explore your emotions and serves as an outlet to introspection. All of which hopes to feed into the one broad goal of creating a stronger sense of identity for women* living with ADHD.

The TOC charts 3 distinct pathways : the access pathway, self-identity pathway & the societal stereotypes pathway. There are many more areas that are a part of the ADHD experience but these 3 are the ones that my intervention touches upon the most in some capacity or another. The intervention explores the self-identity pathway in detail - with some factors interacting and overlapping with the other two areas in the process as well.

To establish an understanding of the role self care plays in the ADHD journey - and why self-expression is essential to self-care, we need to look at the barriers that have prevented it in the first place. Access to information is a large one that governs almost every area of the problem. Not having enough resources that are accurate, up-to-date, freely available and widely known is a huge factor in how misconceptions are formed, stereotypes are built and communities are neglected.

MoodyBoards brings into an environment that's already buzzing with an excess of productivity tools & time management tools - a space to reimagine self-care and expression. A platform to practice self-expression in a way that doesn't necessarily require words, but urges the individual to dig a little deeper in order to sit with themselves. It requires from the person investment in the form of time and an intentional self- interaction. An approach to getting to the ultimate goal can be designed systematically in steps that works on every level- in order to build and keep strengthening each other. These steps are listed in detail in the TOC flow-chart.

Getting this cycle in motion is what will help to reinforce it as it keeps looping into itself. Providing a platform to practice the act will require certain resources such as internet access, the knowledge to use the tool, images and passing the know-hows to every new person who wishes to interact with it. This will create an increase in the number of people who interact with it, the MoodyBoards created and the conversations around self-expression and self-care, to name a few. This increase will direct us to see more and more people practicing this form of self-expression, leading to an enhanced sense of self-awareness & a decrease in feeling isolated. The conditions favourable to bring about this change can be more accurate and updated resources available in the community to access, avenues to practice self-expression and self-care - and finally a decrease in the misinformation in society about women* living with ADHD. This will contribute to the goal of cultivating a practice of self-expression as a form of self care, and ultimately increase the ways women* living with ADHD can engage in these practice to build a stronger sense of self & identity as they continue living & navigating their life with ADHD.

Theory Of Change

*CAN BE READ TOP-DOWN, VICE VERSA OR AS WHOLE LEVELS/ TIERS



HIGH LVL GOAL

increasing ways to engage in self-expression as a form of self care in order to contribute to a stronger sense of identity for women* living with ADHD

THESIS GOAL

cultivating a practice of self-care & expression for women* living with ADHD

ACCESS PATHWAY

SELF-IDENTITY PATHWAY

SOCIETAL STEREOTYPES PATHWAY

PRECONDITIONS

increased number of accurate & updated resources for people to learn about ADHD

increased understanding of self & practices to exercise self-expression

reduced misinformation and misperception in society about women* living with ADHD

OUTCOMES

enhanced sense of self-awareness

decreased feeling of isolation

increased & alternate ways to approach self care & expression

created & sustained practice of introspection & self-care

OUTPUTS

increased no. of women exposed to intervention (introduced to)

increased no. of conversations (one on one & in community)

increased no. of working sessions

more moodyboards created

increased no. of participants

INPUTS

Using electronic devices

Having internet access

Using online/ personal image libraries

Calls for interaction & introduction of intervention

Dispersing and learning technical knowledge

INTERVENTION

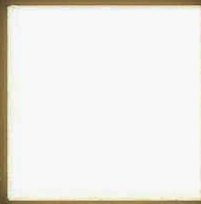
a digital space that cultivates a culture and a practice of self-care by encouraging expression of self primarily through images, shapes, colours, etc.

**“Facts alone can't
save the world.**

**Hearts can.
Hearts must.**

**We're working to
make sure that
hearts do.”**

- Carl Safina



**environmental
impact
assessment**

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- a framework/ communication piece that encourages self-care & expression.
- centers lived experience and serves as an outlet to unload personal thoughts/ feelings/quotes, primarily using visuals.
- the overarching vision is bringing attention to self-care & self-expression back for women* living with adhd in order to build a stronger sense of identity as they navigate their adhd journey.

LOCATION

Online on Figma Community

ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITIES

My estimate of the way the existing environment will likely be affected by my intervention is the increase in usage of the activity itself which demands an electronic device and power & energy in order to run. I would imagine that an increase in these activities would affect the demand of the devices itself and the impact this demand has on the environment. Since we're living in a digital age, there is fortunately a lot of work done towards finding sustainable resources and methods to create energy that we require. Switching to green energy and being mindful of the carbon footprint we generate by our consumption is discussed widely politically and socially. I would explore options where this can be applicable to the intervention and ways in which I can make it more adaptive than extractive.

PROJECT TYPE

product | system/ framework | practice

CLIMATE IMPACTS

energy & power | manufacturing

PROBABLE IMPACTS ASSESSMENT

ACTION/ ACTIVITY	RELATED FACTORS	PROBABLE IMPACTS
Using digital devices. (eg: laptops, phones, iPads, etc.)	Manufacturing, Energy & Power, Overconsumption	Increase in demand for tools in order to access and use the intervention, ultimately adding to the rise in production and consumption of more energy ultimately aiding the rise of global temperatures.

CONSERVATION TECHNIQUES

ACTIVITY	MITIGATION TECHNIQUE
Using digital devices. (eg: laptops, phones, iPads, etc.)	Using sustainable sources of energy, looking for 'carbon neutral' produced devices.(EPEAT certified devices)

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

Thinking about it from a resource alternative perspective, the intervention has capacity to adapt. Instead of using electronic devices to use and record the data that the intervention will hold, an alternative would be

REDUCED ENVIRONMENTAL STRESS + INTENDED INTERVENTION EFFECT INTACT

(a) switching to green electronics and platforms that are less energy consuming, either hosted through/ on a carbon neutral platform to offset the consumed energy

LEAST ENVIRONMENTAL STRESS + NO INTENDED INTERVENTION IMPACT

(b) having verbal conversations and sharing sessions that centre the same prompt/ idea of the intervention. This can be done by keeping an audio recording library of these thoughts, or sharing with a trusted individual whom you are comfortable with (if you choose)

The resource replacement no-action alternative would be to carry on with the current design, and bear the energy consumption associated with it.

The no-action alternative of not doing the intervention at all would result in contributing to the loop of mental, social & physical health challenges that the community currently faces. It would also reinforce those negative notions and strengthen the misinformed stereotypes that are associated with living with ADHD. Impacting mental health, increasing the demand for more medical and professional attention in forms of medication and behavioural therapy will also see a steady growth.

As this process keeps repeating without a point of intersection or intervention - it will soon become a natural and embedded notion within people who are living with ADHD. Internalising your symptoms, the shame and unawareness associated with seeking help would amongst various others would be common-ground occurrences.

CONCLUSION

Shifting the availability of the intervention to host it on a carbon neutral or green energy backed platform, in order to ensure that the energy demanded by the intervention is offset and consumed responsibly. It would also be valuable to look into different ways in which it can be replicated in case it expands into an analog method - using those materials sustainably while making sure that the intention of the intervention is retained in a conscious manner.

I would consider weaving changes or accommodations that I can adapt immediately on a smaller scale that is feasible for my intervention, such as

- Carbon neutral platforms that allow you to have meetings and conduct workshops online exist + if slots can be reserved or rented.**
- Limiting the energy demanding + heavy features & transitions (of the intervention) would also be a good element to keep in mind for the design.**

The larger goal is not only to sustain and offset the resources introducing the intervention will generate, but to get to a stage to be able to generate and give back more than what is consumed by its existence.



**the
beginning.**

EXPLORING THE VISUALS





dreamscapes

The visual identity of this project was inspired by the work of many talented artists and designers whose designs and renders have made it possible to be what it is.

I am grateful to share a vision with people that have created visuals wondering 'why not', and exploring the 'what ifs'!

I wanted to pursue the idea of 'novelty as the norm' and wanted the images to evoke feelings for the viewer. It could've been hope, peace, sadness, or anything else.

The intention was to stir something within, and make you feel. It was meant to acknowledge the different emotions you feel and recognise the power within those. The book is laid out in a manner that mirrors unpredictability, sparks curiosity and captures an excitement of the unknown - all the ways in which we experience life!

Typically an astronaut requires a space suit while traveling to outer space, where the conditions to survive are less than favourable. There are no chances of survival if you don't have one when you're not in planetary habitable conditions.

Living with ADHD is a lot like that and more often than not, it feels like if you don't wear a spacesuit on earth, you'd explode.

There are a couple of metaphors in the visuals that run parallel and come together to communicate it.

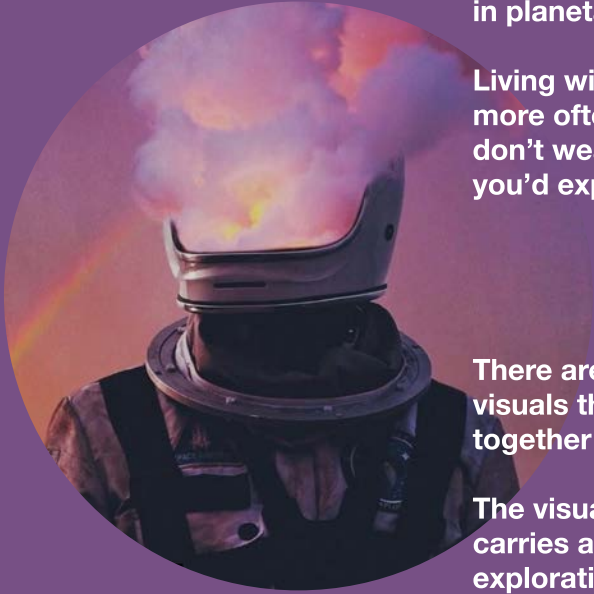
The visual identity that this book and work carries and embodies the very thing this exploration talks about. It might look odd or strangely designed. Which would be valid, because that's what it was meant to do and be.

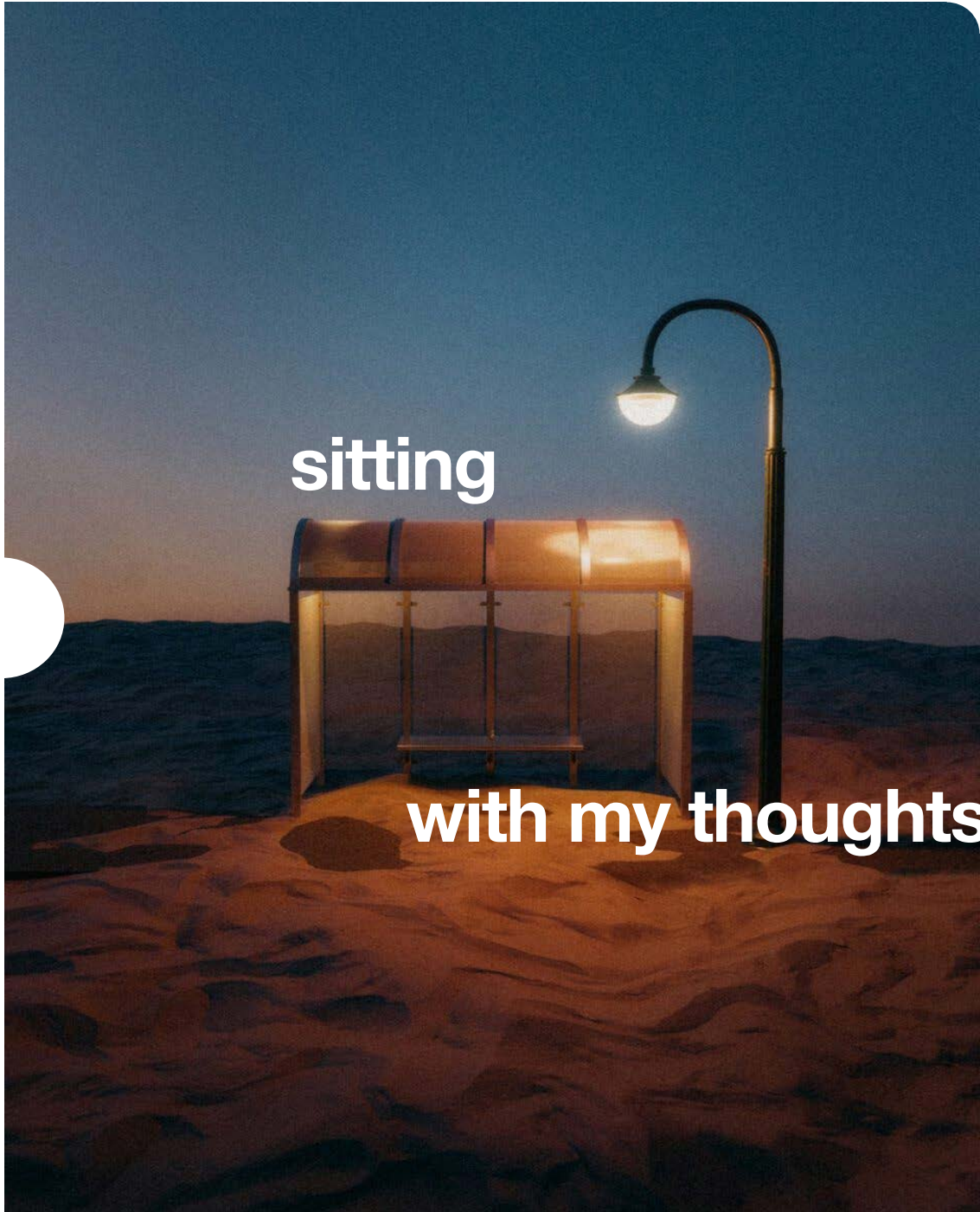
It was designed very intentionally to look a little 'odd'. Odd by most standards- by what we're used to seeing, what we expect and know how to respond to.

To me it looks exactly the way I envisioned it being represented - and comes closest to what my ADHD looks like. How it lets me think and the way it makes me feel.

These places almost look like they exist on another planet- yet have a quality that makes them familiar and look like they could exist on earth.

The images at the beginning of the book start out a little empty- with nothing but the environment as it is. Slowly you start noticing an astronaut appearing in these places. Soon after that, you can see two of them. And finally you see the smoke that's released when the helmet comes off. A symbolic gesture that represents finding a place of acceptance, belonging and a sense of community. Finding you.





sitting

with my thoughts

hello

When I started this journey I didn't have an end goal in sight. I did have a few things I knew I wanted to learn, achieve and work through- but where I wanted to end up was always kept open to possibilities and whatever the experience might bring with it.

It became immediately clear to me that language was at the core of what I was setting out to do. And even if what I created and explored didn't directly speak of language or design around it, the work I did was always grounded in the understanding and determination to be mindful of what we say and how we say it. I recognised through the course of my work how intensely language has shaped us. It's been so conditioned in our upbringing and being that it's next to impossible to spot its origins. Having weaved so deeply into our lives, it influences our thinking and soon enough becomes a reality.

It was important for me throughout to first and foremost acknowledge the harm that's been done and is continued to be done in the space and community - under the pretext of progress. This doesn't imply that all or any people creating are entering the space with malice - it just so happens that when tools, advice or any structures are designed without care, they unintentionally do more harm than good.

This isn't a call to action to cancel every productivity tool or app you've ever seen or used to help make life a little easier. It's a learning and practice that encourages us to be patient, look again and offer ourselves the time and space to just be. To question things that have been the norm, to be curious and open ourselves to the possibilities, the what ifs and the why nots. It is by staying open and receptive to the idea that things can be different than what you know (but equally real)- that we can create an environment where everyone is included and celebrated.

I recognised the power of self- expression and how powerful a tool it is to understand yourself and the world around you. Reimagining the role of self care was evident to me and felt like the next step for designing an intervention. I remember wanting to keep it short, simple & available for everyone to use. This wasn't and won't be something that becomes a paid service or product. I'm determined to keep looking for ways in which I can host and distribute what's been created in order to make design a community-informed practice.

I was also delightfully surprised at how people found value in something as simple as having a space to express themselves. Moving away from the traditional journaling practice- but retaining the essence and the intention of it was powerful in ways that I hadn't entirely anticipated!

This work has been transformative to me as I thought it would be, having been in it through the motions all along. But even when I didn't know the world it would open up for me, I doubt it would have held me back. What started from a little voice in my head, turned into budding curiosity and soon enough became a full fledged exploration. I would like to continue doing it in some way or another.

There have been so many learnings - some small and some big. I'm in awe of the people I met, the places I went to and the relationships I made- one day at a time. It's been humbling and an absolute privilege to be able to even do this work. I'm curious, excited and honoured to see where I can take this, and where it goes. And so, I pass it on to you- in the hope that it sparks something within you too.

After all this is just the beginning.

**with love
riddhi**



Credits

* The images are all digital renders, and you can find the artist's names listed in the order of appearance below. I do not own any images or artworks that are featured in the book. The images have been used solely to support the vision of the work. Please contact the respective artists if you wish to use them or want to learn more.

01

- Daily Renders #83 | Javier Pardina
- A Place Beyond | Artworks Selection • 2019 | Julien Missaire
- CONSOLAZIONE TP | Vineeth/Vinpan
- i.pinimg.com
- Cloud path into paradise | nicolemadethat
- AvantForm X Adobe Stock Premium Collection
- mo.design

02

- "Thoughts of Spring" by James Tralie
- The Creator | Vasjen Katro
- A World Underwater | Hayden Clay
- everyones19 | VSCO
- Pink Scape | www.boredpanda.com
- mo.design
- mir-s3-cdn-cf.behance
- Out of the Ordinary, Worlds Apart | Austin Poon
- Unsplash | Jonathan Formento
- Oasis by Camille Boldt
- Turn Of the Century | Hayden Clay
- Turn Of the Century | Hayden Clay
- r/VaporwaveAesthetics by GabrielleSalonga

- **Cash Macanaya | Unsplash**
- **i.pinimg.com/originals**
- **i.pinimg.com/originals**
- **i.pinimg.com/originals**
- **i.pinimg.com/originals**
- **mkpcdn.com**
- **i.pinimg.com/originals**
- **Roselands | Yomagick 2020**
- **Devialet Dione - Multiple Owners | Behance**
- **Unpublished Stuff 19' | Alberto Carbonell**
- **Unpublished Stuff 19' | Alberto Carbonell**
- **Unpublished Stuff 19' | Alberto Carbonell**
- **weAR3_NFT | @mankind**

03

- **i.pinimg.com**
- **kimlaughton.tumblr**
- **i.pinimg.com**
- **Out of the Ordinary, Bus Stop | Austin Poon**
- **Astronaut Kalopsia | mr.kalopsia | Instagram**
- **Flower 3D Projects | Behance**
- **i.pinimg.com/originals**

Citations

1. MEd, N. B. M. (2021). What is neurodiversity? Harvard Health. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/what-is-neurodiversity-202111232645>
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3. Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). (n.d.). National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd>
4. Gender Identity Terminology | Gender & Sexuality Services. (n.d.). <https://lgbt.uni.edu/gender-identities>
5. Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in Children. (n.d.-b). Johns Hopkins Medicine. <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/adhdadd#:~:text=Estimates%20suggest%20that%20about%204,sisters%20within%20the%20same%20family.>
6. Do No Harm Framework in Design: A Valuable Business Consideration. (2023). www.designit.com. <https://www.designit.com/stories/point-of-view/do-no-harm-in-design-part-one>



more to explore

Resources

Below are some resources that you can explore or follow to find support in community!

Women & ADHD Podcast

Women & ADHD Online Community

ADDitude Magazine

CHADD. org

The Mini ADHD Coach



ADHD Testing

The research, views and findings in this book are not meant to be treated as medical advice or a diagnosis. Kindly check with your health provider for more information.

If you think you have ADHD or feel like you'd like to get tested, contact your PCP or a health provider.

Listed below are some resources where you can access more information. Please practice exploring them with care.

[QB Check](#)

[understood.org](#)

[ADHD Online](#)

[ADDA](#)

[Donefirst](#)