



Design for Wellbeing,

How do we do it?

Princess Woy, Design Researcher and Service Designer

Princess Woy, at DiNG Nottingham, 20 March 2025

Slide 1

Who Am I?

Currently:

- Doctoral Researcher (aka PhD student)
- Independent Tabletop Roleplaying Game Designer
- Service Designer
- Postgraduate University Teacher

Previously:

- Industrial Designer
- Design Researcher

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Princess Woy



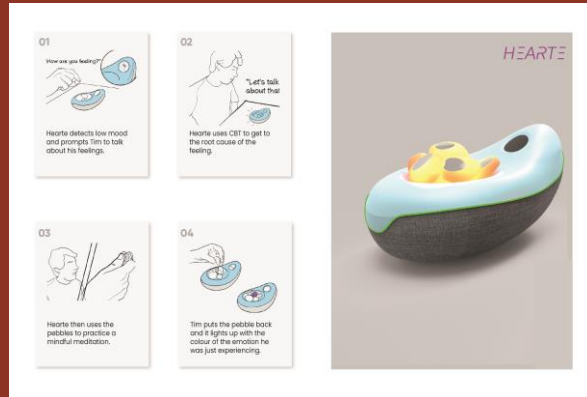
That's a lot of titles that I've put on this slide – probably too much to be honest. But I'll summarise these super quickly and then we can get to why I'm here, [click]

Background

Industrial Design and Design Research

- Undergraduate in Industrial Design and Technology
- Experience as a Consumer Insight Researcher

Industrial Design BA



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Let's start with previously, my background is in Industrial Design and Design Research.

So I 'grew up' as a designer by learning about how we design products and how we understand users. But as I went through my degree and graduated, I started to realise that I wanted to learn more about experience design in its entirety rather than just through its presentation in a physical mass-manufacturable product.

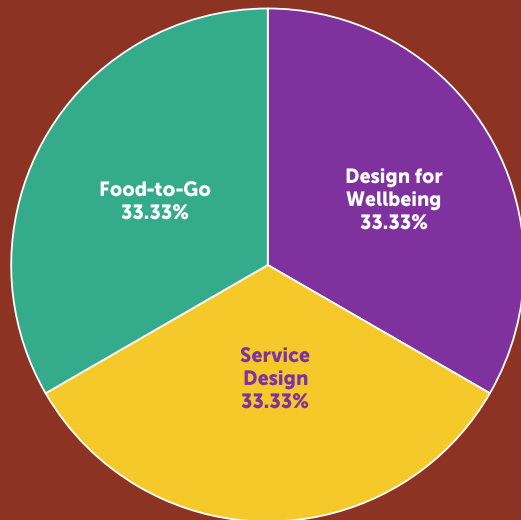
Pivot: Starting a PhD

Three Key Areas:

- Design for Wellbeing
 - Designing to enhance psychological wellbeing.
- Service Design
 - Designing service experiences, the experience customers have in a service.
- Food-to-Go Services
 - Cafés and shops selling sandwiches and ready meals.

One Key Question:

- How can designers be supported in creating positive food-to-go service experiences for users?



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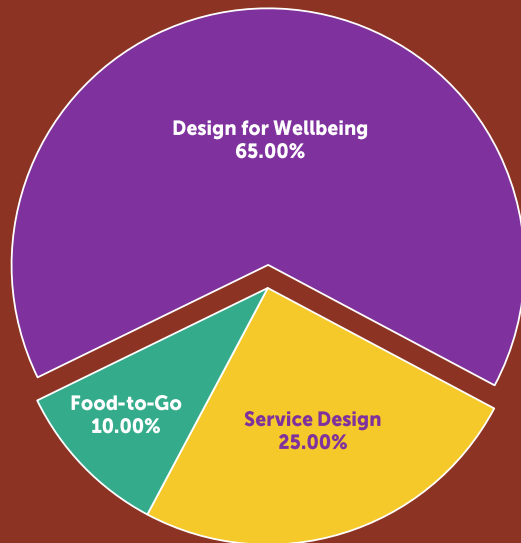
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So, I pivoted. I started a PhD; I wanted to explore designing experiences. My PhD started out with a focus on these three areas, in somewhat equal proportions. However, as I started my PhD and looked into these areas more, I realised that there was something that was a bit more pressing and more interesting to me.

Continuing a PhD

New Key Question:

- How do we design for wellbeing in Service Design?



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Design for Wellbeing – I came to realise that's what I really cared about, was exploring design for wellbeing. I wanted to make experiences that actively made people feel better and at a minimum didn't detract from someone's wellbeing. I realised that that was something I'd been missing out on throughout my design journey. A way to do evidence based intentional design for wellbeing.

My PhD

What is Design for Wellbeing?

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Let's dig in a bit more now that we know the focus.

Design for Wellbeing,

"All designed products, services, environments, or systems that surround us, more or less, in one way or another, influence our health and wellbeing."

(Soto, Xue and Tseklevs, 2022, p. 6)

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A bit of an explanation first on what I mean by design for wellbeing



Design for Psychological Wellbeing

- Design for Wellbeing focuses on designing for positive psychological wellbeing rather than treating health issues.
- Unlike Design for Health, which addresses physical or clinically significant psychological issues, Design for Wellbeing takes a holistic approach to wellbeing (Tseklevs & Cooper, 2017b).
- This mirrors the difference between positive psychology (which enhances flourishing) and traditional psychology (which focuses on treatment) (Jayawickreme, Forgeard & Seligman, 2012).
- Design for Wellbeing includes non-health-specific designs that enhance wellbeing, rather than just those directly tied to mental or physical health.

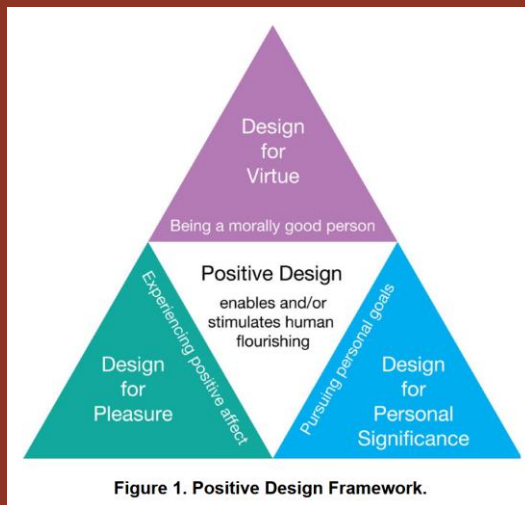
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When I say design for wellbeing, I mean design for psychological wellbeing



Okay, we've got an understanding of what I mean when I say I'm studying design for wellbeing in my PhD. But what is it that I'm actually trying to understand here?



Positive Design

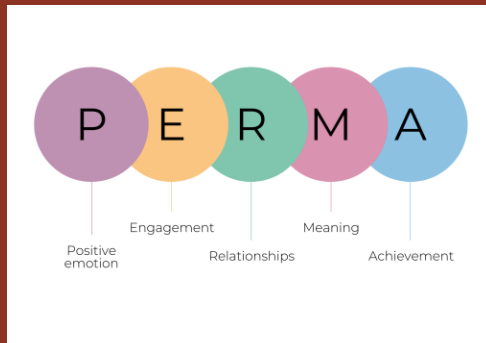
Desmet, P. and Pohlmeier, A. (2013) 'Positive design: An introduction to design for subjective well-being', *International Journal of Design*, 7(3), pp. 5–19.

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We've already got frameworks like this that designers can use...

PERMA Theory

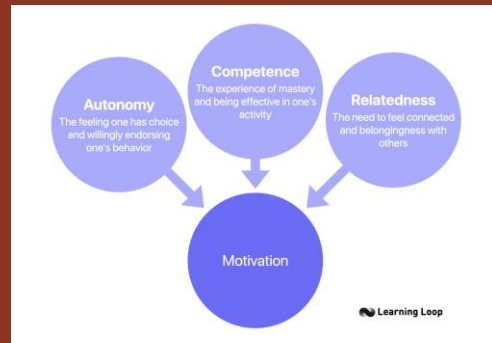


Theory: Seligman, M. (2011) *Flourish*. Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Image: <https://www.strengthscope.com/podcasts/what-is-the-perma-model-of-positive-psychology>

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Self-Determination Theory

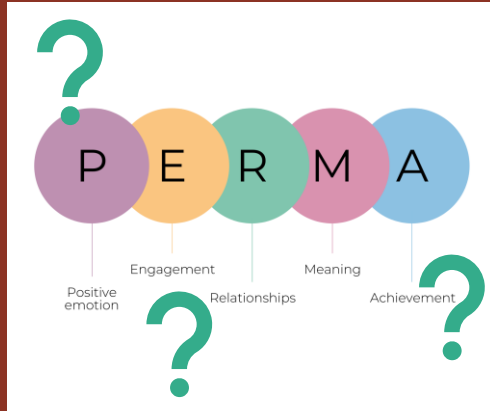
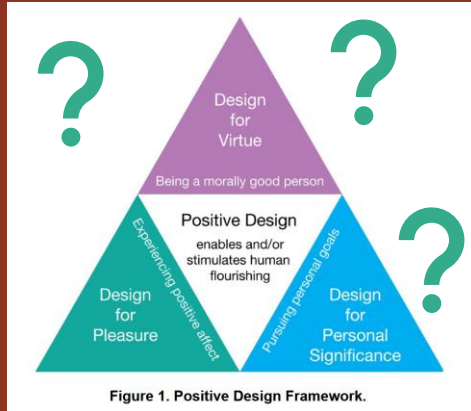


Theory: Ryan, R.M. and Deci, E.L. (2001) 'On Happiness and Human Potentials: A Review of Research on Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being', *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52(1), pp. 141-166. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.141>

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And lists of needs from psychology like this.

But what does this mean for *new designers*?

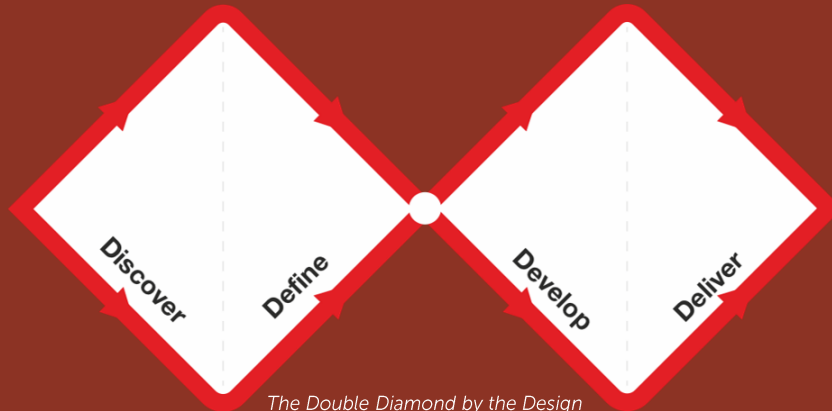


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The issue is what if you're a new designer? What does 'design for virtue' mean to you? When do you use the concept? How do you apply it to your work? What you need is a helping hand.

Defining a Process



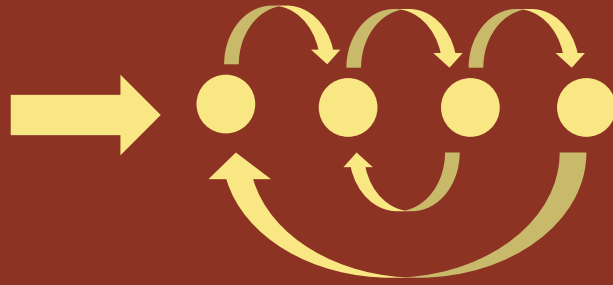
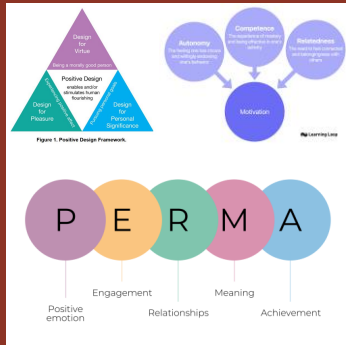
The Double Diamond by the Design Council is licensed under a [CC BY 4.0](#) license.

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In the same way that the double diamond is a useful tool and representation of a design process for people new to designing. It would be helpful to translate

Defining a Process



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It would be helpful to translate these frameworks and elements into a set of processes that someone new to designing positive experiences can go through. That's what my PhD is about – it's about defining and understanding the process of design for wellbeing. What are its mechanisms? What do designers actually do when designing for wellbeing?

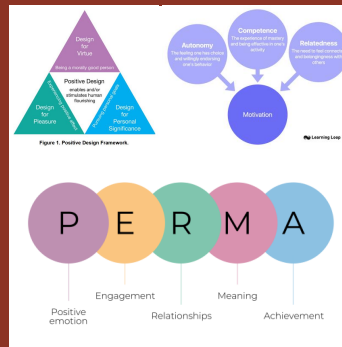
The Design for Wellbeing Ideation Process

Four non-consecutive stages

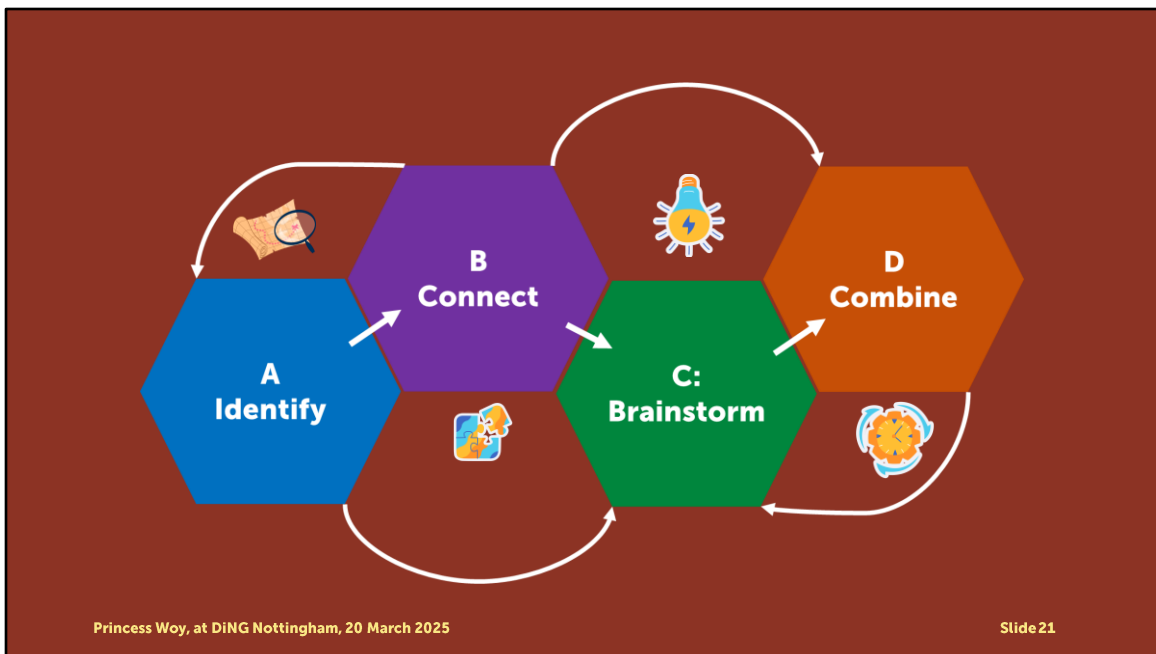
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Choose a Framework



Prior to starting the ideation process – you need to have a reference framework. Something outlining wellbeing elements.



The design for wellbeing ideation process is

- Iterative
- Contains distinct stages
- The stages can be mixed around.

Let's break them down:



A: Identify Interactions

- List the interactions that occur during the experience.
 - For example, through an experience map, customer journey map, task analysis, a written list of steps, etc.
- [or] List out daily interactions that occur for your persona.
 - (if the experience you are re-designing is part of their day-to-day life).

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At its core, this stage is simply about identifying a set of interactions.

Identify: This involves identifying interactions that occur during your experience.

In a normal design process, you should already be doing this as part of understanding the problem and identifying opportunities.

Re-designing the indoor car servicing experience

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As I go through I'm going to draw upon a theoretical example of re-designing an indoor car-servicing experience.

A: Identify

List the interactions that occur during the experience

- Drive into the business
- Find a parking spot
- Park the car
- Find the entrance
- Notify a staff member that I've arrived for my service
- Ask how long it will take
- Take a seat whilst I wait
- Scroll social media on my phone
- Ask for a cup of tea
- Continue to wait
- Get told my car is ready
- Leave the building

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Re-designing the indoor car servicing experience



Photo by Jack Lucas Smith on Unsplash

List the interactions that occur during the experience.

For example...

Here are the interactions related to an indoor car servicing experience.



B: Connect to Framework

- Identify sub-elements from your framework that are relevant to the experience you are re-designing.

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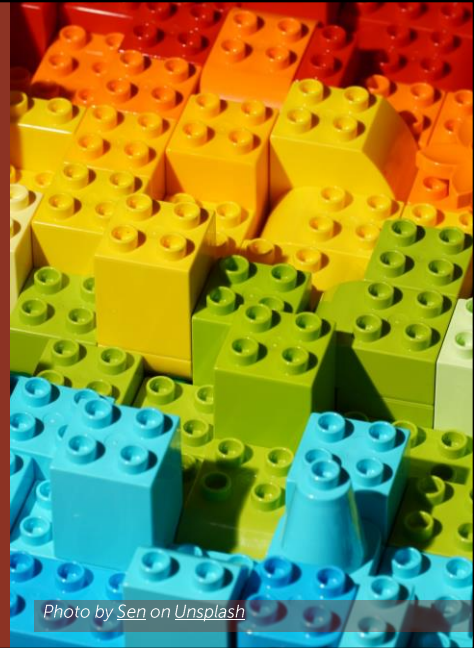


Photo by Sen on Unsplash

Next step - Understand how your chosen framework maps to the experience and its interactions.

These are some ways that you could do the connect stage.

At its core, this stage is simply about connecting your experience to your framework, which could be connecting the elements within your framework to the interactions you have outlined

B: Connect

Identify sub-elements from your framework that are relevant to the experience you are re-designing

Nature in the Space encompasses seven biophilic design elements:

1. **Visual Connection with Nature.** A view to the outdoors that connects people with living systems and natural processes.
2. **Non-Visual Connection with Nature.** Auditory, olfactory, or gustatory stimuli that engender a positive reference to nature, living systems or natural processes.
3. **Non-Rhythmic Sensory Stimuli.** Stochastic connections with nature that may be analyzed but may not be predicted precisely.
4. **Thermal & Airflow Variability.** Subtle changes in temperature, relative humidity, airflow across the skin, or surface temperatures that mimic natural environmental conditions.
5. **Presence of Water.** A condition that enhances a place through seeing, hearing or touching water or features that evoke water.
6. **Dynamic & Diffuse Light.** Leverages varying light levels and shadows that change over time to create a sense of connection with nature.

Natural Analogues encompasses three patterns of nature:

8. **Biomorphic Forms & Patterns.** Symbolic representations of natural forms, patterns, textured or numerical arrangements.
9. **Material Connection with Nature.** Materials that, through minimal processing, reflect the textures, colors, or patterns of nature to create a distinct sense of place.
10. **Complexity & Order.** Rich sensory information that creates a hierarchy similar to those encountered in nature.

Nature of the Space encompasses four biophilic design elements:

11. **Prospect.** An unimpeded view over a distance, which allows people to orient themselves within their environment.
12. **Refuge.** A place for withdrawal from environmental conditions, in which the individual is protected from the flow of activity, in which the individual is protected from the flow of activity.

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Identify sub-elements from your framework that are relevant to the experience you are re-designing.

Areas of the framework that could apply to my experience have been highlighted.



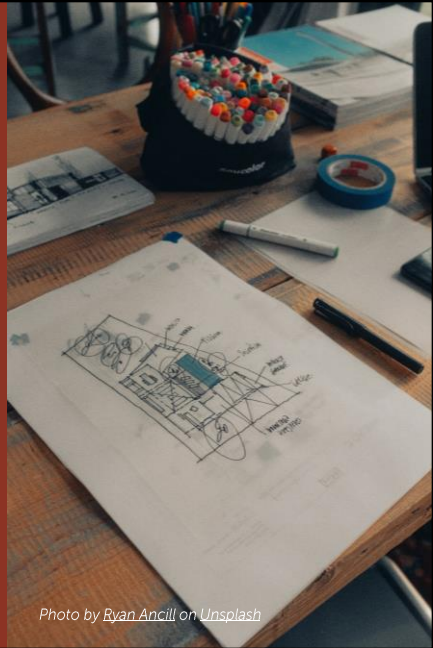
C: Brainstorm Ideas

- Generate concepts based on the combination of an interaction and a framework element.

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Photo by Ryan Ancill on Unsplash



This involves generating new ideas – it's the ideating part of the creative process, where you start to develop concepts.

These are some ways that you could do the brainstorm stage.

C: Brainstorm

Generate concepts based on the combination of an interaction and a framework element.

→ Walk into the business

→ Add nature visuals



Photos found on Pinterest

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Re-designing the indoor car servicing experience



Photo by Jack Lucas Smith on Unsplash

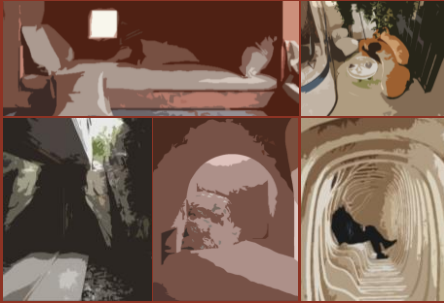
Generate concepts based on the combination of an interaction and a framework element.

For example...

C: Brainstorm

Generate concepts based on the combination of an interaction and a framework element.

- Take a seat whilst I wait
- Provide a space for refuge



Photos found on Pinterest

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Re-designing the indoor car servicing experience



Photo by Jack Lucas Smith on Unsplash

For example...



D: Combine Interactions

- Combine brainstorms into a new experience.
- [or] Build new experiences by placing interactions, relevant parts of your framework and design opportunities together to generate new ideas.

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Photo by Gaëlle Marcel on Unsplash

This involves combining your concepts and ideas into one form/experience.

In this, you are taking elements of the concepts you have ideated and merging them into one.

These are some ways that you could do...

D: Combine

Combine brainstorm into a new experience

- Take a seat whilst I wait
 - Provide a space for refuge
- Walk into the business
 - Add nature visuals



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Re-designing the indoor car servicing experience



Photo by Jack Lucas Smith on Unsplash

Combine brainstorm into a new experience.

For example...

Combining a space for refuge and nature visuals to get images like this.

Re-designing the indoor car servicing experience

Identify

- Drive into the business
- Find a parking spot
- Park the car
- Find the entrance
- Notify a staff member that I've arrived for my service
- Ask how long it will take
- Take a seat whilst I wait
- Scroll social media on my phone
- Ask for a cup of tea
- Continue to wait
- Etc.

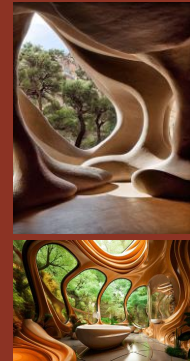
Connect

- Drive into the business
 - Add nature visuals
- Find a parking spot
 - Arrange parking in a way so that it is associated with complexity and order
- Find the entrance
 - Entrance should be a biomorphic form.
 - Reception desk should also be a biomorphic form
- Take a seat whilst I wait
 - Provide a space for refuge

Brainstorm



Combine



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Here is a summary of the example that I just walked through.

Examples from Students

Applying the Design for Wellbeing Ideation Process

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I used this explanation of how to ideate in a design for wellbeing process with a class I taught, the class was all about design for wellbeing. Let's explore the context of the class and then some of the experiences that students designed.

I've got examples from a full spread of the course, some are going to be a bit rough but you'll get the thinking behind them.

Context

This was an experience design module with a broad definition of the term 'experience':

"An experience here is broadly something that can be interacted with and may elicit various feelings, emotions, and/or may influence our wellbeing in other ways."

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Examples given:

- Products are an experience because we interact with them, and they make us feel different things.
- Environments are an experience because we interact with them purposefully or through our senses. Think of this building and the type of lighting it has or the smells

- Graphic communication is an experience because we interact with it as a piece of communication, it can elicit emotions from sight alone or from what it makes us think about.

Photo by [Celpax](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Context

The students' brief:

Design a wellbeing-enhancing or wellbeing-supportive experience within the context of in-person shopping.

Context

There were a range of students from different programs:

- Fine Arts
- Textile Design
- Experience Design
- Industrial Design
- Product Design
- Graphic design

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Examples

Please no photographs.

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I used this explanation of how to ideate in a design for wellbeing process with a class I taught, the class was all about design for wellbeing. Let's explore the context of the class and then some of the experiences that students designed.

Re-designing the experience of resting whilst at a market

Data Removed to Protect Participants

Student Example of Design
for Wellbeing

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Re-designing the experience of resting whilst at a market

Data Removed to Protect Participants

Student Example of Design
for Wellbeing

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Re-designing the experience of resting whilst at a market

Data Removed to Protect Participants

Student Example of Design
for Wellbeing

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Re-designing the market stall experience

Data Removed to Protect Participants

Student Example of Design
for Wellbeing

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Re-designing a clothing sales shopping experience

Data Removed to Protect Participants

Student Example of Design
for Wellbeing

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Re-designing a clothing sales shopping experience

Data Removed to Protect Participants

Student Example of Design
for Wellbeing

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Student's Thoughts

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Now, we can look at some of the reflective comments left by students. For some context, as part of their coursework students needed to include a piece of reflection on their experience in the module and of designing for wellbeing.

Reflective Feedback

- "While some approaches and frameworks can initially seem confusing, I found that once I grasped the underlying principles, their application became feasible. Importantly, I was able to integrate well-being design elements without compromising functionality."
- "As I move forward with new design processes, incorporating principles of design for well-being will become a key consideration in my concepts. Rather than adhering strictly to one specific framework or approach, I plan to draw on various principles."

Reflective Feedback

- "Additionally, exploring the psychological and physical benefits of biophilic design in an interior space will help inspire future designs."
- "Moving forward, I aim to use these frameworks and processes more intentionally in my design process, to ensure that wellbeing considerations are being made."
- "Design for wellbeing theories (e.g. Subjective Wellbeing) have significantly influenced my creative process by focusing on the user experience and emotional impact. This theory guided my focus on creating positive, joyful environments (life satisfaction and positive affect) and reducing negative emotions (low negative affect). "

Reflective Feedback

- "In addition to this, I have gained a deeper understanding of psychological need fulfilment from framework research, allowing me to create products and/or environments in the future that not only look appealing but also support users' overall health and happiness."
- "Incorporating Design for Well-being into my practice has expanded my perspective on designing with a focus on emotional and psychological health. It has sparked a new-found interest in design for inclusivity and well-being, which I see as increasingly crucial in current and future design practices."
- "Overall, focusing on well-being in design brings personal satisfaction, knowing that my work makes a positive contribution to users' lives, which drives my professional growth and passion for design."

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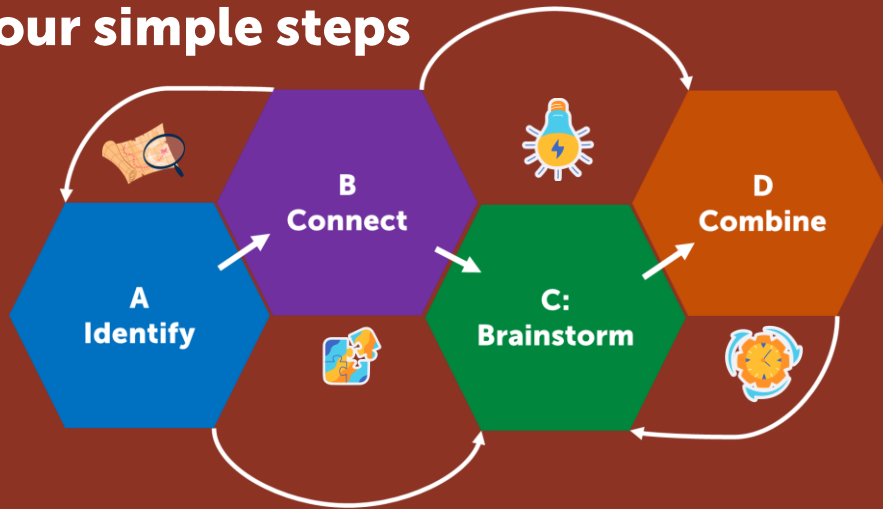
Conclusion

A success with students and a useful process for designers new to designing for wellbeing.

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Four simple steps



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Four simple inter-mixable steps:

- Identify interactions in an experience
- Connect interactions to elements in your framework
- Brainstorm around the connections
- Combine your brainstorms

What Next?

Continuing the work...

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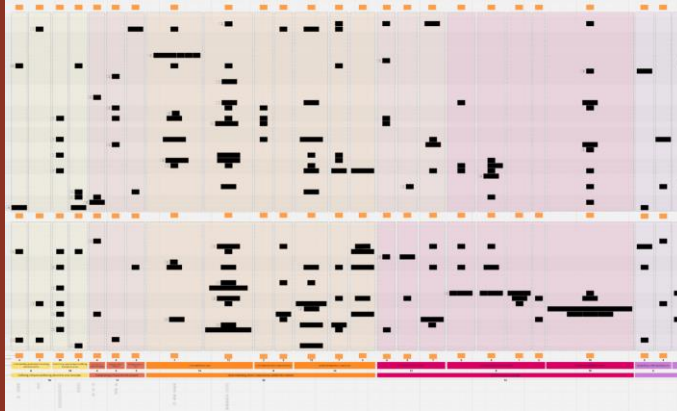
Returning to my PhD

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If we return to who I am and what I'm doing
It's all about exploring and trying to grasp/describe the process of doing design for wellbeing.

A bigger study on the whole process



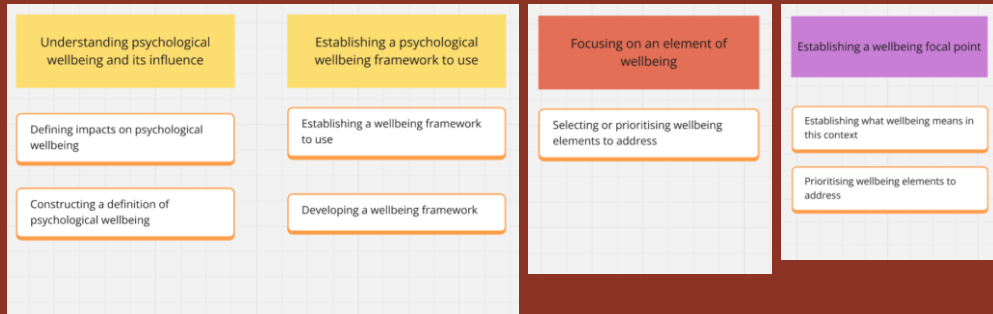
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So after this bit, I also analysed cases of people doing design for wellbeing to try and identify typical actions and activities.

Trying to identify any other key activities that distinguish a design for wellbeing process

Zooming in



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After this, I interviewed service designers about how they consider wellbeing in their projects.

Thanks for Listening

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