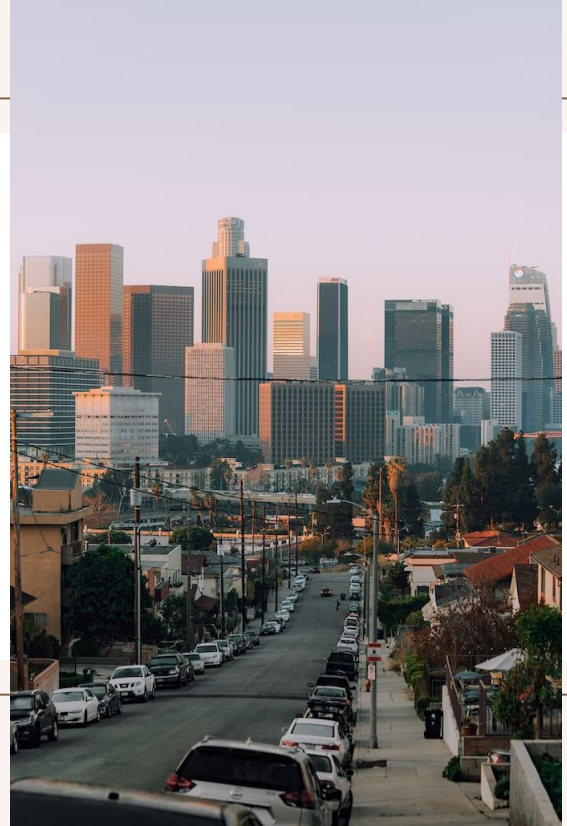


PATIENTS FIRST

Joy Truex
Mental Health Care in the United States





01 PROJECT OVERVIEW

[Slide 3](#)

02 DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

[Slide 14](#)

03 USER STORIES & TASK FLOW

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04 INSPIRATION & SKETCHING

[Slide 34](#)

05 USER TESTING

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06 REVISIONS & PROTOTYPE

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01 PROJECT OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

“America’s **mental health crisis** began long before the coronavirus pandemic did, but a year and a half of loss, stress, isolation and treatment disruption has only **increased** the number of Americans **struggling** with their mental health.”

[Source: Axios](#)



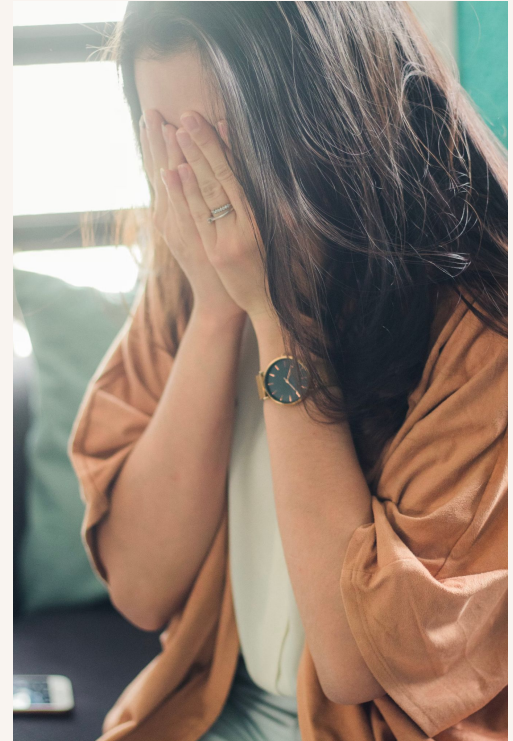
Although not everyone sees mental health care as healthcare, our society is making great strides towards breaking the decades-long stigmas against seeking out mental health services.

THE LANDSCAPE

The COVID-19 Era

From **2019 to 2021**, the percentage of adults who had received any mental health treatment in the past 12 months increased from **19.2% to 21.6%**.

[Appendix](#)



THE PROBLEM



OVERWHELM

72% of therapy-seekers
say the process
overwhelms them



CONSISTENCY

34% of patients did not
return for a second visit
after 45 days



CHOICE PARALYSIS

of therapists in
largest US counties:
7,576 in LA County, CA
7,437 in Cook County, IL
1,135 in Harris County, TX

THE PROBLEM CONTINUED...

More adults than ever are seeking mental health services. However, there is not an easy way to find a therapist that will be the right fit for you, and the process is often long and arduous, wasting valuable time and effort better spent on personal growth.



“Place people and patients at the **center of healthcare** by more deeply understanding patient needs and experiences, while improving patient outcomes.”

PROJECT MOTTO

THE BIG IDEA

I restructured the problem space into the “*big idea*,” or a “*how might we*” question to solve for:

How might we provide a more effective process for millennials and gen z adults to research a therapist they have a good relationship with?



RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 1 To learn about millennial and gen z adult experiences of choosing a therapist.
- 2 To learn about the challenges and goals millennial and gen z adults have when hiring a therapist.



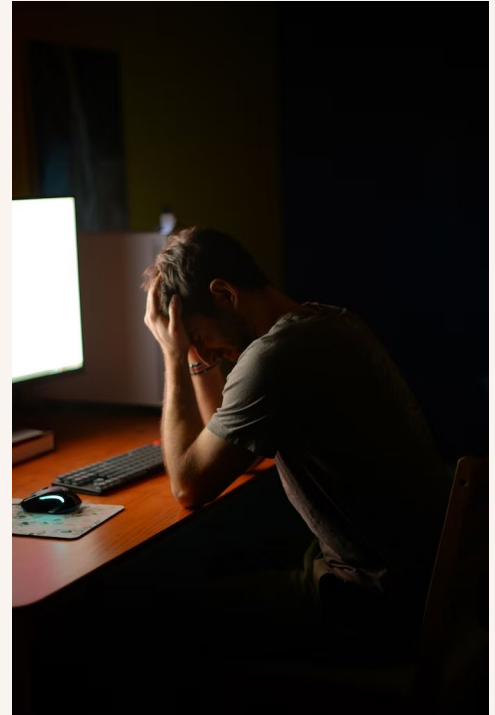
DESIRED OUTCOMES

- 1 Increased understanding of the challenges of finding a good therapist.
- 2 Improved practices or processes in matching patients and therapists.
- 3 Identification of areas for further investigation.



ASSUMPTIONS

- 1 The process of finding a therapist is difficult and stressful.
- 2 Patients value a therapist they connect with over saving money.
- 3 Finding a good therapist requires great persistence.
- 4 Patients don't know how to effectively find a therapist that matches with their requirements.
- 5 Patients would like direction in the process of finding a therapist.



DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS 02

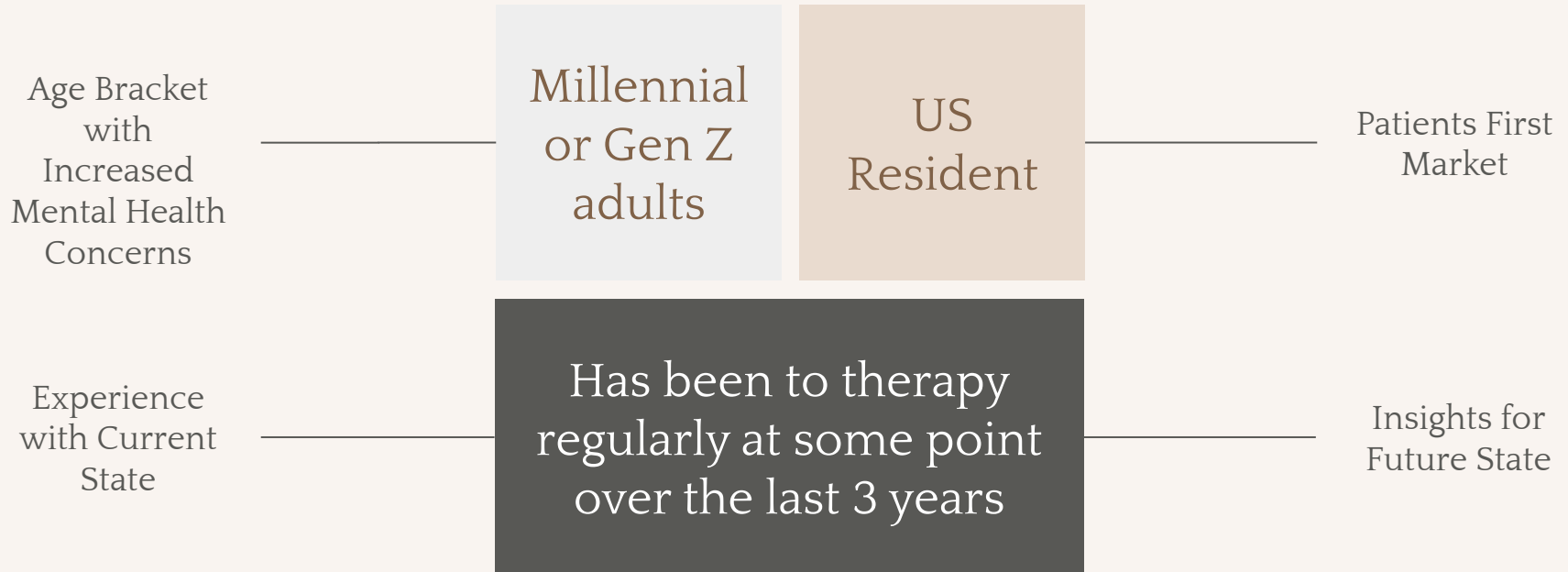


TRANSITION TO PRIMARY RESEARCH

With my assumptions and research hypothesis determined based on secondary research, it was time to transition to **primary research**.

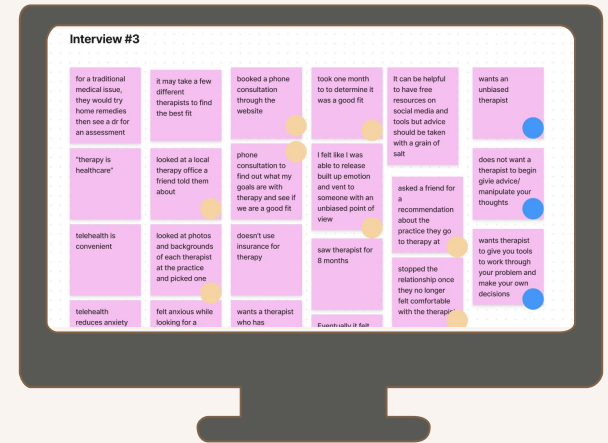
I created a plan to deploy a decontextualized strategy (more specifically a qualitative attitudinal study), in the form of **user interviews**.

PARTICIPANT CRITERIA



INTERVIEW GUIDE

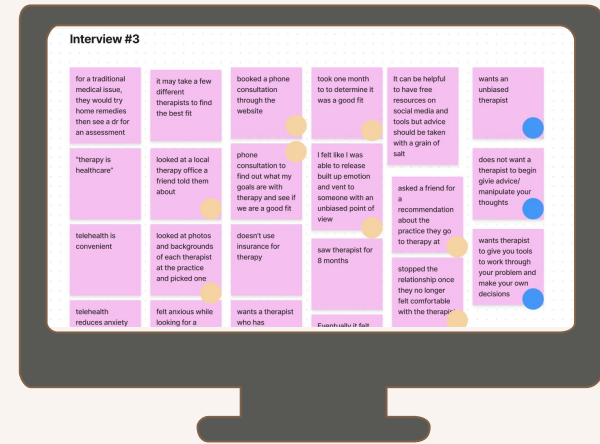
Questions centered on the user's **process** of finding a therapist (starting from research and ending with intake), how they **felt** during it, and what they **liked and disliked** about the process.



INTERVIEW GUIDE CONTINUED...

Outline:

- ❖ If your friend asked for your advice in finding a new therapist, what are the first steps you'd tell them to take?
- ❖ What was your process like in selecting a therapist?
- ❖ How did you feel during the process of finding a therapist?
- ❖ How long did you take to select a therapist?
- ❖ What were your major considerations in selecting a therapist?
- ❖ What are some common red flags to look out for when finding a therapist?
- ❖ Did you complete a consultation prior to first appointment? If so, how did you set it up and what was that process like?
- ❖ How long before you knew your most recent therapist was/was not a good fit? Why?
- ❖ How did you feel about your therapist a month into therapy? A couple of months?
- ❖ Do you have a preferred therapeutic approach?



INTERVIEW SUMMARY

INTERVIEW #1

- ❖ Millennial
- ❖ US Resident
- ❖ Currently in therapy
- ❖ Felt discouraged about looking for a therapist
- ❖ Found a good therapist after trying out a few

INTERVIEW #2

- ❖ Millennial
- ❖ US Resident
- ❖ In therapy in the last year
- ❖ Felt optimistic about finding a good therapist
- ❖ Felt comfortable with their therapist after a few months

INTERVIEW #3

- ❖ Gen Z
- ❖ US Resident
- ❖ In therapy in the last year
- ❖ Felt anxious about looking for a therapist
- ❖ Believed their therapist had some necessary insight, but ultimately did not understand them

INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Pain Points



Motivations/Goals



Behaviors/Actions



Theme #1

Gathering perspectives from others

values opinions of those she trusts on this matter



looked at a local therapy office a friend told them about



she has gone off of friend's recommendations in the past



her friend told her about Psychology Today directory



likes about it is there are reviews to help me sort through my search



Theme #2

Ambiguous expectations about the process

it's difficult because lots to choose from



doesn't know of any better way to pick a therapist



was worried about the process of therapy and whether it would benefit her



it's difficult because you don't know if you'll like them



doesn't know what questions she should ask



didn't do any consultation or pre-communication, just made first appointment and went with it



first time going to therapist, took several months to select one because she was nervous about going



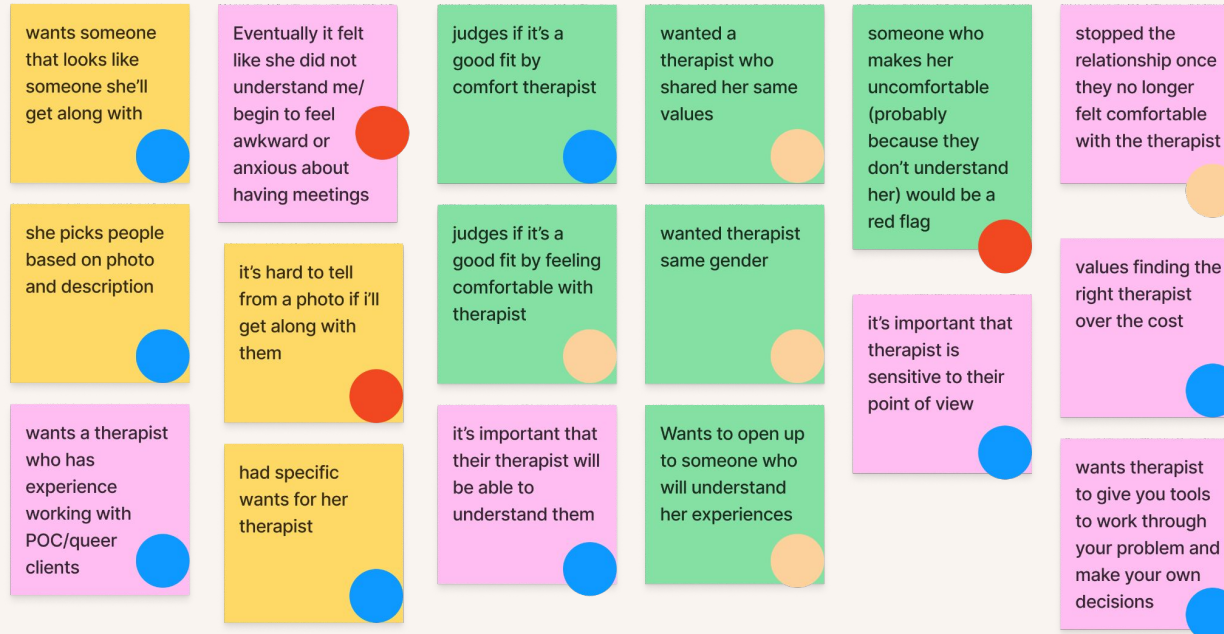
don't like google method takes a lot of time and isn't the most exhaustive process.



INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Theme #3

Empathy is essential



INTERVIEW SUMMARY CONTINUED...

“My biggest red flag is if it seems like they aren’t listening to me and understanding me.”

“I wanted a therapist who is the same gender as me and shares the same values that are important to me.”

“I wanted a therapist who has experience working with POC/queer clients so they would understand my point of view.”

INTERVIEW SUMMARY CONTINUED...

PAIN POINTS

- ❖ Don't like their current method of looking for a therapy
- ❖ Don't know what to expect til they meet the therapist
- ❖ It is a difficult process to find a new therapist

MOTIVATIONS

- ❖ Want someone who has or understands their identity/values
- ❖ Don't really care about therapeutic approach

BEHAVIORS

- ❖ Do not use health insurance to pay for therapist (regardless of it's covered)
- ❖ Will stop going to a therapist that makes them uncomfortable
- ❖ Ask friends advice & look at online reviews

KEY THEMES SUMMARIZED

SEEKING FEEDBACK

Patients ask their friends for recommendations and look at online reviews of therapists.

EXPECTATIONS

The process of finding a therapist can be ambiguous and therefore difficult.

COMFORT IS CRUCIAL

The number one thing patients want is a therapist who they feel comfortable with and they feel understands them.

KEY THEMES CONTINUED...

*“Research shows that the **therapeutic relationship** is one of the strongest predictors of successful treatment.”*

[Source: The Family Institute at Northwestern University](#)



REVISITING THE BIG IDEA

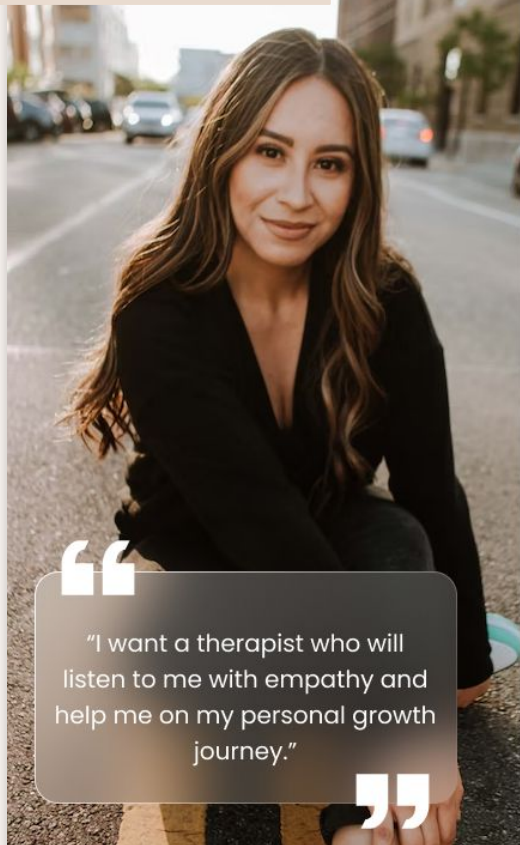
HMW provide a more effective process for millennials and gen z adults to identify a therapist they have a good relationship with?



Important Considerations:

- ❖ Knowing + Sharing Values
- ❖ Feeling Understood > Saving Money
- There is a lack of information that supports the patient's wants and needs in the process of finding a therapist

PERSONA



"I want a therapist who will listen to me with empathy and help me on my personal growth journey."



Angel

Age: 29

Location: Los Angeles, California, USA

BIO

Angel has been to a few therapists in the past few years, but has yet to form a strong connection with one. She wants to start therapy again and know the qualities she wants in a therapist, but is dreading the process of looking for one.

Behaviors

- Starts and stops the process of looking for a therapist because it it's so draining.
- Will be a dedicated patient once she finds a therapist she likes.

Motivations

- Uses a quick Google search to try and find a therapist near her as conveniently as possible.
- Doesn't care what the therapist's approach is, as long as they are unbiased.

Frustrations

- She thought her last therapist would be a good fit, but 3 months later she felt her therapist didn't understand her.
- Can't tell much about a therapist from their online listing of a photo and education history.

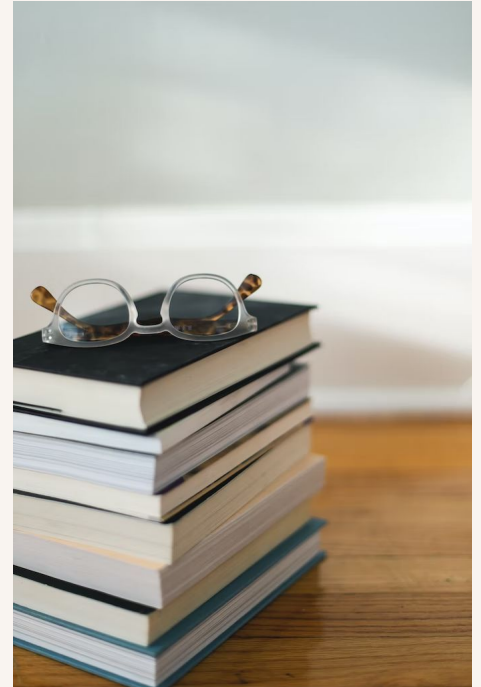
03 USER STORIES & TASK FLOW

EPIC - IMPROVED TRANSPARENCY & TRUST

Improved Transparency & Trust

- ❖ Strong indicator of whether a therapist will understand their client.
- ❖ **Knowledge of background** will allow them to understand their client's situation
- ❖ **Experience with a mental health challenge** will equip them to treat their client effectively

By being to identify a therapist who possesses these metrics, a prospective client can better identify someone who they will feel comfortable with.



USER STORIES



TASK FLOW

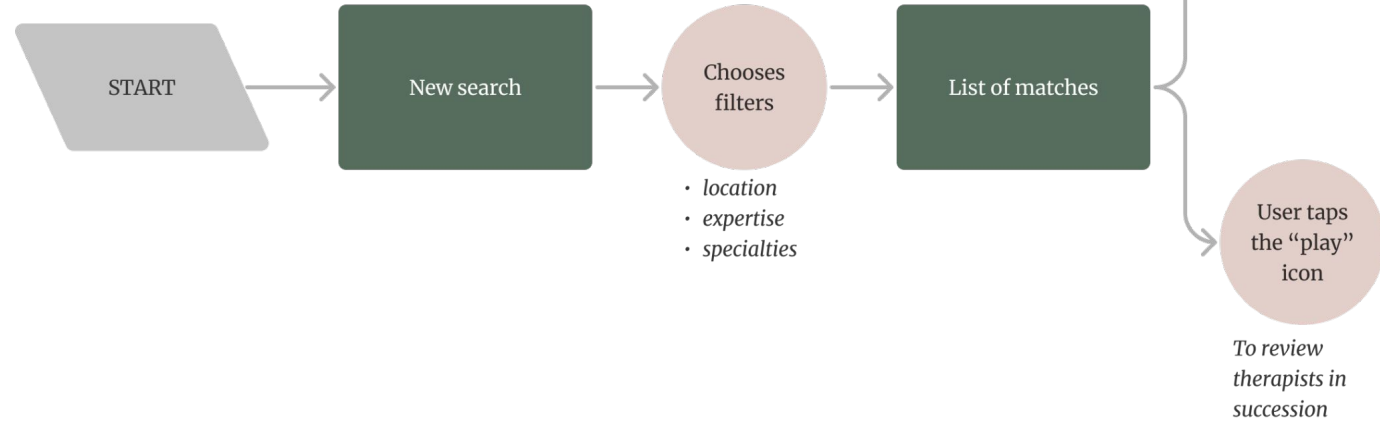
Legend:

Location/State
Change

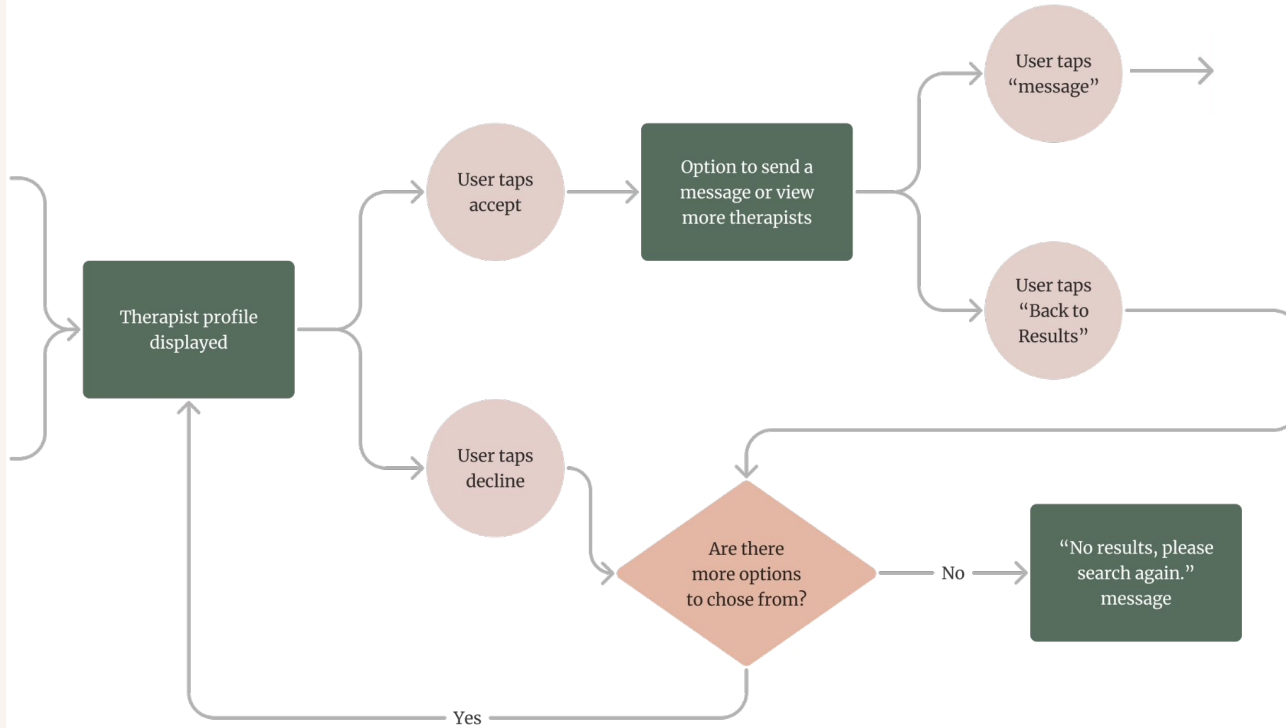
User Action

System
Descision

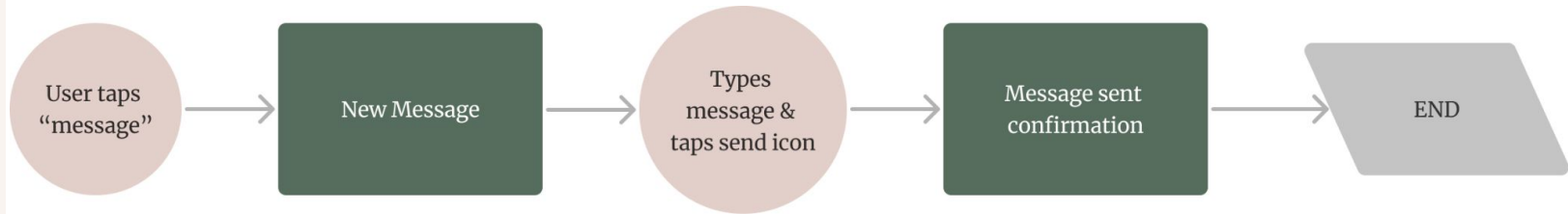
START
/END
Points



TASK FLOW



TASK FLOW



INSPIRATION & SKETCHING 04

INSPIRATION -> SKETCHING

The primary features needed for my app were:

- Search
- Profiles
- Messaging

I considered 3 main models in my inspiration-finding and initial lo-fi sketches:

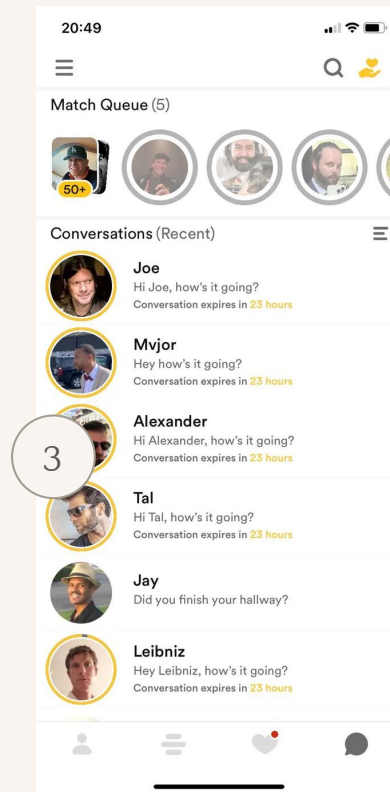
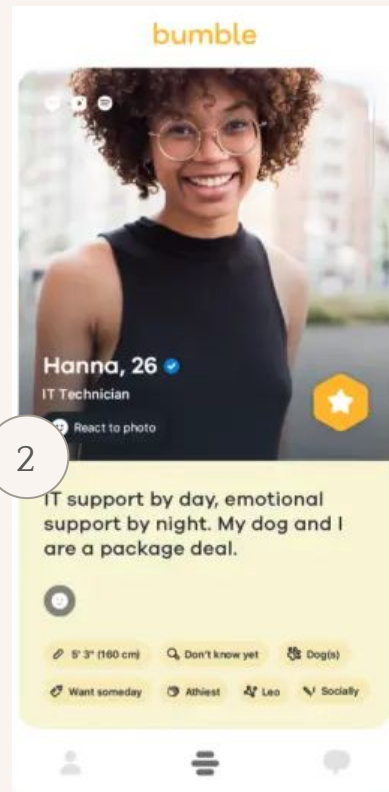
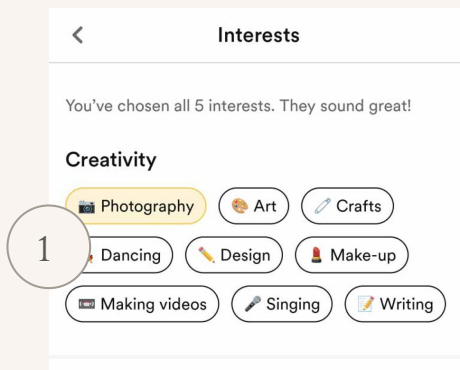
- Bumble
- Airbnb
- Ecommerce



INSPIRATION

BUMBLE

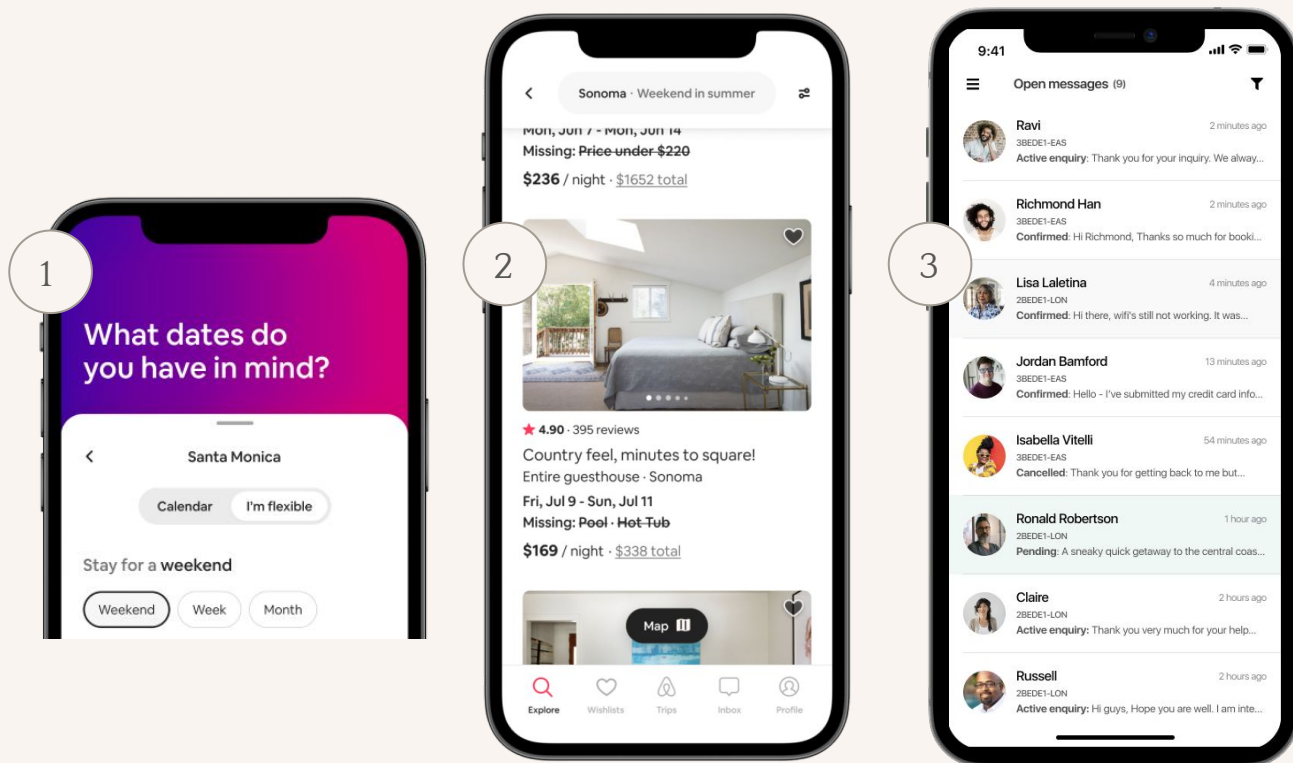
1. Specific filters
2. Easily scannable profile
3. Minimal messaging layout



INSPIRATION

AIRBNB

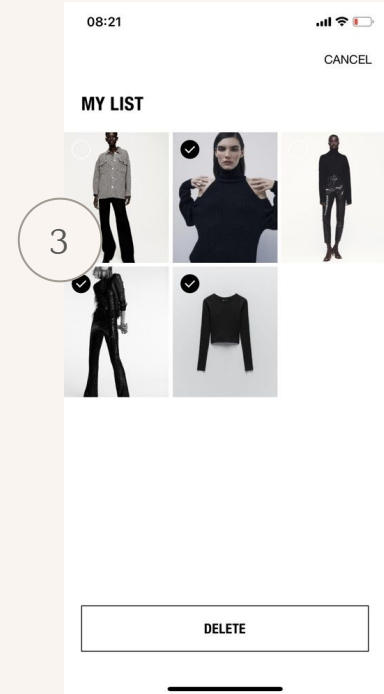
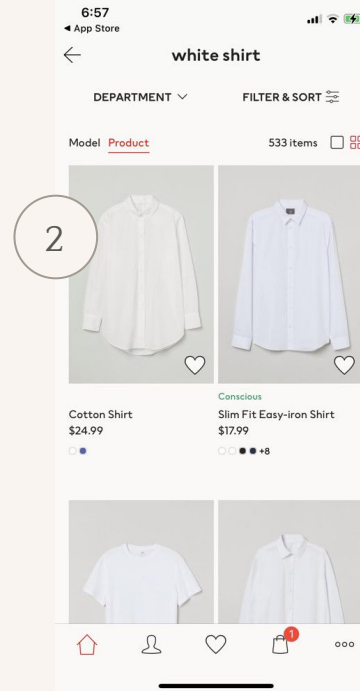
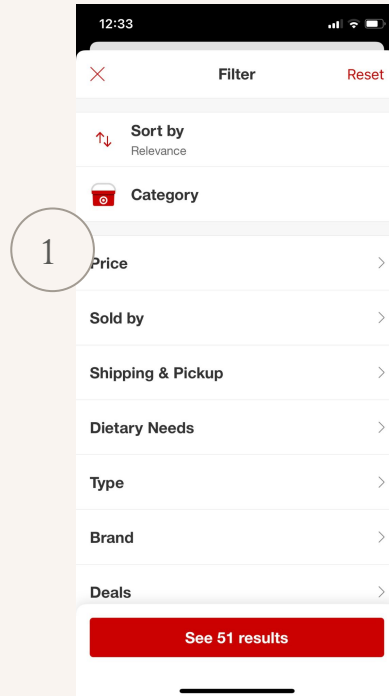
1. Specific filters
2. Easily scannable profile
3. Minimal messaging layout



INSPIRATION

E-COMMERCE

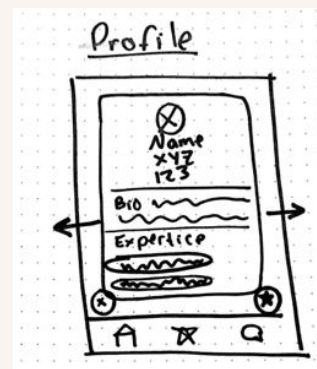
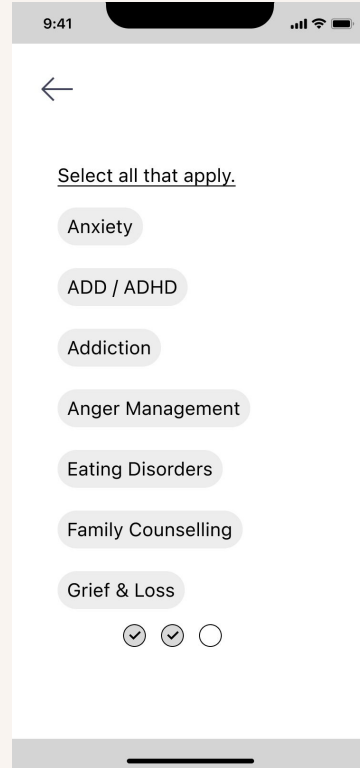
1. Specific filters
2. Quickly view and compare options
3. Save to review later



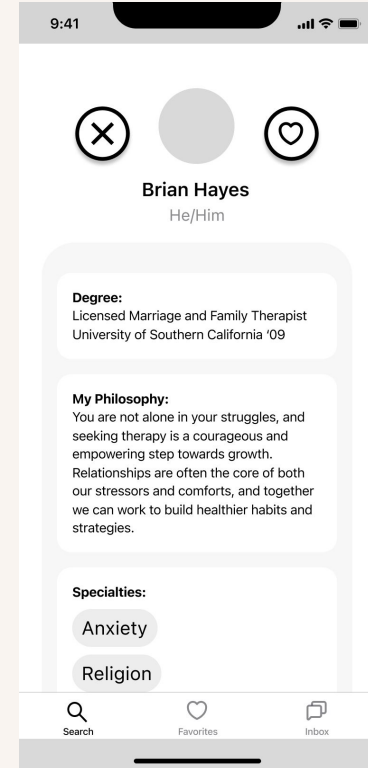
CONCEPT SKETCHES



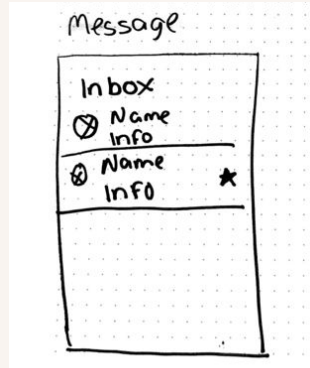
Filter chips are broken into pages by category to avoid choice overwhelm.



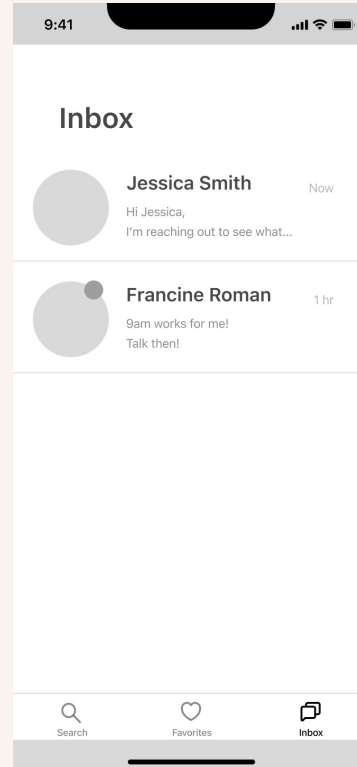
The profile is broken into easily digestible and scannable sections.



CONCEPT SKETCHES



The messaging function draws on existing mental models of messaging within a mobile app.



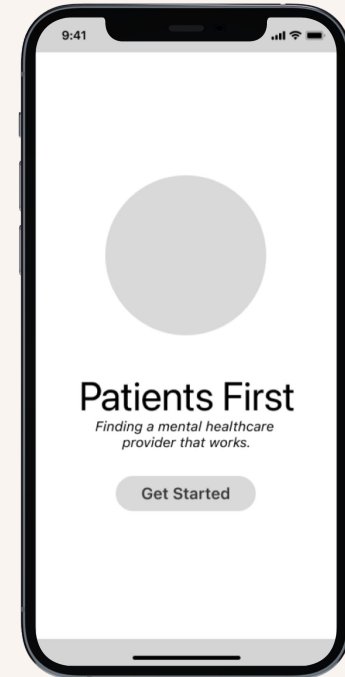
05 USER TESTING

OUTLINE

User testing was completed with 5 participants using **Mid-Fidelity Wireframes**.

Participant Demographics:

- ❖ **Age demographic**
 - Millennial or Gen Z adult
- ❖ **Therapy / Telehealth usage**
 - Varied among participants
- ❖ **General phone/app usage**
 - Heavy among all participants



TASKS + GOAL

1. Search Parameters

Navigate search function using Angel's identity

2. Review Options

Review profiles for to determine if they'd be a good fit

3. Identify Potential Match

Favorite selected profile

4. Send Message

Send message to prospective therapist

GOAL: Browse potential matches and message a potential match

OUTCOMES

From the outcomes matrix, it was evident that areas of opportunity for improvement are:

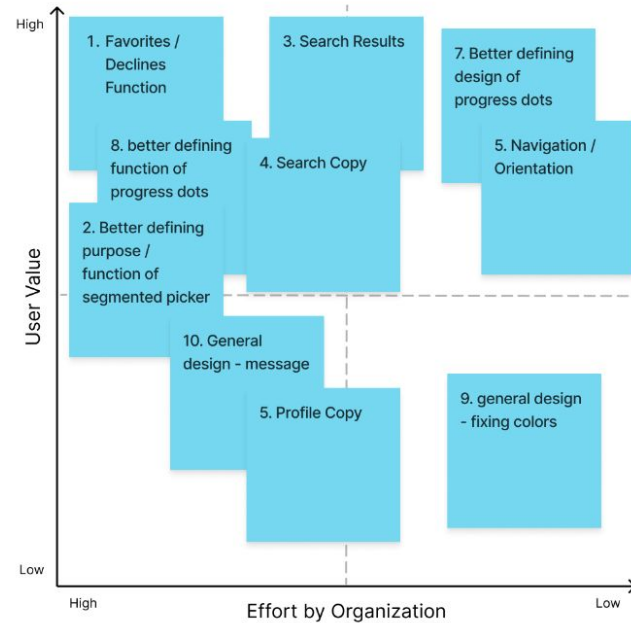
- Search Parameters
- Review Options

However, other areas emerged; even though users completed a task there was still ample room for improving the design.

	Search Parameters	Review Options	Create Potential Match	Send Message
Tester #1	✓	✗	✓	✓
Tester #2	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tester #3	✗	✓	✓	✓
Tester #4	✓	✗	✓	✓
Tester #5	✓	✗	✓	✓
Task Average	4/ 5	3/ 5	5/ 5	5/ 5

FEATURE PRIORITIZATION MATRIX

Feature prioritization took into account effort by organization to fix, and user value.



TOP 10 INSIGHT DECISIONS SORTED

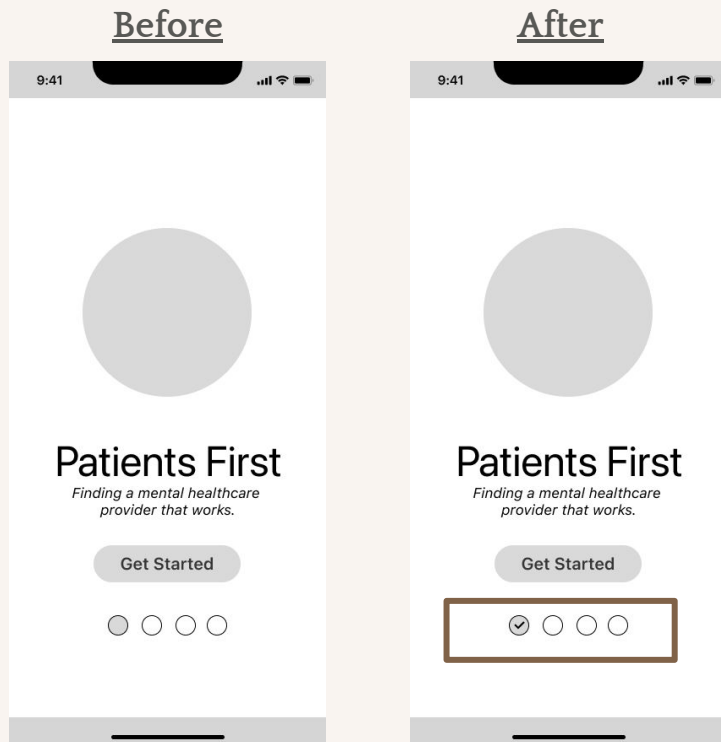
Backlog	Minor Tweaks	Bigger Changes
8. Better Defining Function of Progress Dots	9. General Design - Color & Design Consistency	3. Search Results
5. Profile Copy	7.0 Better Defining Design of Progress Dots	1. Favorites / Declines Function
10. General Design - Message	5. Navigation / Orientation	
4. Search Copy		
2. Better Defining Purpose / Function of Segmented Picker		

Additional Info

- Ranked 1-10 by **severity of issue**
- Sorted based on Feature Prioritization Matrix with consideration to **User Value** and **Effort by Organization**

REVISIONS & PROTOTYPE 06

DEFINING PROGRESS DOTS



User Testing Notes: Users were unsure if they should tap the dots, swipe, or tap the CTA.

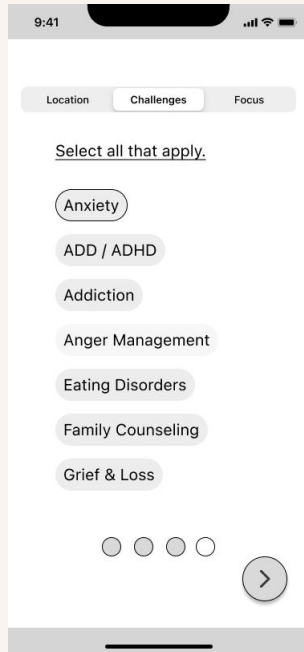
Decision: Change design slightly but keep function in place.

Method: I added a check into the highlighted dots to indicate more of a pizza-tracker function than a clickable icon.

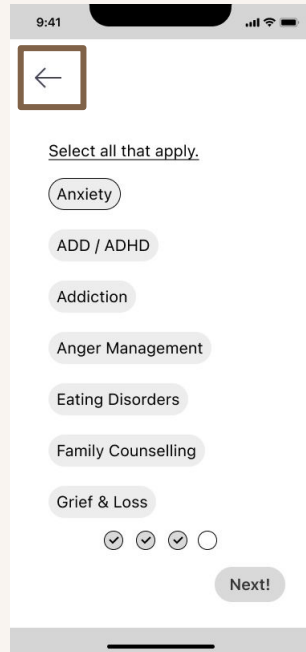
Note: In final iteration, pagination dots were removed from this welcome screen to keep in line with best practices.

NAVIGATION / ORIENTATION

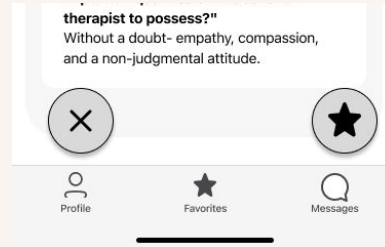
Before



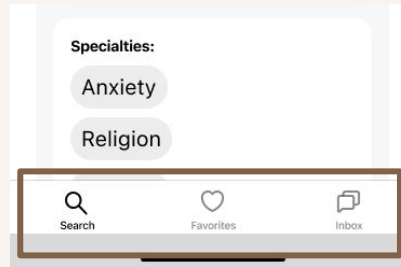
After



Before



After



User Testing Notes: Users were unsure where they were in the app and how to move around freely.

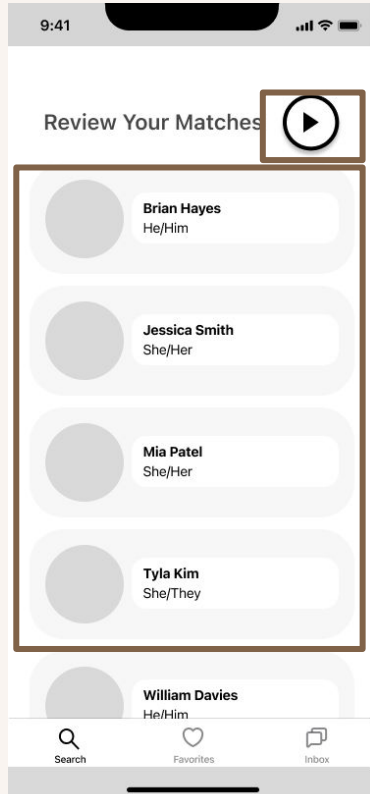
Decision: No major changes, just clarify existing and add more user control.

Method: Replaced existing star with more familiar heart icon for favorite; added a back button.

Bonus

Segmented picker was causing confusion with copy and function so it was removed.

SEARCH RESULTS



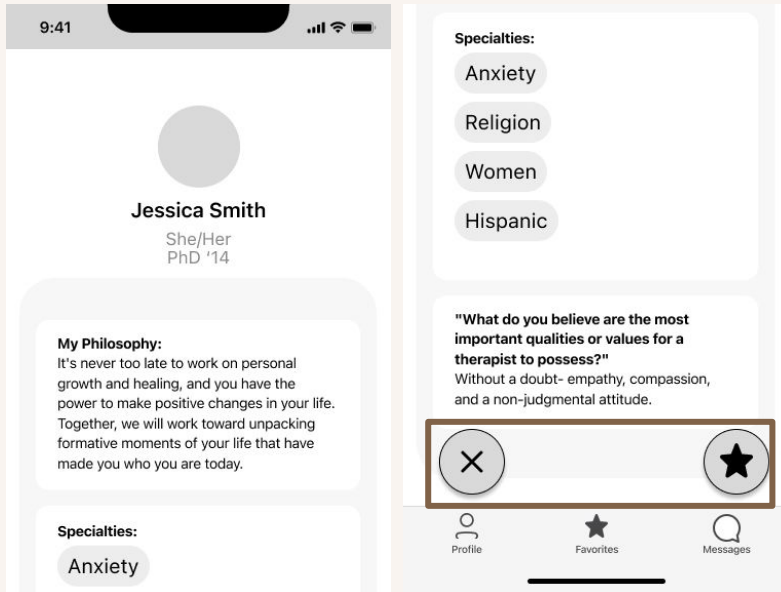
User Testing Notes: Users were surprised / confused when they were brought to the first profile result immediately after completing the search options.

Decision: Add an in between screen to show list of results.

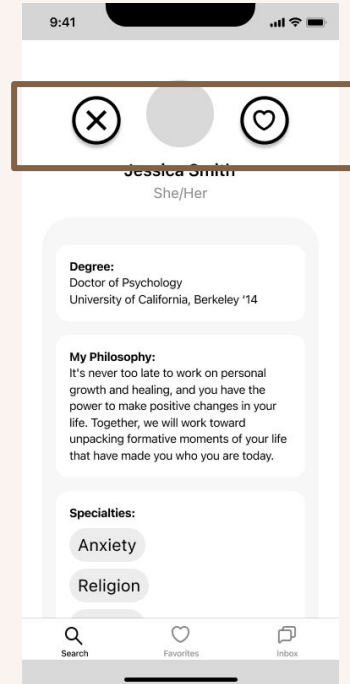
Method: Added a screen with listed options that could then be “played” to review one by one.

FAVORITES / DECLINES FUNCTION

Before



After



User Testing Notes: Users weren't confident on how to use the decline / favorite buttons. They caught on after one tap that it was a "dating app" function of reviewing each profile in succession but were initially unsure.

Decision: Research and clarify so it makes more sense to the user how this works

Method: Updated icons to be more familiar and moved to the top of the screen.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ❖ Improving the familiarity and simplicity of the tasks will allow the user to achieve the goal with more ease and confidence.
- ❖ Future sprint potential focuses:
 - Copy grooming
 - Enriched navigation features



PROTOTYPE



Mid-Fi Prototype

- ❖ Custom Search
- ❖ Review Options
- ❖ Send Message

07 ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

APPENDIX

Secondary Research

- ❖ *America's Shadow Epidemic*
<https://www.axios.com/2021/10/30/mental-health-pandemic-shadow-epidemic>
- ❖ *Mental Health Treatment Among Adults Aged 18–44: United States, 2019–2021*
<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db444.htm>
- ❖ *COVID-19 and your mental health*
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/mental-health-covid-19/art-20482731>
- ❖ *How Much Does Therapy Cost?*
https://www.forbes.com/health/mind/how-much-does-therapy-cost/#footnote_1
- ❖ Average person goes through 3 therapists before finding ‘the one’
<https://studyfinds.org/finding-right-therapist-mental-health/>

APPENDIX CONTINUED...

Secondary Research

- ❖ *Is Dropout After a First Psychotherapy Visit Always a Bad Outcome?*
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3708593/#R1>
- ❖ *How Do I Find a Good Therapist?*
<https://www.apa.org/ptsd-guideline/patients-and-families/finding-good-therapist>
- ❖ *Therapist Demographics and Statistics in the US*
<https://www.zippia.com/therapist-jobs/demographics/>
- ❖ *Blue Cross Blue Shield Study*
<https://www.bcbs.com/press-releases/blue-cross-blue-shield-association-study-finds-nearly-one-third-of-millennials-are-affected-by-behavioral-health-conditions>

Visuals

- ❖ [Unsplash](#)

THANK YOU!

CREDITS: This presentation template was created by Slidesgo, including icons by Flaticon and infographics & images by Freepik

