

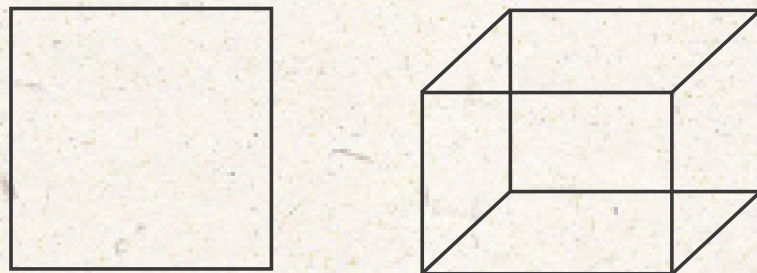
LouLou

An exploration in the role of physical objects in
the two-dimensional world of therapy

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... Imagine if we could put our emotions into the shapes we learned in geometry, to measure the area of our sorrow and the volume of our joy.



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

To talk about feelings and certain emotions is a taboo in many cultures. We grow up censoring what we feel, to decrease the risk of being misunderstood. We pretend to follow the norms which teach us that boys shouldn't cry and that girls shouldn't get mad. We are so focused on our materialistic needs, educating ourselves in managing our devices meanwhile, we have never learned to manage our own emotions. What we end up with is keeping all those feelings hidden inside, which in some cases lead to bigger issues such as burnouts, loneliness, and depression.¹

In my degree project, I interviewed different psychotherapists and people who have participated in therapy sessions. Speaking to a therapist, I realized the lack of physical objects in this field where almost everything is being communicated verbally or on paper. I got to know more about the importance of having a third element as an aiding tool for both the patient to feel more open to express emotions and also for the therapist to analyze patients' choices and to keep a conversation going.

¹ Alain de Botton, *The school of life: an emotional education*, London, The school of life, 2019, p.2.

1.1 Aims and questions

Addressing our feelings and how to deal with them is not easy. Sometimes we would get stuck in emotions that we can't find a way on how to express them. In my degree project by designing shapes and forms I aim to try to create a aiding tool to let us express ourselves more easily and to help us be more aware of our emotional state.

How can we describe a feeling when words are not enough? Can objects help us to describe our mixed feelings? How can I with physical objects help people to get to know their emotions better? What can I, as a designer add to the two-dimensional world of therapy and mental health?



2.0 DESIGN PROCESS

2.1 Thoughts and ideas

My degree project started with questions and discussions about emotions and the limitations which language makes when it comes to expressing some emotions. Topics and considerations that I had were more about humanistic matters rather than the material ones; our need for language, as our main means of communication and also thinking of how mankind's best invention could create so much misunderstanding and in many cases not even being the best tool to communicate with.

As a bilingual who is born and raised in Iran, after moving to Sweden, I have learned a lot about cultural differences and perspectives. I have also realized how lack of words can affect one's identity and the way one presents and expresses himself/herself. As Alain de Botton beautifully says "There is only one way to be understood and that is through the horribly cumbersome business of language."

²

At the time I was also very inspired by an author called John Koenig who is the founder of a website called "The dictionary of obscure sorrows" where he makes up new words. The idea behind this website and his project is to create words to define feelings that are new but familiar to our generation, feelings that we have in common but have no name to define them. Such as Vemödalen - n: which means the fear that everything has already been done.³



² Alain de Botton on Emotional Education, [online video], The school of life, September 28 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9X7u-Mejz0&t=2739s>, (accessed 6 Oct 2019).

³ John Koenig, *The dictionary of obscure sorrows* [website], <<https://www.dictionaryofobscuresorrows.com/page/3>>, (accessed 25 Feb 2020).

2.2 Research

2.2.1 Emotions and stereotypes

Emotions and how each of us experience them and why we experience them is still a mystery. Even though there have been many researches and studies in neurology and psychology, many questions still remain unanswered. In the book *How emotions are made* (2017) by Lisa Feldman Barrett she argues on the theories which claim that emotions are built in different cortices in the brain or that they are in our distinct.⁴ Recent studies show that emotions are concepts that are created by earlier experiences and very much based on a person's culture, environment and the way we are raised in our families and how we grow up in the society.⁵

Another wrong belief she points out is that facial expressions are the same all around the world. As globalization in the world is growing, even our concepts of emotions are changing, and we tend to believe more and more in the Western and mostly American stereotypes of emotions.

⁴ Lisa Feldman Barrett. (2017). "The brain makes emotions". *How emotions are made*. New York. Mainer Books. p.112-127.

⁵ Barrett, "The myth of universal emotions". *How emotions are made*. p.42-55.

The fact is that the universality of facial expression has been already disproved by Darwin for many years ago.⁶

Emotions are different from culture to culture and even in individuals of the same culture. To put words on them and to categorize them in different groups, is what is necessary for us to understand ourselves and to communicate a feeling. Vemödalen is a word unknown and not written in any official dictionary in the world but no doubt that many of us have felt that everything has already been done (especially if you are a designer).



⁶ Barrett. *How emotions are made*. p.165.

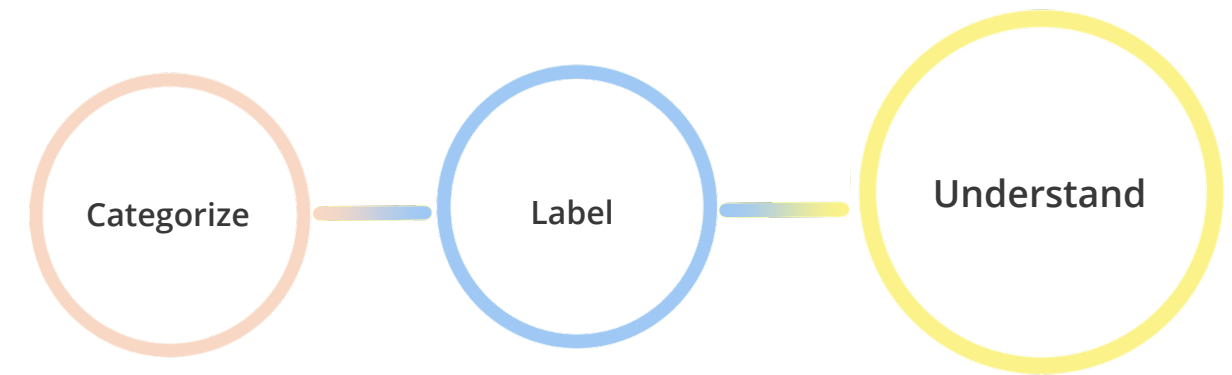
2.2.2 Why emotional awareness matters?

World Health Organization has predicted that by the year 2030, depression will cause more early deaths and disabilities than, stroke, cancer, war, or accidents. However, to the majority, mental illness is still not considered to be such a big issue.⁷ The number of breakdowns has been increasing during the past years, mostly because we have neither learned to listen to our emotional needs nor to let them be heard by others.⁸

Studies also show that even people with cancer who have higher levels of emotional intelligence have an easier time going through stressful events because they know how to frequently categorize, understand, and label their emotions. Overall to address different affects and emotions and labeling them helps one to be better protected against chronic inflammatory processes.⁹

Unfortunately, our societies have put more time on educating us to become intelligent in school, teaching us mathematics and physics as the only requirements to become good citizens and less effort on what we really need; understanding our own emotions, how to address them, and learn to deal with them. Imagine if we could put our emotions into the shapes we learned in geometry, to measure the area of our sorrow and the volume of our joy.

In the past years, self-help books have become more popular than ever before and applications such as calm and headspace are frequently used to decrease the level of anxiety and stress.¹⁰ What all these apps and books offer is to help the user to be more aware of their emotional state to control the level of anxiety.



⁷ Lisa Feldman Barrett (2017). *How emotions are made*. New York. Mainer Books. p.209.

⁸ Alain De Botton (2019). "Chapter 3: Therapies". *The school of life: an emotional education*. London. The school of life P 74.

⁹ Barrett (2017). "Emotions and illness" *How emotions are made*. New York. Mainer Books. p. 205.

¹⁰ David Phelan. *Indipendant*, "Headspace: How The Meditation App Turns Your Stressful Phone Into A Source Of Calm", <<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/features/headspace-meditation-app-ios-android-download-review-interview-a8888186.html>> ,(accessed 26 April 2019).

2.3 Interview I: Aiding tools

During my project, I've had contact and talked to a psychologist and a psychotherapist. I interviewed Ulrika Rosdahl Ljung who is an art therapist in Örebro region and works with adult patients. I asked her about how a usual therapy session takes place, methods, and tools that she uses during the sessions.



Fig 1: Ulrika Rosdahl Ljung, Örebro



Fig 2: Nallekort/ The bears cards , Örebro Psykiatri

Some of the examples she pointed are a series of animated cards called Nallekort or The bears (fig 2), KAT-kittet (fig 3).¹¹

Help tools such as Nallekort and KAT-kittet were made for kids in the first place to help them to talk more easily about their feelings and also to communicate them with the therapist or their family.

Nallekort is a series of cards, a classic tool for talking emotions and communicating them. These cards have not only been used in therapy but also for social workers and teachers.



Fig 3: KAT-kittet

KAT-kittet is designed as a communicative and cognitive aid in conversations about thoughts and feelings. An aid to clarify without subjective interpretation.

This product was initially made to help children and adolescents with an autism spectrum disorder, but later also a special educational tool for the professional groups that came into contact with people who need emotional and social training. However, both of these help tools have now a wider range of use, and are used in therapy for adults.¹²

Ulrika Rodahl Ljung also mentioned that these are some of the most useful tools they have used in this field and patients even have the KAT-kitet at home to give more support to the patient to have more control over their feelings.

¹² Angelica W Rydén, *Special Nest*, "KAT-kittet som hjälper till att identifiera känslor", <<https://www.specialnest.se/hjalpmedel/kat-kittet-hjalper-till-att-identifiera-kanslor>> (accessed 22 Oct 2019).



Fig 4-5: Some other materials used in her therapy sessions, Örebro

I asked her if there are any three-dimensional objects that patients can use to support them while sitting in a therapy session or if there is any help tool for people who struggle when communicating verbally. She mentioned that there are no three-dimensional objects used in therapy and everything is mostly verbal or on paper.

Another thing she brought up was that many people find it hard to look the therapist in the eyes and speak and often get distracted or uncomfortable. Having a third element would be beneficial for both the patient and the therapist.

¹¹ Phone interview with Ulrika Rosdahl Ljung, Psychotherapist and occupational therapist, (2019-12-08).



2.4 Design references

Although the topics of emotional awareness and mental health are very essential, there are not so many design projects done in this field.

Degree project, "Talking objects" by Martha Brauer and "Yoy" by Frida Nyberg are some of the works that concentrate on the field of mental health. These projects were huge inspirations during the starting phase of my process.



Fig 6: Talking objects, Brauer.M, Stockholm, 2016

Meditating objects

Martha Brauer is a master graduate from Konstfack year 2016. In her degree project she has worked with a variety of objects, with different features such as material, textures, and shapes. In her project, she is aiming to make a child therapy session easier and use the kid's fantasy to interpret those objects and also to increase their ability to remember the features of the forms as a help for the upcoming therapy sessions.¹³

¹³ Konstfack college university of arts and crafts. 2016. "Konstfack degree exhibition 2016", <<https://www.konstfack2016.se/master/mais/martha-brauer/>>, (accessed 1 Dec 2019).

Känslobarometer YOY

Project Yoy is also another work from a former Konstfack student. In her degree project for bachelor, she has worked with ways to deal with stress in a household environment. With her design proposal, she makes a solution for talking more openly about stress and sharing it with family members. I find interaction, playfulness, and sharing as the main strength points in this project.



Fig 7: Yoy, Nyberg.F, Stockholm, 2017

¹³ Konstfack college university of arts and crafts. 2017. "Konstfack degree exhibition 2017", <<https://www.konstfack2017.se/bachelor/baid/frida-nyberg/>>, (accessed 1 Dec 2019).

Alma dolls

Some other inspirational projects I found relevant are Alma toys by Yaara Nusboim which is a series of wooden toys for kids who suffer from emotional trauma.¹⁵ By making different characteristics, symbols, and colors she makes it possible for the kids to use their power of imagination and communicate with the therapist.

Tools for therapy

And also Nicolette Bodewes's tactile kit to encourage people to talk about their emotions in a therapy session. These objects are made of different material and create a variety of tactile experiences. Another interesting aspect of her project is her inspiration from Jungian Archetypes defined by Swiss psychologist Carl Jung and bringing them into her design.¹⁶



Fig 8: Alma dolls, Nusboim. Y, Shenkar, 2019



Fig 9: Tools for therapy, Bodewes. N, Eindhoven 2016

*"... Our energies are overwhelmingly directed toward material, scientific, and technical subjects and away from psychological and emotional ones. Much anxiety surrounds the question of how good the next generation will be at math; very little around their abilities at marriage and kindness."*¹⁷

- Alain de Botton

+ - = *

¹⁵ Hahn, J. Dezeen, <<https://www.dezeen.com/2019/11/18/yaara-nusboim-alma-therapy-dolls-design/>> (accessed 18 Nov 2019).

¹⁶ Morby, A., Dezeen, <<https://www.dezeen.com/2016/11/04/tools-for-therapy-nicolette-bodewes-tactile-object-psychotherapy-dutch-design-week-2016/>> (accessed 18 Nov 2019).

¹⁷ Alain de Botton, *The school of life: an emotional education*, The school of life, London, 2019, p.1.

2.5 Workshop: How are you feeling now?

In order to reach a better understanding of the universality of feelings and how we communicate them, I arranged two workshops with almost the same questions and tasks. In these workshops, I reached out to people with different nationalities and linguistic skills.

The first workshop took place at Konstfack's clay room with four of my classmates, three women and a man. Participants in this workshop are from, Italy, France, India and Sweden.¹⁸

The second workshop was with a group of SFI (Swedish for newcomers) students from Röda korset folkhögskola in Skärholmen. This group consisted of a man and a woman from Syria, a woman from Russia and another woman from Somalia.¹⁹



Fig 10: Workshop I: *How are you feeling right now?*, Konstfack, 8 Dec 2019



Fig 11: Workshop II: *How are you feeling right now?*, Röda korset folkhögskola, Stockholm, 19 Dec 2

Tasks

In both workshops, participants had three tasks to do. The first one was to write down all the words they knew for feelings, preferably in their mother tongue. In the second task, they were asked to define and visualize the feelings that they found easiest to describe. The last question was to describe how they were feeling at the moment.

In the last part of the workshop, I asked them to switch places and see if it is possible to guess what the other person has written, drawn, or made in clay.

What I learned

My outcome from the workshop was that, feelings such as happiness, sadness, stress, anger, and calmness were easier for the participants to define. Whereas when answering how they feel at the moment they were showing mixed feelings and the answers took a longer time for them to deliver.

Another insight was that when words were switched between the participants, it was almost impossible to guess the feelings written on the page since it was in another language whereas shapes and drawings had more potential in being understood by the other participants.

¹⁸ Workshop I, Konstfack, Stockholm, (8 Dec 2019)

¹⁹ Workshop II, Röda korsets folkhögskola, Stockholm, (19 Dec 2019)

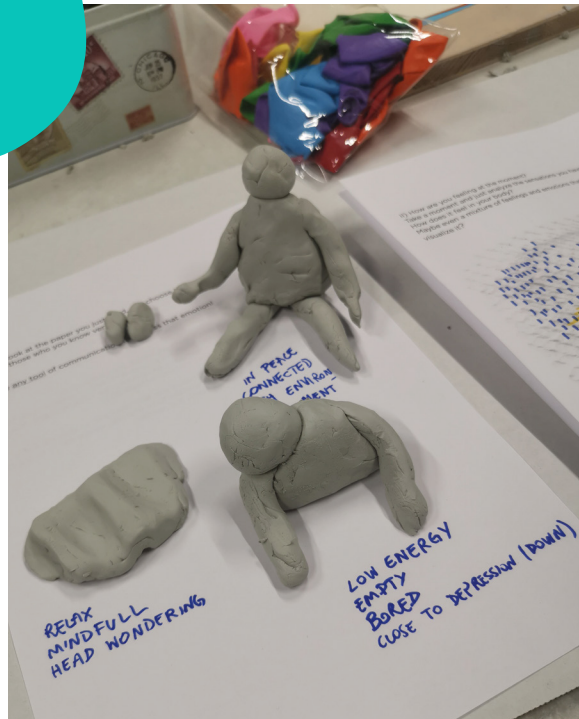


Fig 11: workshop I, Konstfack

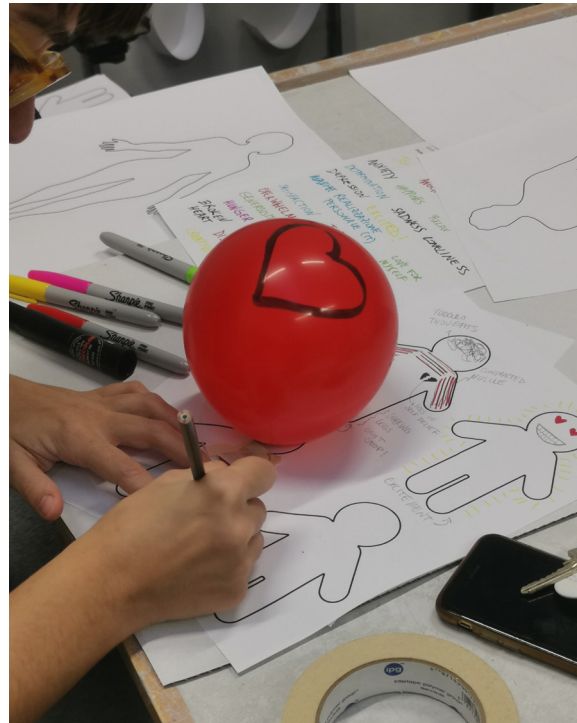


Fig 12: workshop I, Konstfack

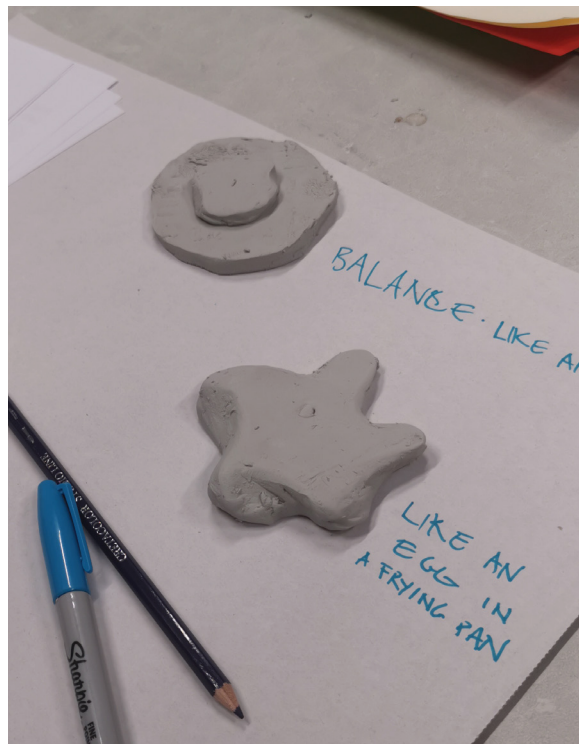


Fig 13 : workshop I, Konstfack

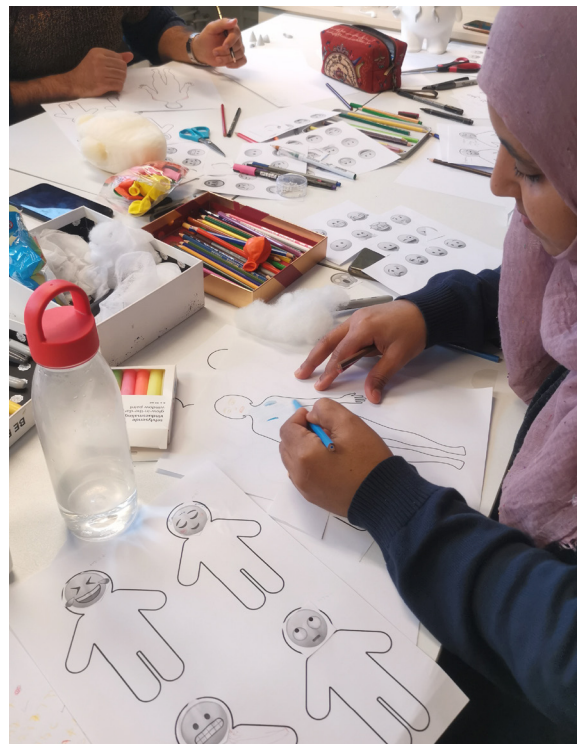


Fig 14 : Workshop II, Röda korset folkhögskola

2.6 Interview II: The most discussed emotions and CBT

In my second meeting with Ulrika Rosdahl Ljung, I asked her which format of therapy could be a suitable for my idea of having physical objects. She believes that any tools and methods used in different types of therapy are based on the patient's needs and can vary from person to person. Some find it useful and some may not, just like every other technique. She pointed out that many people can be stiff in the beginning and to have objects can help to break the ice in a good way.²⁰

When asking about which feelings are discussed the most during a session I was shown a piece of paper that included words for different feelings. Seven feelings were highlighted as the most used ones: anger, fear, disgust, guilt, happiness, interest, and surprise.

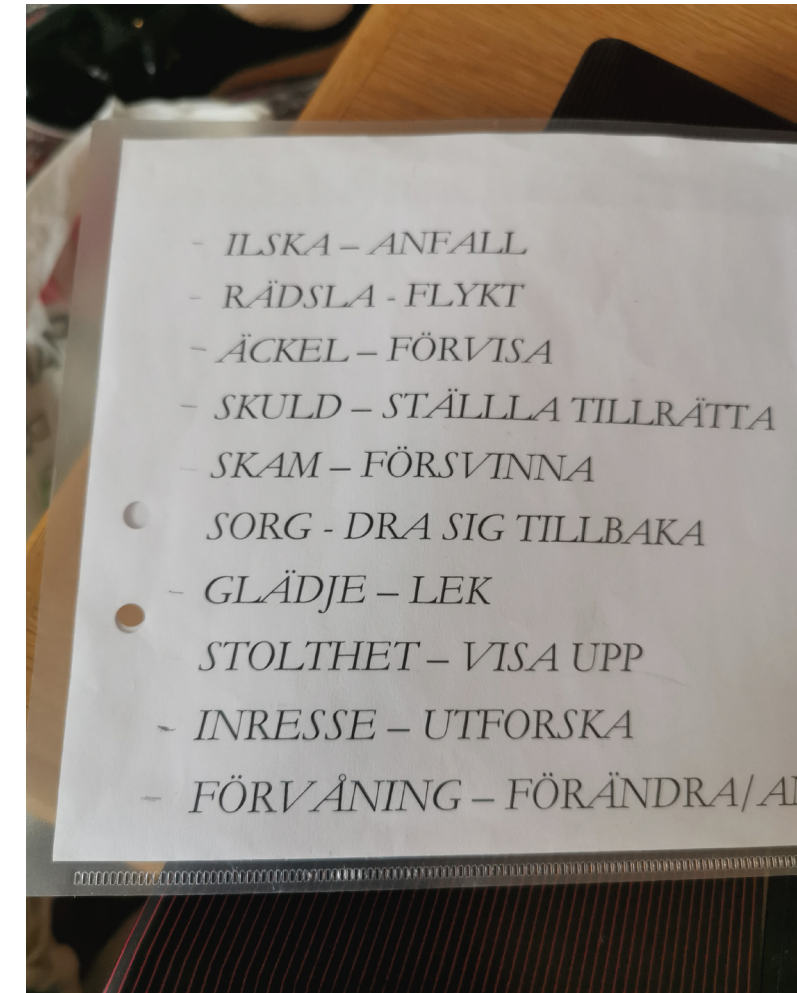


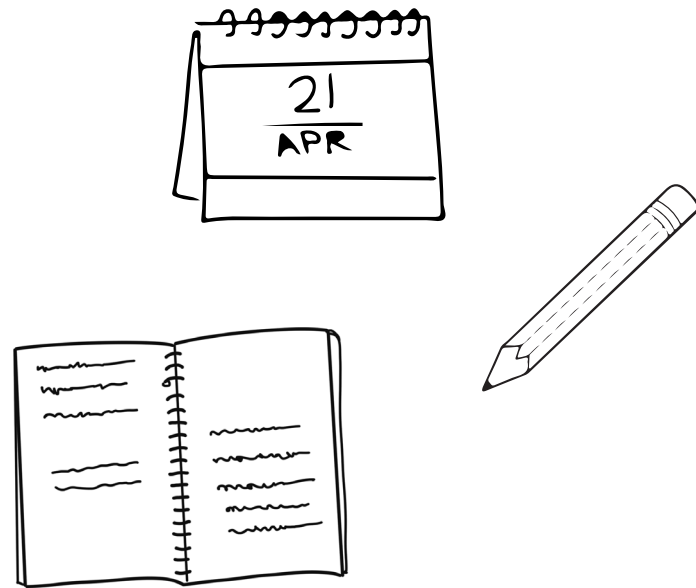
Fig 15 : Emotions card. Örebro

²⁰ Interview with Ulrika Rosdahl Ljung, Örebro, (27 Feb 2020).

She also mentioned CBT as a good therapy method for my idea. CBT stands for cognitive behavior therapy. It is a talking therapy that can help the patients to manage problems such as anxiety, depression, addiction, and mental illness.²¹ In CBT the conversations between the therapist and the patient are centered on thoughts, feelings and sensations with more emphasis on the fact that all these are related to one another.

The focus of CBT is on the present time and how you can change your behaviors and negative patterns in order to change how you feel. This method aims to deal and address emotions to more positive experiences by breaking the big and overwhelming problems to smaller ones and teach the patient how to have more control over them.²²

In most therapies that use CBT as their method, patients are asked to keep track of their journey by writing a diary in between the sessions. The therapist might ask the patient to keep a diary of different incidents that have provoked feelings such as stress, depression, and anxiety. With the help of the diary, the therapist and the patient can go through the incidents together and examine them.



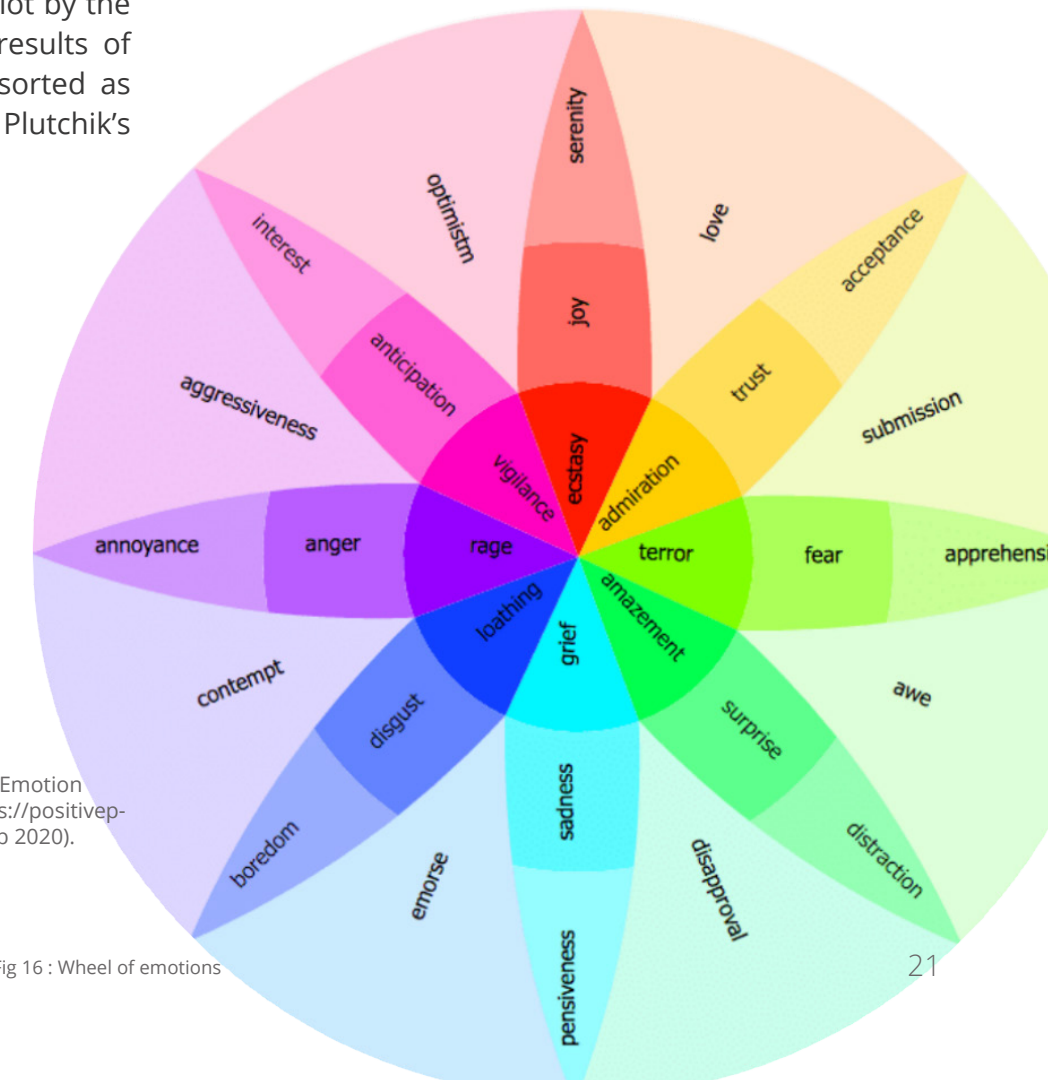
21 American Psychological Association, "What is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy?" [fact sheet], 2017, <<https://www.apa.org/ptsd-guideline/patients-and-families/cognitive-behavioral>> (accessed 15 Feb 2020).

22 National Health Service, "Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)" [website], 2019, <<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cognitive-behavioural-therapy-cbt/>> (accessed 15 Feb 2020).

Robert Plutchik's wheel of emotions

Later on, I decided to work with Robert Plutchik's theory of emotions. Based on this theory, all of our emotions are created of eight basic ones which are: anger, disgust, fear, sadness, anticipation, joy, surprise, and trust (fig 16).

Anxiety and stress are also used a lot by the patients but these emotions are results of other primary emotions and are sorted as secondary and tertiary emotions in Plutchik's theory.²³



23 Karimova, H, Positive Psychology, "The Emotion Wheel: What It Is and How to Use It", 2019, <<https://positivepsychology.com/emotion-wheel/>>, (accessed 10 Feb 2020).

Fig 16 : Wheel of emotions

2.7 Workshop: Wheel of emotions

After the information I received from interviewing Ulrika Rosdahl Ljung I prepared another workshop. In this workshop I used Robert Plutchik's wheel of emotions. In total, six students from Konstfack participated in this workshop, including four women and two men. Workshop took place in the clay studio at Konstfack and I found it as a good opportunity to explore a wider range of shapes.



Fig 17 : Workshop III: Wheel of emotions, Konstfack, Stockholm, 3 Mar 2020

Tasks

During the workshop I asked my participants to shape how each of these emotions would look like for them. Later on I handed in colors and asked them to fill the wheels with colors that would represent each emotion. In the last part of the workshop I divided them in pairs and asked them to breakdown mixed feelings such as anxiety, stress, love, hate, calm, shame, guilt into the eight basic emotions.²⁴ As an example hate is a mixture of anger and disgust.

What I learned

Participants also discussed about the similarities they could see in their clay forms. For instance, fear, which for all of them felt like being trapped by something bigger and feeling small.

Anger for all looked like something being crushed. Joy looked smooth and round. Shapes that represented disgust looked formless, with a rough surface or holes on them. Forms that represented sadness were broken to pieces, scattering and empty. Trust looked like stability, support and as a whole. Surprise was mentioned as something unexpected and shocking.

The feeling that they found quite hard to define was anticipation but what they found similar in the shapes was continuation and growth.



Fig 18: Participant's wheel of emotions sheet



Fig 19: Participant's wheel of emotions sheet



Fig 20: Participant's wheel of emotions sheet

3.0 DESIGN PROPOSAL

3.1 Ideation & sketching

Based on the outcomes resulted from scientific research, interviews with experts and workshops, the ideation process began. As a matter of fact, different concepts and solutions were brought up to solve the chosen problem.

The idea of visualizing, measuring and communicating emotions were the main tasks to design. This process later on resulted in a clearer proposal, with help of different design and ideation methods.

The ideation process started with creating different mind maps, different scenarios and personas (based on the people I met from the workshops) and quick sketches.

I had the idea of having a physical object in a therapy session to let the patient to be able to express their emotions with help of this third element in the room. Another goal is to break the ice in an environment which can be tough to be in, when all communication takes place verbally. I started to sketch on different ways for making this third element as a connection tool between the therapist and the patient.

I sketched further on a character and how it would help the patient to refer to as oneself. An aiding tool that is supposed to be like a blank canvas, to be filled by the user. By having different shapes and colors let the patient to describe and show mixed feelings and tensions in the body.

I had to consider different aspects during creating this character, such as gender neutrality, balance in human/animal like appearance and also making it more interactive and inviting to the patient.

I named this character LouLou. This name comes from a word in my mother tongue Persian. LouLou is an old word which can be translated to an imaginary creature to scare the kids from. I find it as a metaphor for the demons inside that rather than being scared of them, we should learn how to deal with them.

I also sketched on five basic emotions in the beginning as you can see in figure-24.

These emotions in order from top left were: calmness, sadness, surprise, joy and anger. When designing these elements I based them mostly on personal experiences and general definitions of these emotions. For example a wave that represents calmness, a tear that resembles sadness, bolt as a sign of surprise and shock. A pink splash as happiness and a red cone that shows anger.

The sketching process has been repeated and developed several times during the design proposal phase and particularly when visualizing the emotion symbols.

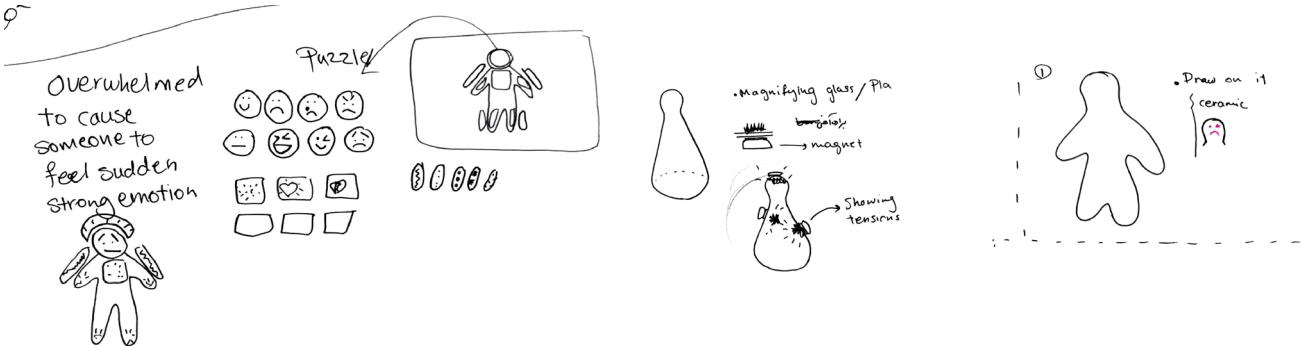


Fig 21 : Sketches of different ways to show emotions and tensions



Fig 22: Sketching on a character



Fig 23: Sketching on a character



Fig 24 : Sketch of the first emotion symbols

3.2 Prototyping

In the next step, in order to see the possibilities and potential of the different ideas, I started to make different prototypes in different materials and methods. In this process I made quick and dirty prototypes in clay, sponge and by 3D printing in PLA. I 3D-modeled LouLou in a computer program called Blender with tools that are used for digital clay modeling.

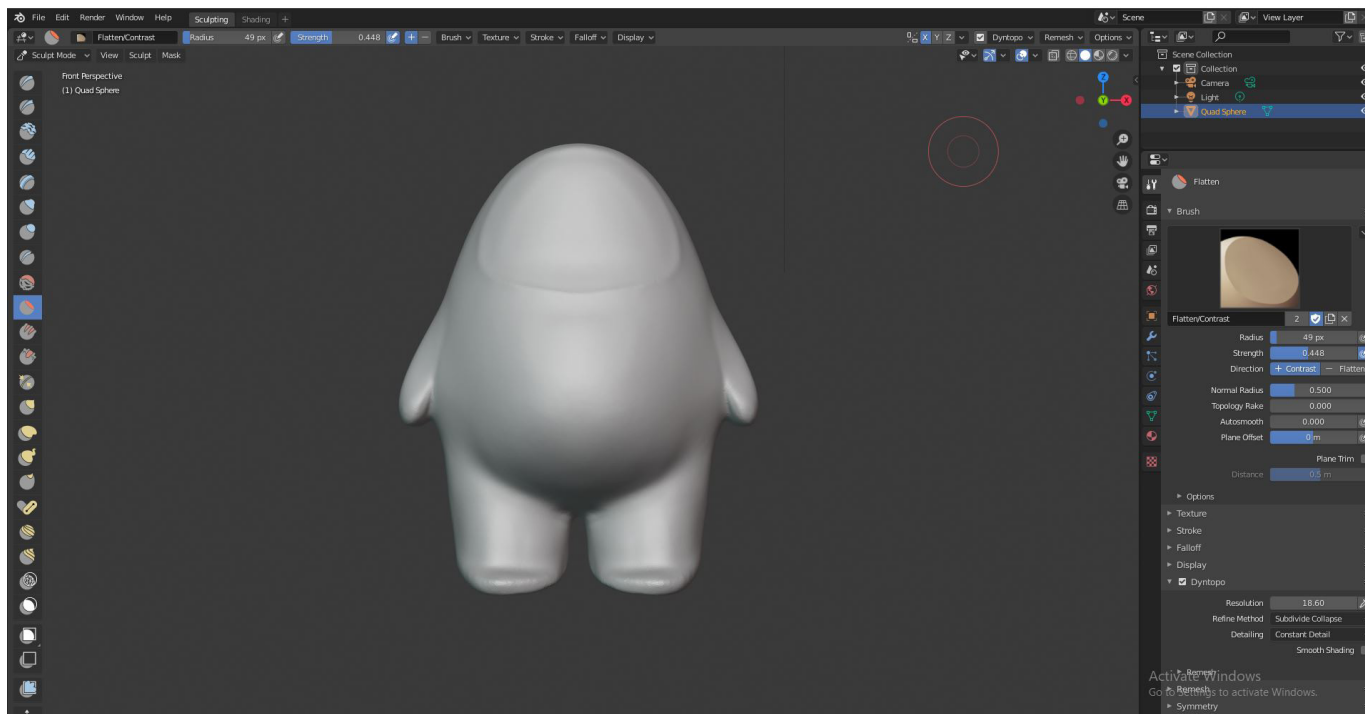


Fig 25: 3D-sculpting in Blender



Fig 26: Scale model in sponge



Fig 27: 3D-printed LouLou



Fig 28: Clay prototypes for emotion symbols

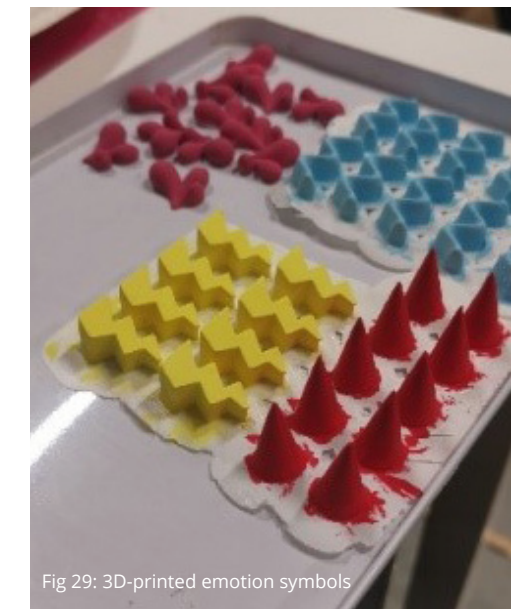


Fig 29: 3D-printed emotion symbols

Earlier in my process, I had the chance to showcase the prototype in an exhibition in school. I also made an interactive poster (fig 33). On the poster, I asked the visitors to illustrate how they were feeling at the moment on the silhouettes of LouLou. The poster became filled and even on post-its that were put on the wall. It was very interesting to see how creatively everyone had used them and also to see people interact with it so positively.



Fig 30 : LouLou in the exhibition

I also received feedback from the visitors on different uses of LouLou such as in school and a family environment. The emotion symbols were still unclear and I received some views on how I could change them, such as the emotion symbol for happiness and calm which were unclear to understand.



Fig 31 : Visitors using LouLou



Fig 32 : Visitors drawing on the poster



Fig 33 : Some of the drawings on the poster

3.3 Test with therapists

During the product development phase, I had the opportunity to meet Ulrika Rosdahl Ljung several times. On my second visit to her office in Örebro rehabilitating center, I had the chance to give my prototype of LouLou to her as a test model.²⁴

In two weeks period, I received insights from her and also other people she had tested LouLou with. This group of people included five therapists/work-therapists, two curators, two nursing students, one patient, and a group of young teenagers in a session called Kuling which is organized for those whose parents suffer from mental health issues.

Opinions received from them are divided into five categories: overall concept, LouLou's shape, design of the emotion symbols, target group, and additional tools.

²⁴ Phone call with Ulrika Rosdahl Ljung, Örebro, (27 Feb 2020).



Fig 34 : LouLou in Kuling group

Concept

As Ulrika Rosdahl Ljung reported, everyone she talked to was positive about the concept of having a physical object in a therapy room.²⁵ The group of therapists whom she has talked to have all agreed on how some of the patients think that the tools they use are often considered as ugly and not attractive. Whereas to have something physical that offers an activity to a session could be a good option for the patients to feel safe about talking about emotions.

The two nurses' thought was that it is also a pedagogical way to describe a feeling. One patient who has severe issues such as self-hurting in the past has also mentioned that she wishes she could have something like LouLou as an aiding tool when visiting curators at high-school, to support her to communicate easier and feel safe. The group of teenagers thought that it could also be a good way for them to communicate with their parents and ask them how they feel.

²⁵ Phone call with Ulrika Rosdahl Ljung, Stockholm, (13 Mar 2020).



LouLou's design and shape

Overall, everyone has been happy with the shape of LouLou. They have mentioned that it has a neutral shape, reaching to a variety of ages both for adults and kids. The color white makes it look more welcoming to be filled by the patient. LouLou has more surface on the stomach and the head area which are also places that patients refer to the most when explaining different feelings.

The curators have said that it doesn't look naïve and it could easily even turn to something even scary depending on what the patient wants to express. It has a likable character that creates curiosity in the patients.

The fact that LouLou has no facial expression gives more focus on the experience of emotions and how they feel embodied. However, patients can still use the symbols on its face to create an expression.

When it comes to the material as the therapists have said, it should be in a kind but durable material. Nurses have pointed out that it creates a feeling of safety for the patient to be able to hold something during a therapy session.

Emotions and symbols

The group of therapists and nursing students think that having colors on the symbols can be helpful for the patients to not feel lost in too many details. The variety of shapes help the patient to choose freely which one can be a good representative for each emotion.

One therapist has also mentioned that the symbols could be just in black and white to represent pleasant and unpleasant emotions. The curators' opinion is that if it's used in a group, having pre-chosen colors create more clarity when it comes to sharing with others. They have also mentioned that LouLou could be a good replacement for Nallekort, in reaching a broader user group and by creating more outcomes for expressing emotions.

Target group

As Ulrika Rosdahl Ljung reported, everyone has mentioned that it could be used for any age, suitable for adults, and also a tool to create a conversation between different ages. Therapists use different tools with different patients, based on their needs and what the therapist wants to get out of the sessions.²⁶

²⁶ Phone call with Ulrika Rosdahl Ljung, Stockholm (13 Mar 2020).

An interesting opinion has been mentioned by a curator, that even a physiotherapist could use it. Many have also pointed out the pedagogical use of it in the school environment as an aid for curators.

Ulrika Rosdahl Ljung also mentioned that LouLou could be used not only in CBT talking therapy but also in DBT and psycho-dynamic therapy.²⁷

Additional tools

Another idea that I had discussed in my previous meeting with Ulrika Rosdahl Ljung was an application or a diary in the form of a notebook or a calendar with LouLou and the symbols.

This idea was brought up as a complementary option for LouLou, to enable the patient to have a look through their journey in between the meetings, to help them to sort out and categorize their emotions visually. Since we use our cellphones all the time, this could turn the diary writing between the sessions to a more pleasant and frequent experience.

²⁷ Phone call with Ulrika Rosdahl Ljung, Stockholm (13 Mar 2020).

3.4 Analyzing forms and colors

Based on the changes made on which emotions to focus on, I had to reconsider and redesign the emotion symbols. In my earlier prototype, I focused on five emotions and made different shapes that would represent each of those.

Further on, I decided to move on with eight primary emotions of Robert Plutchik due to the insights I received from my last workshop, and test with therapists and patients. In order to do this, I made an analysis of the shapes and colors chosen for each emotion. You can see the summary of colors, shapes, and keywords in fig 36-43.

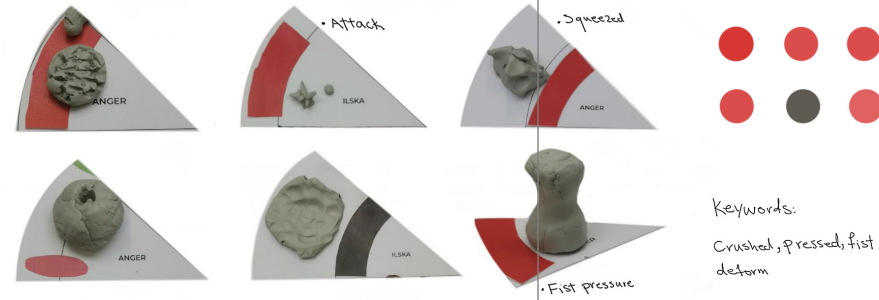


Fig 36 : Participants' interpretation of "Anger"

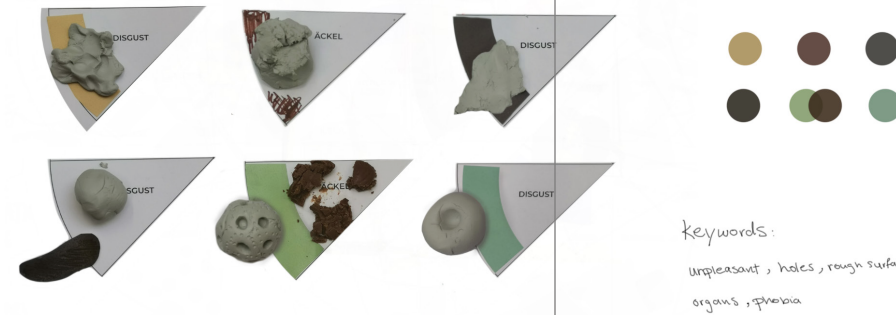


Fig 37 : Participants' interpretation of "Disgust"

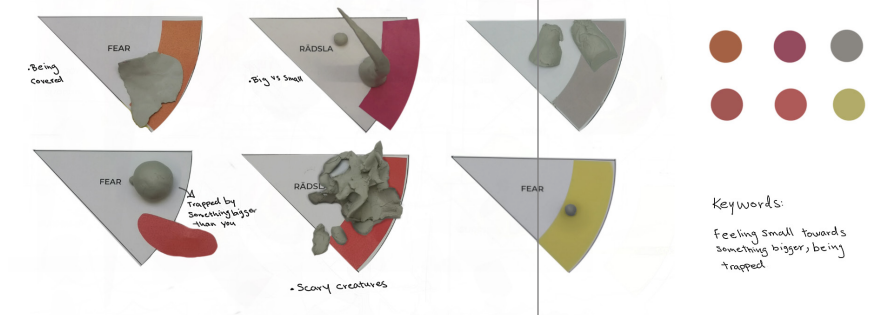


Fig 38 : Participants' interpretation of "Fear"

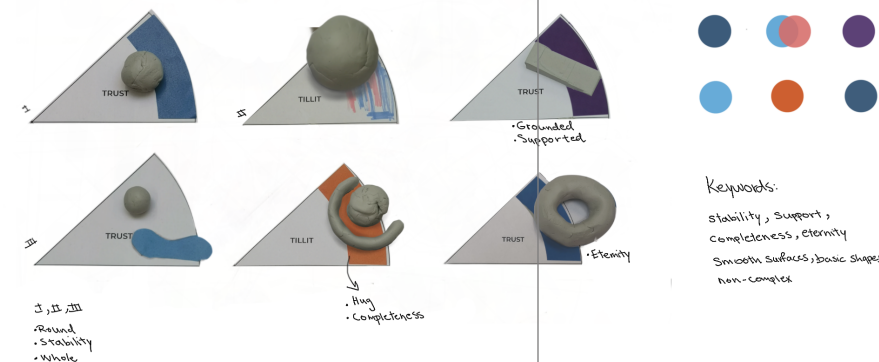


Fig 39 : Participants' interpretation of "Trust"

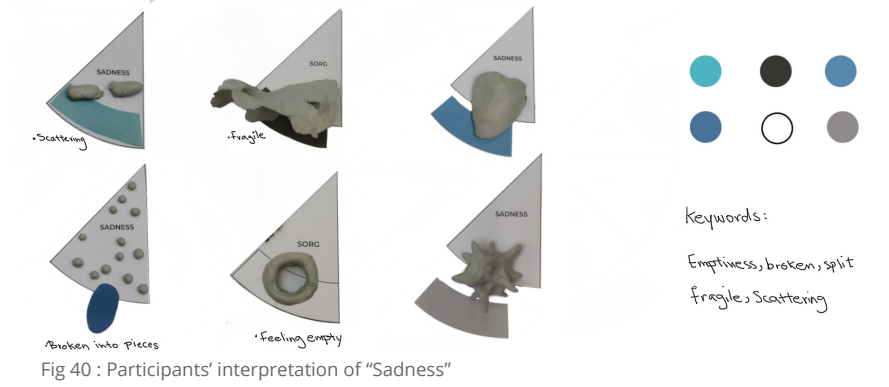


Fig 40 : Participants' interpretation of "Sadness"

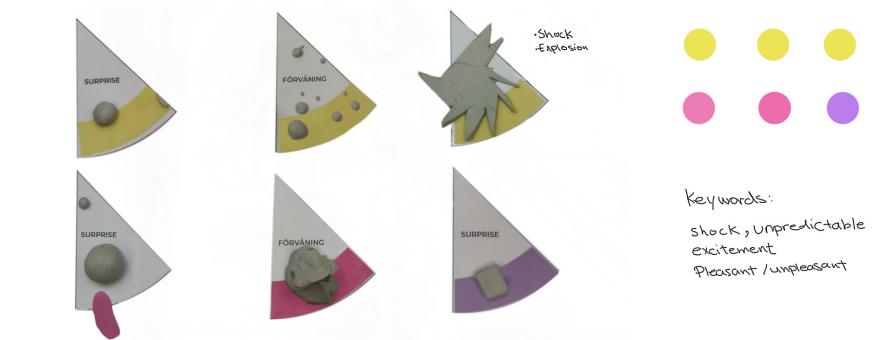


Fig 41 : Participants' interpretation of "Surprise"

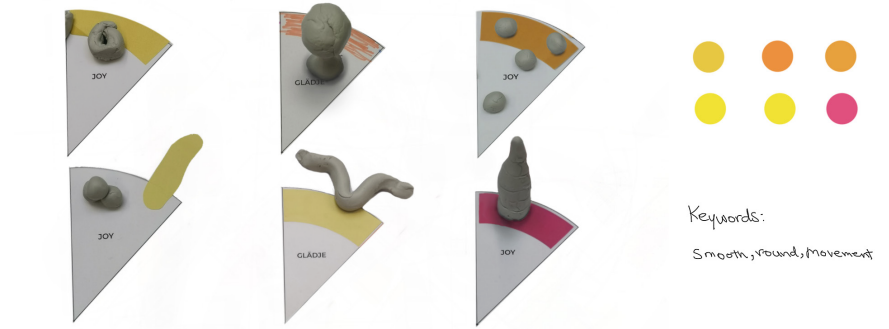


Fig 42 : Participants' interpretation of "Joy"

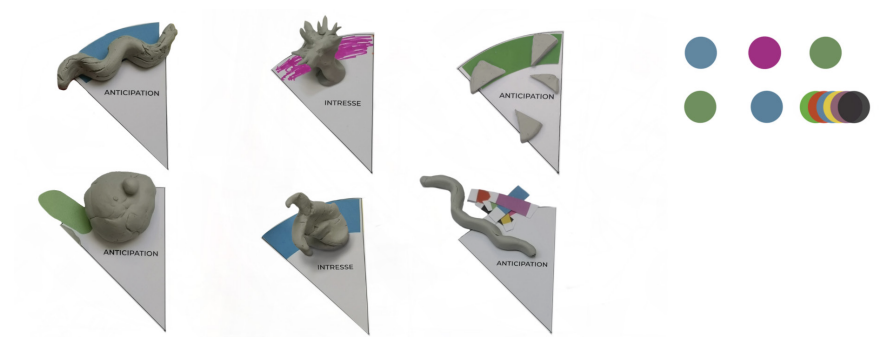


Fig 43 : Participants' interpretation of "Anticipation"

3.5 Creating a form alphabet

In my next step after analyzing my data, with the help of similarities and keywords, I began my form giving process. After several steps and by forming and deforming the shapes I tried to make a map to get a broader view of the possibilities in each shape and its relation to each emotion and by that to make the best representative shape for each emotion.

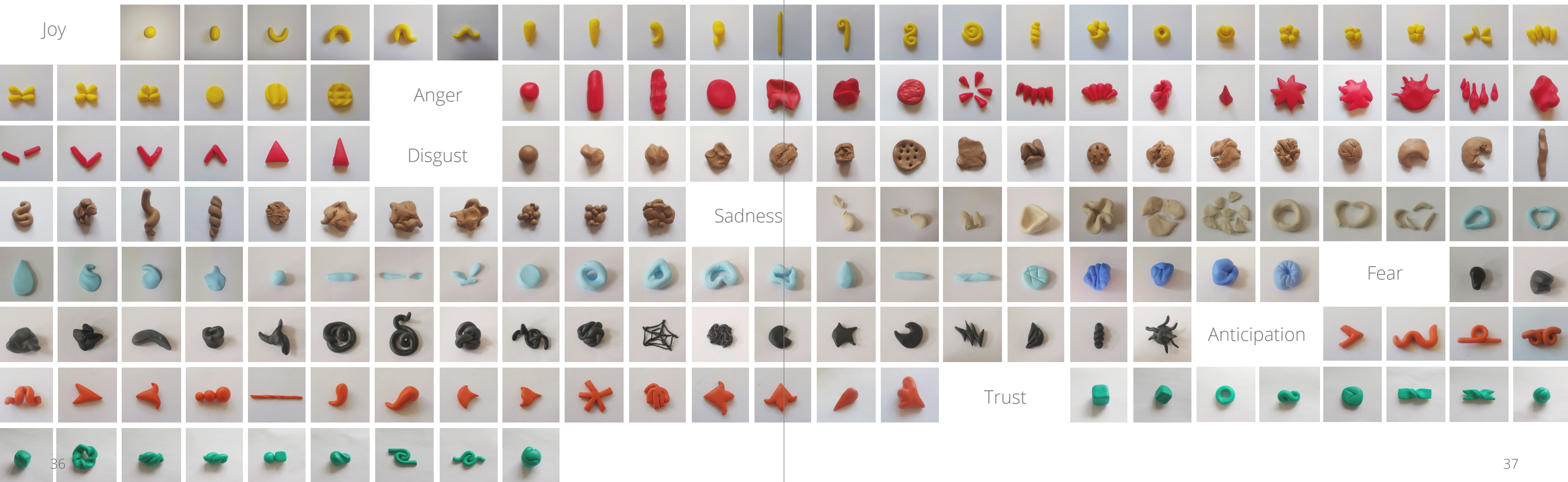
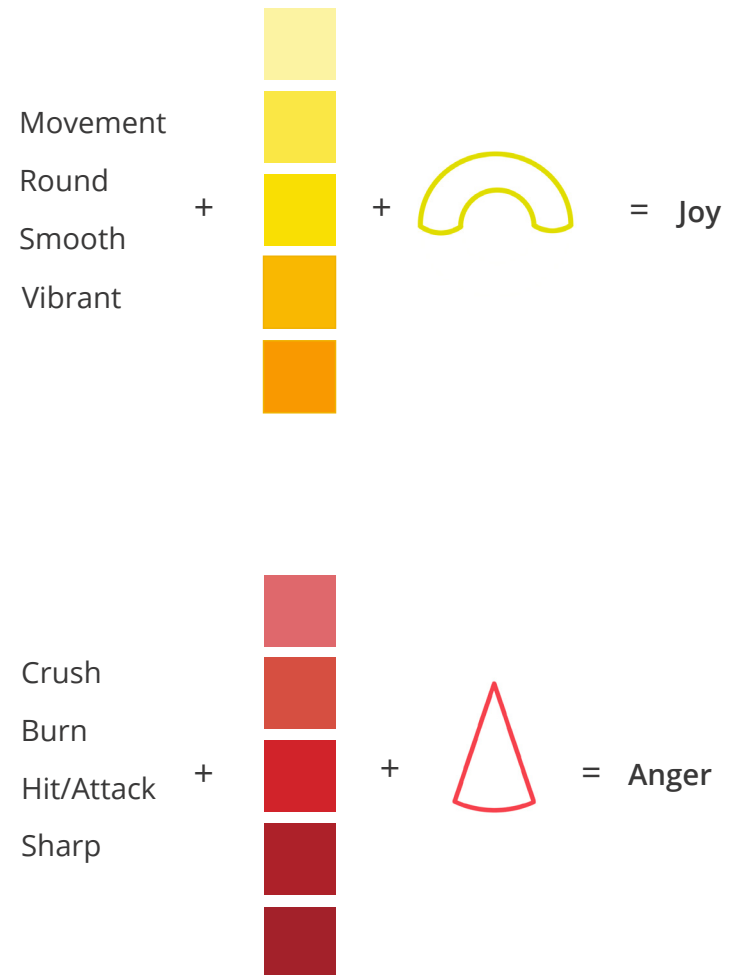


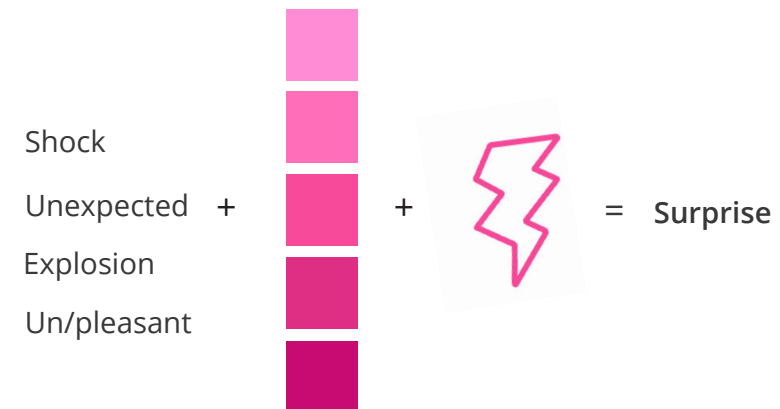
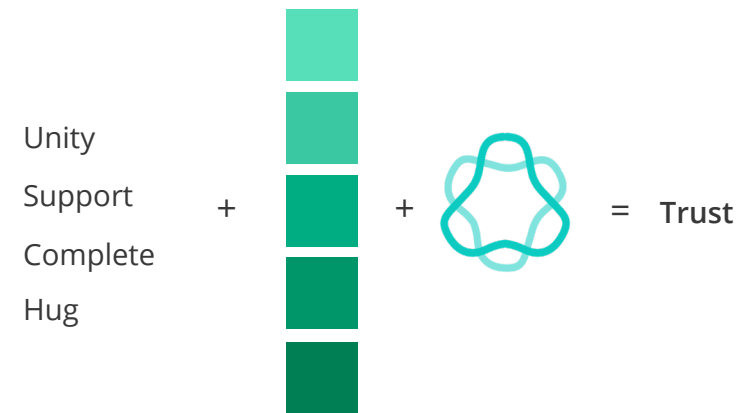
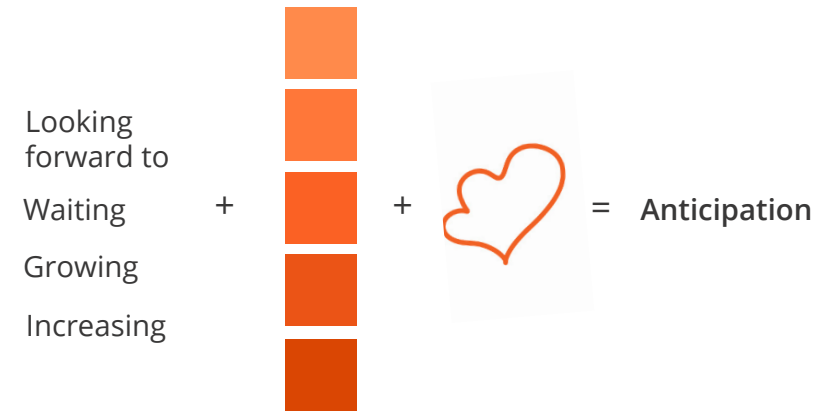
Fig 44 : Form alphabet

3.6 Recreating the emotion symbols

I translated the emotions into shapes with different colors. Each series of emotion includes five pins of different shades of the same color. These shades start from the main color in the middle and to visualize the

intensity, they tend to brighter and darker shades. For example, the emotion for joy is a bow, there are five pins that vary between light to dark yellow.





3.7 Material choice and function

Earlier I 3D-printed the pins in PLA which is a plastic material. Later in the process, I decided to make them with polymer clay instead. I found it easier to create organic shapes with this material and it also made it possible to bring a variety of different colors and shapes. This material also makes the tactile experience more pleasant than plastic or painted wood.



Fig 45



Fig 46

I considered different methods and techniques, such as molding in iron and covering in silicone, painting in magnet color, and layering with different materials. At the end of these tests and material research, I found the solution in 3D-printing with a magnetic iron PLA and covering it with layers of rubber-spray. Each of the pins has a magnet on the backside which fastens them on the surface of LouLou.

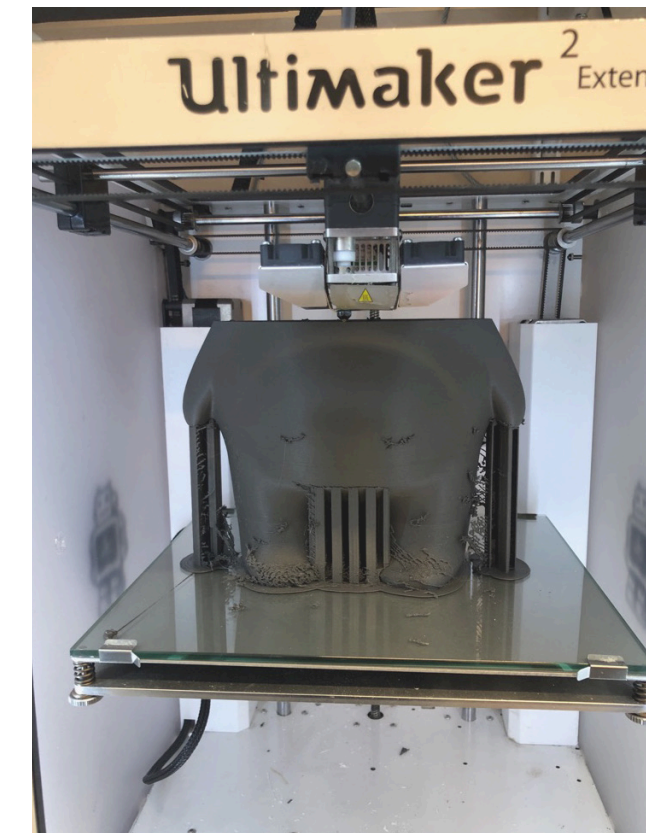


Fig 47: 3D-printing LouLou with iron filament



Fig 48: Interacting with LouLou



Fig 49: The emotion symbols

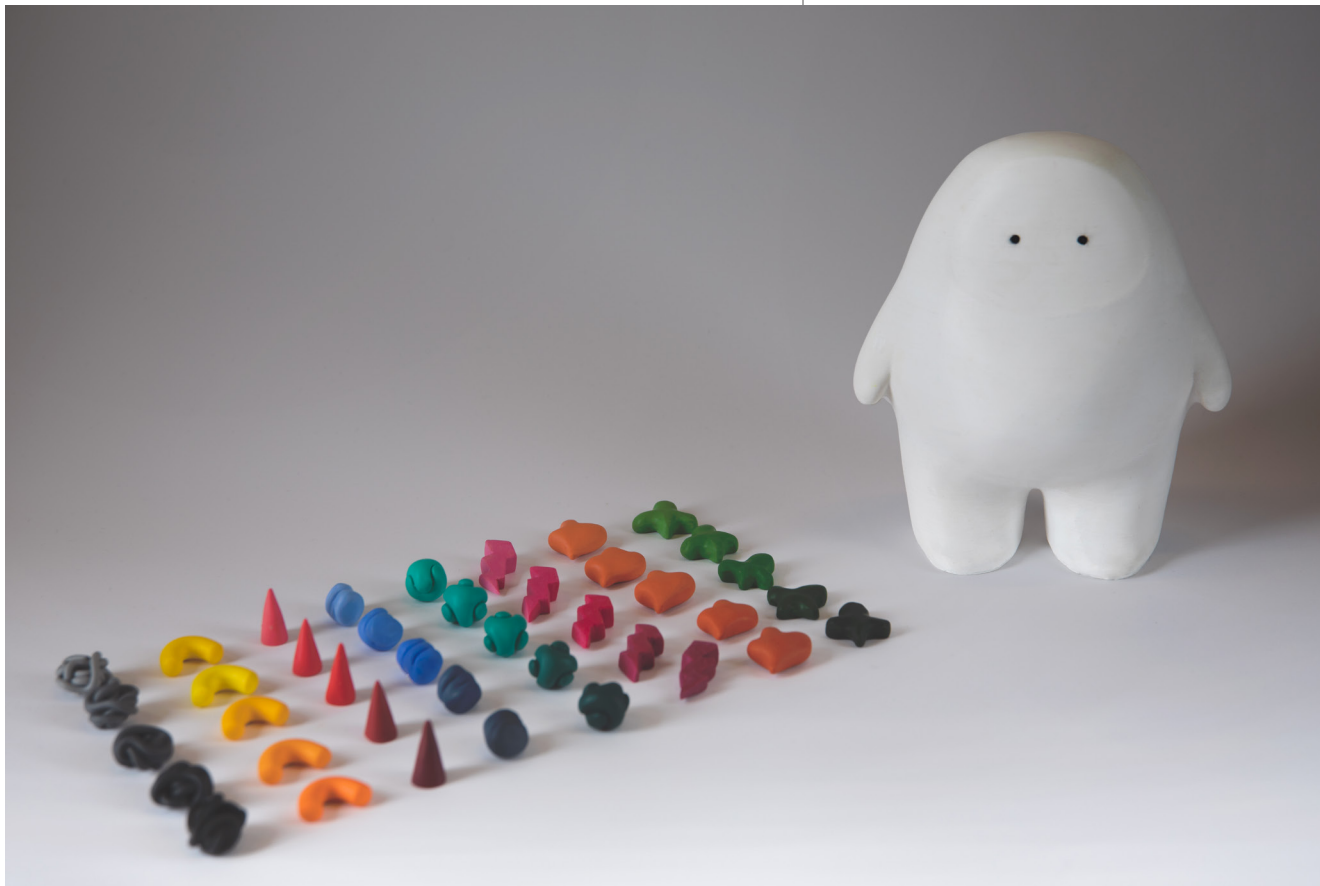


Fig 50: LouLou and the emotion symbols



Fig 51: Interacting with LouLou

3.8 Scenario of use

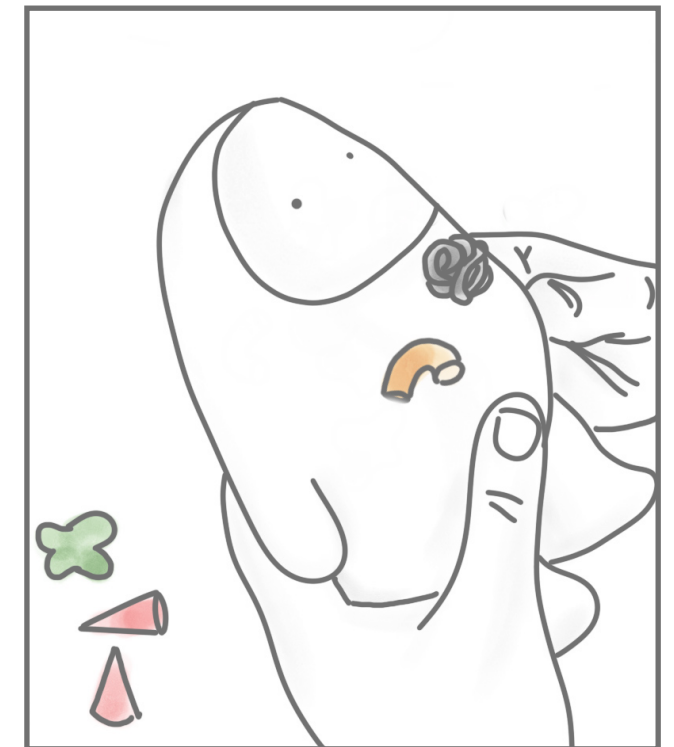
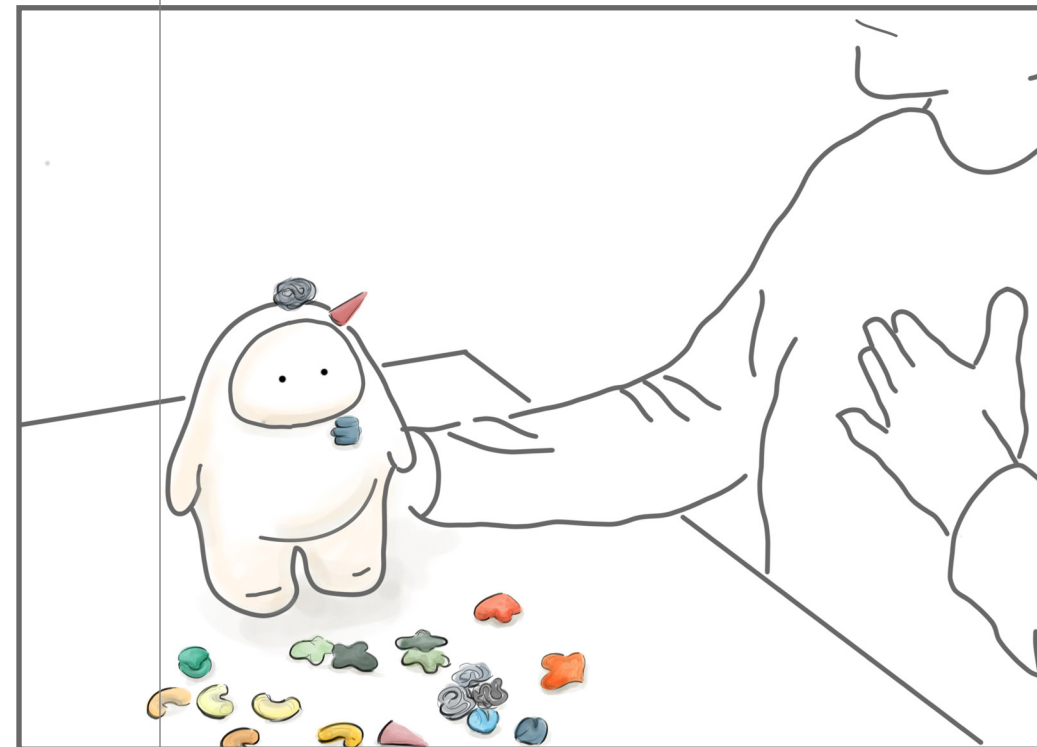
Anna has been struggling a lot recently with her career. She's feeling exhausted, anxious, and worried. Everything feels too much and she is afraid to talk to anyone about it. She has thought of talking to a therapist for many years but she finds it hard to open up to someone she doesn't know.

She finally decides to meet a therapist. When meeting her therapist she finds it hard to look at the therapist in the eyes. She still feels uncomfortable sitting on a chair and constantly talking.

When looking around in the room she sees LouLou on a shelf close to the therapist's

desk. She asks her what that is and the therapist brings LouLou to the table. The therapist runs a short description: "Each of these series of pins represents an emotion. With them, you can tell me more about your mixed feelings." Anna mentions that she finds it hard to describe how she feels about certain things.

certain things. They continue the conversation and Anna points out to LouLou and talks about her emotions. "I feel a heavy pressure on my chest, it feels like my heart is full of sorrow," says Anna and puts the blue pin on LouLou's chest.



3.9 LouLou's app

The idea of an application was something that I had discussed when meeting Ulrika Rosdahl Ljung. This idea was also brought up during the test with therapists. To make it easier to keep track of daily changes in emotions and

to make it easier for a patient to categorize and label mixed emotions, I designed this prototype of an app. It is a visual diary that works in the same way that LouLou as a physical product works.

Another feature of this app is to let even more people be able to use it, even those who don't take part in any form of therapy. The user can also customize each emotion with a shape they want and also choose between different

colors. Another part of the app is considered to be educational to let the user learn more about the secondary and trinary emotions based on Robert Plutchik's theory.

Daily mood reminder

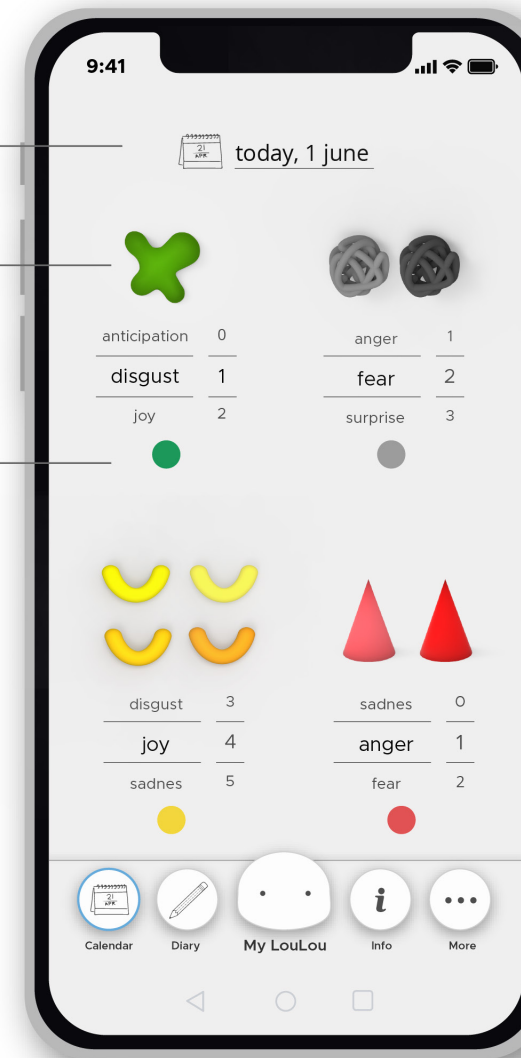


Learn more about the secondary and tertiary emotions

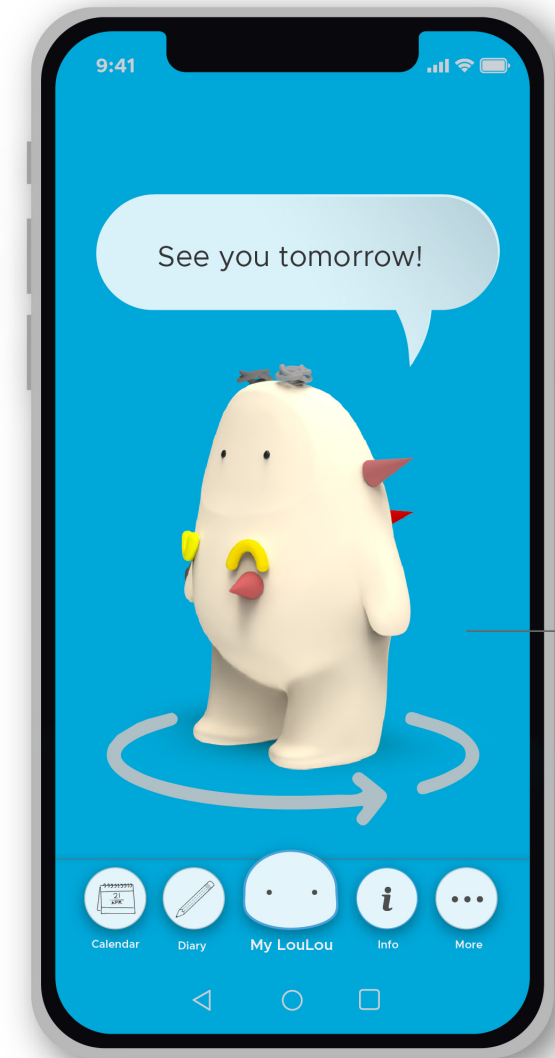
Calendar

Personalize emotion symbols

Choose color and number



Placing the emotion pins on LouLou



3.10 Final feedback

Due to circumstances caused by the spread of the coronavirus, my last meeting with Ulrika Rosdahl Ljung was held virtually on Skype. During this online meeting, I gave updates on my process. I showed her the new symbols that I made and explained the process of abstracting each emotion to shape and the story behind each. She thought that the symbols had become clearer and easier to understand. She liked my decision on choosing a specific color for each emotion.

Ulrika Rosdahl Ljung mentioned a comment she received from a patient who tested LouLou, that even if our understanding of shapes and colors are different, it's good to have decided shapes and colors to help the patient to not get lost in too many details.

The biggest change in my process since my last meeting with her was the visual diary app.

Ulrika said that the app would help the patient to remember to write a diary in between sessions and to make this task fun. She also mentioned that the app makes it accessible for more people to keep track of their mental health and learn to categorize emotions.²⁸



Fig 52. Skype meeting with Ulrika Rosdahl Ljung, 20 Apr 2020

28 Phone call with Ulrika Rosdahl Ljung, Stockholm, (20 Apr 2020)

4.0 Summary and reflection

Summary

The world health organization has predicted that by 2030, depression will cause more early deaths and disability than cancer, stroke or accidents. The number of burnouts has been increasing during the past years since we haven't learned how to manage our own emotions.

In our Swedish society today, we have people from different backgrounds and linguistic skills that find it difficult to talk about their emotional states and ask for help. At the same time, most of the methods used in therapy are done verbally or in writing which can be hard, even for those who speak the same language.

In this project, I have explored the role of objects in the world of therapy, interviewed therapists, and had workshops with different people from different nationalities.

My design proposal is a physical aiding tool to help the user to identify and describe mixed feelings and emotions. A character called LouLou as a blank canvas to be filled by pins that represent emotions.

Reflection

During this project I learned a lot by meeting new people, exploring unfamiliar fields, testing new methods, getting lost, and coming back on the track. I learned about the importance of research and including people in the design process. I realized the importance of mental health in my life and to always return to myself and test my ideas; learning to ask myself how I feel at the moment and understanding my emotions.

There is still more to explore to develop this project. For instance doing more user tests. I also see a potential for my design proposal to be used not only in therapy but also as a communication tool for children with autism. This is something I am very keen to explore more about.

Working with a project about emotional awareness and mental health in the times of Corona has not been an easy task. I had days where terrible news made me feel sad in every inch of my body but still not being able to abstract it into a symbol. Whereas a day later when abstracting joy I understood how small things could make me happy, things as little as a Zoom meeting with classmates.

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- Rosdahl Ljung, Ulrika; Psychotherapist and occupational therapist, Karlahuset Örebro, 27 Feb 2020.
- Rosdahl Ljung, Ulrika; Psychotherapist and occupational therapist, phone call, 13 Mar 2020.
- Rosdahl Ljung, Ulrika; Psychotherapist and occupational therapist, phone call Stockholm, 20 Apr 2020.

Workshops

- Workshop I: How are you feeling right now with classmates, Konstfack, 8 Dec 2019.
- R Workshop II: How are you feeling right now?, students from Röda korset folkhögskola, Stockholm, 19 Dec 2019.
- Workshop III: Wheel of emotions, Students from industrial design department, Konstfack, Stockholm, 3 Mar 2020.

Illustrations

- Figure 3. Special Nest, *KAT-kittet* [Illustration]. 2015. <<https://www.specialnest.se/hjalpmedel/kat-kittet-hjalper-till-att-identifiera-kanslor>>, (accessed 22 Oct 2019).
- Figure 6. Brauer, Martha. *Talking objects* [Photography]. 2016. <<https://www.konstfack2016.se/master/mais/martha-brauer/>>, (accessed 1 Dec 2019).
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- Figure 9. Bodewes, Nicolett. *Tools for therapy* [Photography]. 2016. <<https://www.dezeen.com/04/11/2016/tools-for-therapy-nicolette-bodewes-tactile-object-psychotherapy-dutch-design-week-2016/>>, (accessed 18 Nov 2019).
- Figure 16. Positive Psychology, *Wheel of emotion* [Illustration], 2019, <<https://positivepsychology.com/emotion-wheel/>>, (accessed 10 Feb 2020).

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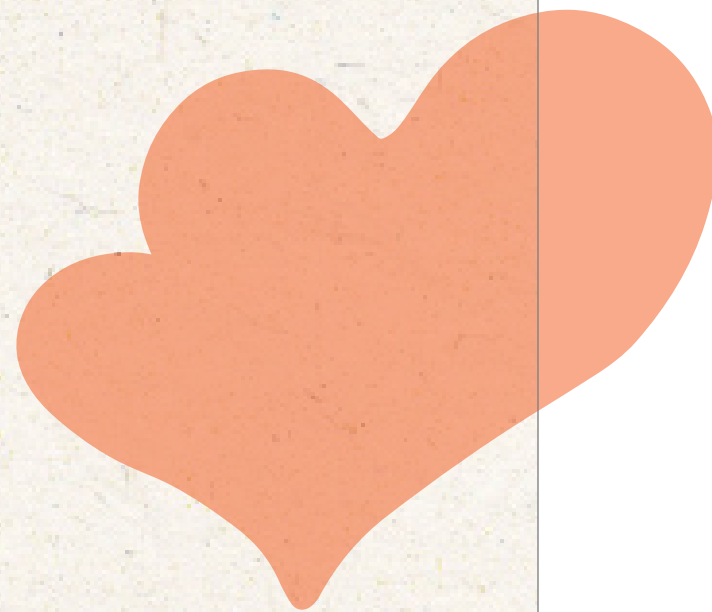
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LouLou

Paria Mohammadi - Spring 2020
Konstfack