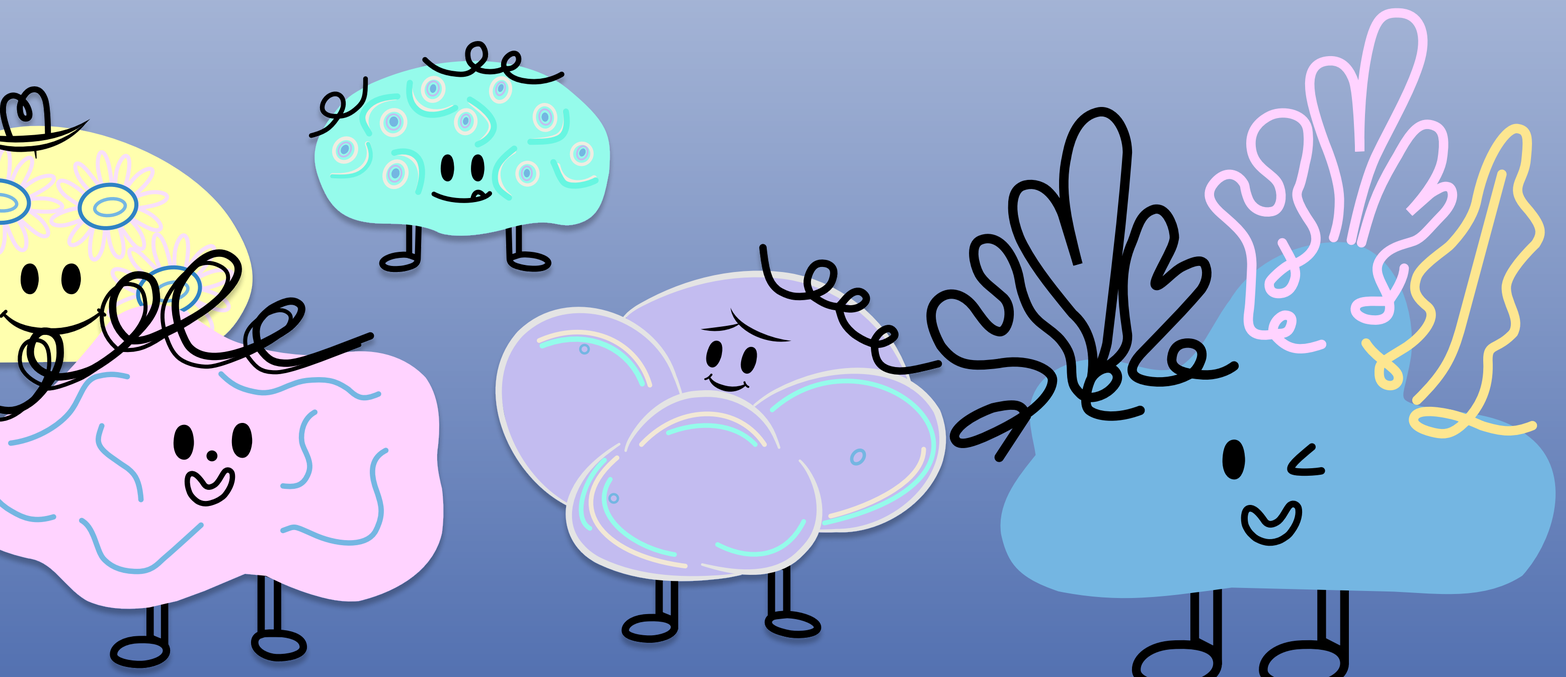
The Art of Almost

A coral-inspired micro-practice app for perfectionists

APP Design

Final Project MACD 2025

Yizhuo Tan



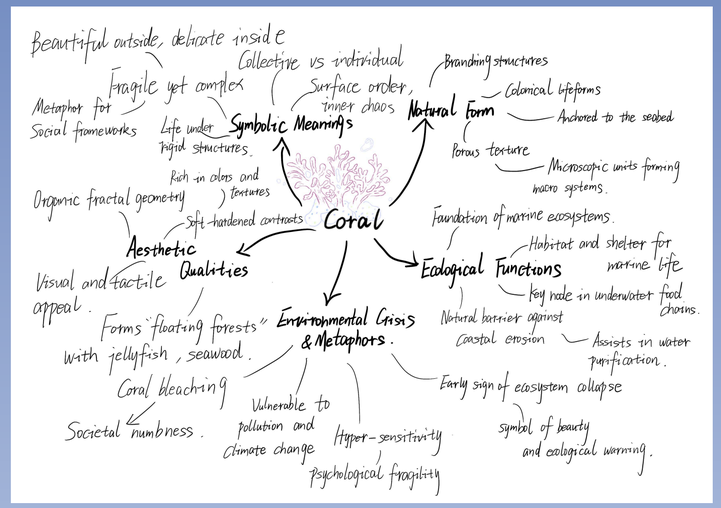


OVERVIEW

Almost is a micro-practice app for perfectionists, framed by the metaphor of coral bleaching: when we over-control and keep polishing, our inner system enters a bleaching phase—intact on the surface, depleted inside. After a 5-item quick test you receive a Coral Persona, then run a compact loop: 60-second breathing, one intentional flaw / 90% submission, a no-fix lock with 90-second observation, and a brief debrief (three pieces of evidence). With each attempt, the on-screen coral moves from Bleached toward Pale and finally Healthy, its color returning to signal recovery rather than perfection. It is not medical or diagnostic, but a safe, non-judgmental space for small self-experiments.

RESEARCH & REFERENCE

Project analysis & Planning





Design Solution & Primary Research

Coral Ecology Traits and Perfectionist Psychology Traits

Coral



Healthy coral



Bleached coral

Perfectionism



Perfectionism (part II.)

Bleaching mechanism: Under stress (heat, acidification), corals expel symbiotic algae, lose color, and expose their skeleton.

Highly sensitive to environmental conditions (light, temperature, pH);
small changes cause major impact.

Hard on the outside, soft inside; structurally complex and precise

Dependent on symbiotic systems (algae & reef ecosystems); cannot survive in isolation.

Emotional collapse, mask breakdown(Perfectionists may look calm, but high pressure triggers inner breakdown.)

Hyper-sensitive to external judgment(Criticism, failure, or pressure can destabilize them.)Like coral reacts to sea changes, perfectionists are deeply affected by small disruptions.

Appears stable, inwardly fragile(Disciplined exterior masks inner tension.)The hard shell reflects a “I'm fine” façade; internally, they may be crumbling.

Craves control but needs support(Often suppresses emotion, but deeply needs safe space & empathy.)

Related Design Case Studies



Nervous System — Hyphae Reef Installation.

Inspiration: 1. Balance of control and chaos mirrors the psychological tension in perfectionism

2. Fractured branching structure suggests emotional breakdown and release.

3. Increased structural complexity reflects emotional growth after letting go of rigid standards.

Nervous System – Hyphae Reef Installation

Link: https://n-e-r-v-o-u-s.com/blog/?p=7913

This generative installation uses an algorithm to “grow” biomimetic coral structures. The resulting form is organic, unpredictable, and highly intricate—mimicking coral growth in marine ecosystems.



Courtney Mattison — Our Changing Seas III

Inspiration: 1. Color transitions mirror emotional journey: control → collapse → repair

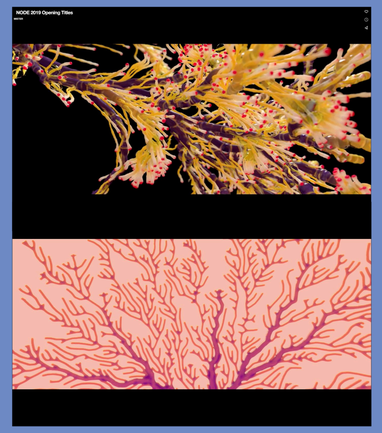
2. Material textures symbolizes fragile yet resilient emotions.

3. Density and spacing reflect psychological openness vs. tension

Courtney Mattison – Our Changing Seas III

Link: https://courtneymattison.com/ourchangingseas-iii/hpxqmb2oxvlvxq4yau2znehv00624s

Artist Courtney Mattison creates large-scale ceramic coral reefs, using color gradients to show the environmental shift from vibrancy to bleaching, highlighting marine fragility.



NODE 2019 — Coral Metaphor Opening Titles.

Inspiration: 1. coral as a metaphor for interconnected minds.

2. Visualizes emotional flow through organic, animated motion.

3. Offers a language for portraying the loosening of perfectionistic control.

NODE 2019 – Coral Metaphor Opening Titles

Link: https://www.stashmedia.tv/coral-metaphor-creativity-node-2019-opening-titles-mister/?utm_source

This animated opening title for the NODE conference uses abstract coral-like formations and particle flows to represent collaboration and cognitive entanglement.

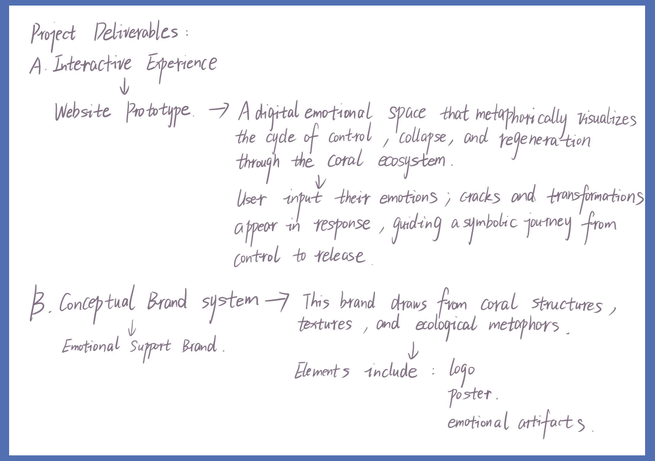
Inspired by artists and studios working with coral metaphors—from the generative structural growth of Nervous System to the poetic degradation in Courtney Mattison’s ceramic reefs—this project creates a brand experience rooted in emotional fluidity, structural vulnerability, and self-acceptance. Through soft visual systems and metaphor-driven interaction, perfectionism is gently questioned, not fixed.

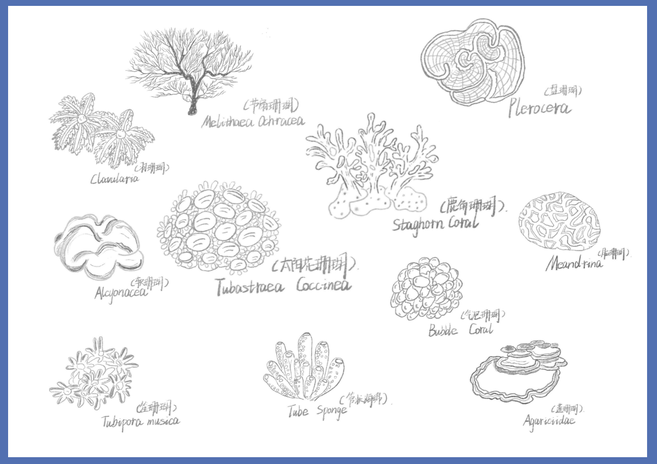
MOODBOARD

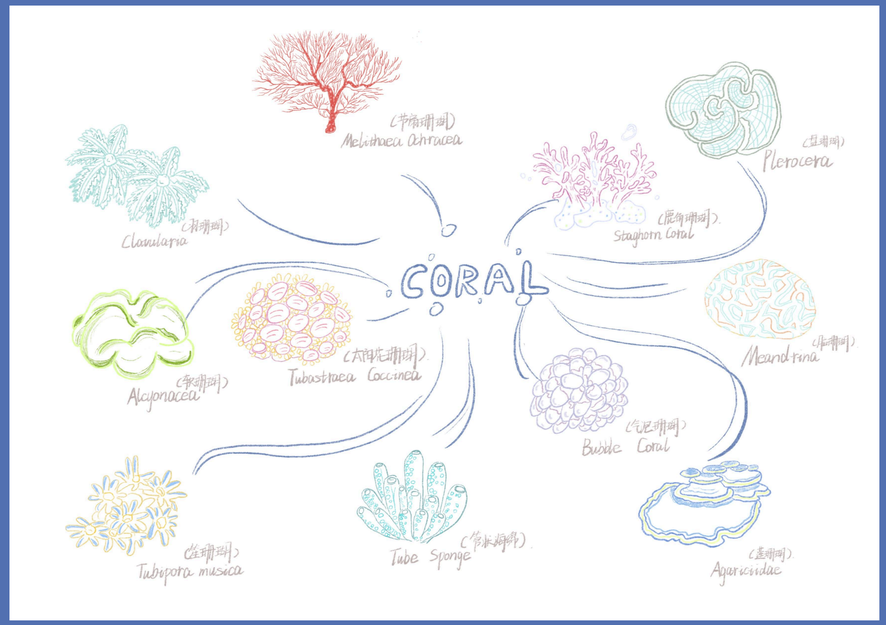

Coral as a Metaphor — complex, fragile, and quietly resilient.
The tangled mind of a perfectionist: vibrant yet overwhelmed.

SKETCH PART1

These are some of my ideas for the final project. It's an iterative update process. I finally decided to make an APP.

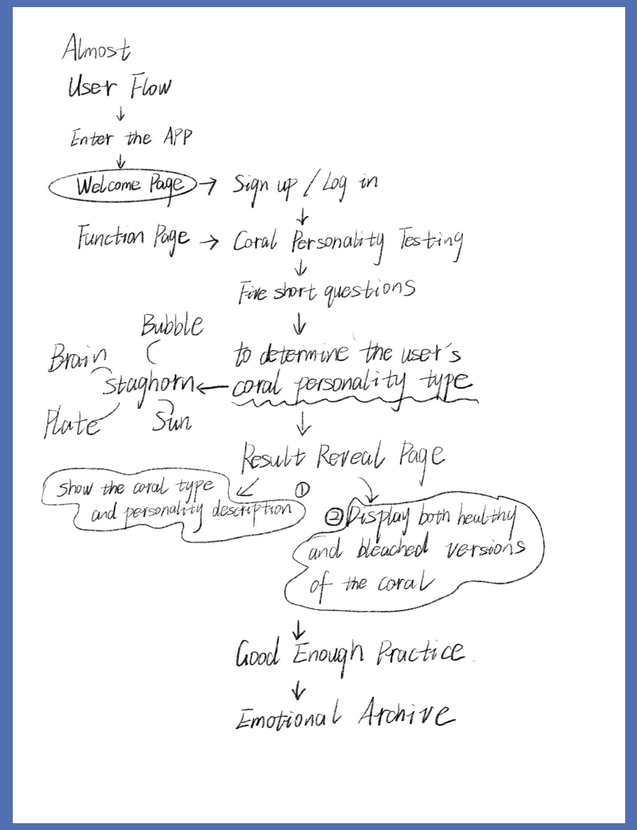






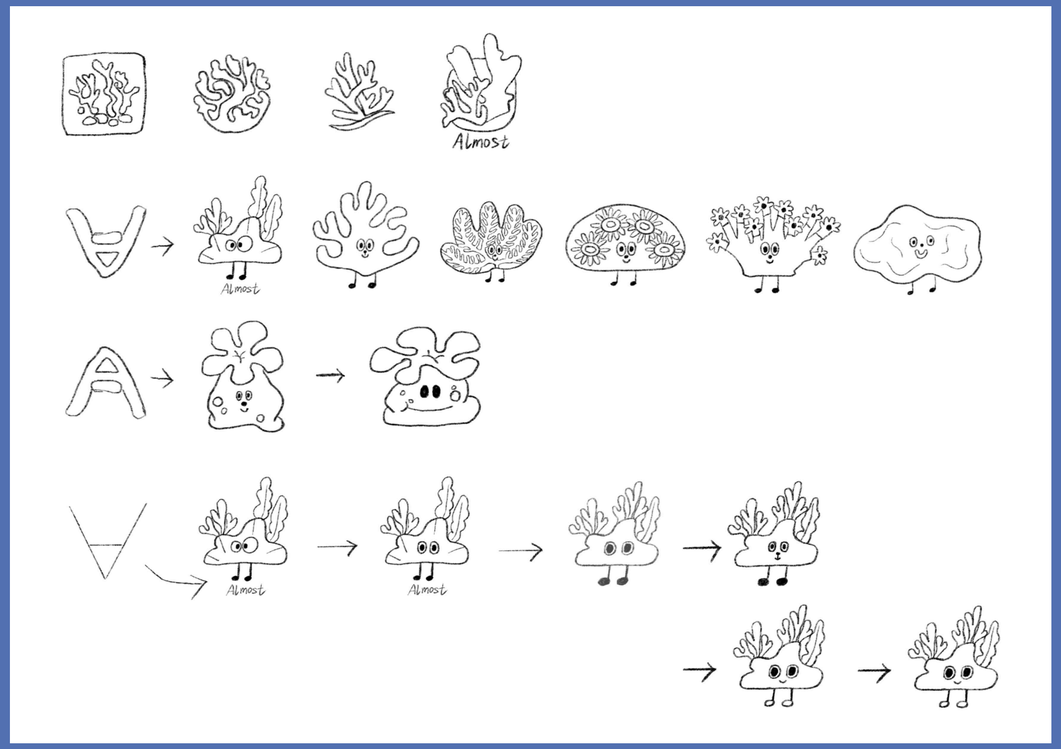
These two sketches were drawn by me when I was conducting research on corals. They can help me understand the shape and color of corals. One is a black and white sketch, and the other is filled with colors. During this process, I learned a lot.

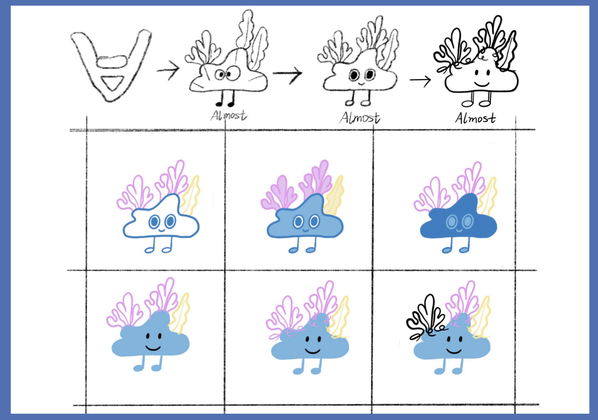
These are some of my ideas about the APP design before drawing the wireframes. This framework helps me better organize wireframes for prototype design. It also helped me to make better iterations.



SKETCH PART2

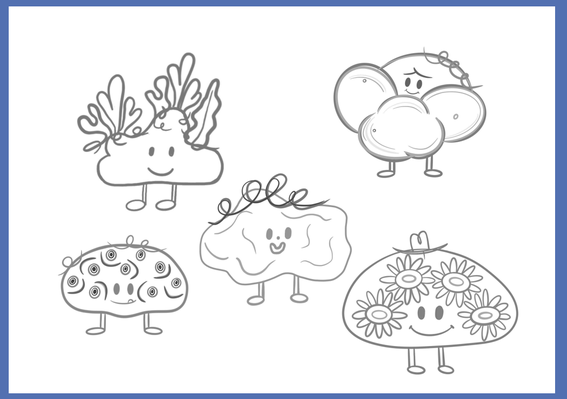
I have been thinking about the design of the logo for a long time. Ultimately, I used the inverted capital letter "A" as the basic shape for the design.The logo is an upside-down A—turning the chase for “A+” into “almost.” It also reads as a calm coral head, gradually recoloring through practice.

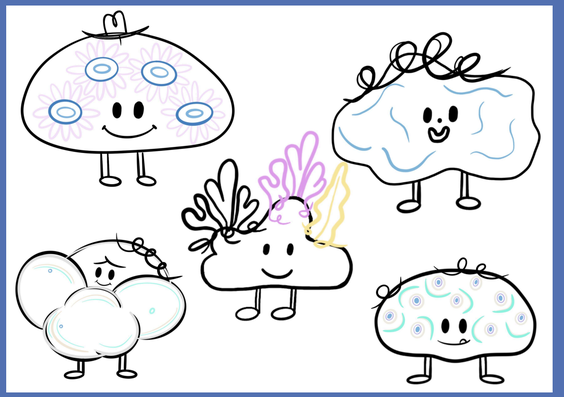




This is my continuous modification of the details of the logo. I chose the most representative coral species, the staghorn coral, for my creation. The staghorn coral is also a type of coral personality.

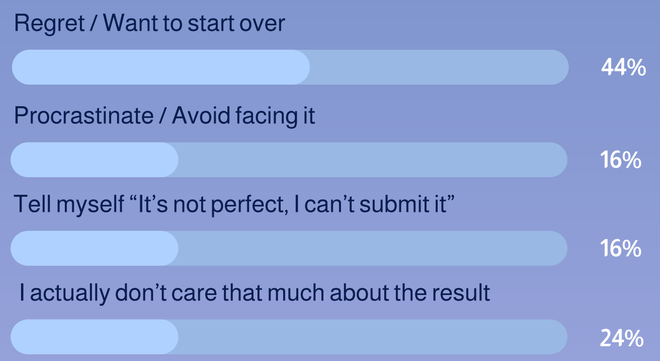
These are five coral personalities, five different coral species, each with its own characteristics. I conducted experiments on creating their images and some color combinations.



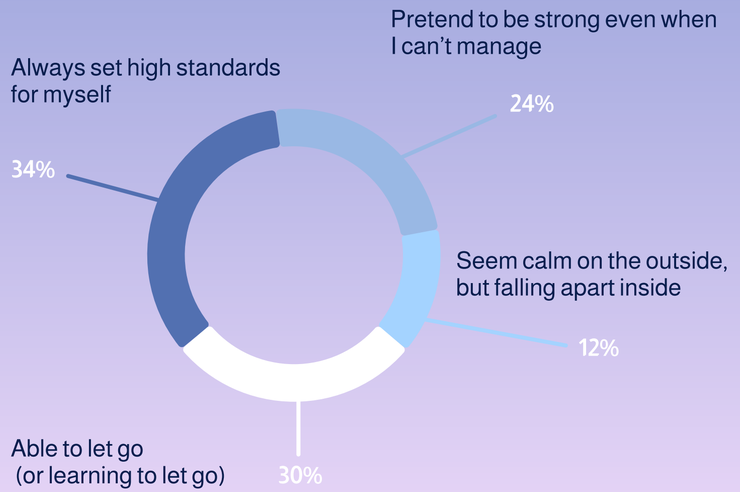


USER SURVEY

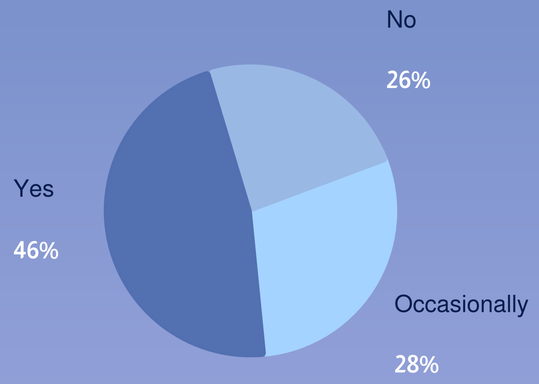
·When something doesn't meet your expectations, what's your first reaction?



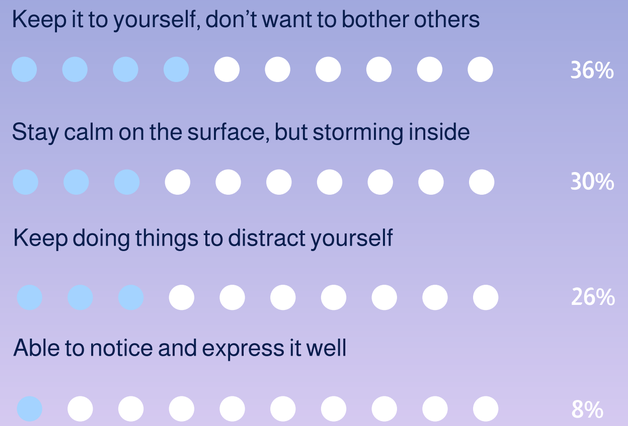
·Which of the following states best describes you?



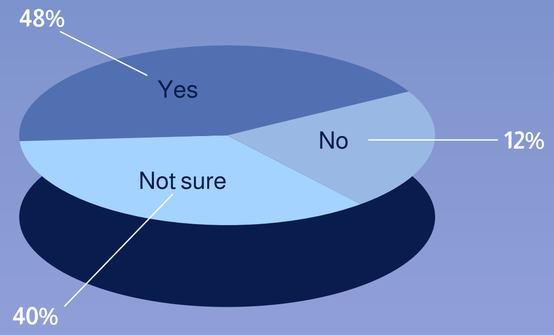
·Have you ever procrastinated or broken down because you wanted to "do your best"?



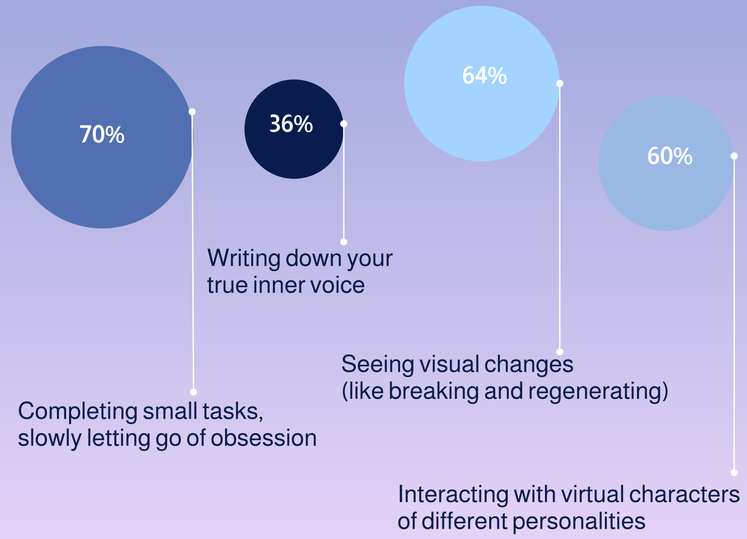
·When your emotions feel unstable, you tend to:



·Would you like to have a space where you can release control and emotions without being judged?



·Which of the following do you find more healing? (Multiple choices allowed)



·If your emotion could turn into an image of a coral, What might it look like ?

Bleached

Still standing, but tired

Cracked, but still whole

Floating

Fading edges, bright center

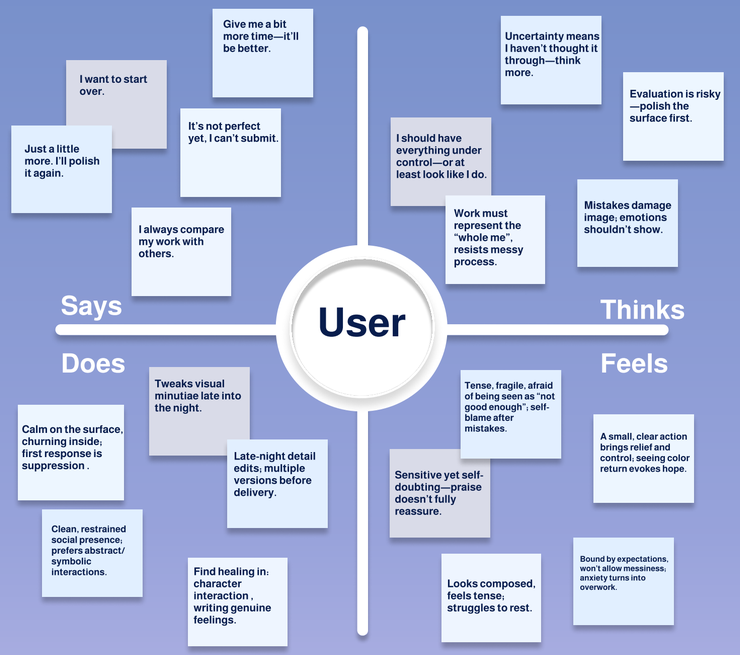
Hard shell, hollow inside

Delicate

Beautiful, slowly breaking

Colorful, but drying out

EMPATHY MAP



Pains

- Aesthetic control, comparison stress; posting anxiety.
- High self-demands, can't stop; anxious near delivery.
- External expectations, fear of missing out; resists overtly emotional practices.

Gains

- Need a non-judgmental space.
- Visual regeneration metaphors and personified interactions strongly support the experience.
- Very short, repeatable rituals: 60s breathing, 90s observing.

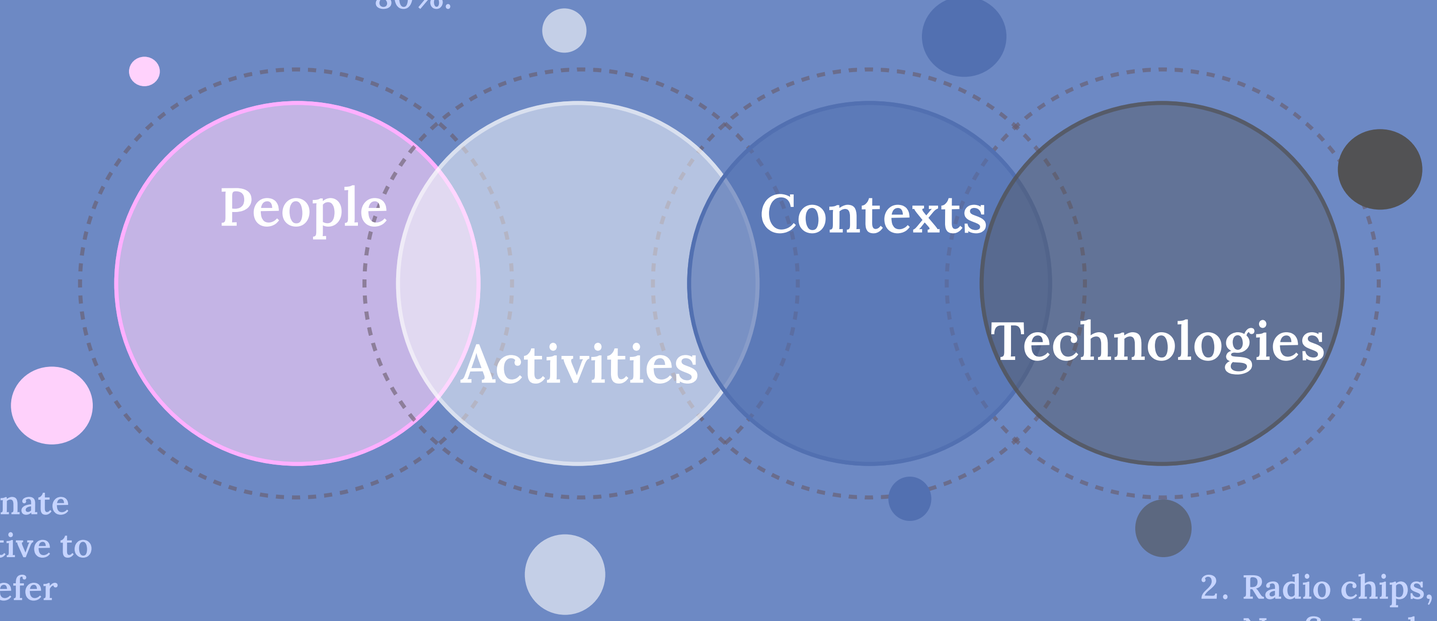
PACT ANALYSIS

Primary users:

Perfectionism-prone users aged 15–30 (students/early career).

Key traits:

Over-polish/procrastinate pre-submission; sensitive to “professional look”; prefer privacy and short steps.



1. 5-item Coral Persona test → persona + one-line tip.
2. Choose the allowed imperfection (one chip): leave 3rd blank / ship at 80%.
3. Observe without fixing for 90s; note 0–2 feared outcomes.
4. Reality check (completion): did it happen.
5. UI shows Bleached → Pale → Healthy recolor.
6. Provide a space for meditation.

3–4-minute fragments during commute, breaks, desk, bedtime; robust to poor network.

1. iOS/Android; offline timer + sync; local encrypted storage.
2. Radio chips, short text fields, No-fix Lock, 90s timer, recolor feedback.

PERSONA



Yuki

About

21 | Undergraduate

Japan | Design

Background

Art student / Junior UI designer

Keywords

Creative anxiety, aesthetic control, comparison pressure

Traits

- Overly sensitive to others' works, constantly comparing
- Feels each creation must reflect their "whole self"
- Afraid their work is "not unique enough", yet resist chaotic processes
- Rationally knows perfection is fake—but can't stop chasing it

Demand

I need a playful, self-evolving system that challenges their obsession with control and symmetry.



Ashley

About

24 | Postgraduate

China | Illustration

Background

Freelance illustrator

Keywords

Internal pressure, hidden anxiety, high personal standards

Traits

- Sets very high goals for herself; will stay up late redoing details
- Cannot stop tweaking because "it's not quite right"
- Feels relief when others don't notice her flaws, but never fully satisfied
- Calm outside, tense inside; rarely rests mentally

Demand

I needs a judgment-free experience to help her soften expectations and accept the "almost".



Jason

About

27 | Undergraduate

London | Financial

Background

Financial analyst

Keywords

External expectations, fear of mistakes, image control

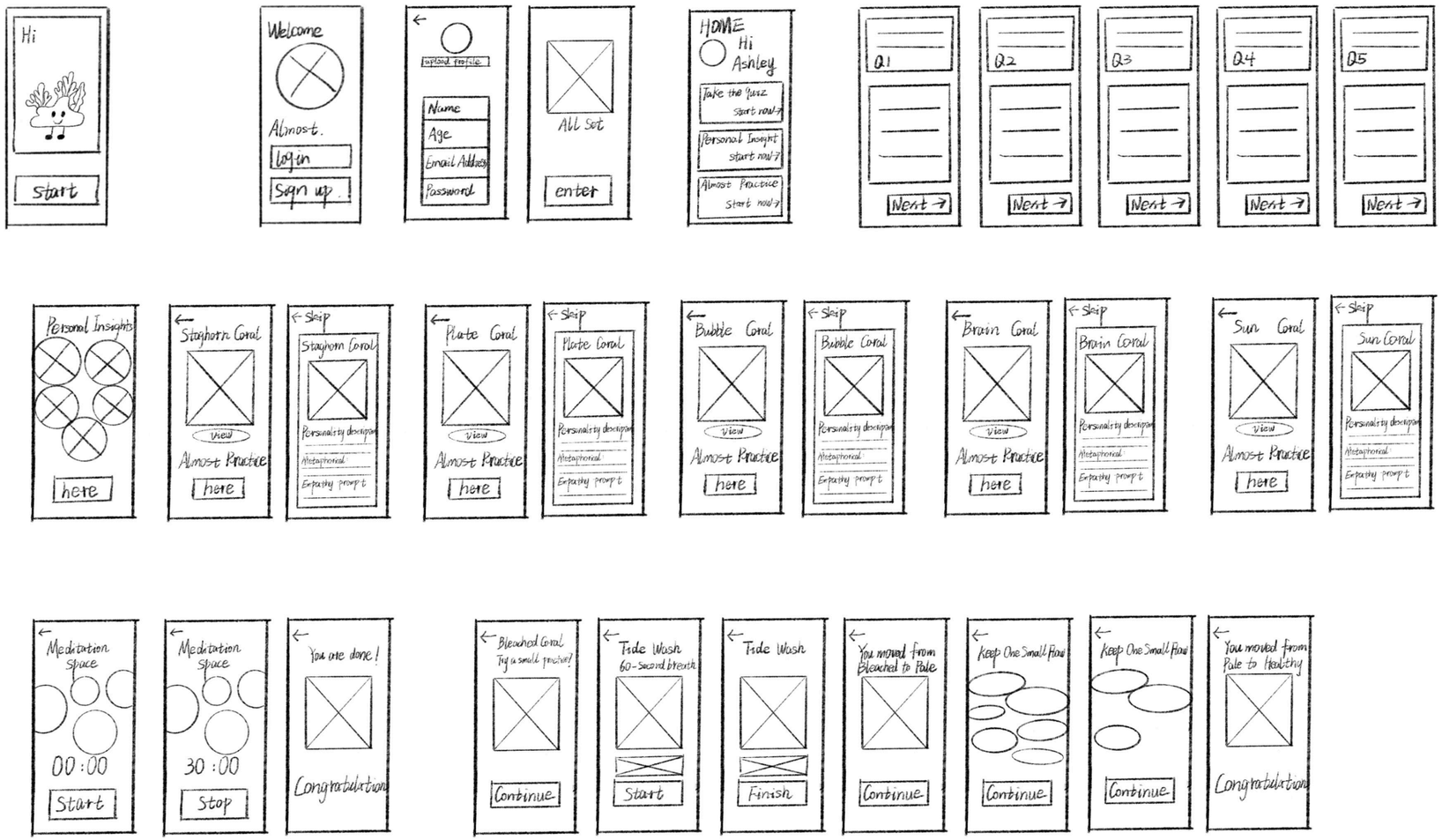
Traits

- Believes people expect him to be competent and composed
- Avoids showing confusion or emotional mess at work
- Social media is clean, curated; real life is more chaotic
- Resistant to direct emotional tools; prefers abstract, symbolic engagement

Demand

I needs a subtle and metaphorical experience that gently encourages reflection without pressure.

WIREFRAME

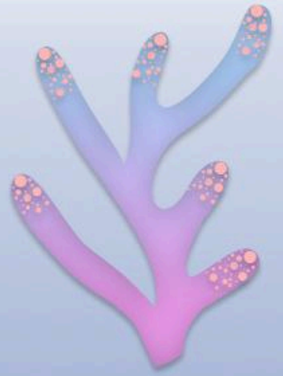

Hi
Start
Welcome
Almost.
Login
Sign up
Upload profile
Name
Age
Email Address
Password
All Set
enter
HOME
Hi
Ashley
Take the Quiz
start now
Personal Insight
start now
Almost Practice
start now
Q1
Q2
Q3
Q4
Q5
Next
Personal Insights
here
Staghorn Coral
View
Almost Practice
here
Skip
Staghorn Coral
Personality description
Metaphorical
Empathy prompt
Plate Coral
View
Almost Practice
here
Skip
Plate Coral
Personality description
Metaphorical
Empathy prompt
Bubble Coral
View
Almost Practice
here
Skip
Bubble Coral
Personality description
Metaphorical
Empathy prompt
Brain Coral
View
Almost Practice
here
Skip
Brain Coral
Personality description
Metaphorical
Empathy prompt
Sun Coral
View
Almost Practice
here
Skip
Sun Coral
Personality description
Metaphorical
Empathy prompt
Meditation Space
00:00
Start
Meditation Space
30:00
Stop
You are done!
Congratulations
Bleached Coral
Try a small practice!
Continue
Tide Wash
60-Second breath
Start
Tide Wash
Finish
You moved from Bleached to Pale
Continue
Keep One Small Plan
Continue
Keep One Small Plan
Continue
You moved from Pale to Healthy
Congratulations



Bleached Coral



Pale Coral

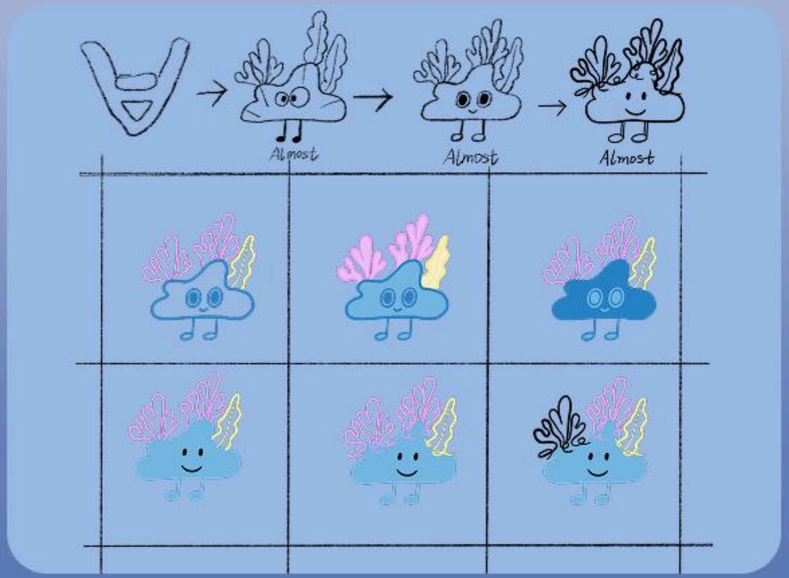


Healthy Coral

Logo



Almost.



The logo is an upside-down A—turning the chase for “A+” into “almost.” It also reads as a calm coral head, gradually recoloring through practice.

Font

·Aa Magra

·Aa MuseoModerno

·Aa *Oleo Script*

Size

14 16 18 22 25 28

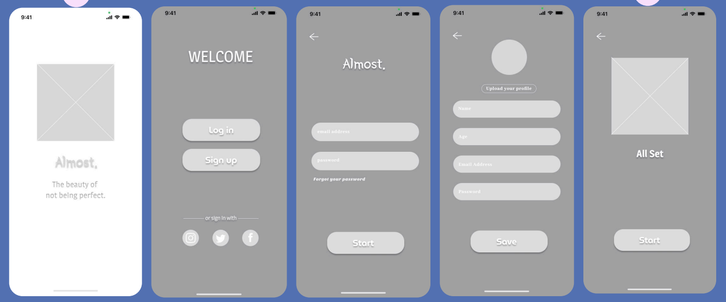
32 35 42 65 84

Colour

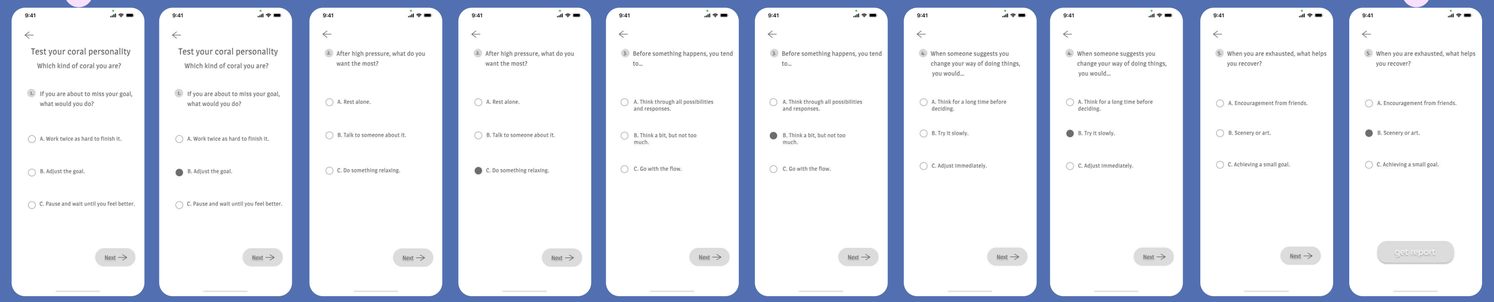
95FBEC FFFFAE F1D3FF C3BCF1 6D8AC5 081E4D

LOW-FIDELITY MODEL

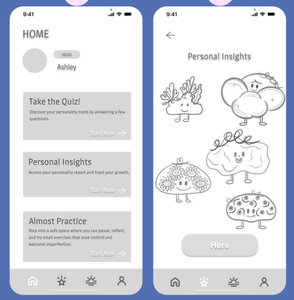
Welcome Page



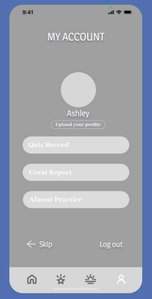
Take the Quiz



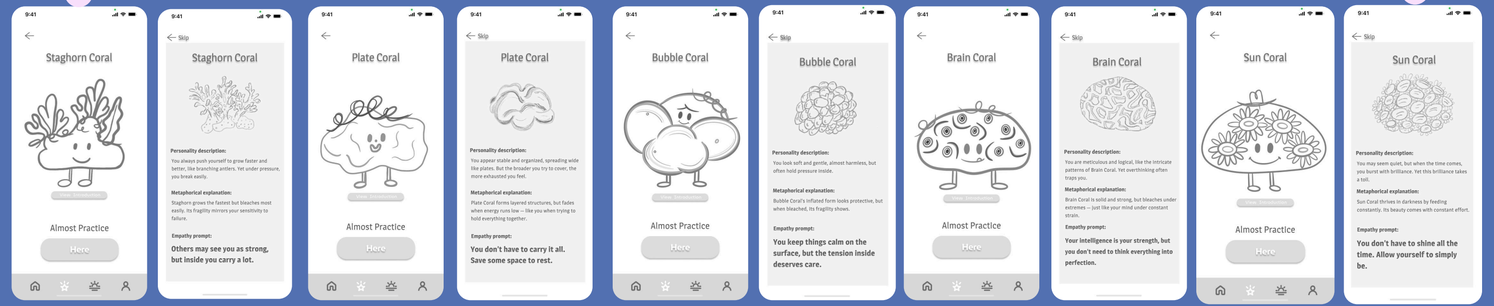
Home Page



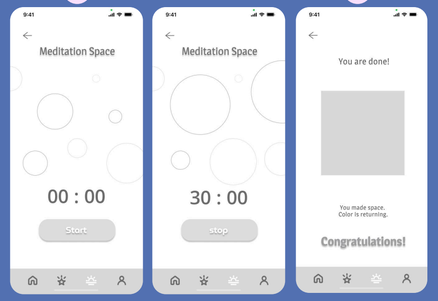
My Account



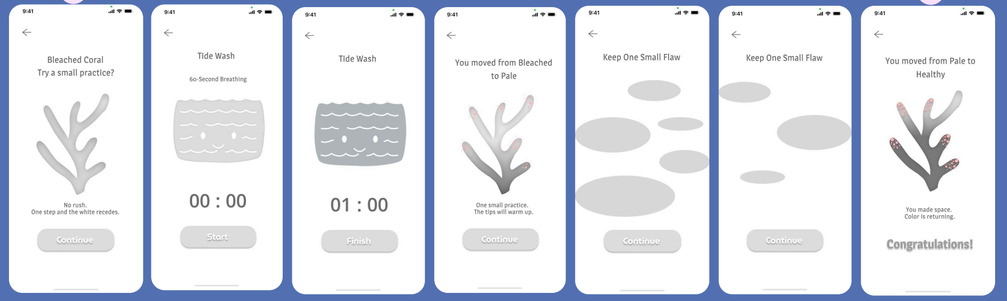
Personal Insights



Meditation Space



Almost Practice

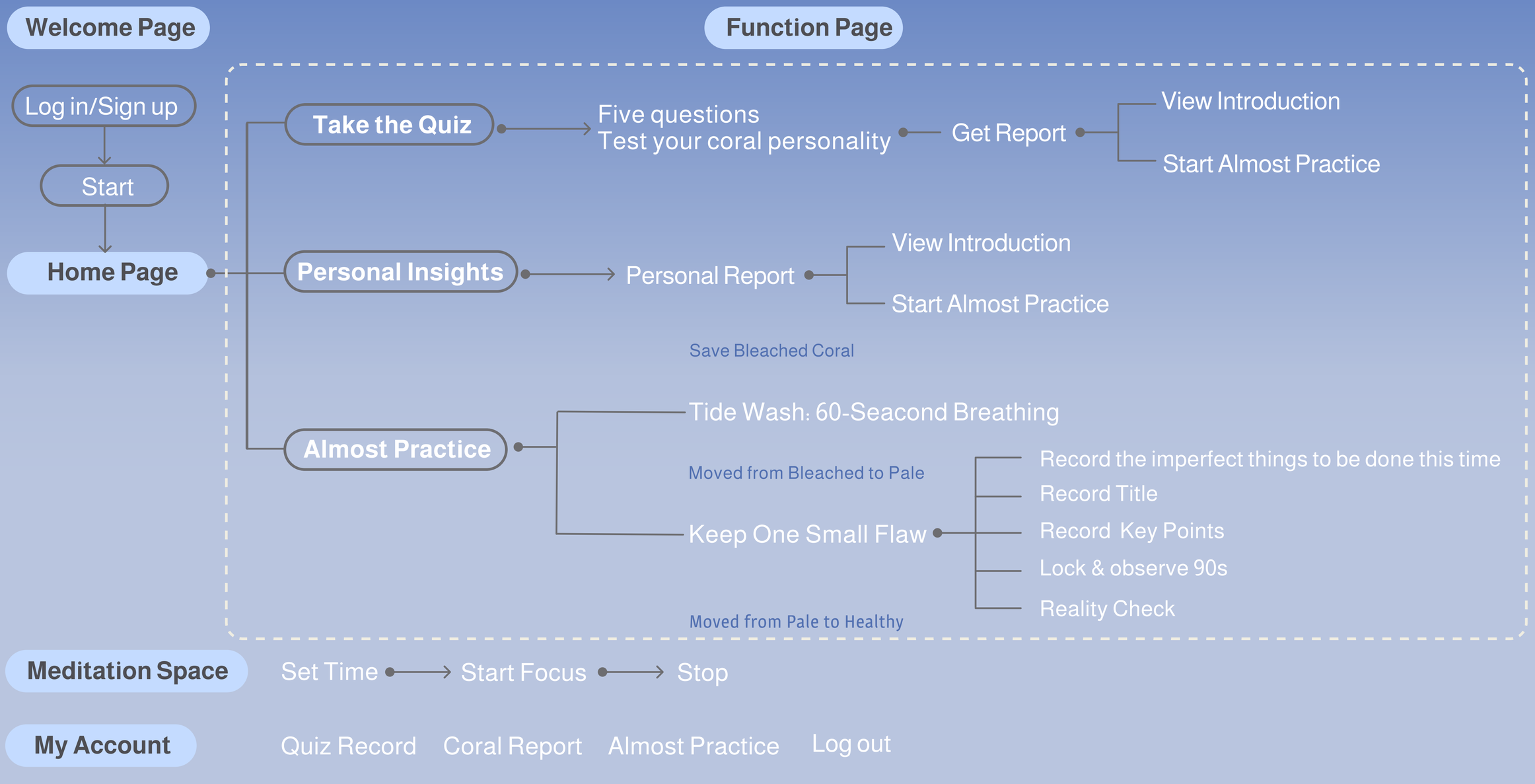


FIRST USER TESTING VIDEO



Video Link: https://youtu.be/TqsXQULC1l0

USER FLOW


Welcome Page
Function Page
Log in/Sign up
Start
Home Page
Take the Quiz
Five questions
Test your coral personality
Get Report
View Introduction
Start Almost Practice
Personal Insights
Personal Report
View Introduction
Start Almost Practice
Save Bleached Coral
Almost Practice
Tide Wash: 60-Seacond Breathing
Moved from Bleached to Pale
Keep One Small Flaw
Record the imperfect things to be done this time
Record Title
Record Key Points
Lock & observe 90s
Reality Check
Moved from Pale to Healthy
Meditation Space
Set Time
Start Focus
Stop
My Account
Quiz Record
Coral Report
Almost Practice
Log out

MID-PROJECT ZINE

Contact Information

website link：https://2025.macd.work/yt4n24/

Brand Logo



Technical Info

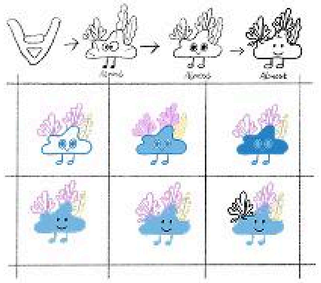
Materials

Mobile prototype screens

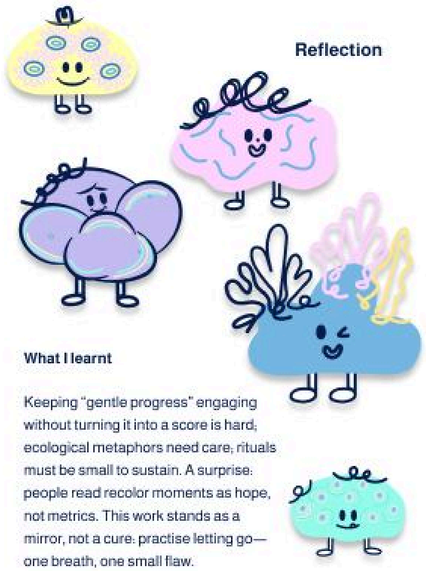
Tools

Figma　Procreate　Adobe Illustrator

Adobe Photoshop　Adobe After Effects



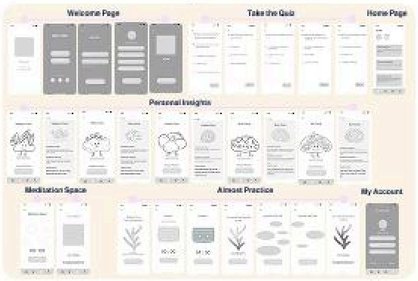
Reflection



What I learnt

Keeping "gentle progress" engaging without turning it into a score is hard; ecological metaphors need care; rituals must be small to sustain. A surprise: people read recolor moments as hope, not metrics. This work stands as a mirror, not a cure. practise letting go—one breath, one small flaw.

Proposed Final Outcomes



Design Lens



Bleached Coral　Pale Coral　Healthy Coral

Icon



Colour



The Art of Almost

A coral-inspired micro-practice app for perfectionists



Almost APP Design

Yizhuo Tan

Project Overview

The Art of Almost uses coral bleaching → recolor as a metaphor for perfectionism: a polished surface can hide inner depletion. The app offers a safe, reflective space where a 60-second breathing cool-down and a tiny "leave one flaw" experiment turn abstract self-pressure into visible micro-changes, letting color return to your personal coral.

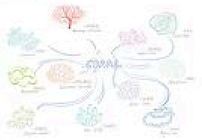
Purpose

To practise letting go through low-risk, repeatable steps.

Concept Development

Inspiration & Context

Coral systems: fragile yet regenerative, when stress eases, color returns.

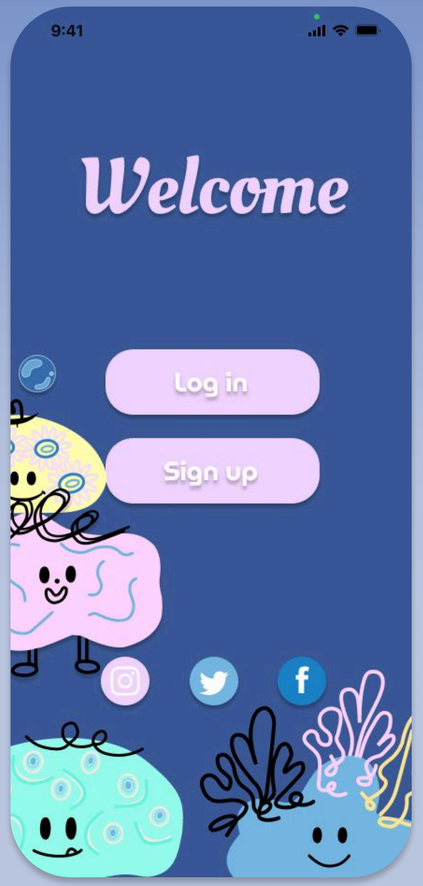


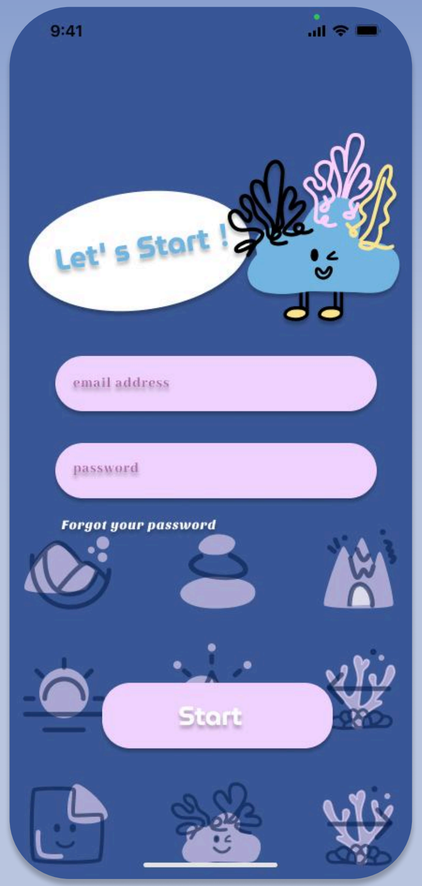
Perfectionism: surface control vs. inner drain, reframed as care + recovery.

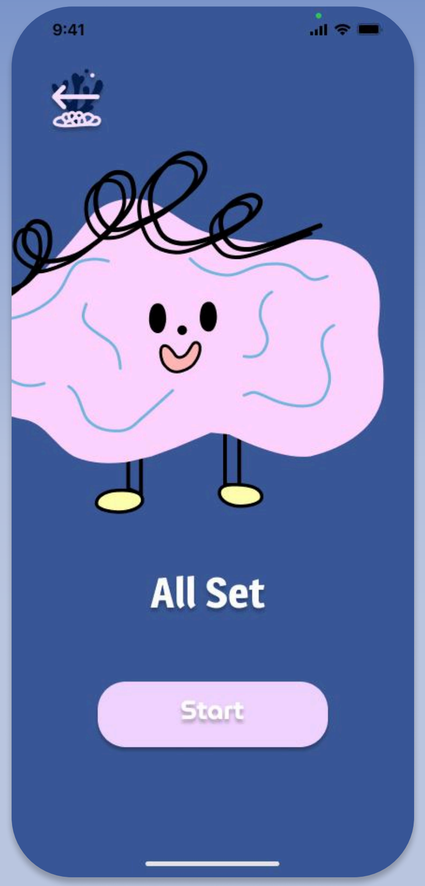


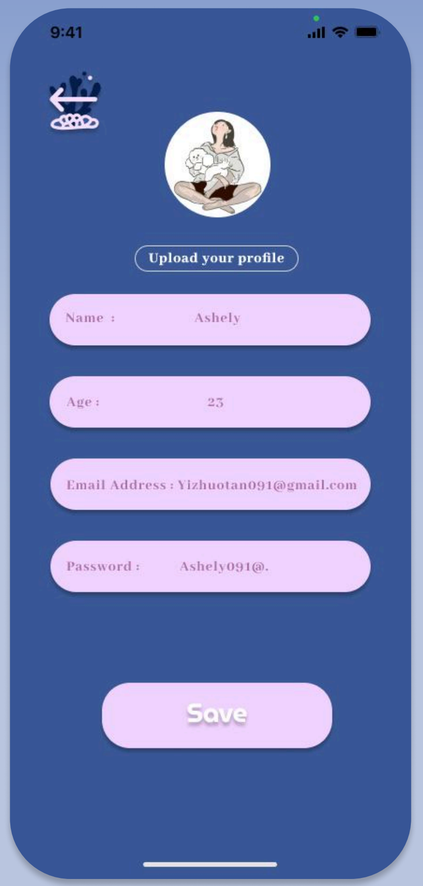
OUTCOME

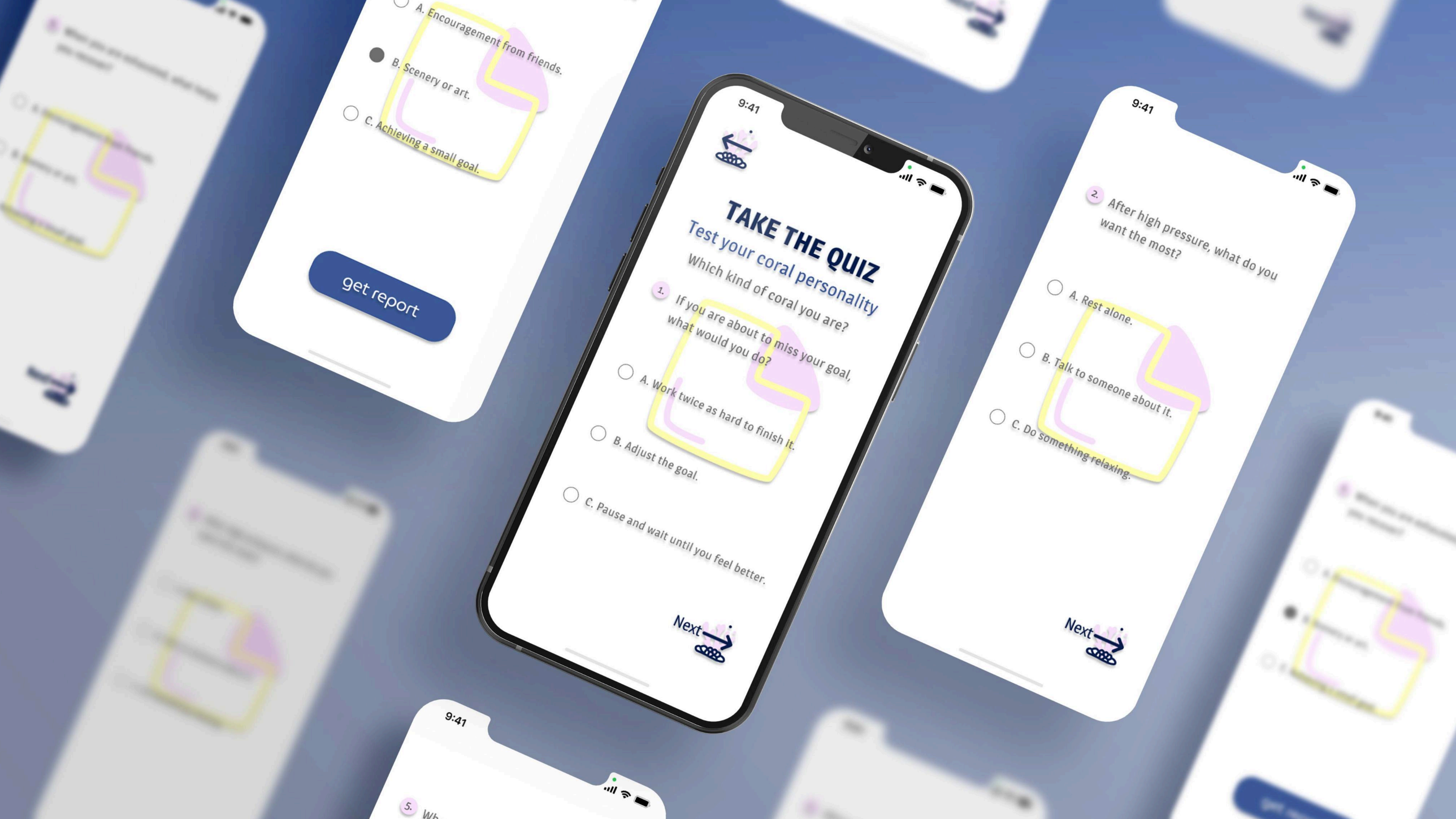
Welcome Page







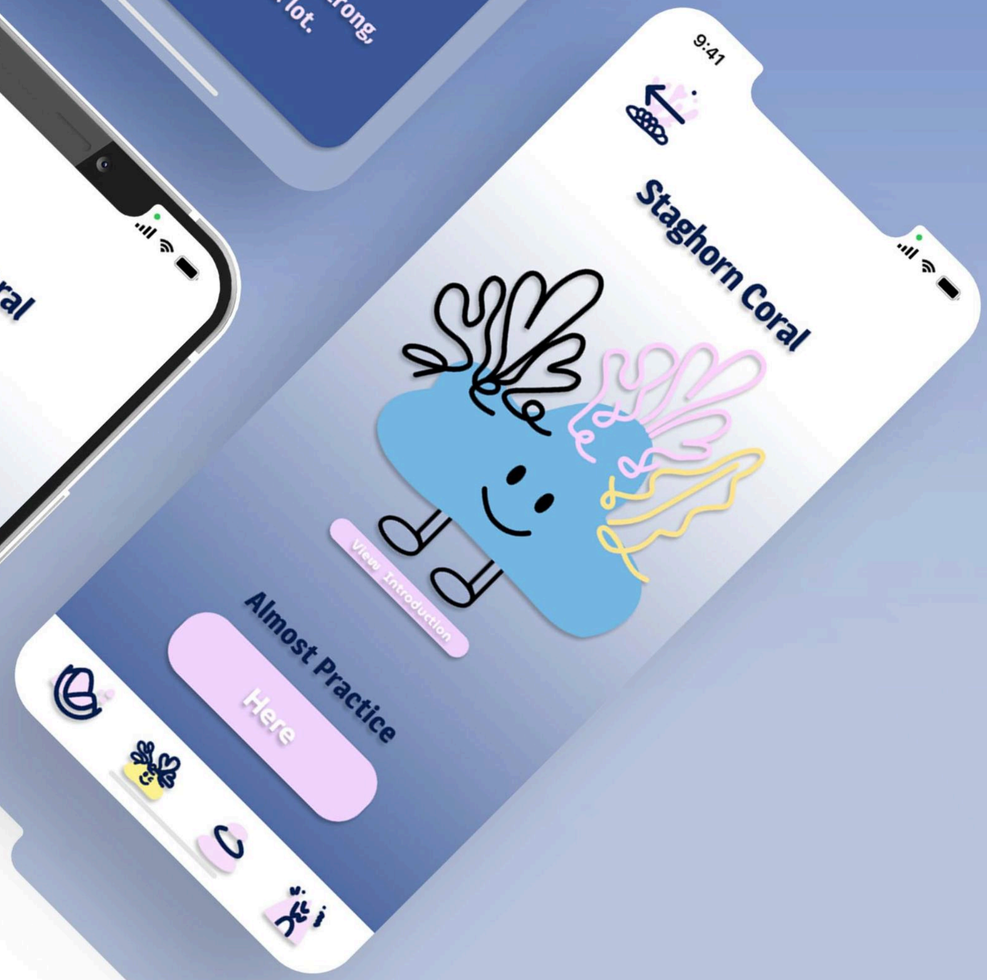



A. Encouragement from friends.
B. Scenery or art.
C. Achieving a small goal.
get report
9:41
TAKE THE QUIZ
Test your coral personality
Which kind of coral you are?
1. If you are about to miss your goal, what would you do?
A. Work twice as hard to finish it.
B. Adjust the goal.
C. Pause and wait until you feel better.
Next
9:41
2. After high pressure, what do you want the most?
A. Rest alone.
B. Talk to someone about it.
C. Do something relaxing.
Next
9:41
5.

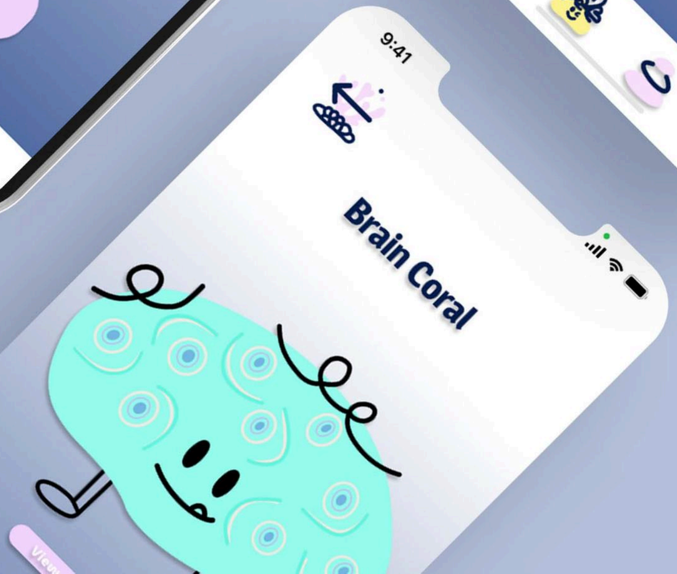
Coral Introduction



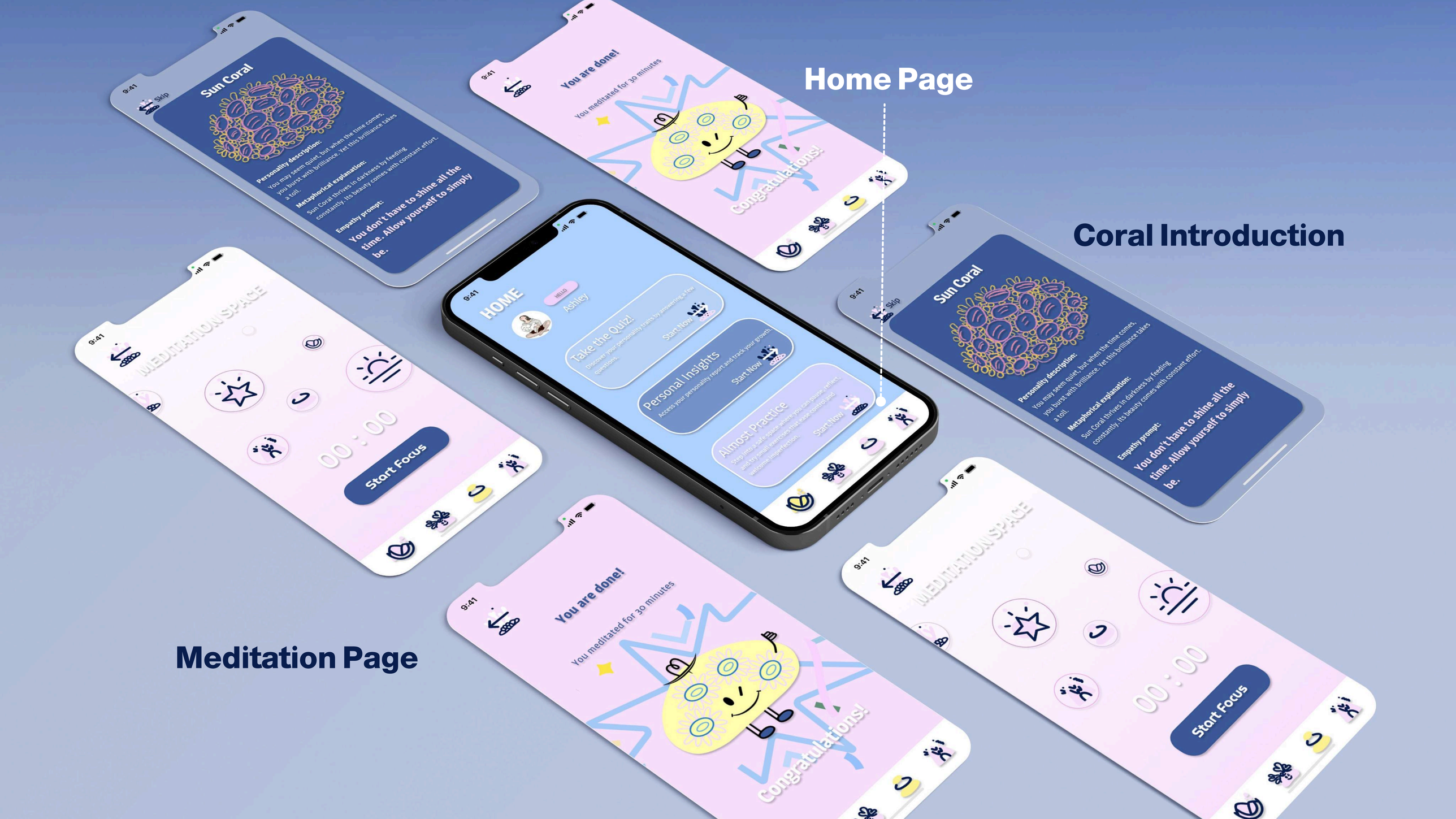








Coral Report


Home Page
Coral Introduction
Meditation Page
9:41
Skip
Sun Coral
Personality description:
You may seem quiet, but when the time comes, you burst with brilliance. Yet this brilliance takes a toll.
Metaphorical explanation:
Sun Coral thrives in darkness by feeding constantly. Its beauty comes with constant effort.
Empathy prompt:
You don't have to shine all the time. Allow yourself to simply be.
You are done!
You meditated for 30 minutes
Congratulations!
MEDITATION SPACE
00 : 00
Start Focus
HOME
HELLO
Ashley
Take the Quiz!
Discover your personality traits by answering a few questions.
Start Now
Personal Insights
Access your personality report and track your growth
Start Now
Almost Practice
Step into a safe space where you can pause, reflect, and try small exercises that ease coming and welcome imperfection.
Start Now

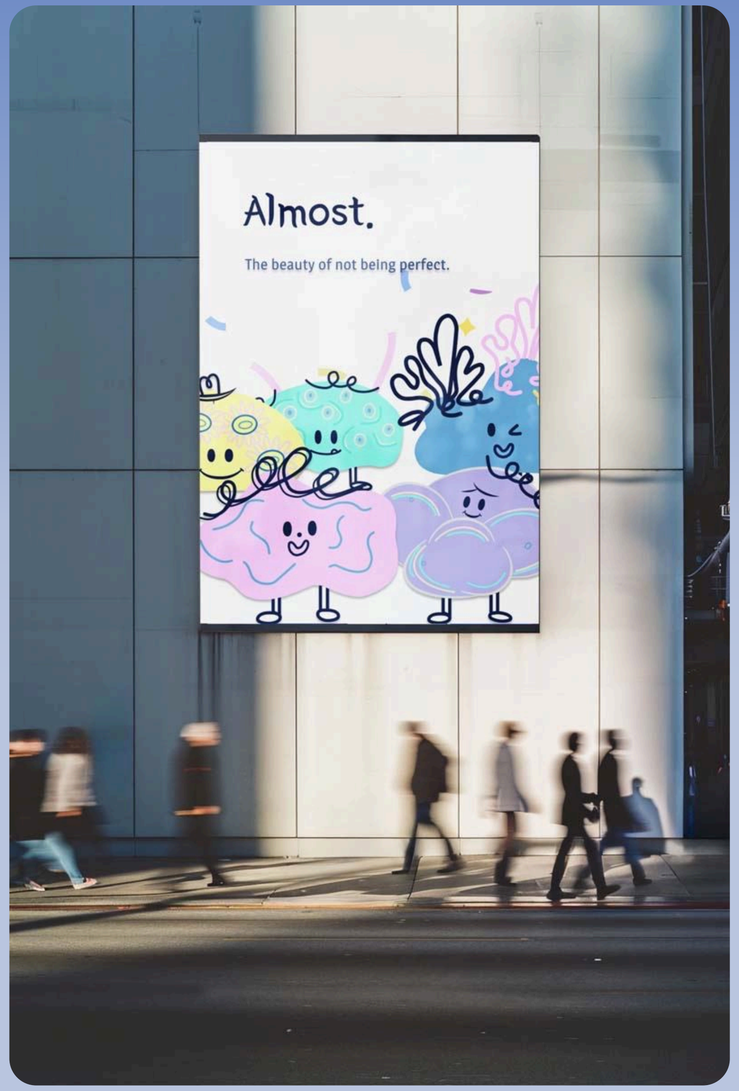
Almost Practice



SECOND USER TESTING VIDEO

Video Link：https://youtu.be/usABvLBC19M

BRAND & POSTER









Rewards for completing practices





REFERENCE LIST

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