

# **Design for happiness-enhancing activities**



## **development of design strategies for the activities of learning to forgive and avoiding overthinking**

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# Abstract

This research-by-design projects aims to contribute to the field of design for happiness.

It therefore has two main objectives:

- 1) provide designers with new strategies to design for happiness.
- 2) present concepts that illustrate these strategies.

An overview of the process and contributions of the project can be seen in figure 1, below.

This report opens by introducing the field of design for happiness, and presents a list of fourteen activities that, through research, were found to contribute to the happiness of it the people that engaged in them.

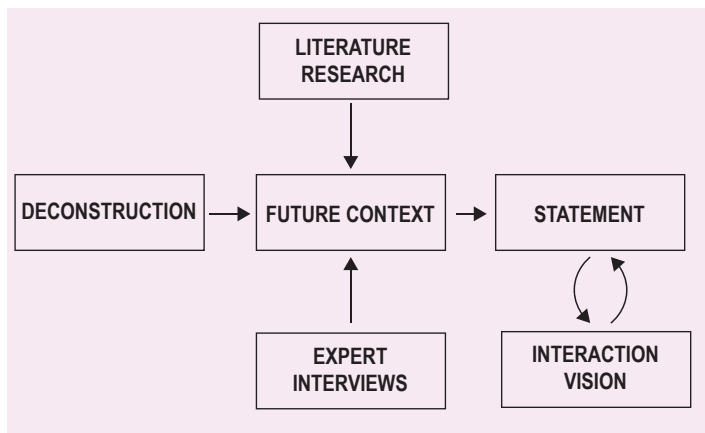
A survey was used to determine the most promising activities to design for during this project: avoiding overthinking and learning to forgive. This is due to the limited number of existing products that facilitate these activities, the low frequency of engagement people indicated for these activities, and the superficiality the people described when interacting with current products.

With two activities chosen, the Vision in Design approach was employed to create two future worldviews --one for both activities-- by interviewing experts and conducting literature research. These worldviews provided an understanding of how people engage with these activities in the future. This made it possible to form an appropriate and meaningful design goal.

Subsequently, in an iterative process, multiple design strategies were created for both activities. The report closes with these strategies, concepts that illustrate them, and their evaluation.

Designers can use these strategies to design products that will help people to avoid overthinking, or learn to forgive. In addition to this, the research conducted to form the strategies provides further insight into the field of design for happiness.

VIP



CONTRIBUTIONS TO RESEARCH ON ACTIVITIES

CONTRIBUTIONS TO DESIGN

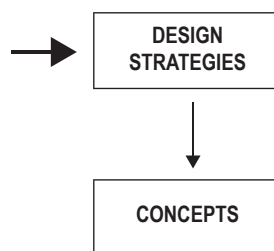
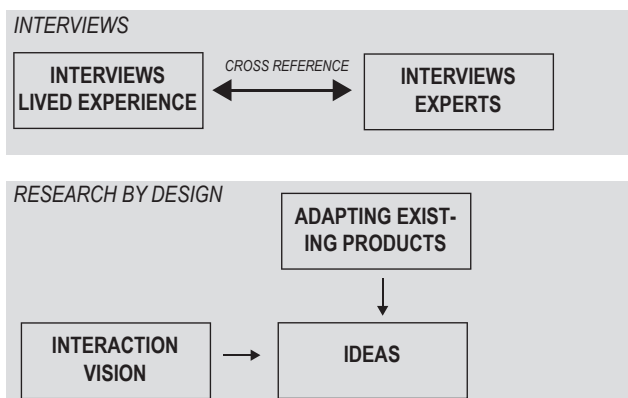


Figure 1: project overview and contributions

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# **Phase I**

## **Foundations**



**Project goals, current research &  
scope of the project**



# 1. Project introduction

This graduation project is linked to the research of client Lisa Wiese, currently conducting a PhD at Delft University of Technology, on how technology can promote sustained well-being.

In addition to this, she is Senior User Experience Researcher at brands4friends, an online shop that sells brand name fashion goods via temporary sales auctions.

This thesis heavily builds on research of Wiese, Hekkert and Pohlmeier (Wiese et al., 2019; 2020), which describe the potential of products to support well-being-enhancing activities.

This research led to, among other contributions, the development of a multi-stage framework that shows how sustained well-being can be promoted by technology (figure 2).

This framework proposes activities as the most promising starting point to improve subjective well-being.

This graduation project aims to contribute to this research by researching how designers can design for specific activities, knowledge that is currently lacking. It does so by developing design strategies for the activities of avoiding overthinking and learning to forgive.

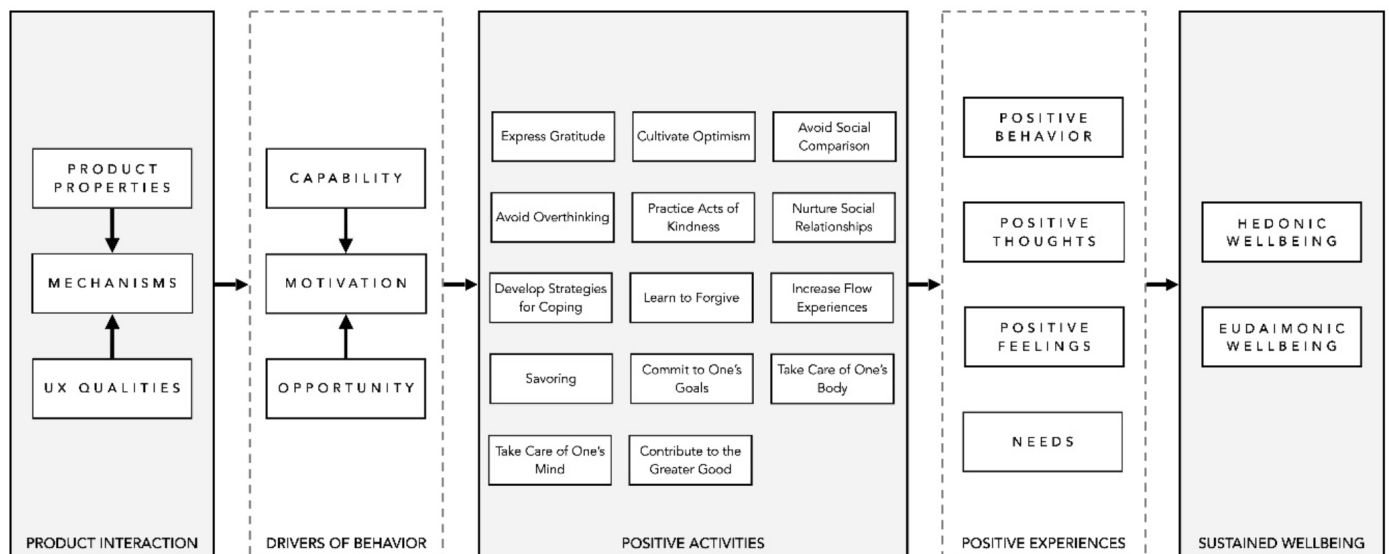


Figure 2: Multi-stage framework for sustained wellbeing promoted by technology (Wiese et al., 2020)

## 2.1. Design for happiness

*This chapter introduces the concept of design for happiness, its origins, and its relevance and importance to life. The chapter concludes by describing how products can contribute to the happiness of their users.*

### **Shift in design: design for experience**

In 1977, Ronald Inglehart wrote about the ‘silent revolution’ in the Western world: a shift from an overwhelming emphasis on material values and physical security toward greater concern with the quality of life (Inglehart, 1977). In recent years, this transformation of the definition of human happiness is gradually more noticeable in daily life.

Psychology has long focused on disease, disorder, and mitigating negative effects of these (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). More recently however, psychologists have greater, more ambitious aims. Positive psychology strives to go beyond merely reducing negative feelings, and instead empower people to develop a positive state of mind and live life to the fullest; to flourish.

### **Towards happiness**

This shift can also be seen in design. Instead of seeing products as material things that make us happy, it is what we do with these products that can make us happy.

Lyubomirsky describes happiness as “the experience of joy, contentment, or positive well-being, combined with a sense that one’s life is good, meaningful, and worthwhile” (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

Research proposes that products can function as resources that address meaningful goals in order to contribute to users’ happiness (Desmet & Pohlmeier, 2003).

Further research of Pohlmeier suggested that design can play a pivotal role in promoting subjective well-being (Pohlmeier, 2012). In the same research, she implored that contributions of a product should not be restricted to its direct influence, but be expanded to the experience(s) it enables.

Bill Buxton, a pioneer in the field of human–computer interaction, describes that design goes beyond the product itself, and revolves more on the “social and cultural experience that they engender, and the value and impact that they have” (Buxton, 2007).

One mentioned example of this is a classic mountain bike. On the surface level, the user buys a carbon fiber frame with off-road tires, front and rear suspension, and a number of gear ratios. However, the likely reason the buyer purchases this product is to experience the conquering of muddy roads, steep rocks and wild water.

Designing a mountain bike, or any product for that matter, with this purpose in mind would ask for a different approach. A completely different approach than, for example, designing a mountain bike that has a better suspension than its competitors.

The mountain bike, and its features, facilitates the experience of an engaging activity desired by the user.

Research of Lyubomirsky (2007) indicates that our happiness is largely determined by activities. Our behaviour plays a large role in our happiness and is the factor that provides the most opportunities to increase it (Lyubomirsky, 2007). Lyubomirsky describes these as ‘happiness-enhancing activities’. The next chapter elaborates on the concept of these activities.

## 2.2. Happiness enhancing activities

*Happiness is what people indicate they want most in life, in almost every nation (Diener, 2000). Increasing one's happiness will make that person feel better, but also benefit his or her energy, creativity, immune system, relationships, work productivity, and will even lead to a longer life (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Becoming happier is thus a legitimate and worthwhile goal to pursue in order to increase one's well-being.*

*However, even though we all want to be happy, what we think will make us lastingly happy is often wrong, and many of our pursuits of happiness are actually not effective in contributing to our well-being (Lyubomirsky, 2007).*

### Constituents of happiness

Research of Lyubomirsky (2007) indicates that our happiness is determined by three factors that contribute to it in varying degrees:

- a set point, for 50%
- our circumstances, for 10%
- intentional activity, for 40%

**The set point** is similar to the genetic traits that one inherits. Some people have a disposition that allows them to experience happiness more easily than others. Like genes for intelligence or cholesterol, this will determine to a large extent how happy one will be in their life (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

**Our circumstances** are differences in life circumstances such as wealth, health, beauty and place of residence. Contrary to popular thought, these only contribute to 10% of our happiness. This is demonstrated by research by Diener et al., in which the richest Americans -earning more than ten million dollars per year- indicate happiness levels only slightly greater than their office employees (Diener et al., 1985).

**Intentional activity** refers to our behaviour. While both the set point and circumstances are often difficult and impractical to change, a change in behaviour offers promising

potential to influence our happiness. The happiest participants of studies showed similarities in their behaviour (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

Lyubomirsky categorised these behaviours and called them, referring to them as happiness enhancing activities.

### How to increase happiness

Our circumstances appear to have little bearing on our well-being, and our set point (our 'baseline' or 'disposition' for happiness) is, by definition, not able to be changed. So, the opportunities lie in the other 40%: our behaviour. It is thus that 'happiness-enhancing activities' are the key to increase our well-being.

Lyubomirsky (2007) has found twelve of those activities. Wiese, Pohlmeier and Hekker (2019) have found two additional activities, for a total of fourteen activities.

Although any of these 14 activities has the potential to contribute to one's well-being, some activities have a better potential fit with a person as everyone differs in, for example, their motivations and preferences.

### List of activities

The current list of fourteen activities is as follows:

1. Counting your blessings: being thankful for what you have.  
This can be privately (such as in your own thoughts or writing it down) or by saying that you are thankful for what someone did.
2. Being optimistic: looking at the bright side of life.  
For example, by having a diary in which you write about the best possible future for yourself, or by thinking about the positive aspect of a situation.
3. Avoiding overthinking and social comparison: not dwelling on your problems and not comparing yourself to others.

For example, by using strategies such as distraction.

4. Doing good deeds: doing good things for others

This can be for friends or strangers, directly or anonymously, spontaneously or planned.

5. Developing your relationships: picking a relationship and strengthening it.

For example, by investing time and energy in healing, growing, confirming, and enjoying in the relationship.

6. Doing more activities that really engage/interest you: Increasing the number of experiences at home and work in which you “lose” yourself. These are activities in which you feel a “flow” while doing them.

For example, activities that you find challenging and absorbing. Can be anywhere such as at home or at work.

7. Replaying and enjoying life’s joys: thinking about the pleasures and wonders of life.

For example, paying close attention to the joys of life. Can be through thinking, writing, drawing, or sharing with someone.

8. Committing to your goals: picking one, two, or three goals mean a lot to you, and spending time and effort to achieve them.

9. Developing strategies for coping: learning or practicing ways to overcome or deal with a recent stress, difficulty, or trauma.

10. Learning to forgive: working on letting go of anger and hate towards someone.

For example, by keeping a journal or writing a letter.

11. Practicing religion and spirituality: becoming more involved in your church, temple, or mosque, or reading spiritual books and thinking about the contents.

12. Taking care of your body and mind: doing physical activities, but can also be broader such as meditating, smiling and laughing.

For example, exercising, keeping a healthy diet, getting enough rest.

13. Learning: learn a new skill, and/or getting a different perspective on a topic.

14. Contributing to the greater good: doing something to add to the greater good in any way.

For example, doing something to protect the environment and living in a sustainable way.

Provided that behaviour change offers the most potential to positively influence our happiness, it would be interesting to design for any of these fourteen activities. A selection of two activities will be made given the scope of this project. The two most interesting activities to design for will be determined with research described in the next chapter.

### 3. Project scope

*The previous chapter established a list of happiness-enhancing activities, which are scientifically substantiated by research of Lyubomirsky (2007), and Wiese, Hekkert & Pohlmeier (2019). This chapter will focus on determining which of these activities would be most interesting to design for, as time constraints do not allow to design for every activity during this project. To do so, a qualitative survey was conducted on happiness-enhancing activities and products that play a role in these.*

*As a result, the activities avoiding overthinking and learning to forgive were chosen to design for, as people engage in these activities less frequent and fewer products play a role in these activities.*

#### **Survey goal**

The main goal of the survey was two-fold. The first goal was to determine which activities people engage in and in what frequency. The second goal was to acquire a taxonomy of products that play a role in these activities.

Only achieving both goals would allow me to choose the most interesting activities to design for. To show why this is the case, the meaning of interesting activities in this context must be explained.

#### **Pre-determining what constitutes as interesting to design for**

Before the survey was created, I hypothesised what variables would influence how interesting it would be to design for a certain activity. I determined the following three variables: 1) frequency of engagement in the activity, 2) how many products play a role in the activity, and 3) the degree of the role these products play in the activity. The combination of these three variables would ultimately determine which activities to design for. This is because each variable in itself is does not carry significant meaning.

The first variable, frequency of engagement, is the most obvious one. The activities that

people engage in less frequently seem more interesting to design for than the activities that people are practicing more.

However, an important sidenote is that there is no optimal frequency of engagement for each activity, as this differs per preference of each person (Lyubomirsky, 2007). At the same time, engaging in one activity more often than another does not mean that your happiness increases more because of the first activity (Lyubomirsky, 2007). For example, playing sports and thereby achieving a flow state twice a week might contribute less to your happiness overall than if you count your blessings just once each month.

Still, choosing to design for the activities that people are currently engaging in the least is a step in the right direction. The chance that people might want to engage in a certain activity more frequently is higher in these activities.

It is important to note that this also depends on the second variable; the number of products that play a role in each activity. The activities that have fewer products mentioned that play a role in them seem more interesting to design for than the activities in which more products are mentioned.

Here too there is a sidenote that need to be discussed: some activities lend themselves better to be engaged in with products, while other activities require no products at all. For example, many sports that help people achieve a flow state require multiple products to be played, while counting your blessings can, in theory, be done by thinking about them and thus does not necessarily require any product.

This is why the third variable is important to also take into account; the degree of the role that the product plays in an activity. The activities in which products help to facilitate the activity less is more interesting to design for than the activities in which products help to facilitate the activity more.



Thus far, each variable merely seemed to influence how interesting it would be to design for a certain activity. However, as described it is important to take into account all three variables simultaneously to acquire a holistic view.

From this I hypothesised that the most interesting activities to design for would be those with a low frequency of engagement, and a low number of facilitating products, with the requirement that these products do not contribute extensively in facilitation of the activities.

### **Methodology**

The survey was made available online. This aided the recruitment of participants and their anonymity. A pilot study (N=3) was held after which the phrasing and clarity of the questions were improved. The pilot-participants were recruited from the authors' network and were chosen due to their experience in setting up and conducting surveys during, as they all obtained a Master's degree in Psychology.

After this, 54 unique surveys were created. Participants were first explained what happiness-enhancing activities are, and how products might play a role in them. They were then shown a description of one of the 14 activities and were asked to report how often they engaged in said activity.

Possible options were:

- Never
- Rarely (a few times in your life)
- Sometimes (a few times in a year)
- Very often (once a week or more)

If the participant answered "never", he would be redirected to a different activity and asked the same question for this activity.

If the participant picked any of the other options, he was asked if a product played a role in this activity. If so, the participant was asked to describe the role of the product.

This would repeat until the participant reported on 4 or 5 activities in total, depending on the random survey the participant selected. The survey was set up in such a way that participants needed to reflect on 5 activities at most. More than this was considered to be too time consuming and mentally straining on the participants, as pilot participants mentioned that they were not used to reflect on these types of activities. Minimising the activities needed to reflect on would thus ensure higher quality data.

The full survey can be found in Appendix 1.

54 participants completed the improved survey. As incentive for filling in the survey, three gift cards of €15 were given to randomly selected participants.

### **Participants**

Al 54 participants were recruited from my own network. In total, I sent out 150 requests by providing people with a link to the survey via WhatsApp, Facebook and email.

### **Results**

#### *Demographics*

Of the 54 participants, 50 were between 18-34 years old (26 were aged 18-25, 24 were age 26-34), the remaining 4 were 35 years old or older. 29 participants were male and 25 were female.

Most of the participants lived in The Netherlands (48), the other 6 lived in Norway (2), a different country in the EU (2), Taiwan (1) or Indonesia (1).

Most of the participants completed a Bachelor's degree (15) or Master's degree (32) in university. The other participants reported a high school degree (2), college degree (4) or a Doctorate/PhD (1).

### Frequency of engagement per activity

The activities of taking care of your body, being optimistic, and contributing to the greater good were engaged in most frequently. On the other hand, avoiding overthinking, learning to forgive, and taking care of your mind were engaged in the least frequent. The frequency of engagement of all 14 activities is shown below in figure 3.

### Number of unique products per activity

The activities that have the most products mentioned are taking care of your body and increasing flow experiences.

The activities that have the least products mentioned are learning to forgive and learning new things. The number of products per activity is shown at the bottom in figure 4.

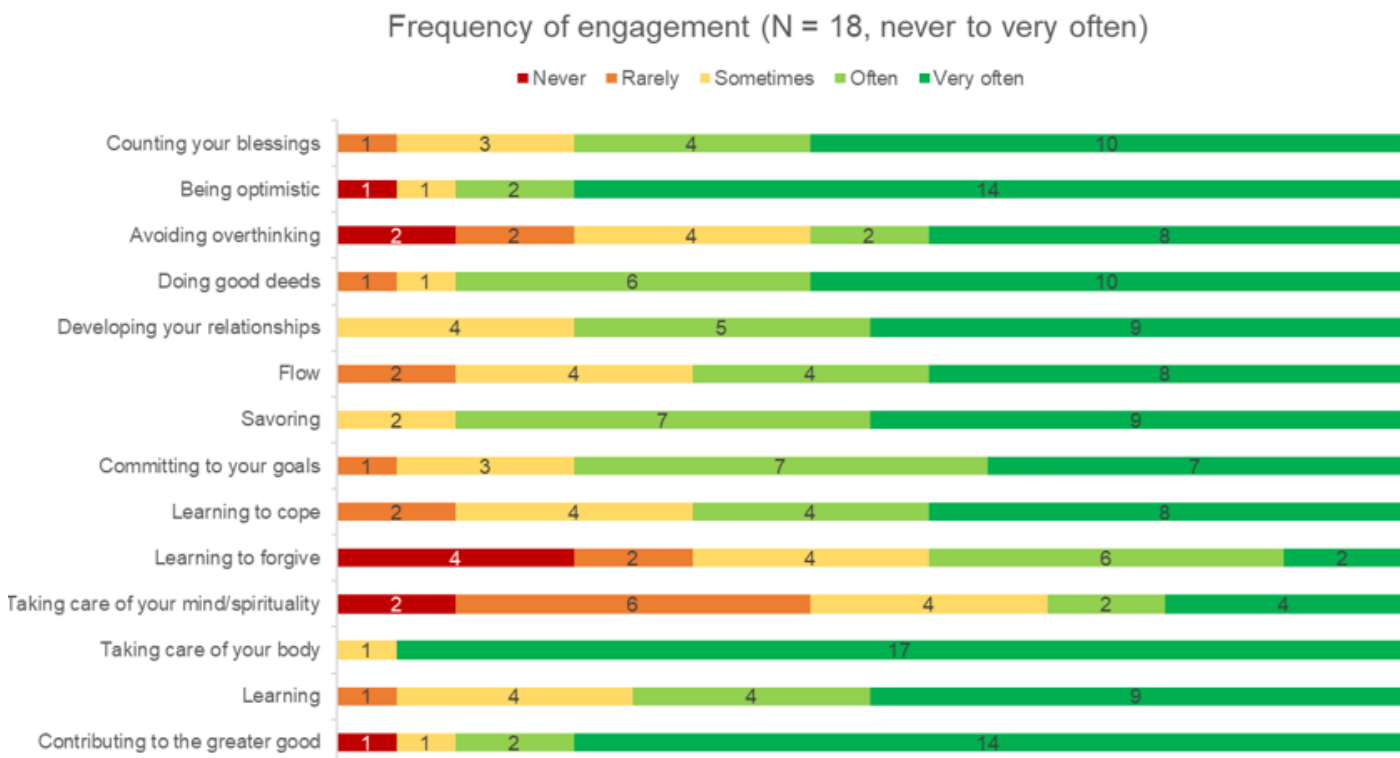


Figure 3: frequency of engagement (N=18) for all activities.

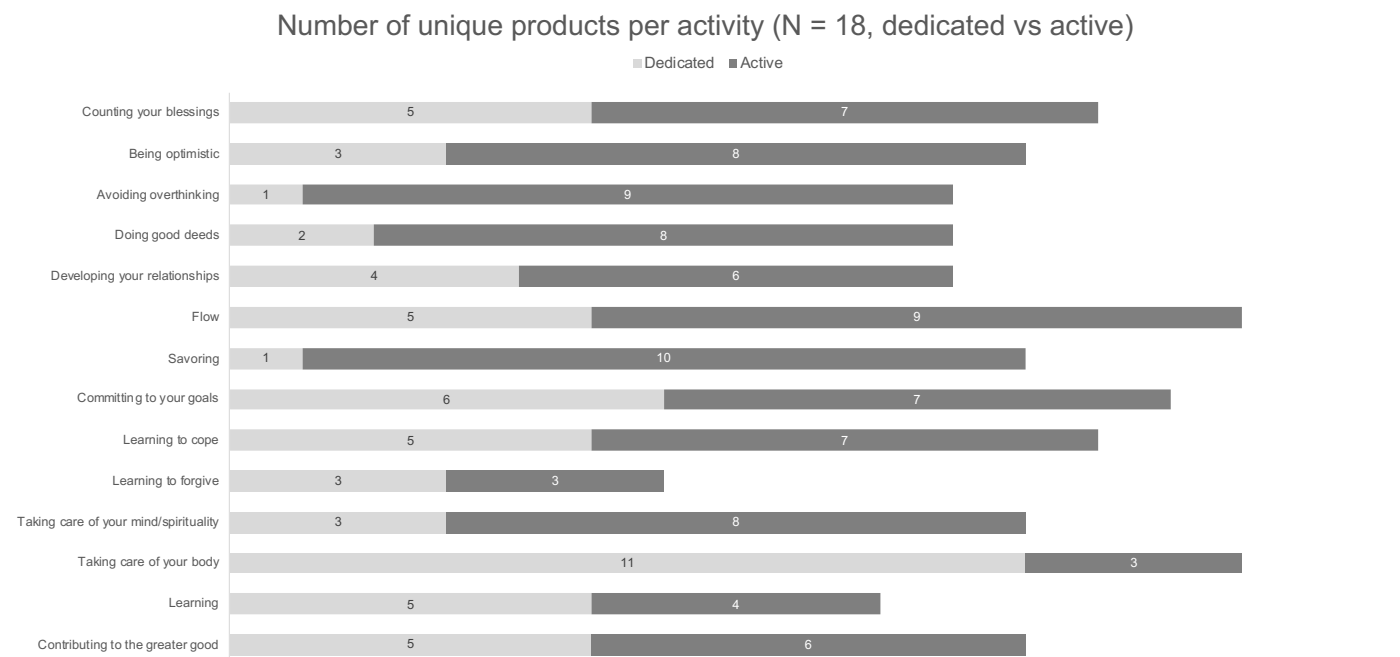


Figure 4: number of unique products (N=18) for all activities.



I also categorized the mentioned products in dedicated and active products. These categories differ in what role the promotion of well-being plays in the use of this product. A dedicated design has the promotion of well-being as a core function, while active products has determinants of well-being being actively stimulated by the design, in addition to its core function (Calvo & Peters, 2014).

Looking at these categories, it can be seen that the activities savoring and avoiding overthinking have only one dedicated product mentioned for them. For savoring these are digital photos, for avoiding overthinking this was a cooperative game.

For learning to forgive, one dedicated product was a forgiveness letter. On this, the participant wrote “Writing about the wrongdoing, the effects and the future can help someone reflect on their willingness to forgive and their needs in this process.”

### **Limitations of the survey**

The structure of the survey will require some people to write about 4 activities, while others are asked to report on 5 activities. The possible consequence that people with 4 activities will be inclined to provide more elaborate descriptions is deemed minimal, especially when taking into account the overall difference in effort and time needed to reflect on 4 or 5 activities.

## 4. Chosen activities

*Following the results of the survey, the activities avoiding overthinking and learning to forgive were chosen to design for.*

*For avoiding overthinking only one dedicated product was mentioned in the survey, and it was one of the least engaged in activity.*

*For forgiveness, the same applies. It had the fewest mentioned products, three active and three dedicated, and people engaged in it fewer times than other activities.*

*Finally, the depth of engagement was deemed low with the products mentioned. For example, for forgiveness one could read passages from the Bible, but the product would not go beyond the offering of text and information.*

### **Avoiding overthinking**

Overthinking is defined in this project as by Lyubomirsky: thinking too much, needlessly, passively, endlessly, and excessively pondering the meanings, causes, and consequences of your character, your feelings, and your problems (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

It differs from structured problem solving because as overthinkers merely think about how unmotivated or sad they are, for example, without taking action to relieve their symptoms (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991).

Overthinking is especially difficult to avoid because the belief exists that it is useful. People (over)analyse past event, hoping to solve problems and avoid certain things in the future (Matthews and Wells, 2000).

It is important to note that for the remainder of this project, I consciously separated *avoiding overthinking* and *social comparison*. The latter is a whole different activity in and of itself, although Lyubomirsky describes both them in one activity.

### **Learning to forgive**

In this project, forgiving is defined as decreasing the desire to avoid the transgressor

and harm or seek revenge toward that person (McCullough, 1998).

These feelings are often accompanied by emotions of anger, disappointment and hostility (Lyubomirsky, 2007). People can desire revenge to restore the moral balance, teach an offender a lesson or to save face.

Forgiving is for many people a challenge as a need to forgive implies that someone apparently does not value you or your worth on some level (M. Noor, personal communication, January 30, 2020).

## **Phase 2**

### **Past context**



**Explanation of the Vision in Design approach & employment of it to analyse existing products**

# 5. Design methodology

*For this project, the Vision in Product Design (ViP) approach will be applied, which has been developed by Paul Hekkert and Matthijs van Dijk (Hekkert & van Dijk, 2011).*

*This method can be used to develop products, services and policies. They have been working on this approach since 1995 (Delft Design Guide, 2011). That time, their main goal was to bring the designer back into the process. They were looking for something that would yield designs that would be more than appropriate and fulfilling of user needs.*

*Before I explain what this approach entails and why it is suited for this project, let us take a leap back in time.*

## Let us talk adaptation

More specifically, 186 years ago. Location: the Galapagos Islands. Over a period of five weeks, Charles Darwin went from island to island. He noted that the creatures that inhabited them were similar but had distinct features in how they seemed to be adapted perfectly for their differing environments. These observations of the wildlife inspired him to develop the Theory of Evolution.

We now understand that these changes in characteristics of creatures developed over a long time. The creature with a more appropriate characteristic would stand a better chance to survive. Appropriate here being, for example, birds with longer and more slender beaks that would allow them to catch critters in the crevices of rocks. In short, the living environment of creatures influenced their evolution and thus their behaviour.

Here we can draw a parallel to design and the ViP approach. Human behaviour is also dependent of the conditions in which we live. If we could uncover the conditions of the future world, we can distill what human behaviour we could expect to see in that world, as van Dijk mentioned in an interview (BNR Nieuwsradio, 2019).

For the activities of learning to forgive and avoiding overthinking, determining the future world around these activities would mean that we could learn more about how people might approach these activities in the future; how people relate to them, what kind of behaviour follows. This is useful for a designer in order to design products that are more future-proof as well as relevant for the people who will use them.

## Why ViP?

The main premise of ViP is surprisingly simple: designing starts with a selection of a set of factors, ideas and observations, that in turn will determine the to-be-designed product (Delft Design Guide, 2011).

While there are other design approaches that require the crafting of a future vision, the way this vision is created differs greatly. In other approaches this future vision is often drawn up in general lines, while ViP requires doing it in greater detail (BNR Nieuwsradio, 2019).

The importance of trying to accurately craft this vision of the future is evident through the other aspects of ViP too. Envisioning a future world allows the designer to envision a desired interaction.

The underlying premise of ViP is that every design -whether a product, service or complete system- is a means to establish a certain behaviour or social interactions with its users. Subsequently, designing starts with the design of this effect: how do we want people to use and experience a product, service or system?

It is in this aspect that ViP differs from many traditional design methods and processes (Roozenburg & Eekels, 1995). Instead of jumping to a solution, asking ourselves what kind of behaviour is desirable allows us to determine the most appropriate design. The shape the design takes is not determined beforehand, but follows what the desired interaction should be.

## Model

The different steps of the ViP method are shown below, in figure 5.

### Deconstruction

The ViP process starts at the left side of the diagram; the deconstruction. The deconstruction is done on three levels: product, interaction and context level (in that order). The deconstruction serves as a preparation to the design process, and is helpful to overcome fixation on existing solutions in the domain.

We start by analysing current designs on a product level; what does the product express and communicate? This is on both a literal level (e.g. affordances) as on a figurative level (e.g. associations it evokes).

Next, we analyse on an interaction level; we picture the product in use and try to determine what kind of interactions the product evokes (as a result of previous findings on the product level).

Then, after having a grasp of the design on both the product as interaction level, we can think of the context the designer had in mind when designing this product. What kind of considerations were taken into account that led to the way this product is?

### Designing

After the deconstruction we move on to the right side of the diagram; the designing. Now, instead of going from product to interaction to context, we work in the opposite order. As said before, to create truly meaningful designs we must start by determining the future context.

#### *Future context*

Exploring this context involves the generation of context factors relevant to the activity. By interviewing experts of the domain we collect factors, “building blocks”, that make up this future world.

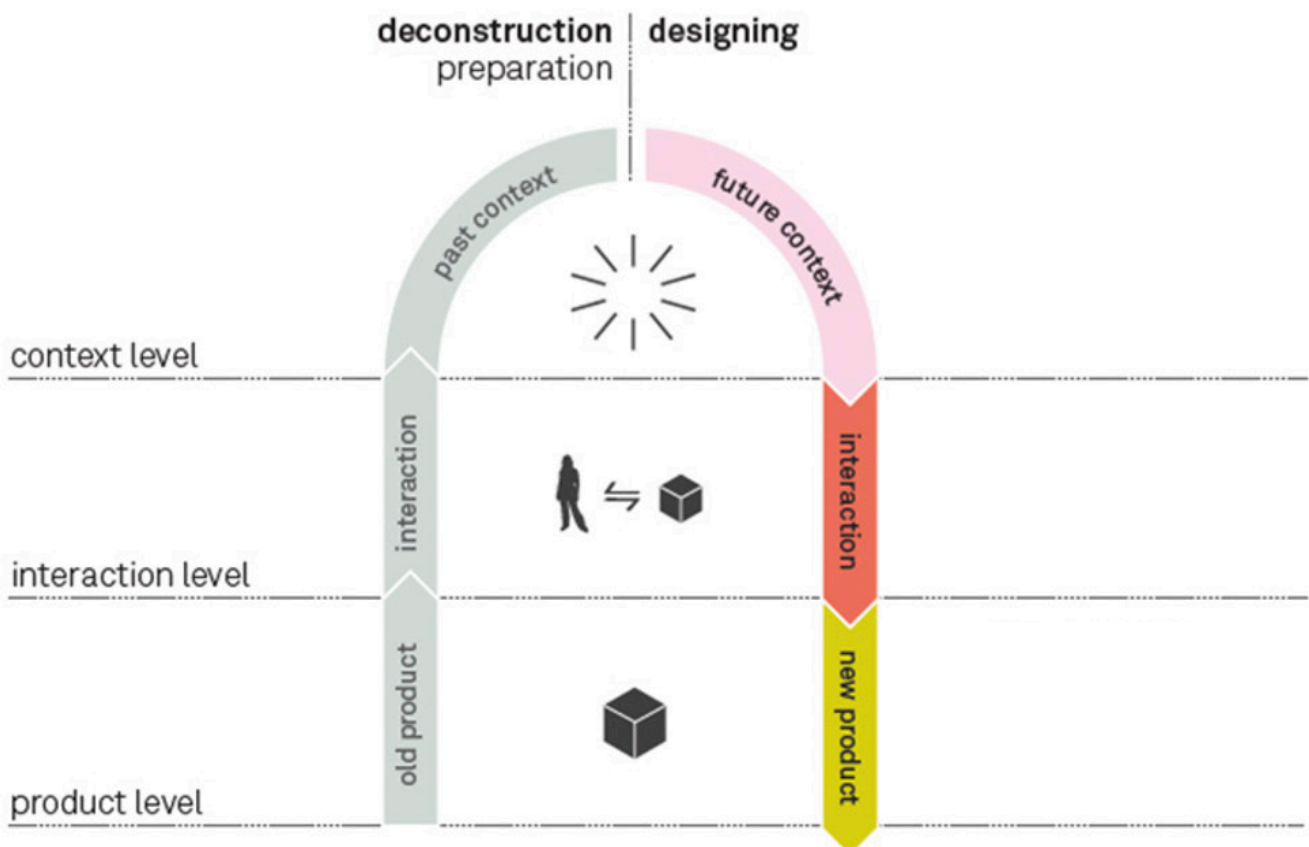


Figure 5: ViP approach visualised (Hekkert & van Dijk, 2011)

Context factors can be, for example, thoughts, considerations, theories and observations. The next step is to structure this context; many factors must be brought into a coherent story that describes this future world, without losing the essence of each individual factor. After this, a statement is made; how do we want to respond to this future context?

### *Interaction*

Now that we have a statement in mind, we can think of what kind of interaction will lead to the desired goal laid out in the statement.

### *Product*

Next, we can define product qualities that elicit the aforementioned interaction. These specific qualities will determine how a user will experience and use the product. We then move on to concept design.

Up until now we have deliberately postponed to jump to a solution. Now, we should have a very clear vision of what we want, all the previous steps have led up to this point. Instead of generating a host of ideas, we can focus on the single (or few) ideas that fit our statement best.

Finally, during design and detailing this vision also steers all design decisions.

The following chapter will describe the first stage of ViP, deconstruction, applied to the chosen activities.



## 6. Deconstruction

*A deconstruction was made for products for both learning to forgive and avoiding overthinking. These deconstructions served as a preparation for the designing phase, as they revealed what product currently exist, how people might interact with them, and what reasoning their designers might have had when creating the products.*

*To find products for both activities, I searched through the Google Play Store for digital products, added products from the previously described survey, and searched the Internet using different key words that describe and relate to the activities. A list of the found products can be found in Appendix 2.*

*14 different products were found for learning to forgive, and 21 for avoiding overthinking. I decided to do conduct a more superficial deconstruction of all these products, instead of a detailed deconstruction of just a few of them. Although this would provide less detailed data on specific products, it would benefit the creation of design strategies more as this would provide a more general overview of existing products.*

### **Deconstruction for forgiveness**

#### *Product level*

On a product level, most of the products consists of text. For example, one of the products mentioned in the survey is the Bible. The app store also contained several apps that provide the user with scriptures and verses from the Bible. Other products found were books regarding psychology or life lessons.

There were two products that stood out from the rest: The Forgiveness Toolbox (found online) and a forgiveness letter (mentioned in the survey). The first is a website describing a set of skills needed to forgive, with accompanying inspiring anecdotes of how people learned to acquire those skills and the challenges they went through. The latter is a letter someone can write to the person they want to forgive.

#### *Interaction level*

Based on most of the products found, in general people using them will be reading text to acquire information. Many of the digital products found in the Google Play Store seem to be digital versions of existing books. The user would be taking on a advice-seeking role, in hopes of being informed and inspired. None of these products seem to interact with the user on a personal level, instead offering stories about forgiveness from others.

The exception here is the forgiveness letter, where the user would take on an active role.

#### *Context level*

Taking a closer look at many of the scriptures and the images that inspiration themed apps offered, they inform the user why one should forgive. The products explain the importance of it, but not how one would go about to forgive.

There are exceptions, such as the Forgive For Good app, which is a digital version of a book on forgiveness and how to forgive, and the Forgiveness Toolbox, whose real life stories might inspire readers to try the same things as described in the stories.

Information or tips on how to forgive are often lacking, instead the focus of the products lies on emphasizing the importance of forgiving. It can therefore be concluded that many designers seemed to have taken a context into account where forgiveness is seen as a virtue that sometimes needs a reminder.

### **Deconstruction for overthinking**

#### *Product level*

A wide variety of products was found. Notable was that the products found in the Google Play Store were never mentioned in the survey.

For example, Spotify, games and YouTube videos were all mentioned in the survey to distract the mind. While products found in



the Google Play Store offered motivational quotes, exercises to perform, and scheduling or tracking functions.

#### *Interaction level*

The interaction with the products mentioned in the survey can be described as distracting, while the Google Play Store products are interacted with by reading, meditating, journaling and tracking behaviour.

#### *Context level*

It seems that active products help people to stop overthinking by offering distractions. On the other hand, designers of the dedicated products seemed to approach overthinking as something that can be avoided by acknowledging it, and then to consciously try to stop it by performing various psychological tasks such as journaling.

### **Conclusion deconstruction**

Existing products for forgiveness seem to be designed for a context in which people generally know how to forgive, but simply needed to be reminded of the reasons as to why to forgive.

For overthinking, designers tend to create products that let the user actively approach their overthinking and reflect on it.

These insights can be used to compare with the creation of future contexts. Doing this can reveal if a past context is incomplete or perhaps (partly) based on outdated values.

## **Phase 3**

### **Future vision**



**Construction of future worldviews,  
design goals & desired interactions**

# 7. Future contexts

I interviewed four experts on forgiveness, and conducted literature research for both forgiveness and overthinking to collect context factors for both activities. The interview transcripts can be found in Appendix 3, the context factors in Appendix 4.

Three clustering sessions were held to create future contexts of both activities. Two sessions were conducted with the help of a PhD student who also studied Design for Interaction and was familiar with ViP. A third session was held with the help of three people without a background in design. However, they were selected due to their analytical abilities, and I deemed them to be skillful in seeing connections between different context factors.

We used walls, printed out cards with the context factors on them, and temporary adhesives to start clustering. As per ViP, we started with one factor, adding one at a time and seeing if they would start to form a cluster (Hekkert & van Dijk, 2011).

There were two types of clusters that we constantly had in the back of our mind (Hekkert & van Dijk, 2011):

1) a common-quality cluster where two or more factors point in the same direction. For example, “overthinkers tend to focus inward” and “when overthinking, we tend to pay attention to only our problematic thoughts”, might be combined into one factor, “when overthinking, it is easy to miss the bigger picture”.

2) an emergent-quality cluster, where a new factor arises which is not represented by individual factors. For example “overthinkers can tend to forget simple tasks such as getting groceries” and “when overthinking, your mood may be affected causing you to be curt with people”, can be combined into the emerging factor “overthinking can strain relationships”.

For both activities, the clustering resulted in three driving forces.

## Driving forces avoiding overthinking

### 1. *the counterintuitive counterproductivity of overthinking*

Overthinking is counterproductive in many ways. We think it will relieve our troubles, but it interferes with our problem-solving skills. We believe it makes us engage in productive self-reflection, but it clouds our insights. And we hope it will make sense of our uncertainties, but it makes us worry more. These things make it extremely difficult to avoid overthinking.

Many people overthink to try and improve their state of mind, but all the research indicates that overthinking leads to analysis paralysis. Overthinking is introspection’s evil twin; not only does it effectively prevent insight, it can masquerade as productive self-reflection.

This is what makes avoiding overthinking so difficult.

We cannot ignore our problems. And maybe that one time when we overthought, it seemed to resolve something. We think if we overthink something else for the umpteenth time, it might work again. And so we continue to play the lottery of overthinking.

With this, all the ingredients to form a habit are there; a trigger, behaviour, and reward – a negative thought pops up (trigger), we start to overthink (behaviour), we feel some control and there is some small, temporary relief (reward).

This makes overthinking an extremely difficult vicious cycle to escape. Dwelling on your shortcomings, mistakes, and problems increases the risk of mental health problems, and as mental health declines, the tendency to overthink increases.

### 2. *poor perspective-takers*

Though we are endlessly dwelling on our problems when overthinking, it’s effectively an avoidance strategy. This is because we do not really deal with the emotions that come with overthinking the causes and meaning

behind negative events.

Overthinkers are therefore less accurate at identifying their emotions. Their minds are so laser-focused on an incident, reaction, or personal weakness that they can miss the larger picture.

In general, overthinkers tend to avoid the people and situations causing them to ruminate, which could be a valid strategy to avoid the hurtful process. However, when applied too much, this can hurt our external self-awareness.

Moreover, when overthinking, we are so busy looking inward that we can neglect to think about how we are showing up to others. Overthinkers generally ignore or avoid feedback. They therefore tend not just to be poor perspective-takers, but also to be more narcissistic and self-absorbed than non-ruminators.

Research also shows that overthinking drives away social support. Combining this with the fact that overthinkers generally ignore feedback, it becomes extremely difficult for them to snap out of their hyper-focus on all the small, negative things.

Because overthinking is largely an inwardly focused phenomenon, overthinkers are facing their negative thoughts on their own. But the perspective of a family member or close friend could be just the thing to help them grasp the bigger picture, and see that things are not as bad as they seem.

### 3. *ideal times to overthink*

These times, there is an abundance of opportunities for social comparison (e.g. Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat). Here, people tend to show the good sides of their life. We're increasingly aware of how others might live, which provides excellent fuel to start overthinking and needlessly comparing oneself to others.

Often, people start overthinking when they

are uncomfortable or do not understand stimuli that are subject to multiple interpretations.

These could be triggered by a small incident that bothers you, a reaction of someone of which you doubt its meaning, or a personal weakness that you obsess over.

People not only vary in how (well) they deal with these stimuli, but also in their ability to feel comfortable with them. The latter is a trait known as intolerance of ambiguity.

It's increasingly important in today's society to possess this trait. Most people are very concerned about their social status, and in these times, we can do so in an ever-widening context of social knowledge.

The Internet makes it possible to marvel at –and contemplate– the splendor of others. Think of apps such as Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook, and their sharing culture which focuses on showing all the perfect things in one's life. When obsessing over these things, the odds are against your feeling fully satisfied with your place in the world.

We share our preoccupation of social status with our primate cousins. But we can truly brood about our failures, projecting them into a recollected past and an imagined future. The baboon can seize the alpha male by the throat and try his luck. But seeing of someone halfway across the world, overthinkers tend to compare themselves to them, with negative consequences. Millions of years of hominid evolution have not prepared us for this.

## Driving forces forgiveness

### 1. *The (mostly) universality of forgiveness*

Forgiveness; an age-old concept with many principles that, experts think, have remained unchanged. The notion that forgiving provides a sense of freedom -it is “good” to do- has always been accepted, mostly. However, why, for whom one should forgive, and how forgiveness is generally perceived has changed in recent decades.

Experts mostly agree on what forgiveness entails and what it means. Forgiveness means that you forgo your right and longing for revenge, instead opting to respond in more constructive ways. This does not mean that the wrongdoer can walk away scot-free; forgiveness never subverts justice. However, how you choose to respond to him/her can change massively after one wants, and succeeds, to forgive.

This does not necessarily mean one has to keep enduring harmful acts if the other person is unwilling or unable to change. Forgiveness entails restoring or relinquishing the relationship. There is such a thing as being too forgiving; the dark side of forgiveness. A study that followed newly wedded couples across four years showed this. Couples who were exposed to abuse, but who kept forgiving their partners, saw no change in their relationship. For the couples who did not forgive those instances, the line of abuse went down and decreased.

Experts therefore generally agree on the notion do not forgive too soon. A healthy way of forgiving involves a conscious choice and process in which you decide to renew or relinquish the relationship.

This concept and notion of forgiveness, especially the reason to forgive has changed in recent times. Forgiveness used to be descriptive and a virtue; forgive and forget. You “should” forgive because “it’s the right thing to do”. This was especially true if you had a religious identity.

Nowadays we still say you have to forgive, but naturally you do not forget everything immediately. It’s now accepted to experience pain. This has to do with society. We have more time to spend on ourselves, on things as self care and mindfulness. These things did not used to exist. The depth of forgiving has changed and the experience of forgiving is becoming more dimensional.

While forgiving is universally still seen as a good thing to do, the reason to forgive does differ slightly per culture. In Western culture, forgiving is more focused on the individual. Being forgiven means that there’s nothing more to be required of you. In cultures that are more communal, forgiveness means that you are now free to work together for a better community.

However, there seems to be no significant difference per culture in whose choice it is to forgive, as described earlier. “Forgive and forget” is not as dominant as it used to be; the choice is now more up to the individual.

### 2. *Forgiveness; a process, not an event*

Forgiveness is a loaded concept. For many people, it brings to mind religion and sounds purely reserved for the severest of offenses. However, experts agree that forgiveness is generally misperceived and that there are daily opportunities to practice it.

Many people see forgiveness as an event or as a singular, one-time activity. Some people might have seen movies where a perpetrator offers his apology, displays remorse, and returns power to the victim. The victim will have the power to offer or withdraw their forgiveness, therefore feeling empowered and rehumanized. What follows is a cathartic event: the words “I forgive you” are spoken and everything is well. This is Hollywood forgiveness.

We have a very narrow and traditional social script when we talk about forgiveness. The assumptions that we make are very linear, meaning that we always have in mind a

nasty perpetrator and an innocent victim. This only applies only to a very narrow realm of how forgiveness is experienced, offered, restored and lived.

Experts regard forgiveness as a practice or habit; a process. A process which can be messy – it oftentimes is.

This process can take months, years, sometimes a life time. Part of this process is telling your story and expressing your feelings. This is accompanied with acknowledging that what happened was not right; recognising that there has been injustice. All interviewed experts said they thought this was the first step; telling the story.

### 3. *The intertwinement of forgiving and identity*

Feeling the need to forgive and your sense of identity are heavily connected. On a deeper level, in order to forgive one must realign or develop one's identity.

An offense that requires forgiveness implies that your sense of understanding of who you are has been threatened, harmed or misaligned. On a deeper, more latent level, a harmful act is contradictory to the kind of identity that you have developed. This makes forgiving very personal and difficult.

A harmful act means irreversible damage materially. Psychologically, it means that the loved ones that you relate to, you connected with, no longer exist. And in that sense it's a loss; it's a loss of control and a loss of agency.

The same applies to the need to forgive yourself. This implies that you have violated your own values. You know it and you know it better than anyone else. Multiple experts believe that this makes self-forgiveness even harder than forgiving others.

Therefore, forgiving requires a realignment of your identity, or on a higher level even a development of your identity. This requires

some form of profound adaptation skills: accepting reality, but not letting the event define who you are and who you will be in the future either.

The “most successful forgivers” demonstrate this best. Many of them have a different sense of who they are now. That's partly as a result of the trauma that they've experienced, but it's also about meaning-making.

The most successful forgivers realized that they wanted to go beyond their own unfortunate situation and help other victims, and potential perpetrators, in making sure this never happened again. For example, a Sikh invited his attackers to ask him questions about Sikh-hood. And rape survivors formed a charity to work with young women, to emancipate them, empower them, inform them, educate them. These are extreme examples of profound character development.

This does not mean everyone that feels a need to forgive has to go the same lengths, but it does imply that some form and degree of identity realignment or development is needed to truly forgive.



## 8. Statements

*Having crafted the future contexts, it becomes easier to determine what would be valuable and meaningful to design for the people living in those context. The statement, or design goal, should capture this.*

### **Statement avoiding overthinking**

The statement for this activity is as follows:

I want people to stop overthinking...  
*by helping them enter an appropriate state of being engaged in something distractive...*  
so they can return to their thoughts with a rested and more creative mind.

As described in research, distraction could be an effective strategy to stop overthinking (Lyubomirsky, 2007). However, in what way to distract is currently not known for designers.

By appropriate I mean:

- 1) temporary, so the overthinker knows he can return to his original problem if desired. As described by Kahnemann, the prefrontal cortex is getting strained when overthinking (Kahnemann, 2011). Temporarily engaging the other part of the brain, which is more intuitive and automatic, can provide the prefrontal cortex with ease. As a result, the mind is more rested and creative to then deal with the original problem if desired. Either the problem is more likely to be fixed, or the person realises more easily that it was not worth overthinking about in the first place.
- 2) engaging to a sufficient degree, so the overthinker cannot overthink due to the engrossing enough distraction.

### **Statement forgiveness**

For forgiveness, the statement is formulated as such:

In order for people to learn to forgive,  
*I want to help them reframe their appraisal,*  
by facilitating a judgment check.

The word appraisal here describes the evaluation we make of an event, from which

emotions are extracted. For example, suppose someone forgets to call you back. You might appraise this action as negative; it goes against your desires of being called back, and being respected enough to not be forgotten. The emotions extracted from this appraisal might be anger and/or disappointment.

Now suppose you take a critical look at your appraisal and ask why it is the way it is. You might realise you appraise the action of not calling you back as severely negative, because you assumed the other person did not make an effort. Upon realising this, you begin to wonder if this assumption is justified. You have no way of knowing this, because you did not speak to the person yet. You decide to call him and inquire further. Immediately the call is answered and the other person just as fast blurts out that the call slipped his mind as he had to unexpectedly take care of his sick child. Is it now easier to forgive him? This process is what the judgment check implies.

This is a highly idealised example, and a more realistic situation might involve a friend who “just” forgot despite having a normal day. However, even in that case, a judgment check could be helpful. It might make you aware of other considerations that promote forgiveness, such as remembering the time that you forgot to return a call. Or the judgment check might make you aware that the whole situation is probably not worth being angry about.



Looking at the future context of forgiveness, how people might approach the activity in the future can be visualised as in figure 6 (bottom).

The vertical axis refers to why people would choose to forgive; because they want to live in a more forgiving world, or for their own well-being. As a designer, I would deem any point on this axis as justified en not necessary to change.

The horizontal axis depicts if people approach their process of forgiveness passively or actively. Here I would want to make a change as a designer. Being on either end of the horizontal axis would contribute negatively to the process of forgiveness.

Being too passively and not involved with forgiveness at all, one might run the risk of thinking one has forgiven, while negative feelings are actually repressed. On the other hand, if one were too approach the process of forgiveness too eager, one might not be ready for this. As I extracted from expert interviews, wanting to jump on this process can be detrimental as emotions are stronger when they are fresh.

Both of the statements serve as starting points for developing the strategies, together with the Interaction Vision, which will be described in the next chapter.

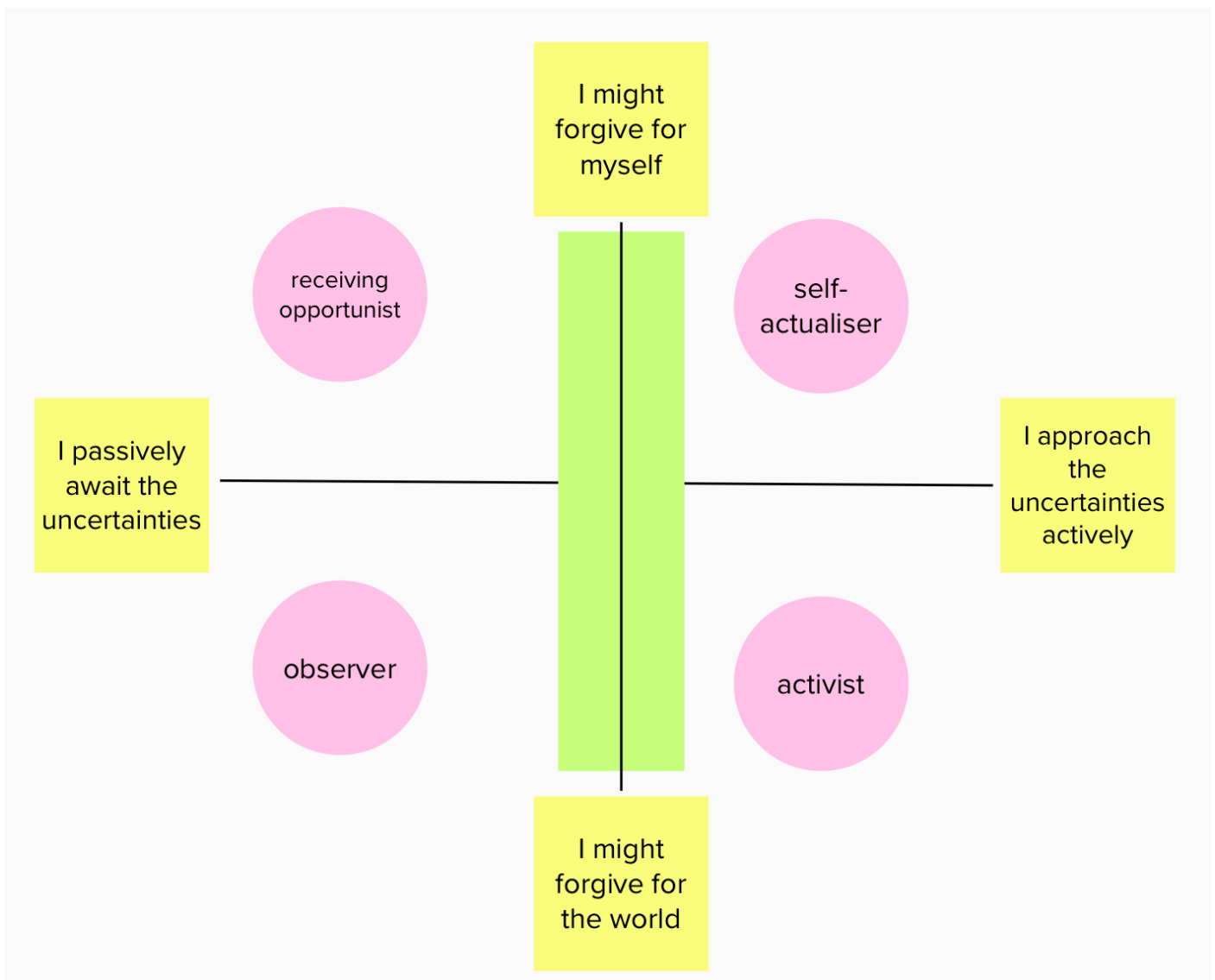


Figure 6: how people might approach forgiveness in the future context

# 9. Desired Interaction

*The previous chapter explained two future contexts; one for forgiveness and one for overthinking. These contexts both describe a future worldview around each of the activities; how will people approach these concepts in the near future? The chapter then concluded with two statements: a design goal for each activity. First envisioning the future worldviews helped me to determine what appropriate and meaningful statements would be. Now, I need to determine how to fulfil these statements. I will use an interaction vision (Hekkert & van Dijk, 2011) for this, which will be explained in this chapter.*

## What is an interaction vision and its relevance?

An interaction vision (IV) explains how the relationship between the user and the product should be, in order to realise the statement (Hekkert & van Dijk, 2011). As such, the IV acts as a bridge between the context and the product. A successful IV will help establish a desired human-product relationship, such that it simultaneously fits the future context, and addresses human concerns, needs and desires (Hekkert & van Dijk, 2011). An IV can take on many shapes, analogies, images, songs and so on.

## The power of IVs

IVs are impactful in concepts and emotions, especially when these concepts are new and abstract (Verganti, 2016). Luckily, we humans often tend to think using metaphors. For example, when we feel down we can use the metaphor of space to express sadness (Verganti, 2016). A familiar example can be found in comic books where characters are drawn with, literally, sagging shoulders.

A useful IV can make more abstract concepts, such as forgiveness, more tangible. A sign of a good IV is when it keeps things immediate and intuitive.

Thinking of any IV also helps to find new and better ones. Due to the feelings they express, the designers can determine if an IV is actually the appropriate one: does it “feel”

right? If not, what is “off” (Verganti, 2016)?

## Interaction vision for forgiveness

Recall the statement: In order for people to learn to forgive,  
*I want to help them reframe their appraisal, by facilitating a judgment check.*

The chosen interaction vision is: *untangling the necklace you value (figure 7).*



*Figure 7: IV for forgiveness; untangling a necklace*

Reframing your appraisal, and thus learning to forgive, should feel like carefully untangling a necklace that is meaningful to you.

In this IV, the necklace and its knots and twists can be seen as your emotions. The literal untangling represents figuring out where those emotions stem from, and trying to accept them and learn from them. In order for to let negative feelings go, you first have to “unfuzzy” them.

Doing so is a precarious task; carefully untangling one part might mix up a different part, but slowly but surely things get clearer overall. Being too passive will get you nowhere. However, being too eager to untangle something so delicate might be detrimental too.

Figuring out what makes your appraisal the way it is, takes, like untangling a necklace, some reflection and calmness. The IV captures this.

## Interaction vision for overthinking

The statement was:

I want people to stop overthinking...  
*by helping them enter an appropriate state of being engaged in something distractive...*  
so they can return to their thoughts with a rested and more creative mind.

To find an appropriate IV, it is useful to look at the theory behind flow state. A flow state, also one of the 14 activities, is described as “a state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience is so enjoyable that people will continue to do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it” (Cziksentsmihalyi, 2008).

It is virtually impossible to overthink when one is in a flow state, as the activity itself is so engrossing there is no room for other thoughts. However, it is also a challenge to achieve this state (Cziksentsmihalyi, 2008). It is therefore useful to look at determinants that were found to induce a flow state, and try to incorporate as many as possible in the IV for avoiding overthinking.

The following determinants for are conducive for activities to potentially allow a flow state (Cziksentsmihalyi, 2008):

- 1) Complete concentration on the activity
- 2) Clarity of goals and reward in mind and immediate feedback
- 3) Feeling of control/agency over the situation or activity
- 4) Transformation of time (speeding up/slowing down of time)
- 5) Experience is deemed as intrinsically rewarding
- 6) The person experiences effortless and ease
- 7) There is a balance between challenge and skills
- 8) Actions and awareness are merged, losing self-conscious overthinking

Looking at those eight determinants, I deemed the IV of playing a game of Tetris

inspiring, below in figure 8.

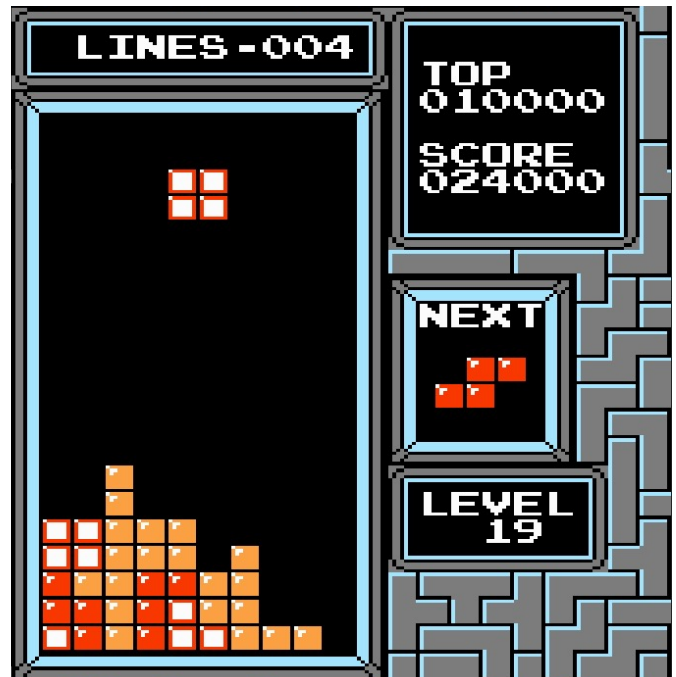


Figure 8: IV for overthinking; playing tetris

This deceptively simple game matches many of the determinants:

- 1) One must concentrate on each current piece and the next piece at all times
- 2) The rules are very clear, and the reward of clearing lines is immediate
- 3) Save for the randomness of the pieces, the user has total control and freedom to place to pieces as he sees fit
- 4) Chasing a high-score under pressure, and being highly concentrated often leads to a loss of time
- 5) Playing Tetris can be intrinsically rewarding, one could play it to set a personal best or just to see how many lines one could clear this time. However, Tetris might not be intrinsically rewarding to everyone, depending on personal preferences and affinity with games, for examples.
- 6, 7) The user can choose a difficulty level and thus balance skill and challenge optimally
- 8) Each action requires awareness to make the right move, thus making it difficult to think of something else

These IVs, and statements, were used to develop design strategies for both activities.

# **Phase 4**

## **Designing**



**Development of  
design strategies & concepts**

# 10. Design Strategies

This chapter explains design strategies I devised. These strategies can be used by designers to design for both activities.

## Process

The statements and IVs were helpful in developing parts of the design strategies and concepts that answered (part of) the statement. Through an iterative process, the strategies were expanded and revised.

For example, from the IV several ideas for products arose. I could then inspect these ideas and see what elements I found useful in answering the statement and which did so in a lesser degree. I translated the useful elements into parts of the design strategy, while the elements that did not work well to answer the statement were used to change the phrasing and structure of design strategies. This process could be repeated to tweak the strategies further.

I also gained insights from interviews I conducted with people who had experience with either forgiveness, avoiding overthinking or both activities. These interviews contributed to my understanding of both activities, and gave me ideas on how designers could design for these people. The insights from these interviews can be found in Appendix 5.

Finally, I also employed introspection (Xue & Desmet, 2019) to think of parts of the strategies. Basically, after reading and researching extensively on both activities and gaining a feel for them, I tried to look inwards and take my own relevant emotions, sensations, memories, thoughts, or imaginations as data for analysis (Wallendorf & Brucks, 1993). As no other researcher is involved, this runs the risk of incorporating biases. To combat this, I evaluated the design strategies by interviewing design academics and a design practitioner who served as evaluators.

## Design for Forgiveness strategy

This strategy can be visualised in the following model, figure 9. The following explanation was also given to the evaluators.

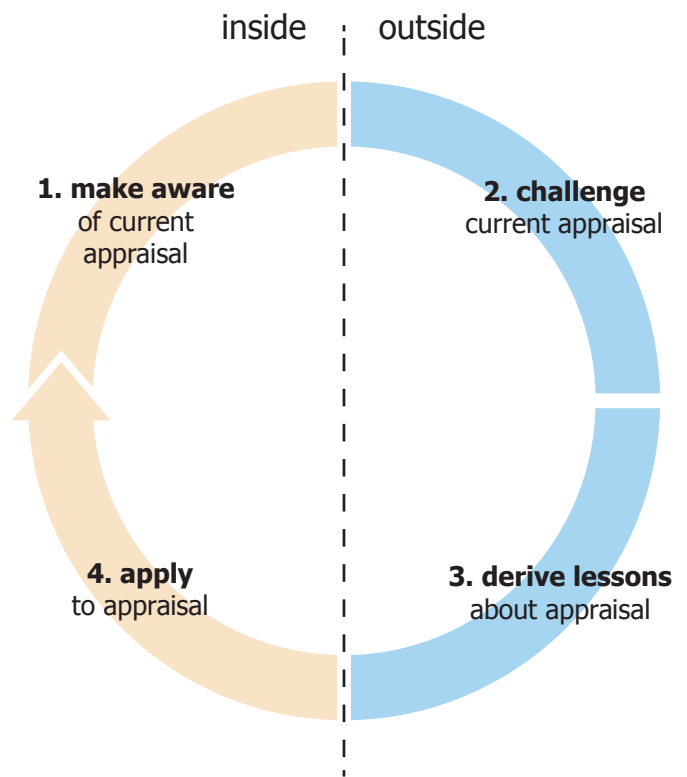


Figure 9: model of Design for Forgiveness strategy

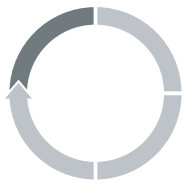
The strategy helps designers to evoke an “appraisal check”: it enables people to critically assess their judgment of a certain event.

When done successfully, people realise their negative view of an action is either unnecessary, unwarranted, doing more harm than good, or can be reframed in something positive.

Any of these outcomes help people to let go of negative feelings toward someone, deepening their understanding of forgiveness.

The next pages explain the model in more detail as it would be explained to designers, and provide an example. From here onwards, the Design for Forgiveness strategy shall be referred to as the DfF strategy.

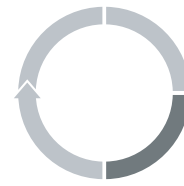
1. make aware of current appraisal



Map the person's (daily) behaviour and identify where the product could intervene to make them aware of their current appraisal.

E.g. shortly after forming of the current appraisal.

3. derive lessons about appraisal



Extract and make newly derived knowledge on the current appraisal explicit.

E.g. by showing how one's appraisal differs from others in similar situations.

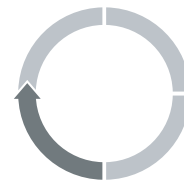
2. challenge current appraisal



Push the person "outside" their current appraisal and challenge it by expanding their focus.

For this, you can use six "challenge types", shown below in figure 10.

4. apply to appraisal



Enable the person to return "inside" their current appraisal and now change or reframe it.

If applicable, the strategy can be repeated with the new appraisal.

type	the confidant	the spectator	the empathiser	the lookout	the historian	the futurist
aim	a third party helps you to forgive	you recognise yourself in a different situation	you gain understanding about the wrongdoer	you learn to see the bigger picture	you look back at the evolution of your appraisal	you want to help others and prevent similar situations
why	you trust him/her to see things clearer at the moment	you can assess things more clearly as a spectator	you learn the complexities of the situation	you realise the (long-term) effects of a certain behaviour	you see that your judgment can change, however little, which gives hope for the future	you reframe your motivation to forgive: to help others with whom you sympathise

Figure 10: challenge types for step 2 of the DfFS

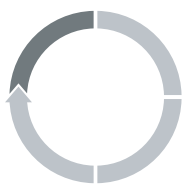
An example is provided on the following page.



## Example

A highschool approached me to design for their students, aged 13-17. The combination of youngsters in their puberty and the stress of upcoming exams brings about many tensions in the classrooms between the students. There are thus opportunities for forgiveness that might improve student-student interactions.

### 1. make aware of current appraisal



*Insight* During school, the student constantly tests their peers, explores boundaries and is occupied with schoolwork.

*Idea* A more appropriate moment of intervention might be at home where the student can relax and introspect more.

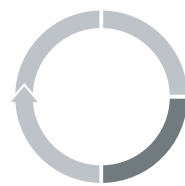
### 2. challenge current appraisal



*Insight* Youngsters, who are still figuring things out, are known to respond negatively to a direct confrontation about their appraisal. Thus, the spectator might be an appropriate challenge type here.

*Idea* “Netflix experience”; an add-on for the streaming service where people can select movies based on the experiences they portray/convey.

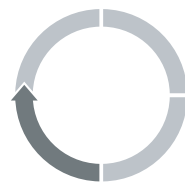
### 3. derive lessons about appraisal



*Insight* After watching a movie that deals with recognisable themes, e.g. bullying or peer pressure, the student begins to reflect on these themes.

*Idea* At the end of the movie, Netflix facilitates sharing opinions about the portrayed events and intentions of the characters. The student gets the option to use the Netflix app to, anonymously, share their thoughts on pre-written questions.

### 4. apply to appraisal



*Insight* Initial reflection of the student might inform their appraisal, but reading other opinions would deepen their understanding even more.

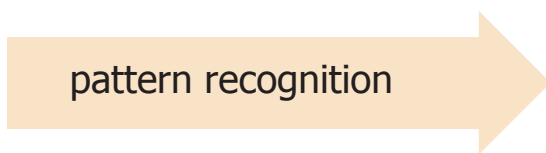
*Idea* The next time the student opens the app, thoughts of others on the movie, characters and themes are shown.



### Design for Avoiding Overthinking strategy

The Design for Avoiding Overthinking strategy is visualised in the model below, figure 11. The same explanation here was also given to the evaluators. From here onwards, the Design for Avoiding Overthinking strategy will be referred to as the DfAO strategy.

#### 1. make aware



#### 2. enter temporary distractive state

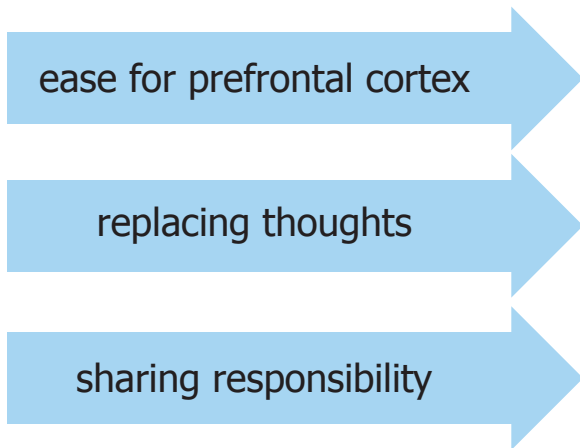


Figure 11: avoiding overthinking strategy

The strategy helps designers to enable people to enter a temporary distractive state.

This state will make it (near) impossible to overthink.

Afterwards, people can return to their original thoughts with a rested and more creative mind to solve them, or realise that they are not worth overthinking about.

This page explains the model in more detail, the following page provides an examples.

Temporarily stop the overthinking by using one of the three **methods** below or a combination.

#### pattern recognition

Enable the person to map their overthinking pattern. As overthinking often happens unconsciously, triggers or reminders can be useful here to encourage active reflection on their overthinking.

#### ease for prefrontal cortex

During overthinking, the prefrontal cortex is overwhelmed. Give it a break by facilitating intuitive and creative activities.

#### replacing thoughts

The best way to stop thinking about a pink elephant, is to start thinking about a green caterpillar. Make it impossible to overthink by enabling the person to intensely focus on something else.

#### sharing responsibility

Overthinkers are often focused inward and lose perspective. A third party can see the bigger picture and help to recognise overthinking and distract.

## Example ideas

Temporarily stop the overthinking by using one of the three **methods** below or a combination.

### pattern recognition

- one-week screensaver that triggers to reflect on overthinking a few times a day
- one button app you tap when you find yourself overthinking. Time and place are registered for a weekly overview.

### ease for prefrontal cortex

- escape room at home with puzzles that keep you moving from room to room
- YouTube playlist with exercises you can immediately begin (no equipment, apartment friendly)

### replacing thoughts

- (in public transport) app that asks you to look for certain objects around you and tap button when found
- add-on for Google Maps that recommends thought provoking activities in your proximity

### sharing responsibility

- Dutch government sets up the Ministry Against Overthinking for the well-being of its citizens. Less affluent citizens that are more prone to overthinking can acquire the Contemplation Card. This provides discounts for distracting activities such as museums and (movie) theaters.

# **Phase 5**

## **Evaluations**



**Evaluation of design strategies & concepts  
and recommendations**

# 11.1. Evaluation of strategies

*I evaluated both strategies, where the main goal was to assess their clearness for designers and how well they inspire them to design for both activities.*

## Methodology

I provided both of the strategies to three PhD candidates of the faculty of Industrial Design Engineering and one designer working at a design agency. This combination of evaluators was chosen to ensure a combination of both academic as practitioners insight. After they read through the strategies, I conducted interviews with them to gather their assessment, insights and recommendations.

All three PhD candidates had studied Design for Interaction, and were thus familiar with interaction based design approaches.

Maarten Heijltjes of design agency Waarmakers was the fourth evaluator. Waarmakers' portfolio consist of, among others, social and experience design projects.

## Interviews

After the strategies were read, I conducted semi-structured interviews that kept the conversation flowing, allowing the evaluator to express his or her thoughts freely without leading questions.

First, the evaluators were asked for their initial impressions. This gave them the opportunity to express any thoughts they had without being inhibited by specific questions.

These specific questions were asked after their initial impressions. These questions were formed in reference to research of Wiese, Pohlmeier & Hekkert (Wiese et al., 2020), where they list four elements as to what constitutes a strategy.

In their view, a strategy consists of at least these four parts. Firstly, a strategy consists of a positive activity to foster. This is inherent in the strategies I developed, as they are specific strategies for learning to forgive and

avoiding overthinking.

The next three parts that a strategy should consist of are

(A) which driver of behavior to influence, that is; motivation, capability or opportunity.

(B) which (combination of) mechanism(s) to apply, for example providing rewards or feedback.

(C) how to implement these mechanisms, for example, receives a "like" on a social media post (rewards) or indicate progress with a progress bar (feedback).

I also asked the evaluators if the strategy (D) advanced their understanding of forgiveness and overthinking.

(E) helped to evaluate designs that came forth out of the strategy.

Parts A-E will be referenced in the results of the evaluation of the strategies, described on the next pages.

## 11.2. Results of evaluation of strategies

*In general, the evaluator responded positively to both strategies.*

*They found both strategies to be sufficiently clear and understandable, and were able to relate to them. The balance between abstractness and specificity was appreciated: the evaluators expected that the strategies would allow designers enough freedom and creativity, while the explanation and examples brought enough guidance to put the strategy into practice. The strategies were mostly found to be inspiring regarding targeting drivers of behaviour and finding mechanisms. Evaluators indicated that both strategies advanced their understanding of the activity, although opinions differed on to what degree this was achieved.*

*On the other hand, the term appraisal was not immediately clear in the DfF strategy, and the some evaluators found the DfOA strategy too concise. Neither of the strategies gave explicit guidance on how to implement mechanisms, or provided explicit instructions to evaluate designs. The latter was due to the absence of testable and measurable elements.*

*These evaluations led to recommendations to improve the strategies, which will be described in the next chapter.*

### **Clearness of strategies**

Opinions of the evaluators varied evenly on which strategy they found clearer. Two evaluators expressed no difference in the degree in which they could relate to either strategy. The models seemed to be at the same level of detail to them.

However, one evaluator indicated that the DfF strategy was clearer, and the DfAO strategy was too concise. The three methods of stopping overthinking (e.g., ease for the prefrontal cortex) were found to be similar of each other, although he could also see the nuances between them. He found it easier to apply the DfF strategy in his work. There were more different pathways to take, and

the challenge types were found to be very strong. He felt he could go through what the user would go through, which felt like a strategy in and of itself. Although using the different pathways was still difficult, it was more manageable than the DfAO strategy due to the tools provided in the DfF strategy.

A different evaluator found the DfAO strategy clearer, as the methods, “replacing thoughts” for example, seemed clearer than the more abstract challenge types of the DfF strategy. The tools were deemed more applicable in practice and the different steps of the model clearer. The DfF strategy was found to be more open for what you would be designing. The three methods of stopping overthinking were found to be clear, while at the same time not to be too defined to restrict designers. With the DfF strategy it was deemed that the six challenge types provided enough creative space for designers.

Both evaluators noted that their preference for strategies might be a result of their personal experiences with both of the activities.

### **Evaluation of forgiveness strategy**

#### **General impressions**

One evaluator mentioned that the model of the DfF strategy would also be helpful in designing for other kinds of behaviours than forgiving. The merit behind the different steps of becoming aware, challenging, deriving lessons, and applying them was seen. The strategy was found to have the right level of abstraction to also be applied in other situations where appraisal plays a role.

The visual of the model was difficult to understand at first sight. However, the explanation and examples that followed made it clear.

Three evaluators mentioned they needed more explanation and examples on what is meant by appraisal. In the school example, it was unclear what the appraisal of the students was. Overall, the example was deemed



clear enough, and participants liked the Netflix idea. After the example, participants had a general grasp of the appraisal concept.

One evaluator found the names of the challenge types to be misleading. At first, it seemed like the user would take on the role of, for example, the spectator. It was not clear that the name referred to the challenge type itself. While it can be possible that the user takes on the role of the spectator when using the product, this is not always the case with other challenge types. For example, the confidant refers to a trusted third party that helps the user to forgive, and not to the user himself.

The same evaluator was the only one to indicate that the terms “outside” and “inside” were difficult to comprehend at first sight. However, when the model was explained in detail, the terms and their meaning were clear.

None of the participants mentioned they did not understand the circularity of the model.

### **Abstractness of strategies**

The strategy was found to strike an appropriate balance between abstractness and concreteness. It was abstract enough to provide designers with enough freedom and creativity, while the examples brought enough guidance to put the strategy into practice.

### **(A) Did the strategy show which driver of behavior to influence?**

In general, the evaluators found it quite clear which driver of behavior to influence.

For example, one evaluator indicated they could see how you could use this strategy to determine an appropriate motivation to design for to learn to forgive. A different evaluator indicated that the six challenge types helped to critically think about different opportunities and capabilities.

### **(B) Did the strategy inspire to think of mechanisms to apply?**

The evaluators found that the strategy triggered them to think about what kind of mechanisms could be applied to achieve a desired effect. Although exact mechanisms were not mentioned, they indicated that the challenge types were inspiring. The challenge types sparked originality and creativity, but could be described in more detail to spark this even more.

Evaluators indicated that the exact mechanisms to be used were dependent on the context. One evaluator mentioned that he could imagine that the challenge type of confidant could be difficult to apply in the school example, which triggered him to assess other challenge types and think of mechanisms. The examples were also found useful to think of different scenarios and imagine what kind of mechanisms designers could apply there.

Especially step 2 (challenging appraisal) and 3 (deriving lessons) were deemed as useful steps where one could come up with different mechanisms to apply. However, steps 1 (make aware of appraisal) and 4 (apply lessons) seemed to be abstract and not inspiring enough to think of mechanisms.

One evaluator mentioned it was quite challenging to think of mechanisms, due to the absence of a specific context and brief. However, the challenge types triggered him to think of possible situations to design for.

### **(C) Did the strategy show how to implement these mechanisms?**

Evaluators found that the strategy did not explicitly show how to implement mechanisms. However, it did inspire them to think of ways of implementation themselves. For example, one evaluator mentioned the strategy would provide him with a strong enough vision, that he felt he could more easily think of how to implement a certain mechanism.

#### **(D) Did the strategy advance your understanding of forgiveness?**

Two evaluators indicated that their understanding of forgiveness was greatly expanded by reading the strategy. They found that the strategy unpacked the abstract concept of forgiveness by showing different paths to design for it.

One evaluator noted that the strategy helped her to expand her understanding beyond her own experiences with forgiveness. She used a metaphor where one was moving from one point to another through a field of plants. The strategy paved the way for the designer, and got rid of overgrown plants.

The other evaluator found the strategy to be well structured and providing a solid, praktisch beeld. The strategy was seen reliable as the evaluator felt it was based on insights derived from psychological research that were samengevoegd in this strategy.

A different evaluator indicated that the strategy provided him with steps to take in order to design for forgiveness. However, he was doubting if gained more extensive understanding regarding forgiveness from the strategy, although the six challenge types told him more about how to design forgiveness. After reading the strategy, this evaluator gained the insight that forgiveness cannot be opgelegd, but that it should come about more organically.

The final evaluator found the model quite “clean”: he felt the concept of forgiveness was reduced to a “cold” model. However, the names of the challenge types worked well for him and gave more context to the concept of forgiveness.

#### **(E) Did the strategy helped to evaluate designs that came forth out of the strategy?**

One evaluator noted that the four steps in the strategy help to critically evaluate the potential of the design, as the steps guide the designer through different stages of reframing an appraisal.

The same evaluator also noted that it would still be challenging to measure the impact of the design. This was because asking a user about his or her appraisal would likely not amount to valuable insights, as the term appraisal is technical. It would be the task of the designer to translate this into layman terms, which the strategy currently not accounts for.

A different evaluator indicated that it was clear when the strategy has been successful -when the appraisal has been reframed or changed-, but how one would determine this is unclear.

Another evaluator found that the strategy currently does not help in evaluating possible designs. He made this clear by drawing a comparison to an interaction vision (Hekkert & van Dijk, 2007). An interaction vision helps a designer not only by providing guidance on how to come up with a design, but also helps to evaluate the design as the interaction describes the desired effect. The current forgiveness strategy was deemed to guide a designer on coming up with designs, but lacks in options to evaluate them.

The final evaluator also mentioned interaction visions. He deemed the six challenge types useful as possible interaction visions. He found them valuable to refer to when evaluating a design. If the design evoked the same feeling as described in the spectator, he would deem the design as successful in that regard.

## Evaluation of overthinking strategy

### General impressions

The DfAO strategy was also found to be abstract enough to allow for creative freedom, while concrete enough to offer enough guidance and inspiration to imagine possible ways to put the strategy into practice.

Evaluators were able to relate to the overthinking strategy. One of them, whose PhD revolves around mood regulation, appreciated the fact that the strategy seemed to draw parallels to mood regulation strategies. The principles mentioned in the overthinking strategy -ease for prefrontal cortex, replacing thoughts, and sharing responsibility-, looped back to mood regulation research of, respectively, distracting strategies, positive thinking and seeking social support.

The examples used in the explanation of the strategy were deemed to be quite clear.

One evaluator found the visualisation of the strategy confusing. For him, the arrows made it seem like “pattern recognition” was the overarching strategy and that the methods were a subset of pattern recognition, instead of it being a linear process.

### (A) Did the strategy show which driver of behavior to influence?

Similar to the evaluation of the DfF strategy, evaluators found it, in general, quite clear which driver of behaviour they could influence with the DfAO strategy.

However, one evaluator was not sure how the strategy helped to think about possible motivations. Also, another evaluator indicated it was difficult to predict exactly how the model would influence motivation, capability and/or opportunity. This was deemed dependent of the situation for which one was to design.

The same evaluator mentioned he “would find it strange if, after employing this strategy, the designer did not determine at least some capabilities or opportunities”. This was

credited to the descriptes of the elements under “distracting arrows”.

One evaluator mentioned that the combination of the methods shown in the strategy (e.g. ease for prefrontal cortex) and the example ideas could help the designer in identifying opportunities, and in later stages be able design other interventions.

### (B) Did the strategy inspire to think of mechanism to apply?

One evaluator appreciated that the strategy helped him to focus on first recognising patterns, which would help him identify the root of the overthinking. He indicated that this would aid him in building the bridge to mechanisms. As with the forgiveness strategy, the exact mechanisms would depend on the situation.

A different evaluator mentioned, as with the forgiveness strategy, that the examples were useful to think of others scenarios accompanying mechanisms designers could think of.

### (C) Did the strategy show how to implement these mechanisms?

Similar to the forgiveness strategy, evaluators expressed that the overthinking strategy does not explicitly instruct how to implement mechanisms. However, again they did indicate that the strategy did give them a start and inspiration to come up with own implementation ideas

### (D) Did the strategy advance your understanding of overthinking?

Three of the evaluators found the overthinking strategy to advance the understanding of the activity. One evaluator mentioned that the principle “ease for the prefrontal cortex” indicated to him that this part of the brain is working overtime during overthinking.

## 11.3. Conclusion

A different evaluator found that the strategy “pulled apart” the concept of overthinking well, and that it provided clear and practicable ways to design for it in a structured manner.

However, one evaluator found that the overthinking strategy could be expanded more and found it too beknopt.

### **(E) Did the strategy helped to evaluate designs that came forth out of the strategy?**

Evaluators found the overthinking strategy less helpful in evaluating designs than the forgiveness strategy. For example, it was difficult for them to imagine if a product gave “someone’s prefrontal cortex ease”.

One evaluator noted that although he found the overthinking strategy more “specific” than the forgiveness strategy, he had to put in more effort to think of ways to measure the impact of the designs the strategy could deliver. This was due to the absence of toetsbare elements and descriptive elements.

*The following themes were identified as shortcomings of the strategies.*

### **Design for Forgiveness strategy**

Currently, there exists confusion as to the meaning of appraisal and what or whom the challenge types refer to. The strategy did not make clear how to implement mechanisms, nor instruct how to evaluate designs.

### **Design for Avoiding Overthinking strategy**

Some of those themes seen in the DfF strategy were also identified in the evaluation of the DfAO strategy.

Namely, the latter as well did not clearly showed how to implement mechanisms, and it did not provide the tools to properly evaluate designs. In addition, the strategy was explained too concise, and the strategy did not clearly show if the designer could potentially influence the motivation of the user. Finally, there was confusion as to how the arrows in the model of the strategy related to each other.

These themes will be translated into recommendations in the following chapter.

# 12. Recommendations

Based on the interviews with the evaluators, and the insights I distilled from these, the composed following list of recommendations to further develop the strategies in future research.

## Recommendations for both strategies Adding steps to implement mechanisms and evaluate the design

The strategies should be expanded with more incremental steps that help the designer envision different ways of putting mechanisms into practice. Currently, although the strategies were seen as inspiring to think of different mechanisms, it was unclear for evaluators how designers what steps must be taken to ensure the design actually realises the effect of the mechanism.

To improve the strategies, note that mechanisms are provoked through a combination of both the product properties and user experience qualities (Wiese et al., 2021). Product properties are observable and tangible aspects (Wiese et al., 2021). Examples are material, colour and buttons or other operators. These aspects cause the user to experience the product in a certain way; the user experience qualities are the user’s subjective perceptions while they interact with the product (Wiese et al., 2021).

Based on this research, I propose adding the following steps into both strategies (figure 11, bottom) which are inspired by the Vision in Design approach (Hekkert & van Dijk, 2011), most notably the Interaction Vision.

The designer would go through the model left to right, after choosing a mechanism to implement. The designer can choose three different paths to gain more insight on how to implement the mechanism; A, B or C. For example, if the designer prefers to answer A1, he will then proceed to A2 to determine experience qualities.

This model can also be used to evaluate designs in a more extensive manner. They stimulate the designer to make desired qualities more explicit and less abstract, which provides them with more measurable elements. For example, the designer can more easily test if a product quality is deemed tolerant with a lo-fi prototype, compared to evaluating if the mechanism of spectating is realised using the same lo-fi prototype.

In addition, the designer can go through the model in the opposite way after determining desired product qualities. The designer can do this to check and revise separate qualities, and re-assess if each of them contribute to the more abstract mechanism that is less measurable.

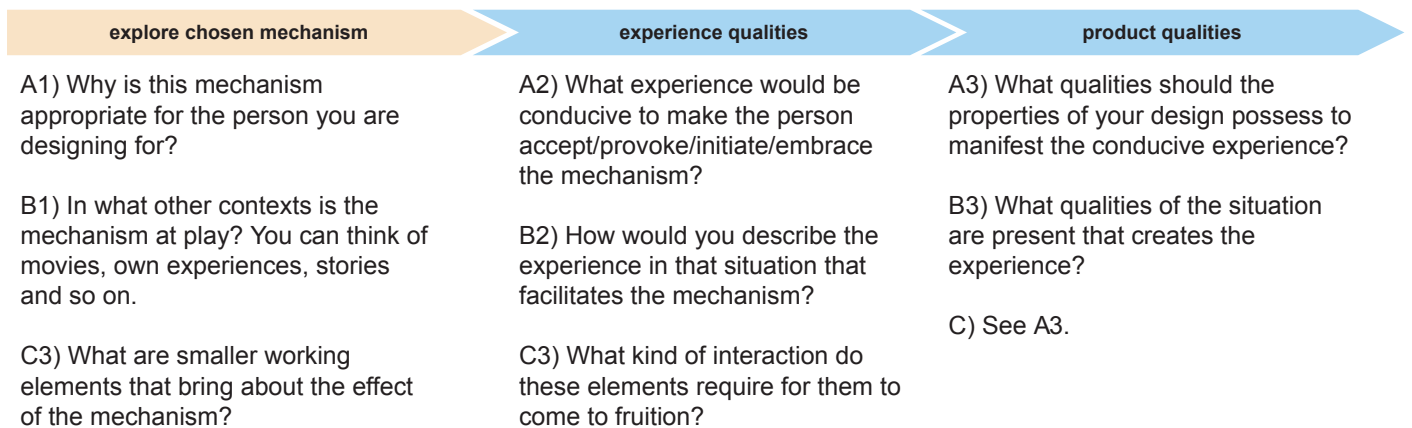


Figure 12: extra steps to aid the designer in implementing mechanisms



Examples of using the model, that should be incorporated in the explanation of the strategies, are shown on this page.

Note that the visualisation of the model is broken into two parts, in order to fit the explanation text on the page. The model should be read as shown in figure 13, below.



Figure 13: overview of the model to implement mechanisms

The model with explanation is shown in figure 14, below.

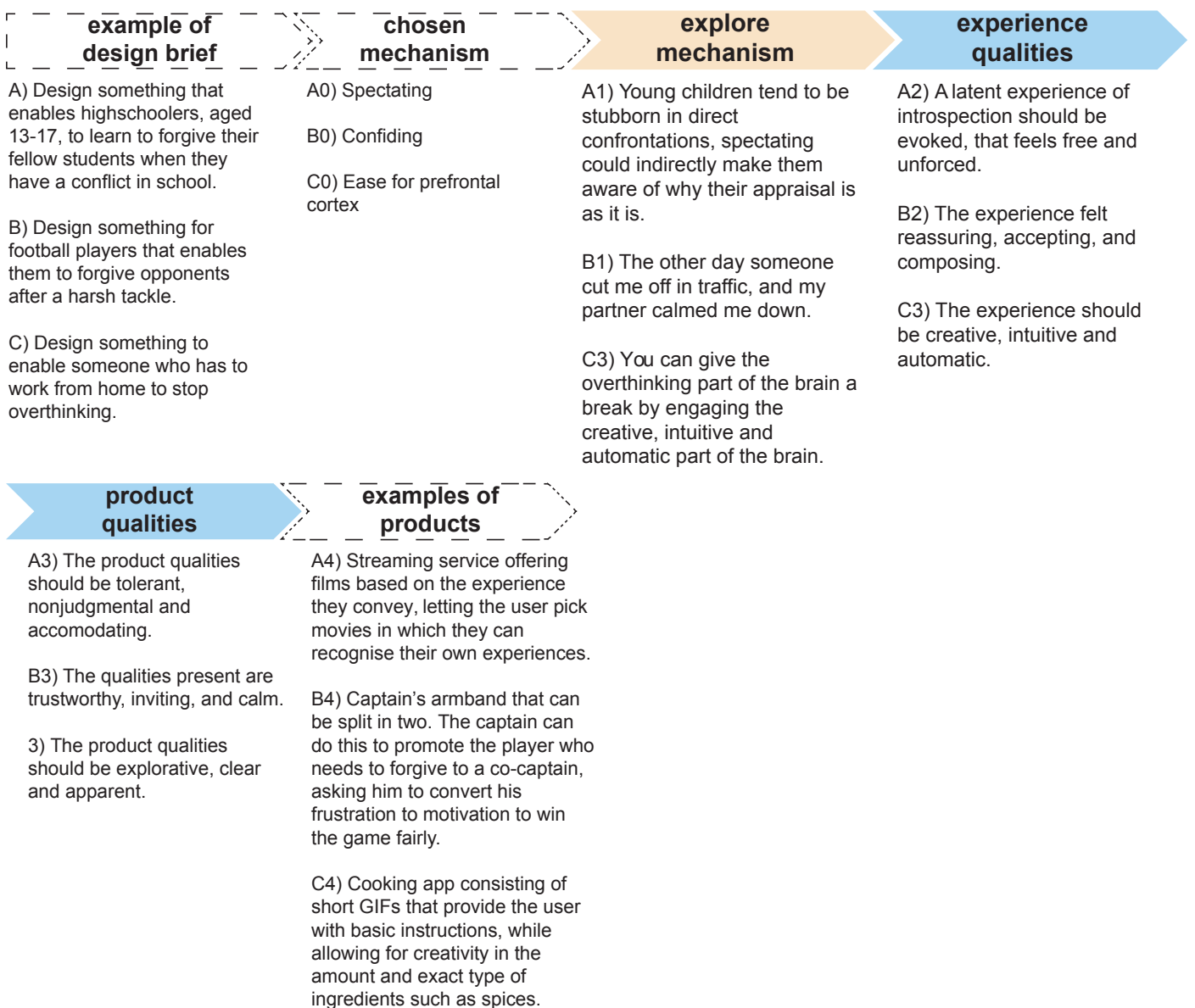


Figure 14: model to implement mechanisms with explanations



## Recommendations DfF strategy

### Changing the names of the challenge types

Currently, the challenge types could be interpreted in different ways, resulting in the designer assigning the “role” of the challenge type to the designer or the user. This is while the name of the challenge type actually refers to the mechanism a designer can apply in order to reframe an appraisal.

Assigning the challenge type to the designer can be useful for the design process in some cases. For example, using the empathiser, the designer gains knowledge about the wrongdoer, which he can then try to transfer to the user. On the other hand, the designer taking on the role of the confidant would not aid him as much in designing for the user, as the confidant should ideally be someone the user already knows and trusts.

Assigning the challenge type to the user works as intended in most cases, and is therefore not undesired when applying the strategy, but one. For example, seeing the user as the (desired) empathiser aids the designer in thinking of ways to make the user understand the complexities of a given situation. The exception is the confidant; the user cannot simultaneously be someone who does not see things clearly at the moment and someone who does.

Therefore, the nouns used in the challenge types should be converted to verbs, resulting in the names being confiding, spectating, empathizing, looking out, historicizing and futuring. This is more appropriate with what the challenge types refers to; the general mechanism a designer can apply when designing for forgiveness.

### Explaining appraisal more

The term appraisal should be explained in more detail, including an example. During the interviews, evaluators and I talked about the meaning of appraisal in this context. The following sentence seems to be sufficient and clear, and should be included in future explanations of the strategy: “appraisal de-

scribes the evaluation we make of an event, from which emotions are extracted.”

Subsequently adding a straightforward example simultaneously makes the term easier to understand and explains the relevance of it to forgiveness. The following example was deemed clear and understandable during interviews:

*Imagine a young child that forgets to pick up something small from the supermarket, after being asked to do so. This event goes against your preferences, so you appraise it as negative. The resulting emotions from the appraisal might be annoyance and disappointment.*

Subsequently incorporating the challenge types in this example was also found to improve the understanding of the term appraisal, as well as clarify the overall strategy to a great extent:

*However, if one were to examine one’s appraisal, we might realise that such mundane tasks are much more difficult to prioritise for young children at their age (empathising), and that being merely angry and disappointment does not help you nor the child (looking out). Also another adult could calmly make you aware (confiding) of an opportunity this presents, namely to use this situation to teach the child about responsibility (futuring).*

## Recommendations for DfAO strategy

### Explaining overthinking more

The strategy was found to be too concise, and it was unclear that motivation could be influenced as a driver of behaviour.

A short paragraph at the beginning of the strategy, explaining the concept of overthinking, could resolve both aforementioned issues. The paragraph should address the main points of overthinking, namely that:

- 1) overthinking differs from problem solving as overthinkers only dwell about their problems, without taking action.
- 2) it is difficult to see the bigger picture when overthinking, as people tend to focus inward.
- 3) overthinking can turn into a vicious cycle, because people often see it as useful introspection. While this is a motivation that triggers people to overthink, the designer can address other motivations to stop the overthinking. It is useful to see motivation as a concept that relates to intrapersonal processes, including goals, values and deliberate decision making, which stimulate behavior (Wiese et al., 2021). Research into, for example, the goals and values of the user can be used to acquire insights that can be used in the methods of ease for prefrontal cortex, replacing thoughts, or sharing responsibility.

### Clearer visualisation of model

The model of the strategy was, on occasion, found to be confusing. The evaluator interpreted the arrows such that “pattern recognition” was the overarching strategy, instead of the arrows as being consecutive to each other.

A redesign of the visualisation of the model, seen in figure 15 (bottom), should be added to make it clearer the designer can apply one or a combination of three mechanisms *after* pattern recognition.



Figure 15: redesign of the model for the DfAO strategy

# 13. Evaluations of concepts

*In addition to the strategies, I evaluated two concepts that came forth of them, one for forgiveness and one for avoiding overthinking.*

*The main goal was to gather initial impressions of the concepts, and in turn determine if the strategies had aided in designing products that were meaningful in regards to learning to forgive and avoiding overthinking.*

## Evaluation of forgiveness concept

This concept was for the context of football, and was a captain's armband that can be split into two parts, designed with the challenge type of confiding in mind.

In football, the captain is often an experienced and trusted player who knows his teammates well. He can recognise when one of his team mates is about to lose his temper, for example, after a harsh tackle. When needed, the captain can split his armband into two parts, and give one to the team mate in question. By doing this, he promotes the player to a co-captain, asking him to convert his frustration into motivation to win the game fairly. The player is motivated to forgive and take "revenge" in a sportsman-like way.

## Methodology

The concept was drawn and explained in a storyboard, shown in figure 16, next page. This was shown to an amateur football player with extensive experience. The player in question has been footballing for 20 years and has been a captain for 13 years.

After reading the storyboard, the player was interviewed.

## Evaluation

In general, the player was positive about the idea, and thought it had a chance to be implemented, although he deemed it more likely to be used by youth players.

On the other hand, he found it difficult to determine when to split the armband. Specifically, he was worried that receiving the

co-captain's band could be seen as a reward for bad behaviour.

He also wondered how to use the armband if two players were tackled in a short amount of time. It was unclear if the armband would go from co-captain to new co-captain, or that the main captain would lose his.

Lastly, he expected senior players to deem the armband as unnecessary and too juvenile. However, he found it suitable for players up till the age of 18. Reasons being that, in youth teams, the captain is mostly someone who:

- has insight for the game (thus recognising situations where the armband can be used)
- has a sense of responsibility
- acts exemplary and is less prone to commit hard fouls

In addition to this, the players are eager to learn, the armband might enjoy a larger status in younger teams, and younger players tend to look up to their captain more, making it more likely they will take his advice to heart.

## Recommendations

The player advised to involve both the referee, as the captain is the first one to be addressed by the referee when needed, as well the trainer, as he could facilitate the use of the armband in coordination with the captain.

Finally, he thought the connection between responsibility and forgiveness could be strengthened. This could potentially be achieved by instructing the captain to, while splitting the armband, asking his team mate to calm down. He could then also remind the player that tackles, although sometimes reckless, are almost always an attempt to win possession, not to injure you. This simple reminder, in combination with the co-captain's band, can help the player to forgive.

## Captain's armband to promote forgiveness

This concept is a captain's armband that can be split into two parts.

The captain can do this when he sees a teammate is about to lose his temper (for example, after being tackled unfairly). By appointing this player as a co-captain, the captain asks him to use his frustration for good and win fairly.

The co-captain can captain a specific part of the team; for example, the mid-field or the defence.

More importantly, the co-captain is motivated to not take revenge, as this would set a bad example for his teammates.

A storyboard is shown on this page.

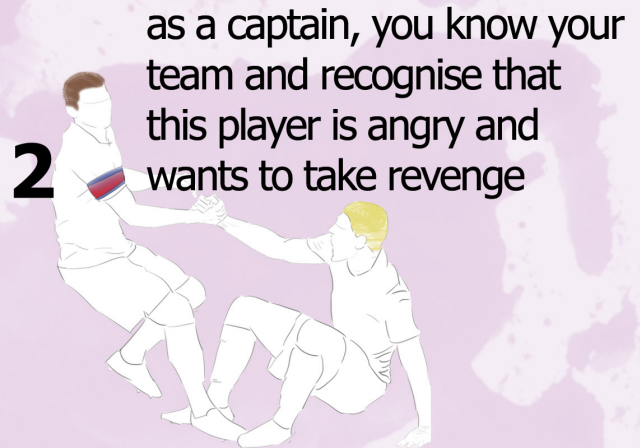


Figure 16: explanation of the the captain's armband for forgiveness, shown to the evaluator



## Evaluation of overthinking concept

This concept was a simple prototype of a cooking app designed to engross the user into the activity of cooking. The idea was that the user got so engaged that she could not overthink, thus giving the prefrontal cortex a break.

## Methodology

A 23 step recipe was explained using 17 short GIFs that showed the required steps, and explained them with as few words as possible. These GIFs were placed on a phone, whose screen stayed on during cooking, and provided to the evaluator with the ingredients and a phone stand (see figure 17). The evaluator described her cooking skills as capable and average. She mentioned she could sometimes be distracted while cooking.

For each step, the GIF showed a) what to do, b) the amount of ingredients, and c) the specific amount of time if applicable. After completing what was instructed on each GIF, the user could swipe to the next one.

This way, the process was made as linear as possible. Often, the instructions tell the user what to do, but omits the amount of ingredients. The evaluator was told about the workings of the app, but not informed about the context of the project or that the app was meant to stop overthinking.

After using the app to cook, the evaluator was interviewed. To determine to what degree the concept helped her to become engrossed in cooking, determinants of flow experiences (Lyubomirsky, 2007, Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009) were incorporated in the interview questions.

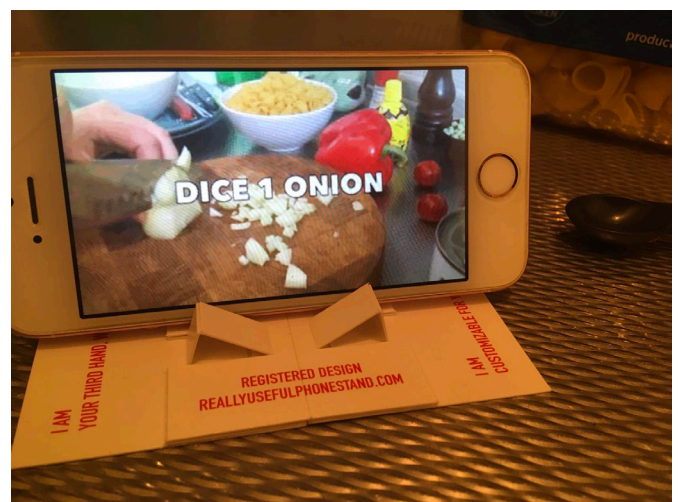
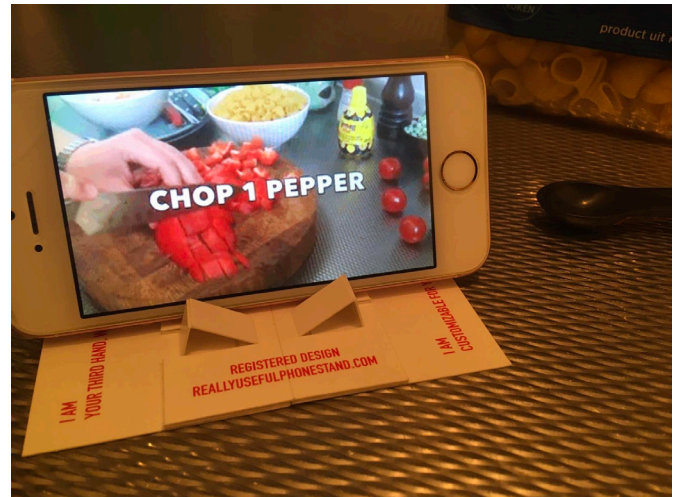


Figure 15: cooking app with examples of GIFs

## **Evaluation**

The evaluator enjoyed using the app and appreciated, she could quickly progress to each next step, and knew exactly what to do.

She mentioned using HelloFresh, where the information offered was more overwhelming compared to the app. The instructions from HelloFresh recipes were more confusing as it was deemed less clear when steps were finished.

### *Concentration on the activity*

The evaluator indicated she was focused while cooking, and could easily retain focus until the recipe was finished.

### *Clarity of goals*

The steps provided clear goals, that were sometimes perhaps too detailed for the evaluator. She did not have to do anything she had no experience with, and found these steps to be more suited for beginning cooks.

### *Feeling of rewarding*

The participant expressed a feeling of reward when the meal was ready, which she normally also has. Completing each step did not provide a feeling of rewarding in and of itself.

### *Immediate feedback*

Feedback was experienced as quite clear. She could imagine that less experienced cooks might need more detailed instructions on, for example, how to dice an onion; the GIFs simply mentioned to dice without providing any further tips. The GIFs were recognisable enough for the participant to know she was doing what she was supposed to do.

The exception here was a step where the instruction was to let a sauce simmer. The feedback on the consistency of the sauce lacked.

### *Feeling of control*

The participant was positive regarding the feeling of control she experienced. She attributed this to the clarity of the steps, and

therefore assumed that the app would take things like cooking time into account. This made her confident that nothing would burn, and increased her feeling of control over the whole process. However, she could imagine that more experienced and creative cooks would find the narrow instructions to be restrictive, what would be detrimental for the feeling of control.

### *Effortlessness and ease*

The entire cooking process was seen as extremely easy to do. However, though the recipe was new for the participant, it was deemed as simple due to it being a single-pan dish.

### *Balance between challenge and skills*

The balance was deemed adequate, though the recipe could have been more comprehensive. However, the participant expected that a more difficult recipe would also be achievable if it followed the same structure as the current app.

### *Transformation of time*

The participant mentioned she lost track of time and did not know for how long she had been cooking, as she was focused on what the next step would be. Only when she had to set a timer for pasta was she aware of the concept of time.

### *Losing self-conscious overthinking*

Although the participant would sometimes overthink during cooking in her daily life, she did not overthink when using the app. She mentioned she was not distracted during use of the app, as she could quickly go to the next step without having to look up extra information, what normally would provide an opportunity to overthink.

## **Recommendations**

On a practical level, the step regarding simmering has to be quantified, either by adding a time limit or explaining to the user the sauce has to have a certain consistency. Also, a button should be added that appears when the user has started cooking the pas-



ta. When it is pressed, the user is told she will be notified when the pasta is done. This way, the user does not have to set a timer herself, thus taking away the opportunity to get distracted and start overthinking.

Different difficulties could be added to the app, in order to ensure a better balance between challenge and skills. For example, beginning would be provided with an explanation of how to dice onions and intermediate cooks would simply be told to dice them.

More experienced cooks could also be given less specific instructions and tips to allow for more creativity. For example, suggestions on spices could be given without the exact amounts, and the user is encouraged to add something not on the list if deemed suited for the dish. Allowing for creativity might also add to the rewarding feeling that is currently lacking in the app.

Further testing should be done with these recommendations applied, and with more comprehensive recipes to research the effects this has on the determinants of flow and overthinking itself.

# 14. Conclusions

This research-by-design graduation project had the goal to contribute to current research on how design can promote sustained well-being.

Therefore, its aim was two-fold, meaning to:

- 1) provide designers with new strategies to design for happiness.
- 2) present concepts that illustrate these strategies.

The report covered the process leading to these two objectives. After exploring current research, the activities learning to forgive and avoiding overthink were chosen to design for out of 14 happiness-enhancing activities. Currently, few products exist that facilitate these activities, and the degree to which they do so was found to be small. In addition, people currently engage in these two activities fewer than in the other twelve.

Through an iterative process, design strategies and concepts were developed for both activities. The strategies were evaluated by three PhD candidates in design related fields, and one design practitioner.

In general, the evaluators responded positively to the strategies and indicated that these could support designers in designing for the two activities. The strategies were found to comply with most of the requirements a strategy should consist of, as proposed by Wiese, Pohlmeyer & Hekkert (Wiese et. al., 2020).

However, the strategies were deemed lacking in supporting the designer in implementing mechanisms, and evaluating designs. Recommendations and changes were proposed at the end of the report to improve the strategies in these aspects.

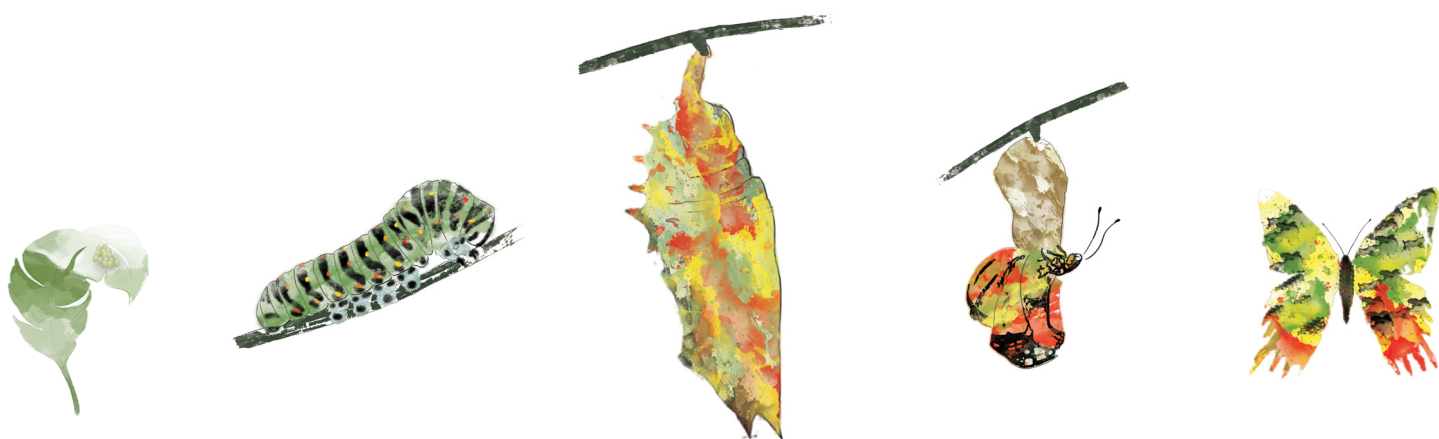
Further research should be conducted with more design practitioners to evaluate the usefulness of the strategies in practice. Ideally, the designers would go through the strategies to develop designs, so that feedback and evaluation can be more extensive.

New knowledge of designing for happiness-enhancing activities was derived during this project, and presented in the described research, two evaluated design strategies, and two tested concepts.

For this, the project built on research conducted by Wiese, Pohlmeyer & Hekkert (Wiese et. al., 2019; 2020). It also contributed to this research by exploring, on an activity-level, how designers can design for forgiveness and avoiding overthinking to promote sustained well-being.

# Phase 6

## Looking back



## Reflections & acknowledgements

# 15.1 Reflections on design

*I struggled a lot during this project with the creative aspects of coming up with design strategies and concepts. I have been thinking about creativity and design (philosophy) for some time now, and figured I would share my thoughts here.*

*Doing this, I hope to structure them and gain more insights on what design and creativity mean for me. In addition, others might find this interesting to think about as well, or might offer me some insights in the form of their thoughts. I'm always open for a conversation.*

## **The epiphany that never (seemed to) arrive(d)**

When trying to come up with concepts, I got stuck. For a long time. Although I'm satisfied with the final results, the strategies, the feeling that I was "missing something" never left.

As a result, I kept reading and reading about forgiveness, overthinking, design strategies, and other projects. I tried to collect a library of insights, in the hopes that my subconscious mind could eventually see the connections between them all and serve up this epiphany. But it never happened. What was going on? Did I not collect enough insights to think of something that felt appropriate? Or was my mind not subconsciously reflecting on all the insights, instead ignoring them or pushing them away for some reason?

At one point, I felt quite hopeless and shot down any idea that might pop up. I couldn't figure out why, in this project, the creative juices seemed to have dried up. I reflected on previous projects, and tried to see what was different in this one.

Firstly, I realised I never felt the weight of a project so severely as this one. A combination of seeing the graduation project as a magnum opus, wanting to impress supervisors I look up to, the seriousness and privilege I felt of having the opportunity to design for such valuable and potentially vulnerable activities, all these things left me feeling

crippled at times. It's ironic how, sometimes, the more passion you have for your (future) profession, the more difficult it becomes to put in the work as you're afraid you won't design something perfect. This, of course, achieved the exact opposite of what I wanted.

*If I could give advice to my past self, it would be this. No, it won't be perfect. It also won't be if you postpone it till tomorrow, next week or next month. The best time to start was a few hours ago, the second best time is now.*

I wish I could have realised sooner that, yes, I was always happy to see a "finished" design I was content with, but the love and passion for design itself came from the activity of designing itself. This is the case for me, at least. I was afraid to start, because the result won't be perfect. But if I love the activity of designing itself the most, why wait, ever?

Secondly, I kept to myself much more than during other projects. I wasn't working at the faculty, and Covid made it more difficult to have the much needed creative sessions with fellow students. Inspiration is a bigger challenge to acquire during Covid times. Inspiration can pop up in unexpected places, seemingly totally unrelated to the design project itself.

I would say, try to force it if you have to. Organise some Zoom sessions with fellow designers. Go outside. Set up your own session in the park. Bore your friends with the design phase you're stuck in (thank you for your patience, kind friends). Explain your research to your parents, even though it might seem gibberish to them (I'm the one to blame for that, dear parents).

Talk. Listen. And do something completely unrelated once in while without feeling guilty. It will do your project good, and your own well-being.

## **Design: start with user, experts, yourself?**

*The following thoughts are on design philosophy. I thought about it for some time, read books, talked about it with fellow students and friends. But I'm not an experienced design researcher. I could be totally misguided and misunderstanding things.*

*However, Cunningham's Law states: "the best way to get the right answer on the internet is not to ask a question; it's to post the wrong answer." I'll take this advice and just let my thoughts drop onto this paper, and perhaps someone interested can offer some response.*

*I want to emphasise that I find all design perspectives below valuable. But they differ in appropriateness depending the context, goals and time frame the designer wishes to design for. And I feel that discussion on this can be promoted on our faculty.*

Reason being that one of the first principles of design I, and fellow students, learn at our faculty is to drop your own assumptions and go directly to the user. Ask them about their experiences. Ask them about their values, dreams and goals. They are the expert of their own experiences. Translating their thoughts into insights could tell you what would be meaningful to design for them.

And so I did. But in the second year of my bachelor, I followed the course Product Design 3. In this course, we were instructed to use a different approach: Vision in Design it was called. I went to the bookstore and purchased the brightly colored pink book on the approach.

It struck a chord with me. We were instructed to interview experts on different domains to construct a future worldview, using that to determine what would be meaningful to design for people. When would the people itself play a role in the design process? I'm at the last page explaining the design process.

Ah, here it is.

"If we are so human-centered, as we claim,

where users fit into the ViP process? [...] In our view, many in the present-day design community make the myopic assumption that human-centeredness requires allowing end-users to engage in various stages of the process through observation, interview, or some form of 'participatory design'. What we take issue with is not end-user involvement, but that the insights thus obtained are often rooted in the situation the user is in *at that moment*. [...] They tend to reason 'what is' instead of 'what could be.' [...] This input may allow a designer to improve the situation, the designed environment, but makes it very difficult to completely rethink and reframe the situation in the first place!"

This perspective on design is a huge shift in what we, at least during my study years, are traditionally taught at the faculty, where extensively involving the end users is one of the pillars. I would like to see more discussion between students on the different design philosophies.

I hope the expression "two's company, three's a crowd" does not always hold, because I'd like to add a third perspective into the mix.

Roberto Verganti writes, in his book *Overcrowded*, that designers should start not with end users but with themselves. He implores them to ask "what would I love for people to love?" The idea is that the designer, through experience and research, already has a feel for the meaning that people strive for. Starting with oneself is controversial in the design world, as mentioned by Xue and Desmet (Xue & Desmet, 2019). They challenged the designer's appearance of objectivity, and proposed introspection as a valid approach to investigating subjective experiences (Xue & Desmet, 2019). As I wrote, this was also useful during my project to come up with the strategies.

So, who'd like to talk about starting with users, experts, or yourself?

## 15.2 Reflections on personal growth

*Here are some time spans to think about.  
Time given for graduation project: 20 weeks.  
Time my graduation project took: 93 weeks.  
What happened?*

I wish I had a clearer answer than what I'm about to write. But I did reflect, analyse and try to figure out what went wrong. I talked with my supervisors, friends, family, my girlfriend, and a psychologist. They all helped me immensely to understand myself better. I am grateful to all of them for that.

There were some personal events that unfortunately transpired during my graduation project that could potentially slow any project down. But I would never see these as legitimate reasons for the delay I had. It would be unfair and untrue. Some not so nice things happened, but the project could have been finished in 20 weeks despite them.

As ViP implores the designer to take full responsibility for his designs, I feel I as a human must do the same for the less fortunate parts of the course of this project.

As I wrote in Reflections on Design, I was often afraid to work on something I found so important, at times leaving me feeling paralysed. The confidence I normally used to feel during the rest of my studies seemed to be diminished to a small speck sometimes during this graduation.

I remember when a friend said "Good luck with your important meeting tomorrow". Over the years, I developed a habit of responding "Thanks, will be fine!" (which I always meant). But on this particular moment, I noticed I swallowed my words after the "thanks". It was a painful reflection to again become aware of the decline in confidence.

Ideas never felt good enough, especially for the activity of learning to forgive, which could be so valuable and vulnerable for many people. Fellow students and personal friends were willing to share their stories and experience of forgiveness with me, dur-

ing talks of several hours in the evening. How then could I propose an idea that only works so so?

Much too late in the project I realised that contributing to the design research, no matter what degree, is helpful enough.

Tromp & Hekkert capture this well in their book *Designing for Society* (Tromp & Hekkert, 2019): *"It is our conviction that designers are needed to solve the challenge our planet is facing - among others. This book is, first and foremost, a call to designers to get rid of their modesty, have the courage of their convictions and actually believe design can shape our society for the better. [...] At the same time, we ask designers to be modest about their impact. Designed interventions will not change everything and any changes will not be immediate. We have to accept that often we can only make a minor difference."*

The irony of working on well-being, forgiveness and overthinking hit me hard at many times during the project, as I found myself feeling guilty and dwelling on ideas I was not content with.

The guilt was the worst I think. Feeling guilty because I took so much time from my supervisors and feeling like I did not deliver. Feeling guilty for my girlfriend, as the delay of my project also postponed plans we had together. For my parents, who rightfully were wondering when things would be done. For fellow students, as I felt I took their place by asking more time from my supervisors. For all the people, including close friends, who could benefit so much from a design for forgiveness, for whom I felt I did not deliver.

It took a long time to try and forgive myself for this. I'm still working on it I guess. I'll continue to be hopeful and to remember that any impact or improvement, even if small, is good.



# 16. Acknowledgements

I was lucky enough to have so many great people around me that helped me in so many ways.

My supervisors, Paul, Lisa and Anna. Your contributions to the project and advancing my understanding of design will always be cherished. I truly hope we can work together again. Thank you for being so understanding, patient and kind.

Paul, it was a joy to learn from you about design perspectives and philosophy. Even when I gave you little to work with, you always inspired me. I appreciate the talks we had, also on a personal level. I hope you know how much they helped me.

Lisa, I could always count on you for a fresh and different perspective. It was amazing to see how you related psychology to design, which helped me to think differently about my own ideas. I'll take the conversations we had about life, children, studies, work and personal well-being to heart.

Anna, thank you for jumping in when needed. I made things less than ideal timewise, but you were always there for me and made me reflect critically about my process and ideas. We had a one-on-one talk during a time I felt quite defeated. After our talk, I was hopeful and more optimistic. I do not know how exactly that came about, but I'll always appreciate your involvement during this time.

Kasper, Jasper, Laurens, Cindy, Lisanne, Mandy, Gijs, Bas and Stef, for making time to cluster, talking about ideas and testing them.

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# Appendix

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# Appendix 1: survey

*The following are the questions used in the survey.*

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome! Thank you for participating in my survey.

My name is Michael Speek, I am a graduate student at Delft University of Technology. I'm researching how products may (not) contribute to our well-being.

With this survey, you will help me discover interesting opportunities to design for well-being.

This survey will take you about 20 minutes. All answers will be kept confidential. Among the participants, three gift cards (Amazon, Bol.com) of €15 will be randomly given out.

If you want to fill in your answers in Dutch, please feel free to do so.

[next] to CONSENT FORM

## CONSENT FORM

Before we start, please read the following information and confirm that you accept the terms of participating in this study.

[INSERT CONSENT FORM] → if

- Consent = yes, proceed to questions proceed to Q1
- Consent = no, end survey proceed to [ENDING THE SURVEY]

## SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHICS

[Q1] What is your age?

- < 18 years
- 18-25 years
- 26-34 years
- 35-49 years
- > 49 years

[Q2] What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer Not to Say

[Q3] Where do you live?

- Netherlands
- Other EU country
- US
- Other (please specify)

[Q4] What is the highest degree or school you have completed? If you're currently enrolled in school, please indicate the highest degree you have received.

- Elementary school
- High school or equivalent
- College degree (or, for Dutch participants; HBO)
- Bachelor's degree university
- Master's degree university
- Doctorate/PhD
- Professor

## [ACTIVITIES SECTION]

In the following section, I'd like to explore with you how products may or may not contribute to individuals' well-being. We will do this by looking at 14 'happiness-enhancing activities'.

Research shows that doing these activities increases one's well-being. By answering the following questions, we can find out which activities people do (or do not) and which products support them during this (or not).

Please indicate how often you do the activity described below.

Please note; activities can include actual behaviour, and may also include thoughts and emotional experiences.

[Q5] [Activity 1 of 14 is described here in simple terms, so:

1. Counting your blessings: being thankful for what you have.
  - o This can be privately (such as in your own thoughts or writing it down) or by saying that you are thankful for what someone did.

For descriptions of each activity, see Appendix A]

Possible answers:

- Never proceed to next activity
- rarely (a few times in your life) proceed to [Q6 [PRODUCT SECTION]]
- sometimes (a few times a year) proceed to [Q6 [PRODUCT SECTION]]
- often (once a month) proceed to [Q6 [PRODUCT SECTION]]
- very often (once a week) proceed to [Q6 [PRODUCT SECTION]]

[PRODUCT SECTION, NAME OF ACTIVITY THAT PARTICIPANT ENGAGES IN (AT LEAST RARELY AS ANSWER) IS WRITTEN HERE]

You indicated that you engage(d) in this activity at least rarely or more. We will now look at what products are involved when you engage in this activity. With this, please note the following two things:

- The product can be directly involved in the activity itself (or not), but the product can also start, trigger or support the activity in other ways.
- Think of “product” as any kind of object, tool, service or (interactive) technology (such as a smartphone or mobile application, digital game, website). A product can be physical but also digital. If you think the activity involved a specific feature or function of a product, please highlight this.

Just in case, here is the definition of the activity again:

[previously given (simple) definition of the activity is provided]

[Q6] First, please indicate what product or products are/were involved when you engage(d) in the activity, being as specific as possible:

[open answer]

[Q7] Second, please describe how you went about this activity and especially how the product played a role. Think of particular relevant features, functions and how you

typically use the product.

[open answer]

proceed to next activity, with possible answers:

- Never proceed to next activity
- rarely (a few times in your life) proceed to [Q6 [PRODUCT SECTION]]
- sometimes (a few times a year) proceed to [Q6 [PRODUCT SECTION]]
- often (once a month) proceed to [Q6 [PRODUCT SECTION]]
- very often (once a week) proceed to [Q6 [PRODUCT SECTION]]

In short, [Q6] and [Q7] are repeated for each of the 14 activities, except for the activities for which the participant answered he/she never engages in.

[FINAL NOTES & €15 GIFT]

[Q8] If you have any additional notes, either about the survey or the research in general, feel free to leave them below.

[open answer, optional]

[Q9] Three participants will be randomly selected and contacted to receive a €15 gift card. If you would like to join the raffle, please enter your email address below.

[open answer, optional]

[Q10] This research is part of my graduation project. If you would like to be informed on the results of this project, please enter your email address below.

[open answer, optional]

Thank you!

This is the end of the survey. Thank you so much for participating, your answers will help drive my research further. Please click ‘submit’ to submit your answers.



when the participant presses submit, the answers will be submitted.

[END OF SURVEY]

Thank you! Your answers have been submitted.

[ENDING THE SURVEY]

[Q11] Are you sure you want to end this survey?

- Yes, quit survey answers will be submitted
- No, return to consent form proceed to [CONSENT FORM]

# Appendix 2: found products deconstruction

*The following is a list of products used for the deconstruction.*

## **Products avoiding overthinking**

*Google Play Store*

Motivation - Daily quotes

Shanti - Mental Health App

Fabulous - Daily Self Care

MindShift CBT - Anxiety Relief

Mindfulness

Daylio Journal

myStrength

stoic.

Bloom: CBT Therapy & Self-Care

Breeze: mood tracker, diary

MindDoc: Your Copanion

Wysa: Sleep Depression Support

*Survey*

YouTube

Instagram

Co-op game

Music

Phone

Spotify

Guitar

Yoga mat

Video game

## **Products forgiveness**

*Google Play Store*

Sorry Or Forgive Me Card Creator

Proclaiming God's Forgiveness

NIV Bible App +

Fruit of Forgiveness Ministry

Sorry And Forgive me Best Cards, Messages  
& Images

Confession Guide - St. Josemaria Institute

Forgive For Good / Fred Luskin

Forgiveness HeartLand Aramaic

*Survey*

The Internet

Phone

The Bible

Psychology books

Forgiveness Letter

*Other*

Forgiveness Toolbox

# Appendix 3: interviews experts forgiveness

*The following are transcripts from interviews with experts on forgiveness. Context factors were distilled from these transcripts, which are marked as italic, grey text.*

## Transcript 1: Mpho Tutu, co-author of The Book of Forgiving

### How would you describe yourself?

I have a lot of adjectives; preacher, teacher, mother, wife, grandmother even. I find that a lot of my adjectives are quite relational. Meaning mother, wife, grandmother. Those are to do with my relationships with other people. My self definition leans into my relationships with other people.

### How does forgiveness play a role in your life right now?

When we wrote the book of forgiving, my father and I, one of the things that we did was to create a 30 day forgiveness challenge. It was a web based challenge that people could engage in as individuals. If you signed up to take the challenge then each day you would receive, in your inbox, a meditation and a task. Most of it was based on what we had in the book of forgiving. What people got to experience with that was the experience of forgiveness as a practice, as opposed to as an event maybe, or as a singular, one time activity. It is in my thinking and in my definition much more of a process and a practice. And, as we say in the book, we actually do get daily opportunities to practice forgiveness. Once you unpack what the process is, then you recognize that it's a process that you actually do engage in on a daily basis.

*[sta/psy] Forgiveness is often thought of as a singular event*

*Many people see forgiveness as an event, or as a singular, one time activity. On the other hand, experts regard forgiveness as a practice or habit; a process.*

It's a process like grief, like Kübler-Ross' 5 stages of grief. What we say the forgiveness process is; you tell the story, you name the hurt, you offer forgiveness, and you recon-

cile or you renew or release the relationship. In that process, the quantum -how big the thing is that you have to forgive- doesn't matter. What matters is that you engage the process. If you have that as your algorithm for forgiveness, that can invite you into making some products that might make things easier. Whether it is an app that prompts you into checking in with yourself. For example, something triggered me, something upset me, something hurt my feelings or made me angry or whatever: what happened, tell the story, name the hurt, express what your feelings were around what the incident was. And being able to do that in a very clear and full way. Also making sure that you were doing it in such a way that you feel heard and validated, not challenged on your expression of the story so to speak.

And then at that point you're able to offer forgiveness, recognizing that forgiveness in this designation isn't permission for the person to walk away scot-free. But it is what clears the ground for reconciliation. When you forgive, essentially what you're saying is "I no longer reserve the right to exact revenge on you for what you did to me". Which means we now have the opportunity to create a different and a better relationship than we had been in before. A relationship in which whatever it was that you did to me would no longer be possible. That goes from the smallest level of "you didn't unpack the dishwasher". You know, "okay, im annoyed that you didn't unpack the dishwasher". Now, usually what happens is, I drop the subject. It's not a big deal, and we just forget about it. But actually, then the blowback from that is that the day after tomorrow, you'll not unpack the dishwasher again. You know, something is more important in your life than unpacking the dishwasher, you go on about your business and the dishwasher will still be packed. If I actually engage it as a forgiveness process -rather than just eating my irritation and going ahead and unpacking the dishwasher- then I will say to you "okay look, you didn't unpack the dishwasher this morning. You know that's your chore. When

you dont unpack the dishwasher the consequence for me is that it becomes my job on top of all the other jobs that I have. It eats my time..." and so forth. Then I actually tell you the whole story and how it impacts me. On your side -apart from kind of sighing and rolling your eyes and going "oh my gosh, you have to do this again"- you'll actually think about how that impacts me. Then you have a forgiveness that is meaningful. The next time -rather than just running off without unpacking the dishwasher or forgetting about it or whatever- you might say to me beforehand "you know what, i cant unpack the dishwasher right now, because im running late. Please, will you unpack the dishwasher and I will do x, y, z, in your place".

### **The method of forgiveness is the same for big and small things ?**

Absolutely, that's exactly what we say. We say that the quantum may be different, the enormity of the thing to be forgiven may be different, but the process is exactly the same. In the case of a rape survivor, or whatever traumatic event it is that you have survived, the first task is telling the story. For a rape survivor that can be the hugest challenge in getting to forgiveness. Unlike most other kinds of violations, with sexual violations very often the shame accrues to the victim rather than to the perpetrator. For a survivor of sexual violence, the biggest challenge can be to say "this happened". Once youve been able to tell that, moving along the rest of the process becomes much easier. For survivor of sexual violence it would be telling the story, so "this is what happened: I was raped, i was sexually abused, i was violently abused". Whatever it was. That would be telling the story. Naming the hurt would be "I felt like less of a human being. This person thought that they could do whatever they wanted to do to me, and that there would be no consequence for their action or behaviour. I was terrified, there was nowhere for me to hide..." That whole piece of telling the story, and telling the story until the story feels told. Until it feels as though "okay, I really have said everything that I want to

say about this". And at that point being able to say "okay, i no longer reserve the right to exact revenge on that person if i ever see them again". I know in war that itself can be a challenge.

Being able to say "okay, i am willing to forgive, so im am willing to let go of the right to exact retribution." However, if this person is ever seen again, that doesnt mean that the war crimes or the justice tribunal doesnt have the right to punish them. The consequences of their actions are still consequential. Forgiveness never subverts justice. Forgiveness never says "okay, now that i forgive you, you get to walk away scot-free. Actually, now that i have forgiven you, you actually need to take responsibility for what it was that you did to me. And this is how I would want you to make reparation to me for what you did." When you engage in that process as a reconciliatory process -after forgiveness has been offered- then the forgiveness really is for the victim. The victim gets to say "I am no longer going to be eaten alive by what this person did to me, by my rage about what this person did to me. I am going to be able to reclaim the fullest of my humanity and my bodily integrity and be able to move on with my life."

### **The definition of forgiveness**

For me forgiveness means that I no longer reserve the right to take revenge for what you did.

### **The importance of forgiveness**

I think it is maybe fitting to look at the places where forgiveness is not. Where people move on without forgiveness, where people dont engage in any kind of process to wholeness. Most post-conflict societies are vivid and vibrant examples of what happens when you dont forgive. Its actually impossible to live together without forgiveness. If you imagine any kind of intimate relationship or partnership in the absence of forgiveness, it just wont work. If you hold on to your upset every time your partner screws up, your relationship is not going to survive very long.

### **The measurability of forgiveness**

I dont know if there is a measurability. I think that you're left to take it on trust. You know, the person says "I have forgiven you", and the behaviour looks close enough for forgiveness to pass. I cant imagine a metric that allows you to see in someones heart. It's the same as "i love you". I can't measure your love, i can only trust your love by the way I see you behave.

I think there are many loopholes in a self reporting method on forgiveness, but i dont know what would overcome the loopholes. I cant see how you get around the need to self report.

I tend to think that people are not likely to say they have forgiven when they havent. Of course i can be wrong. But, my thought is very much that what people say is really what they experience. I dont think you get that much from saying you've forgiven when you havent. I dont see that there's that big a reward in saying you've forgiven when you havent forgiven, that it's worth your while to lie about.

### **Forgiving others versus forgiving yourself**

The Fourfold path also applies to forgiving yourself. It can actually much harder to forgive yourself than it is to forgive other people. We tend to be much harder on ourselves than we are on others. We have very high expectations of ourselves. Again, the process is very much the same. What is it that you're needing to forgive yourself for? So, telling the story, naming how it is that you have hurt yourself or others. And granting yourself forgiveness is kind of, stopping .... giving up on beating yourself up. In that kind of frame, granting forgiveness to yourself is stopping to beat yourself up for whatever it is that you have done or not done.

The thing with forgiving yourself is that you have violated your own values. And whatever it is that you're needing to forgive yourself for, there is a way that you have violated your

values, and you know it and you know it better than anyone else.

*[pri/psy] Needing to forgive yourself implies you violated your own values  
When you find that you want to forgive yourself, this implies that you have violated your own values. You know it and you know it better than anyone else. Multiple experts believe that this makes self-forgiveness harder than forgiving others.*

### **How forgiveness differs per culture/country**

I dont think that forgiveness varies across culture. I think that there is a difference between sucking up what you have to suck up and moving on, and forgiveness. Sucking up stuff and moving on is sucking up stuff and moving on, forgiveness is much more a personal action, a choice and a response. So, as the victim you get to choose whether or not you forget. That has actually nothing to do with your society. Your society can tell you youre supposed to forgive, but whether or not you do that is a completely different kettle of fish so to speak.

For many Christians for instance, there is a kind of biblical expectation: forgive as you have been forgiven. Which was part of the reason for writing the book; "okay, you tell us we're supposed to forgive, how are we supposed to actually accomplish that". As a pastor, you're telling people they're supposed to forgive, but they dont know how to get from the anguish that theyre sitting in, to the forgiveness that is promised and that is supposed to be so good for them. I think the reality is that you cant attach the word "should" to genuine forgiveness. Genuine forgiveness is really the thing that the victim gives of their own free will. You cant demand it, you cant expect it, you cant require it. It is the gift of the giver to give, its not anyone else's gift to give.

*[sta/psy] Whose choice it is to forgive does not vary (much) per culture  
There is a difference between "forgive and forget" and forgiveness as it is experienced these*



days; no wit is much more a personal action, a choice and a response. So, as the victim you get to choose whether or not you forget. That has actually nothing to do with your society. Your society can tell you you're supposed to forgive, but whether or not you do that is a completely different kettle of fish.

### **The future of forgiveness**

I think forgiveness has always played a role in my own life. As I said, a daily practice of forgiveness that is part of living in a household with other people. As soon as people form community, then forgiveness has to be part of the experience of being together in community, otherwise you can't do it. Otherwise, you're walking around tied in knots all the time.

### **Differences in how forgiveness has been viewed**

I would say, the one cultural difference in forgiveness is that it seems to me that in western culture to be forgiven means that you're free to go. That you have paid your debt and there's nothing more to be required of you. In cultures that are more communal, forgiveness means that you are now free to work together for a better community. That forgiveness is actually what opens the way for healing in the community, not just healing of the individual.

*[sta/psy] In Western culture, forgiving is seen as "for the individual"*

*In Western culture, it seems that to be forgiven means that you're free to go. That you have paid your debt and there's nothing more to be required of you. In cultures that are more communal, forgiveness means that you are now free to work together for a better community. That forgiveness is actually what opens the way for healing in the community, not just healing of the individual. This could be the case because Western cultures might be more individualized.*

I think maybe one example of this is of the South African truth and reconciliation process. Perpetrators of human rights violations

came before the commission, spoke to people that they harmed, or families of those they've killed loved ones of. They asked for forgiveness, the families said "sure, we're willing to forgive", and the perpetrators said "thank you very much, I've got my forgiveness and I can now go on about my business. I now no longer have any obligation to you, to society".

But the victims were saying "I forgive you, now we can work together for a better society." So, this was a case of people saying "I forgive, I forgive, I forgive", and the response from the other side was so minimal. What that then meant was that you had people who had benefited from the apartheid system, who then went in front of the truth commission, had their sins washed away so to speak, and had forgiveness from the people that they had harmed so brutally. They were then able to kind of go back in to living the nice life of a wealthy, white South African. There was no consequence to them because they were also granted immunity from prosecution for telling the truth. There was no consequence for them for what they had done, there was no downside at all.

In western society there are philosophical underpinnings in which we privilege the individual. So the I, me, my. If your whole philosophy and your way of life and living is based on I, me, my, then you can say "what is good for me in this minute is what is good." As opposed to "actually, I'm part of a society, and how does my behaviour affect the society at large?" This might explain why forgiveness in western culture is more for the individual, where in other cultures people forgive to then build together.

### **The future of forgiveness**

I think that we're living in a time when there is so much... not division, but maybe atomisation in society. We live in silos, we operate in our own narrow piece of the world, our own narrow community. And we're living in a time where climate change is creating real threats to lives and livelihoods around the



planet. Our way of life, the way that we're living now is not sustainable. It's not going to be the way that the next generation lives, because it can't be, it has nothing to do with what they want and what they don't want. Resource shortages are probably going to drive the next wars that we engage in. After the trauma of war, there's two ways forward. One way is to continue cycles of retribution and revenge that keep driving us into the next war. And the next is to start thinking about forgiveness and reconciliation, and ways of averting the next wars. That means actually being able to engage together in acts of forgiveness. I think you can almost see the difference in say, Rwanda and Bosnia. Where Rwanda made the choice for a reconciliation process after the Rwandan genocide, where Bosnia is still wearing the scars of the war in the 1980s. That had a consequence for their development. I think that's the next avenue, the next place that notions of forgiveness are really going to be tested. For the next generation, it would be in "what kind of a world are we creating?"

I think that the likelihood is that more people are going to see the necessity for forgiveness more.

### **The reason for writing the book**

Because I, as a priest, had spoken so much and preached so much on forgiveness, and really recognised the challenge that people had. Which was "okay, I want to forgive, how do I get from where I am stuck to actually being able to forgive and move on?"

## **Transcript 2: Dr. Masi Noor, senior lecturer Psychology, Keele University, England,**

*Dr. Noor is a senior lecturer in Psychology at Keele University, England. He has a PhD in the social psychology of intergroup forgiveness at the University of Sussex.*

*His research focuses on the psychology of forgiveness; why do people forgive, and what enables and inhibits them to forgive? Dr. Noor argues you have to understand the psychological experiences of victimhood and perpetratorhood in order to understand the psychology of forgiveness.*

*For his research, he conducted studies across different conflict settings, such as Northern Ireland, Chile, and Palestine-Israel.*

*Insights from his research led to the development of the Forgiveness Toolbox; a collection of skills one can study and train in order to learn how to forgive.*

### **Dr. Nasi Moor: critical psychologist**

I try to be a critical psychologist, because if you become a critical psychologist, you live in dissonance constantly. The main task of a critical psychologist is to identify hypocrisies, dissonances, that we live with or that we accept, and that we need to maybe change. I think it's an important point to maybe understand some of my work and where I come from.

The reason I would like to distance myself from positive psychology is that... well actually, currently there's a beautiful article - the title says everything - which talks about the tyranny of positive psychology. Where, you know, if you appear not to be happy or cheerful then people might actually avoid and shun you socially. That might lead to social exclusion, and you're not "the coolest".

But most importantly for me... look at the level of analysis that positive psychologists use to study whatever they want to study.

The level of analysis is the individual and the intra psychic. Fair enough, that is one of the many levels that we can understand and study phenomena on, but if that's the predominant and the only lens through which we see and understand the world, then it's a limited one. So, my concerns are that sometimes social structures and societal structures cause mental health issues, for example. Depression, unhappiness, frustration and so forth. And to reduce that to the inter psychic and individual level could potentially lead to victim blaming.

In 2008 during the banking crisis crash, a next door neighbor of mine -probably around your age [27], very nice guy, very hardworking- working in a call center lost his job. Within weeks he lost his girlfriend. Within another few more weeks he lost his flat. He was on the verge of suicide probably, and the last thing I saw was his parents picking him up to move in back with his parents because he didn't have anything.

Now, I don't know to what extent positive psychology can account for his state. And how positive psychology can actually be practically helpful in that context; in something that he hasn't even caused to bring about.

So, in that I find positive psychology sometimes a little bit naive -maybe innocently so naive- and it's predominantly the influence of kind of a very individualistic, maybe American influenced culture. Which is everyone for themselves. But sometimes, as much as we have agency, there are societal constraints. And to be honest, in many ways positive psychology could stop collective action. Because everyone is atomized in their little offices, bedrooms, stuck to their computers, trying to fix themselves.

In the meantime we forget the broader perspective that these are actually innocent individuals. They need to co-act and protest and bring about the social change that is required. I mean, don't get me wrong; I'm not a

political psychologist. I am very happy to talk about that too, but I just wanted to make that explicit. So whenever I say something about the work I do, I always keep that at the back of my mind.

So, just to make it absolutely clear -again, lived experiences are very helpful in that context- if you go to Madeira, it's a beautiful island and one of the things that will stand out are these ancient UNESCO protected forests. The forests are really important for the island, because they capture the morning fog and then transform that into drinking water. So it's essential for the islands. And yet when you walk and hike through the forest you see burnt-out wood the size of a football pitch.

I was walking there with my guide and other tourists and asking "what happened?" She said "it happens regularly here. We have a problem in Madeira, which is pyromaniacs. We have a lot of pyromaniacs in Malta." Pyromaniac is the Greek word for people, individuals, who are obsessed with fire.

Now you can leave that story there, right? And I use that for teaching sometimes. I've got photographs of the burnt trees and I show that to my psychology students. Psychology students love positive psychology and clinical psychology. And that could be the end of the story; Madeira needs more clinical psychologists to treat all those crazy pyromaniacs. Luckily I went back to the guide and I said "can you tell me a little more?" Then she told me the other half of the story.

In the early 2000s Madeira belonged to Portugal. The Portuguese government decides "look, these forests are unique in the world, they're UNESCO protected, they're really critical for water provision." And they banned the shepherd community to let their animals graze. Well, the shepherd community, who used to let their animals graze there for centuries, said "if we can't use it, nobody will be able to use it." So, they hire the so-

called pyromaniacs and destroy the forests to pressurize the government to reverse and repeal the law. There's actually an intergroup conflict, or community versus government conflict, and you totally miss out the real source of the arson attacks if you just focus on the pyromaniacs. That's a little situation about the importance of level of analysis. That's what I meant essentially.

It's important to find a balance. With a totally systemic approach then you kind of miss the individual. Where that balance lies is always in negotiation. Also, it's not that individuals are always individuals and stuck where they are; things are moving fast all the time.

### **What forgiveness means to me**

There's a philosopher French philosopher, Derrida, he has written a tiny small piece on forgiveness. Essentially his point is "it's not forgiveness if we were not dealing with the unforgivable." So anything else, if the act is easily forgivable, then it doesn't qualify, the term forgiveness does not apply.

Now, that's a particular perspective of course. Forgiveness is hard because often-times the act, the harm done, is most likely unforgivable. Which has material and psychological consequences.

*[pri/bio&psy] An "unforgivable" act implies a loss of control*

*A harmful act means irreversible damage materially. Psychologically, it means that the loved ones that you relate to, you connected with, no longer exist. And in that sense it's a loss; it's a loss of control, it's a loss of agency.*

All those things of course make the act of forgiveness very challenging.

There's one study that shows you can visualize forgiveness with a five minute exercise and that it reduces your blood pressure, at least they report so. As you know blood pressure is associated with lots of horrible health issues.

Now, what is forgiveness? There are several layers to that. The least controversial definition, I would say, is that...

*[sta/phi] Forgiveness is to respond in constructive rather than destructive ways  
You want to suppress, inhibit your impulse for revenge and you know you want to respond to the person who's harmed you in more constructive ways, rather than in destructive ways.*

That's just a very neutral ground.

We just completed a set of studies, a PhD student of mine and myself, looking more at an intergroup level of forgiveness. I think what we are seeing in the results is that forgiveness has actually a lot to do with your identity.

*[sta/phi] Forgiving requires realigning your identity  
You have a sense of understanding of who you are, and then somebody comes in and does something harmful, maybe irreversibly harmful. You're distracted and the whole direction of travel which you had prepared for has changed. That's contradictory to the kind of identity that you have developed, that you've accepted, that you've formed, and all of a sudden nothing makes sense. A realignment of your identity requires some form of profound adaptation skills: accepting reality, but not letting the event define who you are and who you will be in the future either.*

So, I think forgiveness for me means, really at a deeper level, realigning your identity. Forgiveness, especially with severe harm and offenses, does require... I mean if you insult somebody, or if you hurt somebody, essentially the act represents dehumanization: "you were not worthy of my respect." You're in contempt of that person. If you throw that at me I need to deal with that and restore. A lot of the time this is also why victims feel shame. Because the question they get distracted by is "why does it happen to me? Maybe I've deserved it? Maybe I've

provoked it?” For me all of these questions have cues in terms of... they express some need for identity change. It sounds a bit abstract, how do you then implement identity change? But, while we can't see it in our own behaviors, you can observe it in other people's behaviours.

### **On the realignment of identity**

There's no one way system or one particular route to what I refer to as identity realignment. Maybe even a better word would be identity development. In the case of the Sikh, the thing that had happened to him was based on an identity marker: his turban and the color of his skin and so forth. You could see that incident as a couple of crazy guys beating an innocent individual, totally void of the social context and the symbolism and the symbols of other markers of our identity. But ultimately, whether it was a Muslim that they wanted to beat up and kill or a Sikh it really doesn't matter, it were just those identity markers that people were attacking.

Again, if the Sikh was just focusing on “this happened yesterday to me, it was horrible and they nearly killed me”... Again it goes back to that level of analysis. In a very small way, yes the police could have found a couple of them, put them behind bars, and maybe that one may have served as a deterrent. But the main issue of racial hatred and discrimination or xenophobia would have not been addressed at all.

So, you don't have to change your identity but in a way you consolidate it. What the Sikh did in his little article was he invited them instead of putting them behind bars. “I'm inviting them to come to the Sikh temple and to ask me any questions they have about Sikhism and so forth.” Maybe it's a way of engaging and still directing.

There are people who are victims of sexual violence and rape. If they go and form a charity to work with young women, to emancipate them, empower them, inform them,

educate them, that's already taking lessons and learning the lessons from what happened to you personally. But then leveling it up to a systemic level and protecting other potential victims... and now of course the ultimate step would also be to protect future perpetrators. That would require to work with men as well, at least in heterosexual contexts.

If you speak to all the forgiveness storytellers, they have a different sense of who they are now and that's partly as a result of the trauma that they've experienced, but it's also about meaning-making. There's some really poignant stories.

There was one from an Israeli stewardess, it's on the forgiveness project. Her story starts as “look I was not born a pacifist”, she was in the Israeli army. Then she tells her story and at some point she mentions that “there were opportunities to change and develop. To change the narrative as well. And we missed those opportunities.” She feels let down by her family, by her school, by her politicians and so forth. An identity that was constructed for her in the context of violent conflict did not serve her, that does not make sense any more.

It's a combination probably of meaning-making, learning lessons. The conclusion might be “the least I can do in this situation is to protect others”, which I think is a very adaptive behavior. I think that there's social rewards, you feel better, you you feel also probably that all of this was not just futile. Your suffering was not futile. It protects others, it heals.

### **Why is forgiveness important?**

Forgiveness is not only for the good of others.

What inspired me to start working on forgiveness was having grown up in the context of conflict like Afghanistan and Northern Ireland. One thing that accounted for the endless cycle of violence was how victims would



then become tomorrow's victimizers. No doubt that they were victims; they had suffered unjustly, unfairly and in all accounts they were the definition of victims. But that same victimhood then would lead them to do harm onto the other side.

Before you knew it they've given up almost their crown of victimhood and replaced it with being perpetrator. Over generations it becomes one big mess because everyone will feel like victims and everyone will be accused of being a perpetrator. In my work it's reflected in that whole concept of competitive victimhood, where each group claims and competes over the claim that they have the bigger share of victimhood.

Forgiveness is important not just necessarily for the benefit of others, helping others, and sparing others from similar suffering, but it almost preserves your own moral identity and it may prevent you from becoming tomorrow's perpetrators.

To forgive requires character development. Maybe a step further, which is controversial and very challenging, is to recognize and realize that the real victim, or in a way that the real damage has been done to the perpetrator by the perpetrator.

*[sta/phi] "Very successful forgivers" have gone through a character development. Many people that Dr. Noor spoke to that have forgiven, have a different sense of who they are now. That's partly as a result of the trauma that they've experienced, but it's also about meaning-making. The most successful forgivers realized that they wanted to go beyond their own unfortunate situation and help other victims, and potential perpetrators, in making sure this never happened again. A Sikh invited his attackers to ask him questions about Sikh-hood, rape survivors formed a charity to work with young women, to emancipate them, empower them, inform them, educate them.*

**What helps and what doesn't help in learning to forgive?**

One of the questions you asked in the email as well was "what helps and what doesn't help?". By looking at that, you gain more understanding of the concept and the definition of forgiveness. One of the key questions that probably enables people to let go and explore forgiveness is if they could move from the "why me?" question to "why us?" question. That automatically requires broadening your perspective about who you are, who the other is, and the context in which you find yourself. "Us" could be the wrongdoer in the eyes of the victim, but it's not exclusive to that.

An anecdote that might illustrate this links also to the Ubuntu concept, the interdependence in South Africa. There was a broadcast a few years ago on the radio here in the UK. They were interviewing the sister of a victim in India. She had lost her brother due to a drinking and driving offence. Somebody was drunk and driving and it just so happened that her brother was on the street and the driver killed him. Although the interviewer was always framing the whole interview around "how do you feel, are you very angry?" She was refusing to participate.

"No, no, no. This is not why I'm here and this is not why this interview is happening. What I want to do is use my tragedy to spare other sisters from going through what I'm going, through sparing other brothers in being killed on the road, and also expanding that to the perpetrator. That those potential future perpetrators will realize the impact of drinking and driving."

Now, she may not call it forgiveness, but I think this is what I would refer to in terms of shifting your perspective. It's not gonna define her. Of course there's a loss of a brother and a loved one, but she pro actively engages and you can see her character still and you can see her identity, and she's adding to that. But it's not about just loss and there are other cases that you might be interested in which are not recorded on the forgiveness toolbox.

In 2011, I think, there was a Sikh, a medical doctor who still lives in Harlem. He was confused or misidentified as a Muslim and a couple of young people just beat him up severely. They nearly killed him. From the hospital he wrote a small article in a local newspaper in New York saying he will not go to the police, which caused outrage in the community. Then he wrote properly said “this was the toughest decision I had to do.” The easiest would have been to go to the police. Then he was saying the reason he didn’t do that was, after a lot of thinking, it became clear to him that just putting some of those perpetrators behind bars will not make his two-year-old Sikh son any safer. Or any other Sikh community, or even the Muslim community. He said -and I want to use again the same kind of terminology- “I want to use my personal tragedy to start a national conversation about these issues.”

I think for me all of this indicates that... something horrible happens to you, it changes the direction of your travel, which is really around issues of identity. How do you navigate? Do you adapt? How do you adapt as well? I think you will also see, from the forgiveness project, that a lot of the people who shared their stories a substantive number of them have started their own charities. Again, that’s indicative of it becoming something much bigger than that single incident.

Another thing that just was in my head; you mentioned that some people have told you that if they could imagine themselves doing the harm, it would be easier to forgive the wrongdoer. In fact, there’s scientific evidence for that. In the Journal of Consulting of Psychology where they’ve used the same mental framing. They’ve asked participants in one condition to imagine them being responsible for this harm versus a control condition where participants weren’t exposed to such a thing.

Essentially you’re reminding people of their own hypocrisy, dissonance. We are kind of

self-righteous, but if you remind... Well one of the things I do sometimes is, not that I ever want him to be forgiven or anything, but if I showed you a picture of a three-year-old on a tricycle, but you did not know that that was Hitler... I think my aim is not to make you forgive Hitler, but my aim is to understand that A) what happened through the Holocaust... one individual was never solely responsible, B) that individual was not born as a monster, the person evolved into that.

### **Forgiving yourself: harder than forgiving others**

It also relates to your question about self forgiveness and why that is different or more difficult than forgiving others. We know from psychological research that we’re very, very, very protective of our moral identity. We want to be seen as good people and whenever we were caught doing something horrible, we try to explain and say that the social circumstances led and compelled us to do what we did. We’re not evil. Once someone has harmed another person in an irreversible way, that perpetrator, however in denial they might be on the surface, inside there’s a different story. They have to live with that.

Therefore, I argue that that makes self forgiveness really hard. Because in many ways you can use different techniques, perspective taking, and going beyond “why me”, and connecting with other people’s pains and all sorts of things, but what do we do when we are the perpetrator? We’ve done something irreversible and that requires probably even a bigger shift in identity. You have to, finally maybe, acknowledge that we have potentials for doing both good and evil or horrible stuff. It’s about awareness, and it’s about controlling it, and suppressing the impulse. Self forgiveness is, I think, undoubtedly harder than forgiving others.

### **Hollywood forgiveness**

One of the problems when talking about forgiveness is that we have a very narrow and traditional social script to talk about it. By that what I mean is that the assumptions



that we make are very linear, meaning that we always have in mind a perpetrator. Tangible. Most likely ugly-looking. And we have a very sweet, innocent victim on the other side. The whole apology, big forgiveness cycle is predicated upon what you need to do. As a perpetrator you must offer your apology, display your remorse, and then you return power to the victim and the victim will have the power to offer you or withdraw their forgiveness. Therefore feeling empowered and rehumanized. Then it's almost like a bit of a Hollywood approach; everyone's happy.

I think in real life that applies only to a very narrow realm of how forgiveness is experienced, offered, restored and lived. We've done some research where we consider situations in which to be honest, most of the times perpetrators are unwilling to accept what they've done, they're certainly in denial. And sometimes they may not be even around to demand an apology from. What does that then mean for the victim? Does that mean that they're trapped forever in their victimhood? And what are the techniques and tools, psychological ones, that will facilitate victims to enable themselves to forgive without needing the apology or the recognition of the perpetrator that have done them wrong?

*[sta/eth] Hollywood forgiveness*  
*We have a very narrow and traditional social script when we talk about forgiveness. The assumptions that we make are very linear, meaning that we always have in mind a nasty perpetrator and an innocent victim. The big forgiveness cycle is predicated upon what you need to do. As a perpetrator you must offer your apology, display your remorse, and then you return power to the victim and the victim will have the power to offer you or withdraw their forgiveness. Therefore feeling empowered and rehumanized. Then it's almost like a bit of a Hollywood approach; everyone's happy. In real life that applies only to a very narrow realm of how forgiveness is experienced, offered, restored and lived*

It is important to think about, whatever you

design, that in terms of scientific research we always go for templates that are very neat. That we can manipulate in labs and experiments. They create very neat stories about scientific insights; "oh you do this and then it becomes this." Real life will teach you that it is much much messier. I think there are probably a lot of people who could waste their entire lives waiting for an apology.

### **The Forgiveness Toolbox**

Those tools are not the only tools. Also, although they are presented in a particular order, they're not describing a process. I think we picked those for two reasons. One was because they were so clearly coming up in the stories that we were reading and analyzing. Two, they also were easily linked to psychological theory in research that we were doing. I think we've got over twenty six thousand visitors from over 180 countries around the world, who have been visiting the website and the toolbox. I think our aim was to start a conversation. In fact, when I teach that here it's oftentimes that with different individuals, different aspects of different tools will resonate with them. There will always be a case when none of the tools will work. I think the toolbox was launched in 2013, so since then we've learned a lot more. That said, I don't know whether it was the toolbox or the book which triggered that response, but the most amazing or the most touching, moving response was somebody who emailed me: "Look, I don't know what has happened, but I've just called my father with whom I haven't spoken with for over 10 years. I just don't know what happened, but I just called him and he's on his way to my house right now, and he has not seen his grandchild yet who is 10 years old."

It's amazing, and I don't know which aspect of the toolbox... In the book we talk a little bit about the different things that may facilitate forgiveness. Sometimes it's a mindset. When you have this conversation, you get yourself into a mindset. You see human frailty, you see human vulnerability, and you see your own vulnerability. But also your own

potential for harming and being harsh and excluding people for life. Is that the kind of person you want to be? Is that the life you want to live? Those are big questions, but sometimes they can have a huge impact instantly.

### **Forgive and forget**

This comes close to another way to define forgiveness. It's a useful way to think about. It doesn't make it more practical. You can think about it from a computational perspective almost, in that when deciding to forgive, there are two parameters that you need to think about. One parameter is about the value of the relationship. How much do you value that person? How much do you want that person in your life? What would be your life without that person? The other parameter is assessing future exploitation risk. The extent to which the harm might be done again, and repeatedly, and essentially that the other person will not change, or at least change their behaviors.

For me there are three strategies to respond to conflict. One is revenge; trying to exact or correct what was wrong. Two is avoidance; it can be a very practical solution such as to move houses, move city, move countries. Three is of course the forgiveness approach or path, which is yet to be clearly defined, but it's essentially none of the above. It's not necessarily taking revenge, it's not necessarily taking avoiding. But, I guess, a constructive way of engaging.

Sometimes people say "I'm struggling, I don't know. I mean, I want to forgive, but I can't." You can very quickly or very easily respond to that by saying "think about these factors, these parameters." If you're struggling, then you're probably still worried that the person will not really change their behavior. Then you're quite likely to be exposed to the same harm again.

About it not being possible to move houses for example. And that it's maybe naive/wishful thinking that forgiveness should not

depend on anything you can't control. There is some research on the dark side of forgiveness. This was a longitudinal study of four years about romantic relationships. Newly wedded couples were followed across four years. They found that with the couples who were exposed to either psychological abuse or physical abuse, but who kept forgiving their partners, nothing changed. There was a stable line, meaning they continued to be exposed to that kind of abuse. For the couples who did not forgive those instances, the line went down and decreased. So a lack of forgiveness in that context clearly signaled that "this is unacceptable, this has to change, or we have to divorce and go different paths." So, I think that there are times that forgiveness is not appropriate.

*[sta/psy] The dark side of forgiveness*  
*For a study, newly wedded couples were followed across four years. They found that with the couples who were exposed to either psychological abuse or physical abuse, but who kept forgiving their partners, nothing changed. There was a stable line, meaning they continued to be exposed to that kind of abuse. For the couples who did not forgive those instances, the line went down and decreased.*

In fact, we touch on this in the book as well. If nothing has changed, there's nothing to forgive. The circumstances that led to the offense, to the hurt, to the trauma, if they have not changed there is nothing to forgive. Because all you do is you accommodate. I understand that there may be specific circumstances. But that mantra of "give me something to forgive..." So forgiveness can be also defined as desiring social change, whether it's in your romantic relationship, or in your family, or in your community, or in the university or society. But if nothing has changed, and if there's no promise of change... When I say there's nothing to forgive, that doesn't necessarily mean that you go out and get a gun and shoot around and take revenge. So the opposite of forgiveness is not always revenge, but I think you need to facilitate the conditions that are conducive

of forgiveness. Forgiveness ultimately ought to lead to some form of transformation.

It could be a self transformation where you're not bothered and distracted, and it doesn't hurt anymore, and you can get on with life and find your own path. Or it's the transformation of others or it's the transformation of both.

In short, absolutely, I think it'd be very naive to always forgive. What's interesting though is the following thought experiment, which we don't know much about in terms of research findings. Think of people who always tend to forgive, where it's almost their instinctive, first impulsive response. Like "oh never mind, that's fine, don't worry about."

If somebody is known about always being forgiving, people might think that they can get away with things. But, I think there may be a response from the community then. I think other people who care for you will then stand up and deal with the perpetrator. In fact, there is one paper which is called "Second hand not forgiving".

It found that the least forgiving people -for example in a situation about cheating- is not necessarily the victimized partner, but oftentimes it's the family members of the victimized partner.

*[pri/rel] Second-hand unforgiveness*  
*Oftentimes, people realize when a victim is too forgiving. For example, a study found that the least forgiving people in a situation involving cheating were not necessarily the victimized partner, but the family members of the victimized partner.*

Even if you are this constantly forgiving individual, I think there may be some protective mechanisms that might be offered by the community.

### **Forgiveness in daily life**

The way I think about my work, or most scientific work maybe, is that in order to

understand something of which we know very little, it helps us sometimes to just go to the extreme. Then you can identify its core principles, elements. Then you come back to the center. You go to the edge and see where the outer limits are, and then you come back to the center. Yes, you're absolutely right; not every instance of forgiveness happens because a severe and irreversible harm was done.

I think there's some mileage in terms of "how do we deal with the daily snagging of a family life, life at work with colleagues or romantic relationships." I think there's not much work done probably. The problem might be there that the concept of forgiveness is very loaded and oftentimes preserved to very profound harms and instances in life-changing events. When we bring it to that daily level, some people might think that we're trivializing the concept, and that what you're really talking about is just mutual acceptance. Or because you feel so in love that those little snaggy things don't matter to you, you can see the bigger picture. I don't know... if you forget something, if you unintentionally annoy someone, miscommunication and all those kind of things, there's some space for that to explore.

To be honest, I think whatever level you're talking about, I've never been really happy with the word forgiveness. It's so... you mention it and people already have ideas about it. I don't know what to replace it with. You might have more problems even when you are applying it to daily conflicts and lighter conflicts, but of course it should apply there too.

I think there is some research on forgiving romantic partners of life. There wasn't more forgiveness, there were partners whose expectations were positive. Or when they're reframing the mistakes that their partners were making in more positive ways, the relationship lasted for much longer.

I think we're focusing on the higher level, we

mustn't forget the day-to-day instances. It's no my expertise, and I haven't done much research, but I think it's certainly... because sometimes then that becomes a characteristic of the person. It's an interesting question, I honestly don't know. I think you don't always necessarily need to go to the genocides and rape and great big conflicts. But, I think the reason scholars do so is because it's in its extreme form.

I find it very interesting in terms of... you're the first design student who is interested in this kind of thing. It's a really brave and interesting approach to combine a social concept with your understanding and knowledge of design. Because ultimately we are designing life.

### **Giving the book to someone**

I guess my initial plan was that oftentimes it's people who are already either naturally interested in it, or have experienced it, or want to know about it, so I just wanted to broaden the conversation about it. We've tried to work with an illustrator to lighten up things a little bit. It took us two years and it's much credit to the artist who was very patient with me particularly. But, all you can do is to nudge and facilitate, but you can't really fix people. What I tend to do is whenever I have these kind of conversations first I always check up on people, assist them, accompany them. Sometimes things can be very raw, you never know.

Just being mindful that sometimes it can have a huge impact. So hopefully the images help a little bit. But do watch it, people are very vulnerable. You will know if it's the right thing to do. Trust your intuition.

### **The future of forgiveness**

Let me just say I was really impressed by your questions that you've asked. I mean, you've just gone straight into the core questions philosophers, psychologists, historians, all sorts of social scientists, have been struggling to answer.

Regarding the last question, "how will forgiveness change in the future?", what instantly comes to mind is something that I'm applying for some research money at the moment. Which is, right now, "if he drove too fast and carelessly and killed my child", well then the forgiveness happens between you and me, right? We need to find a way or dialogue we can talk about that. But in probably less than 10 years, maybe even five years, who do we forgive when driverless cars will be the common mode of transportation? Who do we hold accountable? Who do we blame? Very interesting, it's not about doom and gloom and scary, but just the second you think you've got something society, life, technology, design will throw something new at you.

[dev/tec] Increasing possibilities of technology raise questions about accountability. Technology brings about many possibilities that remove the need for a human to perform a certain task. Who can we hold accountable when something goes wrong in a situation like this? For example, a careless driver who kills a child can obviously be held accountable for his actions. But who do we forgive when driverless cars will be the common mode of transportation? We do not have an answer for this question now, and we're not sure how people will deal with this, but we know we will find it difficult to handle.

Navigating through that, the question "how does forgiveness today differ from the past" kind of touches on the religion and forgiveness link. I think that in the past it was a prescriptive norm, especially if you have a religious identity; "you shall do this", so it's normative.

*[tre/psy] Forgiveness is becoming less of a prescriptive norm. In the past forgiveness was a prescriptive norm, especially if you have a religious identity; "you shall do this", so it's normative. Now, we are less about "forgive and forget". You will remember. It's what you do with what you remember. And choosing for yourself how to*



*approach it (if at all) and how.*

We talked about systemic level versus individual level, and maybe that overemphasises the importance of community and religious structures, and where you have to sacrifice what you at an individual level wanted or were prepared to do or not. And the phenomenon where religion dictates people to do the forgiving is still very much present in parts of the world, including the UK and certainly in African and South American countries and so forth. However, just the fact that psychology or science, even medical sciences actually, are now playing with the concept of forgiveness and studying it...

### **Transcript 3: Matthew, Dennis & Sheila Linn, of Linn Ministries**

*Linn Ministries is an organisation committed to the nonviolent resolution of personal and social conflicts, led by Matthew, Dennis and Sheila Linn. They have also authored several books on forgiveness. Linn Ministries includes retreats, conferences, books and tapes.*

*The following letters are used to refer to different people:*

*S: Sheila Linn*

*M: Matthew Linn (oftentimes referred to as Matt by Sheila and Dennis)*

*D: Dennis Linn (oftentimes referred to as Denny by Matthew and Sheila.*

#### **Can you tell me about Linn Ministries?**

S: The two names that we use are Linn Ministries -which is the address of our website- and Remember Ministries, which is a non-profit organisation we have that sponsors our retreats.

S: When you refer to us as experts on forgiveness, I suppose there's something to that, in that we have researched forgiveness and we have written about it. But, most of what we know comes from working with people. I'm not sure is what the weird is either... ordinary people, amateurs, lay people. Whatever you want to call it. Most of what we know comes of giving retreats, using processes for forgiveness, and observing what happens. As often as possible, we follow up and we really encourage people to let us know the long term effect of using processes of forgiveness. We come from ordinary, every day experiences as much as anything else.

D: We began giving retreats way, way back. But here is what happens. As soon as you write a book, we did that in 1974, everyone thinks you know more than you did the day before, so you start getting a lot of invitations. I think our work was really launched in 1974 with the book *Healing of Memories*. I think that opened up the possibility to peo-

ple -and it had already to ourselves- of going back to earlier moments and being able to finish, what we just call, the unfinished business of those times.

Because of that we started getting a lot of invitations. Because it's a need -what I want to get to- that that the whole world has. Since 1974 we've worked in over 60 countries. Basically people have invited us to work through memories in their families, they have invited us to work through memories in their country, between black and white, between Protestant and Catholics. What it does is gives people a common meeting ground. A common way of acknowledging each other as really vulnerable people who want to move toward a more fulfilling life.

I think everybody wants that. For instance, when we were in India, we would have people coming to retreats that were Muslims, or Hindus, or Untouchables. People that might not ordinarily meet with or get together with one another. It's a universal language for a longing that we all have inside of ourselves, which is to connect with one another.

M: We make a distinction between forgiveness and reconciliation. Forgiveness is what we do even if we can't connect to another person. If they're hurt, and they keep hurting us, we can still forgive on our part. Reconciliation is when they build a bridge to us and we connect that way, but that's not always possible. People can really be so wounded and so toxic, that you can't have more to do with them. You have to put up a hand that says "no more abuse" and you have to stay out of their way maybe. But forgiveness is something you do for yourself. It always changes you and sets you into this place that Dennis was talking about, that's free. Where you can start to relate to others, you can love yourself. You can build a bridge if it's possible to build a bridge to the other person. All that is the ideal. Sometimes you get to have it, that connection, and sometimes you don't.

M: I think there's some myths to forgiveness. Forgive and forget, we often say in English. No, you're going to remember it. It's what you do with what's remembered. If you love yourself and you have a whole way of caring for that other person, even if it's at a distance, even if it's just through prayer, it isn't forgive and forget.

It isn't saying everything is okay. No. If you've been hurt you have to face that hurt. It's the whole thing of facing what you're feeling, what happened to you, not denying it. The question that helps us, helps me anyway, is "what am I not so grateful for?" Often times I think I've already forgiven, "it's okay, it's alright." You know, "I can go on." I have all kinds of excuses. I was a small child, the shortest one, and I was always taught "go ahead, forgive". And I just swallowed a lot of stuff. The the first question I ask myself is "what am I not so grateful for?" Whatever I'm not so grateful for, that's the hurt that's inside me. The first thing to do is face it, to feel it, to experience it, so it isn't just swallowed. Otherwise I'm in this whole state of denial, where it lives inside me like a cancer. I just can't go on with my life as if it's not there.

Once I'm in that place where I can face it, then there's two hands that come up. I will tell you about the two hands. It's basically your anger. Anger helps you to taste the hurt, rather than just swallow it. One hand comes up and says "no more abuse. I'm just not gonna let myself to continue to be hurt. I am a person that is good, a person that has value." As I start to take in life for myself and receive, the other hand starts to come out. It reaches out to do something about the other person, and usually the first thing I think about is vengeance. "I want to get even." But vengeance leads to another cycle vengeance.

Gandhi says "the whole world will go blind if we take an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." Well, the deepest part of vengeance wants the person healed, wants where they could be a person of giving and receiving life



and love, and connecting to people. Rather than just a person who's wounded and is going to hurt you as you hurt them again. So, it's finding that place, and even if I can't have more to deal to more or to do with that person, I can at least reach out, pray for that person, pray for the healing of their wound. Because people who hurt us are wounded people. Usually they have been wounded in some way.

I find that Nelson Mandela had a really neat thing with the guards in South Africa. He looked for the glimmer of humanity inside each guard. He knew their wounds. They were chosen because they had lost family members, and they wanted to get even with anybody who was black. But, the only way he could stop their abuse day after day in prison, was finding that little place where they are a human being. And reaching out, making it bigger any way he could. Maybe they would talk to another guard about their son who is a soccer player. How good he was a goalie. Mandela would just keep talking about it, "how is your son doing now? How many goals has he stopped? What team will he play next?" If he could do this with every guard -it took him 25 years with one guard- he could find that way to the person's heart. Where they were a human being. And you could get that to grow. That's kind of what we look at as forgiveness. It's stopping abuse, but it's also "is there a way you can start to reach out, heal the wound inside yourself, heal the wound inside the other person?" And find the gifts inside yourself, find the gifts inside the other person.

S: That may or may not be possible. It is not always possible. What we always need to do when we've been hurt or abused in some way, is to say "no." And that's a boundary. That's essential. It's really a first step of forgiveness. We have to start with ourselves. The other hand reaches out to the extent that we are able to do so, that we want to do so.

Can you imagine a person to whom you feel

very close, and you trust them? If that person hurts you in some way. You might put out one hand and say "No! I don't want you to do that anymore. Do not do that again." That first hand wouldn't be very far up, because you basically trust that person and you know they mean you well.

Now, the other hand is going to be way up there; "I care about you, I want the best for you, whatever is going on we can work it out." That's a relationship with someone you trust. With someone you do not trust -and that can be someone who is really dangerous to you- then that hand that says "no" is way up there. And the hand that says "I care about you" is still there, because this is a human being. But it may be very close, it might not be out any distance at all, and you don't have to put it out any further than feels right to you. You're always balancing those two hands, and the starting point has to be what you need to feel safe.

Now, this eliminates vengeance, because you do care about the other person. You do wish them well, but you may not be able to do anything about it, maybe never, maybe not for a long time. What you don't do in the realm of forgiveness is to get heated. Remember that person is a human being. But, you may not focus on what do they need and how you can help. They are just too dangerous and it hurts too badly. You wish them well, but that may be all you can do.

So, I think what we're talking about is a very misunderstanding of forgiveness and the starting point so often, especially in Christian circles, has been "should", "I should." "I should love that person, I should reach out to that person, I should... I should..." And what gets lost in the process is yourself. You have to start with yourself, and then, whatever you can do for the other will rise up naturally as you come to feel safe.

### **The steps to forgiveness**

D: We have a twenty year old son, and every night we do two questions with him, and

we've done it all his life. I want to go back to those, because they're such a basic step. The first question we do every night, my son, myself, my wife, if Matt is with us we do it together, is "what am I most grateful for?" To me the whole process of forgiveness begins by being inside of ourselves, and what are the things we are most grateful for?

What gives us vision? What gives us life? What's giving us life today? From there, the second question is "what am I least grateful for?" That points out the places, the possibilities for forgiveness. What I really want to emphasize is, you don't go to the second until you're grounded in the first.

You have to be grounded in yourself, in your own stencil of life. I would call it life inside of you, light inside of you, because -here's what I want to say- that's what you're ultimately surrounding this other situation with. To me that's what ultimately allows me to enter into that situation with hope, with some kind of expectation, knowing that "okay something has turned out as well in these other situations, now what do I want to bring into these situations that are not happening so well? What can I carry from one to another?"

So, I think the first step in forgiveness is to be connected to yourself. To be able to go back in your own life. See the things you're grateful for. I'm saying that because the gratitude gives you a hope and a foundation in this whole thing, and it gives you memories to rest upon as you begin the steps. So, it's a simple process, we do it every night. We can talk about what the five steps are, but we do this process every night. The five steps, I do it when there is a difficult situation. I just wanted to emphasize the most simple are the two steps that we just talked about.

S: Denny was referring to two different processes there. The steps he is referring to is like the backdrop, the starting point. And that's -step 1- getting in touch with what we're grateful for from the day. Step 2, getting in touch with what we're not so grateful

for from the day. We do this every night as he said. What we're grateful for gives us hope, what we're not so grateful for is a clue for what may we need to forgive.

Then come the 5 stages of forgiveness. These are based on the 5 stages of grief of Kübler-Ross. When you get to those stages then you're really focusing on the process of forgiveness. Each stage has its own unique way of moving through that process. The key thing is to be authentic. To be honest about where we are at that stage, and not to push ourself to forgive in any way. It's to be honest.

In our experience, and how we teach it, it's essential to first connect with your inner self before moving on to the 5 steps. For example, if we're giving a retreat and we're gonna include the 5 stages of forgiveness, the first talk is on getting in touch with what we're grateful for.

We always start anything we do by getting people in touch with what they're grateful for, and, depending on the context, what they are not grateful for. If we're going to do forgiveness, we'll start there; what are we not grateful for? So we always begin with those two steps.

M: When asking yourself those two questions, take whatever has the most energy to it. You are with a friend or a grandchild, or whatever, that's what alive. Take that and let that grow inside you. If you don't have one for the day, then you go back to one from your life. A time that you loved, or a time that you received life. Usually gratitude has to do with giving and receiving love in life. What are the memories you have? Maybe it was with nature. You had a dog that had an unconditional love, maybe it's when you held a baby. Go back and get rooted in that whole place where you're giving and receiving love again. Because forgiveness has a... You can't give unless it's inside yourself. You have to have self acceptance and that life inside of you, or there's nothing to share with another person.

Or you're just going to be doing it artificially, and it won't really work. It's not going to be real, and it's not going to be helpful for the other person either.

### **On what you're grateful for, and not grateful for?**

S: The first question gives hope, the second question uncovers what might need to be forgiven. I think what it's doing is... It's like taking the temperature of where you are. Or owning your psychic, your emotional state at the moment. It's naming the truth of who you are at this moment. Because it's putting you in touch with the most authentic sense of self, the centre of your being. From where we come from, the centre of every person is light, is truth. So, what's the nature of it at this moment? How is my light shining? Because when we're in touch with ourselves -this is an assumption on our part- the self knows the next step in growth. It knows where to go. In a safe environment, the self knows "what do I need now in order to continue to grow, to continue to heal?" So, that's all you're doing. You're reading the temperature of the self, or naming the parameters where the self is right now at this moment.

Carl Rogers was an American psychotherapist. He was the founder of what is now modern counseling psychology. His premise was very simple: if you create an environment of unconditional positive regard for a client, the client will automatically grow and heal. All a human being needs, is a space, an environment of unconditional positive regard. What we're doing is taking that insight of his, and giving people a way to enter that space. We're trying to create unconditional positive regard in a retreat environment, help people feel safe, and help them name whatever's the truth inside themselves. If they can do that in a safe environment, they will automatically grow, heal, take the next step in their own development. In terms of forgiveness, if they've been stuck in that in some way, this loosens it up. It loosens the space. Because people want to grow, it's innate. This two-step process creates a

space. If there's a lack of forgiveness, that's affecting the person. It's not good for us to go around with a lack of forgiveness. We want to heal. We're trying to create a space where they feel safe, and then that built-in healing process -it's innate, it's natural- can take over.

D: I want to bring this down to something really practical. Something happened to us yesterday. We had a meeting which went for about two hours. We were just talking about things that seemed unfinished in us, that's what we did. In the end we took some time to just say "okay, how did the whole thing go?" I myself said "I am really grateful when you said "this and this and this", and I really felt bad that I said "this and this and this..." What I'm trying to say is that the process of forgiveness is just... it's daily... it's in the moment... it's the grease of what helps life to go smoothly. Sometimes we're talking here about 5 steps, and 5 stages and all this and that. But, the things that are in our books are there because they have been helpful in our lives. We've been working together for... our first book came out in '74, we started retreats, Sheila joined us in 1981. What I'm saying is, in any relationship, it's a daily thing. It can be a daily, very simple experience.

### **The daily aspect of forgiveness**

M: It's everything. It's taking in gratitude wherever I can. It's a simple thing like the weather. When I find myself not liking the weather, "what am I not grateful for?" Well am I just going to swallow that? Or there is a place where I can care for myself? Maybe I have to do something else when I'm walking in that weather, or whatever. Anyway, it's wherever I'm grateful; take in. Wherever I'm not so grateful; notice it. Weather. People. Food. Whatever it is. And the more I do that process, the more it just becomes automatic. I don't have to think about it, it just pops up. Next time I catch the weather faster. And rather than saying "I wish I were at a place with more sunshine", I think about what's right here, and how can I be loved and care

for myself? So, it's broad. Forgiveness that we focus on is mostly people, but it's also for everything.

S: There are larger implications to this. Some of the most satisfying experiences we had were in countries where there were longstanding conflicts, internal wars even. For example, South Africa and the conflict between blacks and whites, Nicaragua and the Sandanistas and Contras, Northern Ireland and protestants and catholics, and so forth. What we found so often -if you get people to reflect upon the origin of how they feel toward the other side- is that it's a hurt. What really becomes quite remarkable, is that it's often the same hurt. For example, we had a group in Northern Ireland of protestants and catholics who had lost their children or their brothers in the troubles and the war there. As we worked with them, we realised we all have the same hurt. "The protestants didn't kill my son, the war did." "The catholics didn't kill my brother, the war did." When they were able to understand that, and to understand that they had the same hurt -we're all grieving for lost children, for lost children, lost husbands- they were able to forgive each other. And they were able to really reconcile. In that case, they really were able to reconcile.

So, forgiveness can take place on a large scale. It can be healing to the point of helping resolve conflicts that have been going on for centuries.

### **How forgiving differs on small to large scale**

S: There's forgiveness involving two sides of a national conflict, that has taken hundreds or maybe thousands of lives. Comparing this to a little daily event, where one person was not thoughtful of the other, is there a difference in the basic stages or process of forgiveness, or is it essentially the same?

M: The 5 stages work on the big level and on the little level, because they're working with loss. A loss, whether it's a big one or a little one, it still has to be grieved. And the steps

of grief apply to big ones and to little ones. On a big level, you might have to put a face on that, so you have a whole sense of what the loss is and you can face it more. It isn't just a vague thing. So there are some things like that you have to do, but the process of grief is whatever you're grieving. It can be big and it can be little. That's why these stages work on both of these levels. They work with people who are into social justice, they work with people who are in into marriage conflicts, they work with what you have to forgive inside yourself, if it's just one person. You follow wherever the feelings go. It isn't like "on the "big" level you have to do this or you have to do that." It's what is it that you're feeling on whatever level, and how can you give and receive love and life right there for yourself and where does that take you? What's the next step that it invites you to do? That's basically why it works on all those levels. And yes, there are going to be different things that happen, but it's still the same thing about loss and grieving losses.

### **Why is it so difficult to forgive?**

M: One thing is that with "I have to forgive, I should forgive, it's the right thing to do" you follow the hurt. We have a book called Don't Forgive to Soon. Because if you swallow the hurt, it's just a "should". All you do is bury it, and it's just going to grow. Then we have to go through the two hands step that Sheila was talking about. You have to be taking in life from all life, that Dennis was talking about.

The two questions each day; what am I grateful for, what am I not so grateful for? All those are necessary. So, one block is "forgive and forget, just put it aside, I've already forgiven", and the other one is "I should, I have to... I have to..." No, you have to get life inside yourself, or it doesn't work. In fact, it comes with a hook. "You want to change the other person, you want to be right." There are all kind of things like that. The problems come up on whatever stage you're in. If you're trying to forgive yourself, there are



different problems there. If you're trying to forgive another, there are different problems there. You're not taking in life enough, it's a different problem there. Every stage has its own problems. It's facing what you're feeling, basically letting yourself give and receive love right there, and then it moves either to resolve that problem, or it moves into whatever is the next step.

D: I think it's really hard to say that there is one reason people find it difficult to forgive. My first answer to that question is that they have not taken in enough life, enough love. That's the way I try and live every day. I'm really aware of doing that. In the food that I eat, I try to jog every day, I try and take in a lot of life. I would answer that question that way, I'm sure a different person might answer the question in a different way. I would hate to give one reason or a main reason.

M: We have a stage we call bargaining; "I will forgive you if..." You come up there with whatever would make it easier. "If you first apologise", "if you change" and so forth. That's a stage that finds what the problem of the block is. Then you know what to do. You work with that. That's a question that will help you find the problem: what would make it easier to forgive? What change do you want? Working with yourself, it's the same thing. What do I need inside myself so that I can do the same thing? I can receive life again. Maybe I need more rest. Maybe I need exercise, maybe I need friendship. What would make it easier? That gets to what the barrier is.

### **Is forgiveness always possible?**

S: The desire for an apology is a common bargain. A common condition for many people that they will forgive if the other apologises. But also, I think many people are not going to get an apology.

Either the other person isn't capable of it. or not around anymore. One of the important things in the bargaining stage is to understand "what is it I want?" Okay, an apology.

"What else do I want? What are my needs, and how can I get those needs met? So, the one who hurt me may not be able to meet any of those needs. How else can I get my needs met? is there someone else who can be very caring and respectful of me and really honor who I am and where I'm coming from?" That might help meet the need for an apology. "Is there someone who can really stand up for my reputation? Because maybe that's how I was hurt. Maybe the one who hurt me damaged my reputation. Okay, who are people who know what a good person I am and will say so?" It is essential to the bargaining stage to know what your bargains are, to know what you need begin to explore ways to get those needs met, even if the one who hurt you can't do it.

### **Forgiving others versus yourself**

M: You go back and forth. You're into forgiving another, you find places inside yourself, find pieces inside of yourself, you find out if it's related to another person. The stages work whether you're working with one or the other.

It's not the idea that you go from denial-anger-bargaining-depression-acceptance and then you're done. You go back and forth in the stages.

It's basically, Sheila was saying, listening to what your feeling and what your need is. And your need will land you in one stage or another; "I have to do something with myself, I have to do something with another."

Like the example Sheila gave; "I need somebody else, this person is not going to change, I need somebody else who can respect me.

So, yes, whether you're working with yourself or with another the stages work, but don't get the idea that they just go from one to another. It's basically whatever you feel. Can you give and receive love and life right there, and what could be a way of doing that? When you do that, you meet the need that's right there, and then you move to wherever

the next need is. It might be with yourself, it might be with another. We try to not get people to focus so much on the stages, it's whatever you're feeling. Is that a place where I can give and receive love and life, are my needs going to be met? So, whether you're working with yourself or others, it goes back and forth.

### **How forgiveness has changed over time**

D: I would start by taking it to a larger level. I think there is a lot more sensitivity to the aliveness of not just people, but of animals, trees, sky and air that people are demonstrating.

And people are having a sense inside, you know, "we've really wronged the environment."

Having been in touch with some indigenous tribes lately, Standing Rock and other movements,

I think there is a movement on the Earth to involve people in the process of asking for forgiveness for the ways that we mistreat. The brothers and sisters, the trees the plants, all of that. And coming to terms with what that means for us.

I think it is going to move, or has moved, to a whole different level. The things that we have talked about, starting with "what are you most grateful for, what are you least grateful for?", the 5 stages; I think all these are going to be really significant in the global awareness, and will be very instrumental in affecting climate change and the things we are going to face. I think the conversation is changing.

M: The other thing that's happening is that it's going across body-mind-spirit; the whole person.

There are so many studies that are... Since 1989 there has been a whole group of physical studies on the difference it makes to your body. We're waking up to that. We never

had that before. Mayo has a whole group that just works with forgiveness, because when you can forgive it lowers your blood pressure, it changes your immunology. Physically there are so many changes you can't help.

The psychological part has gone back further, but what we're catching up on is the physical part.

*[tre/bio] The impact of forgiveness on the physical level is being noticed and studied more*

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And then the part that Dennis is talking about; we're learning how to do that with bigger groups, with whole nations, with wars, in Northern Ireland.

What changed it is, in the prisons the prisoners from both sides just shared their hurts. "I've lost all my buddies." And another guys says "I've lost all my buddies." And then they start working on that macro-level. Those things weren't there so much four years ago.

You thrive only if you can forgive hurts rather than draining life out of you. Whether it's your body, whether it's your mind and your heart, whether it's this whole thing up your environment, around you and the culture that you live.

M: We were at Standing Rock and US Army veterans came to Standing Rock and they asked for forgiveness. For the ways they have hurt the tribes. They came to Standing Rock to help the tribes on the issues of water and air. What I want to highlight is that



there are hopeful things like that, that point to what could happen globally. It gives me hope as I look towards the next years with my son and all. Something wonderful can be achieved.

S: I think what Denny and Matt just said gathers up forgiveness and puts it in for a much broader context.

You know, our country is... it's hard to find the right language. We're on the brink of destroying the United States, because of hatred and alienation and prejudice and bigotry. We are in the middle of it. It's horrible. Whatever happens with Mr. Trump, we are going to have to forgive one another and reconcile with one another. And with what we've done to the Earth. I support Denny and Matt in what they said; now it's in a much larger context.

What we have now in this country is hatred and hurt on a mass scale. The country is divided almost into those that we would regard, fortunately, as more reasonable and more oriented towards the common good. There are more of them, more of us. But there is still a profound addition and a profound lack of forgiveness, and I have to say on both sides. I don't want to go off on our politics too much. You probably already have some idea that... this is going to require forgiveness on a mass scale. I think our hope is that we can elect officials who understand what Denny was saying about the extent of the conversation that needs to be had. We need people who can lead a process of forgiveness on a national scale. Rather than fomenting more division.

I think the majority of people know something is terribly wrong, and that a country cannot function this way, with this degree of division. And I think most people know when they encounter leaders who see the good in everyone, who hold out for the values on all sides

That's essential to forgiveness, that assump-

tion that we're all the same inside. Really good leaders create a space where people feel safe. They can relax a little bit, calm down the hostility a little bit, and everyone knows they're going to be heard and taken care of. We're a long way from that. But I think the principles of forgiveness can help us.

The notion that we need forgiveness is increasing with the times we are experiencing now.

## Transcript 4: Adrienne Blomberg

*Adrienne Blomberg works at TearFund, which conducts work in gender and sexual based violence (SGBV). Forgiveness plays a large role in the process the people who experienced SGBV go through. Adrienne works with that group for West Africa.*

*The interview was conducted in Dutch.*

### Insights of interview

Vergeving is geen opdracht. Vergeving kan bevrijding geven. Voor je eigen goed. Vergeving is zeggen dat je niet meer boosheid, kwaadheid, pijn, bij je draagt, maar dat “geeft” aan de persoon die je dat aangedaan heeft. Note: geef aan god/jezus die aan het kruis heeft gehangen.

Onvergevingsheid gezindheid wil alleen maar het slechte voor de dader: je wilt die vertrap zien. Dat is ook niet goed voor jezelf.

Vergeving hoort bij: “ik ben het waard om verder te leven”. Het zet je vrij en je kunt je eigen leven weer oppakken.

Vergeven is niet alleen proces, het is een liefdevol proces.

Survivor is central: proces van vergeving moet persoon centraal staan. Je kunt niemand iets opdringen, je kunt dingen suggereren maar aks zij er niet klaar voor zijn ga je niet verder. Het is een heel persoonlijk gebeuren.

In Zuid-Amerika hebben ze restitutorial justice: daarbij geven ze de pijn terug aan degene die je het aangedaan heeft. Bijvoorbeeld naar gevangenis gaan waar verkrachter vastzat, “ik vergeef je, alle pijn en vernedering die je me hebt aangedaan, die moet jij dragen”. Dat heeft haar goed gedaan.

In de vrijheid die vergeving je geeft kan je groeien. Als je constant met de pijn en bitterheid leeft, dat bepaalt hoe jij je gedraagt naar andere mensen. Bijvoorbeeld bij sek-

sueel geweld heeft dat als gevolg dat vrouwen en mannen haten. Er is niks zo erg om in pijn en bitterheid te moeten leven.

Je kan leren leven met pijn. Ik zou niet zeggen dat iemand die niet kan vergeven niet verder komt. Maar ik zou wel zeggen dat iemand die kan vergeven daar zelf het meeste profijt van heeft. Zelf die enorme vrijheid en opluchting en bloei in het leven, dat dat het leven verrijkt.

Mensen die ik ken die nooit hebben kunnen vergeven zijn toch vaak bittere mensen. Dat is een bitterheid, hoe ouder je wordt... er is een engels gezegde als er narigheid je leven binnen komt dan heb je een keuze: je wordt better or bitter. En hoe ouder hoe bitterder of hoe betterder.

Niet iedereen heeft de keus om te vergeven. Bijvoorbeeld moslimmeisjes die uitgehuwelijkt zijn hebben de keus niet om weg te gaan. We moeten heel voorzichtig zijn om mensen nooit... je moet niet oordelen, hen altijd in hun waarde laten, liefdevol behandelen en ze dan meenemen in het proces. Belangrijk dat ze weten dat degene die hen begeleidt het beste met hen voorheeft, niet dwingen. Dan kunnen ze misschien inzien dat de volgende stap misschien kan zijn. het vergeven.

Proces van vergeving begint daarvoor: begint met verhaal vertellen, emoties hun gang laten gaan: wat is er gebeurd en hoe voel je je erbij. Ook erkennen dat wat er gebeurd is niet juist was: het had nooit zo mogen zijn. Dat is helemaal verkeerd wat jou overkomen is, dat jij in die positie geplaatst bent. Herkennen van het onrecht dat iemand is aangedaan.

Vergeving is net als een soort cadeau wat in heel veel laagjes papier ingepakt zit, en elke keer haal je een laag ervan af. Langzaam wordt je er vrij van. Vergeven is niet dat je iemand vergeeft en dat het dan klaar is. Laagjes weg totdat je denkt nu is het een pakje en eigenlijk geef je dat cadeau aan jezelf.

Vergeving is heel persoonlijk, voor iedereen anders.

Wij beginnen onze journey to healing met het vertellen van het verhaal. Verhaal met gevoelens vertellen. Je mag boos zijn, hoeft niet goed te praten. Religie kan daar aan hinder van maken "hey, het is niet goed om boos te zijn". Alleen dan kun je tot punt van vrijheid komen.

De keuze om te vergeven moet van persoon zelf komen, dat wil ik. Kun je wel bij helpen. Je kunt ook aangeven dat je los kunt komen van degene die je kwaad heeft aangedaan, en loskimen doe je door te vergeven. Dan zeg je dat die persoon geen macht over je heeft, na alles wat die jou heeft aangedaan.

Begrip van vergeven is niet radicaal anders in ander land. Uiteindelijk zijn wij mensen van binnen hetzelfde. Emoties, en al normaliseren we dingen, het blijft pijn doen en blijft niet normaal. Uiteindelijk weet mens diep van binnen dat ze daar niet voor gemaakt zijn, dat ze niet gemaakt zijn om vernederd te worden. Wat het moeilijker maakt.. in westen, zeker in deze tijd, zijn mensen bevoorrecht dat het oke is om naar een therapeut, psycholoog te gaan. Was in tijd van oma en opa niet zo, dan zat er een steekje los. Nu is dat zelfs beetje overdreven misschien (dat je ka gaan). Dat voorrecht heb je bijv niet in libera. Maar ik geloof niet dat het in andere culturen (begrip vergeving) anders zou zijn. Je kunt onderdrukken en normaliseren maar diep van binnen weet je dat het niet normaal is. Diep van binnen is die hunkering naar vrijheid en naar tot je recht komen, dat zit in ieder mens.

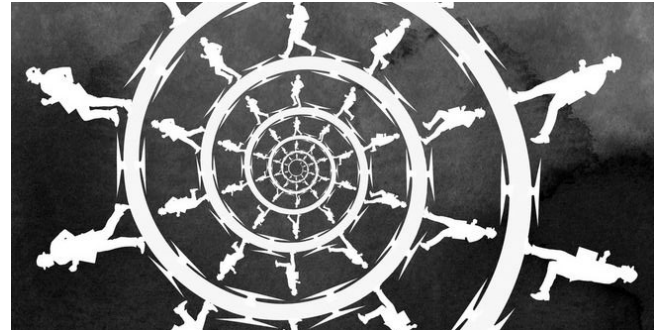
Ik denk niet dat vergeving op zich veranderd is, ik denk wel wat verandert is... in de oudere tijd was het meer zo van je moet vergeven en dus wordt er gezegd ik vergeef en dan ga je verder (toen ik jong was, mijn ouders jong waren). Mijn opa zei na de 2e wereldoorlog je moet vergeven, vergeten en dan gaan we verder. Daarom denk ik dat vergeven niet veranderd is, maar de diepte ervan wel.

Het is niet alleen meer we gaan vergeven en we gaan verder... daarom zeg ik dat we in een bevoorrechte tijd leven, dat je mag ervaren ik heb pijn. Terwijl het vroeger was je moet verder, je hebt vergeven. Dat is veranderd. Mar op zich het vergeven op zich niet. Vroeger was het goed om te vergeven, het was een virtue, om verder te gaan. Vergeven en vergeten. Nu zeggen we meer vergeven wel, maar vergeten doe je natuurlijk niet. Vergeten van vroeger, denk ik, was je moet maar vergeten want anders zou je elke keer weer kwaad worden. Maar nu zeggen we vergeten kan niet, die dingen die gebeurd zijn kan je niet vergeten, dat draag je altijd met je mee, maar ergeven moet wel, voor jezelf. Daarom moet je daaraan werken, dat je vrij komt.

Ik zou zeggen dat ons begrip van en omgang met vergeving dieper is geworden en de ervaring ervan veranderd is. Heeft te maken met de maatschappij, we hebben meer tijd om aan ons zelf te besteden, dingen als self care, mindfulness, dat bestond vroeger allemaal niet. Toen moest iedereen keihard werken voor een inkomen, al die emoties en dingen die liet je maar een beetje begaan. Terwijl we nu veel meer, in westen dan, bezig zijn met hoe voel ik me, hoe ervaar ik it.

# Appendix 4: context factors

## Factors overthinking



### 1. analysis paralysis

Overanalyzing everything interferes with problem-solving and will cause you to dwell on the problem rather than look for solutions.

### 2. vicious cycle

Dwelling on your shortcomings, mistakes, and problems increases the risk of mental health problems. This can lead to a cycle which is hard to break; as mental health declines, the tendency to overthink increases.



### 4. the habit of worrying

A habit consists of a trigger, a behavior, and a reward. With anxiety, something pops up (trigger), often followed by worry (behavior). When we start to worry, we feel like we have some control—we think our brains are going to fix it—so there is some small, temporary relief (reward).

### 5. worry lottery

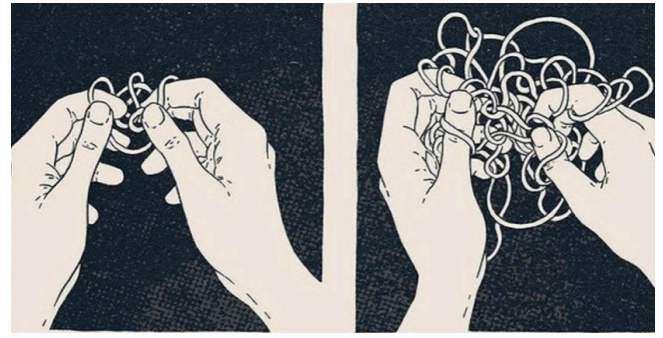
Generally, worrying makes things worse, but maybe it seemed to resolve something once before. We think if we overthink something for the fourth or fifth time, we might come up with the answer.





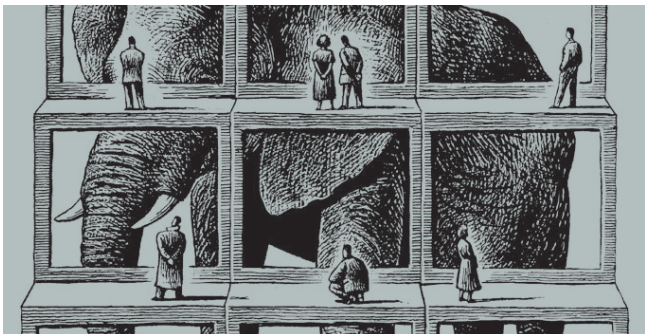
### 3. the deceit of overthinking

Although research shows otherwise, people experience overthinking as a process of finding insight. We believe that overthinking will give insight into personal problems, help in making sense of uncertainty about the future, and aid in understanding and resolving discrepancies between current and ideal states when pursuing goals.



### 6. introspection's evil twin

Some overthinkers believe they're engaging in productive self-reflection. This is why overthinking is the most insidious of all follies: not only does it effectively prevent insight, it can masquerade as productive self-reflection.

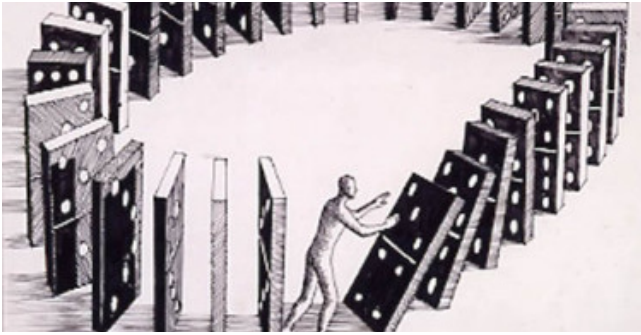


### 7. missing the bigger picture

When overthinking, we're spending our energy looking at what's wrong with us. There's no energy left to explore insights. That's why research shows that despite incessantly processing their feelings, overthinkers are less accurate at identifying their emotions. Their minds are so laser-focused on an incident, reaction, or personal weakness that they can miss the larger picture.

### 8. poor perspective-takers

Overthinking is largely an inwardly focused phenomenon, but it can also hurt our external self-awareness. Overthinkers are so busy looking inward that they neglect to think about how they are showing up to others. They generally ignore or avoid feedback. They therefore tend not just to be poor perspective-takers, but also to be more narcissistic and self-absorbed than non-ruminators.



## 9. far-reaching consequences

Overthinking exacerbates sad mood, impairs problem solving, reduces instrumental behavior, and drives away social support.



## 10. overthinking as avoidance strategy

Though we are endlessly dwelling on our problems when overthinking, it's effectively an avoidance strategy. Because when we obsess over the causes and meaning behind negative events, we keep the emotions that come with them at arm's length. Overthinkers tend to avoid the people and situations causing them to ruminate instead of dealing with them directly.



## 11. ever-widening context of social knowledge

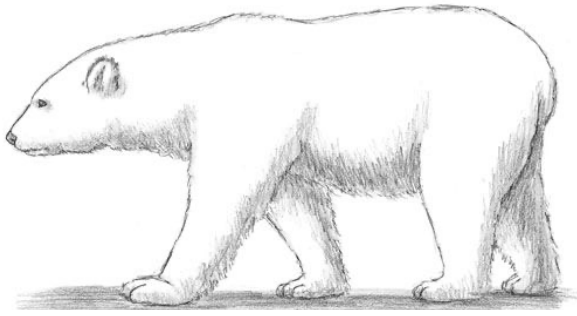
Most people are very concerned about their social status. These times, we can do this in an ever-widening context of social knowledge. When you're on the Internet contemplating the splendor of others, the odds are against your feeling fully satisfied with your place in the world. Millions of years of hominid evolution have not prepared us for Instagram.



## 12. intolerance of ambiguity

People vary in their ability to feel comfortable with stimuli they do not understand or that are subject to multiple interpretations, a trait known as intolerance of ambiguity. In this sense, overthinking can function as a search for emotional clarity for people who desire this.





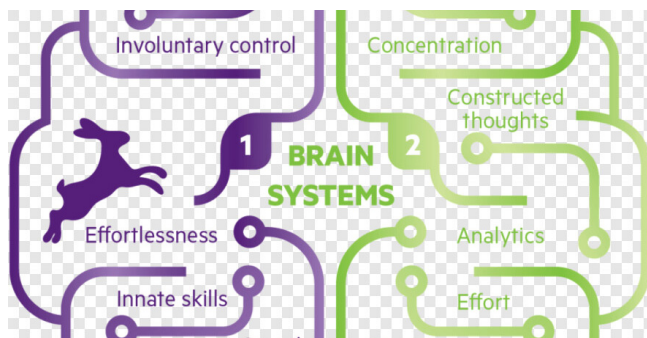
### 13. the white bear problem

Deliberate attempts to suppress certain thoughts make them more likely to surface. For example, when you actively try to not think of a white bear, you'll probably be more likely to imagine one. This is known as ironic process theory.



### 14. the centipede effect

The tendency of a normally automatic or unconscious activity to be disrupted by consciousness of it or reflection on it. For example, a golfer that overthinks his swing. Also known as hyper-reflection or Humphrey's law.



### 15. System 1 and System 2

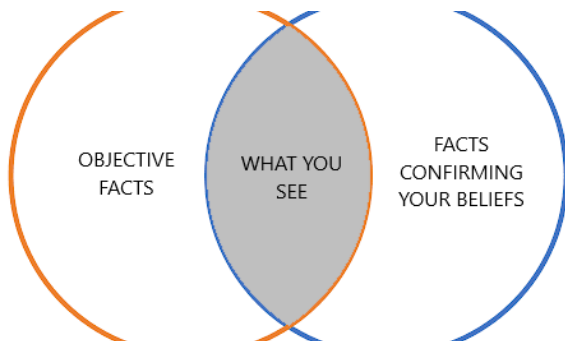
Our behaviour is determined by two different systems – one automatic and the other considered. System 1 is impulsive, automatic and intuitive. System 2 is thoughtful, deliberate, calculating. The first requires little effort, the second requires much more attention. People tend to be 'lazy' and want to use System 1 when possible.

When in a better mood, System 2 tends to relax and System 1 gains more control of your mind; you think more intuitive and quicker, which also makes you more creative.

### 16. cognitive ease vs cognitive strain

Our minds use different amounts of energy depending on the task. When there's no need to mobilise attention and little energy is needed, we are in a state of cognitive ease. System 1 is in charge and we are more intuitive, creative and happier, yet also more likely to make mistakes.

When our minds must mobilize attention, they use more energy and enter a state of cognitive strain. System 2 takes over and will double-check our judgments better than System 1. We are far less creative, but we will make fewer mistakes.

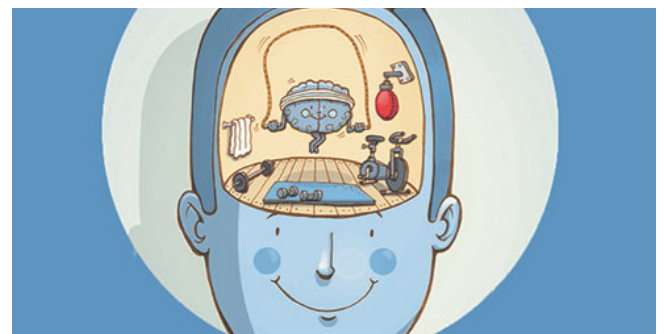
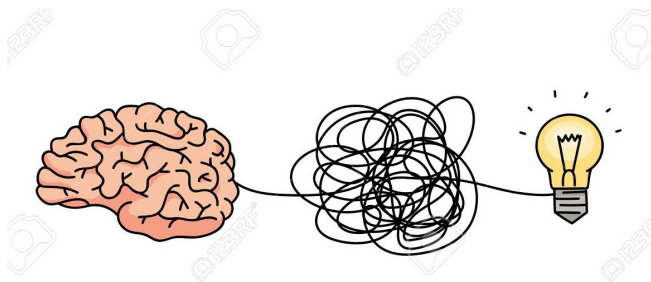


## 17. confirmation bias

People tend to agree with information that supports their previously held beliefs.

## 18. base-rate neglect

An extremely common bias in which we focus on what we expect instead of what is most likely. Example: a taxi company has 80 red cabs and 20 yellow cabs. When you see 5 red cabs pass by, you'll probably think the next one will be yellow. However, the probability that the next cab will be red is still 80%.



## 19. cognitive coherence

In order to understand situations, our minds use cognitive coherence; we construct complete mental pictures to explain ideas and concepts. These images help us understand things, and we rely on them when making a decision.

## 20. overconfidence in faulty mental images

People place too much confidence on the images we construct using cognitive coherence. Even when available statistics and data disagree with our mental pictures, we still let the images guide us. For example, while the weather forecaster might predict a relatively cool summer day, you might still go out in shorts and a T-shirt, as that's what your mental image of summer tells you to wear.



## 21. reference class forecasting

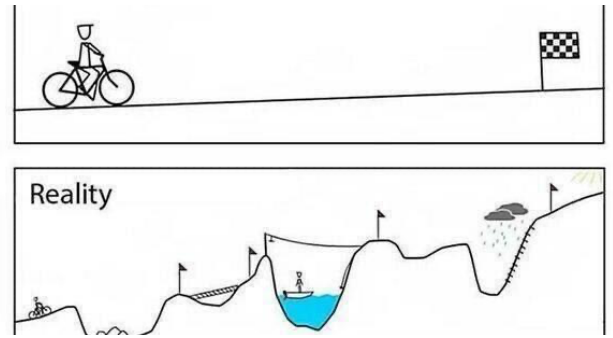
The act basing your decisions on specific historical examples which make a more accurate forecast, instead of on your rather general mental images. For example, thinking of the previous occasion when you went out on a cold summer day, and what you were wearing at that time.



## 23. exaggerated caution induced by loss aversion

People are loss averse, meaning losses loom larger than gains.  
 Example: people reject the offer to a coin-toss gamble where they would win \$150 if the coin lands on heads, but lose when the coin lands on tails.

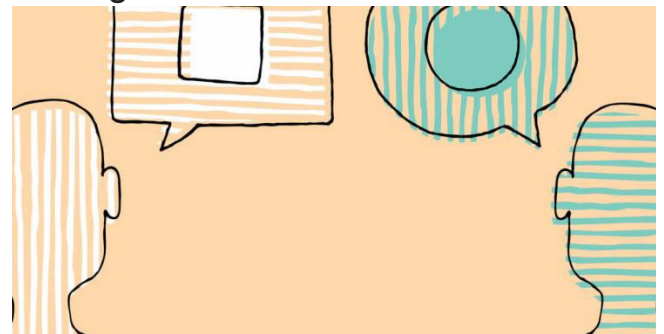
Exaggerated optimism protects people from the paralyzing effects of loss aversion, while loss aversion protects them from the follies of overconfident optimism.



## 22. exaggerated optimism of the planning fallacy

These are plans that  
 o are unrealistically close to best-case scenarios  
 o could be improved by consulting the statistics of similar cases

Example: American homeowners expect a remodeling of their kitchen to cost \$18,500, they ended up paying an average of \$39,000



## 24. The outside view of planning problems

A broad frame for thinking about plans that shifts the focus from the specifics of a current situation to the statistics of outcomes in a similar situation. This is a remedy for the bias of exaggerated optimism.



## 25. risk policies

A broad frame that embeds a particular risky choice in a set of similar choices. This is a remedy for the bias of exaggerated caution induced by loss aversion. Understanding a risk policy should strengthen your ability to reduce or eliminate the pain of the occasional loss by the thought that the policy that left you exposed to it will almost certainly be advantageous over the long run.

## 26. the Zeigarnik effect

A psychological phenomenon that occurs when an activity that has been interrupted may be more readily recalled. It postulates that people remember unfinished or interrupted tasks better than completed tasks.

**To Be Continued**

## 27. the Ovsiankina effect

The tendency to pick up an interrupted action again when it has still not been achieved. The effect states that an interrupted task, even without incentive, values as a “quasi-need”. It creates intrusive thoughts, aimed at taking up the task again.



## Factors Forgiveness



### **1. Forgiveness is to respond in constructive rather than destructive ways**

You want to suppress, inhibit your impulse for revenge and you know you want to respond to the person who's harmed you in more constructive ways, rather than in destructive ways.



### **2. The term forgiveness differs slightly per culture**

The term forgiveness does not differ radically per country; when it comes down to it we are all human and know what we should feel and what not. However, it's more accepted to talk with a therapist or psychologist in Western countries than in, for example, Liberia. This is a kind of privilege, as it's easier to talk about forgiveness.



### **3. Whose choice it is to forgive does not vary (much) per culture**

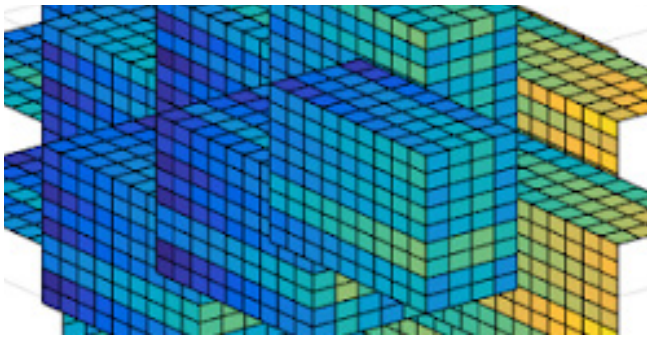
There is a difference between “forgive and forget” and forgiveness as it is experienced these days; no wit is much more a personal action, a choice and a response. So, as the victim you get to choose whether or not you forget. That has actually nothing to do with your society. Your society can tell you you're supposed to forgive, but whether or not you do that is a completely different kettle of fish.



### **4. In Western culture, forgiving is seen as “for the individual”**

In Western culture, it seems that to be forgiven means that you're free to go. That you have paid your debt and there's nothing more to be required of you. In cultures that are more communal, forgiveness means that you are now free to work together for a better community. That forgiveness is actually what opens the way for healing in the community, not just healing of the individual. This could be the case because Western cultures might be more individualized.





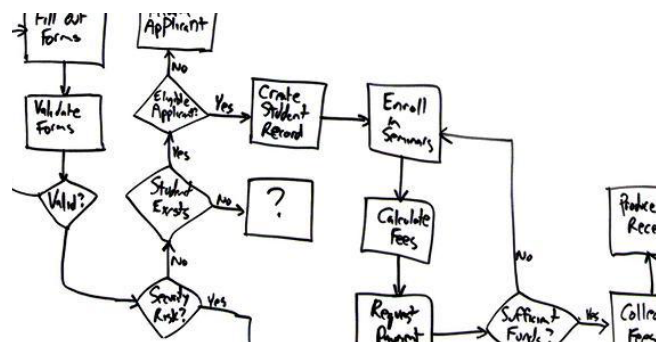
## 5. The experience of forgiving is becoming more dimensional

The depth of forgiving has changed. People used to say you “just” have to forgive, forget and move on. Forgiving was seen as something good you had to do; a virtue. Now we still say you have to forgive, but naturally you do not forget everything immediately. It’s now okay, accepted to experience pain. This has to do with society. We have more time to spend on ourselves, on things as self care, mindfulness, these things did not used to exist.



## 6. The dark side of forgiveness

For a study, newly wedded couples were followed across four years. They found that with the couples who were exposed to either psychological abuse or physical abuse, but who kept forgiving their partners, nothing changed. There was a stable line, meaning they continued to be exposed to that kind of abuse. For the couples who did not forgive those instances, the line went down and decreased.

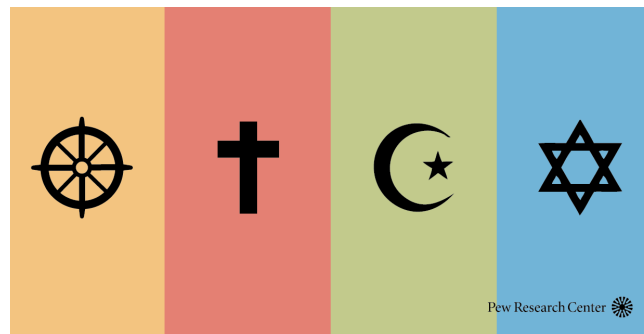


## 7. Forgiveness is often thought of as a singular event

Many people see forgiveness as an event, or as a singular, one time activity. On the other hand, experts regard forgiveness as a practice or habit; a process.

## 8. Forgiveness is becoming less of a prescriptive norm

In the past forgiveness was a prescriptive norm, especially if you have a religious identity; “you shall do this”, so it’s normative. Now, we are less about “forgive and forget”. You will remember. It’s what you do with what you remember. And choosing for yourself how to approach it (if at all) and how.



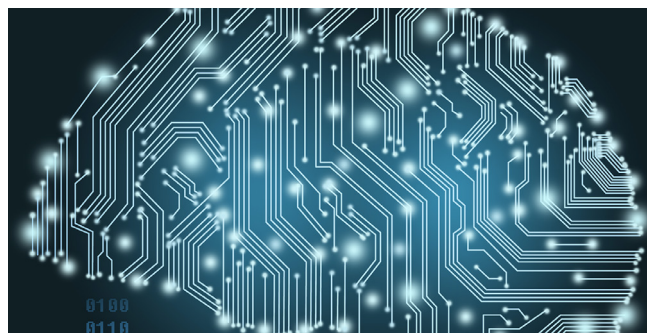
## 9. Hollywood forgiveness

when we talk about forgiveness. The assumptions that we make are very linear, meaning that we always have in mind a nasty perpetrator and an innocent victim. The big forgiveness cycle is predicated upon what you need to do. As a perpetrator you must offer your apology, display your remorse, and then you return power to the victim and the victim will have the power to offer you or withdraw their forgiveness. Therefore feeling empowered and rehumanized. Then it's almost like a bit of a Hollywood approach; everyone's happy. In real life that applies only to a very narrow realm of how forgiveness is experienced, offered, restored and lived.



## 10. Religion can be a hindrance

Especially back in the day, religion could hinder the [healthy] process of forgiving. This was because people used to see forgiving as a virtue that you just had to do, instead of choosing to do it. Religion can tell people to "don't be angry, that's not right". But in the process of forgiving, people have to first acknowledge any injustice that took place, before they can forgive. So in this way, religion can hinder the [proper] process of forgiving.



## 11. Forgiving is a process

This process can take months, years, sometimes a life time. Part of this process is telling your story and expressing your feelings. This is accompanied with acknowledging that what happened was not right; recognising that there has been injustice.

## 12. Increasing possibilities of technology raise questions about accountability

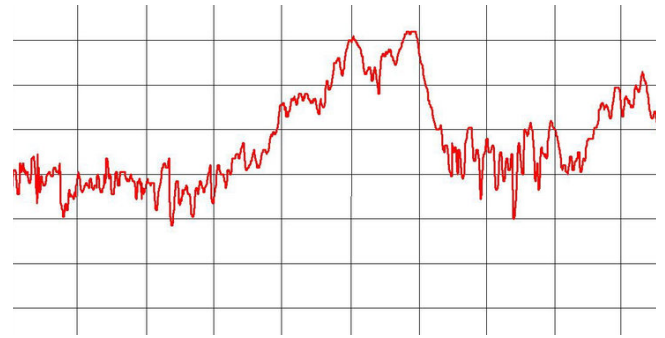
Technology brings about many possibilities that remove the need for a human to perform a certain task. Who can we hold accountable when something goes wrong in a situation like this? For example, a careless driver who kills a child can obviously be held accountable for his actions. But who do we forgive when driverless cars will be the common mode of transportation?





### **13. Second-hand unforgiveness**

Oftentimes, people realize when a victim is too forgiving. For example, a study found that the least forgiving people in a situation involving cheating were not necessarily the victimized partner, but the family members of the victimized partner.



### **14. The impact of forgiveness on the physical level is being noticed and studied more**

Since 1989 there has been a whole group of physical studies on the difference it makes to your body. We're waking up to that. We never had that before. Mayo has a whole group that just works with forgiveness, because when you can forgive it lowers your blood pressure, it changes your immunology. Physically there are so many changes you can't help. The psychological part has gone back further, but what we're catching up on is the physical part.



### **15. Forgiving is personal**

The process of forgiving is very personal and different for everyone.

### **16. An “unforgivable” act implies a loss of control**

A harmful act means irreversible damage materially. Psychologically, it means that the loved ones that you relate to, you connected with, no longer exist. And in that sense it's a loss; it's a loss of control, it's a loss of agency.



## **17. Forgiving requires realigning your identity**

You have a sense of understanding of who you are, and then somebody comes in and does something harmful, maybe irreversibly harmful. You're distracted and the whole direction of travel which you had prepared for has changed. That's contradictory to the kind of identity that you have developed, that you've accepted, that you've formed, and all of a sudden nothing makes sense. A realignment of your identity requires some form of profound adaptation skills: accepting reality, but not letting the event define who you are and who you will be in the future either.



## **18. Needing to forgive yourself implies you violated your own values**

When you find that you want to forgive yourself, this implies that you have violated your own values. You know it and you know it better than anyone else. Multiple experts believe that this makes self-forgiveness harder than forgiving others.



## **19. “Very successful forgivers” have gone through a character development**

Many people that Dr. Noor spoke to that have forgiven, have a different sense of who they are now. That's partly as a result of the trauma that they've experienced, but it's also about meaning-making. The most successful forgivers realized that they wanted to go beyond their own unfortunate situation and help other victims, and potential perpetrators, in making sure this never happened again. A Sikh invited his attackers to ask him questions about Sikh-hood, rape survivors formed a charity to work with young women, to emancipate them, empower them, inform them, educate them.

# Appendix 5: interviews laypersons

*The following are quotes from interviews with people who had experience(s) in their personal lives with the concepts of forgiveness, overthinking or both. These provided insights into the concepts of both activities.*

## Quotes forgiveness

To forgive does not mean to reconcile. It's important to realize this in order to make forgiving easier.

It helps to ask myself "What is the function of an emotion? Does it help me in any way or hurt me? Is it better to stop overthinking/forgive and let go to move on?"

It helps to tell the story (name the hurt) to make explicit what you're feeling hurt about. And what you (or the other) might be able to do about it.

It helps to forgive if an apology is not only a "sorry" but also "this is how I'm going to improve".

Not everyone has the same language of sorry. It helps to get into other people's shoes and appreciate what they are trying to do for you (and not have a list of what you expect from them).

We seem to forget that people are human and make mistakes. It's often the easiest thing to just get out and break it off. People treat relationships more like lightbulbs nowadays.

Rarely does it have to do with the other person (only). There are tons of things: your (other person's) day, week, month, year, childhood, fears.

It's difficult to forgive because you're afraid you go back to being hurt again. So it's important to know that to forgive does not mean to enter a toxic relationship again.

The value of not forgiving is that you (feel that) you hold yourself to your own values. That you're not saying that it was okay what

the other person did to cross your boundaries.

It's easier to forgive if you make it a conscious, deliberate choice. If you forgive too easily you lose your self-esteem.

In order to forgive, I had to embrace the pain and accept that someone hurt me. You don't think this is right, but it's part of life.

I find I can forgive someone more easily if I had my revenge.

I hold on to the anger towards someone because it protects me, reminds me to be wary of that kind of person. It has its value in that way.

It becomes easier to forgive someone or yourself if you see that the person has learned and will do better in the future. The past in the past.

There are two reasons to forgive. To have peace for yourself, and as a favor to the other person.

It's easier to forgive if you have a feeling that the offense won't happen again.

It's more difficult to forgive when your mind is too preoccupied with the offense. E.g., seeing the person that said something bad about you right in front of you.

## Quotes overthinking

What is the function of an emotion? Does it help me in any way or hurt me? Is it better to stop overthinking/forgive and let go to move on?

It helps to detach yourself from your overthinking; you are not sad, you are feeling sad. ("Oh brain.."). It can help to give your overthinking a name (swirl).

Humor can be a good way to detach.

How do you want to feel when facing over-



thinking?

And then, when do you experience these emotions in the context of it?

People can start to overthink because they want to make predictions about what's going to happen next, and being able to plan next steps. Also, to know what is coming and perhaps soften the blow.

You can become aware you're overthinking if other people point this out to you.

It's easy to start overthinking when you have time and nothing else to think about. E.g., lying in bed, doing menial tasks that require little attention.

You start overthinking when there is uncertainty that you cannot take away.

When I tend to overthink, I try to make myself busy so I don't have the space to overthink.

It's difficult to stop overthinking because my mind makes connections very easily. From mangoes to finding it at a market, to a city that I might move to.

I cannot overthink when I have to do (multiple) things and there is a (time) pressure

To stop overthinking it helps to talk to someone to declutter the conversation in my head

The tip of writing stuff down when overthinking does not always help because I'm not always in a place where I can write things.

It helps to stop overthinking when someone else reminds you that 1) you cannot do anything about the situation, 2) your assumption may be wrong.

If someone else tells you to stop overthinking you are more confident. An outsider might know better, you have to trust this person. If this person is sorted/you look up to

them, you feel it must be right.

The quality that these other people share is 1) calm and 2) we've given our best, now let's forget about it

The helpful person is not per se positive, but optimistic. They accept that things might not be ideal right now, but are hopeful that it will become better. In other words, they are more realistic than people that say that everything is perfect.

When I start to overthink I become more quiet and withdrawn

I can restart overthinking when im left with my thoughts by myself

I become aware that I'm overthinking when I start to make mistakes, especially in physical activities. Because when your mind is somewhere else when cooking e.g., you cut your hand.

It helps to talk with a friend who can empathise with you. It can also make you more aware of your overthinking.

I became aware I was overthinking one time because I became anxious, and my mouth felt dry. I was doing something else than I was supposed to be doing.

I managed to stop overthinking because I realized "you're not going to come to a conclusion by just thinking, you need to take action"

To stop overthinking, I try to be in the moment. Jogging, meditation, yoga. I had to learn this. It was not natural.

To stop overthinking, it helps to call someone. Because you have to exert conscious effort, you have to answer someone. With tv it's passive, you don't have to answer and you have space to overthink.

To stop overthinking, I jog, because I am real-

ly tired and the activity is the only thing I can think about. Jogging doesn't work for me.

When I managed to stop overthinking, I still remember the original problem of course, but I feel more confident. Because I succeeded in at least not thinking about it for x amount of time.

When I manage to stop overthinking for a time, I realize that there are other things that I need to do and require attention. I can see the whole picture, and I see that other things require attention. I don't have enough time to overthink about the first topic as much as before.

When I'm alone, it's difficult for me to notice that I'm overthinking.

I tend to start overthinking to distract myself from a task, as a way to not be in the present. When I have to do something difficult

The value I get from overthinking is that I get to compare and be able to choose the best option. I feel in control. Managing uncertainty.

To stop overthinking I count to three, change perspective, take a glass of water, think "okay, this is not happening right now so no need to overthink it". Just change and do something else might help you also physically feel like you are in the present moment.

Becoming aware of overthinking helped me the most. I first thought it was normal. Now when I feel overwhelmed, I can tell the whole story and realize that that's not happening.

I became aware of overthinking when I reflected on what's happening in my mind. Then I became aware of this pattern in me.

I became aware of my overthinking when I got hurt. I saw that it drained my energy. I would lose my focus and concentration.

To stop overthinking, it helped me to distance myself from my thoughts. Seeing them from a distance. See if they're about the past or future. If they're useful to have or not.

It helps to separate emotions and thoughts. Emotions are powerful and hijack your intellect for a moment. Only after they subside your intellect takes over.

Overthinking is difficult to stop because you have practiced it for so many years.

Separating thoughts and emotions helps a lot. Like if you watch a game from a distance, it affects you less than if you were a player. You have an overview of your thoughts and emotions when you keep yourself distant.

I can overthink when my mind is free, like on the toilet, brushing my teeth. When something doesn't require my active involvement.

I cannot overthink when I'm actively engaged in a situation. Then I don't have time to overthink.

# Appendix 6: graduation project brief

DESIGN  
FOR our  
future

TU Delft

## IDE Master Graduation

### Project team, Procedural checks and personal Project brief

This document contains the agreements made between student and supervisory team about the student's IDE Master Graduation Project. This document can also include the involvement of an external organisation, however, it does not cover any legal employment relationship that the student and the client (might) agree upon. Next to that, this document facilitates the required procedural checks. In this document:

- The student defines the team, what he/she is going to do/deliver and how that will come about.
- SSC E&SA (Shared Service Center, Education & Student Affairs) reports on the student's registration and study progress.
- IDE's Board of Examiners confirms if the student is allowed to start the Graduation Project.

#### ! USE ADOBE ACROBAT READER TO OPEN, EDIT AND SAVE THIS DOCUMENT

Download again and reopen in case you tried other software, such as Preview (Mac) or a webbrowser.

#### STUDENT DATA & MASTER PROGRAMME

Save this form according to the format "IDE Master Graduation Project Brief\_familyname\_firstname\_studentnumber\_dd-mm-yyyy". Complete all blue parts of the form and include the approved Project Brief in your Graduation Report as Appendix 1 !



family name Speek  
initials MS given name Michael Soenthorn  
student number 4303733  
street & no. \_\_\_\_\_  
zipcode & city \_\_\_\_\_  
country \_\_\_\_\_  
phone +31621288951  
email \_\_\_\_\_

Your master programme (only select the options that apply to you):

IDE master(s):  IPD  Dfl  SPD

2<sup>nd</sup> non-IDE master: \_\_\_\_\_

individual programme: 09 - 09 - 2019 (give date of approval)

honours programme:  Honours Programme Master

specialisation / annotation:  Medisign

Tech. in Sustainable Design

Entrepreneurship

#### SUPERVISORY TEAM \*\*

Fill in the required data for the supervisory team members. Please check the instructions on the right !

\*\* chair Prof. dr. Paul Hekker dept. / section: IDE, Design Aesthetics  
\*\* mentor Dr. Anna Pohlmeier dept. / section: IDE, Design Aesthetics  
2<sup>nd</sup> mentor Lisa Wiese  
organisation: brands4friends  
city: Berlin country: Germany

comments (optional)   
Wiese is a non-IDE mentor. Her PhD at TU Delft revolves around the measurability of products' contribution to well-being. This and her knowledge and experience in psychology make her a relevant and desirable mentor.

Chair should request the IDE Board of Examiners for approval of a non-IDE mentor, including a motivation letter and c.v.



Second mentor only applies in case the assignment is hosted by an external organisation.



Ensure a heterogeneous team. In case you wish to include two team members from the same section, please explain why.

Design for well-being by stimulating happiness-enhancing activities \_\_\_\_\_ project title

Please state the title of your graduation project (above) and the start date and end date (below). Keep the title compact and simple. Do not use abbreviations. The remainder of this document allows you to define and clarify your graduation project.

start date 09 - 09 - 2019 \_\_\_\_\_ 24 - 01 - 2020 \_\_\_\_\_ end date

**INTRODUCTION \*\***

Please describe, the context of your project, and address the main stakeholders (interests) within this context in a concise yet complete manner. Who are involved, what do they value and how do they currently operate within the given context? What are the main opportunities and limitations you are currently aware of (cultural- and social norms, resources (time, money,...), technology, ...).

Happiness is what people indicate they want most in life, in almost every nation (Diener, 2000). Increasing one's happiness will make that person feel better, but also benefit his/her energy, creativity, immune system, relationships, work productivity, and will even lead to a longer life (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Becoming happier is thus a legitimate and worthwhile goal to pursue in order to increase one's well-being.

However, even though we all want to be happy, what we think will make us lastingly happy is often wrong, and many of our pursuits of happiness are actually not effective in contributing to our well-being (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

In 1977, Ronald Inglehart wrote about the 'silent revolution' in the Western world: a shift from an overwhelming emphasis on material values and physical security toward greater concern with the quality of life. In recent years, this transformation of the definition of human happiness is gradually more noticeable in daily life.

This shift can also be seen in design. Instead of seeing products as material things that make us happy, it is what we do with these products that can make us happy. Desmet & Pohlmeier (2013) propose that products can function as resources that address meaningful goals in order to contribute to users' happiness. This graduation project will take that same perspective.

Research of Lyubomirsky (2007) indicates that our happiness is determined three factors: our circumstances (10%), set point (50%), and intentional activity (40%). Since our circumstances appear to have little bearing on our well-being, and our set point (our 'baseline' or 'disposition' for happiness) is, by definition, not able to be changed, the opportunities lie in the other 40%: our behaviour. It is thus that 'happiness-enhancing activities' are the key to increase our well-being. Lyubomirsky (2007) has found 12 of those activities, Wiese, Pohlmeier and Hekkert (2019) have found two additional activities, for a total of 14 activities.

Although any of these 14 activities has the potential to contribute to one's well-being, some activities have a better potential fit with a person as everyone differs in (e.g.) their motivations and preferences. For this reason, this project aims to first determine for which happiness-enhancing activities little or no designs have been made. Once this has been determined, different concepts for those (2 or 3) activities will be made. The main stakeholder is therefore anyone who sees a good fit between him/her and the activity for which will be designed.

Besides this, the project aims to show and exemplify to the design community, and people in general, that (1) happiness is a possible and worthwhile goal of pursuing, and (2) well-being can be designed for by treating products as mediators of happiness-enhancing activities.

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**PROBLEM DEFINITION \*\***

Limit and define the scope and solution space of your project to one that is manageable within one Master Graduation Project of 30 EC (= 20 full time weeks or 100 working days) and clearly indicate what issue(s) should be addressed in this project.

Psychology has long focused on disease, disorder, and mitigating negative effects of these (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). More recently however, psychologists have greater, more ambitious aims. Positive psychology strives to go beyond merely reducing negative feelings, and instead empower people to develop a positive state of mind and live life to the fullest; to flourish.

Similarly, this project will take a Positive Design perspective; instead of solving current day problems, it seeks to create opportunities to increase well-being.

This will be done using the framework of Positive Design (Desmet & Pohlmeier, 2013), and the Vision in Product Design (ViP) method (Hekkert & van Dijk, 2011).

I want to make both the Positive Design framework and ViP an integral part of the project, merging them to develop a new approach to design for well-being. As Desmet and Pohlmeier (2013) indicate, there is a need for possibility-driven design approaches that target well-being.

To achieve this, literature research on Positive Design, happiness-enhancing activities, and design for well-being must be conducted. Interviews with experts in the domain of specific happiness-enhancing activities will be held to collect context factors.

How and to what extent the final design contributes to well-being of people must be properly addressed, preferably with measurable/demonstrable results. This is needed in order to qualify for the Medesign specialisation. Research of Wiese will be consulted for this.

**ASSIGNMENT \*\***

State in 2 or 3 sentences what you are going to research, design, create and / or generate, that will solve (part of) the issue(s) pointed out in "problem definition". Then illustrate this assignment by indicating what kind of solution you expect and / or aim to deliver, for instance: a product, a product-service combination, a strategy illustrated through product or product-service combination ideas, ... . In case of a Specialisation and/or Annotation, make sure the assignment reflects this/these.

Research: (1) existing products that stimulate engagement in happiness enhancing activities.  
 Generate: (1) a taxonomy of these existing products on product, interaction and context level, (2) a future context.  
 Design: (1) a product that contributes to well-being by stimulating happiness-enhancing activities, (2) a new design approach for well-being.

The main contribution this graduation project aims to deliver is twofold: (1) a design that contributes to the well-being of people by stimulating engagement in happiness-enhancing activities, (2) a new design approach for design for well-being. My expectations for these two deliverables are described below.

(1) The most appropriate design will be determined by the research of the future context and consequent statement and interaction vision, as according to the ViP process. Given that the product should stimulate engagement in a happiness-enhancing activity, there is a myriad of possible designs. Whether the form this takes is that of a material product, service or product-service combination depends on the future context that is yet to be constructed. Predefining this beforehand would possibly mean excluding the most appropriate design.

(2) By merging ViP and the Positive Design framework, I aim to learn more about possibility-driven design approaches and develop a new one that is aimed at designing for well-being. In order to qualify for the Medesign specialisation, I expect to deliver a sound research and show a thorough understanding of the current state of (design for) well-being. I realise that (1) and (2) combined make for an ambitious nature of a graduation project, so it is important to clarify that (2) can mean the start to a new approach (such as first findings and recommendations) to further expand the method, perhaps in a future PhD project.



**MOTIVATION AND PERSONAL AMBITIONS**

Explain why you set up this project, what competences you want to prove and learn. For example: acquired competences from your MSc programme, the elective semester, extra-curricular activities (etc.) and point out the competences you have yet developed. Optionally, describe which personal learning ambitions you explicitly want to address in this project, on top of the learning objectives of the Graduation Project, such as: in depth knowledge a on specific subject, broadening your competences or experimenting with a specific tool and/or methodology, ... . Stick to no more than five ambitions.

Here are five stories and the five learning objections that sprout from them.

I first got to apply ViP in the second year of my bachelor. I was fascinated with it. Since then, I made purposeful efforts to learn about it during internships, design events, workshops and projects. I feel ViP has made me into the designer I am today.

(1) Gain more experience in ViP, especially in structuring the context and going from product qualities to a concept.

Speaking about ViP, in early 2018 I did an internship at Reframing Studio, something I had dreamt about for quite some time then. Besides having the best time of my studies there, I (as my mentor also pointed out) also learned that I could (should) develop my own personal style and vision as a designer more. If I was able to do this, "I see a good fit between the student and Reframing Studio", my mentor wrote on my evaluation form.

(2) Develop my own personal style and vision as a designer.

The previous two stories also make me want to analyse ViP itself, in order to find out what makes me so passionate about it. In order to truly develop myself, I should go beyond existing approaches and try to add to them, and come up with (parts of) a new one.

(3) Develop (the start of/part of) a new design approach to find out what I, as a designer, value.

This brings me to the next point, which is also design-research related; I am very much in doubt about pursuing a PhD after my graduation.

(4) Conduct thorough research to base my design on, as well as to find out if this is a topic that I would potentially want to continue in a PhD.

Finally, the fifth learning objective relates to (qualifying for) the Medesign specialisation.

(5) Gain deeper insight in positive psychology and how this relates to well-being.

**FINAL COMMENTS**

In case your project brief needs final comments, please add any information you think is relevant.