# EATING DISORDER TREATMENT PLAN VIA SOCIAL INTERACTIVE MENTAL HEALTH APPLICATION

Abstract

In modern society, eating disorder is a trending topic that people are paying attention to. Some ED patients would have a chance to receive psychological intervention, but there is also a part of the ED group do not have the budget and time for in-person therapy or scheduled treatment. Thus, to consider the needs of ED patients in the recovery journey, I designed a mental health application that can be helpful in decreasing their ED symptoms. Differently, this application involves an online community, users are able to make friends on this platform, in order to provide motivation, encouragement, and inspiration to each other. It also includes online therapy, users can talk to them without going to a specific therapy, or having a time limitation in consultation with doctors. Moreover, from the result of the online survey, the function of 'self-monitoring' is considered as the most important part of this app, so this will also be included.
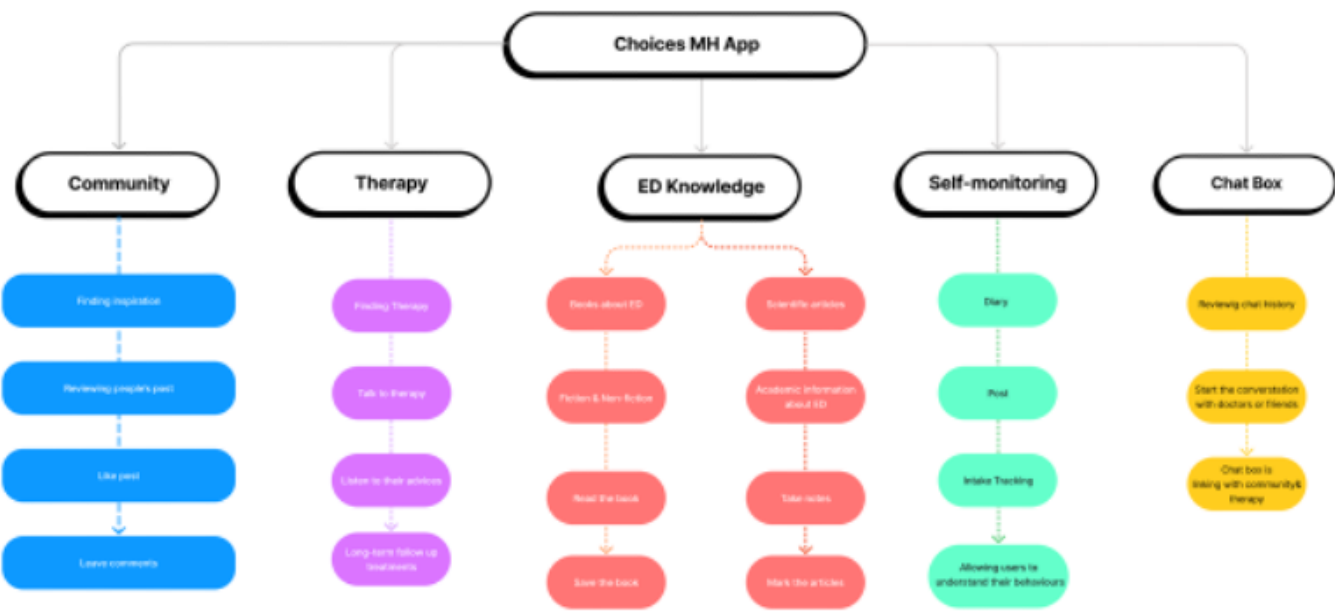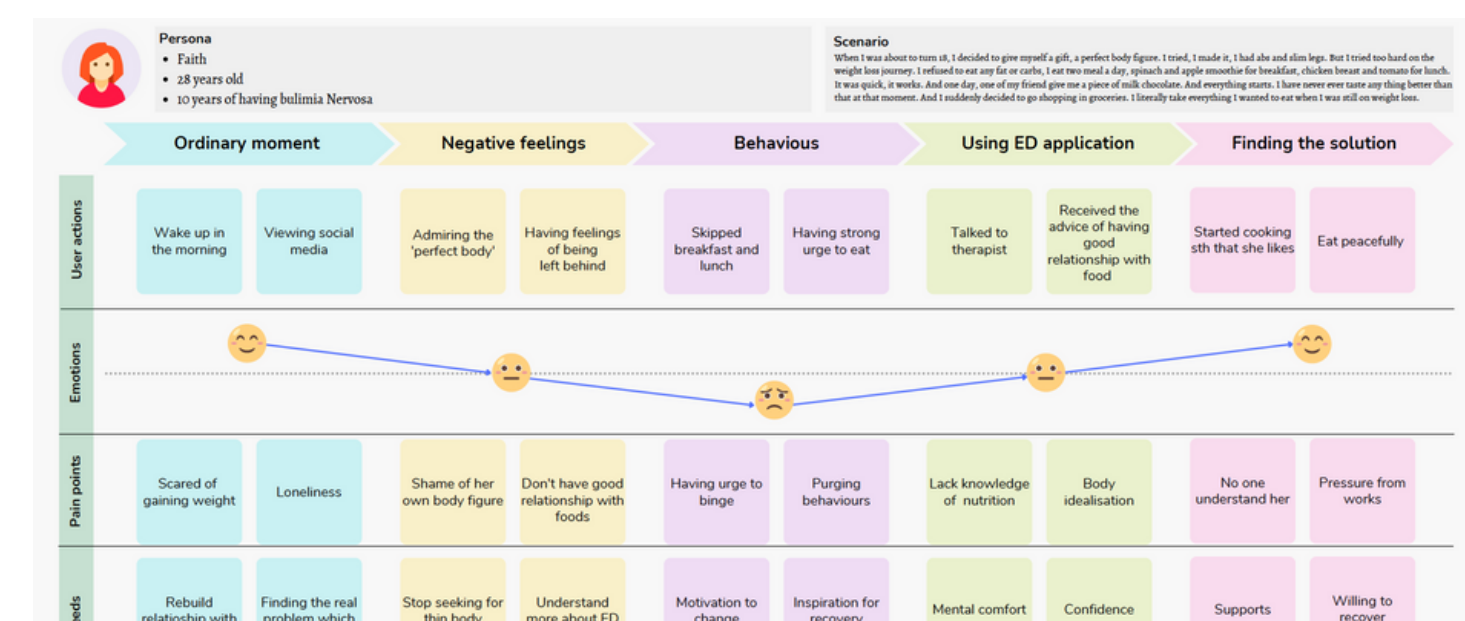
Introduction

For many people, the impression of eating disorder treatment may conjure up images of hospitals or psychological institutions, the process of seeking mental illness therapy might be complicated and exhausting for patients. However, as time passed by and with the development of technology, psychological intervention can be implemented in mental health applications. As the researchers have indicated that an eating disorder is a long-term mental illness that may last for a lifetime, even though there are different kinds of therapies are already existed such as cognitive behavior therapy and group therapy, it might not be a realistic thing for ED patients to receive psychological treatments for a lifetime, having awareness of self-help is one of the most important things to do in the recovery journey. For this reason, an application that includes the functions of 'community', 'online therapy', and 'self-monitoring' could be helpful for ED patients.

Diagram / Design
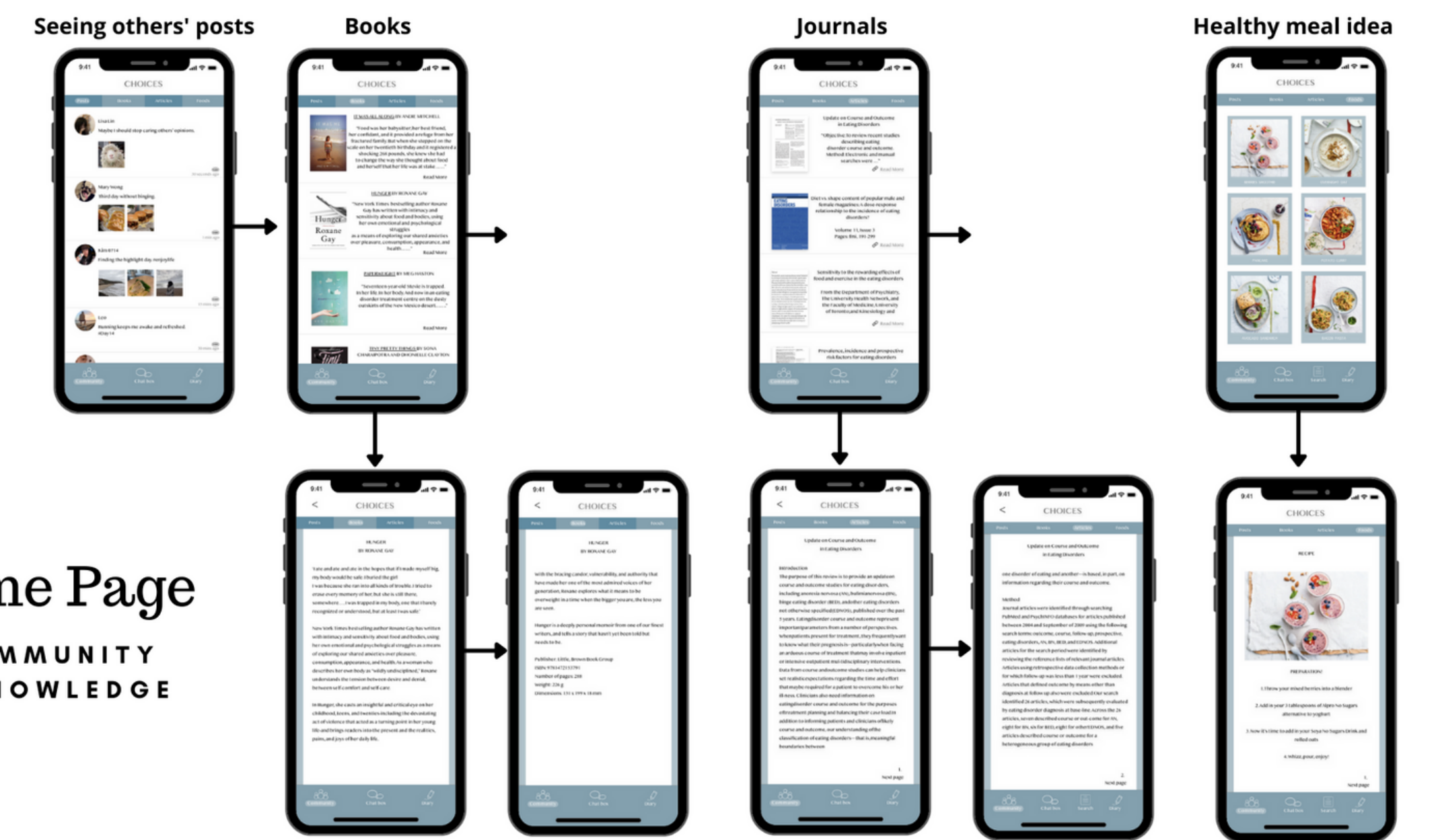
Study Methodology

Interview

I interviewed 3 volunteers who have eating disorder symptoms to find their pain-points. The results can be summarised as 'fear of gaining weight', 'pressure from work/school/family',and 'having perfectionism'.

Data collection on China social media apps

Little Red Book: 'eating disorder' have 21k relevant notes, 'bulimia' has 26k relevant notes, 11k notes are shown when searching 'anorexia', and 3k notes appears when typing 'binge eating'.
Weibo: Searching '#eating disorder', the data shows that users have viewed this topic for 17.17million times in total, there are 8k people joined the topic discussion, and 1 thousand users created original posts under this topic.
Zhihu: The topic '#eating disorder' has 7087 followers, '#bulimia' has 13000 followers, '#anorexia' has 5.2k followers, and '#binge-eating' only has 59 followers.

Online Survey

83 volunteers who have symptoms of ED all completed the survey. 80 participants would like to use this app, 3 users selected 'No'.

Prototype Evaluation

1. Do users understand the functions?
2. Do users think that these functions helpful for the recovery of eating disorders?
3. Can the user accurately find the corresponding information?
4. What do users think when reading the contents?
5. How much do users agree that the app is practical?

Result

Q1: 87.50% of tester selected the 'Yes', 12.50% selected 'Partly understand'.
Q2: 12% of tester selected the 'Neutral', 62.50% selected 'Agree', and 25% testers selected 'Strongly agree'.
Q3: 100% of the users can find the corresponding information.
Q4: 100% of the testers think the contents are professional and helpful.
Q5: 37.50% chose 'Neutral', 37.50% selected 'Agree', 25% selected 'Strongly agree'.

Conclusions & Future Work

During my investigation, I found that most of the therapy TRAIL and treatment methods for eating disorders could not completely cure "eating disorders". Many people showed improvement in their eating condition during the treatment, but there is still a high possibility of having ED again in the future. Therefore, taking this phenomenon as the background, eating disorders can be considered psychological diseases that occur occasionally and repeatedly. What patients with eating disorders need is not short-term treatment, but long-term treatment and long-term follow-up observation. The design of this app can help patients with eating disorders record their eating conditions, communicate with online doctors, and find their own community. It provides almost all the external interventions that ED patients will need, but the most important thing for recovery is whether the patients have the determination to recover from the eating disorder.