

Design for Subjective Well-Being

Happiness is often considered a universal goal of people. Recent studies in the field of positive psychology have introduced and validated a variety of strategies to increase happiness and its broader counterpart; subjective well-being (SWB). Although widely available, not many people seem to pick up on SWB strategies. Here lies an opportunity for design, and the main design question of this graduation project was therefore:

“Can strategies for subjective well-being be translated into or supported by tangible designs that inspire and persuade people to adopt these strategies into their daily lives?”

To answer this question, SWB was studied in theory and practice, problems and opportunities for product design were identified, and were translated into an interaction vision. A set of concepts was designed that explored the interaction vision, and one concept was further developed into a case study.

Tinytask is a subscription to new experiences. Users receive key chains by mail, which contain small and concrete assignments related to SWB strategies, to be applied in daily life. They commit to the assignments and use the key chains as a reminder. Users can collect and confirm assignments on an online profile page, and add comments to reflect on their experiences.

A prototype was built, and tested by fifteen participants over the course of three weeks. Various strengths, weaknesses and recommendations were found. Although the design is still premature, it is a valuable case study that explores the possibilities of design for subjective well-being. There are many opportunities for design within this direction. Even though there is a large gap between abstract theories and concrete products, this study has shown that theory from behavioral psychology can successfully be used to make that translation.

