

# Gambit

Reach out

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12/07/21

Senior Thesis

## Initial thesis statement

To create a digital platform targeting young black adults to educate and stimulate conversations about mental wellness to help break stigmas around mental illness within the black community.

# Research objectives & strategies

## Objectives

My thesis focuses on breaking the mental health stigma within young black adults. There are so many ways to tackle this problem but I had to immerse myself deeper into the issue to create a focused solution.

### 1. The cause

What is causing the mental health stigma within the community?  
Why are these conversations not normalized?

### 2. The people

What are their thoughts on mental health?  
What are their experiences?

### 3. The present

What solutions are currently out there?  
What opportunities are available when tackling this issue?

## Research approach

### Secondary research

Read and watch multiple videos and articles to help me get a general understanding of what mental health is. Along with the issues the black community faces.

Looked at what platforms are currently in the mental health realm and what opportunities were present that I could fill.

### Primary research

Interviewed therapists and young black adults based on specific goals.

# Articles & videos

## Articles on Mental health in the black community



### Mental health definition (WHO)

"Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community."

In the United States, the National Alliance on Mental Illness estimate that almost [1 in 5 adults](#) experience mental health problems each year.

### Common mental health disorders

- [anxiety disorders](#)
- [mood disorders](#)
- [schizophrenia disorders](#)

According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, anxiety disorders are the [most common type](#) of mental illness.

People with these conditions have severe fear or anxiety, which relates to certain objects or situations. Most people with an anxiety disorder will try to avoid exposure to whatever triggers their anxiety.

### Self help

A person coping with mental health difficulties will usually need to make changes to their lifestyle to facilitate wellness.

Such changes might include reducing alcohol intake, sleeping more, and eating a balanced, nutritious diet. People may need to take time away from work or resolve issues with personal relationships that may be causing damage to their mental health.

People with conditions such as an anxiety or depressive disorder may benefit from relaxation techniques, which include deep breathing, meditation, and mindfulness.

Having a support network, whether via self-help groups or close friends and family, can also be essential to recovery from mental illness.



**African Americans Face Unique Mental Health Risks**  
African Americans face unique mental health risks, including higher rates of depression, anxiety, and substance use disorders. These risks are often linked to systemic racism and social inequality.

African Americans skirt away from conversations dealing with therapy as a solution to struggles with [depression](#), [post-traumatic stress disorder](#), [parenting issues](#), and [marriage problems](#).

"There is a need for trained counselors in schools for children of color," he said. Introducing them to the idea and benefits of therapy from a young age might combat the stigma in the African American community."

"There's really no health without mental health."

"I'd come home, go outside, do my thing, sit on my couch for days and weeks on end. And then you just disappear. People would say, 'Hey I haven't heard from you, what's going on?' and the response would be, 'I'm good, I'm out here grinning, I'm hustling.' We say those words that people in our community use to make it sound like we're doing something. You say all the clichés, but inside, you're hurting and you don't know why or how."

Still, in 2018, 18.6% of white Americans received mental health services, compared to less than 9% of African Americans.

A 2008 study showed a stigma within the African American community against receiving treatment for mental illness. Some people felt that sitting down and talking to a "stranger," a therapist, was the same as airing their "dirty laundry."



These notions of strength and weakness extend into perceptions of mental health and treatment thereof. Some black people see therapy as a "white thing."

While people can afford to be human, to be vulnerable, isn't that mental health care? Black people can't.

"There's a history of being degraded or dehumanized and not wanting to have one more thing on your mind," Washington says. Mental health doesn't top the priorities list. "We don't have time to be sad or depressed because we have too many things we have to deal with right now."

some of the unconscious bias that mental health professionals possess makes it difficult to find a clinician equipped to deal with black people's unique experiences.

Having more of these open conversations in the black community can help destigmatize mental health issues and seeking treatment.



**Mental Health Plan for Black Folks From Black Therapists**  
A mental health plan for Black folks from Black therapists. This article discusses the importance of culturally competent care and provides practical advice for seeking support within the Black community.

Increasing visibility of mental health issues in Black communities



### Stigma

Though communities of color, because of socioeconomic challenges, may be at higher risk for poor mental health, this stigma contributes to a reluctance to recognize the need for the help of a physician or therapist.

The problem, in part, is that we often fail to recognize that mental illness is much more than feeling melancholy or anxious.

Mental illness is seen as a weakness

We must also change the narrative from a conversation about mental illness to a conversation about mental wellness. Mental health is, after all, more than depression, anxiety, or a bipolar disorder diagnosis. It is your overall emotional and mental wellbeing, including both positive and negative elements.

adult Black/African Americans are 20 percent more likely to report serious psychological distress than adult Whites. Despite this, African Americans are less likely than Whites to seek out treatment and more likely to end treatment prematurely.



"Yeah, it's a stigma," Jay Z agreed. "As you grow, you realize the ridiculousness of the stigma attached to it. It's like, what? You just talk to someone about your problems."

"I think, actually, it should be in our schools," he continued. "Children have the most going on...social anxiety and all these things are happening to you, and you don't have the language to navigate it."

Although the roots of this stigma are complex, experts say two major factors play a significant role: a lack of access to care and an aversion to openly discussing mental health.

"In the black community, there is often a sense that unlike other illnesses, this is a personal failing, a moral failing. And that's really misunderstanding the nature of mental disorders," Dr. Schottenfeld explains. "People are often ashamed if they're feeling bad. There's a reluctance to show that you're hurting."

Identifying and treating things like anxiety and depression early on can reduce kids' distressing symptoms and help prevent them from making harmful choices as a means of coping—dropping out of school, lashing out at someone they love, turning to drugs or alcohol.



### Results

Depression was the most common mental illness and there were no gender differences in prevalence. Both men and women believed they knew some of the symptoms and causal factors of mental illness. Their attitudes suggested they are not very open to acknowledging psychological problems, are very concerned about stigma associated with mental illness, and are somewhat open to seeking mental health services, but they prefer religious coping. Significant gender and age differences were modest in attitudes and preferred coping.

Studies to examine African American beliefs about mental illness and attitudes toward seeking mental health services have shown mixed results. Several studies, including the seminal report Mental Health, Culture, Race and Ethnicity, have shown that African Americans view mental illness as highly stigmatizing, resulting in low treatment-seeking.

Similarly, a recent qualitative study of attitudes and beliefs about mental health among older African American adults revealed that participants viewed mental illness, particularly depression, as a weakness [Corrigan, Copeland, Goetz, Kortebe, et al., 2019](#)

In contrast to the above findings, African Americans have been found to have positive beliefs and attitudes toward seeking mental health services, but these positive beliefs and attitudes do not translate to seeking treatment. For instance, in one study of racial differences in beliefs about how the natural course of mental illness relates to perceptions of treatment effectiveness, African Americans were more likely than Caucasians to believe that mental health professionals could help individuals with mental illness. However, the African Americans were also more likely to believe that mental health problems could improve on their own [Liggett, Adams, Lusk, & Fyfe, 2005](#). The belief that mental health problems can resolve on their own seemed to prevent use of mental health services as a coping strategy. Similar results were obtained in another study of racial differences in attitudes toward professional mental health care and use of services. African Americans had more positive attitudes toward seeking mental services than Caucasians, but were less likely to use services. Having a positive attitude toward seeking mental health services did not result in use of mental health services [Chen, et al., 2009](#).

If family members talk about a "crazy" uncle who had to get hospitalized, younger generations may grow to believe that having a mental illness means you can't function in society.

Breaking down the stigma will likely involve a two-pronged approach, increasing the number of culturally competent providers and changing the narrative surrounding mental illness.

Similarly, if someone who commits a crime is said to have a mental illness, it may perpetuate the belief that individuals with mental illness are violent. Anyone that commits a crime or displays some type of "undesired" behavior would be stigmatized as having a mental illness or along that spectrum, which isn't necessarily true.

In the 1990s, a public opinion poll found that 63% of African Americans believed depression was a personal weakness and only 31% believed it was a health problem. Other studies have found that the Black community is more inclined to say that mental illness is associated with shame and embarrassment. Individuals and families in the Black community are also more likely to hide the illness.



First, said Lee, we need to reframe the discussion. "I'm a person with depression or I'm bipolar" are classic old-school framings, she said. "In fact we are all as human beings likely to vacillate in and out of episodes throughout our lifetime, and one way we can put it is this is not a mental health condition, but the human condition." We also need to prioritize self-care. "Engage on a daily basis in self-compassion," she said, "turning that toxic inner critic, retelling what you've been told about your so-called suffering or your so-called weaknesses."

Sometimes communities don't have enough tools in their tool kit to see how we don't have to perpetuate these damning discourses."



In the African American community, mental health issues are often compounded by the psychological stress of systemic racism. As a result, African American adults are [20 percent more likely](#) to report serious psychological distress than white adults.

[Link to article](#) African Americans who struggle with mental health issues will ever receive appropriate treatment.

"If an African American person with a mental illness acts out in violence, they are much more likely to be criminalized than to be given the opportunity to receive mental health care," White said.

"It's crucial that we tell stories that prove that people can overcome mental illness and lead rich, fulfilling, successful lives. This requires a shift in the way we portray mental illness in film, TV shows and the media as a whole," White said.



Breaking down the stigma will likely involve a two-pronged approach, increasing the number of culturally competent providers and changing the narrative surrounding mental illness.

Education surrounding mental illness and normalizing mental health problems may help individuals recognize that treatment for a mental health problem doesn't have to be any more shameful than treatment for a physical health problem.



"At the time, I did not have the language to express what I was feeling"

When I was growing up in a predominantly Black community in Harlem, therapy was stigmatized as something for people who could not handle challenges. Even as an adult, I found that if I went to a therapist, someone I knew would see me and telling family and friends, so I hid in deep shame.

"We are raised to believe that we have to walk outside with a tough skin at all times to survive in the world."

"Being transparent about one's own struggles may help to ease the stigma"

I read 12 articles and 4 videos



# Interview Insights

## Problems

Stigma comes from a variety of things , lack of knowledge, families conceptualization on mental health, your environment, etc.

People have a fear of judgement when trying to reach out.

People think they would be misunderstood and do not know how to verbalize how they are feeling.

Do not want to burden others and do not believe other people care about their issues.

## Insights

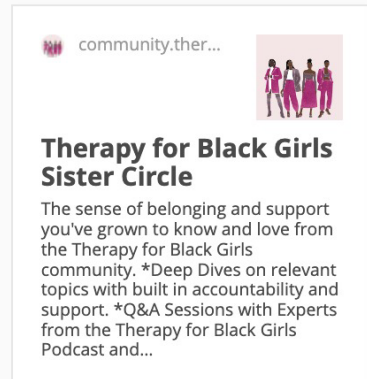
“Once you get the Community talking. You can create change, you can inspire action.”

There is a space for education and an opportunity to create a safe place.

There is a chance for someone who wants to reach out and a listener to educate themselves.

# Competitive analysis

## View of S.W.O.T analysis



community.ther...

**Therapy for Black Girls Sister Circle**

The sense of belonging and support you've grown to know and love from the Therapy for Black Girls community. \*Deep Dives on relevant topics with built in accountability and support. \*Q&A Sessions with Experts from the Therapy for Black Girls Podcast and...

### Aspects

**Users**  
individuals

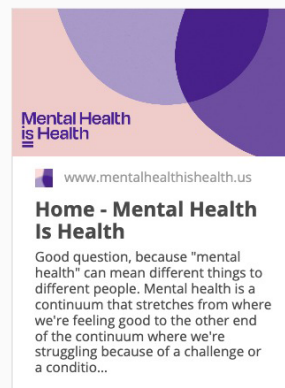
**Platform**  
Mobile and web

**Mission**  
Therapy for Black Girls is an online space dedicated to encouraging the mental wellness of Black women and girls.

Strength	Weakness	Opportunity	Threats
Helps black women find a therapist Community aspect Blog along with Q&A sessions with experts if you join the sister circle	Need to subscribe to the sister circle to get started	Dropping the pay wall	A platform that provides a community for free

### Other apps analyzed include:

- Talkspace
- Longwalks
- Gather app
- The Safe Place
- Therapy for Black Girls
- Silvercloud



Mental Health is Health

www.mentalhealthishealth.us

**Home - Mental Health is Health**

Good question, because "mental health" can mean different things to different people. Mental health is a continuum that stretches from where we're feeling good to the other end of the continuum where we're struggling because of a challenge or a conditio...

### Aspects

**Users**  
individuals

**Platform**  
Website

**Mission**  
"Mental Health is Health" is an MTV Entertainment Group initiative rooted in the reality that we all have mental health and need to take care of it like we do our physical health. The initiative aims to normalize conversation, create a connection to resources and inspire action on mental health.

Strength	Weakness	Opportunity	Threats
Welcoming yet professional UI design Plenty of resources and options to tailor to you Mental health terms are explained and easy to understand Takes you through a journey to help you get help	A lot of text to read inside the site and articles outside the site someone that may need help may not have the patience to read everything or even focus on what they are looking for Additional content for navigation is at the bottom of the page. Users may not always look down there.	Visual learning to reduce text More culturally sensitive resources Another way to navigate the content	

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# Persona



**Josh Kingsley • Age: 23**  
(The sharer)

## Background

Josh is a full-time college student who also works a part-time job on the weekends. His time is consumed mostly by school or work so he does not have much time for himself. Josh has years of built-up stress due to his occupations and lack of self-care. He has considered talking to his family and friends but does not know what is holding him back and continues to tell himself, “No one else would care”, and “I have to keep grinding”.

## Frustrations

- Feeling stressed and overwhelmed from occupations.
- Does not know how to articulate his feelings.
- Feels like no one else would care.
- Fear of being vulnerable to his close ones.

## Goals

- Wants to open up to close ones.
- Wants to reduce stress and emotional disorders.
- Wants to be understood.
- Wants to be able to speak normally about his feelings.



# Persona



**Naomi Kingsley • Age: 19**  
(The listener/reach out)

## Background

Josh is a full-time college student who also works a part-time job on the weekends. His time is consumed mostly by school or work so he does not have much time for himself. Josh has years of built-up stress due to his occupations and lack of self-care. He has considered talking to his family and friends but does not know what is holding him back and continues to tell himself, “No one else would care”, and “I have to keep grinding”.

## Frustrations

- Conflicted on how to reach speak to her brother.
- Does not know where to get the information to help him.
- Does not want to damage their relationship.

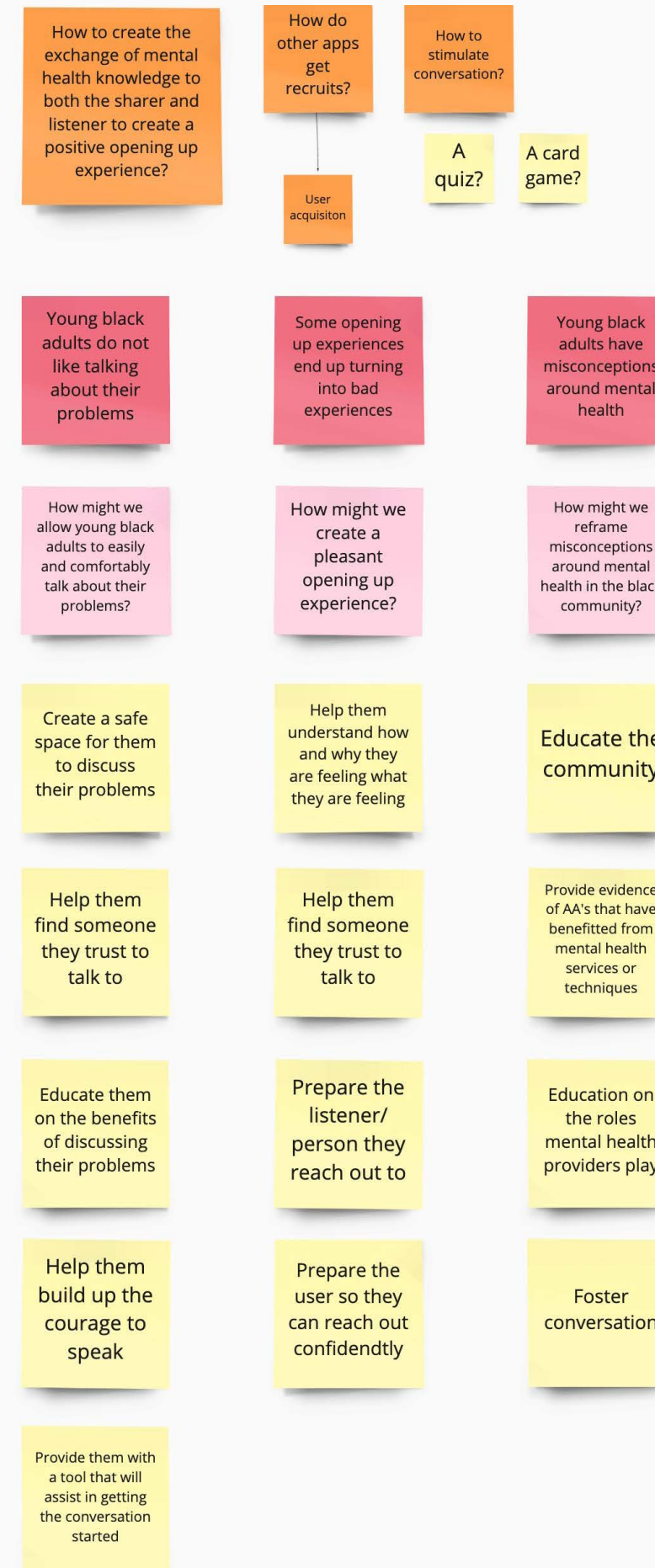
## Goals

- Wants to be there for her brother.
- Wants to know how she can get Josh to open up.
- Wants to learn more about what maybe causing him to be distant.

# How might we & pivot

After my research I used the How might we to come up with as many solutions as possible.

As I was creating solutions came across that my ideas are leading to a product that was too broad and relied on things outside my control. From here I took a step back and created a problem statement to help narrow my focus towards creating a product.



# Problem statement

Talking about mental health is challenging for young black adults because some were not educated or developed misconceptions. This is a problem because certain opening up scenarios can lead to an experience that makes the individual feel misunderstood or unheard, potentially resulting in constantly suppressing emotions. Repeatedly repressing emotions can negatively affect the mind and body. Young black adults need a platform or resource that prepares them for this conversation.

## Final thesis statement

Helping young black adults educate themselves on mental health while normalizing mental health conversations.

# Thesis background

## Statistics

**63%** of African Americans believed depression was a personal weakness.

**31%** believed that depression was a health problem.

Other studies have found that the Black community is more inclined to say that mental illness is associated with shame and embarrassment. Individuals and families in the Black community are also more likely to hide the illness.

## Therapist quotes

*“Once you get the Community talking. You can create change, you can inspire action.”*

-Darreon Greer, Sr., Ph.D.

*“The basis of healing is connectedness so getting the community to have the conversation surrounding mental health is extremely important because what it does it normalizes it places it in your everyday lexicon so you can have the conversation, it just becomes normal.”*

-Audia Fraley, M.S.Ed., LPC

# Design principles



## Culturally sensitive + Accepting

Learning in the app will integrate the factors of the black experience and cultural competence that always keeps the black community and their individual experiences in mind. My platform will create a safe place for the user to be themselves.

## Human

My platform will aim to encourage connection to external support outside of the app.

## Painless

My platform will follow accessibility guidelines and aim to not frustrate or complicate things for users. Someone suffering from a mental disorder may have trouble navigating or using a device so my design must keep that in mind. Minimizing all steps that require making choices is another great way to create a more welcoming service.

## Evidence based

Designers can not replace clinical knowledge with effective UI. My platform will only provide evidence-based information and resources.

# Brand identity

## Brand mission

We are focused on positively reshaping the idea of mental health in the black community. We aim to create a safe social environment, create a connection to mental health education, and normalize mental health conversations in the black community.

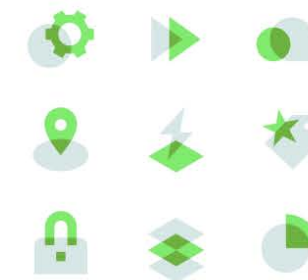
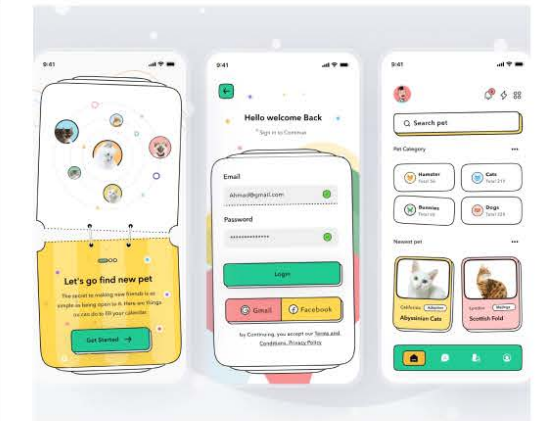
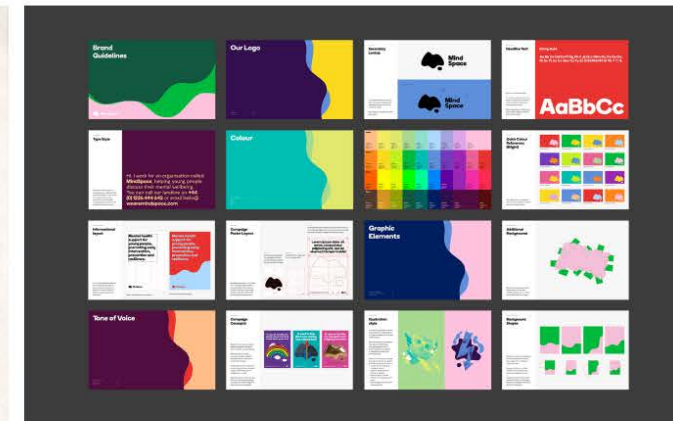
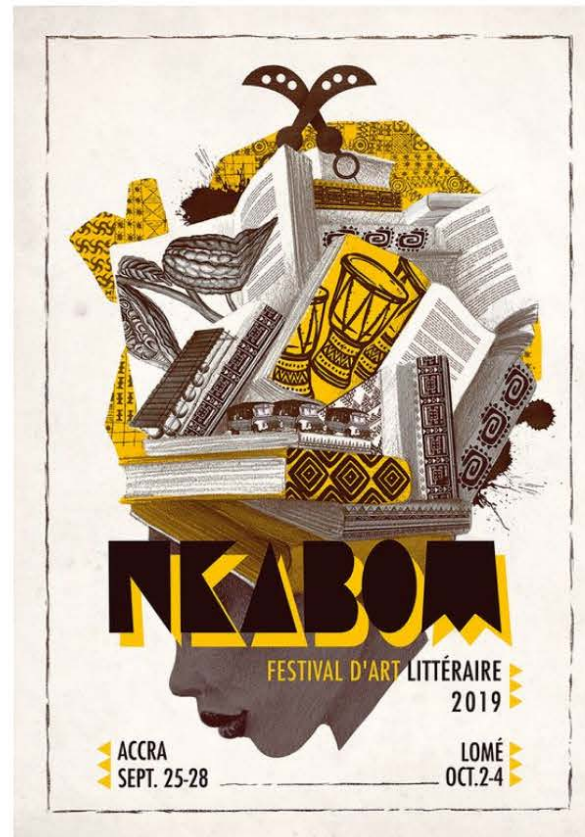
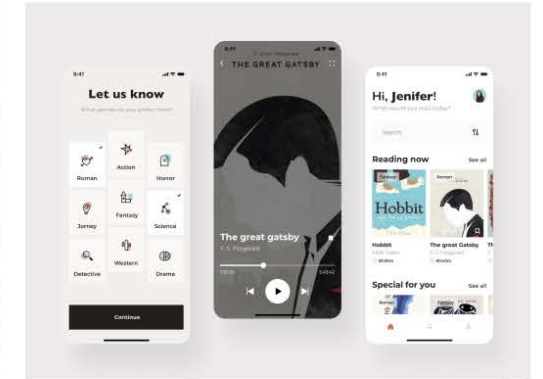
## Brand persona

Cordial (warm and friendly)  
Supportive  
Positive  
Trustworthy  
Relatable

## Brand tone

We will communicate with you as if we are the most empathetic person you know

## Mood board



# Visual & wordmark

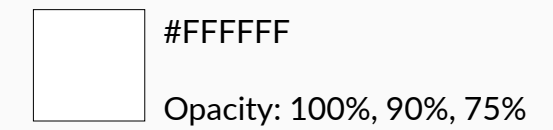
Primary colors



Black variant



White variant



Wordmark



Filson soft bold

**Gambit definition-** A remark made to open or direct a conversation.

\* A device, action or opening remark, typically one entailing a degree of risk, that is calculated to gain an advantage.



# Brand elements

## Typography

### Poppins

ABCDE  
FGHIJKLMN  
OPQRSTU  
VWXYZ

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 & \$ % !

Light	Aa
Regular	Aa
Medium	Aa
<b>Bold</b>	<b>Aa</b>
<b>Extra bold</b>	<b>Aa</b>

### Lato

ABCDE  
FGHIJKLMN  
OPQRSTU  
VWXYZ

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 & \$ % !

Light	Aa
Regular	Aa
Medium	Aa
<b>Bold</b>	<b>Aa</b>
<b>Heavy</b>	<b>Aa</b>

## Iconography

### Navigation buttons



### Additional buttons



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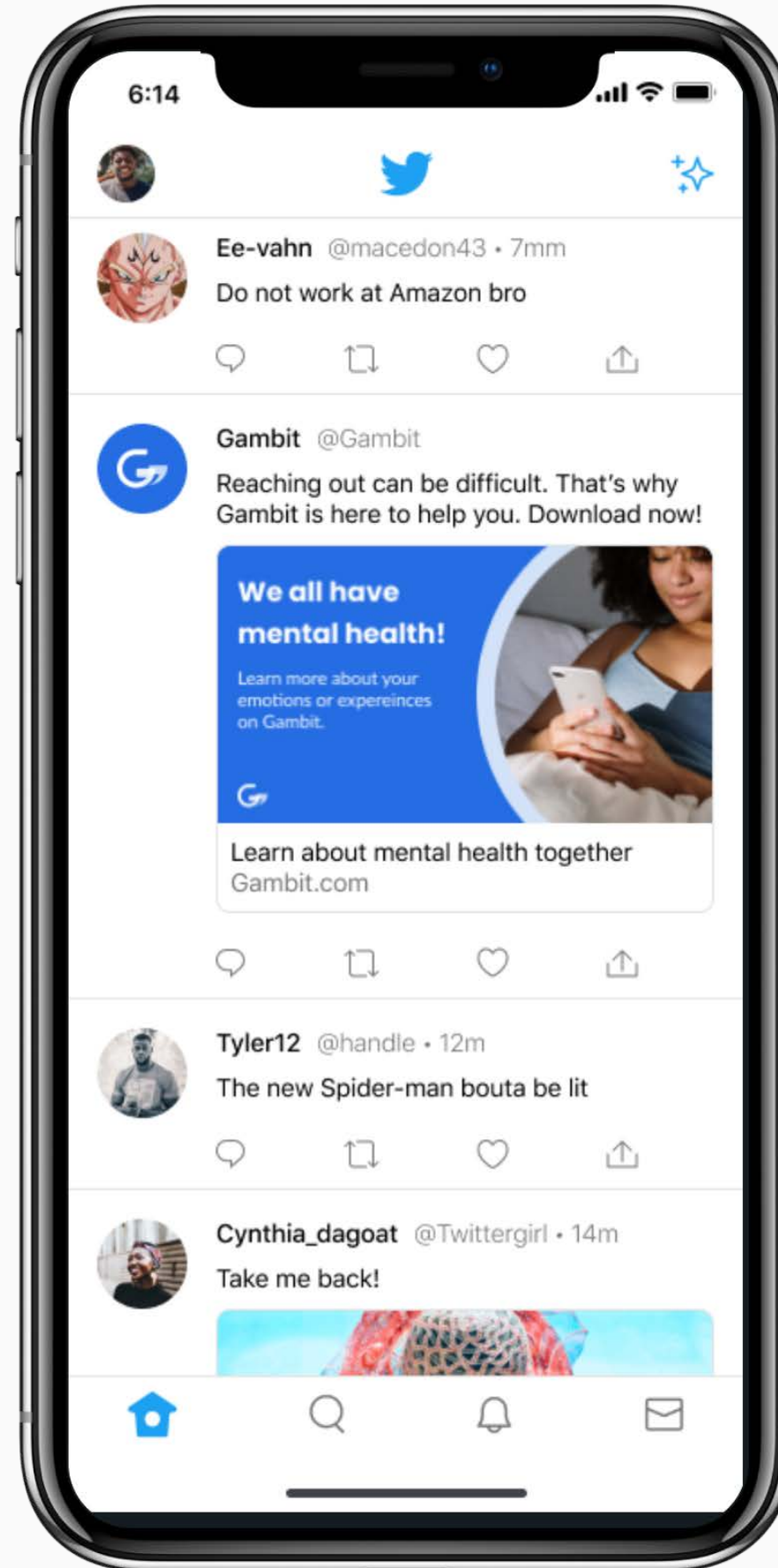
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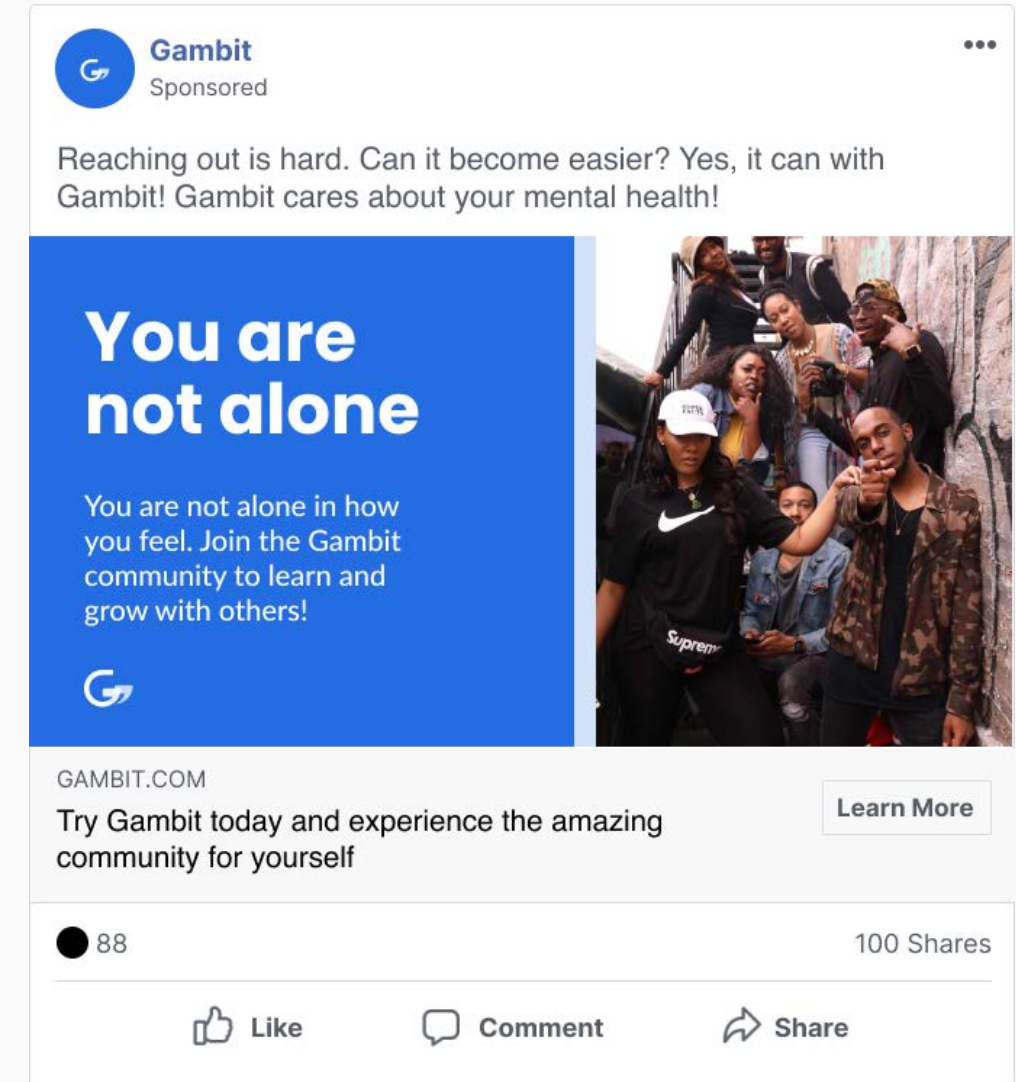
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# Social media ads

Gambit Twitter ad



Gambit Facebook ad



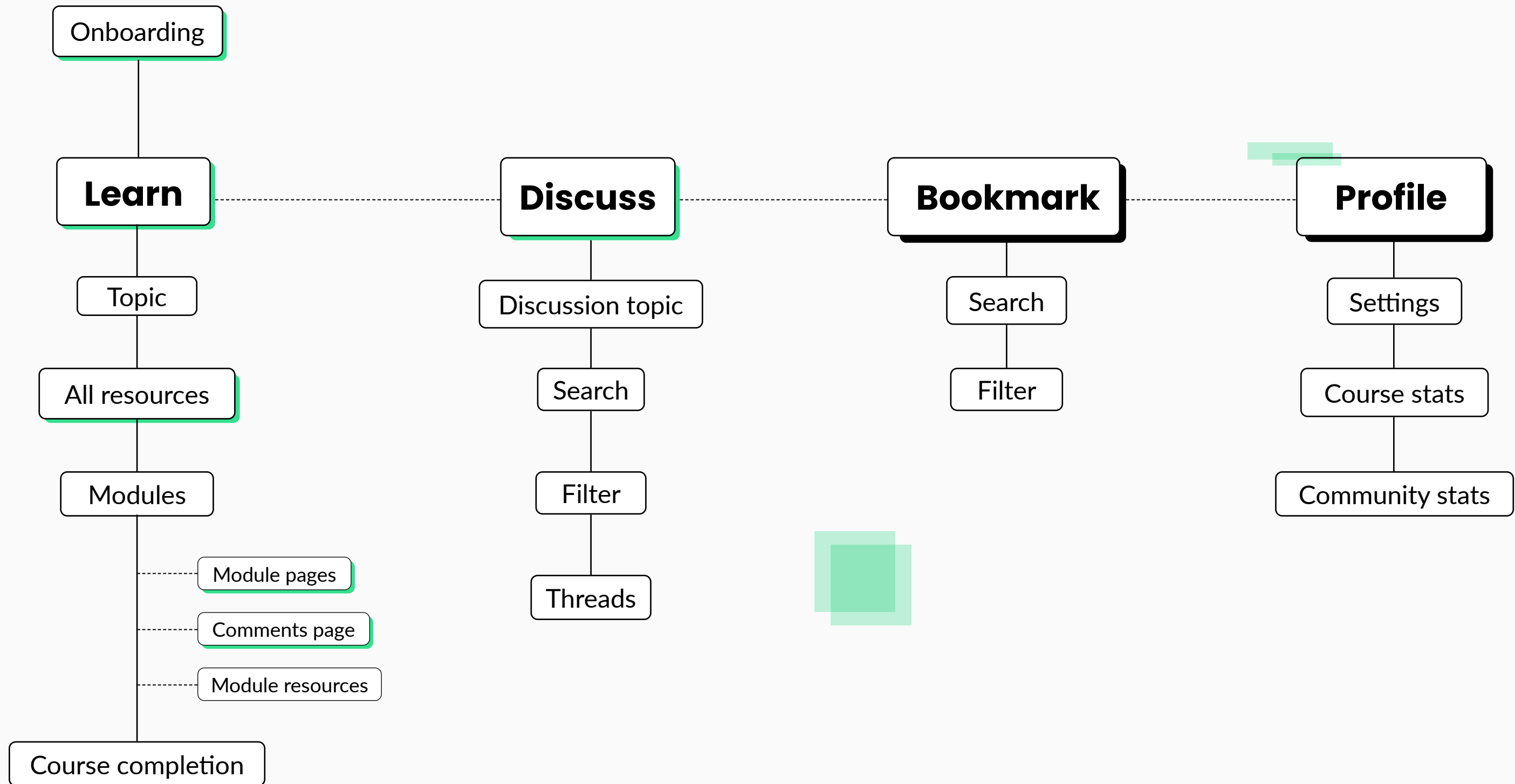
# Gambit poster



# Bus stop ad



# Site map



● Screens that were designed.

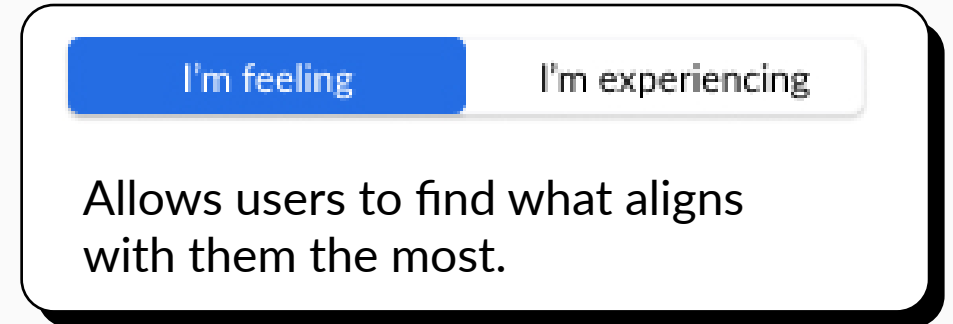
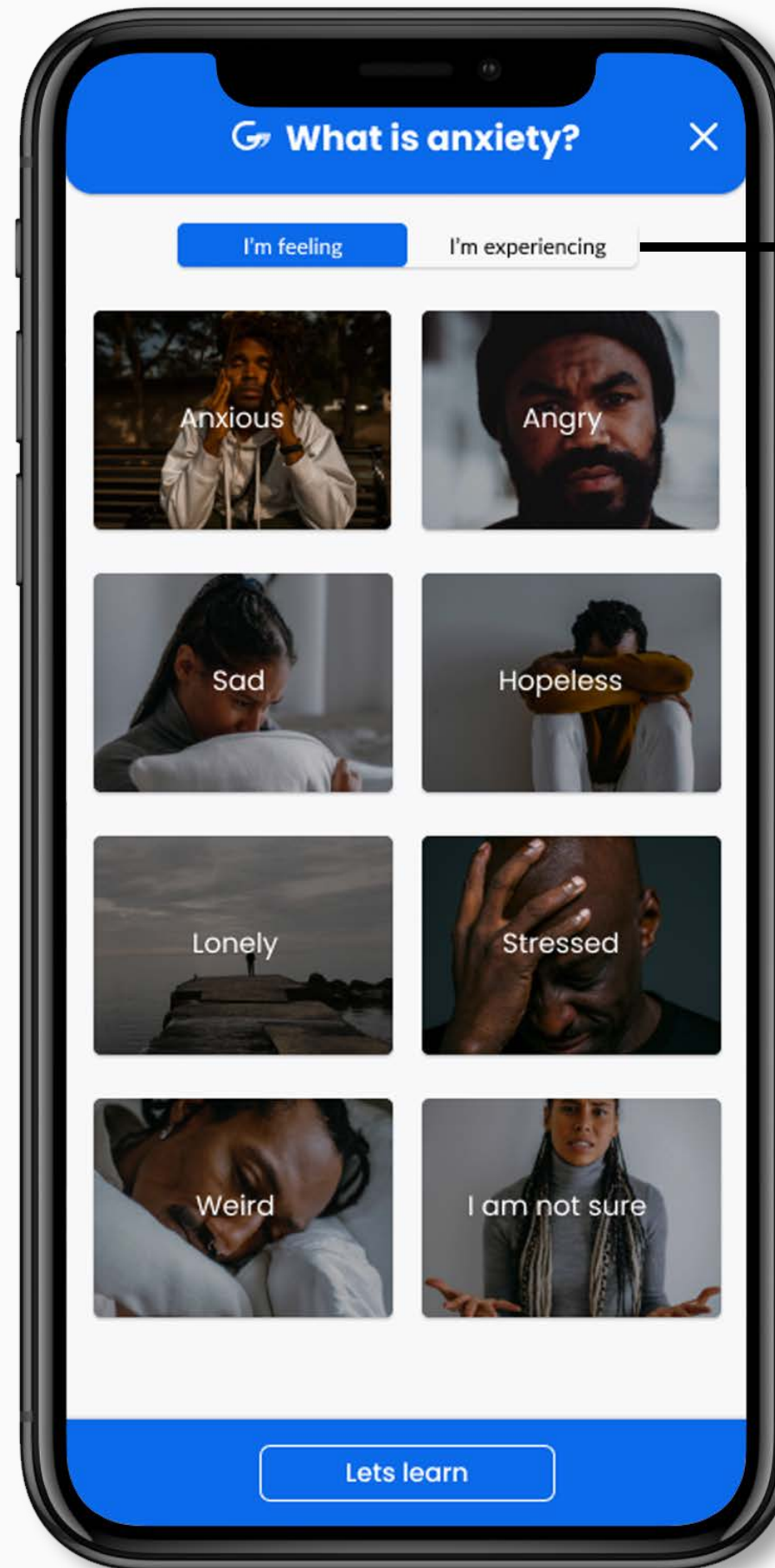
# Onboarding page

## Problem

Users want to know why they are feeling a certain way or how to deal with a troubling experience.

## Solution

Onboarding will allow users to choose the topics that align with them before jumping in.



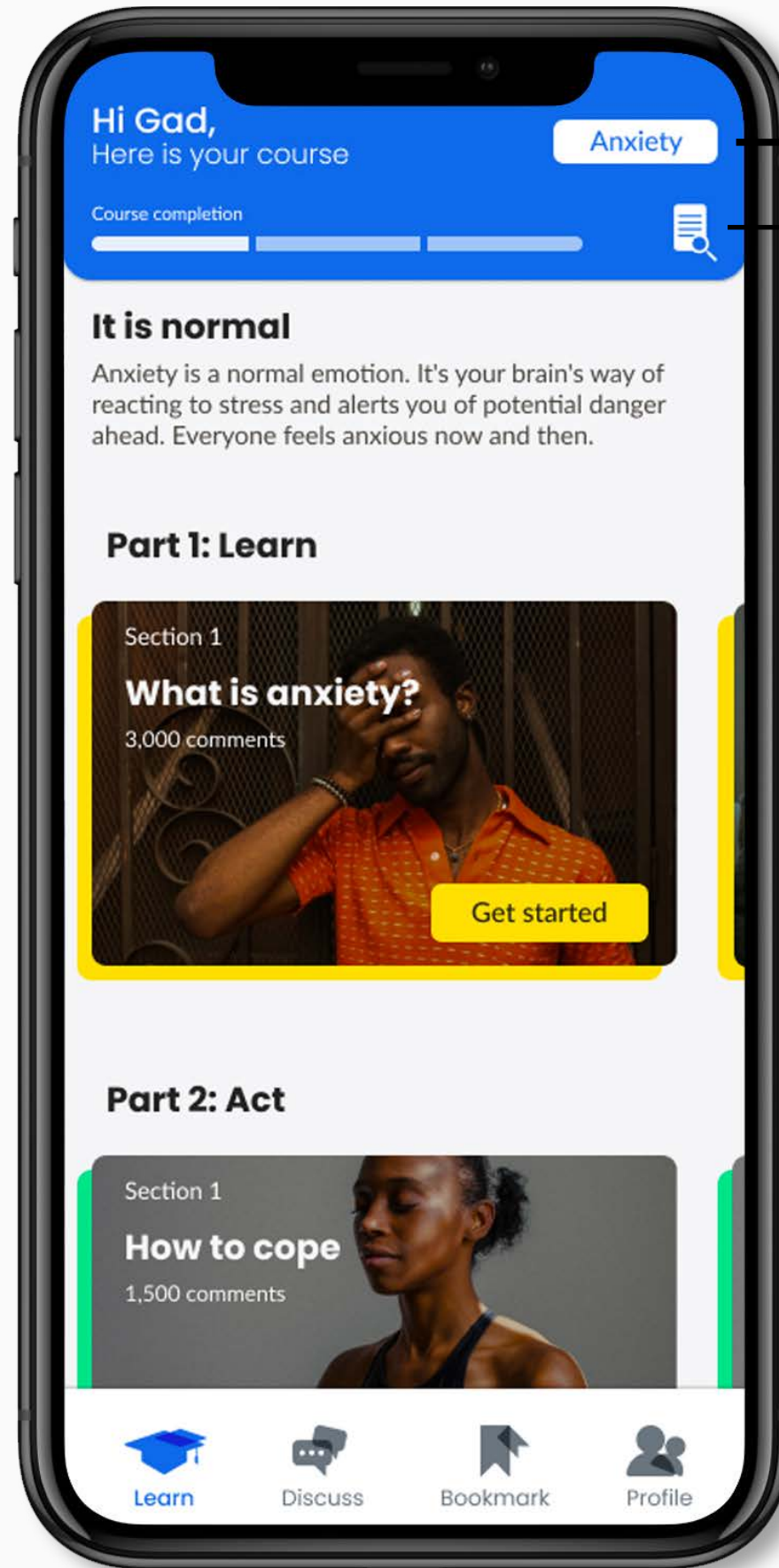
# Learn

## Problem

Users don't understand what they are feeling or how to deal with their current situation. They don't feel like others will listen to them because they don't know enough about what they are going through.

## Solution

The learn page allows users to learn at their own pace through modules. This page gives access to overall information on a topic, how to cope with the topic and teaches users how to reach out to others. Users also have access to all the resources provided for the topic.



## Feature

### Anxiety

This button allows users to switch between their topics or add a new topic.

## Feature



The resource button allows users to see and access all of the resources.

# Module screens

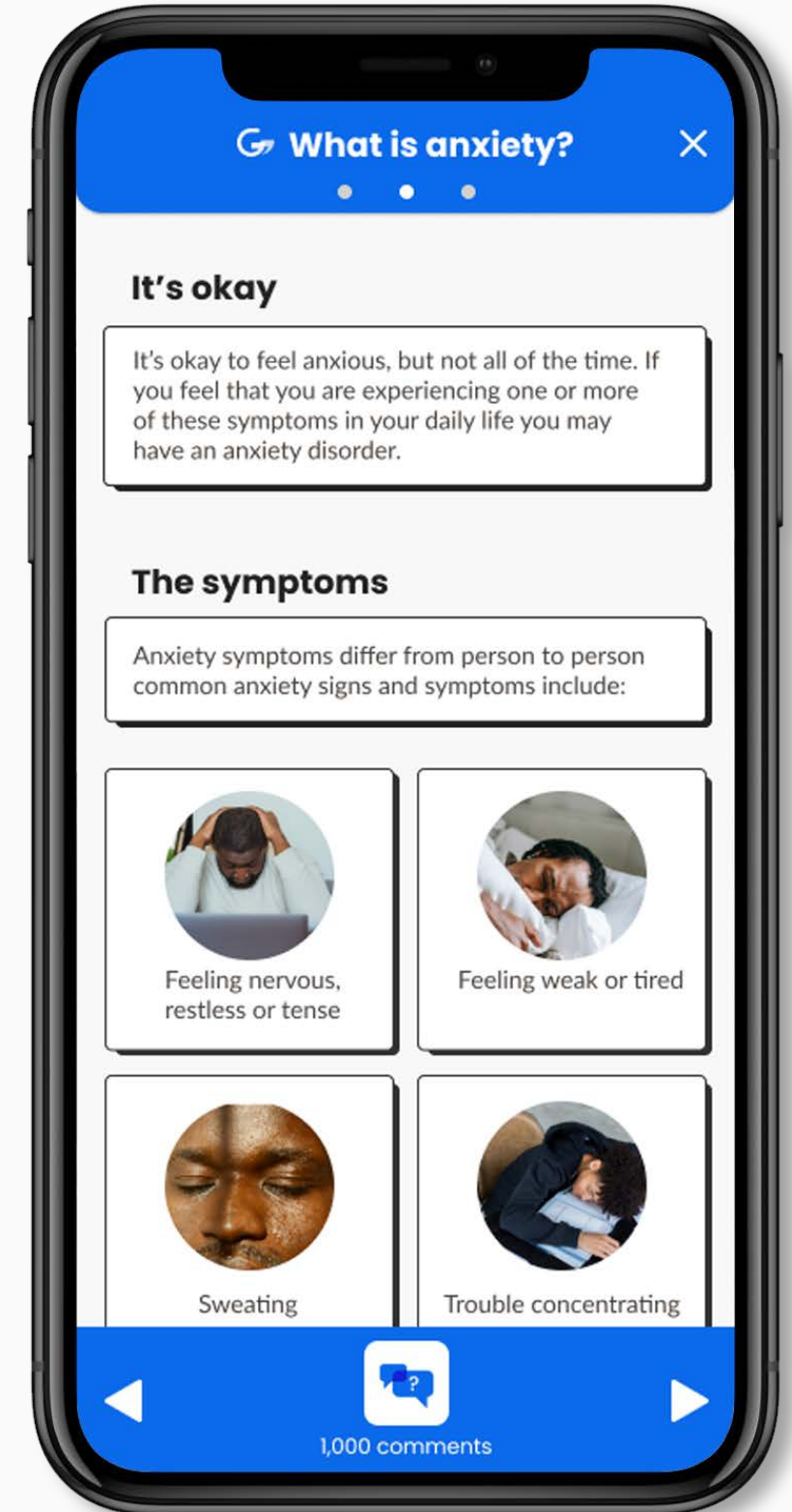
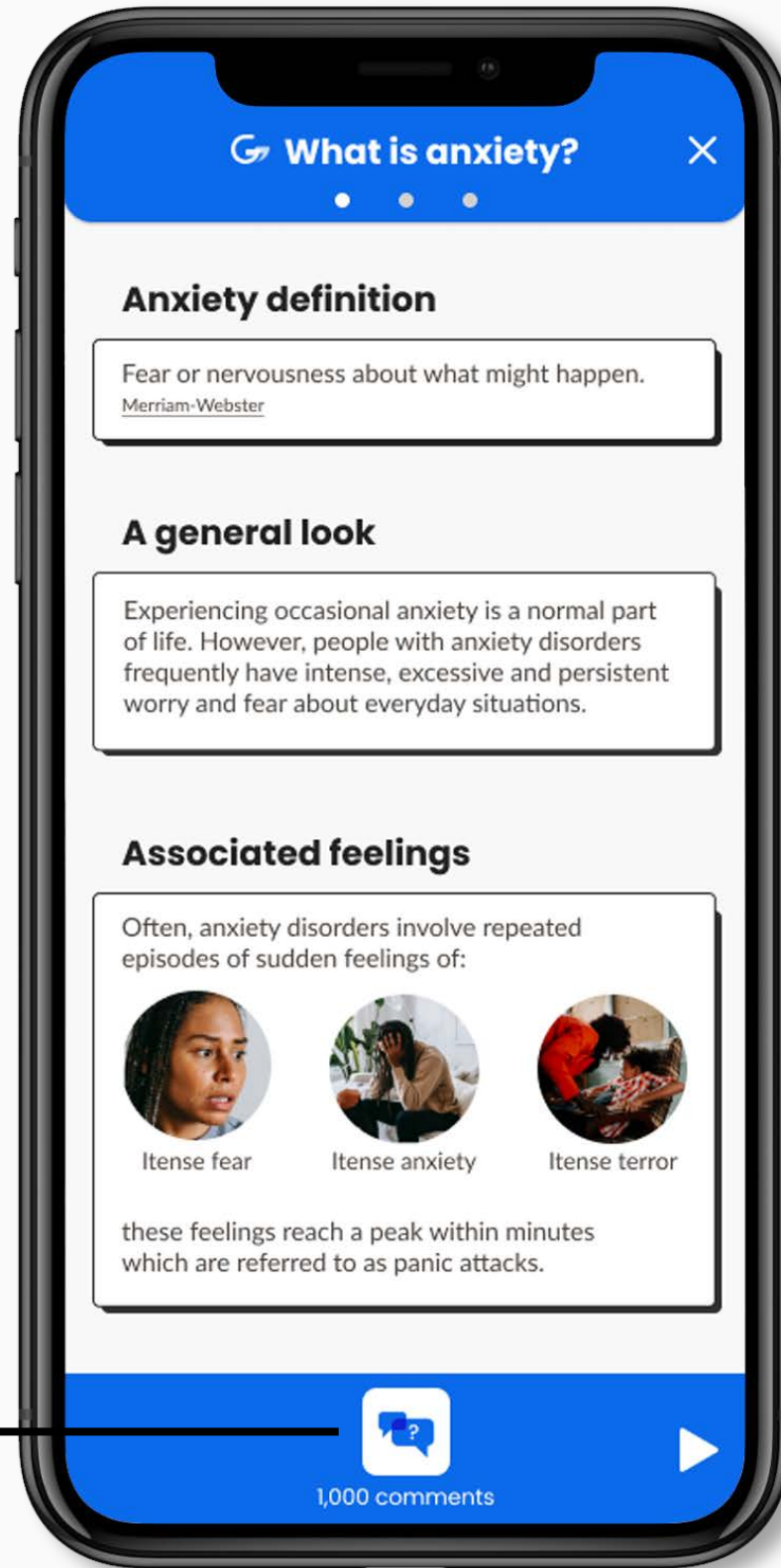
## Purpose

The information is broken up for users to learn about their topic. Each page also allows you to interact with other users through comments.

## Feature



Allows users to comment and interact with each other.





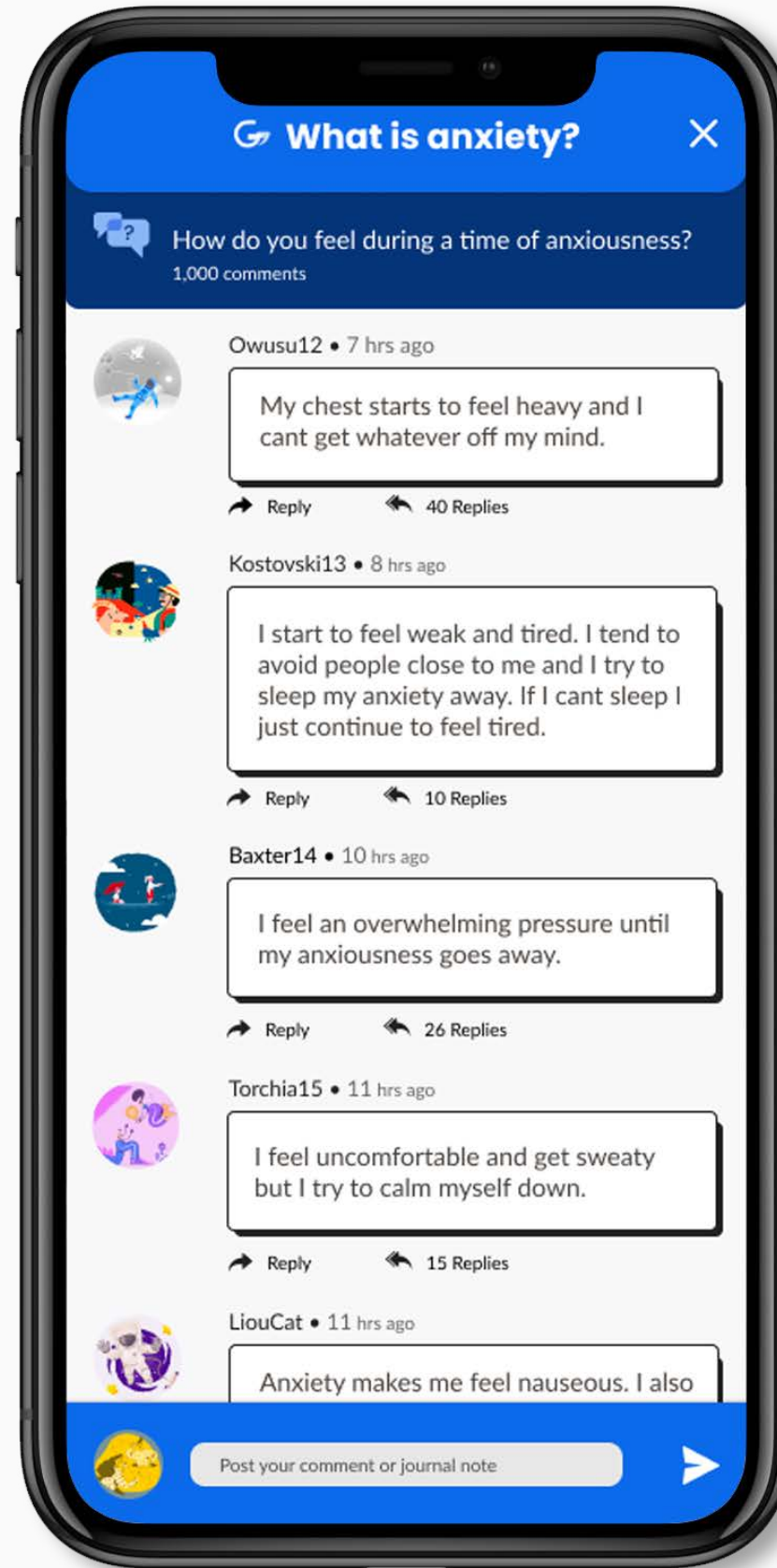
# Module comment

## Problem

Users may feel that no one else has the same experiences of feelings as them. This may make users feel even more isolated or misunderstood.

## Solution

Module comments allow users to see that they are not alone in regards to how they are feeling or what they are facing.

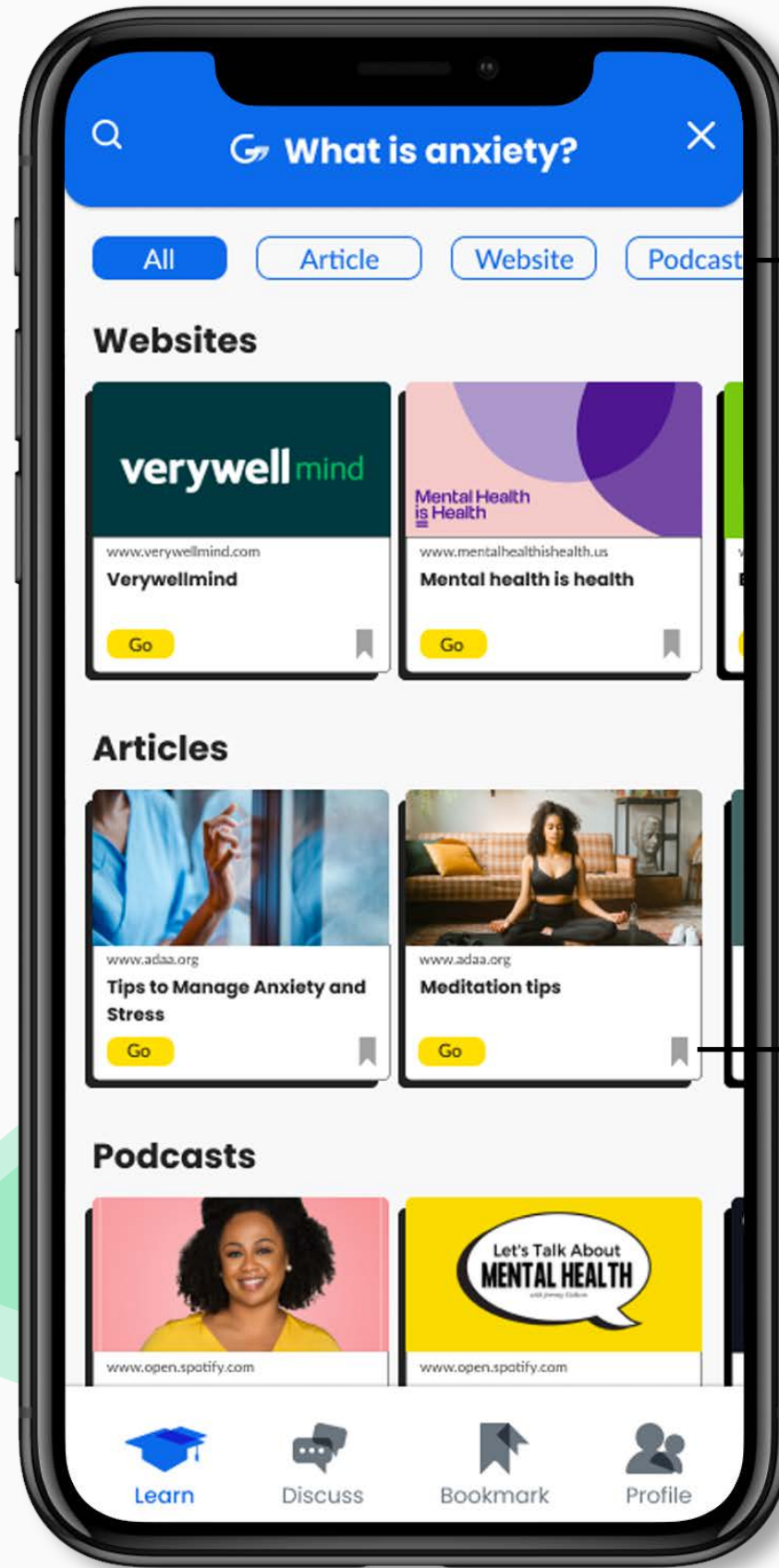


Each comment page allows users to see others' comments and allows a user to respond if they have an account. Users are given a question in each section to stimulate conversation.

# Resource page

## Problem

The resource page allows users to search and filter for any resource throughout the entire course for easy access.



## Feature

Allows users to filter resources.

## Feature

Allows users to bookmark a resource.

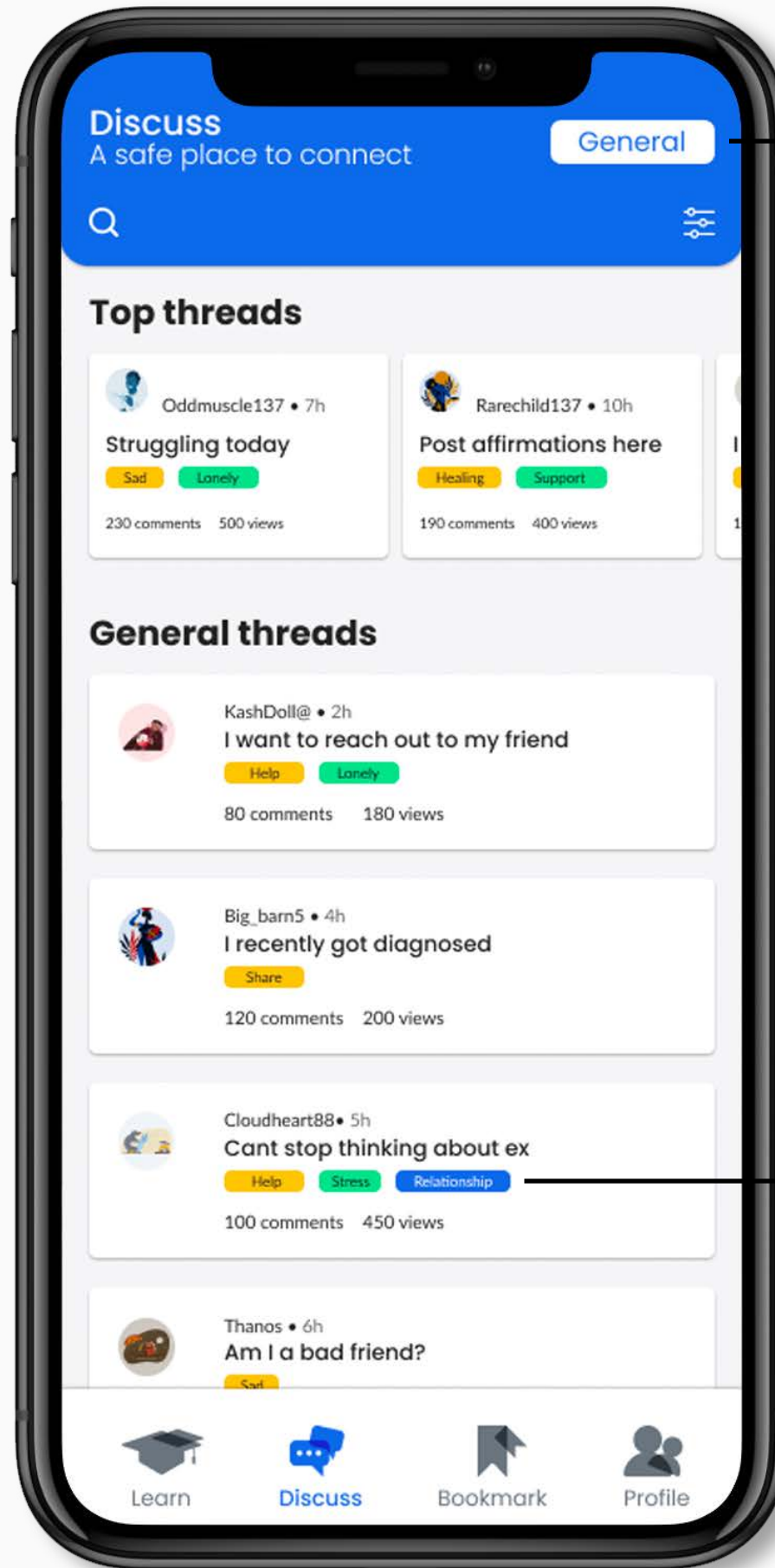
# Discuss page

## Problem

Some users may not be ready to reach out to a close one or professional.

## Solution

The discuss page allows users to talk to others anonymously in moderated spaces.



## Feature

**General**

Allows users to switch to different threads within the discuss page.

## Feature

Help

Stress

Relationship

Tags allow users to see what type of thread a discussion belongs to.

# What's next?

## Testing assumptions

This semester was used to build this concept. But all UX designs should be user-centered so I need to conduct usability tests to confirm my prototype assumptions to make changes accordingly.

## Building further

Based on the feedback I receive from a usability test. I will continue to build the app and create other screens which I will also test.



Thank you