

The background is a solid blue color with several large, stylized white line-art flowers scattered across it. The flowers have multiple layers of petals and a detailed center, resembling a peony or similar multi-petaled flower. The text is centered horizontally and vertically.

Food For Thought

Needfinding Report

Meet the Team



Na Young Son
'25
Music Major
CS Minor



Mai Mostafa
'26
SymSys Major
Education Minor



Ava Love
'25
SymSys Major



Elton Manchester
'26
CS Major
Music Minor



Domain Selection

We wanted something we....

Felt Was Underserviced

Is there already a variety of resources out there?

Had a Passion For

Do we care deeply about this topic?

Thought Would Be Challenging

We wanna see what we can do!

Finding Participants



Not all Stanford students!!

We need to get out of our bubble!

People who have/had some sort of struggle with food

This is our target audience, we need to get their point of view!

A diversity of experiences

Recovery is so different for everyone, we need to see how different people are approaching it!

We Spoke To...



Z

Senior in High School
Menlo Park, CA

In the midst of
getting ice cream
with a friend



J

Junior at Stanford
Philadelphia, PA

Recently returned from
an international
internship



JH

Senior at WashU
Korea

Studying design, has
two siblings (brother
and sister)

And We Asked...

Did anyone close to you growing up exhibit unhealthy eating habits?

Do you put any dietary restrictions on yourself today?

Have you ever taken or considered taking dietary supplements?

Did you ever/do you currently count your caloric intake?

Has anyone close to you ever made comments on your appearance?

Where do you currently get your health information?

Have you ever been formally diagnosed with an eating disorder?

Have you ever sought out professional help? Was it helpful?

Do you view any food groups as “bad” for you?

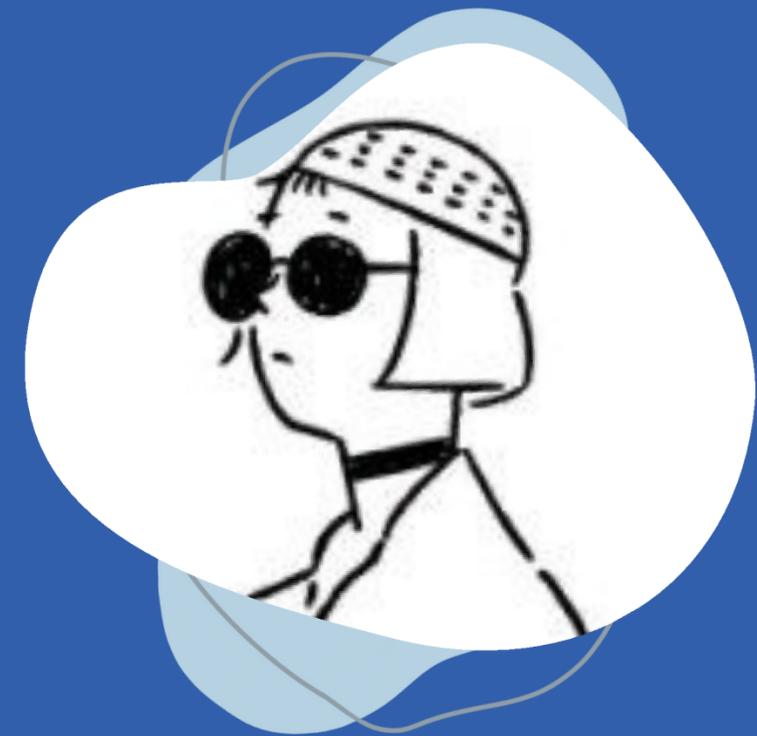
What are your thoughts on health related social media content?

What does a recovered you look like?



Z

Interviewer: Mai
Notes: Na Young



- 17 Years Old
- Long History of Food-Related Trauma
- On University Ave., 20 minutes

her family background: no carbs in the house, unintentionally exposed to food poisoning when she was 4

Therapy has been very difficult for her to get as a minor

"I've tried using various apps and have stopped. I'm just ready to do therapy instead."

Everyone is unique (in reference to dietary needs)

"I don't view myself as feeling worthy of eating, of giving myself energy to eat."

"I am not a good zookeeper for myself"

Past with bad therapists

Finances/affordability is also a big part not being able to get treatment

Food insecurity seemed to surround extreme fear of health issues put upon her as a child

Modern food research is too difficult to access; most is old

Information on food/health online is not reliable: ingredients → FDA | what is good/bad → no trusted source of information

There are too many food options (at grocery stores). Most are untrustworthy.

Financial concerns prevent her from exploring diets that would work for her

she thinks supplements can replace real food, but she is having difficulties in finding the right ones that would replace for her body

Seems to view food as entirely a functionality -> similar to charging a phone

she thinks trying therapy might help her better than using apps for help

she thinks the information on food science is ever-changing

She would never want anyone else to treat their body the way she does

SAY THINK

she forgets to eat meals --> only realizes when her body crashes

During interview, shrugged when talking about difficult issues

When she was younger (as early as 4 years old) she would often go several days without eating

Any apps she tried actually made her worse than she ever had been before

Recovery process seems more related to becoming more knowledgeable on the topic of eating disorders and their impacts

she tried to go from 1 meal a day to 3, made her sick.

she does grocery for herself

she tried to use calorie counting apps for increasing calorie intake

she tried to refer to scientific facts to address her eating struggles

views eating food as a chore

Scared of food poisoning (due to childhood experience)

She has many textural discrepancies around food

she associates eating as feeling unpleasant

Burnt out (little energy for hygiene or diet)

Wishes that she could just look at a box of food and know the feeling of it

she feels healthy food/supplements are inaccessible because of financial restrictions and label misinformation

she enjoys eating certain food items that she associates with positive experiences/emotions

she feels guilty for skipping meals especially because she wouldn't want other people to have her eating habits

DOES FEELS

"I don't view myself as worthy of eating, of giving myself energy to eat"

Mai Mostafa

"I've tried using various apps and have stopped. I'm just ready to do therapy instead."

Everyone is unique (in reference to dietary needs)

Modern food research is too difficult to access; most is old

There is simultaneously too much information and not enough. It is difficult to figure out what exactly could work for you

Mai Mostafa

Financial concerns prevent her from exploring diets that would work for her

Care is unaffordable and inaccessible

Mai Mostafa

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she thinks the information on food science is ever-changing

She would never want anyone else to treat their body the way she does

SAY

THINK

DOES

FEELS

Any apps that she tried using actually made her condition much worse

Mai Mostafa

Often forgets to eat for an entire day and only realizes when her body "crashes"

Mai Mostafa

Associates the feeling of eating as unpleasant, views eating as a chore

Mai Mostafa

Has many issues with the textures of foods

Mai Mostafa

she found it difficult to eat more than one meal a day when her body

she tried to refer to scientific facts to address her eating struggles

When she was younger (as early as 4 years old) she would often go several days without eating

Any apps she tried actually made her worse than

views eating as a chore

Scared of food poisoning (due to childhood experience)

She has many textural discrepancies around food

Wishes that she could just look at a bowl of food and know the feeling of it

she feels healthy

she associates eating with feelings of unpleasant

She enjoys certain food items that she associates with positive experiences/emotions

she feels guilty for skipping meals especially because she wouldn't want other people to have her eating habits

Trying to go from 1 meal a day to 3, made her sick.

with therapists

"I am not a good zookeeper for myself"

Finances/ is also a barrier to being able to get treatment

security to surround the fear of issues put up as a child

Information on food science is too much information and not enough. It is difficult to figure out what exactly could work for you

many

"I don't view myself as feeling worthy of eating, of giving myself energy to eat."

with therapists

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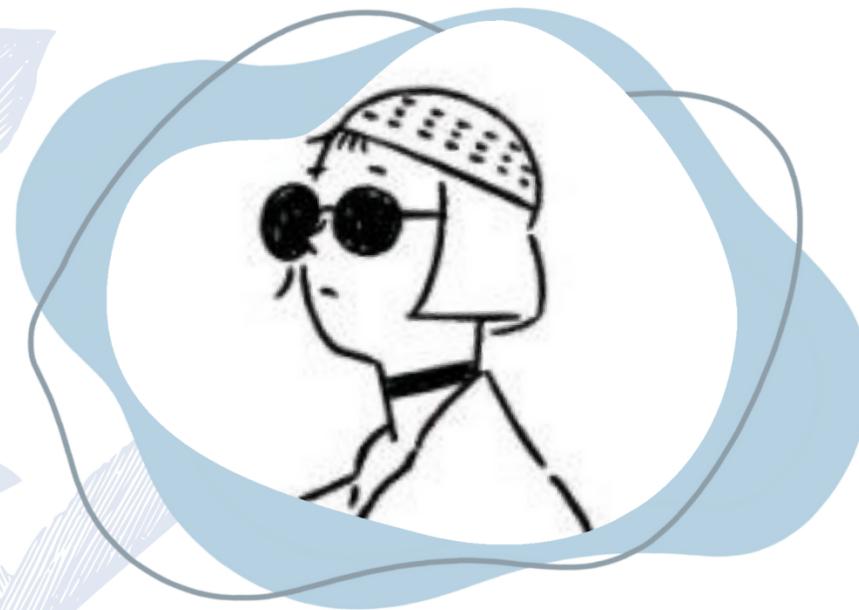
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she feels guilty for skipping meals especially because she wouldn't want other people to have her eating habits

Trying to go from 1 meal a day to 3, made her sick.

Insight

She felt a lot of frustration and overwhelm towards the inaccessibility of trustworthy food information

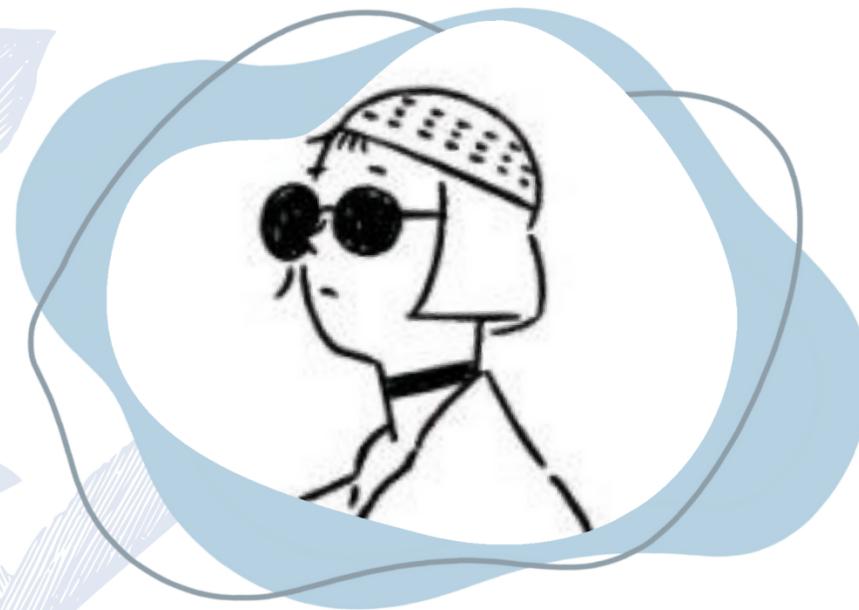


Need

Trustworthy food information curated to her tastes (texture, flavor, nutritional value)

Insight

She feels that taking care of herself is a great hassle



Need

A way to make acts of self-care feel more manageable in a busy and stressful environment



J

Interviewer: Mai

Notes: Elton



- 20 Years Old
- Has Anorexia/Bulimia; Recently Relapsed; Extreme User
- My Dorm Room, 1 Hour



“Once you know how many calories are in a teaspoon of oil, you never forget”

Mai Mostafa

When asked what recovery looked like, she immediately gave a target weight she wanted to be at

Mai Mostafa

Described her eating disorder as an obsession

Mai Mostafa

Tends to compare herself to others often, especially in relation to size

Mai Mostafa

Very much aware that this is not healthy, but can't seem to stop

Mai Mostafa

Very self aware

SAY THINK

DOES FEEL

Makes frequent food substitutions (keto bread, egg whites, artificial sugars)

Mai Mostafa

At its worst, would purge multiple times a day, in particular whenever she felt she had gone over her caloric limit

Mai Mostafa

Feels uncomfortable purging when living with others

Mai Mostafa

Feels a great amount of guilt, shame, and anxiety when she goes over her calorie limit

Mai Mostafa

Insight

She seems to lack any effective coping mechanisms for regulating her emotions



Need

Coping mechanisms that work for her and help her begin the path to recovery

Insight

She has reached a point where she views food as either fuel or the enemy



Need

A way to find joy in food again without feelings of anxiety or guilt diminishing it



JH

Interviewer: Na Young

Notes: Ava



- 21 Years Old
- Has Bulimia; Currently In Therapy; Says She's Doing Much Better
- Zoom, 30 Minutes

therapy helped her to recover from her bad habits

Watched her mother restrict her brother's eating habits growing up

Low-effort medication helpful for recovery

Flare-ups were cyclical, often in high-stress periods

guilts around the total amount of food she ate, not food types

views restrictions as being unhelpful to her recovery

Therapy is what got her better (ED used to be much worse and much more frequent)

Feels very aware of how much other people are eating compared to her

Her ED is much more controlled under medical treatment

snacking helps her to control the entire amount of food when she eats

Snacks so she has an excuse to not eat desserts in social situations

Feels like she eats a lot (1.5-2x the normal amount) and feels guilty if she eats more than her friends

All or nothing mentality around eating habits. If she "breaks a rule," she becomes unable to control her eating

Viewed medication as easier than therapy

Thinks ED stemmed from body image issues / body dysmorphia

Sister had issues with eating disorder as well

Took diet pills in the past to lose weight

Being in public stops her from throwing up

less of a cultural influence, therapy helped her recover

SAY THINK

DOES FEEL

Usually binges at night, when she's alone or feels overwhelmed/stressed/inadequate

Specific Mechanisms: Talk to friends, drink tea, comfort places

Has a set of coping mechanisms when she feels a binging/purging cycle coming on

secretly had diet pills that were advertised as a teenager

Feels guilt when she eats a lot of dessert / sugar

Still self-conscious about eating too much

Had access to an emergency ED help hotline through school, but stopped using it after a couple times due to feeling embarrassment due to judgement

Felt less judged in US vs Korea, but not enough to improve before therapy

used purging as a coping mechanism for feeling bloated, but after she purges, she spirals into suicidal/depressive thoughts

all-or-nothing mentality when it comes to following the food restrictions she set up for herself

Has a curated list of both triggers and coping mechanisms to deal with those feelings

took probiotics when she had issues with bowel movements when she was on her diet

Felt like a failure when not meeting strict dietary guidelines

Feels the need to finish the plate that is in front of her

Generally triggered by high stress situations/periods of life

she felt probiotics was actually helpful for her diet

Found that both medication and therapy were helpful to her recovery, but definitely appreciated the ease of medication

Mai Mostafa

Views restriction as being very unhelpful to recovery

Mai Mostafa

Has an all-or-nothing mentality when it comes to eating

Mai Mostafa

Has a specific list of triggers and coping mechanisms to deal with each trigger accordingly

Mai Mostafa

Very conscious of the amount of food others are eating

Mai Mostafa

Usually triggered by high stress situations/periods of life

Mai Mostafa

**SAY THINK
DOES FEEL**

Flare-ups were cyclical, often in high-stress periods

Snacks so she has an excuse to not eat desserts in social situations

Views restriction as being very unhelpful to recovery

Feels guilty if she eats more than her friends

Therapy is what got her better (ED used to be much worse and much more frequent)

Feels very aware of how much other people are eating compared to her

therapy helped her to recover from her bad habits

Sister had issues with eating disorder as well

Took diet pills in the past to lose weight

Being in public stops her from throwing up

less of a cultural influence, therapy helped her recover

body dysmorphia

Usually binges at night, when alone or feeling overwhelmed/stressed/in

Specific Mechanisms:

Has a set of coping mechanisms when a triggering situation occurs

secretly had diet pills that were advertised as a teenager

Feels a lot of guilt when eating dessert/sugar

Still very conscious of eating

Had access to an emergency ED help hotline through school, but stopped using it after a couple times due to feeling embarrassment due to judgement

Felt less judged in US vs Korea, but not enough to improve before therapy

used purging as a coping mechanism for feeling stressed but after purges, she had suicidal thoughts

curated list of triggers and coping mechanisms with those triggers

took probiotics when she had issues with bowel movements when she was on her diet

Felt like a failure when not meeting strict dietary guidelines

need to finish the plate that is in front of her

felt that probiotics was really helpful for her

Insight

She tends to be more likely to relapse when under a lot of stress



Need

A way to regulate or manage her stress so she isn't as susceptible.

Insight

She has a very all-or-nothing mentality when it comes to food. If she doesn't eat as "healthily" as she would've liked, she tends to binge.



Need

A way to prevent or avoid the feeling of failure that leads to binging

Summary

Our Participants Agreed

Therapy is essential

Recovery is nearly impossible without it

Stress impacts their ability to recover

Whether it is information overload or stress from class, it certainly is not helpful in the recovery process

There is a lot of (mis)information out there

Its hard to know whats right for you when there's so much out there, especially when not all of it is trustworthy



Summary

However...

Therapy is inaccessible

It is incredibly difficult to get a therapist, this process can take a very long time and most find themselves without any resources while they wait

Regulating emotions can be very difficult

Especially if you have an eating disorder, regulating your emotions around food is really hard, and you need to be prepared for whatever may trigger you

There is no regulation of food information online

Getting dietary information from social platforms is both incredibly tempting and incredibly inaccurate

Next Steps

Future Interviews: Experts, Different Genders

To get a different point of view!

Research Available Tools

So we don't make the same thing twice!

Brainstorming

Using HMW statements!

Thank you!

