



Gamified smartphone app to improve mental health and well-being under development

Doctor of Psychology student, David Bakker, is developing a smartphone app, MoodMission, which uses an intuitive and engaging interface to help users improve their psychological health and well-being.

Mental health and well-being apps are being used ever widely with users of all ages and mental health needs. Melbourne-based app Smiling Mind has received international acclaim for bringing mindfulness meditation to almost 1 million users' phones. It is now being used widely in schools and organisations around the country.

The project is now seeking financial support through crowdfunding site Pozible. Funds raised will go towards coding the software with help from Spark Digital, which is the same app development firm behind Smiling Mind.

David, and supervisor Associate Professor Nikki Rickard, have been working on MoodMission for the past 18 months. David and Nikki are part of a team that has developed another mental health app, MoodPrism, which is due for release on the app store in the coming months.

MoodMission is built using evidence-based techniques, including strategies from positive psychology and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). Users report their low moods or anxious symptoms to MoodMission, which then recommends five useful, brief, easily achieved coping strategies to help them deal with negative thoughts, feelings, or behaviours. These could be relaxation strategies, cognitive reframing exercises, physical activities, or anything else that evidence shows can lift moods, reduce anxiety, and improve mental well-being.

Users choose one of these “missions”, and when they have completed it MoodMission rewards them with points, badges, and other achievement acknowledgments. These rewards can promote positive psychological health through boosting self-esteem and feelings of mastery. To correspond to CBT practices, users also report how they feel after they have completed the mission. This enables MoodMission to suggest missions in the future that have had more past success. Psychoeducation is also employed throughout the app.

MoodMission will be experimentally validated via randomised controlled trialling to ensure that it is effective. No other mental health and well-being apps currently available on the app store have been validated by randomised controlled trialling. The app will be free to download when released, scheduled for next year, if crowdfunding is successful.

For more information about the project visit:

www.moodmissionapp.com

www.pozible.com/moodmission