

Product design for social change

Designing products that empower parents

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Shift

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Introduction

**The first 1000 days of life
(from conception to the age of 2)
is a critical period for a child's
emotional development.**

The care a child receives during their first 1000 days, and the relationships that they form with their parents and other caregivers, creates the foundations for their future emotional wellbeing and mental health.

Helping parents to form strong and healthy relationships with their children during this period is therefore an important area for early action. Recognising this, Shift began a programme of work to explore how a product or service could support parents whilst raising their children during this time.

We formed a partnership with NCT the largest parenting charity in the UK, to design a digital tool to support parents during the first thousand days of their child's life. We undertook extensive user research to make sure we designed a product which would meet parents' needs. We spoke to parents up and down the UK, in groups, extended interviews and depth interviews. We also spoke to NCT volunteers, NCT practitioners and other experts such as health visitors and child psychologists.

This report shares the findings from this work, and will be particularly relevant to those wanting to improve existing services or create new services to support parents.



At the very start of this programme of work we conducted foundational research, including literature reviews and expert interviews, to understand the factors that affect a baby's emotional development.



These factors, and the relationship between them, form the theory of change for our work in this area and are illustrated in the model on the right (more detail on the theory of change can be found in our report *0-2: improving infant emotional development* on our website.)

The parenting experience

This report presents our insights gathered from speaking to mums, NCT practitioners and volunteers, and external experts about the experience of raising a child in their first 1000 days.

Who we spoke to:

Mums

We spoke to 49 mums via groups, extended interviews and depth interviews. The women we spoke to came from both rural and urban settings across the UK. They ranged in age from 21 to 40+ and included mums who were expecting, those with a young child and those with multiple children. We also spoke to mums from a variety of ethnicities.

NCT Practitioners and volunteers

We spoke to 26 NCT practitioners from across the UK, including those who specialise in antenatal, postnatal and breastfeeding support. We also spoke to nine NCT volunteers who, through volunteering, have significant insight into the experience of a range of parents that attend NCT activities.

External experts

We spoke to 13 experts with an in-depth knowledge of parents and parenting. This included academics, psychologists, health workers, midwives, children's centre coordinators and social workers.

**17 mums with a household
income under £40k**

**32 mums with unspecified
household income**

During this research we had a particular focus on mums “in the middle.” These are mums who do not qualify for targeted, specialised support designed for the most vulnerable but are also not in a position to buy in additional services such as nannies. For this research, those defined as “in the middle” were those with a household income of under £40k.

Reasons behind our sample choice:

- We focused on mums as, within the UK, mums are predominantly the primary caregiver in the first two years of a baby’s life, particularly during parental leave. We will, however, ensure that in the design phase we consult with fathers who are primary caregivers to ensure any designs also meet their needs.
- We chose to focus on the primary caregiver, as they are the individual who has the most influence on the emotional development of infants from the age of 0 - 2 (and beyond).
- Our sample did not include mothers with severe mental health issues although many of the women we spoke to had experience of milder mental health issues such as baby blues.

What we asked about

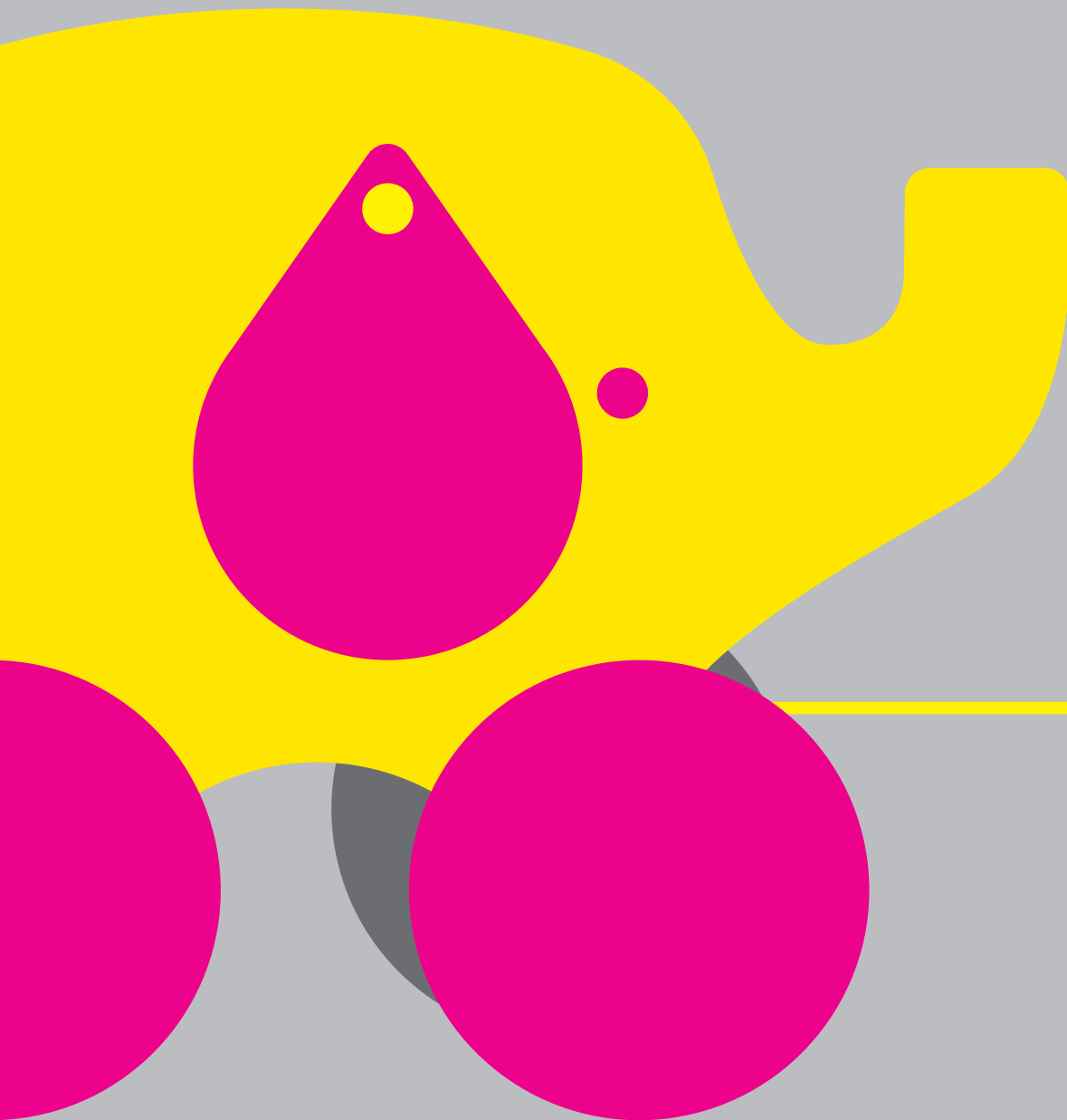
The questions asked in the research centred around:

- The parenting journey - what was the experience of a parent from conception through to birth through to having a toddler?
- What were the feelings, thoughts, desires and behaviours that occurred throughout the journey, both in relation to their child but also as a person independently of their child?
- How did these experiences, feelings and thoughts differ between parents, and were there similarities?
- What helped and hindered parents throughout this journey, particularly what support did they receive, which support was most highly valued and why?

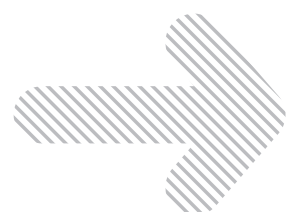
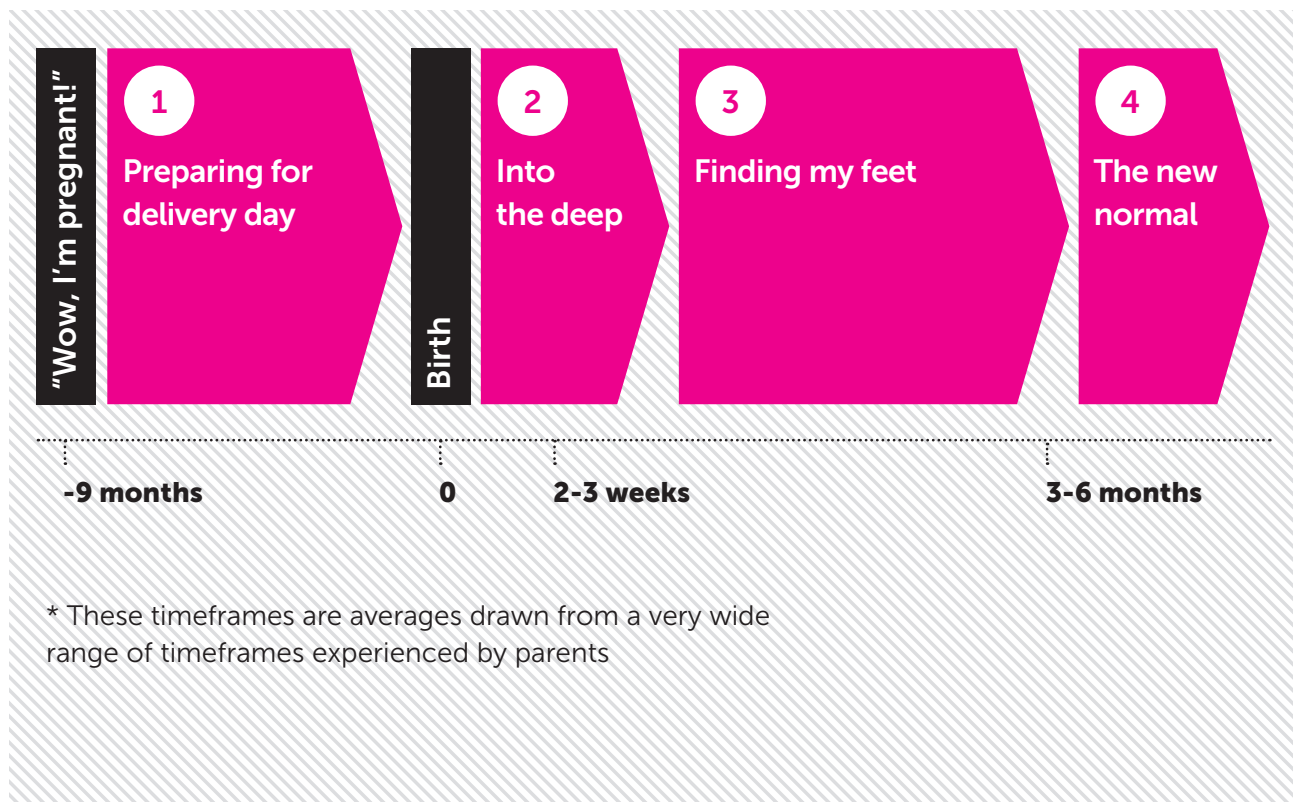


Insights

The journey



Although parents' experiences varied widely there seemed to be a number of common stages that most parents went through as part of their "parenting journey." The length of each stage varied greatly from parent to parent, but the order of the stages was relatively stable. The diagram below outlines these stages, along with indicative timeframes*. This section explores what parents told us about their thoughts and feelings during each of these stages.





1

Prepping for delivery day

When: Conception to birth

With D-Day looming, parents we spoke to were trying to find out as much as they could about pregnancy, birth and their baby. They wanted to do research to feel as prepared as possible. They were mostly looking at information on pregnancy and birth and some had downloaded apps on their phones to track the development of their growing baby. They'd had a little look at information on what happens after birth but felt it was a long way away, and they weren't sure what things were most important to know.

As well as looking things up, some parents had gone to free courses at the hospital, or NCT classes, and had spoken to other pregnant friends if they knew any.

Feelings and Thoughts:

- Excitement
- Is this normal?
- Slight to high apprehension about birth.
- What should I know or be asking?
- Am I behind the learning curve?

Support Needs:

- You don't know what you don't know and so often didn't even know what to ask.
- Would value support that ensured they didn't miss anything important.
- Concerned about post birth (practical and social support) but often birth felt more of an immediate concern.
- In hindsight, often felt they should have prepared more for the postnatal period.

Sources of Support:

- Midwives were valued for trusted advice and nurturing / caring support.
- In first pregnancies (especially where there were complications) mums deferred heavily to healthcare professionals. Care at this stage placed priority on mum's health.
- Mums used apps to track baby's development.
- Mums went to NHS courses on birth and also NCT.

"I did a lot of research and training into the early years. I knew what I wanted to do and my husband was on board with that too. And when he questioned something I wanted I could explain why because of the research to make him understand."

Parent 1

"You read all of the advice. I felt quite burdened... I was doing normal things like books, speaking to people who had kids, advice and tips. Prepping like it was work, as if it was a research project and collecting as much info as possible."

Parent 10



Into the deep

When: Birth to 2-3 weeks

Parents we spoke to felt nothing could have fully prepared them for this stage. They felt like they had gone into survival mode: totally exhausted but continuously fire fighting. They had so many things they weren't sure about, and so much conflicting advice. They often felt they didn't know where to go to to find the "right way" to do things. When they did find this information it often made them even more petrified they'd do something "wrong" and harm the baby.

During this period friends and family tend to visit which, although nice, often adds to the exhaustion. The midwife also tends to stop coming after 2 weeks, taking away a key source of support and reassurance.

Feelings and Thoughts:

- Overwhelmed
- Exhausted
- Generally emotional
- Slight to high fear or apprehension
- Defensive (annoyed at others)
- Protective
- Fragile
- Surviving
- Many moments of joy

Support Needs:

- Parents described a strong need for practical support.
- They also wanted high levels of support for their decisions.
- They needed assurance that they were not doing harm.

Sources of Support:

- Partners play a key role providing emotional and practical support 24/7.
- Midwives tend to still be visiting in this period. However, many parents described feeling dropped off a cliff when midwife support ended.
- Often family and parents would "lend a hand".

"There was so much information on the birth, but when we got back from hospital we didn't know what to do. It's also all about the baby after birth - what about me after the birth? It's midwife for birth then health visitor for the baby. It's scary to be discharged, you're just left after to recover."

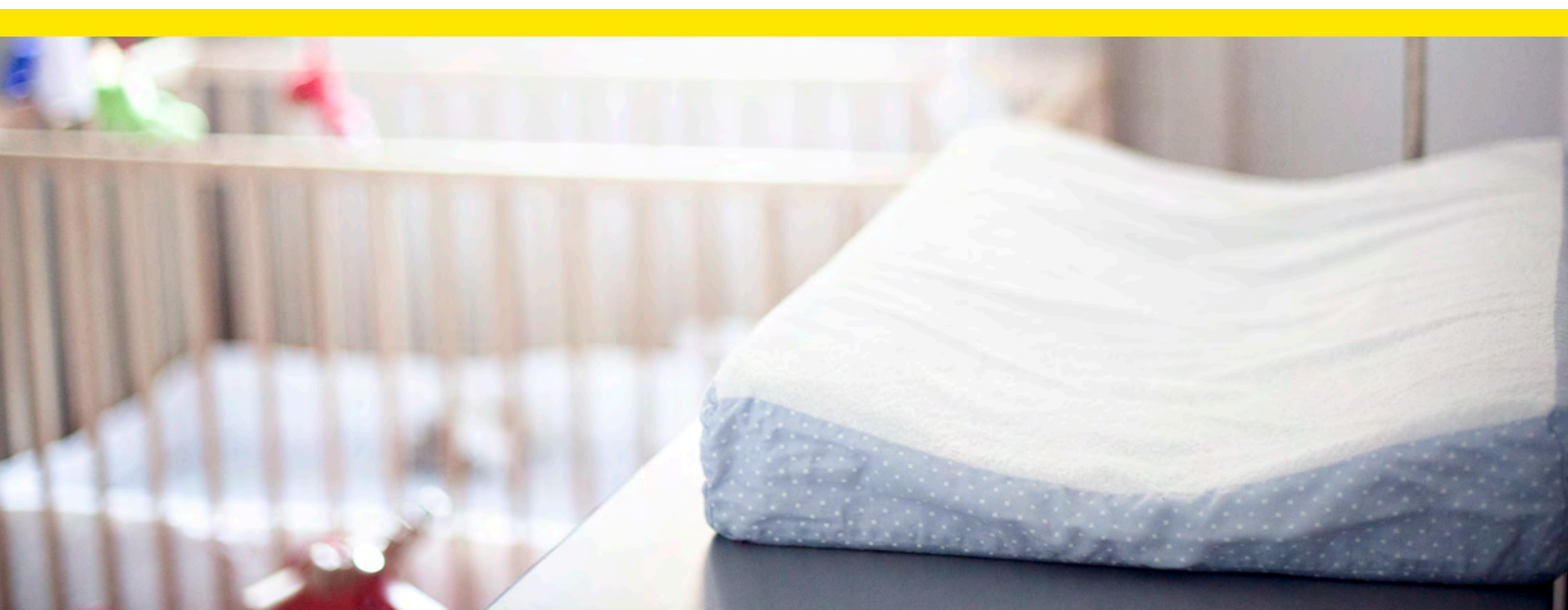
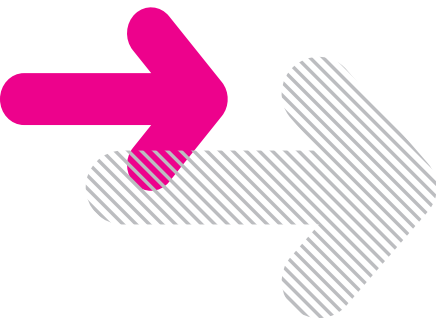
Parent 3

"Wow, it's hard work. Nothing can prepare you for how intense it is. I mostly remember the utter relentlessness. You're not sleeping. You're physically healing. They are physically demanding. Worrying about sleep and feeding and nappies. It puts a strain on relationships too."

Parent 6

"Panic - the fact of having to juggle two children left me very panicked. I was also shocked - no one tells you how hard it will be. People just say it's wonderful but they don't tell you about the hard bits. It's equally shocking having a second child as each baby is completely different - you think that you know what you are doing but actually having to juggle a toddler and baby is a challenge in itself."

Parent 9



Finding your feet

When: 3 weeks to 3 -6 months

During this time parents started to feel like they were finding some form of normality but many had to face being on their own whilst their partner went back to work, which was often daunting.

They found reassurance from hearing that other parents were experiencing the same issues as them, and began trying out some strategies they read or had heard about.

Many said that they realised it isn't about being perfect, but managing to get through and finding what works for them. However, their confidence could be easily knocked by comments from other people - family, friends, other parents - telling them what they "should" be doing.

Feelings and Thoughts:

- Exhausted
- Defensive
- Apprehensive
- Judged
- Failing (and often flailing)
- Slightly more confident
- Underprepared
- Sometimes feeling alone
- Responsible
- Tethered
- Massive highs and lows

Support Needs:

- Continue to want practical support to check everything is ok. Especially when they are making decisions against common advice which causes feelings of guilt and nerves.
- They're increasingly interested in social support - especially support from other mothers currently going through similar situations.

Sources of Support:

- Partner mostly seen as very supportive, but often back at work now.
- Looking things up online (especially to check if things are in the range of ok).
- Talking to health visitor and other mums about their choices and strategies, with other people's opinions having strong influence in this stage.

"I still worry a lot about everything. I feel a lot of anxiety about doing the right thing, I spend lots of time googling things. For example, is he gaining weight properly? What can he eat as he's weaned? There's lots of conflicting information out there."

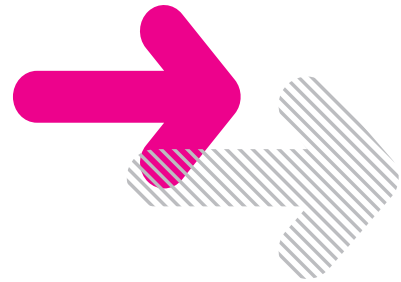
Parent 7

"I'm more confident than I was, but still feel I have so much to learn."

Parent 8

"At the beginning I'd look more at other people's opinions but now I realise we're all just trying to do the best we can for our family. I've stopped worrying as much and just get on with it. My child can have a total meltdown but I've started to realise that that's what kids do, this is part of normal life."

Parent 3



The New Normal

When: 6 months onwards

(or whenever it happens!)

This is the time when the dust is starting to settle. Parents tended to have a routine with their child and were starting to trust themselves to follow what they felt was right. They explained that they'd never be 100% confident (or 100% right) but had realised they knew their child better than anyone and so could make the best decisions on their behalf.

At this stage their baby had begun interacting more which was really rewarding, with parents describing feeling incredibly proud of raising a little person. This is also the stage when parents were becoming a little more independent from their child and doing things "as an adult" like going for dinner or seeing friends.

Feelings and Thoughts:

- Tired
- Through the worst of it
- Proud of self
- Proud of baby
- Confident
- More capable
- Stronger
- Still some doubts
- More of an expert on their baby

Support Needs:

- Mums need sources of information on a range of topics that they can select as and when they have an issue.
- They value social support to share experiences, get strategies and to be entertained.
- Their thoughts are turning to information on practical issues e.g local baby-focused activities, and how to get child-care to go back to work.

Sources of Support:

- Mums create strategies to help meet their support needs e.g. trying to join baby groups, facebook groups, routines to get out of the house.
- Mums would use Google for finding information on medical concerns and ad hoc developmental issues.
- Mums continue to value having other mums like them to talk to and personal relationships are treasured.

"I'm really learning how to read his cues which means I know what to do to soothe him. For example, the other day he was screaming and I could tell he was over-tired, so I put him in the car and he was asleep in minutes. It was rewarding that I could tell what was wrong, and how to deal with it."

Parent 8

"I am confident. It's the best job I have ever had and the most rewarding thing I have ever done when I see he is doing so well."

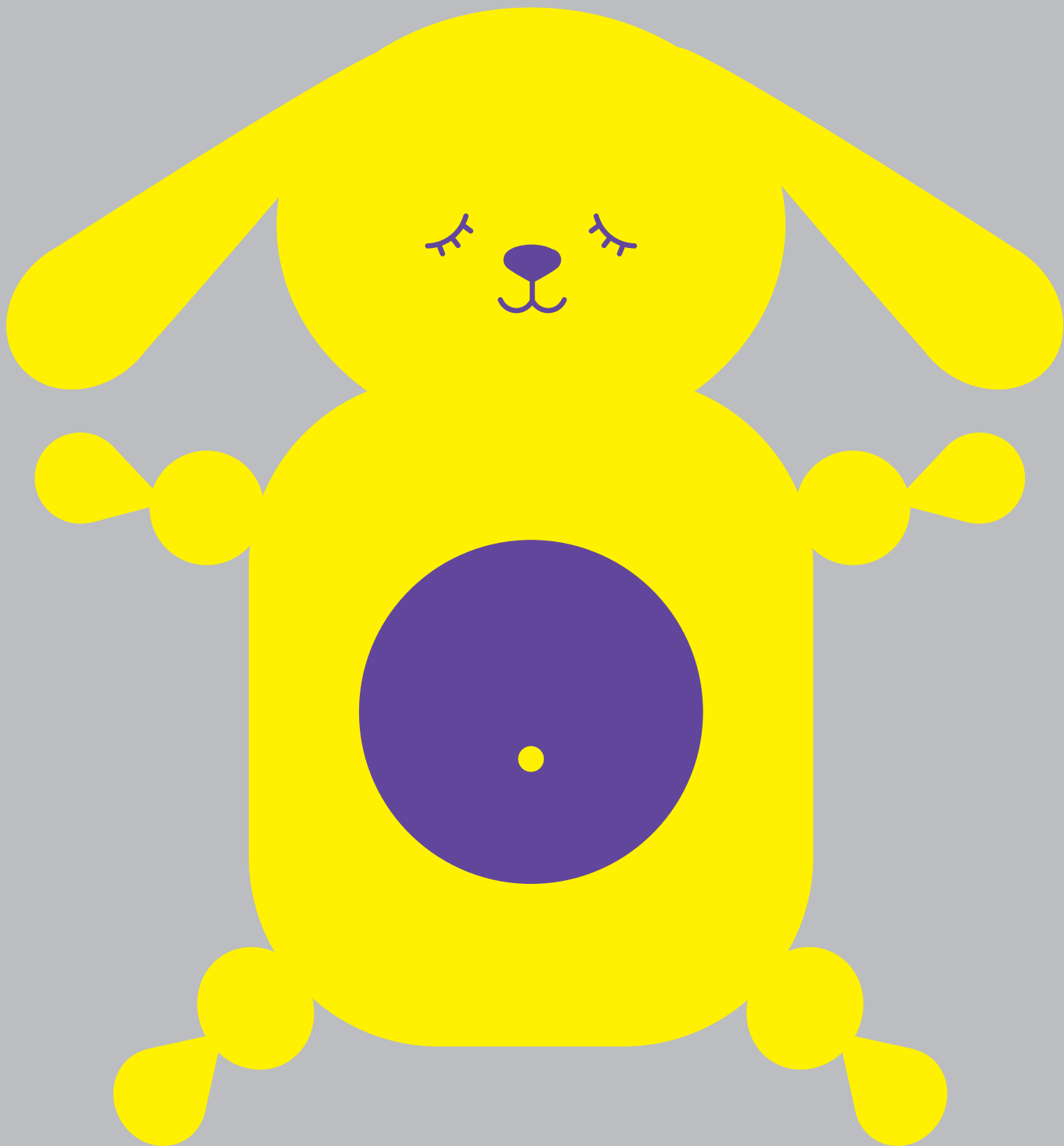
Parent 1

"As a new mum your confidence is really high and you think it will be really easy, then you give birth and you feel more rubbish than ever, and you feel you can't do this anymore - put the baby back! Then you see the smiles and giggles, and think you are doing an amazing job. And then it changes again! It's basically up and down all the time."

Parent 2



Sources of support



The parenting journey is full of learning and new (and often difficult) situations. Support on this journey was felt to be a crucial lifeline in the difficult times by all parents we spoke to.



In this section we present the different types of support that parents said they used to navigate their journey and their views on how useful the support was.



Partners

Useful for:

- ▶ Love, comfort, emotional support
- ▶ Practical support, another pair of hands.
- ▶ Validation and a second opinion / moral support.

Most valued / craved when:

- ▶ Feeling at your worst, totally overwhelmed, totally clueless, when no other support is available (in the middle of the night).



- Loves the child so shares your anxieties.
- Loves mum and invested in ensuring she's ok.
- Trusted to give an opinion.
- Easily accessible (when at home).



- Difficult for partner to share the load equally.
- Can undermine mum's confidence with suggestions "Why don't you just..."
- Can underestimate workload of a child, "I've been at work all day."
- Partners also sleep deprived and stressed.
- Most partners have a maximum of 2 weeks parental leave.



Friends and family

Useful for:

- ▶ Social and practical support (e.g. babysitting later on).
- ▶ Giving a second opinion / moral support.

Most valued / craved when:

- ▶ Feeling a little emotional or in need of another pair of hands.



- Trusted
- Have mum's best interests at heart.
- They know mum well.
- Often had kids themselves.
- Easily accessible.



- Parents / in-laws can undermine you with caring comments that feel like criticism.
- Parents can provide outdated advice.
- Can feel difficult to openly ignore their advice.
- Don't want to worry them with problems.
- Can feel weak, "I'm supposed to be the parent now."



Parenting forums

Useful for:

- ▶ Normalising your experiences and worries.
- ▶ Finding allies (especially when discussing topics which can be controversial e.g. co-sleeping, vaccination).
- ▶ Knowing that you're not alone.
- ▶ Calming you down.

Most valued / craved when:

- ▶ Feeling totally alone, wanting to regulate or relieve anxiety, wanting ideas on what to do.



- A wide selection of topics.
- Multiple points of view on each topic.
- On demand 24/7.
- Able to get information with limited effort.
- Anonymous



- Judgmental comments and threads.
- Huge number of opinions can undermine confidence.
- A lot of effort to skim through so many comments.
- Hard to know who to trust, so just use popular comments.
- Not a reliable source for medical or high risk questions.



Midwife

Useful for:

- ▶ Trusted information especially during pregnancy and in very early days.
- ▶ Mothering the mum.

Most valued / craved when:

- ▶ Feeling like a novice, feeling totally out of options or clueless, wanting high quality advice, both medical and practical.



- All mums have a midwife.
- Direct source of support during pregnancy and birth.
- Personalised face to face care and advice.
- High quality advice.
- Caring bedside manner (give time to listen).



- They "sign you off" 2 weeks after birth, leaving some mums feeling "dropped".
- Feel less able to call the midwife as their child gets older but desire for support remains.
- Private midwives are expensive.



Health Visitor

Useful for:

- ▶ Answering questions at home or at a local drop in centre.
- ▶ Weighing the baby.

Most valued / craved when:

- ▶ Having a medical / developmental question about the baby, wanting to validate what they think is true.



- Personalised care.
- High quality information.
- Can answer a range of questions e.g. "What's this rash?"
- Is this normal? Are they the "right weight"? etc.
- Provide a source of validation (when experienced and knowledgeable).



- Experience and trust of health visitors varied greatly.
- Some mums withheld questions / information fearing it may raise red flags.
- Seen as being there for the baby not the mum.
- Not accessible as and when needed.
- Lack of time the health visitor has to spend with the mum.



Parent & baby groups

Useful for:

- ▶ Human interaction for mum and stimulation for baby. Boredom busting / things to do.
- ▶ Making friends.
- ▶ Benchmarking against other kids (double edged sword).

Most valued / craved when:

- ▶ Feeling bored and isolated, needing to get out of the house.
- ▶ Hoping to find allies or “people who think like you”.



- Benefits baby and mum (so no guilt about taking “time out from baby”).
- Can be a route to meet mummy friends.
- Reduce feelings of isolation and boredom.
- Sometimes run by trained health visitor (providing access to professional support).



- Low provision in some areas.
- Difficult to get yourself and child up, out and to the location.
- Sessions held at day / time that parents can't make (particularly if working).
- Can be a difficult / stressful social experience (mums can be cliquey).
- Not guaranteed to be “parents like you” (e.g. all bottle feed / all breast feed).



Parents like me

Useful for:

- ▶ Emotional and informational support.
- ▶ Sharing war stories.
- ▶ Feeling that someone really understands what you are going through.
- ▶ Ranting about partners.
- ▶ Supporting your decisions.

Most valued / craved when:

- ▶ Feeling bored and isolated, needing to get out of the house
Hoping to find allies or “people who think like you”.



- Going through it too so they understand.
- Provide support for anything / everything.
- Described as totally non judgemental (most of the time).
- Self-selected group of likeminded mums.
- Mutually beneficial support, you support them and they support you.
- Fun person to spend time with and join on days out.
- Accessible 24/7 (almost).



- Isn't always easy to make these friends. Takes effort and often some awkward false starts.
- Their available advice is limited to their own experience.



Facebook Groups

Useful for:

- ▶ Specialised needs e.g. not sleeping.
- ▶ Local activities and services.
- ▶ Strategies and tips.
- ▶ Moral support.

Most valued / craved when:

- ▶ Feeling bored, needing "me time", thinking local, needing to feel "not alone" and sometimes "when at your wits end."



- Often 24/7 if it's a global group (useful at 2am).
- Self selecting - often closed with ability for admin to remove people.
- Private / semi anonymous.
- Can be as passive or active as needed.
- Easy to find and use on phone.
- Often entertaining - use of humour and satire to show "real" motherhood.
- Some local groups too so can be online support with option for face to face meeting / activities.



- Some things you wouldn't share.
- You are still identifiable based on your profile.
- Not a perfect substitute for face to face friendships.



Instagram / Vloggers

Useful for:

- ▶ Infotainment, humour and satire, achievable aspirations, feeling moral support and affinity.

Most valued / craved when:

- ▶ Feeling restless (twitchy fingers), enjoying some downtime.



- Easy to consume (videos and images allows quite passive engagement).
- Helps you feel connected to allies / like minded parents / people like you.
- Entertaining *and* informative.
- Often use of humour and satire to show “real” motherhood. Straight talking.
- Tend to present a “pro parent”, “anti-judgement” stance.
- Great for discovery (i.e. new products, blogs, stores).



- Tends to be one direction communication.
- Not a replacement for other forms of social and emotional support.



Apps

Useful for:

- ▶ Tracking progress of baby, especially during pregnancy.
- ▶ Feeling “in control” during pregnancy (and to some extent after).
- ▶ Prompting you on things you didn’t know you didn’t know.

Most valued / craved when:

- ▶ Impatient or unsure about progress of your child both in pregnancy and also development milestones “when at your wits end”.



- Often free.
- Often low effort.
- Give prompts so can use passively.
- Provides some peace of mind.



- Can be generic.
- Reported usage drops dramatically after baby is born due to lack of time.

Design opportunities

Opportunities to build parents' self efficacy



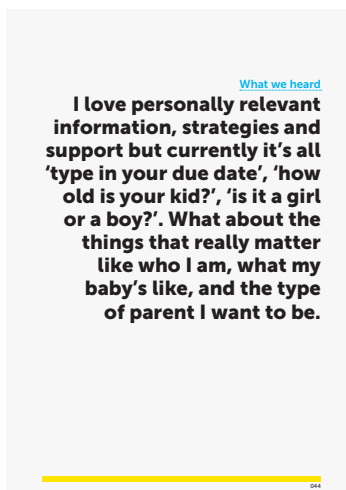
What is a design opportunity?

A design opportunity is an area / problem identified as having particular potential for new and innovative design solutions.

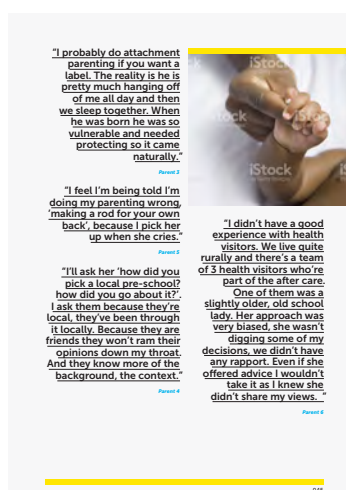
A design opportunity is built on a core insight (typically a tension, contradiction, friction, unmet desire or need) about a user or group of users that can be addressed or “fixed” to deliver increased value to users, society or a business.

Design opportunities act as a springboard to generate new ideas in a focused way. A little like a problem to solve, question to answer or a creative brief. Moving from big often nebulous aims to more specific ones.

We have identified five design opportunities where design could support the building of parents’ self-efficacy.



“What we heard”
our key insights from people we spoke to



“What parents said”
some quotes from our research

The opportunity

What might your product do beyond the basics to provide super relevant information, strategies and support?

“The opportunity”
our articulation of the design opportunity



“Inspiration”
Examples of how others have approached related opportunities

A top-down view of a giant Connect Four board game. The board is a grid of teal-colored circular holes set into a dark surface. Several people are playing the game. On the left, a person in a blue shirt and light-colored pants is sitting on the board, with their legs and feet visible. On the right, a person in a black and white striped shirt is also sitting on the board, with one leg extended. In the center, a person's hand is visible, reaching into one of the holes. The overall scene is playful and creative.

1. Safety Net

Before the baby, I felt really supported with regular midwife visits. They were trusted, accessible and looked after my needs. However, the moment I brought my baby home I felt “dropped”...like I no longer had a “go-to” source of support for my immediate worries, questions and needs.

What parents said

"There's so much information on the birth, but when we got back from hospital we didn't know what to do. It's also all about the baby after birth - what about me? It's the midwife for birth then the health visitor for the baby. It's scary to be discharged, you're just left after to recover and you're having to rely on the internet. The health visitor takes over after day 7 and they check once a week. The support for you stops at the midwife, the health visitor only looks at the baby."

Parent 3

"It's difficult with my parents and grandparents - because the advice has changed so much since they had children and they have very different views on things. When he wasn't sleeping well they just told me he needed formula or food, and I know they're wrong, but I can't say that and it means I can't speak to them about it."

Parent 7

"Breastfeeding was the hardest thing. I didn't know breastfeeding could be that hard. I thought I would be this earth mother. I found breastfeeding harder than childbirth. At the beginning I wasn't in a hospital ward with someone checking the latch. I had a supportive midwife but ultimately I was on my own. I sustained so much damage."

Parent 6

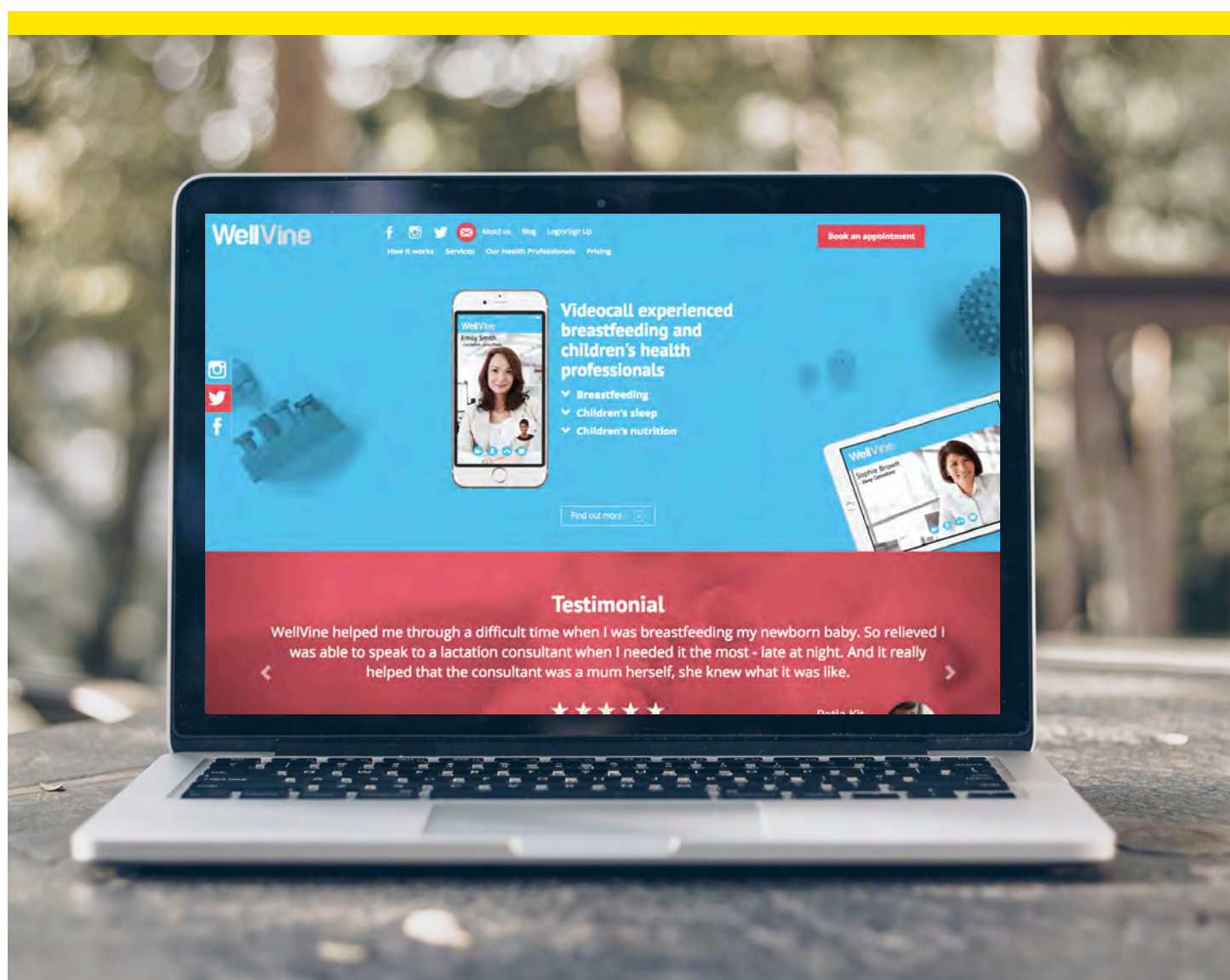
The opportunity

How might your product or service continue to give parents a “go-to” source of trusted and accessible expert support for their immediate worries, questions and needs?

#1

Design inspiration

There are already on-demand parenting support services. How could these be made affordable, allowing all parents to access them?



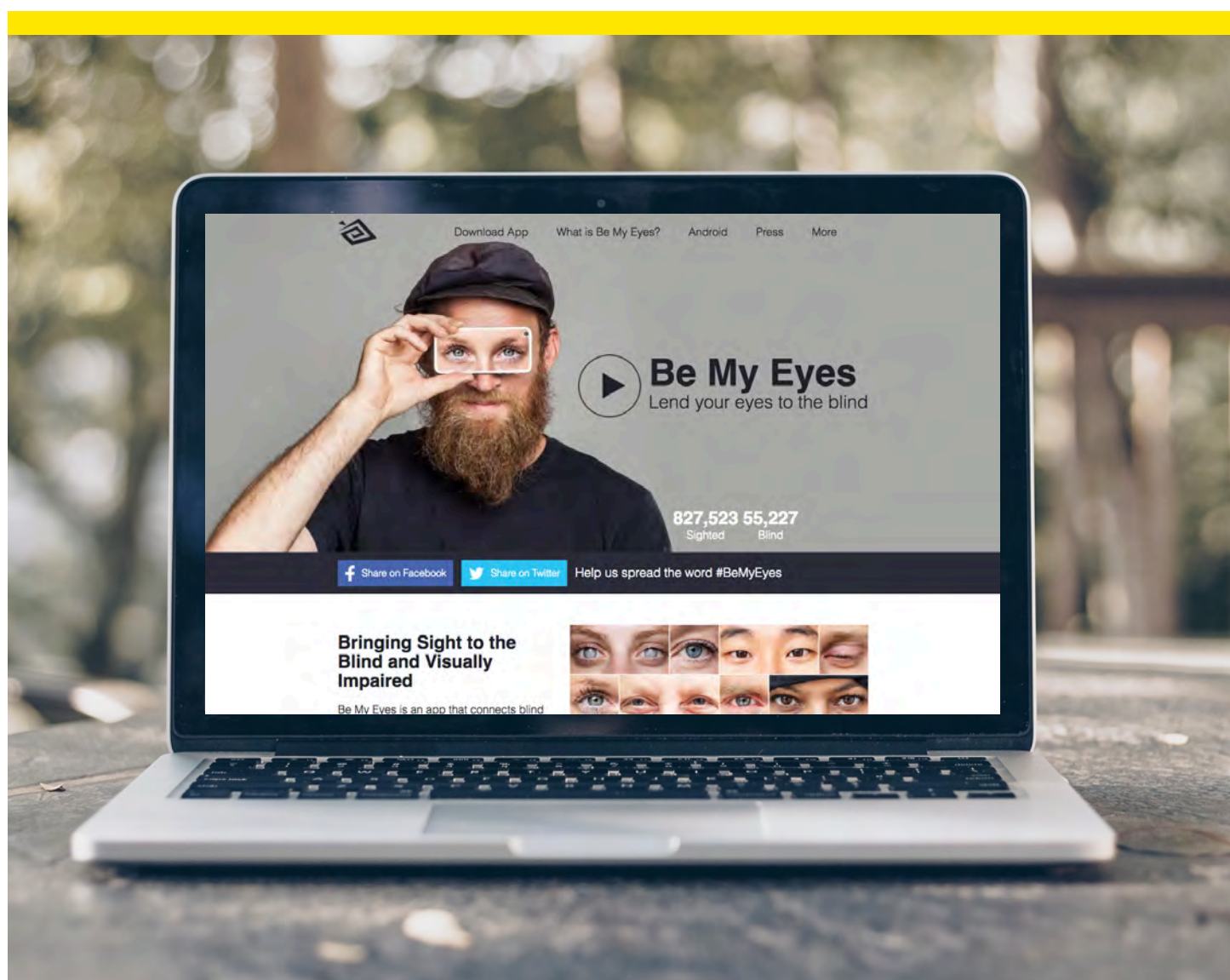
Design inspiration

There are already digital services
that create a gig economy for services.
Could this be leveraged to provide
support services for parents?



Design inspiration

There are already digital services that connect networks of volunteers to those who need specific support. Could a similar service be created for parents?



2. Get personal



I love personally relevant information, strategies and support but currently it's all "type in your due date", "how old is your kid?", "is it a girl or a boy?". What about the things that really matter like who I am, what my baby's like, and the type of parent I want to be.

What parents said

"I probably do attachment parenting if you want a label. The reality is he is pretty much hanging off of me all day and then we sleep together. When he was born he was so vulnerable and needed protecting so it came naturally."

Parent 3

"I feel I'm being told I'm doing my parenting wrong, 'making a rod for your own back', because I pick her up when she cries."

Parent 5

"I'll ask her 'how did you pick a local pre-school? how did you go about it?'. I ask them because they're local, they've been through it locally. Because they are friends they won't ram their opinions down my throat. And they know more of the background, the context."

Parent 4

"I didn't have a good experience with health visitors. We live quite rurally and there's a team of 3 health visitors who're part of the after care."

One of them was a slightly older, old school lady. Her approach was very biased, she wasn't digging some of my decisions, we didn't have any rapport. Even if she offered advice I wouldn't take it as I knew she didn't share my views. "

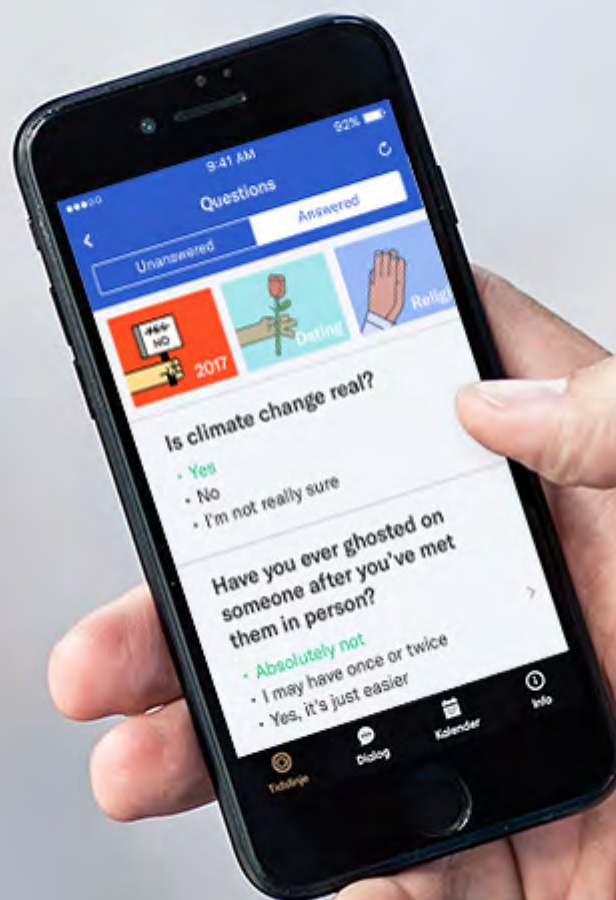
Parent 6

The opportunity

How might your product or service go beyond the basics to provide super relevant information, strategies and support?

Design inspiration

Online dating apps pride themselves on “getting to know you.” What would make parents feel like you knew them and their parenting style? And how could this be used to support them?



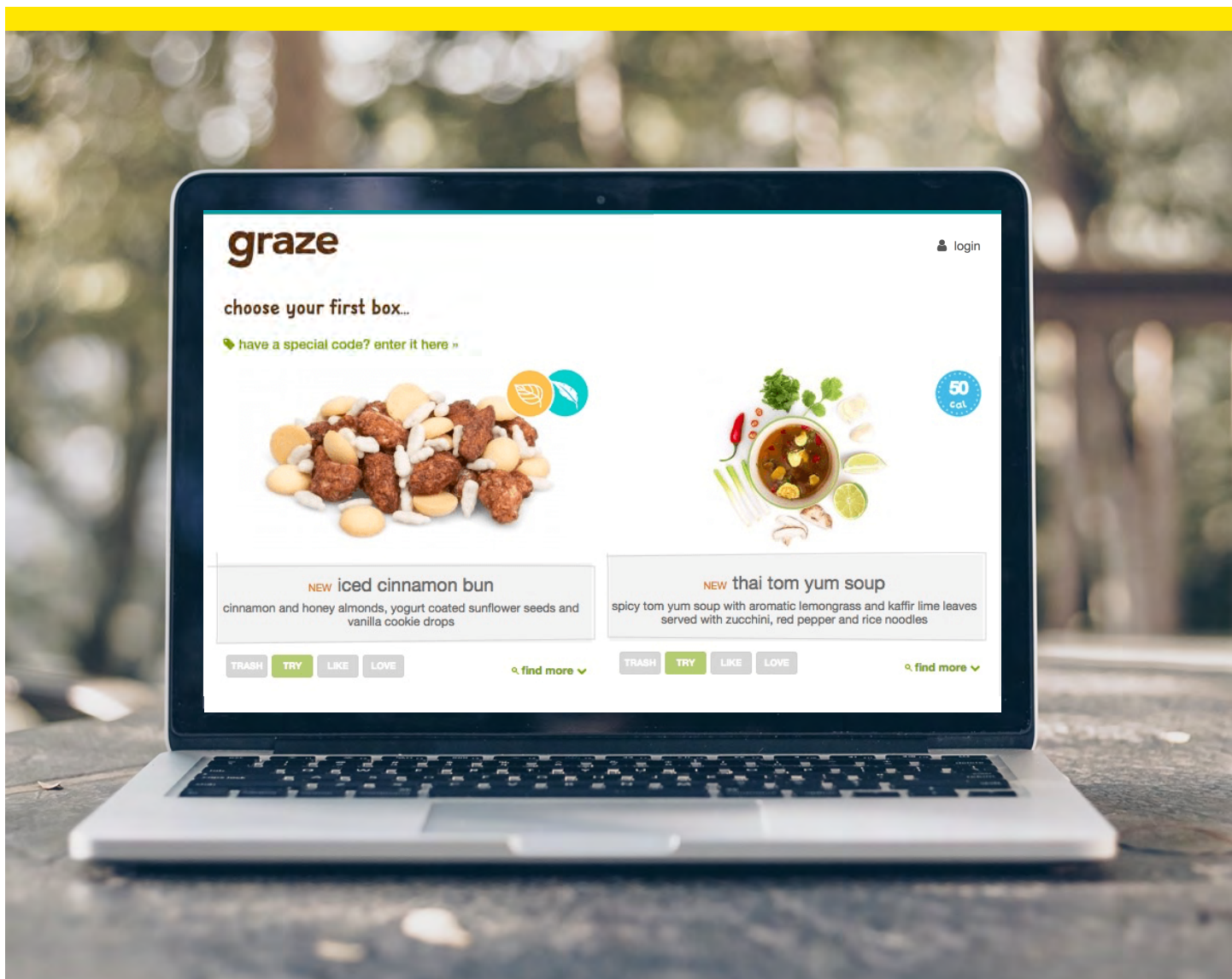
Design inspiration

There are already apps that gather information and present you with what's most relevant based on your profile. How could this be used to help navigate the overwhelming amount of information on parenting?



Design inspiration

Some products have worked hard at learning about customer preference, but have left lots of opportunity for trying new things. Could this approach be used in providing tailored information to parents?



3. Support for my path



**When I'm making decisions
(think sleeping, feeding,
pacifiers, weaning) or need
advice, I *want* impartial
information and relevant
strategies from experts. But
I risk feeling judged if I
don't go with their
recommended route.**

What parents said

"Professionals judge you - 'You should do this, as this is what children with reflux should do' - but I know my child won't be able to do that! One woman got emails saying 'At this point your child should be going onto solids', or 'your child should now be eating 3 meals a day', but her child doesn't want to eat solids much - she is still breastfeeding, and she feels she is then failing. You ask yourself what am I doing wrong? It makes you question if what you're doing is right. You have to accept that the baby will do it in their own time."

Parent 2

"I joined a lot of online groups and at first it was ok. But then after having my baby, some people online are judgemental when your parenting is different to theirs. A group I joined for support became the least supportive group you could have had. They would say things they wouldn't say to your face."

Parent 1

"A lot of people say breast is best. As a person who wasn't able to breastfeed it was hard to hear that. People need to know how to bottle feed correctly too. I'm over it now. But it's like chat rooms - some people have an opinion. It has to be accepted that breastfeeding isn't always possible. It's great for people it works for. I understand they have to do it because there are scientific reasons but it stresses parents out. It's ok to be said once, but not constantly. The breast is best should have a poster alongside it signposting for alternatives."

Parent 4

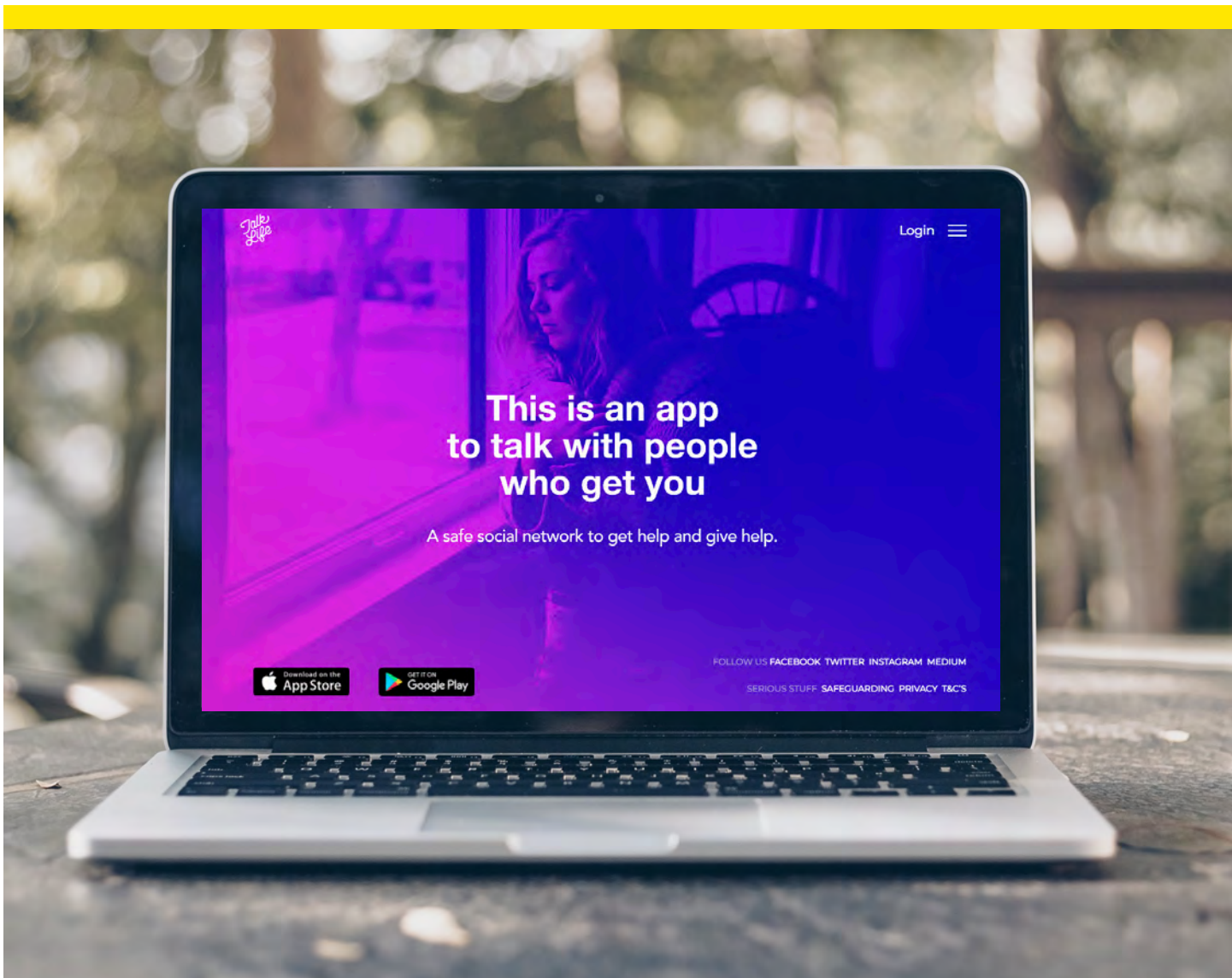
The opportunity

**How might your product
or service make parents
totally comfortable with
seeking expert support
for all the decisions
they make?**

#1

Design inspiration

There are digital services that match people based on shared problems to encourage discussion and provide support. Could similar matching help parents feel supported?



Design inspiration

Excellent customer service can make customers feel comfortable being honest about what they want. Could we use this approach to help parents talk more openly about their experience?



twitter

Home Profile Joined People Settings Help Sign out

About to take some phone calls in our call center to help with the holiday volume. If you call Zappos today you just might get me answering!

3 minutes ago from tcr

Zappos CEO
Zappos.com CEO - Tony



CUSTOMER SERVICE SHOULDN'T JUST BE A DEPARTMENT, IT SHOULD BE THE ENTIRE COMPANY."

Tony Hsieh, CEO of Zappos

4. There for the ride



Being a parent is a rollercoaster. It's incredible but also intense and takes every ounce of energy and patience you have. But when I'm stressed, tired and anxious I can't be the parent I want to be. If only there was a way to cope better with the exhausting, but exhilarating, highs and lows.

What parents said

"It's like swings and roundabouts. I've reached the foot stomping tantrum stage with my daughter, that's what we are currently dealing with. It's hard to deal with all of this child's emotions all day every day. It's like an emotional rollercoaster. There is just the stress of knowing you're responsible for everything. I call it a permanent juggling act - keeping all of the balls in the air."

Parent 4

"I think there's not enough mental health support."

Parent 7

"I think it was when I got to the point that she was waking up every 20 minutes. I felt like I was going to die. Actually I felt I couldn't do it. I was parenting in an ugly way. During the day she was fussy and ratty and I was snapping at her and snapping at my husband. I wanted time with him. I was at a point where I could do something awful or get help. A couple of times I literally had to give her to my husband and couldn't parent her with any love. It's the weirdest feeling. You love them more than you can fathom. They make you so cross and frustrated. Where else do you get that experience all in one person."

Parent 4

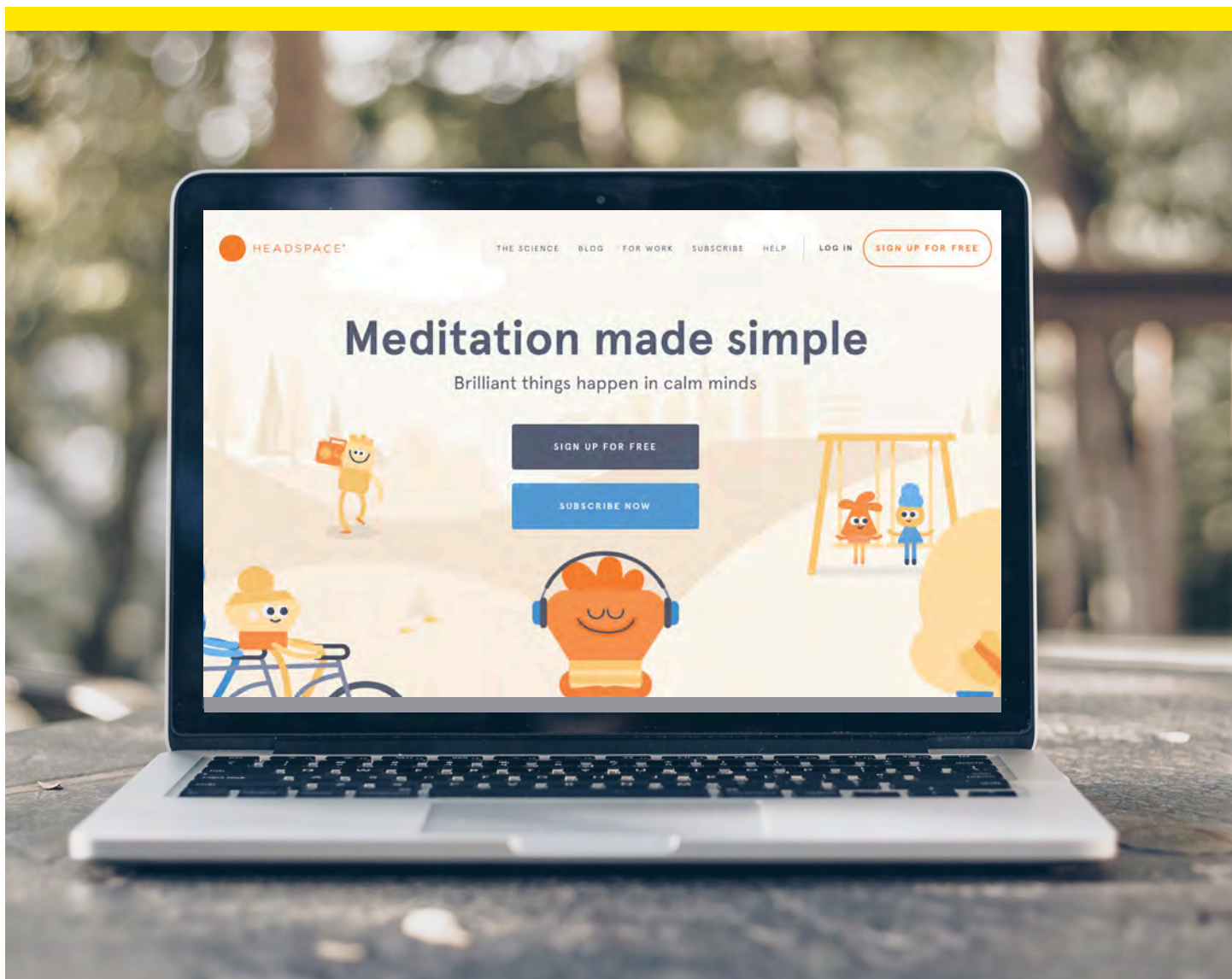
The opportunity

How might your product or service support parents to be the best they can be amidst the stress, anxiety and exhaustion of their child's first 1000 days?

#1

Design inspiration

There has been a surge in popularity around mindfulness apps. Is this approach something that could be harnessed to help parents during the very difficult post-birth stage?



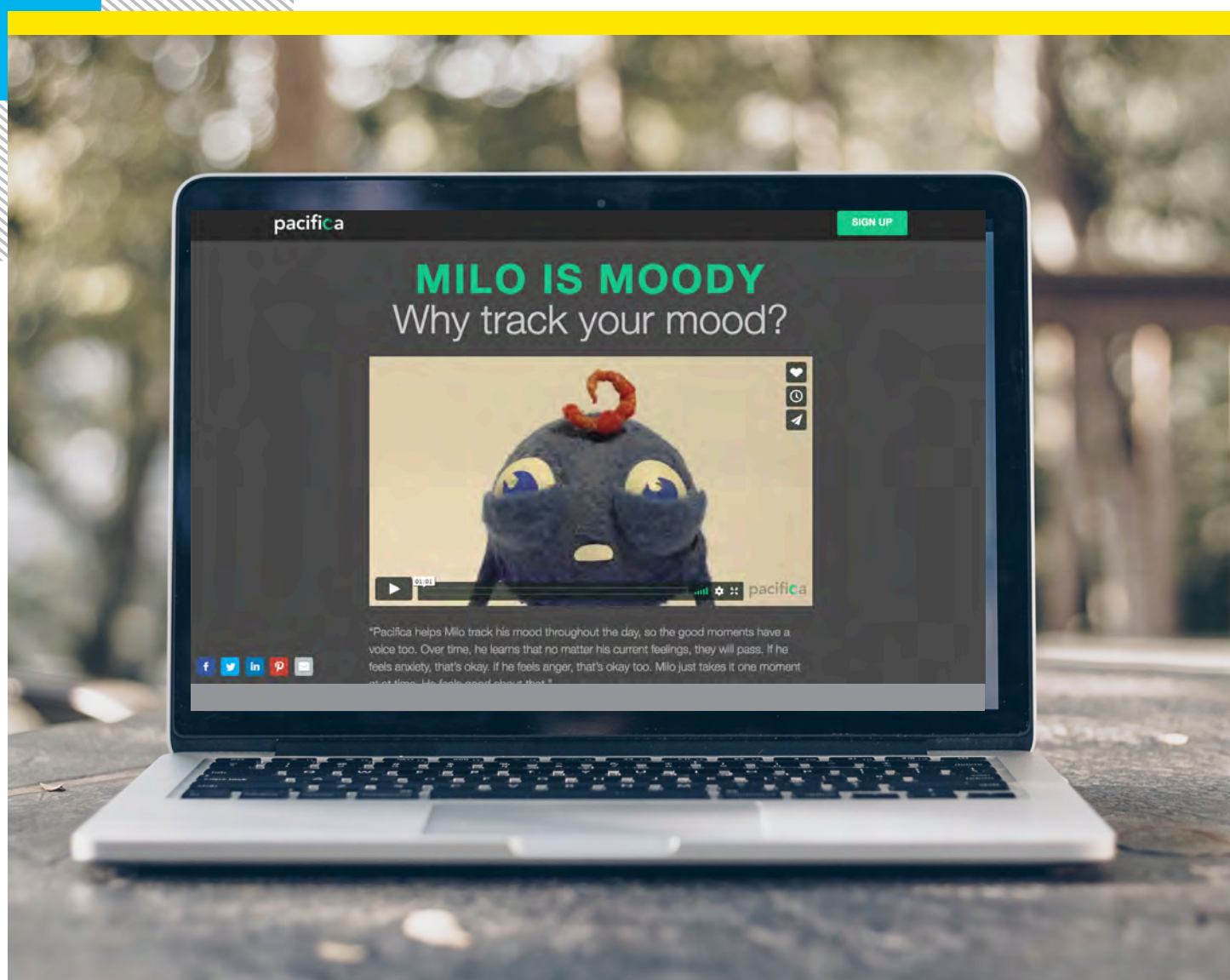
Design inspiration

A new wave of books and diaries aimed at mums tackle the emotions of parenting head on with honesty and humour. What role might this approach play in helping parents to manage the roller coaster?



Design inspiration

Mood tracking is a phenomenon that's been growing with the trend around quantified self. Might there be ways to better adapt these mood tracking methods for the needs and realities of parents in the first 1000 days?



5. No normal



When I ask for advice it feels like my baby is constantly being compared to the fictitious “Normal Child” as if they’re saying they’re not perfect. But to me perfect isn’t being the same as *all* babies, it’s them being within the range of ok and me being confident they’re not in harm’s way.

What parents said

"Accepting that there isn't a right answer to what you should do. You read lots of advice beforehand and it all goes out of the window as some things work and some things don't. And then you realise that everyone's just winging it! Different people give different advice and your child is different to everything. In the group it's their chance to share ideas. This is what I've - but I know everyone is different so it may or may not work for you."

Parent 2

"People ask are they 'good' meaning do they sleep through the night. But they're not designed to do that, they're supposed to feed during the night because they're small. I get defensive - like they think I should let her cry it out. But I know my child, I know what she needs."

Parent 5

"I was speaking to my mum and I had a breakdown and she said that there is no shame in doing something else and just to know it was ok, it didn't matter after this. I felt empowered and realised this is my journey and I didn't have to compare myself to other mums. He was happy and healthy and that was all that mattered."

Parent 6

"For me the annoying thing about those forums is the fact that some people think they know best. But what works for one person doesn't always work for another.."

Parent 4

The opportunity

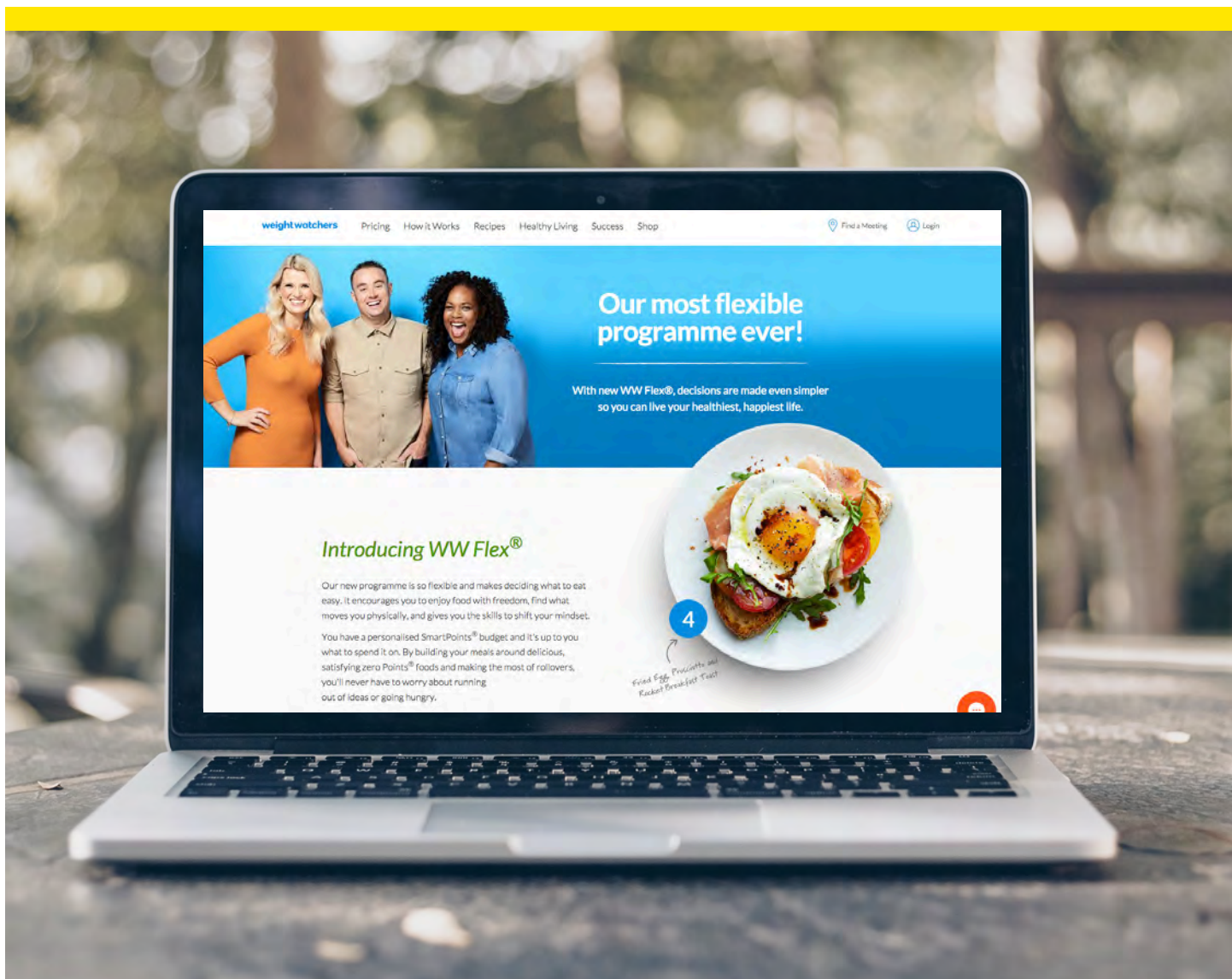
How might your product or service support parents to be the best they can be amidst the stress, anxiety and exhaustion of their child's first thousand days?



#1

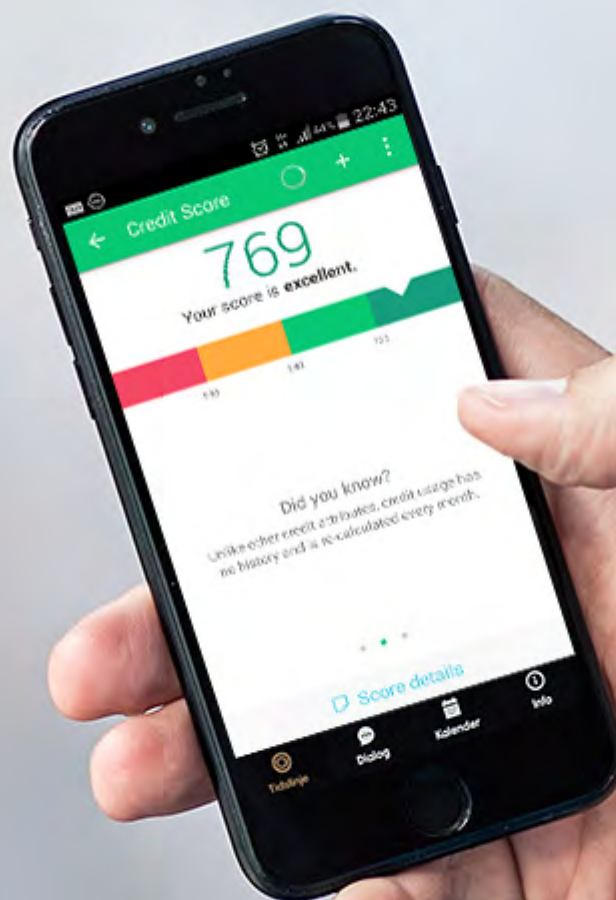
Design inspiration

Some products emphasise that different approaches work for different people even though they are all aiming for the same goal. Could this approach be used in a parenting product or service?



Design inspiration

Data can be displayed in ways that provide rough norms but also accounts for individual variation. How could this be used to deliver information to parents in a more reassuring way?



Principles of design to build parents' self-efficacy



Design for the distracted

Remember: Parents live in a world where their attention is constantly divided. They often operate with one hand, and in short bursts of concentration between the numerous other tasks yelling for their attention. Think tiny asks, clear navigation, and short snappy text.

Let's be honest

Remember: Parenting is hard and it can come with a huge amount of judgement. Show you understand the realities of parenting; the good, the bad and the food all over the wall. Don't alienate and intimidate parents with the idea of the "perfect parent".
p.s. that means you don't have to be perfect either.

2am moments

Remember: Parenting is 24 hrs,
not 9 to 5. And there are especially
active communities in the wee
small hours. Think about how
you can continue to be present
for them when everything else
is "closed".

Part of the gang

Remember: For a parent finding allies and friendship is crucial and craved. Reassure parents they are not on their own in this new experience, by building in opportunities to connect with others. This doesn't have to mean mixers and chat functions, but simply asking the question "does this product, service or feature help parents feel less alone?"

Higher risk but not “a risk”

Remember: Don't expect and
design for the worst. Start from
the basis that every parent loves
their child and is trying their best.
This is sometimes overlooked for
audiences deemed “hard to reach”
or “higher risk”.

Thank you

**Contact Tayo or Naomi
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