

Sonder

noun. the realization that each random passerby
is living a life as vivid and complex as your own.

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Thank You to...

Sahar Ghaheri

For your sincere consistency and care.

Miya Osaki

For your unwavering graciousness and support.

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For your generative feedback and curious

mindset.

Noreen Singh

For your generosity of resources and wisdom as well as your rooted values in being community driven.

My Fellow Cohort

For holding and creating endless space for

growth.

50+ Participants who will be left unnamed for the purpose of anonymity

For your bravery and vulnerability.

My position as a designer

Dori Jacobson

My position as a designer in this space is one with lived experience who believes I can leverage my privilege by positioning myself as a facilitator, community builder, and advocate.



Introduction of the Social

The body is an incredibly complicated system, maybe the most complex of all of the systems that exist. It stores biological information and holds traumas in ways that often cannot be described. Every single entity, experience, and person we encounter impacts it, yet the way we receive care does not reflect that level of complexity.

Holistic Integrative Care on the other hand is an expansive and comprehensive approach to mind-body wellness that utilizes researched and proven methods of healing in tandem with traditional western medicine to improve and maintain the lives of individuals. It commonly is referred to as 'complementary' or 'alternative' healthcare.

In New York City specifically, there is an abundance of holistic integrative care institutions available. The issue is that most of them are unattainable and inaccessible. They're luxury spaces whose level of care has proven to not be able to be sustained in an environment that rapidly scales. The structure of the system and the many barriers that come with it perpetuate the already existing inequitable gap of people who can access this care and those who can't.

A systemic change is urgently needed. I am taking a reformist approach in that I accept the reality of the existing industrialized healthcare system and its abundance of barriers surrounding financial access, individualization, and time as constraints. I am proposing immediate, incremental change by using my thesis to respond to a system that is not working.

The Design Process

The question that has framed my work asks: What if folks could become active participants in their healthcare without having to rely on the healthcare system? More specifically...What are the ways we can imagine an accessible, community based, and non-stigmatizing space for folks to experience holistic health?

My research and co-design process was extensive. I began conducting secondary research to examine the system's landscape. Synchronously, I conducted 50+ hours of primary research interviews by speaking with a wide range of physicians, practitioners, and patients – all varying in age, race, and gender.

Individually, they gave insight into their experience surrounding the doctor-patient dynamic. Many folks stated that the hierarchical relationship is traumatizing – the lack of time spent together creates difficulties around a patient's inclination to be open with their doctor which in turn, makes it nearly impossible to have patient's bodies be met with the complexity they hold. All of this research proved that the issue is not with the doctors, but rather the system they're working in.

My focus began to shift towards institutions, practitioners etc. who were truly putting an emphasis on the "whole person" experience. I entered the world of the perinatal lifecycle and spoke with doulas, midwives, prenatal yoga instructors, massage therapists, acupuncturists, and more. My eyes were opened to the fact that in many ways, the birthing space has options for birthing people that are accessible, allow them to be unapologetic in their bodies, and treat them with complexity.

This shift in my research allowed me to get really clear on which group of people to hone my focus on...women and gender nonconforming folks – they have been understudied, undervalued, and misdiagnosed for centuries. The result being that they may not have always received the most optimal care. More specifically, I spoke with women and gender nonconforming folks who have had negative experiences with the healthcare system and are searching for different means to explore holistic modalities. One example of this could be someone who is struggling with their sexual and reproductive health and is looking for gender affirming care. They may have been traumatized by the allopathic care model and are looking into holistic care because it can aid the trauma as well as the actual well-being of the person.



Research, Data, Insights

I would be remiss to talk about my 50+ hours of primary research interviews without detailing the data collection, storage, and usage process. I practice data feminism and believe that there is a just way we can collect people's information. The consent forms attached below spell out my process. Additionally, I reiterated the terms at the beginning of each interview.

I collected qualitative insights from over 50 women, ranging from 18-65 years old by means of interviews and surveys. Additionally, I collected quantitative data by means of medical journals and articles. All of which indicated that folks are looking for an intervention that is accessible, community based, and inclusive. More specifically, some asks are mentioned below:

1. An intervention that exists outside of the industrialized healthcare system.
2. An intervention that centers women and gender nonconforming folks.
3. An intervention that is affordable and able to reach people digitally or with whom have low technology access.
4. An intervention that is culturally responsive and acknowledges the histories of intergenerational trauma and individualized experience.
5. An intervention that highlights the importance of uplifting shared community experiences.
6. An intervention that is inherently inclusive – one that allows people to be unapologetic in their bodies and express themselves (their interests, wellness, desires etc.) freely.

With the previous asks in mind, my goal was to create and test a prototype that would give women a space to approach their life in a multidimensional way and encourage them to recognize themselves as a whole person for their spiritual, emotional, occupational, physical, social, and intellectual well-being.

I partnered with Dr. Noreen Singh, an Integrative and Family Medicine doctor from The Institute For Family Health. She has deep knowledge and experience working in community settings where she has honed her practice in the sexual and reproductive health space.

Dr. Noreen has given me access to a breadth of holistic practitioners in her network that armed me with an understanding of the different modalities that exist. I worked as a liaison and facilitator to build a workshop with her that would give folks an entry point to understand that there isn't one solution for anything. More importantly, the workshop intended to put this theory into practice.

Participation Consent Form

School of Visual Arts, MFA Design for Social Innovation

Participation Consent Form

I, _____, voluntarily agree to participate in this design research study.

I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which the material will be deleted.

I have had the purpose of the thesis explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it.

I agree to my interview being audio-recorded with the intention of note-taking.

I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially. I understand that my identity will remain anonymous during collection, storage, and usage. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in thesis presentations for public viewing.

I understand that I am free to contact Dori Jacobson using the email address given to me to seek further clarification and information at any time.

Signature of thesis research participant

Date

Signature of researcher

Date

Prototypes

My research and insights proved that it's crucial to cultivate community by uplifting shared experiences.

I facilitated a workshop mid April to encourage folks to think about holistic health in different contexts and uplift their shared experiences. Before coming up with the agenda for the event, I affinity-mapped my goals and sent out a pre-survey to folks who RSVP'd. The survey asked questions about people's base level knowledge of what holistic health is, their perceptions of it, whether or not they've ever seeked it out in a medical setting before and if so, whether or not they've experienced barriers to access.

The workshop had several parts. First, we moved through an exercise where we talked about each other's perceptions and experiences with holistic health. We moved through an activity that encourage folks to think about different aspects of their health as 'dimensions' – this included spiritual, emotional, occupational, physical, social, intellectual. We moved through some self reflection and then shared with each other the amount of energy we would want to put into each dimension.

Our conversation surrounded the idea that oftentimes, the dimension we give the most energy to stays constant even when everything else in our lives is falling apart.

Create your ideal version of wholeness

Imagine you only have "30 energy blocks" to devote across the six dimensions. Fill in a total of 30 blocks below to indicate how your ideal self would distribute those blocks across the dimensions. Devote a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 10 blocks to each dimension.

Six Dimensions

Spiritual

Sense of purpose; knowing one's values; awareness of life as a journey; tolerance; integrity.

Emotional

Acceptance of feelings; management of emotions and stress; resilience; attuned to others emotions.

Occupational

Ability to share gifts, talents, and skills through work; sense of achievement.

Physical

Self-care; monitoring vital signs; sense of vitality and energy; connection to nature.

Social

Encouraging community; giving and receiving social support; intimacy; compassion.

Intellectual

Creativity; stimulating mental activities; learning; reading.

Spiritual



Emotional



Occupational



Physical



Social



Intellectual



The Process

[illegible]

Prototypes

I took all of the feedback from the post-event surveys and created a facilitation guide below that anyone can use to begin a conversation around holistic health practices with their friends, family, and community.

Lastly, I sent out a post-event survey that asked questions to evaluate the event's effectiveness in increasing knowledge and access.

Based on the surveys, the workshop was successful in challenging folks' perception and definition of holistic health as well as co-creating a space for them to feel in community with one another.

The intervention doesn't stop here. In fact, this is not an intervention; this is a prototype – a prototype that should be tested and co-created again with a different group of folks who want to practice holistic health at home and in community with others.

The Practice at Home Facilitation Guide

The body is an incredibly complicated system, maybe the most complex of all of the systems that exist. It stores biological information and holds traumas in ways that often cannot be described. Every single entity, experience, and person we encounter impacts it, yet the way we receive care in the industrialized healthcare system does not reflect that complexity. Holistic Integrative Care on the other hand is an expansive and comprehensive approach to mind-body wellness that utilizes researched and proven methods of healing in tandem with "traditional western medicine" to improve and maintain the lives of individuals.

This facilitation guide aims to provide you and your loved ones with the resources and tools to build a holistic practice for yourself at home.

What You'll Need

1. Flowers, diffuser, snacks, playlist and anything that will make folks feel comfortable and at ease.
2. White board or poster paper and appropriate markers.
3. Flowers or any other object for a take home activity.

Introduction

1. Go around the room and introduce each other
2. Facilitator should share why everyone is coming to gather – for the purpose of building a holistic practice together and uplifting each other's shared experiences.
3. Build a list of community agreements with the folks you're sharing the space with. Take some time for personal reflection then move into a share-out.
4. Go around the room and share individual perceptions, understandings, and experiences with holistic health.

Dimensions Activity

1. Use the Dimensions worksheet attached to an entry point to explain holistic health in the context of each individual person that is there.
2. Encourage folks to make their own data visualizations and use stickers or markers to visualize their energy blocks.
3. Once everyone is finished, pin up each person's dimension worksheet and give everyone some time to look at all of them.
4. Share back: What did you notice? Did anything surprise you? Get people talking...
5. Frame this Dimensions Worksheet as an individual exercise for today but also frame it as a futuring activity if you do it consistently overtime.

Dimensions Bucket Resource Sharing

1. Segway question: Is there a daily ritual that you do to focus on these specific energy blocks? Offer a starting resource for each specific dimension:
2. Spiritual: Cooking as a way to connect to your ancestral practices.
3. Emotional: Telling your doctor that you don't want to be weighed unless it's medically necessary.
4. Occupational: Build relationships with co-workers to meet them as their fuller selves.
5. Physical: Have a solo dance party to your favorite playlist.
6. Social: Take your work to a coffee shop and sit near people.
7. Intellectual: Use collage as a creative practice.
8. Ask everyone to refer back to their initial understandings, perceptions, and experiences with holistic health – did any of that change? Did this activity help deepen your understanding that most likely, you practice holistic health everyday?

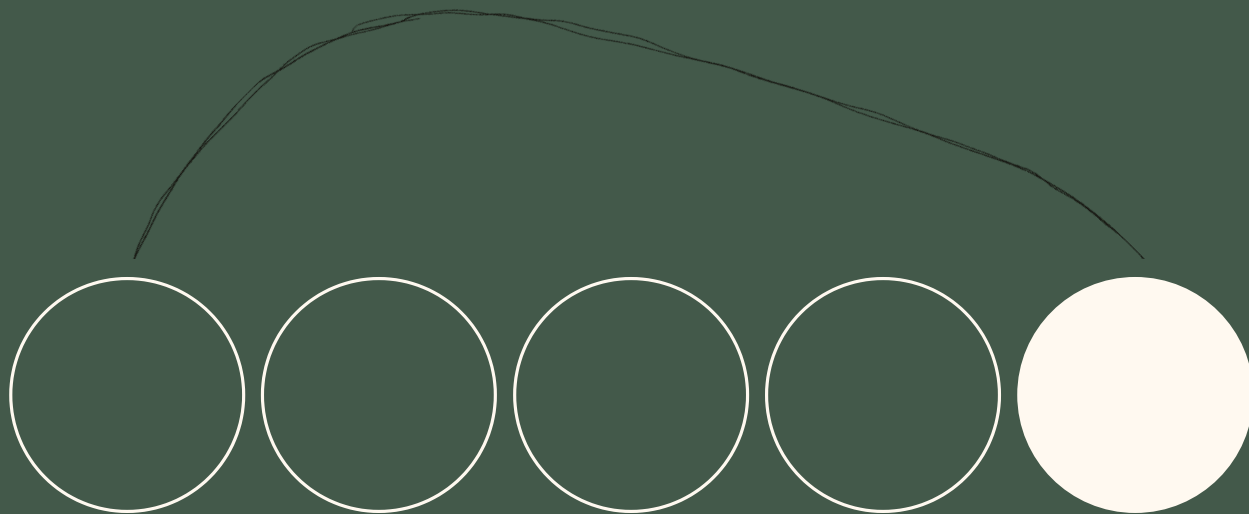
Close and Frame

1. Reiterate the goals: This workshop has been built with the intention of helping one another find entry points of access to better healthcare for ourselves and our community.
2. This is a larger theory of change that maybe the industrialized healthcare system will talk about the holistic health part and parcel to the language they use in their offices. And that maybe they can implement this kind of care to happen tangentially with physical care.
3. Shepard everyone through the "thank you/take home" flower-making activity. What does this symbolize for you?

Learning and Conclusions

I hope that this work serves as a stepping stone with the goal of achieving an ideal future for body complexity in medicine – that primary care physicians adopt the values, practices and language from the Integrative Holistic Medicine space and use it in tandem to the care that already exists. Knowing the language around holistic health, what it means to you, and what it looks like in practice is a core part of shifting the system.

The challenge will be expanding and creating access to community health spaces. in a way that feels sustainable and not burdensome in the industrialized models. There is a need to build on the already existing model and not solho Holistic Medicine from Western Allopathic Models. The grand future vision is about genuine and consistent integration. I have listed extensive community health centers that are already doing this so fiercely.



adopted values, practices, and
language from the Integrative
Holistic Medicine space to use in
tandem with the care that
already exists

Lexicon

Industrialized Healthcare System

Healthcare is now an industry, in some places a source of economic development and profit, in which an indistinguishable amalgam of people with ailments are processed by interchangeable healthcare providers set on meeting quotas and targets for access, throughput, outcomes, and costs. Patients receive care that is generic, often excessive, and burdensome. (*The Patient Revolution.*)

Holistic Integrative Care

An expansive and comprehensive approach to mind-body wellness that utilizes researched and proven methods of healing in tandem with “traditional western medicine” to improve and maintain the lives of individuals. (Institute for Holistic Health Studies.)

Accessible

Affordable and able to reach people digitally or who have low tech access; culturally responsive and acknowledges the histories of intergenerational trauma and individualized experience; representative of the many people who practice holistic health and have upheld the standard of it.

Traditional Western Medicine and Allopathic Care

A system in which medical doctors and other healthcare professionals (such as nurses, pharmacists, and therapists) treat symptoms and diseases using drugs, radiation, or surgery. (National Cancer Institute.)

Community Based

Co-created with, by, and for the people it's intended to serve.

Non-Stigmatizing

Something that makes people feel like they can approach it unapologetically.

Co-Design

The practice of actively involving all stakeholders in the design process.

Practitioner

Health professionals who treat patients by addressing the individual's physical, mental, and spiritual ailments.

Facilitator

Someone who helps a group of people to work together better, understand their common objectives, and plan how to achieve these objectives, during meetings or discussions.

Resources

- 1.CenteringPregnancy
- 2.Circle Community Acupuncture
- 3.Petaluma Health Center
- 4.Santa Rosa Community Health
- 5.SBH Center for Culinary Medicine and Teaching Kitchen
- 6.The Osher Center at UCSF