UTalk
Helping people who experienced miscarriage to communicate and seek help

Personal Process Journal

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Reflections
When I started to choose the topic for my graduation project, Covid-19 was spreading outside. Same as others, I had to stay at home and feel really depressed and upset.

While searching for the news that might be useful for my project, I found that many people are experiencing the same feelings as me. The news show the sudden changes in many people’s lives due to Covid-19, such as the death of loved ones and lose income, which makes them feel anxious and depressed.
It’s obvious that changes in life, especially sudden changes, can easily influence our emotion. So what people usually do when they face a sudden change? What kinds of change are they facing?

Suddenly, it reminds me of a story of one of my friends, who experienced a miscarriage when preparing for the wedding with his girlfriend. Both of them feel very desperate and sad when the miscarriage occurred, and finally, they broke up cause they don’t know how to cope with the sudden change and how to communicate with each other. Until he told me this story, almost four years since it happened, I could still feel his grief and sadness through his word.

Then I searched for more information about miscarriage. To my surprise, there are a great number of people who have experienced miscarriage, which made me realize that there are still many people who suffer similar pain as my friend.

Therefore, I decided to choose “miscarriage” as the topic for my project, trying to help people who suffered from this sudden change in their life. Even though people will always struggle with miscarriage, which I can’t design it out, I still believe there must be something that can be improved to help them go through the tough time easier.
ABOUT MISCARRIAGE

Miscarriage sounds far away from us, but in fact, when I searched for the resources of miscarriage, I found there are a great number of people influenced by miscarriage.

Miscarriage is the most common kind of pregnancy loss, affecting around one in four pregnancies.¹

There are many different reasons why a woman might miscarry, though problems with the chromosomes of the foetus are most common,² which means it always doesn’t mom's fault to cause the miscarriage.

1 Miscarriage association https://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/information/miscarriage/
2 NHS website-miscarriage https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/miscarriage/
However, when miscarriage occurs, many women will show **great disappointment and sadness**, and think that it was their fault that caused the miscarriage, which made them feel guilty.³

When I search for the key word “miscarriage”, some related news caught my attention. Out of the grief caused by the miscarriage itself, the public opinion on the attitude and lack of protection for people who experienced miscarriage made things worse.

I sorted out some of the more significant issues as opportunities for development. In fact, problems related to awareness always need a long time to change, which means it’s unrealistic to solve this kinds of problem by a simple solution. However, I will keep these problems in mind and try to add something might make it better when produce solutions.

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02
Research
People who experienced miscarriage
Stakeholders & Experts
After got some basic understanding of miscarriage, I decided to learn more about the experience of people who have experienced miscarriage. My purpose was to find out their emotional changes and their pain points in the process through their stories, and how they got through difficult times or what kind of help they got.

At first, I planned to interview people who went through miscarriage to know their stories. But tutors suggested to me that it would be better to read their stories online instead of talking to them directly cause “It’s an incredibly sensitive topic.” In fact, I was a little afraid about just looking for information online can’t get enough information I need.

Therefore, I listed some questions I might ask if I could interview with people who experienced miscarriage, and then I found some stories online to test if the existing stories can answer the questions I listed. It showed that even though just a few stories could answer all questions I listed, most of the stories could show their feelings and emotion changes, as well as how they cope with it.

Finally, I decided to use the stories online as the resources for understanding people who experienced miscarriage. Stories are mainly from the Miscarriage Association website and Facebook group about miscarriage. I read over 40 stories and tried to sort it out to get something in common.
From the stories I have read, I organized a timeline of emotion change in the process, which from get pregnant to next pregnant. And I listed some critical sentences of their narrative, from both men and women.

- **Get pregnant**
  - **Hopeful**
  - **Happy**
    - "When we saw the second pink line on the test, we were so happy."

- **Miscarriage occurs**
  - **Shocked**
  - **Numb**
  - **Disappointed**
    - "Words fail me. Overwhelming emotions have made me numb and speechless."

- **Fear & Physical pain**
  - "My miscarriage was long and traumatic."

- **Angry**
  - **Guilt**
  - **Ashamed**
    - "Then there was the anger that this had happened and that I couldn’t protect my partner and the baby."
    - "I struggled with guilt, I felt ashamed."
    - "At different times they have made me feel powerless, angry, sad and sometimes jealous of others."
    - "I was absolutely destroyed. I just wished it wasn’t true."

- **Lonely**
  - **Isolated**
    - "I didn’t see friends or people with babies and I stopped going to places where I might see pregnant people or small children."

- **Prepare for next pregnant**
  - **PTSD**
  - **Scared**
    - "For the next 10 months we tried again for a baby. I cried a lot, I had nightmares and flashbacks daily."

- **Next pregnant**
  - **Exciting**
  - **Terrified**
  - **Anxious**
  - **Defensive**
    - "When we found out I was pregnant again we were both excited and terrified."
    - "Miscarriages have taken away the excitement and enjoyment of pregnancy for me."
    - "We put up defensive walls to try and protect ourselves in case we lost this baby too."
In the process of reviewing the story, I also summarized some existing problems and support for people who experienced miscarriage. The problems and supports can be the guidance for my next step research.

- Supports
  - Get pregnant
  - Hospital
  - Regular scan
  - Miscarriage occurs
    - Miscarriage Association
    - “Mark your loss”
    - NHS
    - Leaflets
    - Consultants
    - Support group
    - SCIM
    - Helplines
    - Story sharing
  - Next pregnant
    - Leaflet for people around you
    - PRCI cards
- Problems
  - Never thought about miscarriage
    - “It’s funny how having children wasn’t at all a big deal for me up until I was actually pregnant.”
  - Lack of support from hospital
    - “The hospital had not offered any support after the miscarriage, I was given a leaflet on miscarriage and sent away – to walk past the antenatal clinic and the delivery suite on my way out.”
    - “The hospital told me they will arrange for me to speak to the counsellor, but that never happened.”
  - Lack of support for men
    - “There is very limited support, but in all honesty I’m not sure most men are open to discuss things.”
  - Communication problems with partner
    - “I had a partner who didn’t want to talk about it, and no-one else to turn to.”
  - Lack of memorial objects
    - “Because I gave birth before 24 weeks gestation, I am not able to officially register Noa’s birth and death.”
    - “When a baby dies in the womb there is no death certificate, no burial, no outcry of mourning.”
  - Inappropriate comfort words
    - “I’ve never found it helpful when people say “At least it was early” or “At least you can get pregnant” because it feels like they are undermining the devastation we both felt during those times.”
Besides the questions I wanted to know, I also found two interesting points in the stories I have read.

**Men’s emotion**

**Most of the stories are narrated from a female perspective.** In over 30 stories I have read, there are just 7 or 8 stories written by men. However, about half stories written by women mentioned their husband, or us “we” as the subject, which shows men are highly engaged in the process, and their needs also should be considered. In other words, *men should also be classified as “people who have experienced miscarriage.”*

Also, this data shows that compared with women, men are not willing to share their painful experiences publicly, although they also suffered from similar pain as women.

**How existing supports work**

Even though there are various external support with professional help, such as helpline and consultants, many people *still prefer to explore their own way to cope with the situation,* which includes doing sports, talking with family members, reading stories from peers and trying to get busy e.g.

The reason for this phenomenon is worth exploring. Did they really do not need the help of professionals, or did they ignore these problems because they didn’t understand the seriousness of the issues, or because of financial considerations?
After completing the data collection of people who experience, I organized the existing information together, analyzed and selected the topics for the next stage.

For the main topics I listed above, I decided to give up the topic about the hospital. On the one hand, it contains too many small points, and the points are from different hospitals, which means it’s hard to make a solution applicable to all hospitals. On the other hand, the medical system is very busy due to COVID-19. I’m afraid it’s hard to gather information from the hospital in such a time.
For the topics I chose, I want to go further in each and get more information and find some internal connections. Here I used a structure of listing question to help me think about what information should I gather. Then, I searched online for related organizations and experts, excepting they can give me some insights for my questions.

Structure of questions

- **Current situation**
  - What can be use now / Related organizations?
  - How to get access? Is it costly?
  - ...

- **Obstacles/Difficulties**
  - Why people don’t use it?
  - What are the difficulties when offer the service?
  - What is missing in the service / support?
  - ...

- **Ideal situation**
  - What can be change to make it ideal?
  - How was the feedback?
  - ...
After confirming the topics, I thought it’s more useful to ask specific questions for one topic rather than general questions about miscarriage. Therefore, I searched online for related organizations and experts for each topic. I looked through their website or introductions and found out organizations who mostly related to the topic.

### Couples’ Relationship & Men’s emotion

**Relate**  
https://www.relate.org.uk/  
Organization which providing help with relationship

**Julia Bueno**  
http://www.juliabueno.co.uk/  
Experienced consultant of working with individuals and couples who struggle to conceive, or have experienced a loss during pregnancy or after birth.

### Anxiety of getting pregnant again

**Sarah Bailey**  
A lead nurse, coordinates the care of women experiencing recurrent miscarriage.
Further research in existing support

Miscarriage Association & SCIM
Organizations which providing various support for miscarriage

SiMBA
https://www.simbacharity.org.uk/
Organization which providing memorial way for people who experienced miscarriage.

However, the research process wasn't that smooth. I wrote several emails to organizations and requested for a short meeting, but they all said they were really busy at that time and rejected my request, which made me a little sad.

When I reviewed the emails sent to organizations, I noticed that I didn't describe the questions very clearly, maybe the unclear description made them confused. Therefore, I made some adjustment of the email, pointed out the main questions I would like to know most. I also said if they don't have time for a meeting, perhaps they can answer the questions at a time convenient for them.

Fortunately, after I adjusted the email and sent it to other experts, I got a few positive replies. Some of them answered my questions via email and also sent me some materials related to the questions to read.

At the same time, I also looked through the organization's website, trying to get more information about their service, as well as the difficulties they are facing. In the end, I got some findings in each aspect, as I will show in the next page.
Couples’ Relationship & Men’s emotion

Men also feel sad when the miscarriage occurred, but most of them believe they should be tough and not allowed to be vulnerable.

Men and women always use different ways to express their emotions even though their emotions are the same, which is one of the causes of relationship problems.

When the relationship problem occurs, many couples can’t notice it in time, which makes it worse. Even though there is some guidance, most of them are general contents.

Men always want to do something to help their wife but don’t know what they really need and how to do.

Anxiety of getting pregnant again

Both men and women feel anxiety when they get pregnant again. The emotion always changes between anxiety and happy, as I will show in the next page.

People who experienced miscarriage have found some ways to manage their anxiety, like lower expectation, try to be busy and mark some milestones.

There is some existing emotional help for women diagnosed as RM (more than two times miscarriages). But for those who experienced miscarriage for one or two times, there is no specific emotional help for them.
02 Research

Futher research in existing support

There are many kinds of support provided, both online and offline. But most of the supports are aimed for women.

Most of people would like to choose free supports, like support group and helpline. The private counselling is costly and the NHS support will take a long time to wait.

The organizations are always busy dealing with the demands of people who experienced miscarriage.

The number of women who seek help is far more than men. Some couples seek help together, but few men seek help individually.

There are various memorial ways for parents to choose, like a memorial box or trees for baby. But for the miscarriages in early stage, there always no much objects about the baby (like baby’s body) can be collected for the memorial.

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Revised text:
03 Analysis

Opportunities & Insights

Ideation

Concept
After getting enough materials from experts and stakeholders, I tried to analyze all the data I collected from desk research and field research. Here I created a graph to represent the “journey” of people who experienced miscarriage, which included their emotion change, supports and potential opportunities.

1. Need a better way to communicate

When similar emotions expressed in different ways, misunderstanding will show, and a communication gap will be created between the couples. Sometimes men want to help their partner but don’t their needs or didn’t prepare for the needs, which might cause relationship problems. For the needs, which might cause relationship problems.

To analyze these three opportunities better, I disassembled the reasons for each in a visual way, which include the potential solutions and some specific ideas. At the same time, I also wanted to explore the internal connection between the three opportunities.

2 Need a “safe space” for men to release their emotion

For the men, on the one hand, most of them are educated to be tough at any time. On the other hand, they are supposed to be a protector and supporter for their wife when a miscarriage occurs. Therefore, they always feel shame when they get vulnerable. Only with the men who have the same experience can they talk through about their emotions. However, few men would like to talk first because of the shame, which means there wouldn’t have space for them to release emotion at the end.

3 Need a way to manage anxiety in next pregnant

For the couples who get pregnant again, they feel more anxious than happy because they are always afraid the same thing happen to them again. Their emotion changes are like a “roller coaster” as I showed in the graph, which goes up and down based on the outcome of the scan.
See the ideation map in next page
03 Analysis

**Need a "safe space" for men to release their emotion**

- Feel shame to talk about miscarriage and their vulnerable
- No one willing to talk about miscarriage and feelings about it first
- No space for men to share their negative feelings freely
- Stereotypes of men have to be strong
- Don’t know how to help
- Don’t know each other’s feeling
- Misunderstanding

**Potential solutions**

- Using "signs" to increase the identity
- Gradually change public opinion
- Write down negative emotions to let partner know

**Specific ideas**

- Link men with their partner
- Want to do something to help their partner
- Find a "trigger" to encourage men to talk about miscarriage
- Find ways to share feelings
- Safe space to talk with partner freely
- Safe space to talk with partner freely
- Visual way to show the feeling
- Visual way to show the feeling

- Create a safe space for couple to communicate with each other, which can help couple build a stronger bond.
- Share experiences about relationship
- Create a space only for men to share feelings
- Use the bond between couple to engage the men into the context

- Some kinds of product or decoration to show the attitude
- The visual way with metaphor which can fit both demands

**Need a better way to communicate**

- Create a platform for people who experienced miscarriage to share experience and get professional help from experts.
In this map, I intended to organize the structure of the final solution. As the graph shows, creating a platform for the people who experienced miscarriage might be a good choice. The platform will include the experience from different aspects, which can provide more targeted contents for the users compared with existing support websites.
However, even though there are connections among the three opportunities, it doesn’t mean the connections are the same strength. As we can see, the 1 and 2 belong to the after miscarriage stage, which means most of the people who experienced a miscarriage will go through. But for the 3, not everyone will choose to have another baby after they suffered a miscarriage. Therefore, I intended to define 3 as a secondary function, which can be opened when people need the function.

1. **Build stronger bond between couple**

2. **Use the bond to engage men to find people who have similar experience**

3. **Reduce couples’ anxiety with next pregnant by coping together**
Based on the analysis mentioned above, I tried to show the whole concept in the map below, which includes both users and stakeholders and the role they play in this system.
Analysis

As we can see in the graph, the core of the concept is the couple.

By increasing the interaction between husband and wife, the emotional demands after the miscarriage of them both can be feed.

When they found it hard to solve the issue between them, they can search for other couples public experience for help. They can also share their experience in the community with others.

For both male and female, there will be an independent space for their gender only to share experience and emotions.

Users can decide who can see what they post.

When they seek external help, experts or consultants can get access to the record of the emotion change with the couples permission, which will help them to provide more specific service.
Solution

Functions & Case studies
Details & Metaphor
Interface & Interaction
Test & Improvement
Based on the concept in the last chapter, I started to think about the form of the final solution. I listed the primary & secondary functions of the solution, and I began to thought about the existing products or services related to the functions I listed. In this part, the case study is a good method to take some advantages to form the existing services and products. The ideas from the case study can be applied to the final solution.

**Primary Functions**

Space for couples to talk freely with interesting visualization and interaction ways.

A platform for people who experienced miscarriage to share their experience in different aspects, as well as to read other’s sharing.

A platform for people who experienced miscarriage to seek professional help.

Space for men only to talk with each other to release their emotion. (Women also have the same space, like what existing services are doing)
Secondary Functions

Help couples to manage the anxiety level between one scan to another by setting milestones and offering success cases with a similar situation.

Provide anonymous sharing and viewing channels for unnamed users.

Record the user's emotional changes in a visual way, and can be used for the memorial. (Like a record of a “journey”)

Build a brand identity for advertising, as well as break the taboo of miscarriage.

Case studies

Platform about miscarriage for sharing information and providing help

Miscarriage association  SCIM

Online platform - easy for people to access
Keywords for different topics - easy for people to find info they need
The case studies brought me some inspirations.

First, for information sharing and seeking help, the *online form* will greatly reduce the cost of communication, which is easy for people to access.

Second, the *digital way* can be used as a medium of information from couples, especially when they are in different places.

Therefore, I decided to use *the APP* as a form of my solution. With the interaction on the APP, couples can share their feelings with each other and read other’s public contents for help at any time.
Structure of Functions

External support
Professional help users can seek when the issue cannot be solved by themselves.

Couple's personal space
Interaction space for the couple.

Personal details
User’s account details, which include information about their miscarriage.

Find other’s space
Read other’s stories and experience for help.

Men / women’s secret space
A place only for men and women to see their weakness.

Expand function
Anonymous letter
Rainbow baby mode memento request.
For people who have experienced miscarriage, everyone's experience is similar, but the details are different. Therefore, a metaphor and presentation form that can not only show the different characteristics of men and women in the process of miscarriage but also reflect the details of the interaction between individuals is necessary.

After searching related product information and brainstorming, I adopted the metaphor of the sun and the moon to represent the women and men who use the APP.

**Metaphor**

![Diagram showing the metaphor of the sun and moon]

**Role**

- **Women**: Core position in the experience
- **Men**: Supporter and protector

**Stereotypes**

- **Women**: can also be strong
- **Men**: also have the right to be vulnerable

The size can be adjusted according to the needs of users.
Interactions of communicating

Area of interaction with partner

Area of interaction with others

Change the shape to leave notes and feelings

Partner will be noticed to read

If the issue wasn’t solved, partner will be noticed to find help from others

Sharing the useful experience and story to the community

After a period of time, partner will be noticed to fill the shape if the issue were solved

Post feelings to the community when need help
**Basic functions**

**UTalk**
Talk about what you want

**Expand function**
Couple's personal space (women)

**Other's space**

- Zoom or slide the back space
- Other's space list
- Women's account

Click the button
Process of sharing feelings

Couple’s personal space

Type notes and feelings

Hold to change shape

Notes saved

Users can choose whether to publish content

Notes saved
Process of understanding feelings

Couple’s personal space (Men)

She feel sad, How to help her?

Men's account

3:00 P.M. WORKING TIME

Search for keyword of issue in the community when need help

Read the massage

Clike to read the massage

Got useful information

Read the massage

From your partner Linda

What are you thinking now?

Write any thing you want to your partner...
04 Solution

Process of getting external support and community

Couple’s personal space
(Men)

Men’s community

Clique the moon to enter the men’s community

External support

Search for experts or keywords of the issue

So many people are as sad as me
I don’t need to be shame for my vulnerable
After finished the first vision of the prototype, I planned to test it and get some feedback to improve the solution. The test has two purposes, one is to test whether the solution I propose meets the needs of users, and the other is to test whether the interaction of the APP is logical and easy to understand. For these two different purposes, I selected different participants and made different test plans.

Test for the concept

For the concept test, I invited two participants who had experienced miscarriage. I briefly introduced my ideas through the chat and showed the critical interface and demo to them. Here is some response from them.

Participant 1

Male, 26 years old, experienced miscarriage for one time

Response

“It is a good idea to build a male community about miscarriage. When my girlfriend and I experienced a miscarriage, I felt very sad, but I didn’t want to talk about it with someone who had never experienced it. I have joined some miscarriage groups, but most of the users who telling their stories were women, I even felt ashamed that I was as vulnerable as a woman.”

“Compared to other services, the style of this APP makes me feel very relaxed. I like the concept of the ‘sun and moon’, which makes me feel that I am protecting her when I am not around her. When she has any problems, I can find other’s experience in advance on the APP and give her better help.”
“One thing that makes me feel a little embarrassed is that since I have broken up with my ex-girlfriend, but I don’t see an option to dissolve the relationship in the APP. If I used this APP with my ex-girlfriend and in the future, my wife and I also experienced a miscarriage and would like to use this APP, these records will make me embarrassed.”

To be improved

Add the option of “terminate the relationship”, which will take effect after the couples both agree

Participant 2
Female, 34 years old, experienced miscarriage for two times

Response

“I think the idea of ‘Rainbow baby’ mode is excellent. I rarely get other people’s understanding when I get pregnant again after a miscarriage. Everyone thinks I should be happy, but in fact, I feel anxiety and fear far more than happy and joy. I would like to see more details about this part.”

“I think the interaction form between couples provided by APP is very interesting, especially for couples who need to work during the day and cannot meet. But when the couple in the same place, such as at home together at night, it may seem strange to use mobile phones to communicate. I think it is possible to discuss the expansion of communication forms, such as a physical form of ‘sun and moon’ or other interactive games.”

To be improved

For the communication part, need to explore more interactive possibilities in different scenarios.
Test for the interaction

For the interactive test, except for the above two participants, I also invited another participant who has not been introduced to the concept. In this part, I used the demo with some comments for testing. As a result, the former two participants said it was easy to understand, but the participants who had not been introduced to the concept said she didn’t really understand how to use the APP.

To be improved

For new users, guide pages and function guides need to be added to help them get familiar with the functions.

Conclusion

For the concept, the next step is to add more details of the relationship between the couple and consider different user groups and users’ needs in different scenarios.

For interaction, more guidance needs to be added to help new users quickly learn product functions to meet their needs.
05

Reflections
This is the first time I have done a project of a sensitive group. In my working process, I encountered many difficulties, such as the selection of research methods and data collection for sensitive groups. Here I would like to thank my tutors, as well as related organizations and experts who have provided me with a lot of help and useful information. Without help, I can’t complete this project.

Of course, when I look back at my project, I found some parts that still need to be improved.

Engagement

In this project, since it is about sensitive groups, I took an indirect approach to collect information, searching for the stories of target users on the internet. However, although I have tested its feasibility, there is still a lack of in-depth exploration of some specific problems and users’ motivations. What’s more, it’s hard to find participants for testing.

Therefore, maybe next time when I do project related to sensitive groups, besides searching for the existing stories from the internet, I will try to keep in touch with a few target users for further research and testing.
Resources

In the process of contacting stakeholders and experts, I was rejected many times. This is understandable because it was such a special time, and everyone was busy. But still, since I didn’t get enough needs from the existing support providers, it’s hard for me to engage them into my solution. The only pain point I learned from them is they are busy. Therefore, my final solution seems doesn’t like a “service design” outcome.

For this, I think maybe I should contact the stakeholders earlier and find more potential stakeholders for each topic. If conditions permit, I think a workshop that can engage target users and stakeholders will be useful to show needs from both sides and build a better solution. I do hope there would be such a chance for me to improve this project.
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