

A Smart Priority Planner Designed to Ease the Pressure of
a High-Performance Life

By Johnnie Noel-Baker



About Me



Me and My Values

I found design by following a passion for high-level sports and the outdoors: experiences which shaped my values of focus, commitment, and creativity.

All great things start with this kind of drive, including great design. My goal is to encourage others to similarly believe in their untapped potential by promoting confidence, balance, and clarity. My work aims to create the mindset and foundation for meaningful progress.

By trusting our individual processes, we can build lives we are proud of, where ambition and purpose exist in balance.

My Passions





Project Introduction

Based on my belief that strong design work originates from personal drive and passion, I began my final project with this in mind.

Throughout my time at university, I've juggled high-level sports alongside the responsibilities of studying. At times, this balance became overwhelming, leaving me burnt out. Each time, I was forced to set one priority aside while I recovered.

I believe I've uncovered a small piece of the puzzle. Sometimes, all it takes is a small shift in mindset to make space for it all.

My design represents that shift—a calm, focused approach—while offering tools to help others navigate and balance their own priorities.

Because our passions shape who we are. And we deserve to hold onto them.



Starting Point

The project began from my personal experience of burnout as a student-athlete. This became the key issue and user group I initially focused on, with my background providing valuable insight throughout the development process.

As the design progressed, however, it became clear that the product could also support a wider group of users managing multiple priorities.



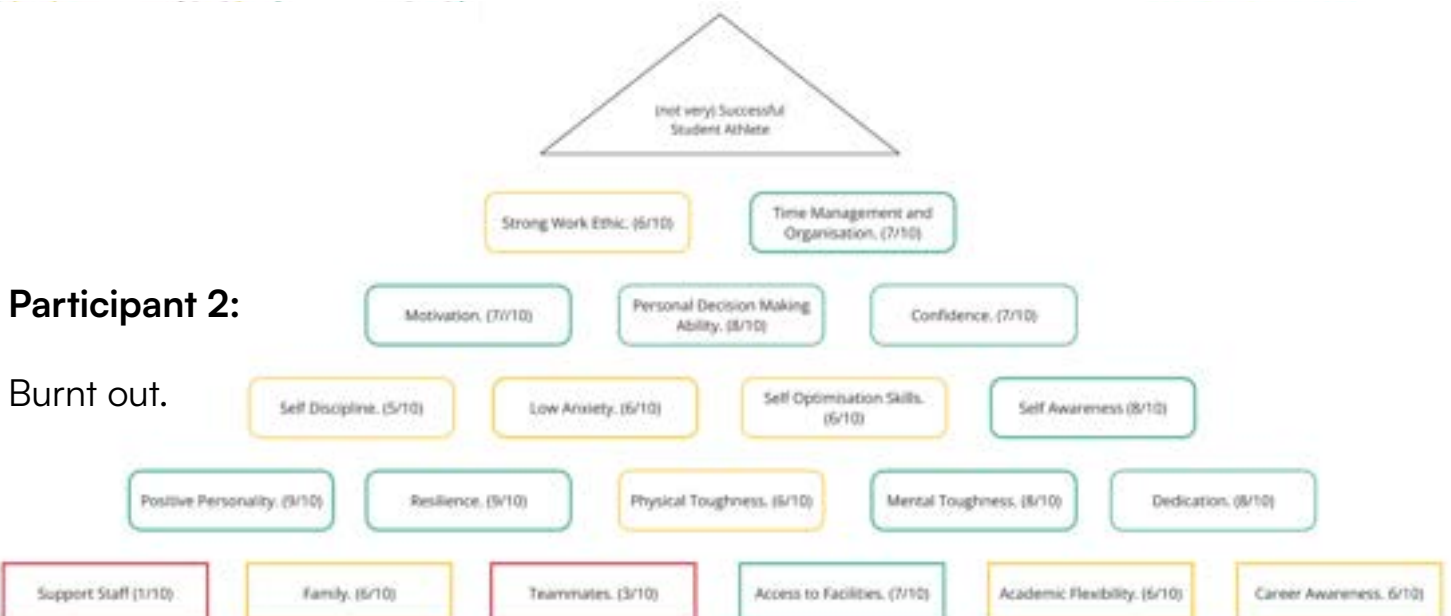
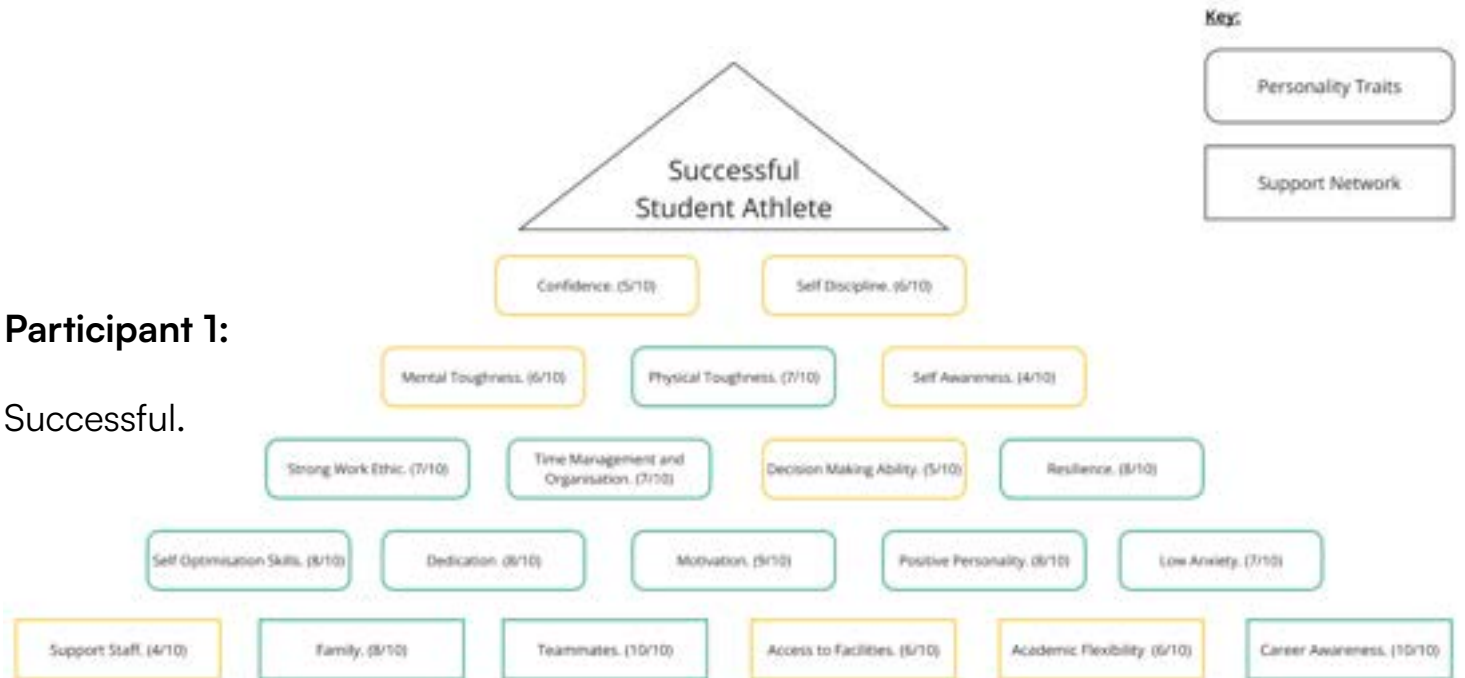


Student-Athlete Interviews

Research papers identified several key factors which are essential to being a successful student-athlete. I mapped these onto a pyramid, showing which traits lay the foundation of a successful student-athlete.

The key difference between successful and burnt out student-athletes was the presence of a strong support network, concluding that a strong support network is the most important factor to success.

They were re-arranged by participants during interviews, demonstrating their view on what's most important, while ranking themselves on each trait.





Support Network Interviews

Low Support

What is not currently well supported?

- (low) Anxiety
- Mental Toughness
- Self Optimisation Skills
- Decision Making Ability
- Positive Personality
- Strong Work Ethic
- Dedication
- Resilience
- Confidence
- Self Discipline
- Physical Toughness
- Career Awareness
- Motivation
- Time Management and Organisation
- Self Awareness

High Support

Interviews:

- 1 Coach,
- 1 Tutor,
- 1 Parent,
- 1 Teammate.

The participants represent the baseline support network that many student-athletes typically rely on.

The interviews revealed which key personality traits each member of the support network contributes to. From this, I identified several traits that are underrepresented within the existing network.

By flipping this list, I defined a set of traits that my design should focus on supporting.

In other words, by targeting the gaps in the current support network, my design can play a meaningful role in keeping student-athlete's from burnout.



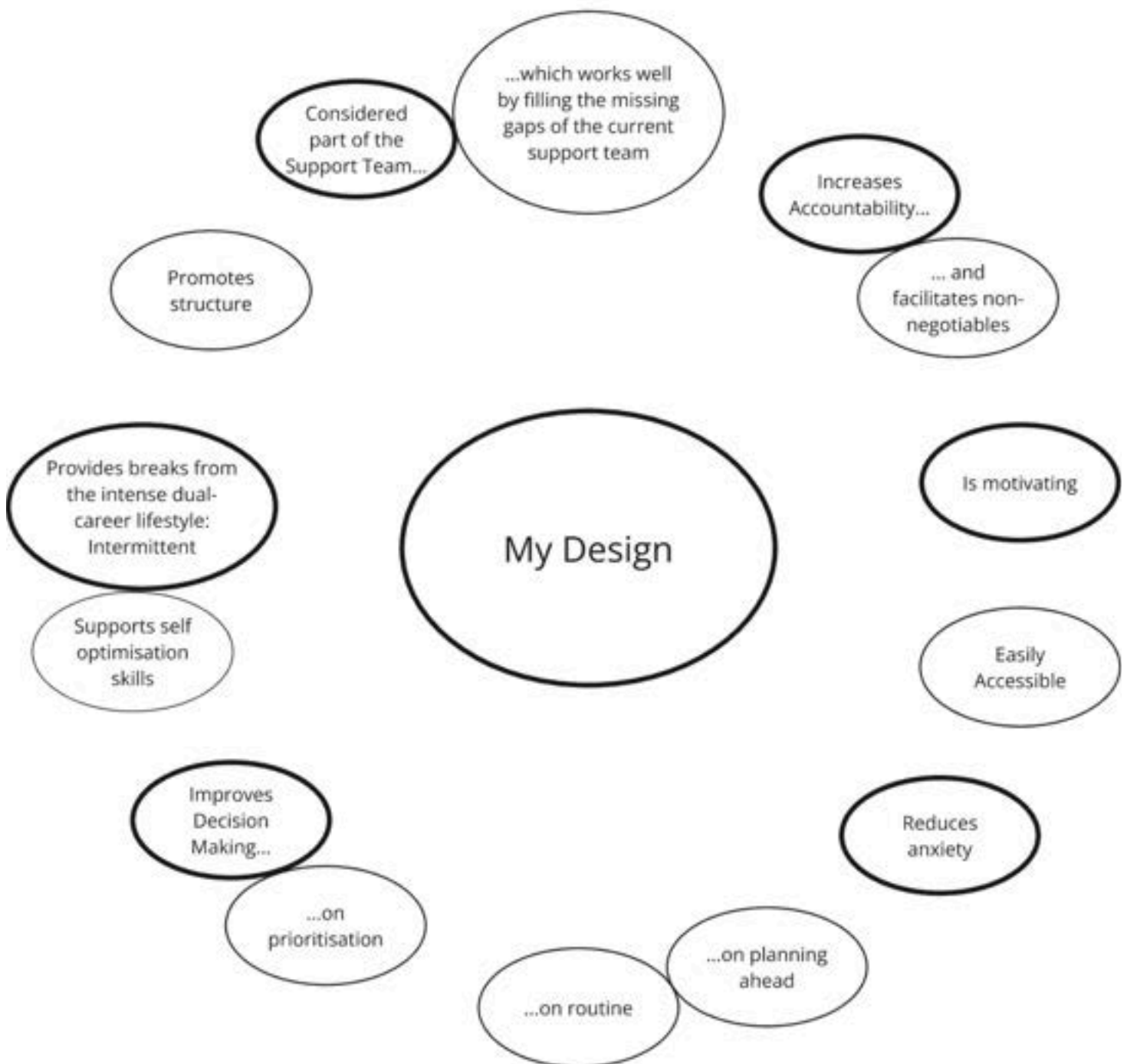
Discussing my results in a workshop with three student-athletes.



Research Conclusion

By identifying key insights from the research, I created a visual representation of what an ideal design should contribute to, in the life of a student-athlete.

This visual became a reference point throughout the project, guiding the analysis of future prototypes and concepts to ensure they remained aligned with the core needs of the user.





Initial Prototypes and Concepts



Sleep Prototypes

The first prototypes were related to sleep quality.

The learning point from these designs was that sleep should always be a top priority to avoid burnout, and any design I create must allow for time to rest.



Support Network Prototypes

The second set was linked to improving communication within the support network.

Although the most effective design would be one to fill missing links in the support network links rather than attempt to fix a 'broken' one.



Prioritisation Prototypes



The next prototypes aimed to help users prioritise more effectively.

A research workshop with student-athletes emerged this strategy as the most effective.

This concept has a strong connection to a number of the ideal design features outlined in the research conclusion from the initial interviews.



Discussing my prototypes in a workshop with student-athletes.



Final Design Concept

A system linked to a smart prioritisation calendar, that uses AI to analyse and arrange the user's priorities daily, reducing stress from decision fatigue. It also introduces an element of accountability by connecting the system to a trusted friend or coach, keeping them in the loop.

This focus on prioritisation also expands the potential user group to anyone managing multiple responsibilities.



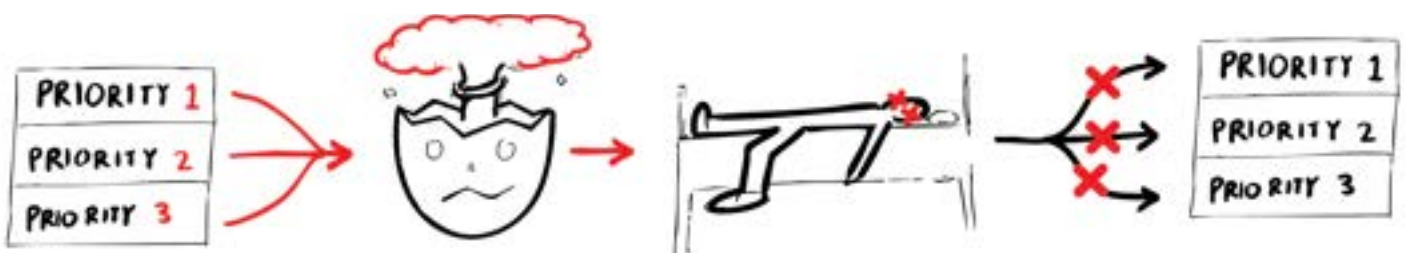
Defining Moment

Burnt out and ill during the most important competition of the year.

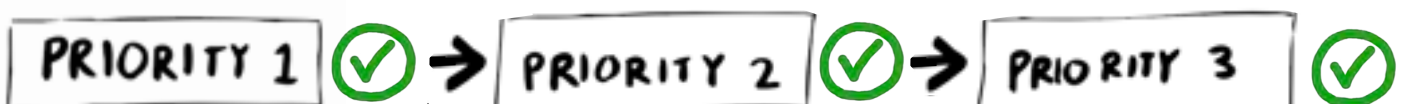
During the first half of semester 2, I attempted to study while training for an important climbing competition, ultimately testing the 1-2-3 priority step approach through an initial prototype.

I burnt out... and by seeing 3 priorities at once at the start of each day, regardless of their ordering, I would become overwhelmed, stressed and ultimately not get anything done.

A more minimal aesthetic which encourages a one-by-one step process to prioritisation would significantly decrease the stressful effect of tackling multiple priorities.



1-2-3 Approach



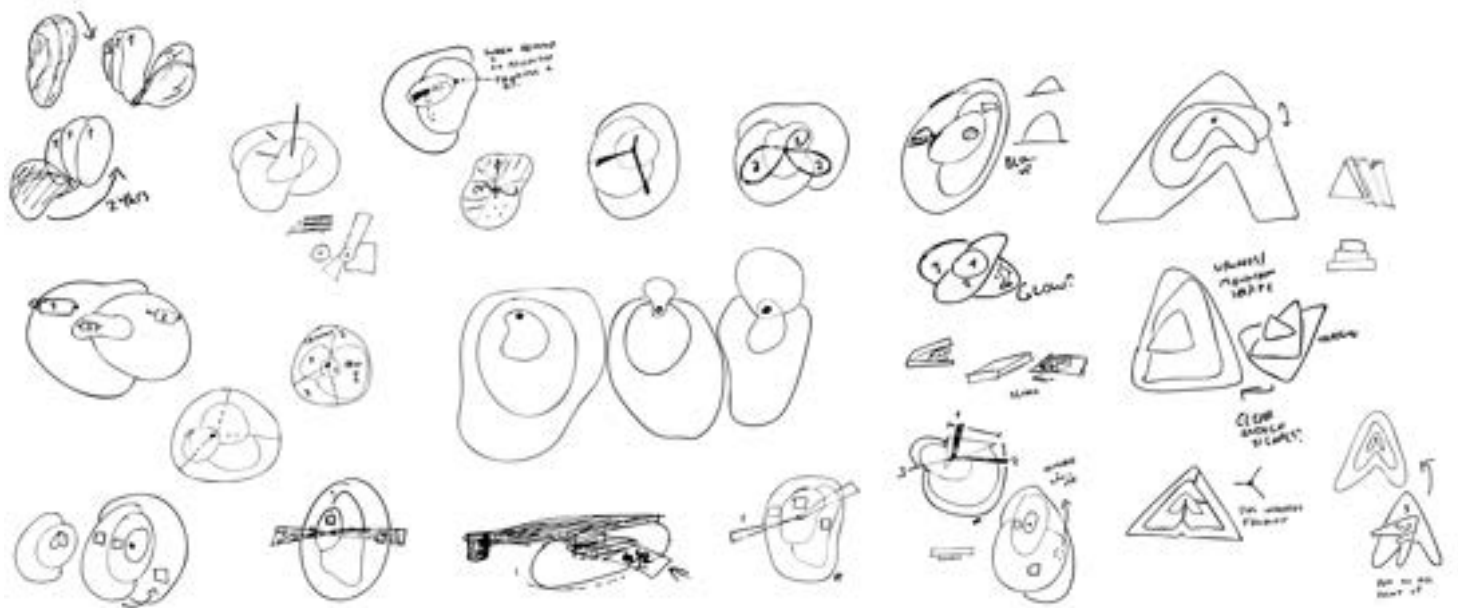
One-By-One Approach



Aesthetic Development



Key Aesthetics: Hierarchy, balance and minimalism.





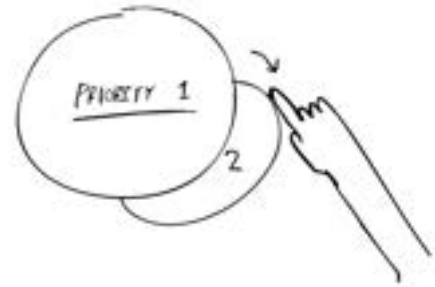
Storyboard



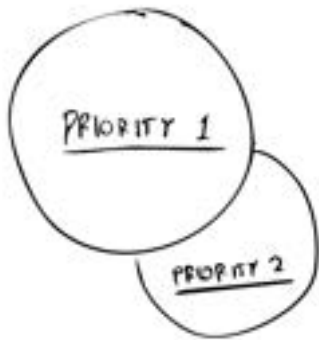
Priority 1 is shown



If user is happy with that



They can reveal priority 2



Priority 1 and 2 are shown

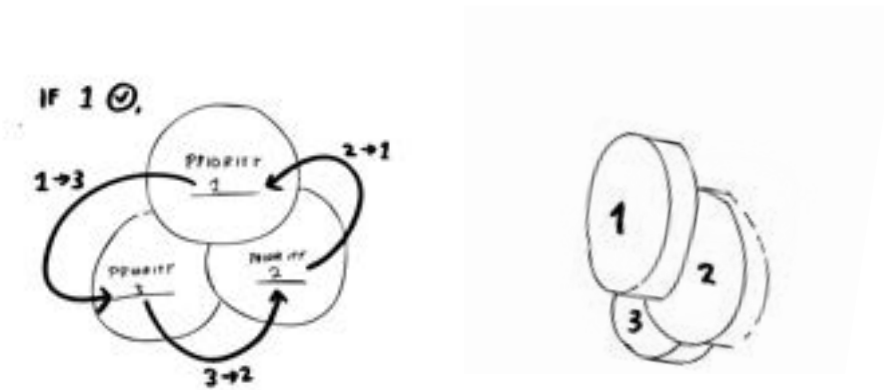


If user is happy with that

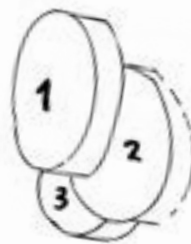


Priority 1, 2 and 3 are shown

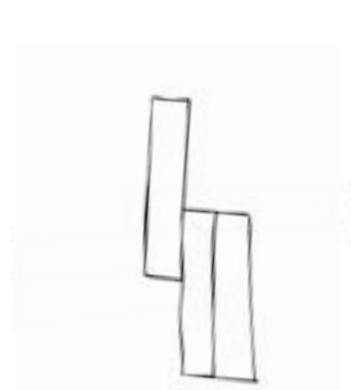
They can reveal priority 3



When a priority is complete for the day, the AI system re-organises the priorities accordingly.



The full priority stack



Side View



Concept Recap

The new aesthetic decisions successfully combine the original final concept of prioritisation, with new core principles of stress reduction and minimalism.

The design encourages the user to only look at as many priorities as they feel ready to at the time, promoting the mindset of approaching each day one task at a time, reducing the chances of overload.



Initial Model Testing

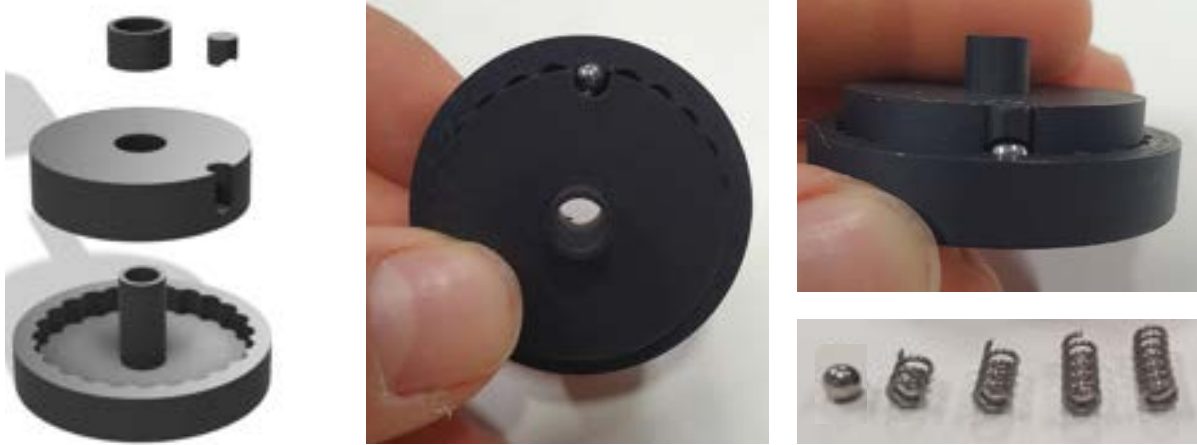


Testing that the rotating mechanism functions as intended and is feasible to produce, while also calculating more accurate dimensions for future prototypes.

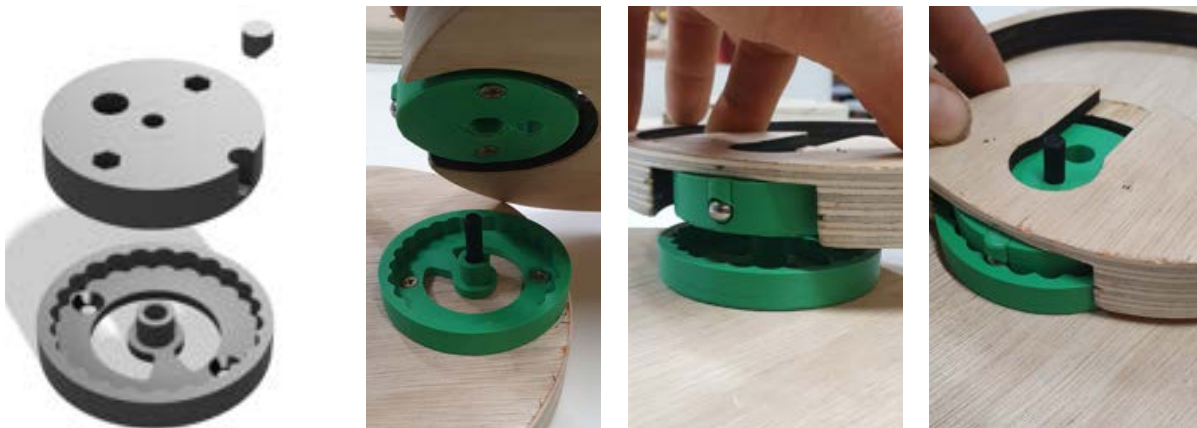


The Main Mechanism

Testing the mechanism which is required to allow for the rotating interaction to remain stable under gravity when the design is mounted on the wall.



Iteration 1: Testing the mechanism



Halfway point: Implementing the mechanism



Final Iteration: Allowing for wire transfer.

These were the key stages of development, though many smaller adjustments were made, resulting in a total of 7 prototypes prior to the final mechanism.



Form Development



Testing the thickness in a 1:1 scale, creating a more accurate representation of the final vision before progressing to the more detailed prototypes.



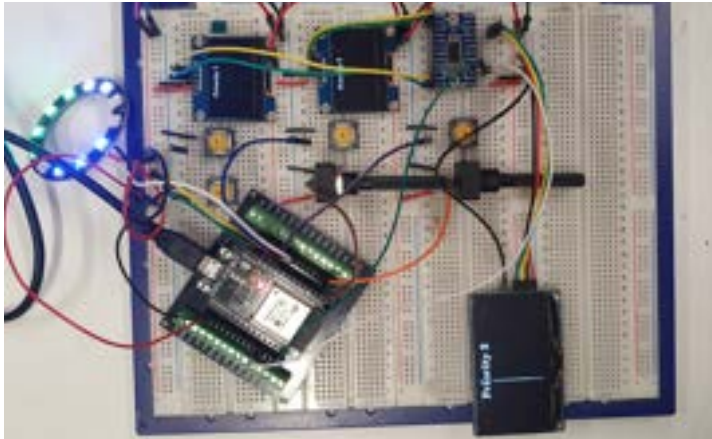
Prototypes testing wood as a potential final material, creating space for electronics, as well as further testing of the rotating interaction, revealing indents must be made.



The final prototypes tested keyhole hangars as wall attachment points, introduced the finger indents for easier rotation, as well as the screen covers.



Electronics



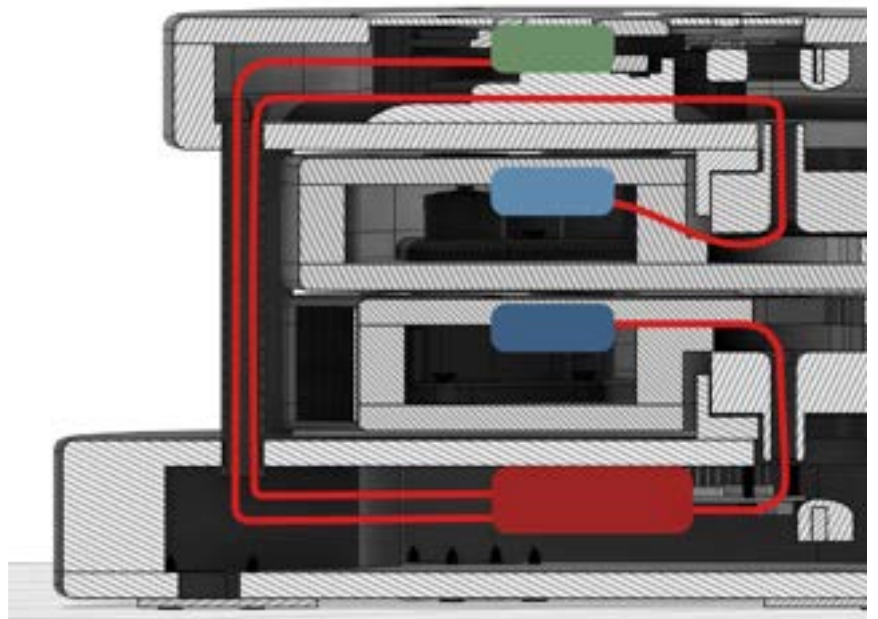
The electronic components as well as their functions were first tested on a breadboard. Once the pieces and their positions were confirmed, I 3D printed fittings to sit internally in the design, creating casings for the electronics to be precisely positioned.

Upper Electronics

Middle Electronics

Lower Electronics

Main Processor



The channel positioning ensures that all three upper layers can be wired with the main processor, while not interfering with the rotating mechanism.



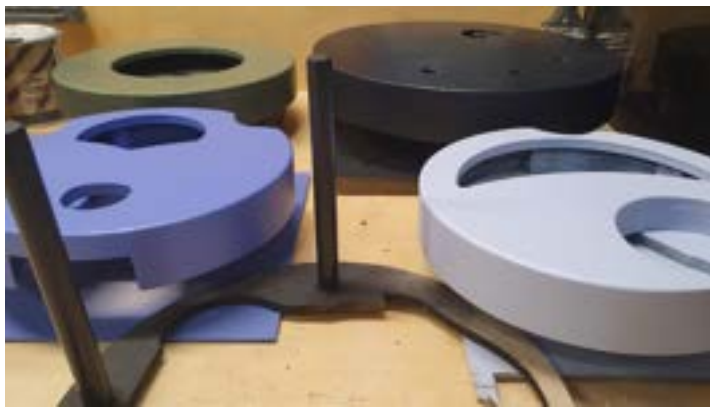
Final Design Manufacturing



1) Laser-cut, glue, stack and clamp.



2) Sand, filler, sand and assemble.



3) Prime, spray and varnish.



4) Wire and code.



Final Physical Design



Priority 1 is on display. The LED's represent how many hours the user should spend on priority 1. Each hour can be logged as demonstrated, reducing the LED's until they reach 0. The design then re-arranges the priorities, revealing the next priority.



The number of priorities the user chooses to have exposed is entirely up to them, and how much information they can handle without being overwhelmed.



The user has the option to manually re-arrange the priorities, reinforcing the fact that the product acts as a guide, not a strict instruction. This is to decrease the chance of stress.



Final Application

Overview:

The application serves as the method of inputting your key information such as priorities and events into the system.

It also allows the user to view certain information in greater detail ('see more' section), as well as link with friends in the 'community' section.

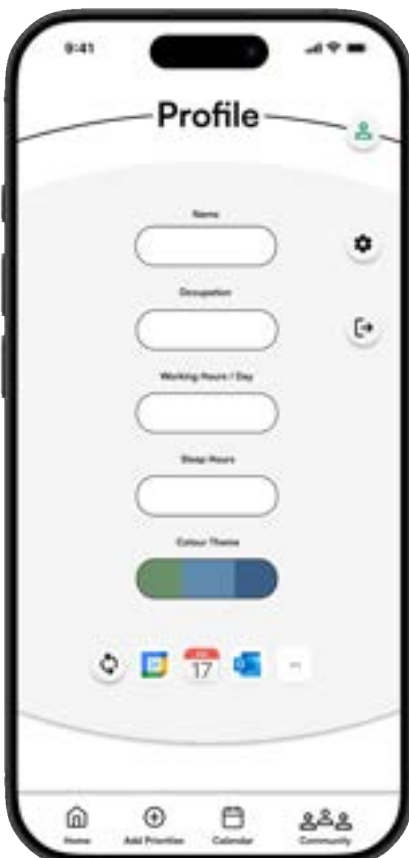
The ability to reflect on past activities also allows the AI software to adjust its expectations and future scheduling accordingly.



Home Screen



See more



Create your account and sync calendar



Priority 1 hours = 0, so priority 2 takes its position.



See more



Add a new priority



Example priority



Community



Calendar



Add Event



Reflect on past events



Final Design



Flow Stack



Personal Reflection

I am proud of this project because I was consistently challenged throughout the year, facing creative blocks and obstacles that tested both my critical thinking and resilience, always finding a way to move forwards.

The biggest challenge I encountered is discussed in the 'Defining Moment' section of this document. At that time, I was unhappy with my prototype and knew I had to shift my approach. I was also recovering from burnout. The turning point came when I took a step back and asked myself how I had ended up in that burnt out position again. In doing so, I found the answer to my project.

Balancing multiple priorities effectively is all about mindset. If everything is treated as equally important every day, nothing can be prioritised properly, and performance suffers. The solution I realised was simple: focus on one priority at a time and let go of the rest for the time being. This shift allows full attention on a single goal, making progress feel manageable. Once that goal is complete, the next one naturally comes into focus.

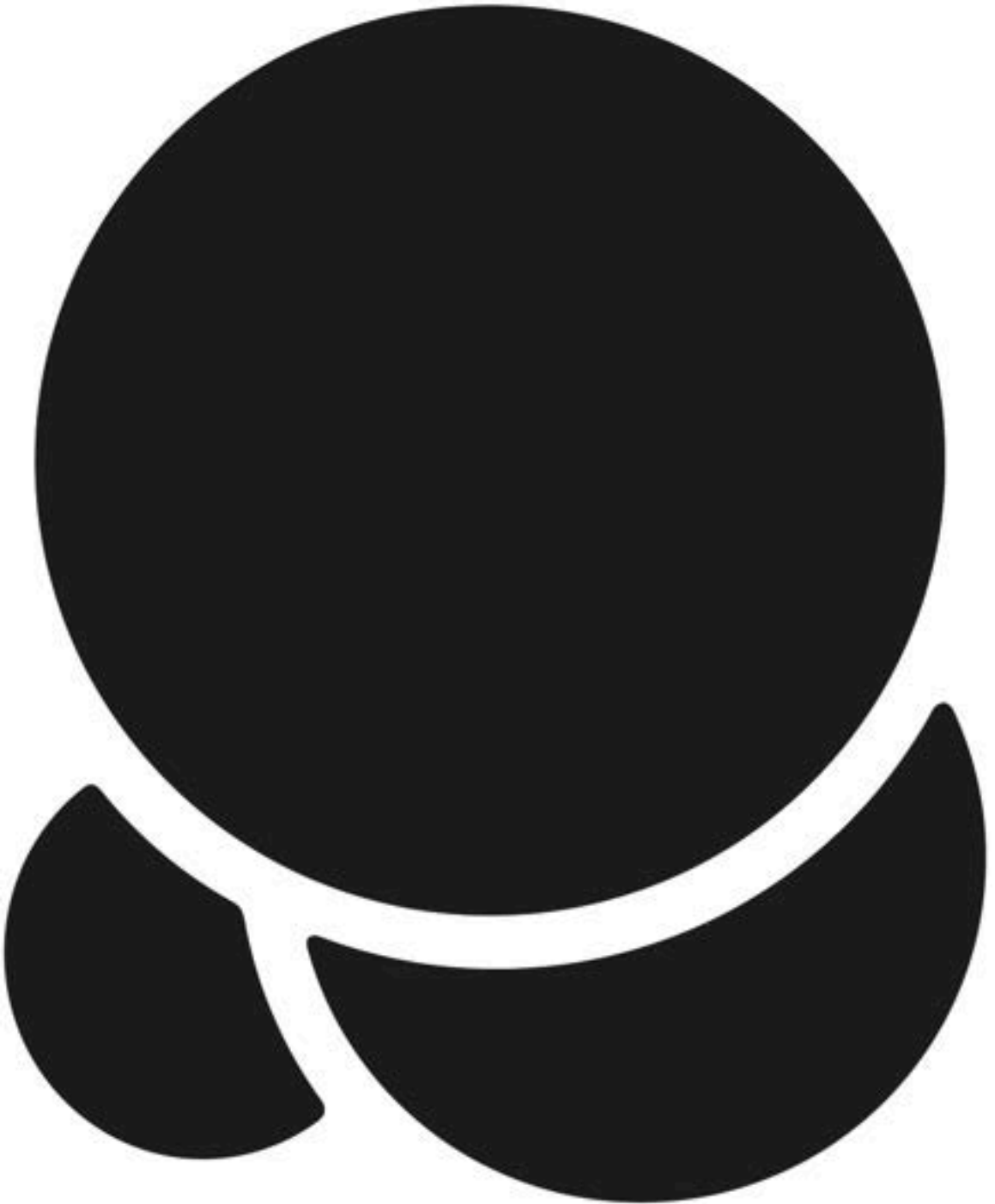
Everything started to make sense after that realisation, and I began designing the final concept with this principle at its core. In stressful situations, the product allows (and encourages) the user to hide the lower two priorities, inviting them to focus solely on the one that matters most in that moment.

The project began with a desire to balance my passion for high-performance sport with my academic life. I developed a working prototype, but then experienced burnout — ironically, caused by the same lack of prioritisation my product was meant to address. That moment forced me to rethink the entire concept, and eventually re-design it based on the mindset that helped me recover.

A great lesson I learned is that while research and data are essential, it is possible for the most important insights and defining moments come from personal experience. Taking a step back to reconnect with the core reason behind the project helped me move forward with clarity and purpose.

There were technical challenges too, such as developing a functioning ball detent mechanism for the first time, which also had to accommodate wire channels. However, the solution to problems like these is usually straightforward. Just test, adjust, and repeat until it works.

Ultimately, I'm proud of this project because it consistently challenged me, and I was able to create a product that genuinely resonates with who I am and what I've learned.



— Stasis —

Balance

— Burnout —