How Technology Can Boost Emotional Intelligence

Emotions are powerful. They drive learning, creativity, and decision-making. To help people develop emotional intelligence, the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence created an evidence-based program called **RULER** that’s used in hundreds of schools worldwide. But until their collaboration with HopeLab, there was no way to take their program beyond the classroom and into the daily lives of anyone who needs it.

“We had a tool called Mood Meter, but we had to figure out more advanced ways of getting people to use the tool more regularly. We had the science and the tool, but we didn’t have the best medium.”

– Dr. Mark Brackett, Director at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence

**BUILDING SELF AWARENESS AND CHANGING BEHAVIOR**

When they met with HopeLab, the Yale team brought the easy-to-understand, color-coded poster they use to help students plot and comprehend the complexity of their emotions. They were ready to evolve it into a personal, practical app that could reach beyond the classroom. Together, HopeLab and the Yale team began to envision Mood Meter’s digital transformation.

“At HopeLab, we partner with researchers like Dr. Brackett and his team who are trying to solve complex problems. Together, we collaborated on the vision for the Mood Meter app to create a tool that motivates positive behaviors and has the potential to make a difference for users.”

– Fred Dillon, Director of Product Development at HopeLab

Here’s how they turned an idea into a technology:

**Translate a lesson into a sticky app.** The HopeLab team knew that an intuitive, visually appealing app was critical to the success of the project — people needed a delightful experience if the intervention was going to stick. So we started by crowdsourcing ideas for the app’s look and feel. We gathered 60 ideas, collaborated with Dr. Brackett and his team to whittle the field down to seven, and then went directly to users with surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

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Dr. Robin Stern
Associate Director at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence

**CASE STUDY**

Mood Meter

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"It’s the congruence of technology design with what we know about how emotions work and the users’ needs that really sets HopeLab apart in the health and technology space."

Dr. Robin Stern, Associate Director at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence

Meet users where they are. By listening deeply to users, the team zeroed in on an elegant, simple design. One critical thing we discovered was that, even though researchers are eager to collect data, users quite reasonably resist a burdensome registration process. Based on this feedback, we minimized the steps to registration — this put users at ease and enabled us to invite people into the experience quickly, which helped them learn the new technological terrain more easily.

We shaped the Mood Meter with a high-school audience in mind, but created flexibility for a variety of users and contexts, including adults in the workplace and the therapist’s office. We layered in rich features so the Mood Meter can serve as a journal, a collection of goals and inspirations, and an access point for tools to help regulate emotions.

"Mood Meter is our signature tool at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. Before you can genuinely impact people in their daily lives, you have to reach them where they are… This is where HopeLab’s work is so indispensible. They take what is a really complicated tool and make it look simple and intuitive."

Dr. Stern

Cultivate a sense of control. The Mood Meter app can always be on hand to help users recognize, label, express, and gain a sense of control over their emotions. When they plot their emotional states on the Mood Meter chart, describe why they feel the way they do, and choose research-based strategies to help manage their feelings, users begin to gain mastery over their emotions. Mood Meter users can also develop a deeply personal experience by incorporating their own strategies, quotes, and images, and they can track feelings over time to see patterns and set goals for a healthier, more productive life.

"The Mood Meter app is great! It makes me stop to think about what I am actually feeling and why! And, like the Yale team says, now that I can name it, I can tame it. I am better at identifying my actual emotion and using a strategy to get into a better place. I was already using the Mood Meter myself in the classroom, but the app is always with me!!"

Mood Meter User

To learn more about the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, visit ei.yale.edu. Get your own Mood Meter app at moodmeterapp.com.

Explore our work at HopeLab.org