SafeSpace: A Simple Start to Mental Health

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Importance of Mental Health

- A big problem in NYC
- Exasperated by the Covid-19 pandemic
  - Stress over remote learning
  - Stress over food/utilities/money
- A difficult topic to handle in many cultures
  - Asian culture treats mental health as taboo
- Not easy to get help

Attempts to Improve Mental Health

- State level programs
  - NY Project Hope (2020)
- City level programs
  - ThriveNYC (2015)
  - NYPD Mental Health unit (2021)
- Local organizations
  - NYU Wellness Exchange (2019)

Issues With These Programs

- Programs are mismanaged or cannot meet their objectives
    - NY Project Hope emphasizes on outreach over actual therapy
    - ThriveNYC has been criticized for wasting taxpayer money (> $1 billion) and not being effective
    - NYPD Mental Health is too new to be able to report efficacy; general distrust in NYPD
- Programs are ahead of their time
    - NYC attitude is to "just suck it up" or to repress their issues
- People need to be able to identify what is bothering them in order for these programs to be effective

ThriveNYC is an even bigger failure than it seems

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Technical Solutions to Improve Mental Health Awareness

- Apps that connect you to a therapist
  - Talkspace
- Apps that track your mood
  - Moodistory (iOS)

Problems w   s

- Users are aske
  - Quantify
  - Searching
- Ends up requir

SafeSpace

- Emphasis on easier of use
  - Simpler input
  - Comforting output
- Processing user input
  - Let the machine figure it out

HCI/Psychological Principles Considerations

- Hick's Law
  - Reduce the number of choices the user needs to make
- Jakob's Law
  - Experience that resembles the most basic communication over the computer:
    - Writing a message (email, text message, instant message)
- Miller's law
  - Only one thing needed to be kept in working memory
- Emphasis on colors
  - Directing actions
  - Visualizing emotion

Behind the scenes of SafeSpace

- User simply types what they want to say
- Safespace performs sentiment analysis
  - Basic mapping of words to sentiment
- Overall sentiment mapped to a color to visualize the person's state of mind
- Recommendations based on overall sentiment

Demo

Further Improvements

- Voice-To-Text input
- Text-To-Speech output
- Utilize an NLP model for advanced sentiment analysis
- Tracking of mood over time