Behind the scenes of

G🍅👀gle

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Process Overview

Project Statement

As a long-time patron of the Google ecosystem, I have always marvelled at the Google Doodles and the boundless creativity within them, ever since they first started. Having wondered how amazing it would be to get the chance to actually design one, I realised there was nothing stopping me from doing just that!

I chose the occasion of Mothers' Day as a challenge, having seen some of the best Doodles created around this – always heartwarming and never clichéd.

Objectives:

- **Craft an original message that is emotional, but not cheesy**

- **Design a specific visual language for Mothers' Day**

- **Create an interactive mobile experience that takes people on an emotional journey with a call to action**

Deliverables:
Visual system
Interactive experience

Research

History of the Doodle

I **researched when the Doodle first began and how it evolved** from a simple out-of-office message in 1998 to the interactive, storytelling experiences that exist today.
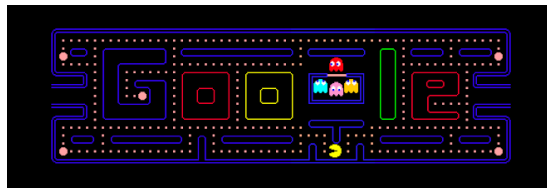
1998
The first
Doodle ever

2000
The first
animated
Doodle

2010
The first
interactive
game Doodle

2011
The first
full video
Doodle

2018
The first
VR Doodle

2019
The first
AI-powered
Doodle

Research

Art direction

Looking at past Doodles helped me **understand design choices that have been made including styles, colors, and typography.** In the early years, Doodles followed Google's brand guidelines, but as time passed, art direction has transformed to stay truer to the theme than to Google.

Teachers' Day, 2022
Pastel colors and handdrawn chalk-style illustration to achieve a children's book style

Halloween, 2023
Dark palette, eerie typeface and glow effects to make for a scary setting

Earth Day, 2013
An earthy palette and organic illustration style with integrated typography for a natural landscape

Indian Republic Day, 2019
Culturally relevant patterns, colors and landmarks to create a typically Indian visual language

Research

Principles

While every Doodle is a masterpiece of its own, they all follow the same **guiding principles to ensure that brand values and recognition** are maintained.

- While it needn't be straightforward or overtly apparent, Doodles feature **the word 'Google' in some way**

- All Doodles **steer clear of political, religious, and other polarizing themes**

- Doodles are always **culturally appropriate** and sensitive

- **Thorough research** guides all narratives

Research

Mothers' Day over the years

Digging up past Mothers' Day Doodles from the archives helped me understand:

- The **nature of themes** that are typically handled

- **Things that have already been done before**

- **Styles and colors** that are used and their relevance to the themes

2023
Handmade cards for mom

2023
Animal family throwback pics with mom over the years

2022
Learning and doing with mom

2020
Interactive digital card-maker

2020

The sunshine to her babies

2018

Hand print art with mom, of mom

2016

Mom's are big shoes to fill

2015

Video tribute to moms of all shapes, sizes, and species

2014

Bedtime stories with mom

2012

The simplest gifts are the best ones

Research

Journey analysis

I studied a recent interactive Doodle experience that was created for Valentine's Day **to understand how the journey is crafted** as I began thinking about my own.

The Valentine's Day Doodle used the idea of 'bonding' to engage users in a fun, scientific love experiment where they could identify their element personality and match with other elements to create compounds.
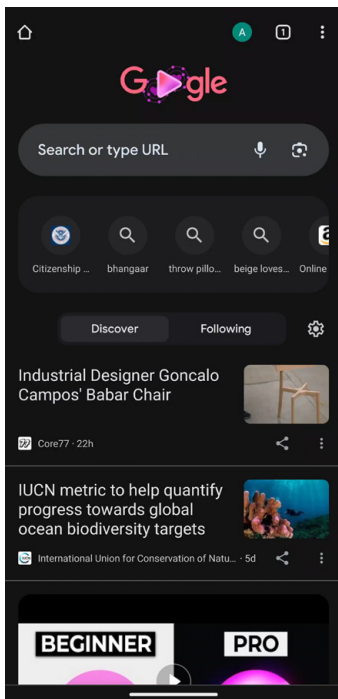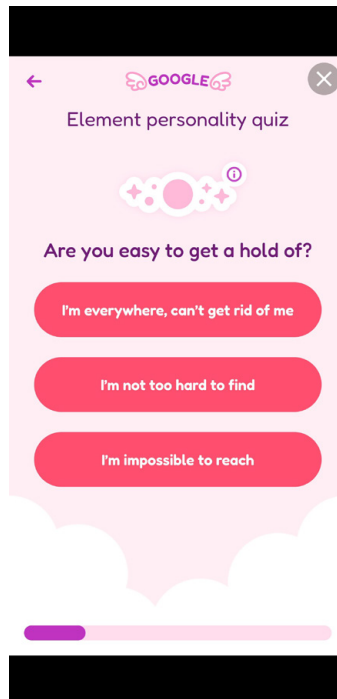

Phone homepage

Logo indicates that there's a special Doodle. Play button shows that something will happen on clicking
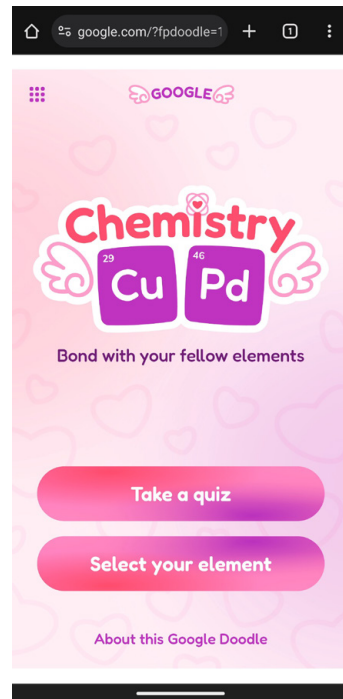
Doodle homepage

Gives an introduction to the concept of 'bonding' and provides two options to begin the experience
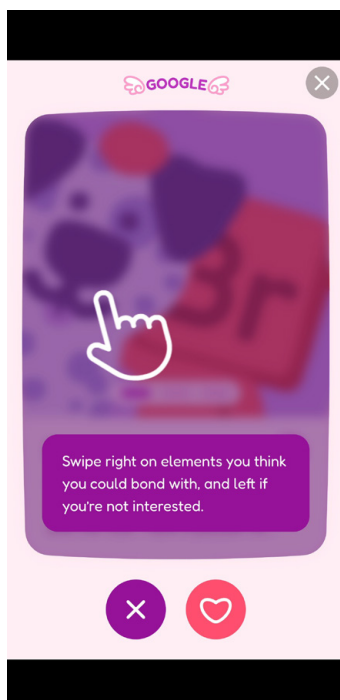

Quiz

Upon clicking 'Take a quiz', a series of questions are presented, with a progress bar to indicate number of steps
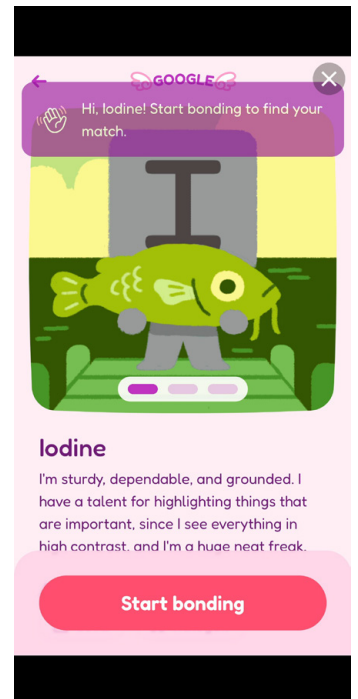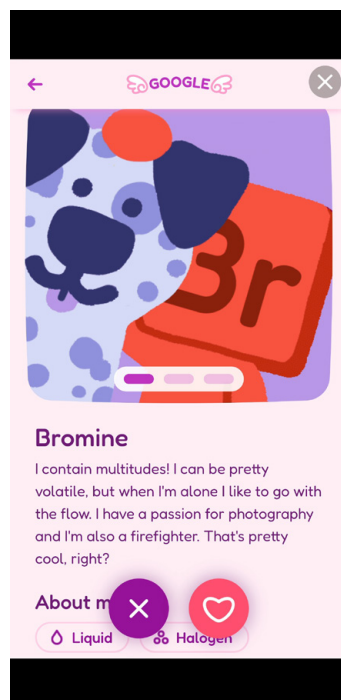

Result

After the quiz, your element personality is revealed and you are prompted to start finding matches
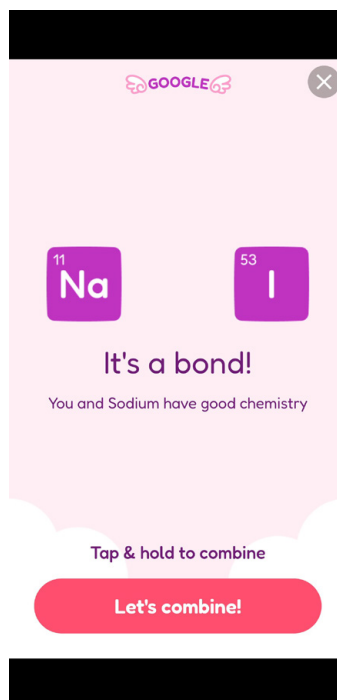
Interaction guide

An overlay shows you how to begin the bonding process

Matches

You can now swipe through the matches, reading bios, looking through images, and swiping to indicate interest

Bonding

Once you've chosen an element to bond with, the UI tells you if it's a bond or not and shows you how to bond

Happily ever after

Upon bonding, you're now a compound. You see relevant images and a write-up which complete the journey

Takeaways:

- The concept was neutral, ensuring that it **catered to all people** regardless of their age, nature of relationship, and sexual preferences
- It used a **familiar experience and interaction mechanism** – that of a dating app
- The experience was engaging, getting people invested in the process by offering a **customised experience and options**
- The experience had a **fulfilling conclusion** that brought the journey to a logical end, leaving the user in a happy state

Ideation

Insight

As I began to brainstorm about Mothers' Day, I realised I wanted to create an **experience that connected the theme to Google so that people would find more delight and relatability in it.** This was something that had never been done before, which made it a more interesting challenge to me. My train of thought reminded me of **stories from my own life** that logically led me to a very simple and promising insight.
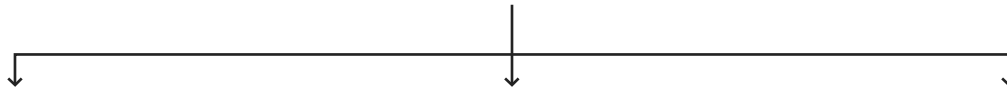
What is Google's core offering?

↓

Search

↓

Do moms have anything in common with Google/search?

| **They always have the answers**	**They know how to do everything**	**They always know where things are**
↓	↓	↓
I'd ask my mom all sorts of questions as a child and she always had the answer. I'd sometimes even try to stump her. I was so proud when I came up with the question that if we only have taste buds for sweet, salt, sour and bitter, then how do we taste spice. But even that she knew – that we just feel the heat!	Even though I'm miles away, I call my mom for recipes, laundry tips, pep talks before interviews, and advice for handling everything from my lease to my relationship.	When I landed for the first time in the US, I couldn't find my favorite t-shirt in my suitcase. I immediately called my mom and she knew exactly where it was, even though I was the one who packed my things.

↓

Mom is the original search engine

Ideation

Concepting

I began **thinking of multiple concepts that illustrated my insight** of mothers being the original search engines. While I was able to come up with ideas that were both relevant and engaging, **I hadn't yet found one that was heartwarming.**
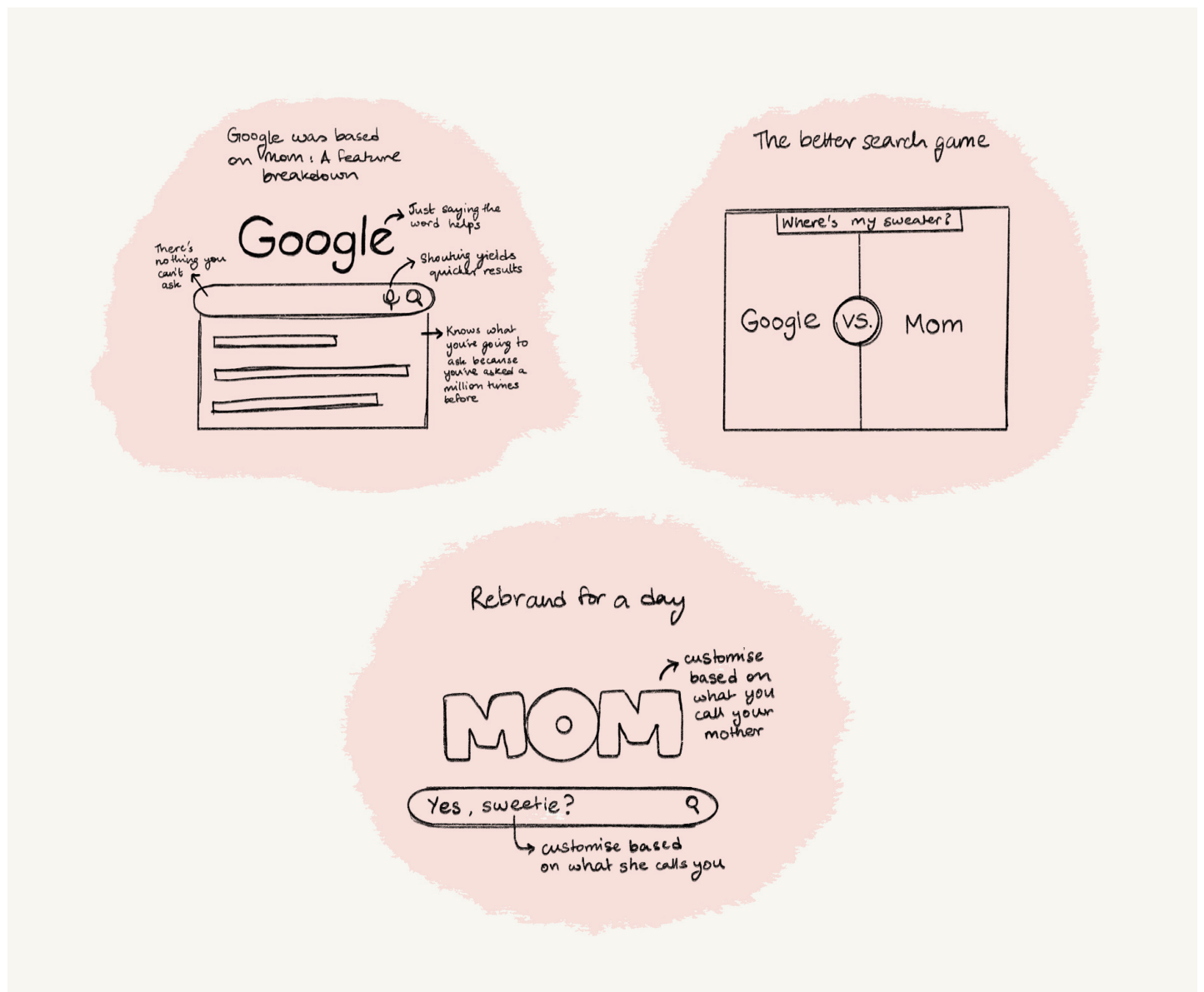
Ideation

Finalisation

The search game spoke to me, but was lacking the emotional aspect. By diving deeper into my insight, I took the search game and turned it into so much more.

My final idea was to create an **interactive experience wherein people could step into the shoes of their child selves and ask 'mom' questions.** Through a back-and-froth exchange with mom, answers would be revealed, reminding the user how many times they've sought their moms out for help and then offering them a way to thank their moms by sending a greeting.

This idea appealed to me because:
- It honed in on the key aspect of the insight – **nostalgia**
- It was **unexpected but relatable**
- It was **heartwarming**
- It was **interactive** without requiring too much effort
- It was **engaging** and would keep the user hooked till the end
- It ended with a sweet, relevant **call to action**

Ideation

Questions

Having finalised the idea of an interactive experience putting the user in the shoes of the kid asking mom for answers, I tried to **find questions that people remember asking their moms.** I sent out a survey to friends and family and collected a lot of great questions that I could use.

I **identified three of the most common questions** that I knew I would be able to illustrate and turn into an interactive experience.

Is there a God?

How do I post a letter?

Why do I have to brush my teeth?

Do I HAVE to eat vegetables?

Why are we here?

Why can't I have dessert first?

Where are my keys?

What happens when we die?

Is Santa real?

How do you make a PB&J?

When will I grow up?

Will I be rich?

What happens if I do (this)?

Do aliens exist?

Do I have to go to school?

Where is my sweater?

How come I wasn't invited to your wedding?

How many inches in a foot?

Through conversations, I was then able to **find common strategies and responses moms usually use when their kids ask questions.** This guided the narrative for my 3 experience options, so that each would take a unique course that would surprise and delight the user.

You're the one who left it on the...

If I come there and find it...

It's where it always is

You don't know where we keep it?

Because I said so!

Why can't you put things back where you got them!
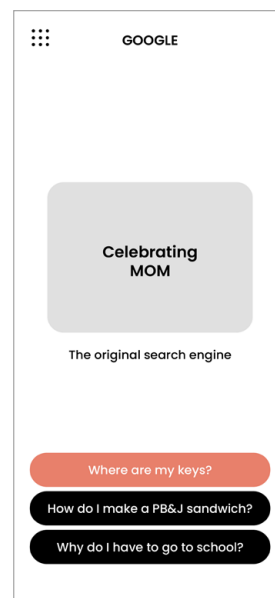
I'll tell you when you're older

Wireframing

As identified from past examples, the journey would begin with a differentiated Google logo that would take users to the main experience. In the first experience option **the user can ask mom to help them find their keys.**
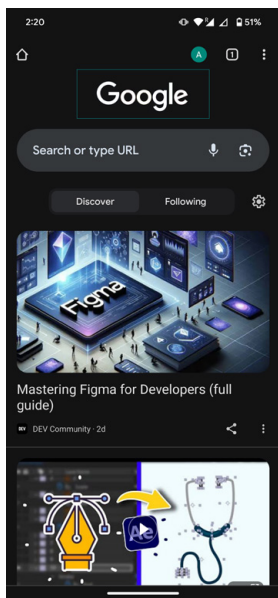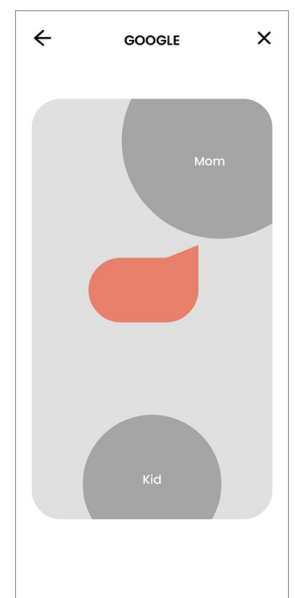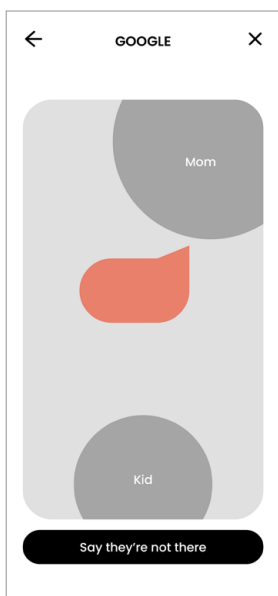

Google Doodle logo
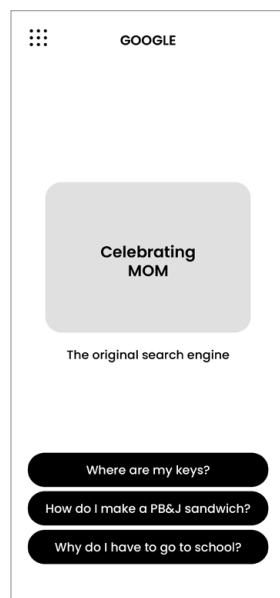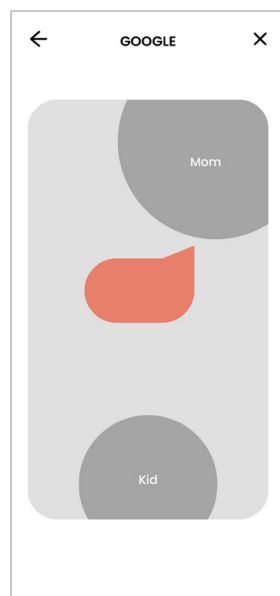

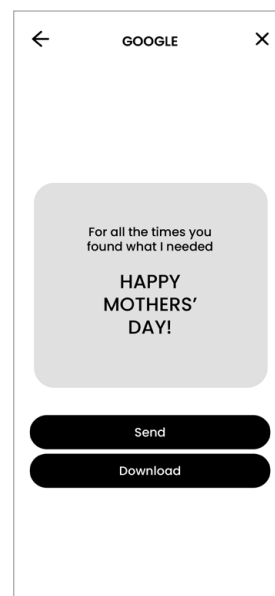Intro screen with options for questions

First option selected

Mom tells the kid where they are
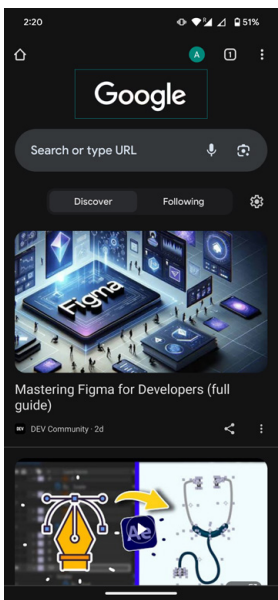

User can click to claim the keys aren't there
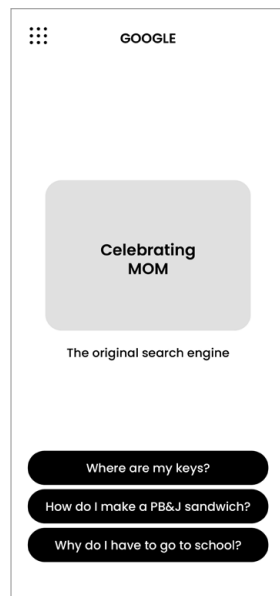

Mom reiterates where the keys are and kid finds them

A greeting pops up which the user can send to their mom or download it

In the second experience option, the **user can ask mom to teach them how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich**, and learn the process in 3-4 steps.
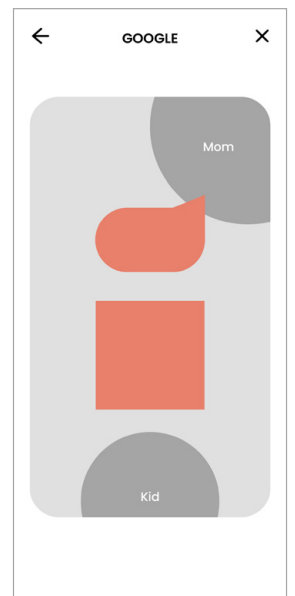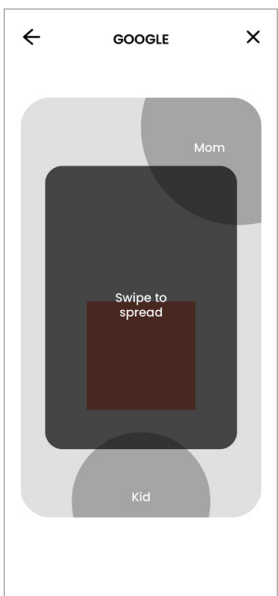

Google Doodle logo
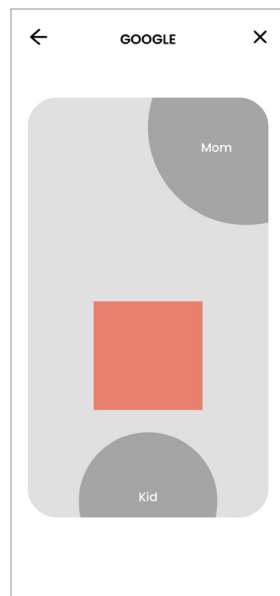

Intro screen with options for questions
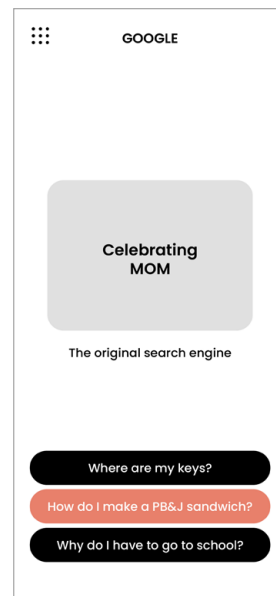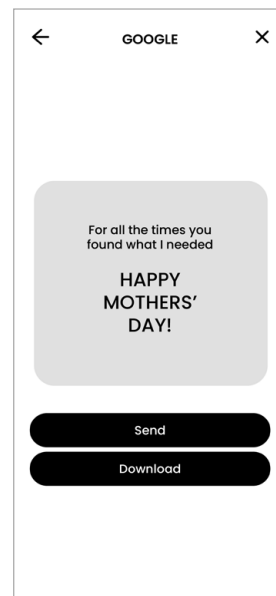

Second option selected

Mom gives the instruction to spread PB/J onto a slice of bread

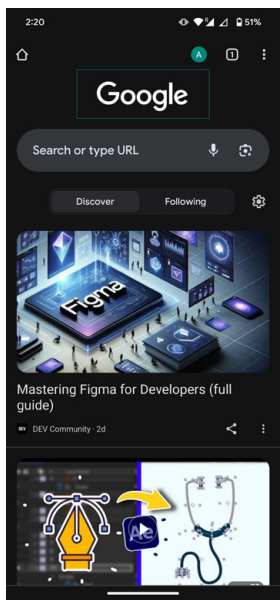An overlay comes up to tell the user to how to spread

The user swipes and keeps following the instructions until the sandwich is ready
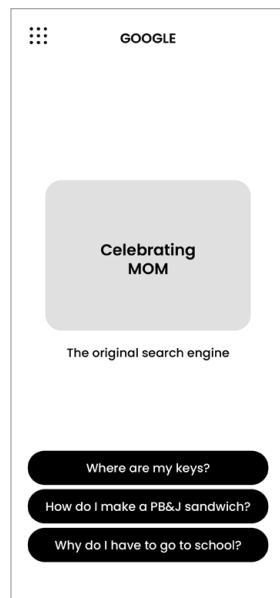

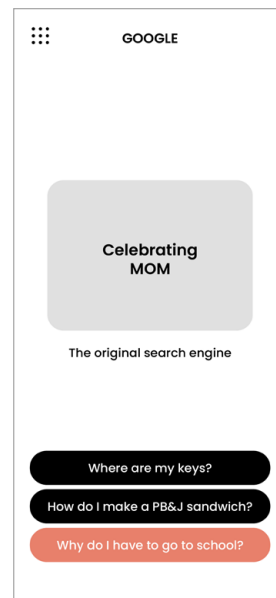A greeting pops up which the user can send to their mom or download it

In the third experience option, the **user can ask mom a question followed by a trademark series of 'whys',** which mom answers until she's fed up.
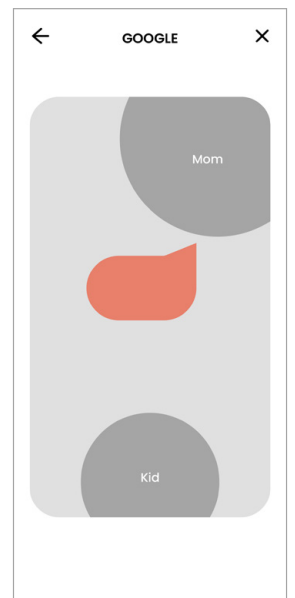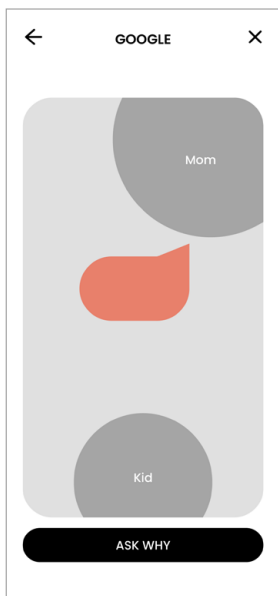

Google Doodle logo

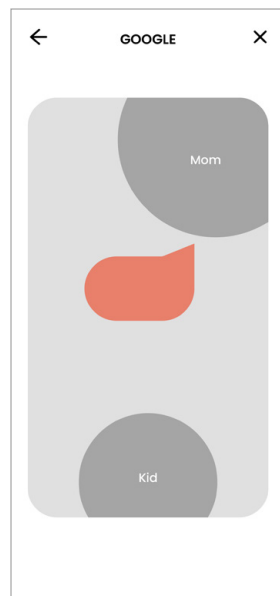Intro screen with options for questions
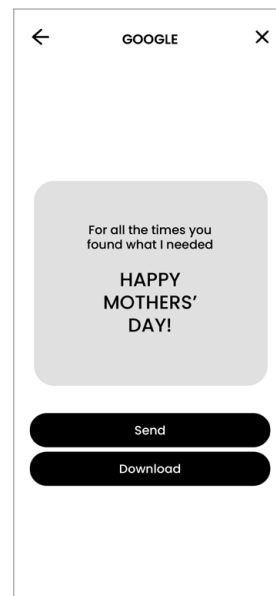

Third option selected

Mom answers the question

The user can keep asking 'why' for every answer

Finally, mom says 'Because I said so!'

A greeting pops up which the user can send to their mom or download it

Design

Exploration

The main **Doodle logo needed to represent Mothers' Day at a glance.** Once finalised I would need also indicate that it was an interactive experience by inviting the user to click on it with a 'play' symbol.


Using the two O's to show a mom searching. However, **without a child, it didn't look like a mom.** It also occurred to me that the depiction of the mom was **not inclusive.**

In this attempt, I managed to depict the search and mother aspects by using magnifying glasses as neutral characters, but **this seemed too clinical.**

Continuing to develop the concept of using the magnifying glass characters to look more organic unfortunately didn't work out as feedback revealed **they looked like eyeballs with option nerves.** Furthermore, I realised that these characters would have **very limited usability in the second and third scenarios** where it wasn't this kind of search activity.
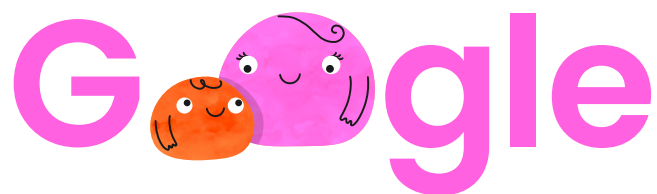
I took a different approach focusing just on depicting a mother and child and avoiding the additional 'search' layer at this point. I used the two O's as playful mom and kid characters. This allowed me to keep them gender neutral and therefore inclusive. However, **I expected that the textures and shadows would increase visual clutter when more elements were added.**
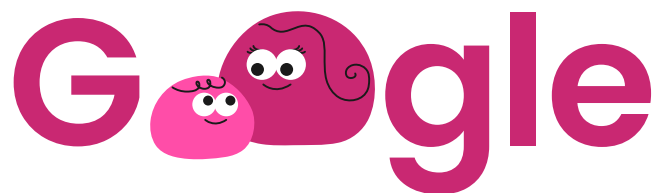
I removed the textured and shadows and further developed the characters to be more emotive with more expressive facial features. With this version, I felt that **the stroke details would likely be lost in smaller formats, while the colors were too feminine and not inclusive.**
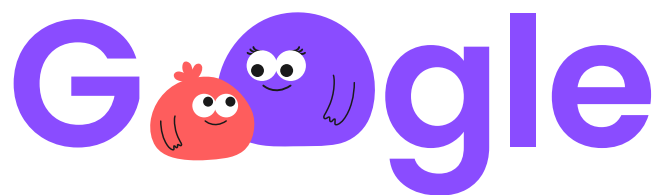
My final approach took the characters one step further by removing stroke details and using shape enhancements instead. I also found colors that were more fun and unexpected.

Design

Illustration

I added an interesting **noise effect to create some sense of depth** and decided on a dark mode experience since more users prefer the dark mode. By illustrating all the elements I would need for the three experiences, I **built a library of objects in the same style.** I knew I would be using **a top view for my experience to give the user a more immersive POV for the interactions.** Creating this library also helped me **extend my color palette** accordingly keeping the same vibrance.
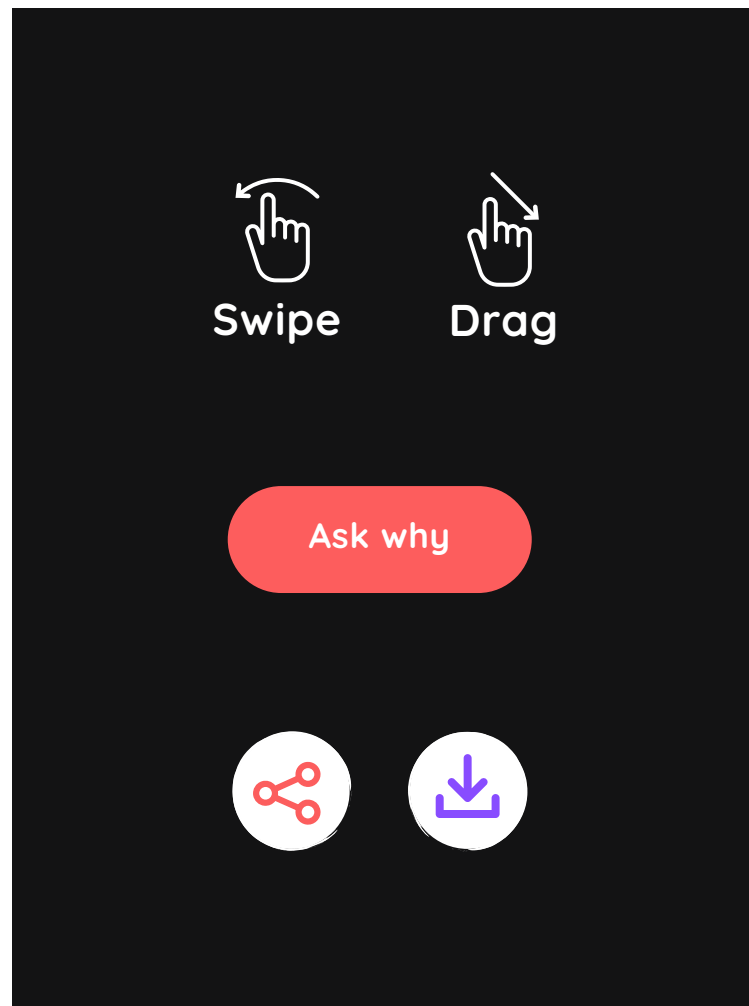
Design

Interaction

I wanted to use interactions that

- Were **low effort** and easy to carry out
- **Familiar** to the user, and not something they would have to learn
- **Resembled the actual real-life actions**
- Could be **similarly experience on a desktop** when eventually created

For this reason I decided to use versions of **swipe and drag**, and add **buttons** where needed.

Design

Screens

Using the logo, illustrations and cues from Google's experiences, I created the screens for my interactive experience, beginning with the **introductory flow from the Google homepage to the Mothers' Day homepage.**
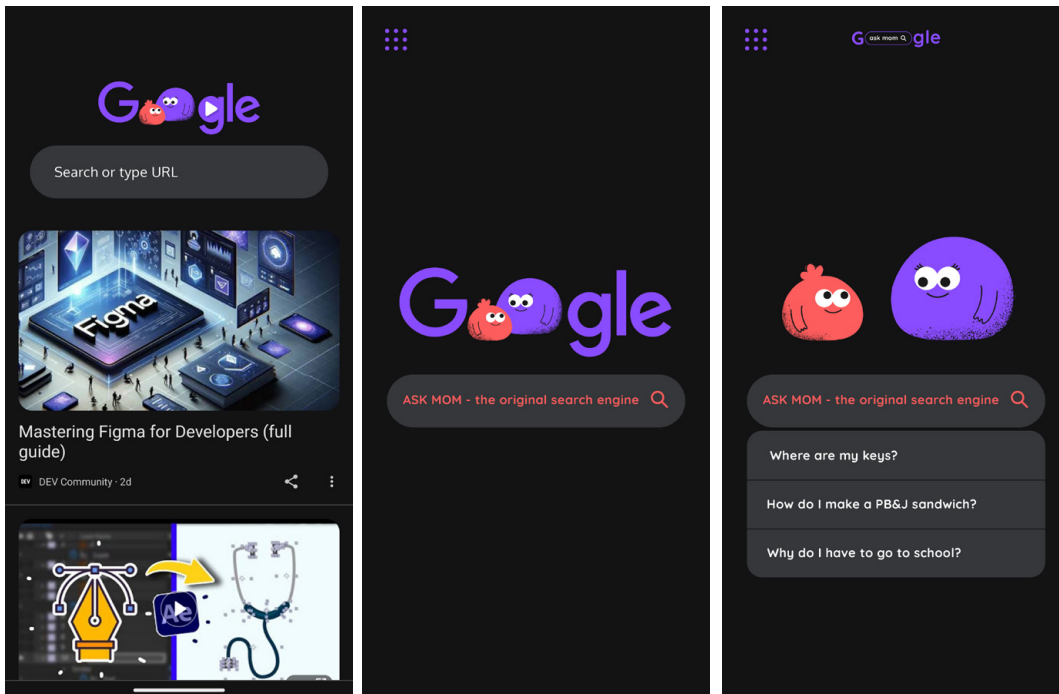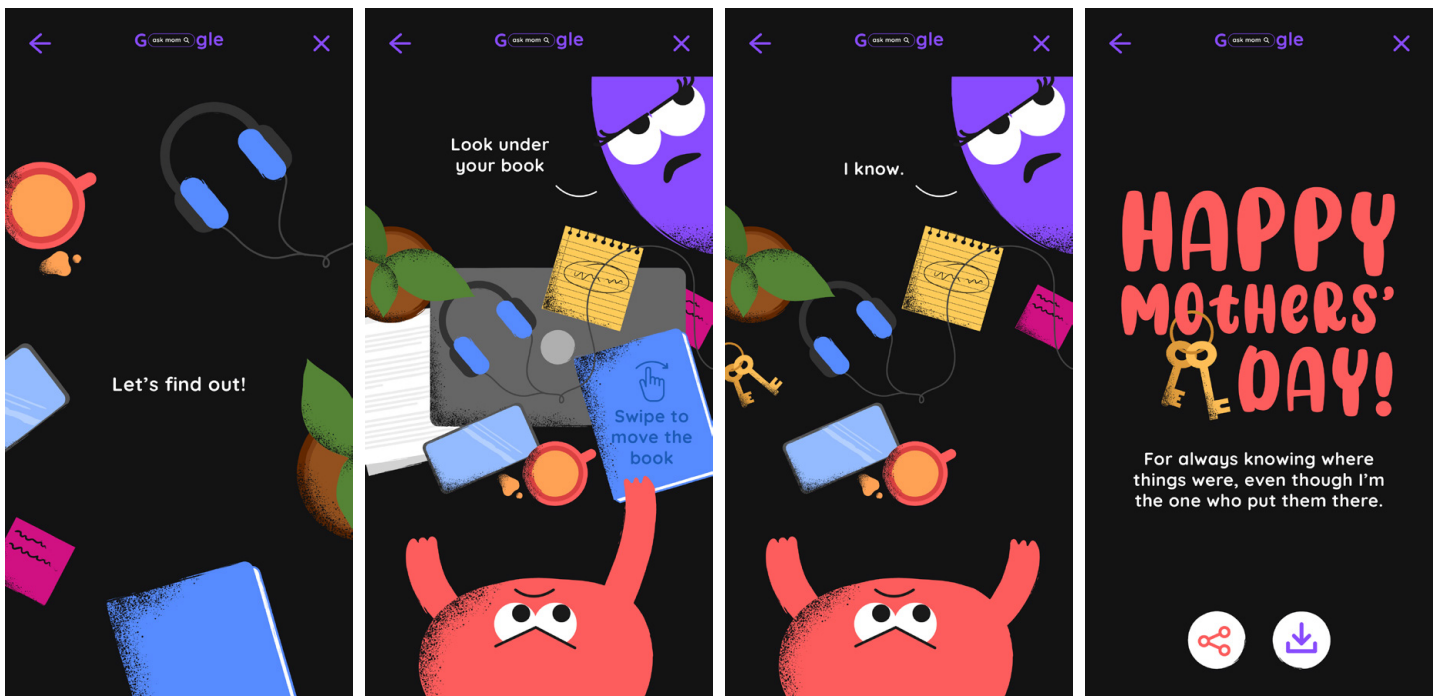
Design

Screens

The first experience was designed using the objects and characters to create the **top view of a desk, adding speech blurbs, interaction cues and appropriate expressions for the characters.** Swiping when cued in this experience allows the user to brush objects off the desk to see what's underneath them.
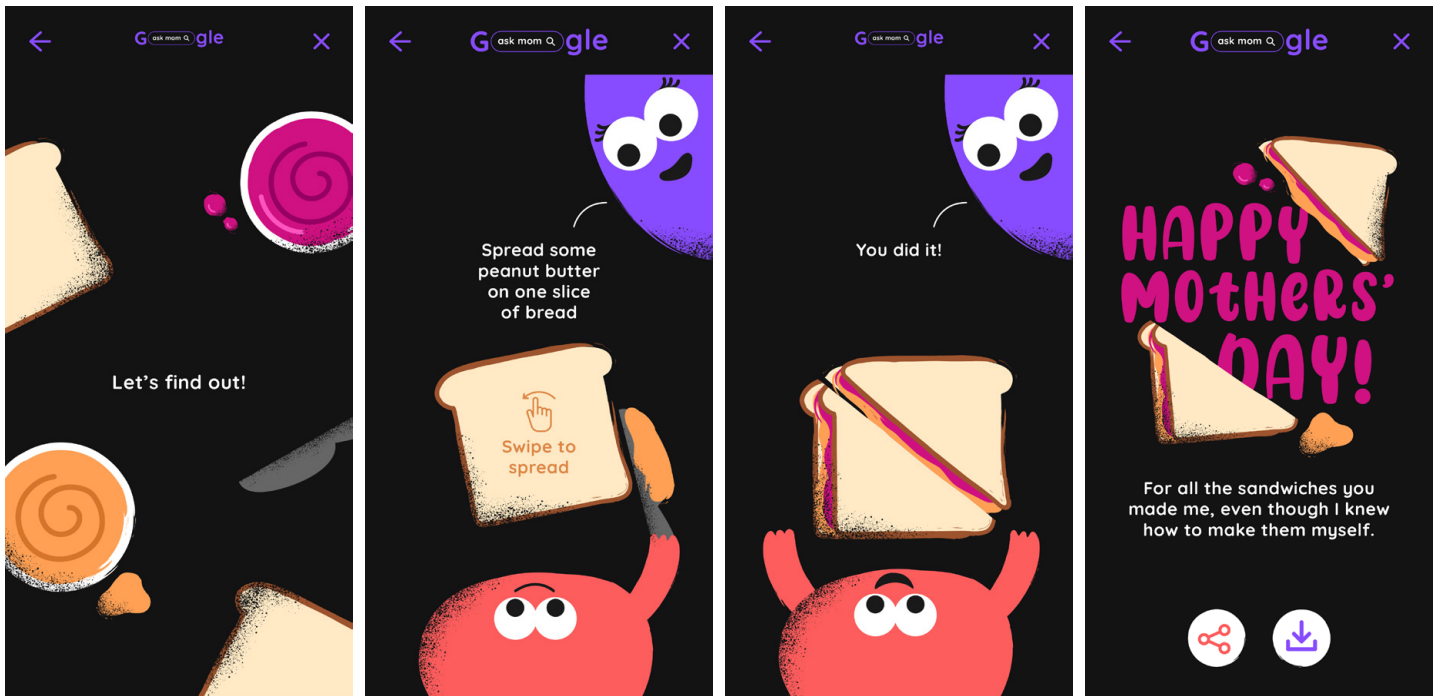
The final greeting screen tied in the experience using the keys along with the message. To further drive the point home, **a loving but witty secondary message** was added, and the **user was presented with two actions.**

Design

Screens

The second experience followed suit but created the top view of **a kitchen counter with all the fixings of a PB&J sandwich,** with the final outcome being featured in the greeting as a celebration of the feeling of accomplishment when you make something yourself. Swiping interactions enable the user to spread condiments on to the slices of bread, while dragging allows them to cute the sandwich in half.
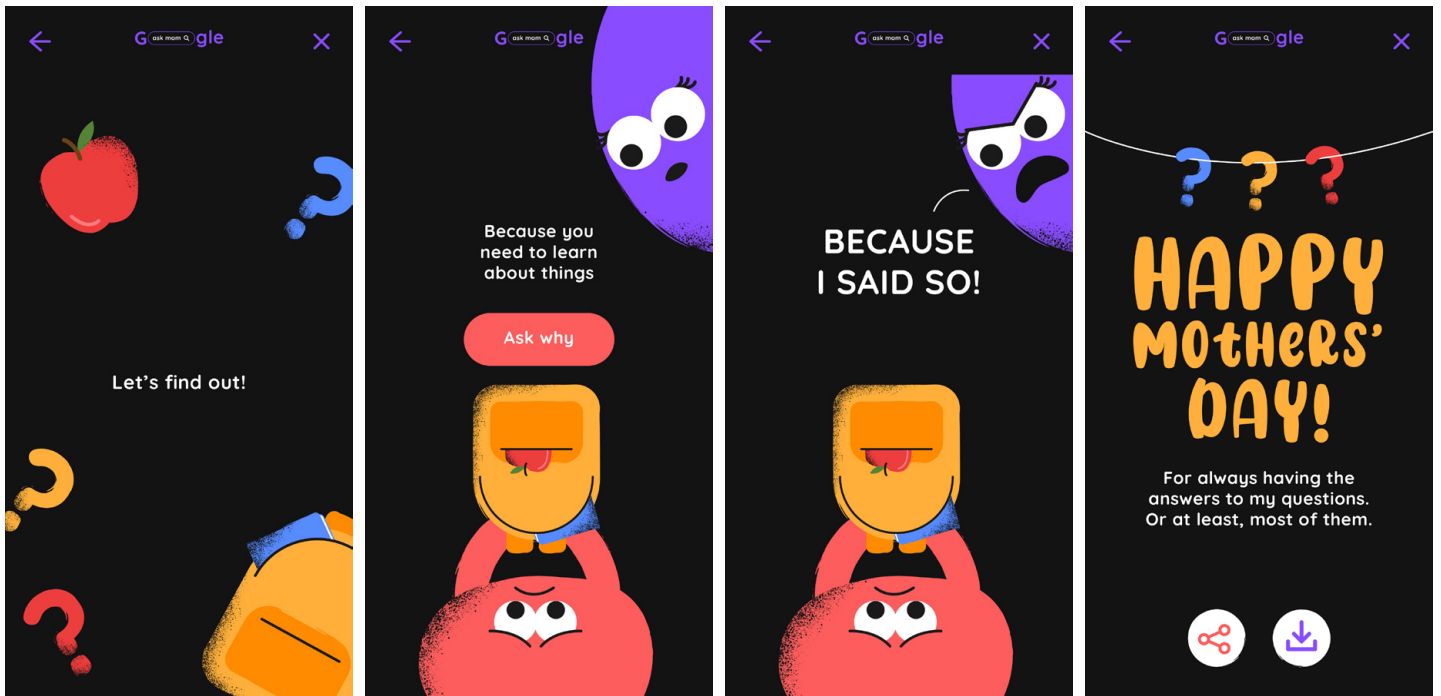
Design

Screens

The third experience mirrored the morning scene of **a child ready for school bargaining to stay home even at the last moment.** By cliking the button, the user can keep asking 'why'.

The final greeting quite literally depicted **the string of questions** moms usually encounter.

Testing

Showing the interactive experience to friends and family reassured me of my solution, as it brought a smile to their faces.

- They all reported enjoying the experience, **finding it relatable, and showed interest in completing all three experiences.**

- All of them also said that **they would definitely share the greetings** at the end with their moms, grandmoms, and other mother figures.

- Every person **knew exactly how to interact with the experience** and did not find it challenging or too long, but rather were **eager to see the outcome.**

The End

Sorry, no greeting to share at the end of this.