Bachelor Design Research

DEVELOPING A FASHION COLLECTION FOR MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH FOR ISNURH X COMMUNITY OF REAL PEOPLE

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Developing a fashion collection for mental health awareness month for Isnurh x Community of Real People

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For ISNURH Aps. & Community of Real People

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Content

List of Tables & Figures

List of abbreviations used

CORP = Community of Real People

Preface

This design research was written by Adriaan Kruithof, as a bachelor project to graduate from the course Fashion & Textile Technologies at Saxion University of Applied Sciences. The research and creation of a collection based around mental health awareness following the FEA-model by Lamb & Kallal was done for Isnurh Aps. and their collaborative project with Community of Real People.

The researcher would like to acknowledge the help of Maria Flores Parra, Karen Bosch and Evelyn Eijkelenkamp on behalf of the university, and the support especially from Oliver Abrenica, but also Kasper Todbjerg and Anders Schultz at Isnurh. This project would have not been possible without the input of Oliver Saundry and the network that led to all interview respondents, models and musicians helping to turn this project to reality. An honorable mention to World of Ukiyo for supporting the pop-up event and translating the designs made into their jewelry collection.

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Synopsis

Copenhagen-based menswear brand Isnurh decided to collaborate with mental health awareness platform Community of Real People (further called CORP) to produce a non-profit collection, from which two styles should be released during mental health awareness month in May 2023 and sold to raise donations for local charity Joannahuset.

In order to do so, the FEA-model following Lamb & Kallal (A Conceptual Framework for Apparel Design, 1992) has been used, consisting of six phases.

In the first phase the problem identification shows that while mental health is one of the most urgent challenges in today's society, the fashion industry often negatively impacts the mental health of individuals and Isnurh and CORP want to create a collection that promotes mental health awareness and gives physiological and psychological comfort to its wearers.

How to do this is explored in phase two, where literature research, target group and expert interviews, combined with trend and material research led to the creation of a FEA model, showcasing the functional, expressive and aesthetic needs for such a collection. These results show that the collection needs to be dominated by the use of breathable and moisture-absorbent natural materials, straight to oversized-fitting clothes and simple silhouettes, combined with more expressive artworks, that are inspired by ten target group interviews.

Because the target group did not want to wear any clothes including fonts addressing mental health awareness in a literal way, more abstract artworks have been developed by the researcher after conveying a survey and creating moodboards and sketches in phase three. These artworks should remember of re-connecting to nature, the community and the wearer's inner child. Additionally, the green ribbon as symbol for mental health awareness is included in each outfit.

In phase four, the prototypes are developed into a digital collection, consisting of nine outfits and one physical outfit, consisting of three garments. All designs are made from certified materials or deadstock fabrics, and respond to the functional, expressive and aesthetic needs of the target group.

During the 5th chapter the physical products are evaluated by the target group and the digital collection by Isnurh. All evaluations let the designs pass with grades between 6 and 10. The average evaluation grade of the target group was 8,8 / 10 and of the Isnurh Team 7,8 / 10.

After the evaluation, the implementation is done by creating visual content and hosting a pop-up event to sell the physical products and earn money for charity. 26.025 dkk / 3494 Euro are donated to local organization Joannahuset after all.

For a continuation of this project, based on the evaluation, the researcher recommends using GOTS certified cotton wherever possible, reduce the artworks of the collection by two, include one more piece of outerwear for the collection, and adjust the length of the t-shirt and the width of the pants. For the communication surrounding the collection, the researcher advises to focus on emotional well-being and self-care, more than addressing medical conditions, and to not glamorize mental health conditions. Instead, a fashion collection inspired by mental health should focus on empowering storytelling and emotional well-being.

Section 1: Introduction

1.1. Problem Definition

Mental health is one of the most important but still often stigmatized areas of human health and influences human behaviour and well-being in all areas, making it crucial for a flourishing society (World Health Organisation, n.d.).

The fashion industry is infamous for catalyzing poor mental health conditions by promoting unhealthy lifestyles (Stansfield, 2016), unrealistic body images (Freitas, Jordan, & Hughes, 2018), and racism (Hoskins, 2014). On the other hand, clothing can be a valuable tool for self-expression, group-belonging, and identity-building (Workman & Freeburg, 2009).

Community of Real People is a platform for mental health awareness, and in collaboration with Copenhagen-based menswear brand Isnurh, CORP wants to co-create a fashion collection inspired by these positive effects clothing can have on mental health, promoting awareness and helping the target group to find comfort through the clothes that they are wearing.

This goes in-line with the ideals of Isnurh. The brand focusses on creating high-quality garments, luxurious details and streetwear-driven elements. Building a strong community and creating long-lasting value are some of the main goals formulated by the owners.

In collaboration with these two stakeholders, it is the goal to create a digital collection and three physical garments that give both physiological and psychological comfort to their wearers and promote mental health awareness.

Fundamental for the creation of this is a triangulation of desk research, interviews with the target group and expert interviews. All research results are implemented following the Lamb & Kallal model to determine the functional, expressive and aesthetic needs of the target group. These needs are used as the guideline to check if the collection is fulfilling its goals.

To leave a measurable impact with this graduation project and give back to the community, physical garments are sold at a pop-up event during mental health awareness month in May 2023 and all earnings are donated to mental health charity.

1.2. Design Brief

- Project name: Isnurh x Community of Real People Capsule Collection

- Client/company name: Isnurh

- Owners: Oliver Abrenica & Kasper Todbjerg

- Other stakeholders:

    – Oliver Saundry, Founder of CORP

1.2.1. About the client / company

Isnurh is a Danish menswear brand, founded in 2017 by Oliver Abrenica & Kasper Todbjerg. The team currently consists of the two founders and Anders Schultz, assisting mostly on design and marketing. Inspired by workwear and streetwear, Isnurh is creating high-end, contemporary menswear with a minimalistic aesthetic, characterized by clean and simple silhouettes. Bold prints and graphics are often incorporated to create interesting looks. A visualization of Isnurh's design identity can be found in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Isnurh's Design Identity

Community of Real People is a mental health awareness project, founded by Oliver Saundry in 2022. After quitting his aspired career as a professional footballer due to issues with his own mental health, Saundry founded the platform to destigmatize the conversation around this sensitive topic, by giving different people a platform to speak about their experiences and collaborate with creatives of all fields to enhance awareness.

Together, the two brands decided to design a small capsule collection, from which two styles are sold at a Pop-Up-Event and online to raise money for a mental health charity. All earnings are donated to Copenhagen-based charity Joannahuset, which provides help and care for local children and young people in difficult situations, trying to protect their mental health. It was chosen to design a collection and not a single product, since this was seen as more suitable for both brands and the researcher's skillset and increased the chances of selling more products, therefore raising more money for charity.

1.2.2. Target market / audience

On the 18th of April 2023, Isnurh had 11.500 followers on Instagram as its biggest platform for customer contact. Almost three quarters of the followers were male, as can be seen in Figure 2. Most of the followers were from Denmark, with 7,8% of all followers being from the countries' capital, Copenhagen. 64,6% were between 18-34 years old and 19,5% between 35 and 44.

Figure 2

Screenshot from the Instagram-insights

of your followers

74.3% Men   25.6% Women

In a market-research project done by the researcher for Isnurh between September 2022 and January 2023, using the Instagram story-function, multiple questions were asked to get a clearer picture of the brand`s target group.

Many of the social media followers of Isnurh were returning customers, getting in touch with the brand over friends and family or retail stores. Colors and artworks and comfortable materials and cuts were more important to most customers than the communication of a sustainable approach. Followers of the brand liked to color-coordinate their wardrobe and viewed themselves as moderately trend-sensitive. A lot of the followers worked within a creative job themselves and were active on social media. During this research, the Scandinavian brands NN07, Sunflower and WOOD WOOD were established to be the most relevant competitors of Isnurh. None of these brands did any projects similar to this one before.

The results of the Instagram-Insights as well as the prior research results can be found in Appendix A.

1.2.3. Key project deliverables

Ultimately, going to be delivered will be:

- A digital collection consisting of 9 outfits, created based on the results of the different data collection methods.
- 3 physical products that can be worn as an outfit all together.
- 2 different styles that will be sold to the public. All profit will be donated to mental health charity.
- A pop-up event in Copenhagen, in May, launching the clothes and bringing the Community of Real People together physically.

All provisional design criteria for the collection can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Provisional Design Criteria

Criteria	Explanation
1. Meets functional, expressive and aesthetic needs of the interviewed target group	The collection needs to align with the FEA model created in chapter 2.3. after the preliminary ideas are collected and analyzed.
2. Fits Isnurh's design aesthetic	The collection is required to suit Isnurh's overall aesthetic of minimalistic outlines and cuts, and a mix of expressive prints and high-quality materials.
3. Integrates trends of the SS/23 trend forecasts by WGSN	The collection should integrate some of the trends predicted by WGSN but does not have to follow every one of them, since Isnurh's target group can be characterized as moderately trend sensitive.
4. Integrates responsible material choices	While sustainable production is not the main reason, Isnurh's customers are buying the brand's products, the overall target group is developing to require responsible production, which needs to be considered in the material choices.
5. Includes uplifting graphics and prints, based on target group research	The collection is highly based on qualitative research. The input perceived during the target group interviews should therefore be considered and the connection clearly shown in the final three products.
6. Goes in-line with color cards and moodboards created	Moodboards and color cards were created after all research was done. These visual guidelines should be clearly reflected in the final collection.

1.3. Reader's Guide

This design research consists out of seven chapters, inspired by the apparel design framework, outlined by Lamb & Kallal (A Conceptual Framework for Apparel Design, 1992). How this model was implemented in this research can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Apparel Design Framework & Implementation

Figure 2. Apparel design framework.
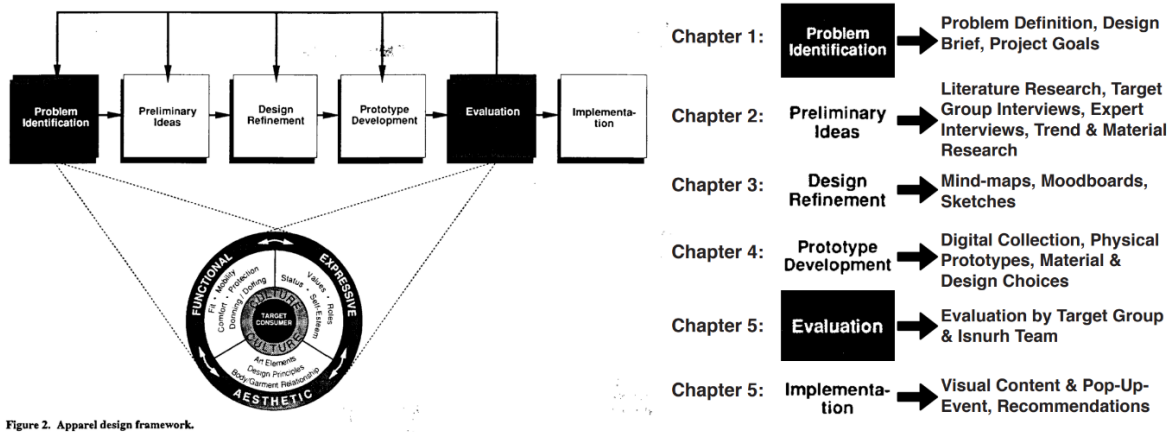
In this chapter, an introduction into the topic, client and target group, as well as the project's goals and deliverables has been given as start of the problem identification. In chapter 2, this problem identification is further examined through literature research, and all preliminary ideas are collected through triangulation on the foundation of literature research, target group and expert interviews. Based on this, the data collected is quantified by using a survey, contributing to the design refinement of the collection, that is visualized by mind-maps, moodboards and sketches in chapter 3.

In chapter 4, the digital collection and physical products are showcased, and the design and material choices explained as part of the prototype development. After that, the final physical products are evaluated by the target group and the Isnurh-team in chapter 5 and possible implementations for the future are outlined. Chapter 6 concludes with a personal and professional reflection on the project. Last, but not least, a short afterword by Isnurh and Community of Real People is included, giving their opinions on the project.

Section 2: Preliminary Ideas

Figure 4

Triangulation Method Applied
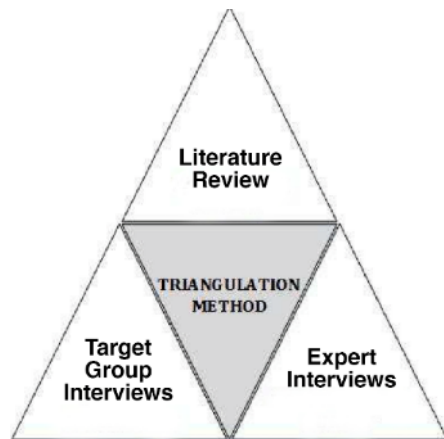
To establish the problem identification and lead to preliminary ideas for this collection, data triangulation has been used to combine different data insights to increase the validity of the findings and try to find more generalizable results (Bhandari, 2023). The results of this are showcased in the FEA model in chapter 2.2.3.

Literature research, ten interviews with the target group and two experts have been done to research the overarching goal of creating a fashion collection promoting mental health and giving comfort to the wearers.

2.1. Literature Research

The research was started by reviewing existing literature in a systematic way, to understand the topic of mental health, how the perception of mental health changed, what impact the fashion industry can have on mental health, and how the target group perceives mental health and sustainable developments. To do so, Saxion's online library, Google Scholars and Sciencedirect have been searched in that order per topic. If there were insights missing, Google was used to find online databases, scientific journals and web-articles by renowned publishers like newspapers and magazines. All sources have been put in a literature matrix per topic and then have been read, coded and analyzed to address the individual questions. The literature matrix can be found in Appendix B.

Definition & Introduction of mental health

Mental health is critically important for everyone, everywhere, and goes beyond the mere absence of a mental health condition. It is integral to well-being, enabling people to realize their full potential, show resilience amidst adversity, be productive across the various settings of daily life, form meaningful relationships and contribute to their communities. (…) Promoting and protecting mental health is also critical to a well-functioning society. (World Health Organisation, n.d.)

In 2021 one in five adults lived with mental illness (Avenaim, 2021). 31% of adults worldwide, say that mental health is the biggest health problem in their country (Statista Research Department, 2022). Following the WHO, "Depression, anxiety and behavioural disorders are among the leading causes of illness and disability among adolescents" (World Health Organisation, 2021).

There are multiple factors influencing and catalyzing mental health conditions, such as experiencing trauma, social isolation, discrimination, social inequalities, stress, on-going physical health conditions, insecure job or living situations, substance abuse or physical or psychological abuse (Mind, 2017).

How did the perception of mental health change?

While artifacts dating back to 6500 BC have shown the attempted treatment of humans struggling with mental illnesses by drilling holes into their heads to let out the alleged bad spirits (Farreras, 2013), it wasn't until the 18th century, that psychiatry was introduced as a profession, still often frowned upon (Hunter A. , 2022). This state lasted until the 1890s, when Sigmund Freud introduced the psychoanalysis, where both conscious and unconscious thoughts, seen by Freud as the root of mental health conditions, could be discussed and analysed (Hunter A. , 2022). The psychoanalysis often discredited women as being hysteric, which has been discussed and led to changes in the field since (Balsam, 2015).

The internet and social media, although sometimes seen as being potentially harmful for the mental health of individuals, is often used as a tool by individuals and organisations alike to address the topic and have therefore helped to normalize the conversation (Ferentz, 2016).

"In 2020, around 46 percent of individuals worldwide aged 15 years and older stated they thought mental health was more important than physical health, while another 46 percent felt mental health was just as important as physical health" (Elflein, 2022).

51% of Europeans in the same year claimed, their mental health problems got worse due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Stewart, 2021).This is, although Europe compared to all other continents has the biggest mental health workforce (Michas, 2022). Worldwide, "many countries are still guilty of violating the human rights of patients with mental illness (…)" (Ferentz, 2016).

Nevertheless, the UN states, that there is growing recognition, that bettering mental health is an essential part of reaching international development goals (United Nations), which led to mental health being included as part of the SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing in 2015 (Votruba & Thornicroft, 2016).

While the awareness and acknowledgement of mental health issues increased within the past years (World Health Organisation, n.d.), especially socially underprivileged groups of people are affected heavily by these issues, the connected stigmatization, and the lack of supportive services (World Health Organisation, 2021). A study conveyed by 2CV, researching the connection of mental health and poverty, concluded, that many felt that "mental health is a white, middle-class conversation they can't tap into" (2CV, 2021).

Relation of the fashion industry and mental health

Negative effects of the fashion industry on mental health

The statement above could also be applied to the fashion industry, infamous for being exclusive in its nature. While there are numerous sources discussing the industry's negative effects on mental health on both individuals and society, only a few examples are shortly displayed in this chapter, to be prevented and excluded from the final collection.

Glorification of unhealthy lifestyles & drug abuse

Partaking in the fashion industry and self-destructive behavior are often perceived as correlating (Stansfield, 2016) and the deadline-driven, competitive environment fosters mental health conditions in its workforce (Press, 2018).

In an interview with FashionUnited, Psychologist Victoria Tischler, said, that eccentricity was encouraged in the field, potentially attracting people with "a propensity towards mental illness", but support to those struggling with mental conditions was offered rarely (FashionUnited, 2021). Tischler further mentioned that substance abuse was more tolerated than in other fields (2021).

This behaviour is also promoted to consumers, as the existence of the term 'Heroin chic', as the dominating aesthetic on the runways of the fashion shows of the 1990s shows, underlines, describing models that "were pale from lack of sunlight, were thin from undereating, had dark eye circles from partying rather than sleeping (…)" (Foy, 2022).

Body Ideals

A study from 1997 showed that college women reading fashion magazines prior to being assessed on their body image satisfaction "preferred to weigh less, and were less satisfied with their bodies, than peers (…) who read news magazines before the survey." (Turner S. L., 1997) In 2017, models pictured in those magazines were still primarily "young, white and underweight" (Freitas, Jordan, & Hughes, 2018). In the same year, "69% of school-aged girls who read magazines" said that the pictures influenced their body-ideals and 47% stated that the pictures seen in these magazines made them want to reduce their weight (Caso, 2017). While physical magazines might be decliningly important in this discussion, social media has similar effects, especially on female consumers, "negatively influencing internalization and self-discrepancy, increasing body dissatisfaction" (Möri, Mongillo, & Fahr, 2022).

While the number of plus-size models in fashion publications increased recently (Wilson, 2022), plus-size models depending on the brand, can start at sizes, connected to a healthy, normal body outside of the industry, but through their 'plus-size' label, based on the below-average industry standard, can easily be taken as an 'abnormal' body, increasing insecurities in consumers (Riordan, 2018). Male consumers under 5,8" / 1,73 m "are underserved by the fashion industry and often impacted by judgemental biases" (Rahman & Delgado Navarr, 2022).

Racism

The fashion industry has a long history of open racism and cultural appropriation, and often benefits from exploiting post-colonial structures for cheap labour (Hoskins, 2014). Several fashion giants like Gucci (Ocbazghi & Skvaril, 2020), Prada (Bhattarai, 2020) and H&M (Davidson, 2020) experienced massive criticism for racist products, advertisements and imagery in the past years. Non-white humans in leading positions in the fashion industry are still rarely seen and often experience stigmatizing behavior and racist responses when applying for jobs in the industry (Badia, et al., 2020). While diversity increased in the last years, still 57% of models on runways in 2021 were white (Cichowski, 2021).

Positive effects of the fashion industry on mental health

Next to these negative examples, there are also different ways, clothing can positively influence the mental health of individuals and groups.

Identity-building and self-expression

Clothes are an essential part of the first impression when meeting people, telling others a lot about the wearer and their social status and class-belonging (Workman & Freeburg, 2009, p. 131). Following Workman & Freeburg this can lead to a range of emotions, that occur because

clothes have not only been a mirror of the values and moods of individuals, but also society. Social movements and subcultures have been driven by the perception and expression of clothes for centuries, making or breaking the 'norms' (Workman & Freeburg, 2009, p. 58).

Clothes have been an integral part of the women empowerment in the 1960s and 1970s (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019), the visibility movement of the LGBTQ+ community in the 1970s (Sheperd, 2021) and the civil right movement in America (Encyclopedia.com, n.d.). The political party Black Panthers founded in those times was known for their "instantly recognisable military-like uniform" and during the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, printed t-shirts with slogans promoting equality and showcasing the leaders of past movements, were worn by many, also leading to a number of initiatives inside the fashion industry (Abu, 2020).

"Fashion choices reflect growth, changing values, and self-expression. Young people want to dress in a way that reflects their values and traits. (…]) Fashion is (…) an integral part of the development of a sense of self and a way of finding social confirmation" says Ph. D. Fabiana Franco in an article for PsychCentral (Franco, 2018). Further, clothes can signify self-acceptance and "positively affect our mental state" (Dittrich, 2019)

Next to communicating social belonging, the way we dress directly affects our self-image. Experiments found out, that people wearing a lab coat, associated with intelligence and scientific education, performed better on specific tasks than without (Dittrich, 2019). Dressing up before business negotiations, lead to more successful outcomes (Kraus & Mendes, 2014), and when students wore clothes, they felt comfortable in, their exam scores increased (Bell, Cardello, & Schutz, 2005).

Psychological comfort of clothing

It is important to note, that: "Comfort is a highly subjective phenomenon, with no unanimously agreed quantitative definition" and can be separated into physiological and psychological comfort (Hunter & Fan, 2015). The physiological comfort has been further investigated in chapters 2.2.1. and 2.2.3. Psychological comfort of clothing stands on different pillars, as pictured in Figure 5.

While psychological comfort is more often unnoticed by the wearer than discomfort, following Hunter & Fan it is hard to measure how to improve it, but can be roughly divided into:

Figure 5

Psychological comfort of clothing following Hunter & Fan

- color,
- texture,
- garment design,
- garment size and fit,
- fashionability and prejudice that could go in line with the garments (2015).

The final garments are assessed on these criteria by potential consumers in chapter 5.1.
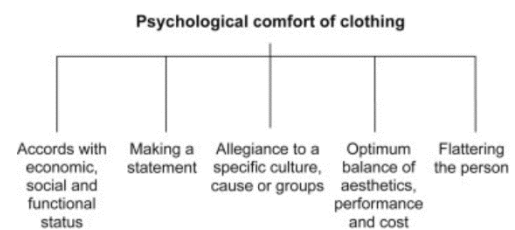
Colors

Next to these expressive social values and the direct psychological effect on the individuals wearing these styles, colors and motives are suspected to have a direct influence on the emotional state of humans. These are some effects often ascribed to different colors, following Qendrim Ahmetaj of Polis University (Ahmetaj, 2014):

Table 2

Colors and their effects following Ahmetaj

Color:	Possible effect following Ahmetaj (2014):
Red	Most striking, awareness-raising color, can represent love and passion, but also anger and irritation.
Orange	Orange is said to positively influence your mood, it "relieves feelings of self-pity, lack of selfworth and unwillingness to forgive."
Yellow	Yellow is also widely associated with positive feelings and optimistic views, said to help to organize and think intellectually.
Green	Green is seen as a calm, comforting and balanced color due to its association with nature.
Blue	Blue is mostly associated with calmness, clarity and control.
Brown	Brown, as green, is often associated with nature and earth, evoking feelings of security and calmness.
Black	As red, can be interpreted quite ambivalently. It can be associated both as calming and protective, but also with death.
White	White can be seen as pure, calming and opening, but also cold and separating.

All of these effects of course vary, based on the exact color shades and the individual perception of the viewer: "For example, if a person dislikes the color pink, he may associate pink with hate" (Ahmetaj, 2014).

Target group research

During an IBM research in 2021, "half of consumers said they were willing to pay a premium for a sustainable brand or sustainable products" (IBM Institute for Business Value, 2022). In the same research, 41% of respondents claimed, that a better understanding of how their purchase makes an impact, would help them to shop more sustainably.

Production processes are becoming more collaborative and relying on consumer feedback, while consumers want to learn more about the history of pieces and identify with the brands offering the products, "feeling proud of themselves for ensuring that their money went to the right cause." (Chandrashekar, 2021)

In a survey from 2018, displayed by Forbes Magazine, 88% of respondents stated they would like brands to help them being more environmentally friendly and ethical in their personal life (Townsend, 2018).

2.2. Consumer research, trend analysis, material research

2.2.1. Consumer research

2.2.1.1.Target Group Interviews

To understand the consumer needs for this collection, ten interviews have been done with members of the Community of Real People. 64,6% of all Isnurh-followers were based in Denmark, male and aged between 18 and 34, but little was known on their sensibility towards mental health. Furthermore, Isnurh did not want to publish a survey while re-branding their social media. Instead, the interviewees were reached, posting Instagram-stories over the Instagram-profile of Community of Real People, where the highest sensibility to the topic was assumed. At the point of publishing the open interview-request, CORP had 325 followers. To further boost the reach, the request was shared over the Instagram-account of the researcher, where he had 656 followers and next to pictures of his private life regularly posted about topics like mental health and sustainability in the fashion industry. Subtracting the shared followers (19), that made up for a population of 962 people. From these people, 18 reached out to the researcher because they were interested in having a conversation about the relation of mental health and fashion. Ten people were chosen to be interviewed, based on their timely availability.

Nine out of ten interviews were done using Microsoft Teams and transcribed in Microsoft Word. All of those interviews were led in a semi-structured way, to keep an open debate and give the researcher the chance to react on different topics being brought up during those conversations in the moment. One interview was done in a written manner, due to the preference of the interviewed person. All people interviewed agreed on the transcription of the interview and their first names being used in the context of showcasing the results obtained for this project.

The interview results were analyzed using thematic analysis with an inductive approach (Caulfield, 2022). This consisted of six steps. The first step was familiarization, which was done by the recording and transcription of all interviews. These transcriptions can be found in Appendix C. The interview results were then openly coded by participant and topic and divided into themes which have been reviewed during the process. To review these findings, the interviews were read again and concluded into briefer summaries. All interview summaries can be found in Appendix D. A table with the open coding by themes can be found in Appendix E.

Participants

An overview of all participants and their information is given in Table 3.

Table 3

Participants Overview

Participant Nr. & Name	Age	Gender	Country of origin	Mental Health Condition	Field of Education / Job
1 Andreea	21	Female	Romania	Anxiety & depression	Fashion

2 Alexandra	22	Female	United Kingdom	Anxiety & eating disorder	Fashion
3 Niveditha	21	Female	India	Not diagnosed, suffering from stress	Fashion
4 Janis	25	Male	Germany	Not diagnosed, applied for therapy	Psychology
5 Carla	22	Female	Germany	Depression & eating disorders	Fashion
6 Bennet	21	Male	Germany	Not diagnosed	Education
7 Laura	20	Female	Germany	Preferred not to say	Jewelry Design
8 Mariam	24	Female	Germany	'Mildly depressed', talking to a professional	Political Science
9 Chanel	26	Female	Denmark	Depression & eating disorder	Fashion
10 Kim	25	Male	Germany	Depression & substance abuse	Sociology & Technology

Perception of mental health awareness

All respondents were between the age of 20 to 26 and saw a comparably higher awareness of mental health in their generation compared to older generations. Nevertheless, participants observed that this awareness was not universal, but dependent on social settings. A greater media coverage and a stronger community behind the conversation following one respondent (Janis) would help to reach a greater amount of people outside of his "own bubble".

Another respondent (Alexandra) had a similar opinion, but still felt like she would not want to express any struggles with her mental health at the workplace, to not seem fragile or unstable, potentially scaring away possible employers.

12

During the conversations, it also became clear, that the discussion of this topic differed in different countries. One respondent (Andreea) said: "In my home country, if you speak about depression or anything related to mental health, they flag you as a crazy person".

Common topics

One of the interviews' goals was to find out if there were common struggles all respondents thought they shared with each other, no matter which mental health condition they had.

Most respondents independently agreed that most people would challenge some form of mental health struggles throughout their lifetime. Several respondents mentioned that that would mostly stem from any form of trauma, often rooted in childhood, leading to unhealthy behavioural patterns or reoccurring negative thoughts. This shared ground led the participants to think that opening up about these emotions was helpful to everyone, that there was a shared need to not feel alienated or left alone with your negative emotions. It was also expressed several times, that people who underwent mental struggles often would be more sensitive to others experiencing similar emotions.

One respondent (Janis) spoke from his perspective as someone who has a bachelor's degree in psychology and said, there were similar patterns within different conditions, but thought it was hard to generalize the needs or feelings of different people dealing with different struggles.

Behavior to improve mental state

To find out how the interviewees were trying to cope with their negative emotions on different days, all respondents were asked what they did to improve their mental state with the goal to draw inspirations from these activities.

All respondents answered that it would help them most to open up about their emotions to friends, family and partners. One respondent (Niveditha) said "the more I share, the better I feel".

Everybody further mentioned that it helped to go outside and emphasized the need to be in natural surroundings like forests, fields or beaches. The sun was seen as a strong factor positively influencing the respondent's emotional state. One respondent (Chanel) said: "I try to just get out. Breathe. Feel the sun on my skin."

Physical activities, listening to music, extensive self-care, developing healthy routines, and re-visiting places that were seen as safe spaces were mentioned as helpful tools to feel more comfortable with themselves by several respondents.

Relation between the fashion industry and mental health

Six out of ten interviewees were working in the fashion industry themselves and therefore had strong opinions on the industry and its effect of the mental health of workers and consumers.

The fast pace of the fashion industry, the missing education of consumers on industry practices, bad working conditions, unrealistic body images and fast-changing trends were seen as potentially harmful for the mental health of people.

All ten respondents stated that they would view the support of environmental or social organisations through fashion brands as a value-adding factor, increasing their willingness to buy from such brands.

Keywords

There were multiple keywords written down throughout all interviews. These were collected in a mindmap, that can be seen in Figure 6.

Figure 6

Mindmap made during conversations

The researcher also wanted to find out more about the associations of the respondents with the terms 'balance / finding balance', as an overall theme for the collection, inspired by the struggle to achieve a balanced state observed in many of the respondents and 'Community of Real People' as the name of the platform and the use for potential branding.

'Balance' was seen as an aspired state by all respondents. One (Mariam) said: "Balance would be what I'm initially striving for, but then I also find it very hard to achieve that (…), I think what balance means changes all the time, (…) since obviously you're going through different phases in your life (…)."

The associations with 'Community of Real People' and the word 'community' itself were mostly very positive. One respondent (Andreea) said "(…) of course my depression is a lot related to feeling lonely, to feeling very alien to the world. And then when you say community, it already makes me feel like I'm part of something like I'm not doing this all on my own, which for me is very comforting."

Relation of emotional state and way of dressing

All respondents saw a connection between their mental health state and the clothes they wore, often seeing them as a reflection of their personal development over the years. Many connected certain garments they owned to personal memories, evoking positive emotions. All respondents recognized that their outfit choices could manipulate their mood on certain days.

In general, most respondents stated that on days, they did not feel good, they wanted to put less effort into dressing up, but going for comfortable choices, that weren't too attention-grabbing or skin-revealing. The more confident the respondents felt, the more daring and experimental they were with their outfit choices.

Many experienced, that they sometimes put more effort into dressing up in a specific way on days they were not feeling positive about themselves, to motivate themselves to still go out and get out of their negative headspace, regaining confidence.

Functional, Expressive and Aesthetic needs following Lamb & Kallal
Figure 7

FEA-model following
Lamb & Kallal

The Lamb & Kallal model is a design approach often used in the development of fashion products. It helps to tie together the different consumer needs based on target group research on a functional, expressive and aesthetic level (Lamb & Kallal, 1992). The different levels can be subclassified into several criteria, as can be seen pictured in Figure 7.

To get a closer understanding of the customer needs, the data collected during the target group was sub-categorized into the functional, expressive, and aesthetic needs. This model is revisited at the end of chapter 2, to conclude the research phase and be used as a guideline for the further design process.

Functional

Assessing the functionality of the clothing, the focus was laid on days the users required additional emotional comfort through the clothes. The needs to achieve this state can be found in Table 4.

Table 4

Functional needs expressed by the target group

Sub-Categories:	Attributes:	Explanation:
Fit	Wide, oversized fitting clothing preferred	On days, the respondents felt bad mentally, they did not want to have anything showcasing their body shape, but instead wanted something that covered their bodies and was not too tight.
Mobility	Mobility should be given to a high extent	It was important for many participants to not wear garments that made them feel hindered in their mobility, potentially increasing anxiety.
Comfort	Garments should have a soft, comfortable hand on the inside	All garments should be easy to move in and have a soft touch or some comfort-giving texture on the outer layer. The fabrics should not feel scratchy or sweat-inducing to prevent making the wearer feel uncomfortable.

Protection	The garments should hide as much skin as possible	""(…) if you are already struggling with yourself, you don't want to feel exposed from the outside. You know, it's like the dreams where you all of a sudden are standing nakedly in a room full of fully clothed people: it just feels super vulnerable (…)" (Laura)
Donning / Doffing	Garments should be easy to put on and take off	The garments should be easy to don and doff and not lead to any inconveniences by getting stuck to the wearer's body or get entangled in the surroundings.

Aesthetic

Since Isnurh's design aesthetic is relying on rather minimalistic silhouettes, it was a big part of the interviews to find out about potential print and pattern motives that could evoke positive emotions in the respondents. Natural surroundings were seen by many as giving peace to mind and the respondents liked to see the collection evoking those feelings due to their prints, materials or colors. Several respondents further elaborated that they would like to see prints that were visibly hand-drawn, quirky and included "cool key characters" (Niveditha) and a lot of different colors, like sketches made by kids. Three respondents mentioned, they wanted the garments to include embroidery, giving them more of a handcrafted, luxurious feeling.

An overview of all collected print and pattern motive possibilities can be found in Table 5.

Table 5

Prints & patterns following the target group

Prints / Patterns:	Examples:
Nature-inspired motives:	- Sun - Cheetah prints - Trees, plants, forests - Water, ocean references - Movement, dynamic prints
Messaging:	- Humor - Engaging prints - Cartoonish prints - Show ambivalence of life
Nostalgia:	- Child-like drawings

- Pop-Cultural references
- Handwriting
- Ugly / "undone" prints, that look unfinished or effortlessly sketched

Further, the respondents were asked to describe their 'happy colors', giving them joy when seeing them. As Ahmetaj (2014) concluded, here the interpretations and associations differed from person to person. After analyzing all inputs, a table was made with colors that all respondents were believed to agree on. The results of the color schematics can be found in Table 6.

Table 6

Colors following the target group

Colors	Examples
Staple colors:	- Black - White - Neutrals in warm tones
Natural tones:	- Blue - Green - Brown / earth tones
'Happy colors':	- Light blue - Pink - Pastels - Yellow - Orange

The body / garment relationship should give the wearer room to move, without being too aware of their own body. None of the respondents wanted to wear synthetic fabrics, unless they were recycled. It was important for the respondents, that the fabrics were breathable and had a soft touch and feel, without exposing the body too much. All respondents claimed to feel most comfortable in natural fibers like cotton, linen, hemp, silk or silk-like fabrics. Many respondents mentioned they liked materials with more texture on the outer layers of the fabrics, as long as they felt comfortable on the skin.

Expressive

The expressive needs for this collection by the target group were mostly about communicating the need for mental health awareness and community-building. While everybody mentioned that they liked the name 'Community of Real People', the respondents advised to not express the values in too literal a way, through fonts or motivating quotes. One respondent (Andreea) said she would like to see the support of Mental Health communicated more through the brand's social media output then through prints. Instead, one other respondent (Niveditha) mentioned, the most value could be created through involving as many people as possible and conveying

the stories of individuals into the storytelling of the collection. Respondent 8 (Mariam) added "I would think that the story behind the piece could be more important than the piece actually saying 'this is mental health stuff'."

2.2.1.2. Expert Interviews

After interviewing the ten potential target consumers, two expert interviews have been held and analyzed using the same methodology that has been used for the target group interviews. Objectives of the interviews were getting more scientific insights on the takeaways obtained throughout the previous data collection and on the communication surrounding the collection, hearing about the experts' perspectives from their professional role. The transcriptions from the expert interviews can be found in Appendix F, the summaries in Appendix G and the coding in Appendix H.

Participants

An overview of all participants and their information is given in Table 7.

Table 7

Participants Overview 2

Participant Nr. & Name	Date of Interview	Education / Job / Specialization
1 Dr. Soljana Çili	28.11.2022	- PhD in Psychology - Lecturer on the MSc Applied Psychology in Fashion at the University of Arts in London - Research psychologist, specialised in personality psychology and clinical psychology
2 Pak Chiu	05.04.2023	- Worked with clinical psychology in mental health care - Founder of Hajinsky magazine, focused on psychology and fashion - Fashion psychology specialist, giving workshops to brands and students

Perception of mental health awareness

Dr. Çili saw an overall increased awareness concerning mental health and advised to not glamorise mental health conditions in any way. The expert said that there were a lot of (especially younger) people who were producing and consuming content around the topic, which led to them self-diagnosing conditions they did not have, (unconsciously) reproducing what they saw on social media platforms. Dr. Çili thought, that this was done, because it was often

showcased as something that made an individual more special or interesting, fearing that this could lead to "more stigmatisation rather than acceptance".

Pak Chiu had a similar opinion, appreciating the increasingly promoted mindfulness, but saying: "Sometimes I'm not sure just a simple Reel on Instagram or TikTok is enough to help people address mental health problems or symptoms they're experiencing." Instead, he recommended people unsure about their mental health state to talk to experts and brands wanting to address the topic to focus on terms like "psychological safety and psychological resilience", trying to spin the narrative in a less triggering, more empowering way, suitable for the promotion on platforms with a short attention span. He said: "focusing on the well-being side, that is actually where fashion is a good medium to talk about and express and not trivialize those who are really suffering". Chiu further recommended to include addresses of organisations offering help in all communication surrounding the topic to create a direct link to professional support.

Relation between the fashion industry and mental health

Dr. Çili mentioned studies showing that while body images portrayed by the fashion industry in the past affected women more than men, this was currently shifting. The expert further explained that there were isolated studies that showed "(…) that people who work in the creative industries are more likely to suffer from mental illnesses than people who work in other industries."

Hajinsky-founder Pak Chiu had the mission "to make psychology more tangible and more meaningful for the creative staff that works in fashion" and recommended working with a user-centered design approach.

Relation of emotional state and way of dressing

Following Dr. Çili, "people use clothes to express themselves and to express their uniqueness, but also their group membership, (…) we also have some research which shows that people do strategically use clothes to manage their emotions." According to this research, people cheered themselves up over wearing clothes on days they did not feel well initially. This effect, according to the expert, could have something to do with the connectiveness of clothes and our autobiographical memory. If one's wearing something that reminds them of positive experiences, this can boost emotional comfortability. Dr. Çili linked this effect to a term called self-continuity, that she described as "this idea that we know who we were, we know who we are, but we also have a direction of where we're going in the future. So, you have this sense of continuity between your past self and your present self and your future self."

From Pak Chiu's perspective, mental wellbeing and clothing were often connected and the things we wear could be a "a tool people can use every day to empower themselves", mentioning his experience in an assessment treatment unit for people who spend a lot of their life in mental health care units. For them, going shopping for new clothes was an essential part of re-participating in the community and exploring their idea of self again. Talking about how to symbolize community-belonging, the Hajinsky-founder mentioned the idea to look into uniforms as a tool, helping users to understand who they are and where they belong. "(…) Sometimes uniforms take away that mental space, that engagement, or that insecurity you have about where you belong. What you look like is out the way and you can actually focus on something else."

To make sure, there were no triggering aspects of this project, the expert recommended creating a sort of code of conduct or a checklist that the products and communication surrounding must fulfil.

2.2.2. Trend analysis

To look into the key trends of S/S 23, trend-forecasting website WGSN was used. Since Isnurh is a menswear brand in the first place, the forecasts were taken from the menswear market.

2.2.2.1. Key Trends

WGSN sections the S/S 23 menswear season into three key themes: Soul Space, Design Space and Full Spectrum. Due to its' focus on aspects directly influencing mental health, the connectedness to nature, comfort and identity-building, 'Soul Space' was considered the most suitable trending theme to inspire this collection.

"Soul Space is all about finding comfort and connection, whether through an appreciation of nature or via new male identities, where softer colors, crafted details and resort themes converge" (Paget, Menswear Forecast S/S 23: Soul Space, 2022). After the past years of crisis, this trend is all about exploring balance, stability, happiness and comfort again, for both individuals and community. Self-care, healing and prosperity are promoted. Natural and pastel colors rule this theme and warm tones are dominating (Paget, 2022).

2.2.2.2. Tops

In S/S 23 there are a lot of different options for tops. Drop-shoulder t-shirts, oversized short and long sleeve shirts and knitted vests and cardigans are staples seen throughout many forecasts (Zagor, Buyers' Briefing: Men's Key Items S/S 23, 2022). More experimental silhouettes including sleeveless shirts and tank tops and popover shirts add a broader variety in this season. (Zagor, Collection Review: Key Items – Men's Shirts & Woven Tops S/S 23, 2022) Jackets can be classic silhouettes like bomber and western-inspired trucker jackets (Paget, Collection Review: Key Items – Men's Jackets & Outerwear S/S 23, 2022) Layering, versatility, and a season-bending approach, away from traditionally masculine outlines, are the main topics of S/S 23.

Figure 8:

Men's bottoms trends following WGSN (Zagor, Collection Review: Key Items – Men's Trousers & Shorts S/S 23, 2022)

01	02	03	04	05
Short boxer short	Super wide smart trouser	Baggy short	Sport panel trouser	Cargo pant
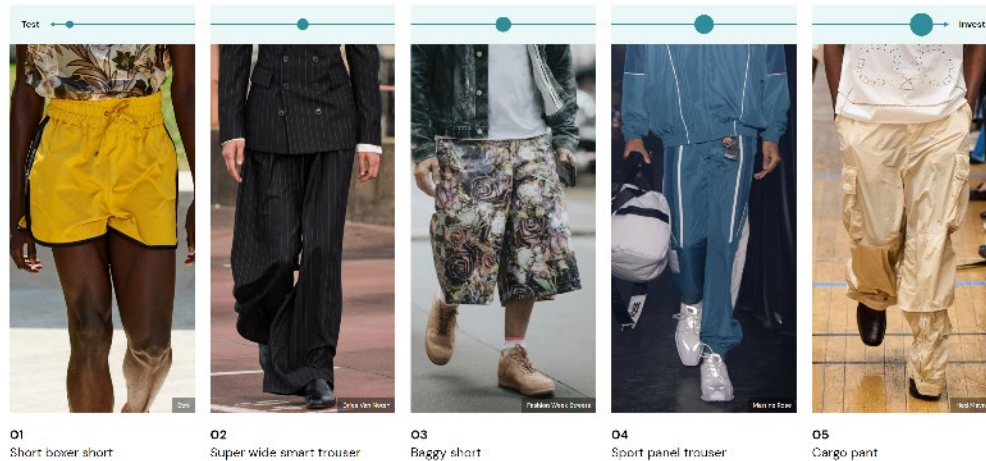
All the trending silhouettes for bottoms pictured in Figure 8 have one thing in common: maximalism. WGSN recommends playing into the extremes this season, going very short, very wide, very baggy or very technical. The trend researching platform further recommends using either natural materials or use recycled or recyclable synthetics (Zagor, 2022).

2.2.2.4. Colors

For S/S 23, there is the visible main topic between mixing neutral tones, blacks and trans-seasonal colors with more optimistic, bright color palettes. WGSN recommends, to focus on building trans-seasonal collections, not only relying on trend colors, to deliver products creating lasting value, benefitting sustainable consumption (Smith, 2022). In the Table 8, the trans-seasonal and trending colors are listed for a better overview:

Table 8

Colors following WGSN (Smith, 2022)

Trans-seasonal colors	Trending colors
Enhanced neutrals:	Astro green:

A: –

B: –

C: –

A: –

B: –
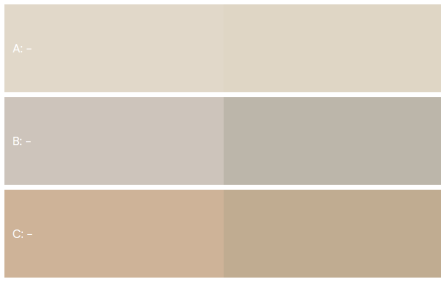
Olive oil:

Luscious red:

A: –

B: –

C: –

A: –

B: –

C: –

Back with black:

Dopamine brights:

A: –

A: –

D: –

B: –

C: –

E: –

Golden hour:

Soft pink:

A: –

C: –

D: –

B: –

E: –

A: –

B: –

C: –
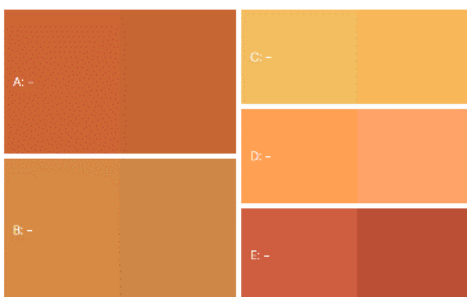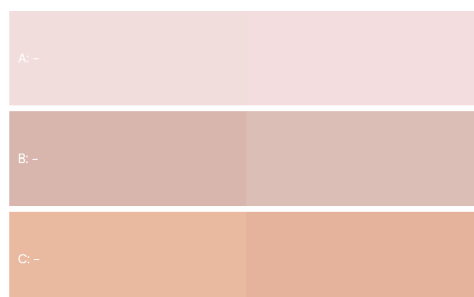
Tranquil blue:

Performance blue:

A: –
B: –
C: –

A: –
B: –
C: –
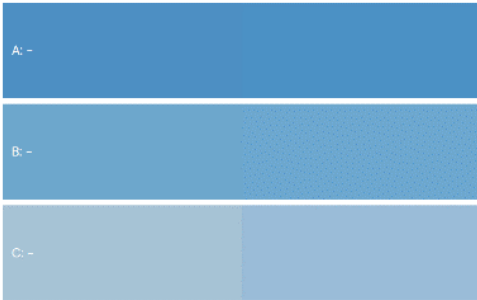
2.2.2.5. Prints & patterns

Main print & pattern themes for the 'Soul Space' trend are natural structures inspired by beaches, forests and deserts, vacation-referencing designs and florals. (Watkins, Men's Prints & Graphics Forecast S/S 23: Soul Space, 2021) Hand-painted details reinforce the artisanal feel aspired in many aspects within this season. (Watkins, 2021) Abstract patterns and childlike motives are often used to give the garments an ironic touch or a nostalgic feel, imperfections make the clothes more tangible and add personal value (Chow, Collection Review: Men's Print & Graphics S/S 23, 2022).

WGSN further recommended to invest in bright prints with vibrant colors and "tongue-in-cheek graphics to boost the optimistic mood", focusing on a handcrafted aesthetic through incorporating embroidery and "resort-ready looks", with "feelgood prints" all while promoting longevity through trans-seasonal color palettes and "sustainable printing techniques" (Chow, Key Prints & Graphics: Men S/S 23, 2021).

2.2.2.6. Material Trends

Following Johnston & Sabahi Jamali, plant-based bast fibers like linen, hemp and cotton can be used to create a rustic, organic hand-feel (Johnston & Sabahi Jamali & the WGSN Materials, 2022). Further, the WGSN-team advises to lower the environmental impact of all fabrics used, through working with certified materials, "such as GOTS organic cotton, natural linen and organic bast fibres. (…) Increase use of FSC-certified lyocells" (2022).

2.2.3. Material research

The need to feel physically comfortable in the clothing to enable mental comfort was expressed throughout all target group interviews. Following Hunter & Fan (Chapter 29 - Improving the Comfort of Garments, 2015), referencing an earlier work of Fan, that couldn't be accessed online:

a physiologically comfortable clothing ensemble should:

- have adequate thermal insulation so as to keep the body and skin temperature of the human body within a narrow limit;

- be highly permeable to moisture transmission and have good liquid water absorption and transport properties so as to keep the skin dry;
- not cause any tactile discomfort;
- not impose excessive pressure on the body; and
- not restrict movement of the body. (Hunter & Fan, 2015)

That means, the materials used for this collection should have a certain breathability, making the wearer feel warm in cold weather and cool in hot weather conditions, take up sweat without getting damp, not cause allergic reactions, irritations or prickling on the skin and not make the body feel trapped in the garment (Hunter & Fan, 2015). Following Hunter & Fan, next to the choice of the materials, this also depends on the fiber structure, fabric construction and cut of the garments. "An air space between the body and the garment generally has a beneficial effect on thermal insulation" (2015).

The fabrics recommended using by the target group were: cotton, linen, hemp and silk or silk-like fabrics.

All of these natural fabrics, following the data displayed by Sinclaire (2015) share:

a) a comparably low thermal conductivity, making them good insulators,

b) a comparably high moisture regain, keeping the wearer dry and comfortable through perspiration,

c) a comparably low tensile strength and high modulus, meaning they are weaker and elongate less than most synthetic yarns. This means they break easier, but with the right garment-cuts will not be hindering the wearer, in a way more elastic, but usually tighter cut garments made of spandex or polyester sometimes do.

Following Hunter & Fan (2015), tactile discomfort can best be prevented by using soft materials with perspiratory properties, that do not cling or rub on the body of the wearer. Chemical finishes can sometimes lead to tactile discomfort and should therefore not be extensively used.

So far, Isnurh has been working with the OEKO-TEX STANDARD 100 certifications on most of their newly produced products. This certification guarantees that there are no harmful chemicals used during the production and should therefore limit the likeliness of tactile discomfort to a high extent but does not guarantee the compliance of other sustainability efforts during the production, like other certifications like GOTS do (SJ, 2022).

Although Isnurh's customers in the past claimed to not consider sustainability to a high degree, the brand published a sustainability strategy and a code of conduct for their suppliers aiming at improving their production in 2021 (Isnurh, n.d.). The overall market trends and customer interviews showed a need to consider responsible production, which for Isnurh mainly relies on two topics.

Silk or Tencel / lyocell

Since several respondents mentioned they would like garments to have a silk-like feel for the spring summer season, the question was raised if those garments should be made from actual

silk or alternative products, like FSC-certified lyocells mentioned by Johnston & Sabahi Jamali (2022).

Natural silk is known for its soft hand, natural sheer and "remaining cool in warm weather and providing warmth during colder months" (Babu, 2015, p. 63), but also requiring harsh processing conditions, killing silkworms as a necessary part of the production. Therefore, following Babu, many look for man-made alternatives, that do not require harming animals in the production.

"Regenerated cellulose fiber has a smooth and lustrous appearance much like silk (…). Fabrics made of regenerated cellulose fiber are soft and display high drapability, leading them to be widely used for apparels (…)" (J.Chen, 2015).

One of those regenerated cellulose fibers is Lyocell, with one of the biggest producers, following Chen being Tencel. Tencel claims to recycle 99% of the water and chemical solvents used in the production and therefore having a comparably low environmental impact (TENCEL, n.d.). Isnurh has been collaborating with Copenhagen-based printing manufacturer Rodinia Generation on low-impact Tencel-shirts for several years. Rodinia claims to produce 100% biodegradable items and to not use any water or pre-treatment on the Tencel fabrics used (rodinia, n.d.). Due to these existing, relatively low impact production connections and to not exclude people who morally do not align with the silk-production, the waterless-printed Tencel shirts and shorts are used instead of silk fabrics.

Deadstock materials

The fashion industry is said to be responsible for around 10% of the world's carbon emissions, and multiple fashion companies have been publicly criticized for burning leftover stocks in the past years, which raised to an increased desire to use deadstock materials and prevent waste (Cernansky, 2020). Deadstock materials are leftover materials that have been overproduced due to unrealistic minimum order quantities, miscalculations, changing trends or smaller flaws, but are in well enough quality to still be used (Krosofsky, 2021). Instead of blocking the manufacturers storage, or going to waste, these existing fabrics can be used by other brands or for other purposes to make better use of the already existing impact they left through being produced.

While Isnurh is mostly using virgin fabrics so far, they have worked with deadstock supplier Fabric House before. This supplier claims to follow its own certification, the 'Circular Fabric Standard', which ensures that all partners work according to international chemical restrictions, and comply to their ethical code of conduct (Fashion House, n.d.).

This supplier is used for all products that are not made of Tencel or certified cotton, to keep the option open to use other kinds of materials, with the comparably smallest negative impact.

2.3. Conclusion

Based on the research-findings validified through the data triangulation displayed in this chapter, the FEA-model has been used to collect all data insights in an overview in Table 9.

Table 9

FEA-model 1

Needs:	Sub-categories:	Attributes:
Functional	1. Fit 2. Mobility 3. Comfort 4. Protection 5. Donning / Doffing	1. Oversized and wide fitting garments will be dominant in this collection. 2. Mobility should be given through loose cuts and silhouettes. 3. Comfort is key for this collection. Therefore, all materials used in garments laying directly on the body will be made from natural materials or lyocell to secure a soft touch, high moisture absorbency and breathability. 4. All garments should make the wearer feel protected by covering as much skin as possible. This will not count for shorts and short-sleeve (t-)shirts, that should be included in a summer collection and can be worn on hot days, the wearer feels comfortable showing some skin. 5. Donning and doffing should be as easy as possible. The garments should not include elements that get easily entangled.
Aesthetic	1. Art Elements 2. Design Principles 3. Body / Garment Relationship	1. Trans-seasonal colors like black, 'enhanced neutrals' and 'golden hour' will be used as the main colors of this collection. Greens, blues and 'dopamine brights' will be used for joyful details. The prints and patterns should evoke feelings of nostalgia through a hand-made aesthetic. Embroidery will be used to enhance a luxurious feeling. 2. Clean cuts & silhouettes in-line with Isnurh's design identity. 3. Next to oversized fits, all bottoms will include an elastic waistband to not exclude any potential customers due to their body type or weight. While Isnurh is a menswear brand, all designs are supposed to be as gender-free as possible.
Expressive	1. Values 2. Roles 3. Self-Esteem 4. Status	1. Inclusivity, community-belonging, connection to nature and a sense of self-continuity are the main values transported through this collection. 2. No traditional roles are fostered throughout this collection, nobody should be excluded. 3. Self-esteem should be enhanced and undermined by the clothes in this collection through delivering both psychological and physiological comfort. 4. The status the wearers want to transport is to be aware of mental health and open for the discussion of this topic,

without wearing clothes that transport this in any literal fonts or prints.

Additionally, based on the idea of Pak Chiu and in-line with the findings from all research done so far, a checklist for a successful collection around mental health has been drafted as can be seen in Figure 9.

Figure 9

Do's and Don'ts of releasing and promoting a fashion collection inspired by mental health

Do	Don't
○ Show community & connection to nature	○ Include potentially triggering imagery or communication
○ Communicate psychological safety & resilience	○ Make false claims or try to give medical advice
○ Emphasize safe space	○ Trivialize conditions or those who are suffering
○ Focus on empowering storytelling	○ Make people feel more vulnerable or alienated
○ Provide styles for different days and emotional states	○ Use instructions, literal motivational quotes
○ Center on emotional well-being	○ Go in-depth on different mental health conditions
○ Include contact points to professional support	○ Glamorize / romanticize mental health conditions

Section 3: Design refinement

3.1. Evolvement

3.1.1. Survey

To add more quantitative data insights to the data obtained during the qualitative research, a survey with 13 questions, made using Qualtrics, was published in the same way as the target group interview requests on the Instagram-accounts of the researcher and CORP. The survey was open to answer between the 18th of April and the 27th of April and got 100 respondents. The number of respondents varied between 98 and 100 respondents per question. Since the population was 962 people, these 98 completed responses only make up for a confidence level of 70%, with a margin of error of 5% (Calculator.net, n.d.). Due to the limited reach and time of this project it was not possible to receive a greater number of replies and the following results therefore can only be seen as implications. To reach a higher level of confidence, more people would have needed to be surveyed. The survey questions and results can be found in Appendix I.

92% of the respondents were in the age between 18 and 34 and therefore in the direct target group of Isnurh and this collaborative project. Of the 100 respondents, 33% stated they would struggle with their mental health once a month and 34% once a week. 17% of respondents said they dealt with their mental health every day. Talking about the issues was seen as most helpful by the biggest amount of people, while following hobbies or structures were seen as comfort-giving by many as well. More respondents liked to go out into the nature (19,86%) compared to city surroundings (10,28%). 39,8% of respondents claimed that the way they dressed themselves could 'definitely' improve their emotional state and 36,73% said it 'probably' does. More than half of the survey respondents (55%) claimed, they dressed up more on days they did not feel good initially, while 28% said they did not care about what they wore. The materials that were perceived as most comfortable during summer can be found in Table 10.

Table 10

Preferred materials following Survey

Material	Percentage of respondents
Cotton	37.31%
Linen or Hemp	30.05%
Silk or silk-like materials	18.65%
Wool, cashmere	7.77%
Leather	2.59%
Synthetic materials like nylon or polyester	2.59%
Other, namely:	1.04%

Under other, namely, one respondent stated "I don't put much thought into the material, but the silhouette and fit. Prefer oversized and loose fit."

This is in line with the general response, where 55% of people surveyed felt most comfortable in baggy, oversized silhouettes, 38% in straight silhouettes, and 3% in skin-tight clothes. Asked about nature references, childlike drawings and colorful prints on clothes as elements that were assessed during the qualitative research, the opinions differed, as can be seen in Table 11.

Table 11

Design elements following Survey

Answer options:	Nature references:	Childlike drawings:	Colorful prints:
Dislike a great deal	5.05%	10.10%	3%
Dislike somewhat	17.17%	17.17%	21%
Neither like or dislike	20.20%	22.22%	14%
Like somewhat	40.40%	31.31%	43%
Like a great deal	17.17%	19.19%	19%

The name 'Community of Real People' resonated with most of the survey respondents. 64,34% liked the name either 'somewhat' or a 'great deal' and only 4 respondents 'disliked it a great deal'. The likelihood of buying a product, where 100% of the earnings are donated to a mental health charity was high. 43 people said they were 'somewhat likely' and 42 'extremely likely' to buy such a product.

3.1.2. Mind-mapping

After analyzing all data obtained, two mind-maps have been drawn up by the researcher to collect ideas for the design process and concept generation (Elmeshai, 2021). The mind-map concerning the design input, received during the research can be found in Figure 10 and the mind-map for the storytelling and symbolism of the collection, as interpreted by the researcher, can be found in Figure 11.

Figure 10

Mind-map Design Input

Figure 11

Mind-map Storytelling

3.2. Moodboards, sketches

3.2.1. Moodboards

Following the mindmaps, different moodboards have been created to visualize the collection and its design principals in an organized way (UX Design Insititute, 2023). These are showcased on the following pages. Figure 12 shows the moodboard of the trend 'Sould Space' following WGSN and described in chapter 2.2.2.1.

Figure 12

Moodboard Trend 'Soul Space'

In Figure 13, the silhouettes and items mentioned in chapter 2.2.2.2. and 2.2.2.3. are visualized.

Figure 13

Moodboard Silhouettes

Inspirations for prints and patterns inspired by nature, childlike drawings and hand-painting are shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14

Moodboard Prints & Patterns
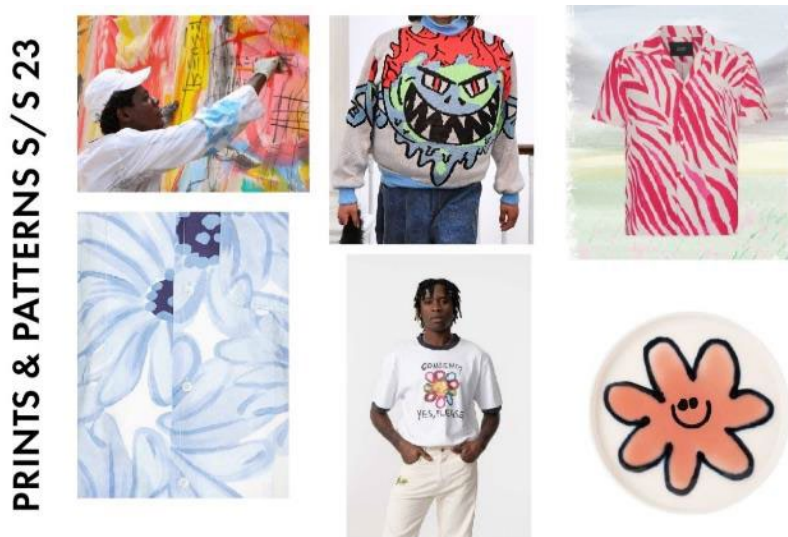
In Figure 15, the color inspirations for the collection are shown.

Figure 15

Moodboard Color Story

Figure 16 concludes the overall storytelling of the collection, that is all about re-connecting to nature, the community and your inner child.

Figure 16

Moodboard 'Finding Balance'

In Figure 17, the moodboard for the final photoshoot and visual content is shown, which results can be found in chapter 5.2.

Figure 17

Moodboard Photoshoot

3.2.2. Sketches

Based on those moodboards, sketches of the collection have been made. Figure 18 showcases the sketches for the outlines and silhouettes of the collection.

Figure 18

Sketches Silhouettes Collection

In Figure 19, different print and artwork ideas have been created by the researcher based on mindmaps and moodboards.
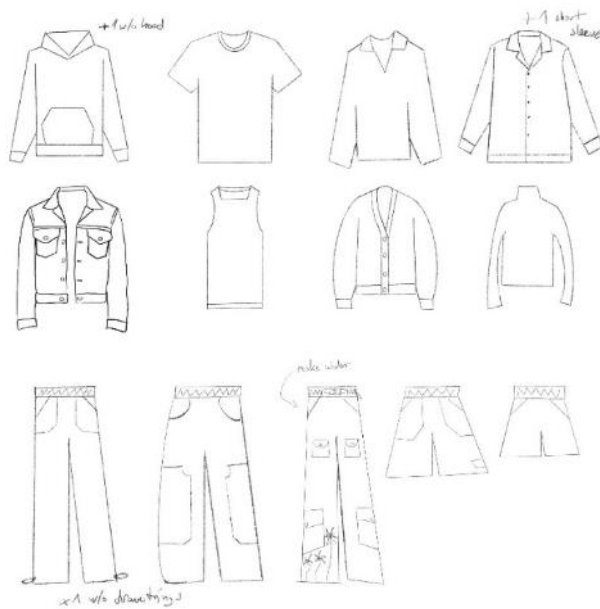
Figure 19

Artwork Ideas Overview

These sketches have then been shown to the Isnurh design-team on the 9ᵗʰ of May 2023, that decided to use the following motives, pictured in Figure 20.

Figure 20

Motives chosen in collaboration with Isnurh-Team

To not only include placement prints, but also the Isnurh-typical all-over prints on TENCEL-shirts, the blue flower / ghost motive in the middle of the bottom row was turned into different patterns and experimented with, leading to 4 different variations that can be seen in Figure 21.

Figure 21

Shirt design variations

To further keep a strong branding throughout the collection, three typical Isnurh-trims have been chosen. These can be seen in Figure 22. From now on these will be referenced as (from top to bottom): 'Isnurh signature embroidery', 'Isnurh signature metal plate' and 'Isnurh leather patch'.

Figure 22

Isnurh-trims used for collection

Of especial importance were the artworks for two of the three products that were chosen to be produced physically and sold to raise donations for mental health charity. Here, the researcher decided to stick to the idea of one respondent (Niveditha) and expert Pak Chiu to include the interviewed people from the target group in the design process as much as possible. As can be seen in Figure 23, input from all 10 target group interviews has been used for each design. The pants completing the outfit consisting out of 3 different pieces, were chosen to not feature any bigger artworks to not disrupt the overall aesthetic of the outfit too much and generate overly much attention, that was sometimes seen as unwanted during the target group interviews.

Figure 23

Evaluation design final hoodie & t-shirt
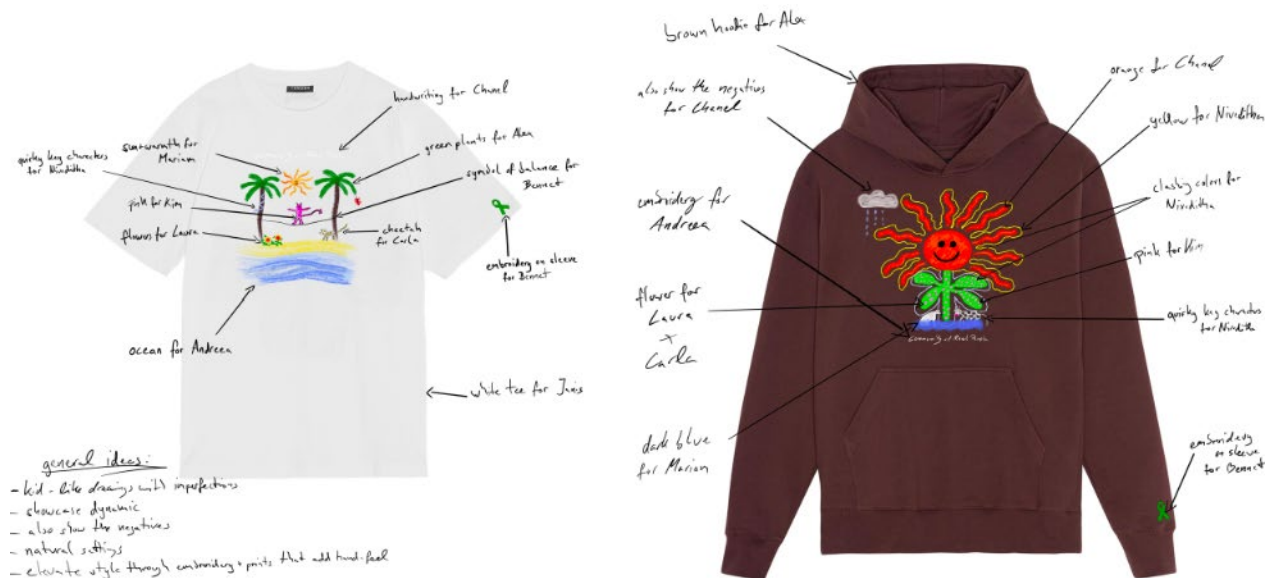
3.3. Conclusion

After working on these design refinements, they were discussed again with Isnurh's co-founder, Oliver Abrenica on the 12th of May, 2023. Hereby, it was decided to not include a pop-over shirt, although mentioned in the trend research and pictured in Figure 14, since it did not suit the brand's overall aesthetic. By wish of the organization and in line with the trend research, one tank top is included as a layering piece in the collection, although baring a lot of skin on its own. To include one turtleneck, seen as feeling protective during the target group interviews, and because 7,77% of respondents said they felt most comfortable in wool, this garment is included with the risk of scratching or getting entangled easier than for example cotton or lyocell.

Further, it was decided to reduce the number of artworks showcased in Figure 20 drastically to create a more coherent design language. Some artworks were adapted, to better fit the color-story of collection, as pictured in Figure 24.

Figure 24

Adjustment hugging arms artwork
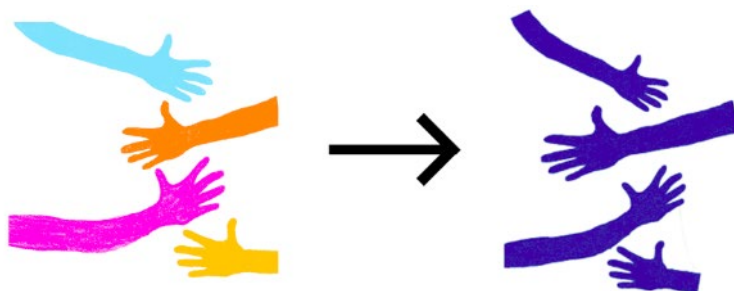
Because 38% of survey respondents claimed to feel most comfortable in straight-fitting silhouettes, more of those have been included in the final collection than initially considered. Cotton was seen as the most comfortable material by both survey and interview respondents and is therefore the most-used material in this collection. While it was the initial goal to include outside materials with unique textures, this thought was dismissed, since the researcher was not able to find suitable deadstock materials that aligned with not including any synthetic yarns directly on

36

the skin over the supplier Fabric House. Instead, none of the garments feature additional lining, but instead are made from 100% monomaterials. Although roughly 30% of survey respondents stated to feel most comfortable in linen or hemp, only two items made of linen are included in the collection as a matching set, because there was only one linen-fabric available at the supplier, that was not see-through and therefore showcasing the body in an undesired way. Additionally, cotton and lyocell were seen as more trans-seasonal fabrics, as recommended by WGSN. Since only 2,39% of survey respondents felt most comfortable in synthetic materials, there are no synthetics used for the main fabrics, but instead only used for embroidery and trims, where they showed better durability than natural alternatives following Oliver Abrenica.

The survey showed mixed reactions on childlike drawings, nature references and bright prints, so these will be mixed and matched in a way that is supposed to still transport the main values of the collection without losing potential customers. As a result of the interviews and based on the mindmaps made by the researcher, there are no fonts on the garments, apart from 'Community of Real People', but to still communicate mental health awareness, the green ribbon, as a symbol for this (Mental Health Foundation, n.d.) is included once in each outfit.

All **changes** made for the FEA-model **marked in green or through cross-outs** can be found in Table 12.

Table 12

Adjusted FEA model

Needs:	Sub-categories:	Attributes:
Functional	1. Fit 2. Mobility 3. Comfort 4. Protection 5. Donning / Doffing	1. Oversized and wide fitting garments will be dominant in this collection. Straight-fitting silhouettes will be also included. 2. Mobility should be given through loose cuts and silhouettes. 3. Comfort is key for this collection. Therefore, all materials used in garments laying directly on the body will be made from natural materials or lyocell to secure a soft touch, high moisture absorbency and breathability. Cotton will be the most-used material. Synthetic materials might be used for trims, but not any main materials. 4. All garments should make the wearer feel protected by covering as much skin as possible. This will not count for shorts and short-sleeve (t-)shirts, and one tank-top that should be included in a summer collection and can be worn on hot days, the wearer feels comfortable showing some skin. 5. Donning and doffing should be as easy as possible. The garments should not include elements that get easily entangled. The partial exclusion is one turtleneck made out of wool.
Aesthetic	1. Art Elements	1. ~~Trans-seasonal colors like black, 'enhanced neutrals' and 'golden hour' will be used as the main colors of this collection. Greens, blues and 'dopamine brights' will be used~~

	2. Design Principles 3. Body / Garment Relationship	~~for joyful details.~~ Trans-seasonal colors like black, 'enhanced neutrals', earthy and natural tones like blue and green will be used as the main colors of the fabrics of the collection. Prints and details will be made from the 'happy colors' named during the interviews in-line with the 'trending colors' from the color forecast made by WGSN, The prints and patterns should evoke feelings of nostalgia through a hand-made aesthetic. While childlike drawings are an important part of this, they should not be used in every design. Embroidery will be used to enhance a luxurious feeling. 2. Clean cuts & silhouettes in-line with Isnurh's design identity. 3. Next to oversized fits, all bottoms will include an elastic waistband to not exclude any potential customers due to their body type or weight. While Isnurh is a menswear brand, all designs are supposed to be as gender-free as possible.
Expressive	1. Values 2. Roles 3. Self-Esteem 4. Status	1. Inclusivity, community-belonging, connection to nature and a sense of self-continuity are the main values transported through this collection. The communication of fair working conditions and support of mental health charity is important. 2. No traditional roles are fostered throughout this collection, nobody should be excluded. 3. Self-esteem should be enhanced and undermined by the clothes in this collection through delivering both psychological and physiological comfort. 4. The status the wearers want to transport is to be aware of mental health and open for the discussion of this topic, without wearing clothes that transport this in any literal fonts or prints. For this, no literal text is used, but only the green ribbon as sign for mental health awareness.

Section 4: Prototype/sample development, product, collection

In this chapter, the final collection, the choice of material per design, as well as the three physical products and their patterns will be showcased and elaborated on how they are supposed to fulfill the FEA-model.

4.1. Technical drawing

The overview of the entire collection as outfits can be found in Figure 25.

Figure 25

Collection Overview

All tops and their style names, as well as the specific pantone colors used, taken from WGSN (Smith, 2022) are shown in Figure 26.

Figure 26

Overview Tops

All bottoms from the collection are shown in Figure 27.

Figure 27

Overview Bottoms

ISNURH X COMMUNITY OF REAL PEOPLE
S/S 23 'Finding Balance'
Bottoms:

19-3911 TCX | 11-0103 TCX | 19-1220 TCX
17-1134 TCX | 19-4122 TCX | 18-3949 TCX
17-0235 TCX | 17-6154 TCX

Pants: „Protection" Pants: „Breathe' Pants: „Protection" Pants: „Ambivalence"

Pants: „Ambivalence" Pants: „Bloom"' Pants: „Bloom" Shorts: „Moored" Shorts: „Together"

4.2. Choice of material per design

In Table 13, all designs are listed, including the choice of materials, the fabric weight and the artwork and haberdasheries used.

Table 13

Overview Choice of Material per Design

Product / Style name	Material, Composition, Type and color	Artwork, Haberdasheries	Fabric Weight
Jacket "Protection"	100% GOTS-certified cotton, twill weave, black	Isnurh signature metal plate on back; corozite buttons	273 g/m²
T-shirt "Balance"	100% OEKO-TEX cotton, single jersey, white	Digital print on front; 100 % polyester embroidery of green ribbon on left sleeve; 100% polyester "CORP" embroidery on front; 100 %	210 g/m²

40

		polyester Isnurh signature embroidery on back	
Pants "Protection"	100% GOTS-certified cotton, twill weave, black / brown	Waistband & drawstrings 97 % polyester, 3 % elastane; Isnurh signature metal plate on left back pocket; Digital print of green ribbon on right back pocket	273 g/m²
Jacket "Breathe"	Deadstock from Fabric House: 100% linen, twill weave, oatmeal color	Isnurh signature metal plate on back; corozite buttons	280 g/m²
T-shirt "Stability"	100% OEKO-TEX cotton, single jersey, dark brown	100 % polyester embroidery of green ribbon on left sleeve; 100% polyester "CORP" embroidery on front; 100 % polyester Isnurh signature embroidery on back	210 g/m²
Pants "Breathe"	Deadstock from Fabric House: 100% linen, twill weave, oatmeal	Waistband 97 % polyester, 3 % elastane; Isnurh signature metal plate on left back pocket	280 g/m²
Turtleneck "Shield"	75 % wool 2 x 2 rib, 25 % mohair 2 x 2 rib	Isnurh-leather patch on back; Blue intarsia knit with raised mohair to make artwork stand out	Approximately 600 grams per piece
Hoodie "Growth"	100% OEKO-TEX cotton, French terry, loop back, dark brown	Digital print on front; 100 % polyester embroidery of green ribbon on left sleeve; 100% white polyester "CORP" embroidery on front; 100 % polyester Isnurh signature embroidery on back	500 g/m²
Pants "Ambivalence"	100% GOTS-certified cotton, twill weave, green / beige	Waistband 97 % polyester, 3 % elastane; Isnurh signature metal plate on left back pocket; Contrast stitching	300 g/m²

Crewneck "Cherish"	100% OEKO-TEX cotton, French terry, loop back, elemental blue	Digital print on front; 100 % polyester embroidery of green ribbon on left sleeve; 100% polyester "CORP" embroidery on front; 100 % polyester Isnurh signature embroidery on back	500 g/m²
Cardigan "Serotonin"	100% OEKO-TEX cotton, beige	100% polyester Isnurh-flower-logo embroidery on left front chest; Digital print on back, corozite buttons	Approximately 400 grams per piece
Tanktop: "Aware"	Deadstock from Fabric House: 94% OEKO-TEX cotton, 6 % elastane, 1 x 1 rib, white	100% polyester embroidery on front	153 g/m²
Pants "Bloom"	100% GOTS-certified cotton, twill weave, green / light brown	Waistband 97 % polyester, 3 % elastane; Isnurh signature metal plate on left back pocket; 100% polyester "CORP" embroidery on right back pocket, Aluminum buckle strap in waistband; 4 aluminum buttons on pockets; Digital print artwork on right front leg	273 g/m²
Shirt "Safe-Space"	100% TENCEL, plain weave, off-white / blue	Artwork / pattern made with waterless printing technique by Rodinia Generation; 100 % polyester embroidery of green ribbon on left sleeve; corozite buttons	210 g/m²
Shirt "Hope"	100% TENCEL, plain weave, off-white	Artwork on center front over shirt opening, made with waterless printing technique by Rodinia Generation; corozite buttons	210 g/m²
Shorts "Moored"	100% GOTS-certified cotton, twill weave, elemental blue	Waistband 97 % polyester, 3 % elastane; Isnurh signature metal plate on left back	273 g/m²

		pocket; Isnurh-leather patch on left leg side	
Shirt "Community"	100% TENCEL, plain weave, off-white / blue	Artworks made with waterless printing technique by Rodinia Generation; corozite buttons	210 g/m²
Shorts "Together"	100% TENCEL, plain weave, off-white / blue, black / pink	Waistband 97 % polyester, 3 % elastane; Isnurh signature metal plate on left back pocket; Artworks made with waterless printing technique by Rodinia Generation	210 g/m²

4.3. Patterns / 3 prototypes

The t-shirt and hoodie have been made by one of Isnurh's trusted suppliers in Poland, using OEKO-TEX-cotton. For that, existing patterns, modified for a baggier, boxier fit have been used. Due to confidentiality, the pattern pieces can only be shown without exposing the exact measurements. In Figure 28, the pattern used to create the t-shirt is shown.

Figure 28

*Pattern T-shirt*
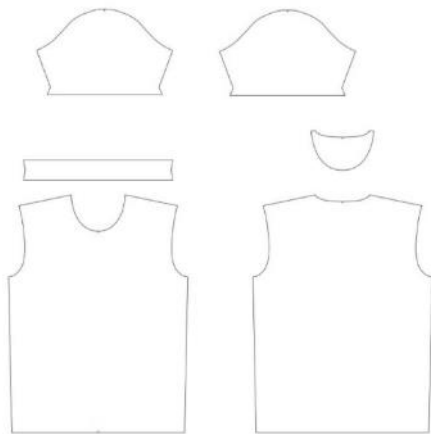
Figure 29 shows the pattern used for sewing the hoodie.

Figure 29

Pattern Hoodie
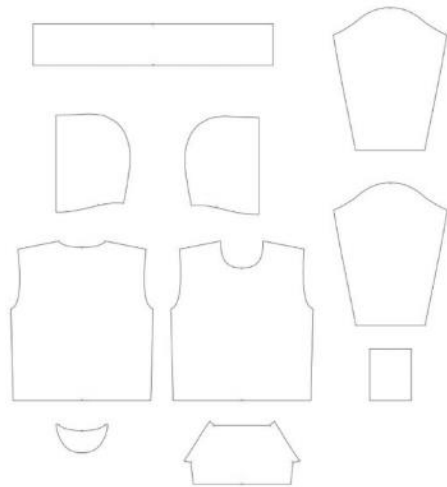
The pattern for the pants were created by the researcher with the help of a friend more experienced with garment construction. It can be seen in Figure 30.

Figure 30

Pattern Pants

From these patterns, the final prototypes were drafted. Pictures of these can be seen in Figure 31.

Figure 31

3 Physical Products

Since the originally intended 100% GOTS-cotton twill was not available in-time, the prototype pants are made of 50% cotton, 50% polyester. T-shirt and hoodie are made like displayed in chapter 4.2.

4.4. Description of elaboration

The collection was titled 'Finding Balance' as a shared topic, many of the interview respondents struggled with. Based on the FEA-model and the interview and survey results, the researcher developed a graph, displaying the organisation of the collection, pictured in Figure 32. In this graph, the priority of the different design criteria is changing following the mental state of the potential customers. This is based on the target group interviews and should secure that the collection includes garments for all kinds of emotional states.

Figure 32

Priority Design Criteria
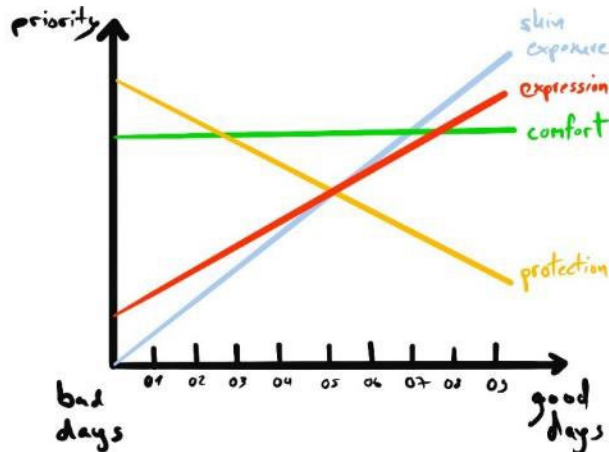
Because on the 'bad days', many felt like not exposing too much skin, and not grab any unwanted attention, the first outfit will start off, completely made of a black cotton twill with a white, printed t-shirt. While the physiological comfort must be on a high level throughout all looks, the skin exposure, as well as the expression of the outfits increases with each look, leading to more outgoing, extravagant outfits for days the wearer feels comfortable in their own skin. Due to this increase, the protective feeling of the outfits declines over the collection, showcasing more skin, brighter colors and prints and more experimental silhouettes. This graph is based on the insights obtained during the target group interviews and used as a creative structure for the collection overview, however, it does not claim any generalizable scientific reliability.

How the graph is reflected in the collection overview can be compared in Figure 33.

Figure 33

Collection Overview for Comparison

Functional

The fit of all garments, as elaborated throughout this research, is either straight or oversized, giving the wearer enough room to move without feeling caged. To guarantee physiological comfort, all garments are made of cotton, linen or lyocell, making them breathable and moisture absorbent. To fit the provisional design criteria set in chapter 1.2.3., where possible, due to the different suppliers Isnurh is using, GOTS-certified materials were used instead of OEKO-TEX-certified ones, as elaborated in chapter 2.2.3. Synthetic materials are only used for functional reasons in trims like waistbands, embroidery and fastenings. For most buttons, bio-degradable cellulose-based corozite buttons have been used by one of Isnurh's suppliers. The certificate can be found in Appendix J. Only the linen set "Breathe" and the tanktop "Aware" are made from deadstock materials from Fabric House, since the researcher was not able to find other suitable fabrics there. Donning and doffing of all clothes is easy due to the roomy cuts throughout the collection and the lack of any restrictive or complicated fastenings.
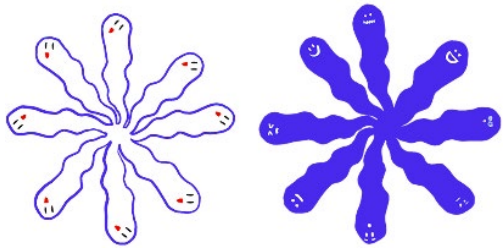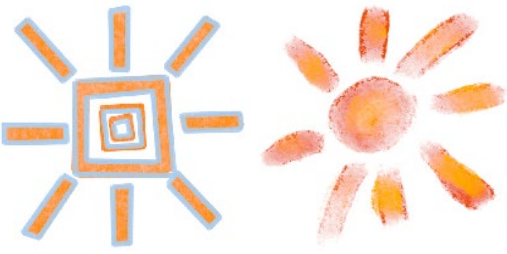
Aesthetic

All colors in this collection are inspired by nature as the main resource for finding new energy on days of emotional distress recognized throughout the target group interviews and the survey, fitting the preliminary design criteria. WGSN color forecast by Smith (2022) all main fabrics are made in trans-seasonal colors, resembling nature following Ahmetaj (2014), like shades of beige / 'enhanced neutrals', reminding of warm sand on a beach, warm tones of browns / 'golden hour', resembling deserts, rocks and mountains, green / olive tones inspired by forests, trees and plants and 'tranquil blues', to reference deep blue water. All of these colors are used as the foundation of the collection because they, following Ahmetaj (2014), are often associated with calmness, clarity and balance, that were keywords intensively discussed throughout the interviews.

On top of this foundation, different artworks are printed and embroidered onto the garments to increase the expressiveness of the collection. The artworks are in a similar color palette, but further include orange and yellow as mood-boosting, optimistic colors, reminding of serotonine-inducing sunlight (Ahmetaj, 2014). On two artworks, 'dopamine brights', as described by Smith (2022) were used. All artworks have been hand-drawn by the researcher to play into the wishes of the target group and in-line with the print & pattern trends analyzed in chapter 2.2.2.5.

The print & pattern motives can roughly be divided into 5 pillars, that are mixed and matched with each other. The values the different artworks are supposed to symbolize are briefly explained in Table 14.

Table 14

Artworks & Explanation

Values/ Keywords:	Artworks used to symbolize:	Explanation:
Growth		There are multiple flowers blooming and growing throughout the collection, but it was also chosen to reimagine a flower as small ghosts, symbolizing the different emotions and intrusive thoughts one has to overcome to grow as a person.
Optimism		The sun was chosen as the ultimate symbol for optimism as mentioned during the interviews and by Ahmetaj. The hand-drawn aesthetic adds to the imperfection and coming to terms with an imperfect state while maintaining an optimistic outlook.
Community		The community is pictured coming together on a little lake, surrounded by rivers spelling Community of Real People. This little piece of water can be a collective element giving calmness, but also hope and freedom, as pictured by the small sail boats in the middle. The second artwork is more literal, picturing different arms, holding the wearer of the garment and comforting and protecting them.
Mental Health Awareness		Since the target group was very outspoken against putting any fonts on the garments, the green ribbon was integrated as a symbol of mental health awareness instead. While the artwork on the left is made out of treetops forming a ribbon-shaped jungle, the right one was hand-drawn and embroidered onto the clothes.

Ambivalence
of life

The final artworks, digitally printed on two of the physical products combine all elements described above and take-up design elements mentioned by all participants of the target group interviews (Figure 24). The sun, the water and the flowers / plants show the connection to nature as a safe space, triggering our sense of self-continuity through their childlike easiness, but also including elements that refer to the ambivalence of life, as mentioned by the target group, through the devil trying to find his balance on a slackline between the palm trees and the sun / flower motive that has a rain cloud over its head.

To make the collection as inclusive as possible, elastic waistbands have been used on all bottoms, two pants feature additional drawstrings at their leg openings to adjust the fit on the legs. In line with the 'Soul Space' trend, the garments are not cut in any traditional gender-specific ways but leave room for all body types and shapes without putting the wearer's body at focus.

Expressive

The research results showed that the expressive values of this collection should communicate self-acceptance, self-expression and community-belonging.

This collection is supposed to achieve this, by signalling a unique style in line with Isnurh's brand identity, but more importantly mental health awareness. To do so, the idea of creating a uniform to feel comfortable in, as mentioned by Pak Chiu and during the literature research was explored in an abstract way and followed by incorporating the green ribbon and the CORP-embroidery as the only literal uniform element found throughout all outfits in this collection. This gives people aware and unaware of the project a chance to recognize the product without the use of any fonts. The clothes are supposed to boost the self-esteem of the wearer and transport the values, that while every human experiences their own mental struggles, the community and the connection to nature and one's inner child can help dealing with them. The uniformity of this collection is further achieved through its cuts and the use of returning motives, but also the consistent color palette.

Instead of fostering traditional roles, everybody should be welcomed to the wear the collection and join Isnurh's community of real people. All prints and colors should initiate positive emotions and are formed into silhouettes that are exciting enough to motivate the wearer to start the day, but not too attention-grabbing to ruin it. The soft, natural materials used should not induce any additional distractions, as a foundation to a day, where they feel comfortable and confident

enough, to not worry about what they are wearing. To reference the mental health inspiration behind the collection, all items have style names inspired by the keywords collected during the research and design process.

It is important to note, that the garments in this collection are only a part of the communication of the expressive needs formulated in the FEA-model. To fully communicate the expressive side of the project, the marketing of the clothes over social media has to align and portray the motivation of the project, following the guidelines given by the researcher, pictured in Figure 9.

Section 5: Evaluation and implementation

5.1. Final evaluation

5.1.1. Fit & Feedback Session

For the final evaluation, a fit and feedback session with six people from the potential target group has been done to let them determine, how well the physical products fulfilled the functional, expressive and aesthetic needs from their view. To measure their feedback, they were asked to rate each product in each category of psychological comfort, as proposed by Hunter & Fan (2015) on a scale from 1 to 10. The results can be found in this chapter.

Figure 34

Fit & Feedback Results T-Shirt

Figure 35

Fit & Feedback Results Hoodie

Fit & Feedback Session Hoodie

Name: Bakary
Height: 188 cm
Usual Size: L-XL
Size worn: L

Color: ●●●●●●●●●○
Texture: ●●●●●●●○○○
Garment Design: ●●●●●●●●○○
Garment Size and Fit: ●●●●●●○○○
Fashionability: ●●●●●●●●○○

Name: Justine
Height: 182 cm
Usual Size: M
Size worn: S

Color: ●●●●●●●●●○
Texture: ●●●●●●●●●○
Garment Design: ●●●●●●●●●●
Garment Size and Fit: ●●●●●●●●●●
Fashionability: ●●●●●●●●●○

Figure 36

Fit & Feedback Results Pants

The average results and a few comments made by the participants can be found in Table 15.

Table 15

Fit & Feedback Session Results

Product:	Positive comments	Room for improvement	Average Score:
T-shirt	- Luxurious hand-feel - Vibrant colors - Both would incorporate in own wardrobe - Good fit (Olivia)	- Artwork colors don't match green ribbon perfectly (Olivia) - Very big fit for a size Small (Gio)	9,2
Hoodie	- Great colors and artwork (Bakary) - Both would buy it for their own wardrobe - Embroidery elevates the design, good artwork size and fit (Justine)	- Fit could be more cropped and wider on the arms (Bakary) - Outside material could have softer hand-feel (Bakary)	8,6
Pants	- Both liked color and contrast stitching - Felt like an "everyday-item", matching a lot of their wardrobes - "simple but elevated" (Anna)	- Pockets could be deeper (Vicente) - Size a bit big on waist (Anna)	8,5

5.1.2. Isnurh Feedback Session

On the 22nd of May 2023, a feedback session with the Isnurh-team was held. Here, the finished designs, the moodboards and the FEA-model were presented to the team to let them assess the final outcome of the project. After the presentation, they had five minutes to write down their scores and comments on a piece of paper that have then been collected and discussed in the group. To compare their feedback to the one received by the target group, they were also asked to rank the overall collection from 1 to 10.

Since most products were only visualized, the team was not asked to judge the garments after the psychological comfort, but the criteria displayed in the FEA-model instead and additionally

how well the collection matched with Isnurh's brand aesthetic, as well as the moodboards presented in chapter 3.2.1. The results of this can be found in Figure 37.

Figure 37

Isnurh Feedback Session Results
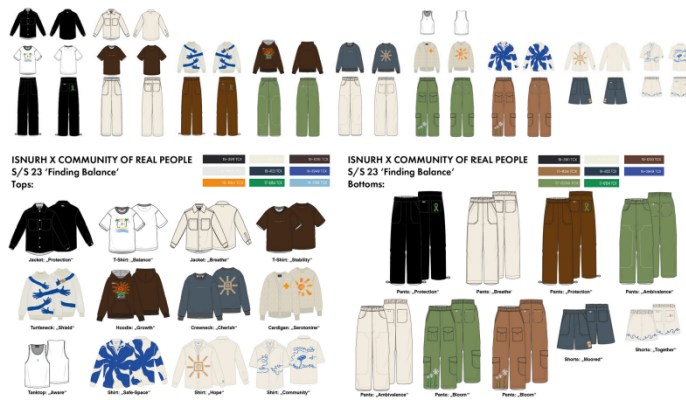
Overall, the Isnurh team was very satisfied with the results of this collection (average score: 7,8) and emphasized that their judgement was very critical. All thought the collection fulfilled all needs expressed in the FEA model, and that there were multiple pieces in the collection overview, they could see the brand producing in the future. The preliminary design criteria were seen as fulfilled.

The Isnurh team thought the collection had a cohesive color story and positive artworks, wearable by a broad target group, but said that there were still too many different artworks for a relatively small collection like this one. Instead of having a separate print of the green ribbon for mental health awareness, they would have sticked to the ribbon embroidery throughout the entire collection. Things, they would have liked to see more were technical outerwear, and more ways to address the topic of mental health in a literal way, through fonts or patches, which would have fitted their own design aesthetic better but would have been conflicting with the needs formulated by the target group.

5.2. Implementation

After all prototypes of the physical products were finished, a photoshoot with 10 models, all followers of the Instagram-page of CORP, was done to create visual content and advertise the project on social media. The outcome can be seen in Figure 38 and Figure 39.

Figure 38

Photoshoot Results 1

Figure 39

Photoshoot Results 2

Additionally, a promotion video has been created, where some of the models talk about their experiences with mental health awareness, while they are followed on a day of re-charging energy, spending time with their community. This video can be found here: Community of Real People X Isnurh - YouTube.

On the 26th of May a pop-up event has been hosted at KB3 in Copenhagen. At the two-hour-long event, local musicians performed, and the products were sold to raise money to donate to mental health charity. Some impressions from this event can be found in Figure 40.

Figure 40

Pictures Pop-Up Event

280 people showed up to the event and started buying the clothes. T-shirts were priced at 500 dkk and hoodies at 1000 dkk. A lot of the garments were sold to friends and family for 50% of the original price. In total, until the 22nd of June, 2023, 24.750 dkk / 3323 Euro for local charity Joannahuset have been collected in that way.

Additionally, since many people of the interviewed target group stated to have a strong emotional connection to jewelry, the designs from the physical products have been translated into a set of earrings and a ring in collaboration with Copenhagen-based brand World of Ukiyo as can be seen in Figure 41.

Figure 41

Jewelry in collaboration with World of Ukiyo

World of Ukiyo sold these rings and other items at the pop-up and was able to donate 15% of the earnings to the same charity, which accounted for 1275 dkk / 171 Euro.

In total, this project was able to raise 26.025 dkk / 3494 Euro in donations for Joannahuset, that will be donated to the institution in July 2023. The exact calculation for these donations can be found in Appendix K.

For further implementation in the future, the researcher recommends following the ideas presented in Table 16.

Table 16

Recommendations further Implementation

Digital collection	Physical products	Communication online
- reduce the artworks of the collection by two, take away one of the sun-prints and the printed green bow - include one more piece of outerwear	- use GOTS-certified materials over OEKO-TEX-certified ones wherever possible, if commercially feasible - adjust the fit of the t-shirts, by making them two to three centimeters shorter - re-visit the color of the embroidered green bow and adjust it to match the artworks better - adjust the fit of the pants, to make them two centimeters wider on the legs and the pockets two centimeters deeper	- closely follow the guidelines for responsible communication, pictured in Figure 9.

Section 6: Process reflection

This design research was based on the FEA-model as outlined by Lamb & Kallal, which benefitted a systematic approach for the design research.

As shown during the process, the connection of mental health and fashion is an area, almost entirely relying on qualitative research and therefore not always generalizable. While there is more quantitative data on the negative impact of the fashion industry on mental health, studies on the positive impact are rare, and the subjective matter of the topic made it difficult to find universally valid insights. More research in this area is needed to find more generally reliable data.

The target group interviews were highly subjective, as it lays in the nature of the overall topic. While the high interest to participate in the research can be seen as undermining the importance of the subject, six out of ten respondents were based in the fashion industry themselves and therefore might have a higher connection and need to talk about its impact on mental health. The respondents were suitable representatives of the target group, but more male respondents could have helped to diversify the data obtained and represent Isnurh's existing target group to a higher degree.

Both experts interviewed delivered relevant information and because of their different roles within the same spectrum gave diverging answers, which added to the data obtained before in diverse ways. Many general effects of the fashion industry and the clothes we wear that were mentioned during the literature research were validified by the experts. The semi-structured way at this point of research was benefitting to keep the researcher from leading the interviews in a biased way.

The trend and material research fitted the insights and ideas obtained during the interviews very well and many trends seen on WGSN were cohesive with the ideas formulated by the participants.

As mentioned earlier, the survey results can only be seen as implications. Again, this is partially because of the highly subjective matter of the topic, but more survey respondents would have made the research more valid. Due to the limited reach, this was not possible for this project, but should be considered if researching this area further. Nonetheless, subjective factors like the fit of the clothes, materials that felt comfortable and ways of dealing with mental health struggles were countersigned by the quantitative insights obtained during the survey.

Mind-maps, moodboards and sketches were based on the data obtained in all stages before and in-line with the trend reports obtained from WGSN. This step of the design research might be complicated to re-produce in the same manner, since it was mostly based on qualitative research and the creative approach might differ for others researching the same topic. The same can be said for the final designs, which showcase how the research results have been implemented, but especially the artworks used to communicate the main values transported through the collection could differentiate based on how others interpretate them.

The evaluation of the products was done by six people directly from the target group and the entire existing Isnurh-team. This gave valid qualitative feedback considering the timely limitation of this research, but with more time, another survey or focus group with more people from the target group or the interview-respondents would have led to more quantitative feedback.

Section 7: Personal reflection

When Community of Real People first approached Isnurh to do this project during my internship at the fashion brand, I was immediately interested in participating in it, since mental health awareness has been a topic close to my heart. So, it was decided, that I would be the person mainly responsible for this project and using it for my bachelor graduation.

While the preliminary research quickly showed me that the topic was very relevant, I was also surprised that there was so little quantitative data available, which made the project harder and its outcomes less clearly evident. During the research, I saw from how many angles you could look at the topic of mental health in fashion, but sticked to the decision that the project should create something that everybody can see themselves in. Since mental health and how we relate ours to the clothes we wear is a topic without clear rules, based on highly individual perceptions, I decided to go for the foundational needs, different people share for such a collection. This wasn't always easy to grasp and I personally found it challenging to display all these findings and how they were translated into designs in an academic paper. Another possibility could have been to try to create one single garment, modified for the needs of people with one specific mental health condition, which might have been easier to display in an academic context.

Nevertheless, I am very satisfied with the outcomes of this challenging project. The goals to raise awareness and collect donations, were successfully achieved. The pop-up event was a full success, the visual content posted on social media was seen by thousands of different people and almost 3500 Euro will go to a charity focused on preventing mental health conditions in an age group where it's most needed. This makes me feel proud and like I left a measurable, positive impact on the community. It feels also confirmative that Isnurh and CORP want to continue their collaboration in the upcoming time and see me as a part of this.

Throughout this project, countless people got involved and helped this project in all kinds of ways, and the power such a community has, has left an impact on me, also on a very personal level.

Of course, this sometimes also was stressful. One of my biggest weaknesses is that I am often impatient and do not like feeling dependent on others, which happened all the time through organizing the essential target group interviews, waiting on deliveries and negotiating with different locations regarding the pop-up event. This often led to me feeling stressed or unhappy, but I would like to think that I also learned getting better with that throughout the project. Still, I learned how important thorough organization was, especially with that many stakeholders involved, which leads me to one of my SMART learning goals:

1. For the next collaborative project, I want to get better at planning. During this project I worked with a weekly schedule for myself, which was good to overview my own tasks, but did not involve the other stakeholders. Therefore, I will use a collaborative planning tool (like Trello) and a weekly meeting time for the next project, to help keeping the overview and reduce potential stress factors for all stakeholders.
2. During this research, I learned a lot about the connection of fashion and mental health and saw a lot of currently unused potential in the topic. Therefore, after graduating, I want to look for applicable masters' programmes (for example at UAL) or internships (for example at Hajinsky) to broaden my knowledge in the area and gain more expertise. This next step should be done in the start of 2024.

Afterword from the companies

Oliver Abrenica, Isnurh

At ISNURH, we take interns quite seriously. And especially people like Adriaan, who show the passion of coming to Denmark to do his internship. I quickly found out that he had more on his heart than to just finish his bachelor on a regular scale. He wanted to make an impact with a great purpose. The purpose of proving 2 great topics which sticks in mind, after reading the thesis.

Is it possible to affect people's mental health with the right approach to the design process when working with fashion? And can you theoretically do this with zero funds on hand and create a multiplying effect on crowdfunding donations put into the project and then forward this to charity? I would say that Adriaan has pretty much proven that this is actually possible.

It was an absolute pleasure for me to follow Adriaan on this project. It quickly became a personal desire for me to see him succeed in this. The purpose of the project was simply too beautiful to fail.

Following the scientific insights which got revealed upon research from his side, made me interested in using more of such data to back up a collection in the future. Something that has not been done intentionally before at ISNURH. Maybe because the amount of work that is put into the research is hard to implement in a company with limited resources. But nevertheless, some interesting data was gathered, and utilized into making a great digital and physical collection.

Because of the great proof of concept - we at ISNURH have shown the interest of assisting with further scaling the collaboration by doing more community events with Adriaan and CORP in the future.

I cannot wait to join Adriaan when handing over the funds that were generated to support the mental health organization Joannahuset. What a way to wrap up a bachelor.

Oliver Saundry, Community of Real People

If it weren't for Adriaan's introduction of the collaboration idea to the ISNURH team, this collaboration would not have taken place. Adriaan played an essential role in making this collection a remarkable success, serving as the vital link in this puzzle.

Not only did he possess the remarkable talent to transform emotions and impressions into meaningful designs, but he also exhibited exceptional discipline even during challenging and stressful situations. Adriaan's exceptional communication skills and open-mindedness facilitated a seamless working dynamic among us.

Working with him was such a pleasure that I have invited him to join me for my upcoming collaboration in August.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Instagram-Insights and prior Instagram-Survey

The following Instagram-insights were obtained on the 18.04.2023.
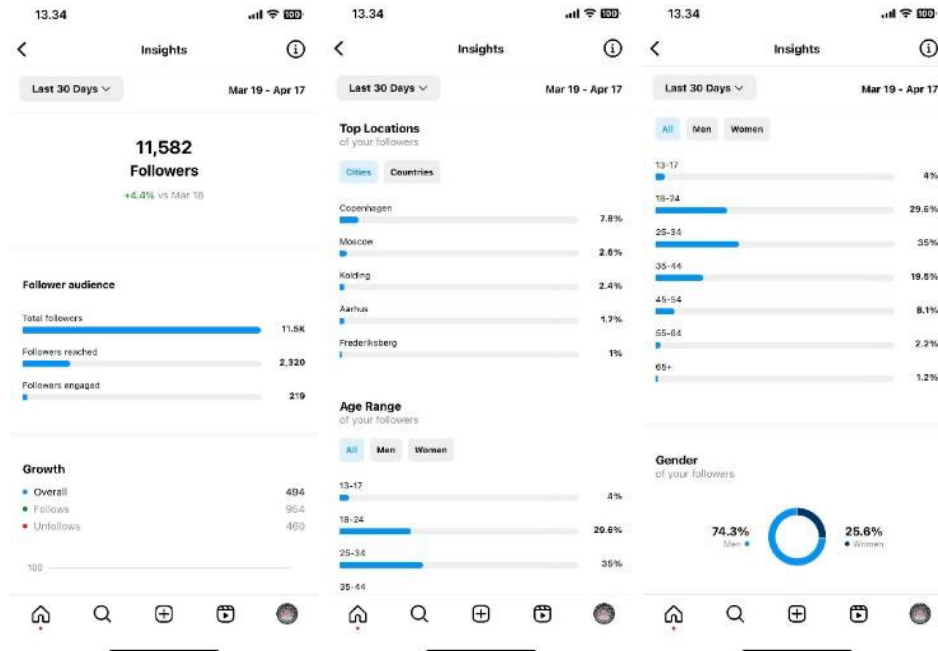
In the scope of a market research project carried out as part of the mandatory internship at Isnurh questions were asked to the brand's existing Instagram-followers, using the story-function on Instagram on different days between the 16th of September 2022 and the 5th of October 2022. Due to the Instagram-Algorithm and the questions being posted on different days to differing times, the number of respondents varied.

1. **Do you own any Isnurh-Designs?**
- 85 respondents
- 21% no
- 48% yes
- 31% multiple

2. If yes, where do you buy it?
- 67 respondents
- 58% Retail store
- 8% Online retail store
- 35% Isnurh.com
- 8% Second-hand

3. What are you doing for a living
- Doctor
- 4 sales assistance
- Digital marketing
- Working with children / education
- 3 independent business owners
- Technician at the police
- Data analyst
- 2 consultant
- Gardener

4. Where did you first hear about Isnurh?
- 62 respondents
- 44% friends & family
- 29% retail stores
- 19% social media
- 8% publications & magazines

5. What do you look for most when buying new garments?
- 62 respondents
- 44% artworks & colors
- 42% comfort & materials
- 8% brand & community
- 6% sustainability & transparency

6. Do you care about sustainable production?
- 50 respondents
- 68% yes
- 21% depends on the brand
- 11% no

7. I am willing to pay a higher price for better quality
- 51 respondents

- 61% yes
- 29% depends on the brand
- 10% no

8. Do you follow the latest trends?
- 45 respondents
- 18% no
- 47% barely
- 31% mostly
- 4% always

9. I try to color-coordinate my wardrobe
- 39 respondents
- 26% no
- 36% yes
- 26% mostly
- 13% always

Appendix B – Literature matrix

Topic	Sources	Axial coding
Definition of Mental Health	(World Health Organisation, n.d.)	Definition
	(Avenaim, 2021)	Relevancy
(what is it, why is it relevant, what influences mental health)	(Statista Research Department, 2022)	Relevancy
	(World Health Organisation, 2021)	Relevancy
	(Mind, 2017)	Influencing factors
How did the perception of mental health change?	(Farreras, 2013)	History
	(Hunter A. , 2022)	History
(history, role of internet, statistics awareness, MH and UN SDG)	(Balsam, 2015)	
	(Ferentz, 2016)	History
	(Elflein, 2022)	
	(Stewart, 2021)	Role of the internet
	(Michas, 2022)	

	(United Nations)	Statistics awareness
	(Votruba & Thornicroft, 2016)	
	(United Nations, n.d.)	Statistics awareness
	(World Health Organisation, n.d.)	
	(World Health Organisation, 2021)	Statistics awareness
	(2CV, 2021)	
		Statistics awareness
		MH and UN SDG
		MH and UN SDG
		MH and UN SDG
		Statistics awareness
		Statistics awareness
Negative effects of fashion industry & mental health	(Press, 2018)	Stress on workforce
	(Vinnikova, 2019)	Stress on workforce
	(Stansfield, 2016)	Drug abuse
	(FashionUnited, 2021)	Drug abuse
	(Foy, 2022)	Drug abuse
	(Turner S. L., 1997)	Body ideals
	(Freitas, Jordan, & Hughes, 2018)	Body ideals
	(Wilson, 2022)	Body ideals
	(Riordan, 2018)	Body ideals

	(Caso, 2017)	Body ideals
	(Möri, Mongillo, & Fahr, 2022)	Body ideals
	(Rahman & Delgado Navarr, 2022)	Body ideals
	(Hoskins, 2014)	Racism
	(Ocbazghi & Skvaril, 2020)	Racism
	(Pauly, 2022)	Racism
	(Bhattarai, 2020)	Racism
	(Davidson, 2020)	Racism
	(Badia, et al., 2020)	Racism
	(Cichowski, 2021)	Racism
Positive effects of fashion industry & mental health	(Workman & Freeburg, 2009)	Identity-building
	(The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019)	Social Change
	(Sheperd, 2021)	Social Change
	(Encyclopedia.com, n.d.)	Social Change
	(Abu, 2020)	Social Change
	(Franco, 2018)	Self-expression
	(Dittrich, 2019)	Self-perception
	(Kraus & Mendes, 2014)	Self-perception
	(Hutson & Rodriguez, 2016)	Self-perception
	(Bell, Cardello, & Schutz, 2005)	Self-perception
	(Hunter & Fan, 2015)	Physiological comfort
	(Ahmetaj, 2014)	Effect of colors
Target group research	(IBM Institute for Business Value, 2022)	Target group
	(Chandrashekar, 2021)	Target group
	(Townsend, 2018)	Target group

Appendix C – Transcriptions Target Group Interviews

Interview Andreea

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright, let's start with the first question: What's your name? And where are you from?

Andreea
My name is Andrea, I am currently 21, turning 22 in like 2 weeks or so. And I am from Romania originally.

Adriaan Kruithof
And in what field do you work or study?

Andreea
Yeah, I study in a fashion and textile technologies and now I am an intern in product development at G star.

Adriaan Kruithof
Right. So the next question is a bit more personal. Just share as much as you want to and also if you don't want to answer any of the questions, you can always just say that. It's also important that you feel comfortable. So the next question is what is your relation slash your story with mental health?

Andreea
My relation I would say is started quite a long time ago, let's say like that. I have been diagnosed, I think last summer with generalized anxiety and depression, which was very nice. It took me like, I don't know, I think two years to get the diagnosis because I changed my therapist. Yeah, with moving around, it's quite hard to keep seeing the same therapist and all, but yeah, I'm doing good. I would say it gets a little bit easier once you get like a diagnosis and you know, and you understand, it's not, not necessarily something wrong with you. Then you can work on it on your own. Yeah, I have a long relationship with the mental struggles.

Adriaan Kruithof
You said it's important or that the diagnosis plays a big role for you to feel a bit more at ease about that. Why is that?

Andreea
I think so. It's firstly because, I've been struggling with mental health is quite a young age. So then you're growing up, you're unsure of your own feelings and not sure of your own value and when it starts at such a formative age, then you kind of grow with that concern about yourself with being like, oh, am I, why am I different? Why do I feel this way? Is it OK to feel this way? And you have all these questions that don't necessarily have an answer because especially with depression is like I shouldn't be feeling like this. Like I shouldn't be this sad all the time. And why isn't anything making me happy as it's supposed to? And then once you or once I did have a diagnosis about it, I felt more at peace with myself. Like, OK, you're not a strange person. You're

not some alien that just came to Earth. There's a thing called depression or anxiety or whatever, and it's not something that you should be necessarily scared of, is something that you can work through. And it's something that now that you know what it is, you know also how to potentially heal it and how to potentially move forward. And I think that's very important and it's very important people to understand cause for me what's what was very hard. In my home country, if you speak about depression or anything related to mental health, they flag you as a crazy person. Like there's no in between craziness and normal you you're either one or the other. And so it was just very hard for me to tell my family or even my father. For me, it was the hardest to tell him. Like, yeah, you know, for years I've been struggling with this and then just having that courage to say it out loud, it took me a lot of time and I feel like that's why it's important to have a professional actually help you through it.

Adriaan Kruithof
I can really relate to that and I think that's also why I think doing this project and really trying to make it a less stigmatized topic just around all parts of society is so important. So, can I ask you because you said speaking about the topic with someone, are you also currently in therapy or doing any medication?

Andreea
Uh, no, I did not take any medication. Uhm, and I stopped my therapy sessions before I started here, because with my work schedule is quite hard to schedule a meeting with my therapist, and the Netherlands is a bit hard to find the therapist and going through all of the process again.
I left it with my therapist that if I do need to go back to her, we can make something work out. That wouldn't be a problem, but she said if I go back again, I'd need to stick to the program. Let's say like going every week. And because when I was in Korea again it was a bit hard to keep track of everything. So then she says, if I really wanna work on every single issue, because that's why you start with an issue you try to solve it, you get to another one, but you first need to solve the first issue to get into the next one. So it's like levels that you need to dig through. Yeah, she is not afraid of like what I might go through because she said we did work a lot and she gave me a good set of strategies. Just to have a talk with myself and like go through different levels of understanding what I'm going through, where is this feeling coming from and how do I deal with it? Stop panicking so much over like, just the smallest things, and like trying to take a step back and say, is this a situation that maybe is related to the past and it makes me feel like I'm relieving that all over again. Or is it
kust an almost situation that I shouldn't be afraid of because I have now the skills to go through it.

Adriaan Kruithof
So how do you feel not being an active therapy anymore? Does it make a big difference for you or do you kind of compensate? Do you talk more to your friends or surroundings about that?

Andreea
Even if I always did try to talk it with my friends, like my close friends, especially the ones I know go kind of through the same things, but it does take me more energy and more of my, let's say, free time to do it on my own because, when you go to a therapist, of course they see it very objectively, they see it from the outside, but when you're inside it, it takes you just a bit more effort to actually see the situation in an objective way and then try to get your brain to be like, OK, maybe it's not such a big deal. Like take a step back and then there are days, of course,

where I might struggle a lot mentally, but I just feel so drained and so tired that I do postpone it. And what I'm trying to not do is postpone it a long time because then everything hits all at once. And then yeah, you just crash and it's something that it's harder to get out of, so sometimes I am aware of when I'm supposed to like, just take a few days off just for myself and like I'm just I I'm lucky I have people in my life that understand when I need time off to like just recharge and to just put my thoughts together and I think what I struggled before with is that I felt guilty of saying that I need time for myself and I cannot now deal with your own problems and my own problems as well. And I just think I got better at putting those boundaries which helped a lot.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, I can see that. I know how it feels when you just have those days, and your energy is literally at zero and then there's just, even if it's a close friend and they might approach you with their individual problems and you just feel like you don't have the capacities to kind of to handle that right now.

Andreea
Yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
I can definitely relate to that. So that actually is a good transition to the next question I want to ask you because the next question is: What do you think is a thing that most people struggling with their own mental health have in common?

Andreea
Ooh. That's a good question. What we all have in common, Adriaan, Trauma. Usually different types of trauma. Yeah, not the level of like, you've been in an accident and you're traumatized by that situation, but also the lack of maybe affection or lack of acceptance from other people. So I think it is in a way we are all traumatized to a level by something that just triggers certain patterns in your brain. I think that my therapist said that helped me understand the whole my brain a lot better is that especially in your formative years once you go through certain situation that can be labeled as trauma. Then your brain is literally wired like that, like you're neurons are going those patterns and then through therapy and through your own effort, you kind of try to break those patterns. So it's not necessarily something that just is on a spiritual level, but it's something that actually physically happens in your brain, which for me it was the key point where I was like, OK, so I'm not insane. I'm not crazy. It's literally my brain wired that way. And I think that's what happens with everybody that struggles with their mental health. It's something that it's actually in your brain, and it's actually happening physically, no matter how many people want to be like: No, you're just crazy. You know, you're just imagining things, or it's all in your thinking, but no, it's actually taking place physically up there and it's like, for example, when you break your arm, you see that arm is breaking, but when it's at such a level, like neurons forming and stuff like that, nobody sees it. So it's your own struggle that you're dealing with.

Adriaan Kruithof
Very good conclusion. Almost sounds like you've thought about that before.

Andreea
I went to therapy (laughs)

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, very well formulated. So maybe to get a bit more positive about it, what kind of activities make you happy and help you to feel better if you can feel that you are in the state of anxiety or depression or both, maybe even. And what are you mechanisms to deal with that and feel better about yourself?

Andreea
So, the thing is I kind of treat anxiety and depression in different ways because anxiety, a lot of situations make me anxious. And yeah, going for example, to Korea. Everything could actually make me anxious because I didn't know the place. I didn't know the people. So then for me, it's really important to form patterns for it. So, once I got out of quarantine, I tried to find a cafe that I really, really liked around where I lived, because that meant in the morning I would wake up and I would have a reason to get out of the house which helped my depression. It kept me moving, which actually helps you when you're in a depressive state. And for my anxiety because I got used to that place, it was like a comfort place for me. So it's very important for me to form sorts of patterns and to find a place outside of the House cause in it's very easy to just stay inside the house. It kind of also makes me wanna go out and actually then I end up seeing people and then I end up doing other activities. So it's just having that motor in the morning to be like, yeah, today I gotta go outside and I go there. I know that place. I don't have to be anxious about going to that place. But also then if I'm depressed, I'm like, OK, but you're going out, at least you're doing a little walk, which always helps you get food in. Cause when I'm. Yeah. When I'm very depressed I struggle with making my own food or like taking care of myself. So then just going out it makes you like, OK, I'm gonna get a sandwich or I'm gonna get a piece of cake and you're still eating something, which at the end of the day, helps more than just starving. But I think that's what for me helps having a pattern. And if I have found somebody that cooks for me, that's great. That's all I can ask for sometimes, cause I cannot. That's what I struggle with most, I would say.

Adriaan Kruithof

I get that I definitely have the same in those states that I just do not feel the energy to cook for myself, but it only gets worse if you get hangry.

Andreea
And also you always have like delivery, but I remember especially when I was in the pandemic, my anxiety was so bad that even the thought of having a delivery man come to my house like put me in the worst mental state possible. So it's. Yeah, just for me. It does help getting outside actually. Yeah, sometimes I just think about certain things like having a food delivery. I'm like, how? How am I afraid? How am I anxious about getting food? Like they can literally just leave it at the door and yeah, it's funny sometimes when I think about it.

Adriaan Kruithof
It's nice to also see it with a little bit of a of self-irony as well. I feel like that helps to take some pressure away and feel more comfortable about yourself as well. So, if you say going out; is it

also related to nature in any form or if because you mentioned a cafe as an example? I know from personal experience that I always get the most anxious at very crowded places, so I personally then tend to go to some more natural environment. Might be a park or sit next to the water or something. How is it for you?

Andreea
Yeah, I if I could, I would just sit in nature. I love it so much. I remember the first year that the pandemic hit, I went back home and I did not want to leave the house like it's been such a stressful period for everybody. And my parents were like ohh, maybe we can go somewhere and travel and blah blah blah. And I was like, I do not need that stress with COVID and everything. I do not need a stress to be out. So we just rented a very traditional cottage. It was very nicely refurbished in a traditional style, but you had all the modern amenities. And it had this very big garden and it had, like a swing under the trees. And they went and, like, saw a lot of places and I was like, I just need to sit here in the quiet. It was also in like a very small village like you would always hear the cows or the dogs or whatever. And I just it filled me up with so much peacefulness that I didn't want to leave this place. I love it so much. Just sitting in the garden. Yeah, I do think, nature helps a lot. It calms your mind. For myself, if I'm in the water, don't necessarily the pool cause pool is with a lot of people, but when you go to the sea and it's like such a big space where you can be also very private, like you don't have to crowd around other people and just laying in the water with like the sounds of it around you is just the most calming experience ever. I cannot even.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yes, yes, I definitely feel the same way. Alright, let's move a bit to the fashion related part of this conversation. How's the way you dress related to how you feel?

Andreea
That's a good question because I saw this also a post about it like I think it was a TikTok. I do feel like once my mental health goes quite low, it's either one of the two, like I either dress even more, even better than usual, like I put my makeup on every single day. I do my liner. I try to put in so much effort that maybe in a way, nobody realizes that I'm not doing that well, so it kind of compensates for that or I go the other way, like completely 180 and I do nothing like I barely wear any makeup, I barely change my clothes. So it can be like very, how do you say that? Very opposite ends and that's also like how my mental health goes like I'm at extremes which doesn't really help. But I do go through either. I'm just in the same clothes every single day or try to be the best version of myself from the outside, if you can say like that.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, I think you can. It's also interesting because I did some literature research on that as well. And actually, as you said, it's also scientifically so related how the brain reacts to the way you're dressing and the other way around. It goes both sides, right? So if you are super depressed and then you put on your jogging pans and your old washed out T-shirts, very high chance you feel even worse after that. If you dress up and you feel fresh and whatever, good chance that you will also feel a bit better after that.

Andreea
Yeah, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
So one thing I wondered because, again, I'm just drawing from like conclusions from myself and I definitely have two or three outfits where I just feel very comfortable in and whenever I'm having a bad day and I have those days where, you know, you don't really want to go out of the bed, you don't really want to make food, but then I kind of force yourself into doing that and I will put on specific clothes where I just know I feel comfortable and to certain degree confident in them. Do you also have something like that?

Andreea
Uh, yeah, I think I definitely do. For me, it's also very important. What season is it, because if it's summer, I hate summer just from the getgo. I hate it. And so, I usually get very depressed in summer, so then I have these very, very pretty dresses, cottage-core inspired that have a lot of material, a lot of fabric, and it's all flowing and nice. And those are usually the dresses. I just stay in those the whole summer like I have two or three that I love to death and they make me feel so good. I feel like a Princess and that's that helps me get out of bed and I love it. But in the cold season, which I love and I treasure dearly, I love my coats. Every time I put a coat on, I feel already more confident, more empowered. It doesn't really matter if I wear jeans or if I wear pants, or if I wear dress underneath as long as I have my long coats on. Something clicks in my brain. I'm like, oh, you look very nice today. So I think, like, that for me, it's like a very important item in my collection. Like, I do collect a lot of coat and I have a leather coatand other in different thicknesses. When it's around, let's say 17 degrees, I'm already out with a coat because that's what makes me the most confident.

Adriaan Kruithof
Nice. Are there maybe also some motives that evoke those positive feelings in yourself like fonts, imagery, colors, something like that. Patterns?

Andreea
I don't really know. I do like pleats, I love a lot of plead and I also love texture. Like everything that it's not just the smooth normal canvas or a tweed on jackets. Whatever has something interesting going on, I do go towards that and I think I just also like in themselves, like the structure of a good coat, it's I like it long and I like it a bit flowy. For example, in summer you have like the flow with dresses that I really like. I think the coat brings that for the winter cause it can be squish and it can be longer or shorter. And also it just feels like an armor when you put it on cause it's like covers everything that's underneath it. Just have a pretty coat on the outside and that that's the deal. So and also I do wear a lot of black. But now I have my hair. It's quite gingerish, so I do have a green coat that I really, really love. So yeah, it's also depends on that, but, if I don't go for black, I do go for plead or I do go for like more like the English patterns that you would find in clothing. Because I grew up with Harry Potter, I think maybe something to do with that, god knows.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yes, that's understandable, I guess. I mean, I feel like childhood is so related to how you feel both negatively and positively, right? It can cause trauma. It can give comfort, it can be everything.

Andreea
Yeah, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
How do you think you integrate childhood as a very broad term, into your way of dressing? Does it influence your comfort? Because you talked about the swings in the garden and being peaceful and Harry Potter. So, a bit of an abstract question, but maybe there is some connection?

Andreea
Well, in my clothing I think from yeah, when I was very young, I did like the style that it's more vintage very much. I don't think I can remember any specific time, but no, I might do. So, my grandma had a brother that lives in America and he would bring us a lot of American movies to watch when we were kids, but he would bring like the old movies, like from the 30s, 40s, 50s. So yeah, of course, when you grow up with Barbie movies and Disney Channel, but I also grew up with those movies, like the very old ones. And I do feel like in my mind, because I am used to that, I do draw a lot of comfort when I dress kind of like vintage. Inspired not 100% because yeah, that's a bit much, but some certain styles. Like for example, I'd really love turtlenecks like I'm wearing one right now. Gives me a lot of comfort. Also, just the fact that you can pull up the neck over your chin, it's hidden and you're warm and nice and everything inside it. I do relate it to childhood when you know you were in bed, and you would put like your blanket on top of your head. So, this is like a form you can get that in your clothing. Yeah. I think the dress in summer, it's just Barbie-inspired. I wanna be a Princess and whatever. Which, yeah, who doesn't?

Adriaan Kruithof
Who doesn't? Honestly. That's interesting. So, I have the challenge that now in my project that the things that the brand I'm working for can produce will be very simple, very basic styles. So, it's mostly gonna be T-shirts, sweaters, crew necks, like the very basics. So, I'm kind of trying to find some ways how to integrate the things that the people like you that are interviewed, mention which gives them comfort. Because you said for example that you felt very comfortable when you wear black, right?

Andreea
Yes, yes.

Adriaan Kruithof
Nice. How about any prints? Any embroidery? Is there any anything that will automatically evoke some positive feelings in you?

Andreea
Yeah, I think anything nature related like if you put a boat, that would. I don't want embroidery with like, not necessarily flowers, but like vines, I feel like vines for me are very peaceful like I think there are very pretty plants. Also anything like astrology related like maybe not crystals. I'm not into crystal but anything like stars or like skies and stuff like that. Also what I see, assured that it's of course the print is nice, not childish, cause the I think there's a fine line between, but if I really, really like it, I'm like, that's it. Just sparks something inside and also, I do prefer embroidery over prints. For example, I feel like they would last longer and they always are umm, not more, more expensive, but they they remind me of that handcrafted feel rather than a print

where it's just printed on top of something. It's nicer if it's embroidered. But yeah, I would say anything, that's nature inspired. I would look at it and be like ohh, I kind of want it.

Adriaan Kruithof
OK, that's that's honestly very interesting input. Maybe we can turn it the other way around because I also want to prevent, you know negative associations from happening. Is there anything that would make you immediately feel a bit turned away or maybe even triggered?

Andreea
Yeah. For example, if you put quotes on clothes like just a basic quote, it sometimes doesn't hit where it's supposed to, like every person feels different about different sayings, so I would just stay clear of that because I do sometimes see something, and if I'm having a bad day, I'm like, don't tell me to it's a wonderful day or whatever. Like, I would say no to have it text on it necessarily. Maybe something like very meaningful that it's very precise, but I couldn't come up with something. Yeah, it it just from person to person. It can differ so much that I don't think it's worth it. I'm not really into for example, skulls. I'm not the type. I do not like roses. I can have a full list of what prints I don't like, but I think also anything that is 2010-inspired, like the mustache and like I don't know, Galaxy prints or whatever. I found those. I cannot look at one and like, take it seriously. It's just like, no. Also, dolphins strangely. I wouldn't use dolphins.

Adriaan Kruithof
OK, very specific.

Andreea
I don't know why. It's very specific, you could use a whale. I don't mind a whale, but a dolphin. I don't know. It's something in my brain. So I don't know which dolphin traumatized me in my childhood. But yeah, I don't know. For example, pets are nice to have, like, different animals on your shirt, but not that much. Like, I wouldn't say I'm more drawn to that.

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright, OK, I love this. All of the things that you just said. This is a lot of very interesting input, honestly.

Andreea
Yeah, just don't put the dolphins, and then you're fine.

Adriaan Kruithof
No, no, no. Dolphins are cancelled.

Andreea
Yeah. Cancel.

Adriaan Kruithof

Alright. Maybe it's just a bit about the general idea again. Do you want clothing brands in general to support social or environmental organizations? Would it be a point for you to support this brand and rather buy this product?

Andreea
Yes, yes, yes. Yeah, I would. I am more inclined, especially right now, I stopped buying entirely from H&M or Zara, whatever. Only if I'm like in a very specific situation like I really, really something and I cannot find it anywhere like I spilled something on my pants. I'm on holiday. I don't have any other brand around. Fine. OK. I will give my money, but otherwise I try to not do it. And if I do find a brand that I like and I can afford, of course, because that's also important. I do my research before because I'm like, do I really wanna pay for my T-shirt from this company? So it's now most of my clothing are either. Yeah, they're thrifted most of them. Or for example, this what I'm wearing right now. It's a sample from g-star. So, it's like something I didn't pay for it. It's just something I have to wear it. Umm, so I would say I'm not buying without knowing where the product is coming from anymore, but yeah, I'm also in the industry and I know what happens behind the closed door, so I'm way more inclined to buying something that it's actually sustainable or thinks about it.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, that makes sense. Also, if you since you mentioned the industry, maybe there's some general things. What would you like to see more within the fashion and the creative industry, maybe especially in relation to mental health?

Andreea
I was talking today with the one of my co-workers, and I think not a lot of people realize clothing is made by people, by actual garment workers. They have in their brain the image that a machine like for cars or whatever else, a machine makes the clothing. But that's not true. Like, of course you have for the fabric, the looms and whatever, but people are actually sewing them and I think also, for people that work in those factories, it would be important to be more seen by the public and for the industry to actually create the image that all clothing is handmade at a basic level. You know, it's not machine made when you put a label on a cloth that's handmade. I'm always like, is it sewed by hand like without a machine then? Yeah, then you can say it's handmade.. But if you use the machine like, that's what the factory worker from H&M also does like. It's something that I think we lost at some point when we became so fast fashioned that people are still making the clothes. And I don't see a lot of campaigns that actually put that to the forefront. When you say for people and the planet, most of the people that are outside the industry, they don't think for people means for the garment workers and it means for us because we live on this planet, you know. So I think that's something that should be more shown in the media because right now I I don't really see a lot of campaigns about it, to be honest.

Adriaan Kruithof
I don't think so either. I feel like it's almost always like about the way, for example, the cotton is farmed, or the materials are recycled, but it's almost never about who actually is recycling these materials, and, more important, who is sewing those recycled materials into the garments that you are wearing right now.

Andreea

Yeah. And also, just using the recycled ohh it's 30% recycled OK, but why isn't it all of it recycled or is it recycled from what? You know like there are some questions that people I know understand on their daily lives, do not ask themselves, but at some point some are should be like OK, recycled. But from what? From where? Where does it go? How is it made, you know? Go more in depth of it.

Adriaan Kruithof
No, but that's that's very true. I feel like that's not done enough. Two more questions actually, because one thing just to jump back a little bit because you said something very interesting about not putting quotes or a lot of lettering or sentences on garments, which I usually also am not a big fan of. But something that we might include in the designs without having any yet is of course the name 'community of real people'. How do you feel about that name? You can be completely honest.

Andreea
I don't mind that. I think it's also because it's not widely used like the word community, necessarily. I don't know. I like it. I don't mind it. There's this account on Tumblr back in the day. It's called the ghost club. And it's like, yeah, different quotes for people that go through mental struggles. And there's just this ghost as a icon and sort of like a cartoonish type of thing and they have merged with like part of the Ghost Club and I really like that because then it's for the people that know what it represents. So this name, like community of normal people gives me the same type of vibes as that one. So for me, I think I like it and it definitely would grow on me.

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright, alright so what would you associations only with the word community be then? Since you mentioned that?

Andreea
Be part of something - like for me, of course my depression is a lot related to feeling lonely; to feeling very alien to the world. And then when you say community, it already makes me feel like I'm part of something - like I'm not doing this all on my own, which for me is very comforting.

Adriaan Kruithof
How do you feel? Because I'm just trying to come up with other with other keywords that you mention. And you said for example that you often are in the extremes, right? Either very bad or very good?

Andreea
Yeah, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
How do you feel about the word balance?

Andreea

Ohk. OK. I like the word, I do. Also I have to say I am quite passionate about poetry like literature in general and I do a list with favorite words. But I also think I like balanced more than balance. I don't know why I feel like that, because balance without the d at the end is more everything can be balanced like it's more sort of like for nursery objects. But I'm thinking about the scale and then there is balance. But when it's balanced with the D it's I also can be balanced or field balance. There might also be one is an objective and the other one is another. part of proposition, but I'm not entirely sure. Right now, I have to put it in a sentence like one is a verb and the other one is a an adjective or something. So that's also important, like when a word is a verb rather than something else?

Adriaan Kruithof
That's all very true. Love the objections in there, but what would be your association with the word then? Balance.

Andreea
My association. Oh. Umm, maybe the ideal I would try to achieve in life. To come to like a balanced state for me would seem like what I achieved to do through therapy and whatever like to try to achieve that. They're going every day up and low, like just having a constant in your life. That would be very nice.

Adriaan Kruithof
I agree with that. I also have that a lot of times that I change my moods like 20 times during the day and it's just exhausting I guess.

Andreea
Yeah, exactly. That's the best word you can find, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, so sometimes a bit more balance would be good I guess, but I I love that you have a list of favorite words.

Andreea
Yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
Is there is there any words from that list, maybe even that I should consider in my mind map for this project?

Andreea
Let me check.
Umm, where's my notes? Where's my list? Favorite words?

Adriaan Kruithof
Mm-hmm.

Andreea
Oh, there's a word. Ohm. I like the word. The word quaint, which means calmness or whatever like that. Like it's a synonym for calm, serene and stuff like that. But it's quaint. It's it is more old, I would say. And then there's a word that let me find the actual translation for this. It's moored. For example when a ship is docked somewhere, but when that vessel is no longer attached to the place or whatever, it's unmoored. And also for a person that means insecure. Confused or lacking contact, but this is the negative of the word.

Adriaan Kruithof
But that's too very cool words and I am not gonna lie, I haven't heard of any of them.

Andreea
You're welcome.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yes, thank you. Thank you. Alright, great.

Andreea-
It's a. It's from listening to Taylor Swift, by the way.

Adriaan Kruithof
Ohk. OK, go off Taylor. Ohh yeah, she just released a new album, right? Did you like it? I know you're a big fan.

Andreea
I loved it. I had a very great time. I could actually relate to a couple of songs, and then I was like, OK, OK, nice, nice. It's very fun.

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright, I'll try to send the T-shirt to Taylor Swift when they're done.

Andreea-
Say thank you, Taylor.

Adriaan Kruithof
Cool. OK, I think that was mainly my main set of questions. Maybe since you are very good at this whole conversation: Is there any general tips, any general things you want to tell me, concerning this project? Any other thoughts? Any input at all?

Andreea
Yes, think about the fabric. Choose wisely, like try to find nice fabric that feels nice on the skin, cause when you like have a very bad mental health situation, the last thing you want to do is put like a very scratchy or like I don't know stiff fabric om, so I think, if you take it from because you said it's a quite a minimalistic brand, like if you only take it from the very core of the garment, which is the fabric, and you try to make it nice and you try to think about it in a way that it cannot catch in everything. It cannot make your day worse then it already is. I think that's very important. So I love natural fabrics. I'm all for cotton or linen. I think wool sometimes can be very itchy, so I wool it's a bit of a drama queen. I think that's if you start from that level, you're already quite on a good track and also be careful where you place labels cause those can also be very annoying and that's not nice. We don't like that.

Adriaan Kruithof
True. So you'll feel like 100% oeko-tex cotton or something would be fine?

Andreea
Yeah, if it's cotton then it's solved that. It's nice and it's breathable. You can breathe through the fabric and it also keeps warm and I think that's very important.

Adriaan Kruithof
Thank you so so much for taking the time. Honestly, I appreciate it a lot. There were a lot of very, very, very insightful answers and really I appreciate that you opened up and made such great connections all the time.

Interview Alexandra

Adriaan Kruithof
Cool. Let's just dive into it. So, first of all, what's your name? Age and where are you from?

Alexandra
My name is Alexandra. My age is 22 and I'm from Northamptonshire, England.

Adriaan Kruithof
And what field do you work with or study at the moment?

Alexandra
Uh fashion and textile technologies, but I'm doing an internship in development and production of a fashion brand.

Adriaan Kruithof
OK, then it's getting a bit more personal. What is your relation slash your story with mental health.

Alexandra

I think I've struggled with my mental health a little bit since I was younger. I had like with anxiety and I saw a therapist for the first time when I was like 12. Umm. And then yeah, I moved a lot growing up so also have been in and out of therapy a lot. I would say now I'm the most stable with my mental health as I have been. But still, yeah, seeing a therapist when I need to. I think now I understand my mental health, like my anxiety and everything a lot more. So yeah, it's easier to know when I need to see someone.

Adriaan Kruithof

So you said you went to therapist the first time when you were 12? How was that for you?

Alexandra

So the first time I went, my mom actually went with me, so it was a little bit easier I guess. I never really knew like how to talk about, like, verbalize how I was feeling. So, I always would just get frustrated and that translated as me being like a trouble child. I think for my parents' generation mental health was not really talked about that much. I think they didn't understand so much. And then like kind of throughout my teen years, my parents, especially my mom, tried to like, understand a lot more. And my sister also struggles with anxiety and panic attacks. Yeah. So, I think talking about stuff as a family then, like everyone in my family now has more of an understanding about it. And I think it was good for my mom also to in therapy for the first session with me because I was so young then, so she could also, yeah, understand a little bit more.

Adriaan Kruithof

Nice. And now when you say that you're currently kind of have been in and out of therapy and kind of know how to handle it, how would you normally handle it? Like what can you do to feel better when you feel like those moments or maybe even periods of anxiety?

Alexandra

Yeah, I think I've figured it out. What helps for me personally is talking to someone. Well, yeah, it depends on the situation. Sometimes I need to be alone and for me, like yoga and meditation or going on a run like physical exercise really helps me a lot just to clear my head and like, not be on the phone or like talking to anyone or anything just to. Yeah, clear my head. But other times, if I feel like I'm going to have a panic attack or something, I always FaceTime my sister and yeah, she talks me through breathing exercises and stuff. Yeah. So I think if you know, like the people that you can talk to who help calm you down. Yeah, but there's other times when if I try to talk to someone, if I'm just like anxious, then it makes me more anxious because, like, the advice, you know, you get in like a negative headspace like, my mom will try to be like, „But you can do this and this". And I just like, shut everything down because nothing helps sometimes, you know.

Adriaan Kruithof

Yeah, I definitely know what you mean. I had such a panic attack on a concert in Berlin the summer as well, and I was there with my mom and my brother. And you know, we gave it to her as a birthday gift or something and went to see a band together that she really liked. And there were so many people, it was so overcrowded. And I don't know, the whole thing took like 6 hours or something. And it got, like, so bad that I had all the having trouble breathing and every, like,

all the symptoms. I had the feeling so much that they just, like, didn't understand and that just like stressed me out and made me so much more anxious that I literally had to leave the venue and go to the forest nearby and sit down and calm myself down. So, it's interesting how communication sometimes can make it a lot easier and sometimes so much harder.

Alexandra
Yeah, definitely. And yeah, I think and until you experience like anxiety or, yeah, different mental health struggles than, it's difficult to understand. Like for my mom sometimes she's like, yeah, but everyone gets stressed, you know, it's about figuring out trying to understand the difference between like, yeah, stress and, like, normal feelings and emotions and, like, actual struggles where it, like, you need help or need to talk to someone. And I understand the breathing, that was always a topic for me when I was younger. I think when I was like 5, I was diagnosed with asthma. Yeah, my breathing struggles were not asthma. It was like from anxiety and yeah, so, like, understanding as I got older that there's so many, like, physical symptoms as well of, like, anxiety and everything.

Adriaan Kruithof
Hmm. Yeah, it's interesting. Yesterday when I had the interview with Andreea, she also talked about something like that. That the biggest point for her was to understand that it's nothing wrong in her head necessarily. But there are little physical reactions. And of course, she compared it to a broken arm, nobody will be able to see it from the outside, but it's still a thing. So, how do you feel about the general perception of society and mental health?

Alexandra
I think it's getting a lot better like with our generation, I feel like everyone is a lot more open to talking about things, like within friends and how to verbalize. Yeah, it's easier to talk to people from our generation. And yeah, people who are open minded about everything. But then at the same time I was thinking earlier about like I wouldn't talk to people from work or colleagues about mental health or if I have a therapist appointment, I would say, Oh yeah, I have a doctor's appointment because I also don't want people's perception of me to change, whereas with my friends I feel like it's reciprocated, like the conversation about mental health. But in a workplace, I would still feel like I don't want to seem like fragile or unstable, especially for an internship. If it's like potential employers and stuff, I don't know. I feel like it's more like walked around and not really spoken about in a workplace, you know?

Adriaan Kruithof
That's interesting, since you also work in the fashion industry and have that study background because I read some things and actually mental health conditions are 25% more likely within the creative fields. Why do you think that is that way?

Alexandra
That's an interesting question. Well, like fashion in general, I would say obviously it's a lot more competitive. For like design and like I have friends who go to AMFI (Amsterdam Fashion Institute) and stuff and I think it's a lot more of a high pressure environment and it's more difficult to find a job afterwards. So, everything is a little bit more competitive. And in the creative fields then it's often not like right or wrong, not about grades and numbers and everything. Everything

is more subjective. So, I think it could be frustrating if, like, you're passionate about something you're doing, but it's not really being seen.

Adriaan Kruithof
I think that's already pretty good assumptions you have there. From what I got from my literature research, it's also because of the incredible fast pace of the industry. Since you constantly have to produce things on a scale that almost no other industry has, of course, this whole competitiveness just gets catalyzed. But anyways one thing I want to ask you because I'm talking to a lot of different people and as I told you yesterday, there were more people than I expected to actually want to talk to me about this topic. Is there something you personally would perceive all people with any mental health conditions maybe have in common?

Alexandra
Umm.I think it depends a lot on the condition. And I think I would be very surprised if there is someone out there who has, like, no mental health struggles or no mental health issues, so I think it's just the difference between people who are talking about them and people who aren't. And I think you have to be a little bit more in touch with your emotions and everything to be able to like, verbalize and talk about it and like, acknowledge that you have struggles. But yeah, I wouldn't say that there is. Because everyone has mental health struggles. Yeah, I I think there's no one out there that doesn't.

Adriaan Kruithof
No, I think that's also a bit of a abstract question to ask. I'm just thinking about it because in the beginning I was thinking, OK, how can I kind of reflect it in the designs? Can I find some, you know, some common ground, some shared topics, we are all struggling with or also some objectives that all makes us feel better about ourselves. So that's where the question is kind of coming from.

Alexandra
Yeah. I don't know. Maybe it also just like thinking deeper about things because yeah, if you are just staying on like surface level. Then obviously there's not as much to think about and reflect on like in your mental health, but maybe that people who are struggling with mental health or maybe like thinking and reflecting more deeply.

Adriaan Kruithof
Could be, could be. OK. But maybe back to you as a person again, how's the way you dress related to how you feel?

Alexandra
Ooh, that's a very good question. So I feel like my style has evolved a lot depending on yeah, the different stages of like my mental health struggle, because I also struggled a lot with like self-confidence. So, I think when I was younger and living in the US, I definitely just wanted to dress how the popular girls dressed in school and fit in. And yeah, having all the most basic stuff from Abercrombie and, you know, looking like the girls in the magazines. And then as I've gotten older, it's like I really don't want anything in my closet that anyone else has. You know, so really

finding, like, my own individual style and like unique pieces in my closet. And that's like definitely a reflection of me being more confident in myself and not dressing to impress other people. But like, what do I feel good in? And then also a reflection of. I also struggle with like an eating disorder and I was in a clinic last year. I don't know if you knew this. But yeah, also confidence in my body. So, if I'm having like a bad day, then it's like, yeah, very oversized, baggy clothing. And yeah, if I'm feeling more good about myself then, yeah, dressing more feminine.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, yeah, you actually told me when you visited in March. But that's interesting because I feel like I also have that from my personal experience, I also more have it with anxiety and a bit more of what I would call depressive periods or something. And I know personally that I have those days where I really do not want to leave the bed under no circumstances, and then I have those like two or three outfits where I know they will always give me the comfort I need. And I know I look kind of good in it, but they also, you know, feel comfortable when wearing it. Do you have something like that as well?

Alexandra
Yeah, definitely my I have a lot of clothes from my dad. So like my dad's sweaters. (Points at sweater she is wearing). This is one of them. I have one pair of jeans that are like the perfect baggy, comfy. So it's like, I feel like I'm wearing joggers or sweatpants or something, but I feel like I still look cool and like, stylish in them. And there is one pair of sneakers that are like my go to. And also accessorizing, my jewelry is, I feel like I can wear like plain jeans and a t-shirt. But like with all my jewelry, I feel like I look more put together and everything. Yeah. And most of my jewelry is also like from my mom or my grandma or something. So I also just like, feel, yeah, feel good when I wear it.

Adriaan Kruithof
So would you say that's also like the main way that clothing or garments that you wear can create some emotional value for you if it's, for example, coming from your family?

Alexandra
Yeah, definitely. And like, yeah, I think it's nice when someone compliments something. And I'm like, ohh yeah, this necklace my dad gave to my mom for her 21st birthday. And it's also nice conversation starters. But yeah, also looking in the mirror and seeing it and being like, oh, that's from this loved one and that loved one and, you know. Yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
That's true. That's true. Are there any other things where you would say, OK, you go to a store and you buy some new clothes, for example, how can that create emotional value for you? Or can it even?

Alexandra
I think definitely it can. I think when I buy something new then I'm excited to wear it. The day that I'm planning the outfit with like a new piece in my closet, it changes my mood throughout the whole day, you know? And then there's also, like memories from, going on a shopping trip with my mom and oh, I got that there. And so then when I put something on in the morning, then I'm

thinking about the memory from when I bought it. Yeah, I think it definitely kind of affects your mood and everything.

Adriaan Kruithof
I think I have the same thing that it's mostly about memories and maybe been places, you know, if you're on a nice vacation and you have this one shirt or whatever and you're like, Oh yes, I was in Hungary then or something like that. Yeah.

Alexandra
Definitely.Yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
OK. Then maybe kind of kind of related to this question, since I'm gonna do a lot of prints and probably embroidery and kind of basic styles for the things that will be sewn: Are there any motives, fonts, anything that you would say will always better your mood a bit? Colors or materials?

Alexandra
Umm, that's a very good question. Colors... Yeah, I feel like I'm normally like a very dark dresser, like a lot of black and everything, but recently as I've been in this new chapter of life and doing a lot better, I've started wearing a lot more like bright colors and prints. And yeah, when I put something on in the morning and it's bright, I feel like it changes my mood. So maybe like my favorite colors to wear that make me the happiest is like turquoise and like bright blues and then also like purple, like bright purple, lilac kind of. There's are, like, my favorite colors to wear at the moment. And yellow just feels like a happy color. UM, and then specific fabrics, I would say knits. Yeah, I like to dress for comfort a lot. So, like in knits and oversized clothes like soft clothes. I don't know specific fonts though.

Adriaan Kruithof
So if you would choose between synthetic and natural materials?

Alexandra

Umm. Natural probably. Yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
I just thinking because you talked about the comfort and I feel like I for example have this one polyester shirt and it's 100% polyester, but it looks so good. So, I'm always in the in this ambivalent state of, OK, at one point it looks very good, but I don't feel super ******* comfortable on that.

Alexandra

Yeah, yeah. I don't know. It's always the question between like synthetic and naturals. And like a lot of my stuff is natural fibers. But it's all second-hand or you know from my family. So if I'm purchasing new clothes, then I would look more for recycled synthetics rather than natural fibers, but I think that also comes from being like a textile student paying more attention to it. But yeah, I don't know how much like typical customers are thinking about it.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. So that's a that's a good question. That's why I tried to talk to as many people as possible. I think that's gonna be very interesting to see. Maybe we can also turn it the other way around. Any motives, any fabrics, any colors where you would naturally just be opposed to buying a garment?

Alexandra
Umm, well virgin synthetics, I would say for me. Yeah. Also, if it's like a very stiff garments that I'm not comfortable in or like really tight things, yeah, I want to be comfortable throughout the day. Umm. Colors. Uh, living in the Netherlands? I'm not really buying orange because I feel like it's kings Day. And like there's some sad colors, I guess, like dark blue and like really deep purple and stuff that. But yeah, that's really it. That would like turn me away immediately or like Gothic style fonts. I'm not a fan.

Adriaan Kruithof
But you wear a lot of black, so it's more about the fonts, not about the color black?

Alexandra Barker
Yeah, exactly.

Adriaan Kruithof
All right. OK. Just wanted to clarify that. How do you feel about dark brown for like hoodies, sweatshirts, stuff like that?

Alexandra
I love dark brown. (Shows jacket) That's like my favorite jacket from my dad that I'm wearing all the time.

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright, yes, perfect example.
Great. I was just wondering since I basically have limited options and I'm gonna do a lot of printing and whatever and you said the things that will make you feel best if you have those days of anxiousness for example, would be to exercise right and move around or talk to people that you're close to. Do you have any preference, would you like to be in the city surrounding, would you like to be in a natural surrounding? Or where are your safe spaces?

Alexandra
Natural surrounding for sure. Yeah, like being around too many people and crowds and stuff like

makes me anxious. Umm yeah, I'm lucky. I'm kind of like living outside of the center, so I live right next to a big park. So, like going for a walk in the park and like my happy space is like at my parents house and they're living in the countryside. So it's just like, peaceful and calm and like, yeah, you feel like a little bit of a detox from the city and people and stress, you know, so.

Adriaan Kruithof
So would you say if you saw that like printed on some shirts or something, that would also evoke this feeling or?

Alexandra
Yeah, maybe. Like when I think of the countryside and like neutral tones and like, like green and everything like those are all also like quite soothing colors and stuff. And if yeah. Yeah, the feeling of being in nature, were kind of like put into a garment, I think it would also like invoke those feelings.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, I still have a lot of questions, but I completely got ahead of myself, so I have to organize my head for a second. Alright. As somebody being from inside of the fashion industry, do you personally want clothing brands to support social or environmental organizations?

Alexandra
Yeah, I think that definitely gives added value if you're supporting a brand that you know is supporting a cause that you're also invested in. Yeah, definitely.

Adriaan Kruithof
And the other way round there anything that will just prevent you from buying from a specific brand?

Alexandra
Yeah. I mean, if there is, I think a lot is now being exposed like on social media, the whole Shein thing. I mean, I was never a Shein customer, but like yeah, knowing if a brand is like not treating their workers fairly or like fair wages and stuff, yeah, that would definitely turn me away.

Adriaan Kruithof
Maybe you also have any general thoughts of what do you would do like like to see more within the fashion industry in the future?

Alexandra
Slow down the pace like also yeah, Black Friday is coming up. I think all the like sales and promotions and everything. Yeah, slow down. The whole pace of everything and stop trying to sell so much ****, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
Anything specific about the fashion industry in relation to mental health?

Alexandra
Maybe starting a conversation more, I think like also at Fashion Week and like when there's big events, it's like an opportunity. There's so many eyes on different brands that like a conversation could be started.

Adriaan Kruithof
I mean, that's pretty much what I'm also trying to contribute to with this project. Do you maybe have any inputs, how do you think that could be done like bestly in the communication?

Alexandra
I mean, what you're trying to do through the clothes? Yeah, I mean, the eyes are on the clothes at events like this, so. Yeah, people are always looking for like the story behind the collection. So if that story is like translated through social media and website. Yeah. To spread the message, I guess.

Adriaan Kruithof
Do you think it's also easy to communicate that only using the clothes so to have it really in the designs of the clothes?

Alexandra
I don't know. For a lot of customers, unless you know the story behind the brands and like, yeah. Then I don't know how it would be translated because some people look at clothes as just clothes so, unless you have, like specific text on them, then it might be difficult to translate.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, but how do you feel about different like fonts and lettering and text and quotes or whatever you wanna call it on clothes? I feel like it's a thin line between being able to build a being a bit empowering, but it also can be very cringy.

Alexandra
Yeah. No, me personally, I don't really like text on my clothes, so I would prefer. Yeah, it should be more like a story about, like, coming from the brand and like the website and the social media, I think, yeah, you could still make it, like, really prevalent when people are buying the clothes so they know the story without making it like, the whole thing on the clothes.

Adriaan Kruithof
I think doing it too literal can easily yeah, make the whole garment just look a bit try-hard. The mental health awareness project that I'm collaborating with has the name community of real people. How do you feel about the name?

Alexandra

I like the word community because, yeah, you think of community. Think of inclusiveness and. Yeah, but of real people then, it also feels slightly exclusive to, like saying that we're real people and I don't know. So you know what I mean.

Adriaan Kruithof

I know what you mean, and that's so interesting because I didn't look at it from that perspective before. Since I understood his idea of being the real people, it's all people and the realness comes maybe through opening up. But even if you see it that way, of course it can be exclusive of the people who choose not to do that.

Alexandra

But that that wouldn't be my first thought when I hear it. But if you ask me to really think about it then I would say, Oh yeah, maybe it's.

Adriaan Kruithof

Yeah, I love that. That's a very honest answer. That's some good input. Umm, OK what will I do with this information? I'm not sure yet. Alright. I mean, there's a few other like keywords. I think that always kind of come up in the mental Health conversation. One thing that I always have to think about when I think about my own struggles with it, is the term balance. What are your associations with that word?

Alexandra

Definitely, yeah, I think. Also with COVID, I feel like you had to figure out a balance a lot. Yeah, I'm very much like an all or nothing person with a lot of things. So like with school and with work and with also going out and social life and working out. So I feel like I'm in the past years I've been a lot either in a period of like going out and like social life and yeah, drinking a lot and partying, blah blah blah or during COVID it was a period of waking up at 5:00 every morning to work out and like doing a juice cleanse and like. No alcohol and eating clean and blah blah blah and like super extremes. And now I've really found like a balance. Umm yeah, and listening more. Not only I've always been good at listening to what like my physical body needs and like, OK, it's a rest day from working out or yeah. The physical body. But now I'm also learning. OK, it's OK to say no to going out and seeing friends. And figuring out like the balance for my mental health as well, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof

Do you have any other keywords that come directly to your mind when you think about mental health?

Alexandra

Umm. "Personal". I think it's really dependent like depends on the person, not all tips for one person are going to work for the other so.

Adriaan Kruithof
That's a good one. How do you feel about the term childhood?

Alexandra
I think everyone's mental health struggles are rooted in childhood trauma. So yeah, even if you grow up with like the most perfect situation and stable childhood, I think that whatever struggles you have stem from childhood, so.

Adriaan Kruithof
It's a very ambivalent word, right? I think it can give so much comfort and so much discomfort at the same time. Also ambivalence maybe is a good keyword when I think about it.

Alexandra
Umm yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof

I'll write those down later.
OK, let me check if I have any other questions that didn't come up during this conversation so far. Kinda don't think so. Maybe you will have some more general things you always wanted to say. Some input for this particular project. Anything that comes to mind.

Alexandra
Uh, I don't know. I feel like we've talked about a lot.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, we did. So it was a fast conversation as well. We both also kind of fast talkers.

Alexandra
Yeah. True, which I like. No, I don't think I can think of anything right now. I'll let you know if I think of anything when I reflect on our conversation!

Adriaan Kruithof
Yes, if you do so, please do. But no pressure at all. Then first of all, thank you for having this conversation. Thank you for opening up. I know it's not always an easy topic to talk about, but I think your insights really helped me with my ongoing project. So I'll just stop the recording now and then we can continue talking.

Interview Niveditha

Adriaan Kruithof
Right. Let's start with the first question then. What's your name, your age and where are you from?

Niveditha
So my name is Nivedita. I am 21 years old when I'm gonna be 22 in like a month. I am from Chennai, India.

Adriaan Kruithof
In what field do you work or study?

Niveditha
So I'm studying fashion design, basically a bachelor's in design.

Adriaan Kruithof
OK, then a bit more personal: What is your relation or your story with mental health?

Niveditha
Like I personally haven't been as such, diagnosed with anything. But I think that I struggle a lot with mental health and I know it's not like anything like a term disorder or anything, but I think that I still suffer a lot with it because it's like the way I live and like my education it puts me in such high pressure situations that I feel like I inevitably suffer, like struggle a lot with it to kind of make my peace with it. But yeah, for most days it's like lows and highs and yeah, a bit on the lower side, I guess.

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright, so do you feel in general that the fashion industry is kind of benefiting this and catalyzing this stress and a worse state of your own mental health?

Niveditha
Yeah, I like. I think the fashion industry in itself is like so fast-paced, right? It's like there's Paris Fashion Week, London Fashion Week and then Milan Fashion Week. And it's just like spring / summer and there's autumn / winter, there's in between collections. There's, like so many things happening all at once that I think that the people who are in the industry are inevitably sourced to just not even have a moment to breathe, let alone like care for their mental health? Or like, take a check in with themselves and and I think like, it affects a lot of the people who are just beginning or are on the lower level of the employees. Right. Like, I think the freshers or like the newer designers or like the smaller people who just entered, I think a lot of the work ends up on their head and since the industry is so fast-paced, right, I think it really like takes advantage of them. I haven't seen any fashion designer or any like big person in fashion acknowledge a person's mental health or like their employees, mental health or their own for that matter. I think that it's not even like something that is really like considered of importance in the industry just because if it's like past baseness or, like, the way that the whole design, the fashion design industry functions, I think that it's just overly consuming basically.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, I agree with that personally. I think we are in an industry that doesn't care about both the people inside nor the people outside. I mean, I also think of unrealistic body ideals, racist tendencies, sexist tendencies, you know. Umm, there's a lot, a lot of things going wrong in my opinion, but how do you feel if you would have to pinpoint one thing that you would like to see to change within the creative and fashion industry? What would it be?

Niveditha
I think that instead of looking at people as like workers or like somebody that works under you or somebody that like you have control over. I think that they should also be treated as like human beings with their valid emotions. That maybe from like the smallest factory worker to like an assistant designer or something, often all these big companies and the big brands they just see you as one small gear in the whole system, right? They're like, you didn't meet this deadline, or you didn't meet that deadline or... Yeah, I understand it's important to maintain the professionalism and stuff, but they should treat people as people that have their own needs. They need that balance. They need their own space and everything. I think that the industry should look at people more as people.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, I feel like that has to do a lot with capitalistic worldview and just existing structures that are kind of hard to break out from sometimes.

Niveditha
Yes.

Adriaan Kruithof
How do you feel: Would you rather buy from a brand who communicates more social or also sustainable efforts in general?

Niveditha
Yes definitely! I feel like I personally do not wanna buy clothes or even associate with a brand that is not sustainable or doesn't meet its employees in a fair manner. Right, because if I am associating with the brand that doesn't do that, then I'm supporting that in a way. If there is something wrong then you need to call out on that being wrong. Otherwise, you're like indirectly supporting it, right? So, I think that like I definitely now I'm trying my level best to buy from brands that are like ethical or sustainable because I want to be associated with and I want that to come up. And I don't want the other side of it to be the main like status quo in fashion.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yes, I agree with that. OK, maybe coming back to be you as a person a bit more. Again, you say that you especially related to your studies experience a lot of stress and because of that a lot of lows.
What do you do when you have these lows to feel better about yourself?

Niveditha
Umm. So I think. For a lot of us, I think our self-esteem is a lot associated with performance in work or in education. Sometimes when we don't get good grades and we don't do well in work, our self-esteem is affected, but it's not like one low grade or whatever makes you a bad person or means you aren't capable or anything. But somehow especially for me my performance is kind of linked with my self-esteem. So, when I cannot cope with it or when I don't like go up to the level that I'm expecting myself to be, I kind of feel very low because I'm like, OK, if I can't even do that then like, am I even worth it or anything like that? But then I tell myself that, you know, it's not about this one project. It's not about this one this thing you're under a lot of pressure because like when you've given, like, unachievable deadlines, you cannot help it. So, I just try to tell myself that, you know, you are capable. It's just that situation that you're in is not allowing yourself to be of that. And apart from that, of course, like relaxing with my friends or my family and like just taking my mind out of those whole thoughts like breaking it and like coming out of it is I think it helps me a lot.

Adriaan Kruithof
So how would you do that in the best way? Do you also speak with your friends and family about your lows and your negative phases, or do you I don't know, go out to nature, do sports or whatever, like what is your best ways to get your mind off the stress and actually relax?

Niveditha
I definitely do talk about my lows to my friends and my family because I think I'm a very open person and the more I share the better I feel. So I definitely do share it with my friends and my family. But I think even that has a demerit, right? Because when they're constantly seeing that I'm sad and I'm low and everything, like what happens is I also start imposing this negativity on them to some extent. Everybody can't take it all. Of course, friends are meant to be there for you and your family is there for you. But then if you're constantly negative, right, you kind of tire them out also. So like you know, that is also like an unseen factor here that when you voicing out, you have to talk about then only then you will feel better. But like sometimes when you're talking so much, you also put all the negativity on them. So that also is like another aspect that I feel like I've faced and I just write, I don't know schools and the lazy question. So, but I just go out somewhere so that I just don't think about the college work and it's stress. Whatever. I just go in the present moment and just have fun.

Adriaan Kruithof
OK. Is there any any favorite activities you do with your friends then?

Niveditha
I think the only thing that I really get time to do nowadays is eat, so we just go to cafes or like some nice place and we have food. I don't really get time to like go on like a minute drive or anything like that. So it's most probably like we go out for ice cream like we just go eat something. So I think it's more or less like food.

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright, I get that. I also do that a lot, just like food or maybe going to a bar and just really take your mind off it, right?

Niveditha
Yeah, exactly.

Adriaan Kruithof
How's the way you dress related to how you feel?

Niveditha
The reason to motivate me going to university. So every day I wake up, I'm like, OK, put on a good outfit. At least I'll motivate myself to go out. So like I think that whole process of like getting dressed and like putting together a nice outfit and like looking good, it gives you a little bit of that energy or that little bit of motivation. I don't know. I can't exactly quantify it, but it just somehow makes you feel better. Any explanation? Scientific explanation behind it? There probably is. But like I just try, like, tell myself. OK, come on, put on a good outfit. If you put on a good outfit, it'll give you like, a little bit of energy. So I just try to, like, dress up whenever I feel sad. So it gives me a like, a little bit of boost to go out of the house to just push myself. It gives me that starting push.

Adriaan Kruithof
There actually is some scientific tests and some scientific evidence. Yeah, they tested that during COVID, for example with people working from home and how they would perform if they would be wearing their pyjamas compared to if they actually dress up nicely, like in a shirt or blouse or whatever, you know. And they performed a lot better. Also, students in class who dressed in something that they perceived as being very comfortable perform better in their exams, and there actually is a lot of connection to that. For example, I think the most famous experiment they did was that they put on lab coats on people and let them do tasks and like one time let them do the task with the lab coat on and then without it, and when they were wearing the lab coat they were performing way better. So there actually are a lot of relations and I think it's a super interesting topic how you can kind of self-manipulate into a certain mindset and state of mind.

Niveditha
Exactly.

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright, so do you have something like go to outfits when you feel very low. Do you have something like that?

Niveditha
I think you probably know by now I love yellow. I'm like trying to make it fully yellow, but whenever I'm sad I wear yellow because then I'm like yellow is my happy colour. Come on, you have to be happy. You know you're wearing yellow. You cannot betray the color. You know you have to, like, live up to the color. And like, I tell myself that you have to be happy because it's yellow. Like you cannot be sad in the yellow outfit. It's just how it is.

Adriaan Kruithof
What is your associations with yellow then? Apart from happiness.

Niveditha
I've always liked it ever since I was a kid and there's no like explanation behind it. I just happened to be born and like the colour yellow. I'm just, like, obsessed with it. Right. And for me, just like, I feel like personally I'm a very happy, very positive, very jumpy person. Yellow represents that to me. So whenever I'm wearing yellow I feel like it that happiness whenever people see yellow. Also, it's like they get happy. So it's like a mutual happiness. You see them being happy and then people are like, oh, you're always so happy. And then you inherently start feeling really happy because like, I think that's how it just kind of associates. Yellow is just like an indication of everything that I want to do is live happily.

Adriaan Kruithof
That's nice. Do you have any other happy colors or colors which will automatically put you in a good mood?

Niveditha
I'm only like, I'm in a committed relationship with yellow. I have no other colors in my life. Of course I love all colors. I love dressing up, like, really colorful as well. But yellow is just like a league above. I don't have any other colors as such, that especially make me feel happy as much as yellow does. Like of course I love dressing up in like my colors, like wearing bright color. I personally like almost never wear cool tones now, I think like warm tones. I feel like warm tones are my go-to. I feel like if I dressed up in cool tones it doesn't suit my character and it just it's like feel like cool tones are for me sad. That's why I don't wear black. I actually don't like wearing black because I think that you have a whole spectrum of colors. Why would you wear black? And the only time I would wear black is when I'm like, extremely, like, depressive and sad mood. And I'm like, OK, now I do. I don't have the energy to pull off colors is the only time I wear black. Yeah, apart from yellow, I don't think I have any other special colours which meet me at the time.

Adriaan Kruithof
To get a bit more concrete because the products that I will do for my collection, the ones that will actually be produced, are gonna be more basic styles, you know? So it's gonna be more like T-shirts, sweatshirts, hoodies, a bit more merchandising than crazy fashion designs, I guess. So I'm thinking a lot about print motives, embroidery, patches, you know. How can you spice it up a bit? Umm do you have any motives apart from yellow which will make you feel happy if you see it for example on a T-shirt or on a sweatshirt.

Niveditha
I think anything which has like a a lot happening right like a very happening motive or like a very happening pattern. I would personally like something that's like compressed together. A lot happening. I think that would make me happy rather than like something that is more like spaced out and like that is like just like relax and things like that and all these like cool key characters or like quirky prints. Very like modern quirky tees, I would not do it like on a very edgy darker side, but on like a very fun keynote. I think those sorts of things make me a bit more happy.

Adriaan Kruithof
What do you mean with quirky? Because I kind of picture for example a bit more like hand drawn or sketchy or something like that. Or is that the direction you're thinking? Could you clarify?

Niveditha
Yeah, let's say like for an example you.
You take like a kids sketch like a, you know, like kindergarteners. They just take, like, different random colors, sketches. And they just scribble all over and like, let's say you took that and we made a print. Now for me, that is a quirky print, and that make would make me happy, like pinks and yellows and oranges. And like, you will never see a kid pick black.
Like they barely ever, they just take all the brightest colors and they just like throw it out there. There is no like balance. So for me that would be like a quirky print something like all like bright colors smashed together. Like maybe like smiley emojis. There was this brand which had a smiley collection right where they had like all of these smiley things. Maybe something like that. Like or balloons or something like that. Or like with like, a lot of kid like tendencies as such thing that would be like happy for me.

Adriaan Kruithof
All right, that's interesting. My association is is fairly similar. I kind of have that as well.
Let's turn it the other way around. Maybe, again, anythings you would find totally stupid on the shirt. That would just like maybe trigger your lower sides or your negative way of thinking.

Niveditha
I don't judge clothes because I'm like every designer. I think I've come to understand that every design has something behind it, right? Like every designer thought about it. And there is something to be said about it. Like maybe we don't know, know it, but it exists for sure. Triggering images maybe like like a person hanging or like something like suicidal things. Or like, I know some things like that exist. Like those are things or like antisemitic messages and racist messages. I think things like that would yeah upset and will make me angry. I'll be like why would you wear something like that? Like why would you associate yourself with something like that?

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, fair enough. That was also not in the plans, but good to clarify that again.
Wait, let me just check because I got kind of messy with my whole questions. Ohh yeah good one because I mentioned in our little talk before we started the recording that the name of the brand I'm collaborating is community of real people. How do you feel about that name? You can be completely honest.

Niveditha
Actually I when you said it, I really wanted to go on Instagram and be like what is it about? Because I mean, I'll still do it after this. But it, it is like very interesting, right? It was like community of real people. I just wanted to like, go look about it. I think it really like made me curious. Like, sounds like something very interesting and sounds like something I would be interested in. Pretty much what I like. This is real people, right? Like I feel like everybody's all

about these superficial things and I find it really hard because I'm like a person who kind of searches meanings and everything. And as a person like that, it's very difficult for me to like klick with a lot of people. So, like when you say like a community of real people it's the opposite. And this is interesting. I should check it out.

Adriaan Kruithof
OK, nice. So what would be your first associations only with the term community then?

Niveditha
It's something that will be there for you no matter what, something you can lean on. And like I think nowadays there are a lot of online communities. It's not just your, your family circle or your ethnicity group or anything like that. I think before it was associated like that, right? Like if I'm Indian then like the Indian community or if I am Hindu, then it's a Hindu community. But I think now it's more towards ideas and concepts you love. Maybe the LGBTQ community, that it's like what I think now community has become more towards your ideas and thoughts. So but for me, a community is basically something that you can always fall back on, something that will understand you. Where you belong.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. And I also had a thought because I talked to two people before you about those topics. And as you said, they kind of mentioned the ups and downs and the big ambivalence between those feelings and feeling either very, very high and very good or very low and very sad. So one thing, one term I thought a lot about was the term balance. How do you feel about the word balance?

Niveditha
Like this world would not function without balance. Balance is everything. It exists in relationships. You know, if you if you don't have balance in a relationship, it's dead, it's gone. If you don't have balance in your work and your like personal life again you go out of balance. So I think like balance is something that is required in like all aspects of your life. In terms of mental health, I think a lot of us struggle to maintain it. Maybe it's just like, say, it's a part of life. Maybe some people have mastered it, but for most it's always just like a seesaw. Just goes after ups and downs and ups and downs. So, but I think balance is very necessary if you if you like, crack the code to being a balanced person. I think it has to be the highest level that one can reach you know all these people who are like spiritually awakened or whatever. I think all of them are like at balance. They found that state of balance.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, that's very beautifully said, actually. I like that.

Niveditha
Thank you.

Adriaan Kruithof
One last thing pretty much already I wanted to ask you is how can clothing create an emotional value for you - apart from being yellow?

Niveditha

Uh, so I personally as a designer believe that and what days as necessary I wanna convey to the world is that clothing is something that lives with you. It is something that you grow with, like let's say your first birthday on your first date or your parents wedding, you will definitely remember what you what you are like this is a dress that I wore that day. This is the dress that I made this memory in. I think clothes are just not cotton or rayon or whatever. I think they're threads of memories. I think they are filled with memories and when people really start realizing that clothes are not just something you put on, they're like way more important than that. I think, like this whole idea of consuming so much and throwing it away, you will rethink it. You will rethink the way you purpose these things. I think that has to like do a lot of things with value, right? Like it's your mom's. Like let's say your grandmother gave you one coin, then you keep because your grandmother gave it to you and you're like, this is the first ever coin my grandmother gave me as a child. And so it holds more value than a euro to you. So, I think that then clothes sit in that emotion when you realize that they're not just something that is there and you just throw out and buy new ones and you realize that there's something that grow with you. And there's something that accompany you and every part of your life.

Adriaan Kruithof

I really like that way of looking at clothes. I feel like that's often lost within all the fast fashion and all the fast media and everything we're consuming. How did you think just for me from personal interest, how is the best way of communicating that supposed value that storytelling that I want to create throughout this collection? How do you think I can communicate that in the best way?

Niveditha

Through collaboration, right involves as many humans as you can in the process, like make the process as much as human as possible. Like maybe you take people together, you take your hand prints like of all ages of all people of all color or whatever. And then you make you take their handprints and then you develop like a print, which is like a superimposed images all of his hands, and that that would make a print. And now you can convey that story. Because I think each human has their own audience story, right? I think the more you involve humans into the process, I personally would like to make it as human as possible. I think that's how you'll be able to like I personally you think you'll be in touch with it.

Adriaan Kruithof

Yeah, that's really nice. I'll keep that in mind. Thank you so much for taking the time. I think that's already all my questions. We went through it kind of quickly, but I really, really appreciate all your answers. Thank you so much.

Niveditha

Thank you.

Interview Janis

Adriaan Kruithof

Alright, so what's your name? Age and where are you from?

Janis
Ohh hey, my name is Janis. My age is 25 and I'm from Germany.

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright. And in what field do you work or study at the moment?

Janis
I've studied psychology and the Netherlands for four or five years and now I'm starting my psychotherapy, education and Cologne, Germany.

Adriaan Kruithof
So to get a bit more personal, what is your own relation or your story with mental health?

Janis
Yeah, of course. Because I've studied psychology. I was interested in mental health before. Some people which were really close to me had severe psychological problems. Yeah, especially in my friend groups, my ex-girlfriend. I became interested in these topics. And after school I worked for one year with children who came from really difficult family situations, so they had problems and their families. I was like a day group and we cared for the children during the days. And we played with them. But we also talked with them. And during this time I learned a lot about how important the topic of mental health is, even in young years. At that time we had a psychologist came to our day group once per month and we talked about the children. And that was really inspiring. And that's also the reason why I've started to study psychology.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. So has your perception of mental health changed since starting your studies again?

Janis
Yeah. I became more aware. Obviously, I spent more time dealing with this topic and I became more aware how important it is. Also how many people are affected by psychological issues. Sometimes how people see mental health today, especially older generation, they see it quite differently. In comparison to our generation or especially to my bubble, kind of, because I've spent a lot of time with people talking about psychological issues and mental health a lot. But for me, it was also always important to have an exchange with people who are not from that bubble. So, for example, I played soccer and not at the university campus on purpose. I just wanted to see how also other people are thinking that are working in other areas of life. And I became aware that it's that it is not so normal to talk about mental health today.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. So you still have the feeling that there is a lot of stigma around outside of your bubble?

Janis
Yeah, exactly. Outside of my bubble, I think there's a lot of stigma. I mean, also there I have the

feeling that it's changing the last years especially, but it's not comparable to like if you have physical problems, broken leg or something, you go to a doctor and it's really common for everyone. But if you suffer, for example, from a depression, you're sleeping all the day because you have fatigue or something. The first reaction of a lot of people is not talk with a psychologist or go get some help. Often people are interpreting these things not correct.

Adriaan Kruithof
So what do you think personally would help to break the stigma around that?

Janis
I think that's a lot so. Umm of course, how this stigma is delivered in the Media is a big topic I think. Yeah, and social media especially! But also for the older generations, it has to be a topic also in the television, for example, and at the newspapers to reach also not only this bubble but also other target groups. So how did message is delivered? And there needs to be like a community also behind the whole topic who wants to change something. And I think that's really important.

Adriaan Kruithof
I think it's so interesting that you mentioned the word community as well, since I told you before that the name of the project I'm collaborating with is community of real people. What are your associations with the word community?

Janis
Yeah. For me, community is like a lot of people or maybe not a lot, but there's like a group of people who want to spread something or want to deliver a message and want to fight for that, maybe as well and want to change something. I mean, that's the same with like for example global change or climate change. There's also a now in Germany, quite a big community behind that whole concept and think that's nice and you can really see the impact that people have on that. And personally, I wish for something similar also in the topic of mental health, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
So how do you feel about the name community of real people? For a project like that then, and you can be completely honest.

Janis
Completely honest. Yeah. Yeah. I think it's a nice, nice slogan because, I mean, especially with the word real people, everyone can be affected by mental health issues. Everyone I think, and also most of the people are affected at some point in their lifetime. I don't know the exact numbers, but most of the people suffer from a depressive episode once in their lifetime and that's also the reason why I like the word real people. Because there could be someone like an old man. A grandfather or something, suffering from depression because he has to deal now with debt or something, but also younger people. And real people just means for me that everyone can be affected and I think that's totally true.

Adriaan Kruithof

I mean, I told you before, I'm trying to build a bridge that's in between all of those different types of mental conditions. Do you maybe from your perspective, just from your own perception, or maybe also from your perspective as learning and studying a lot about this topic, is there anything you would say, all people with some mental health conditions have in common?

Janis
Umm, all people… No, I I wouldn't say that. Because I think every disease is so individual, I think you cannot say that all people have something in common. I think you can identify patterns in different diseases now. I've talked about depression, and I mean, of course, you can see patterns there. I wouldn't say that everyone is thinking completely the same. Of course not. But, I have the feeling that the interests are sometimes overlapping, stronger than with someone else, maybe yeah. And also for my perception, so I I also dealt I think was quite a lot of like depressive episodes kind of. So a lot of thoughts and ruminating about things and I found out for myself that I have a yeah, a huge overlap with people who are thinking kind of the same also interested in like music or different things. Yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, that's interesting. So, if you talk about your own depressive periods, what, how would you deal with that? What would you do to feel better if you had those?

Janis
Umm yeah, so in the past I also tried to get help once but it's quite difficult in Germany still. So, I thought it was a big problematic. So, I tried to to get help just from from friends and family and talking of course. It's so important to talk with other people about it. Exchange your thoughts and then it also feels less bad. I mean, in that situation you feel a bit unnormal and you think "Am I the only one who thinks so much?" and if you then have the exchange with people who have really the awareness of that and are open towards it, it really helps, I think to get out of it, or at least to feel a bit better.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, you also said you played soccer, right?

Janis
Yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
As that's something that could you that you could also utilize to kind of help you sell through those depressive stages or something just like physical activity?

Janis
Activity. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. For me was always nice to have this physical activity. Of course, that helps me a lot just to stop thinking about the different topics, but yeah, physical activity and also the people in that bubble again, are so different to the university people I've met and the mindset there's completely different and they are not that from my experience they are not that open to discuss things like this as much as people from university or my psychological courses. But, it

also helped me a lot to just get out and also to see other people and to see other problems as well that I mean the the people have other problems and also shows me that I'm not the only one.

Adriaan Kruithof
True, I mean, that's what we talked about before with the traveling, right? You get out of your own comfort zone and see the world with slightly different eyes already.

Janis
Yeah, yeah, that's true.

Adriaan Kruithof
So because I'm just trying to research into also just like activities in general that make people feel better when they are not doing great mentally. Could you just like list some down for me that you would say would be you go-to. So apart from speaking to friends and family and being physically active and doing sports, are there other things?

Janis
So the different physical activities which I do that… Mm-hmm. Umm.

Adriaan Kruithof
OK to make a bit more concrete, I spoke to a friend earlier and she told me like, yeah, physical activities and whatever don't make me feel better about myself. But for me it's going out and eat at my favorite restaurant or having this safe space in this park that I love or something like that. Do you have something similar?

Janis
Yeah, I have to think about it. Just to get out, I think also that helps. Yeah, what I do sometimes just go to the city or something, just sitting at the coffee shop or something and just sitting there and watching people. I don't know, maybe it's strange, but it's just so interesting to watch the people and what I what these people are doing and I gets out of my I get out of my room, managing thoughts. Yeah, I would like to say music because music sometimes helps me, but it also sometimes I have the feeling it can also make me feel worse. It depends on the music I listen to, but sometimes I want to listen to music, which makes me feel worse. Kind of because I have the feeling in that moment that the music can understand my feelings or the singer or the I don't know the song, the lyrics and it also feels not better at that moment, but I can connect with something and that also helps me a lot and it means also a lot for me. This is something I often do and also the last two years I've started writing about my thoughts. Who am I? What? What are the problems? But not writing in an I try to write in a directed manner. What is the solution for the problem at that moment, start to describe the situation I am in and start to focus on 'How can I get out of it?'. Otherwise, it would be like more ruminating about the problems and that's also something I've learned during my studies. Reflective writing- that helps me a bit, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, that's interesting, because I feel like my coping patterns and mechanisms I use if I have

those, because I also have states of anxiety, especially social anxiety or also things that I would probably also characterize as like depressive periods or something like that. And I have very similar ways of dealing with that, for example also love to just like going to airports for some reason. I love picking people up from airports because it's just so fun to just sit there and see like, all the people, you know, you can play the games where they're coming from, where they're going, what is the scenario. And I feel just like, as you said, being outside and being surrounded by other things and moving things that are happening around you can really take, like, take your mind off that as well.

Janis
Yeah, moving things, I think that's a nice term.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, it is. Alright, maybe let's get to the fashion side of things a bit. How's the way you personally dress related to the way you feel?

Janis
Yeah, I thought about the question before we started the interview. To be honest I had difficulties to answer that. Most of the time I dress quite similar, so if I feel good, I dress similar too. So, it does not depend on the daily mood, but I think what I want to dress has something to do with me automatically. It's a part of me, I think that's mostly true for all people, because it always shows something of you in what you dress in. So it doesn't depend on the daily mood, but something else. So I have of course, like stereotypes of people who are musicians or have really good lyrics and then I think ohh that I like also what he wears wears for example. So, my inspirations I got from what I want to reuse mostly based on that and that has something to do with my character of course.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, alright. But it's not like for example, say you're having a bad day, so you're gonna just wear some joggers and washed out T-shirt and then on the good days it will be like OK, now I dress up in a shirt and tie or so? Do you know what I mean?

Janis
Umm, maybe it's the other way around. Even so, if I feel bad, I want to dress up to feel better, and maybe it's more in that direction. I wouldn't say that's true for every day, but sometimes I have this feeling. I want to do something. I want to get out of here. So, I take a shower and I dress a bit better in comparison to the other days. And I also have the feeling, of course, that sometimes the things I use to dress, are changing how I behave. So, if I feel that I have a nice outfit and am really proud of the outfit and I am at a party, for example, I have much more self-confidence at that moment. In comparison, if I feel that I am dressed not so nice and my outlook is not so good, I also behave differently based on that I think, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
And that is so interesting because that's also a pattern I've seen and everybody I've talked to so far actually. Interestingly, everybody said, yeah, if I feel kinda ******, I'm more likely to dress up, you know, and kind of try to lift my mood a bit. And of course, I feel like self esteem and

confidence comes so much through clothing as well. And that makes sense since it's most of the time it's 80% of what the people you meet is like the first impression of it. I mean, unless you go to sauna or something, but you know in most cases. Yeah, that's definitely a pattern I already can see there. How is it about different colors or motives because I'm thinking already from the perspective of designing the clothes in the end, are there any motives, patterns, colors that will give you some comfort or lift your mood or something? Can you think of something like that?

Janis
Umm. Yeah, I have to think about it. I think not, not especially colours, because I mostly wear like black and white or really blank colors. How are these things designed? For example, if I just wear like a T shirt or is it something different? (Points at shirt he is wearing) Is this one cotton for example? It's like a handmade hand tailored cotton from Vienna.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. Nice.

Janis
And it feels completely different than I thought. Like it's still, I think relaxed but a bit more...Umm, how are the words for that?

Adriaan Kruithof
Elevated?

Janis
Yeah, yeah, yeah, kind of. So, I choose different designs of outfits, not the colors and not the motives that special leave, but I think a bit more elegant maybe as well.

Adriaan Kruithof
OK, bit more elegant. That's interesting.
If you if you think of different prints or something, because for example, I'm thinking the things that will actually be produced from my collection will most likely be more basic pieces. You know, more like basic silhouettes like sweatshirts, T-shirts, stuff like that. You know, if you think of any print motives, is there anything you would like to see anything you completely dislike maybe?

Janis
Print motives and what? Like what do you mean with print motives? Like what is on the sweater for example?

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. What is on the sweater. So, it could be everything. From quotes to a detailed painting. A photo collage. Could be loads of things. Actually, the options are almost unlimited.

Janis
So as I said, most of the time, I use really blank things. If it's too detailed, I think I wouldn't like that. So if it's too much on it. Sometimes I think you don't need that much if it's a good message or something, but of course there could be like a nice picture or I don't know which haven't also has a message about mental health. Kind of. I mean, you've talked about that, that one guy who so like photograph or video dude. And of course, there could be something nice on the sweater, for example. Also based on that. If it would be completely blank, I think that also won't make that much sense. So, like having something on it is nice. Like picture photography or something? Yeah, that would be nice. Yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
Umm. Yeah. And that's kind of what I'm thinking about is: how to transport a positive messaging, that is, you know, that is in line with this whole topic and this whole inspiration of trying to raise awareness. But I think it's a small line between kind of creating a positive messaging and becoming very literal and kind of cringey easily. You know what I mean?

Janis
Yeah, that's correct. Good, difficult. And you also thought about it.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. I I thought about it so far from what I got from the interviews is that a lot of people are. recommending to be very careful about any like quotes or you know because I feel like it easily goes into this motivational like, Tumblr, Pinterest, whatever direction and I kind of want to don't be that literal but a bit more abstract while still communicating a positive feeling and a positive method kind of combining all the input that I got through those through those interviews.

Janis
I think that it's quite difficult because I think the message you want to deliver should be also visible for other people who are not into this topic. So that's not that easy to make that one motive. Yeah, but what do you have ideas so far?

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, I'm still very early in the data collection right now. For example, one friend mentioned that she would really like childlike drawings, and like very easy drawings picking up like a very playful mode, because that would kind of evoke, like a nostalgic feeling and remind her of, like, childhood and how unproblematic things are, which I think is a very interesting input. Another one simply said she would love the color yellow, so that's what I mean and I feel like from all of those things I would kind of like to create something that can create some value for everybody who sees it. A lot of things that were mentioned so far were like nature inspired prints since a lot of people have their safe spaces in nature and really like to turn to nature when they feel overwhelmed and very low. So that's kind of the ideas that are coming in so far.

Janis
Yeah, I just thought about also the slogan real people. I just thought about this slogan and like. I don't know. I just have like a full photograph, like a realistic photograph in in my mind to represent the idea of real people a bit. But I don't know how directly, but just the idea.

Adriaan Kruithof
OK, I like that. I like that. I'll definitely take that into the consideration. I think that's pretty interesting and pretty different than the other ideas I got so far.

Janis
OK.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, I in in general, do you want clothing brands to support like social or environmental organizations?

Janis
Yeah, that would be nice. I mean, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright, so I'm asking that because I'm thinking about how to create emotional value through clothes, not only through the designs, but maybe also through the communication around it. So do you have any things that come to your mind where you would be like, OK, if I see that the brand is doing that, I would be more drawn to support them by buying their products and or interacting with them on social media or something like that.

Janis
Umm. So if I see for example that they do something for. What did you say? Like also environmental things and.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, it was very social. Like in my example, what I mentioned before, like giving 20% to like charity or something like that.

Janis
Yeah, I think that would be a good point. I mean, if I see that they spend some of the of their incomes to organizations, which I would like to see growing, that would be really nice. I think that's one of the most one of the best things because then also I have the consumer, I have the feeling that I did something good and at the end it's I think most of the time you as the consumer want to feel good if you buy something. Umm. And if I have the feeling that there are like 30% going into something nice I think that's a good thing, yeah. And I think it's also the easiest thing to do. Well, one of the easiest things. Yeah. What's also important that they should spread good content also on social media, for example like awareness content.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, I think that is definitely also included in our plan. We also want to create a pop up event in the end and bring as many people who work in any sort involved in this project together, you

know, gather around, have drinks, have food and really you know, bring all of this, those digital meetings and this communication over so many levels together at like one point and really like you know, just celebrate the community as well.

Janis
Really nice idea. Yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
Do you uh, maybe also from your study so far: Are there any things you would recommend me to be careful about to not trigger people with mental conditions or anything you think I should keep in mind as somebody from a fashion background while doing this, this research which goes so much into the topics that you've dealt with so far?

Janis
I think uh, at the beginning, I would say that's everyone would appreciate what you're doing so don't think about that too much, I would say so, because I think the message is quite clear and the goal is quite clear. Of course, you have to be careful with the language you use and also, yeah, it shouldn't be something people would laugh at or yeah, that would be a bit not to the point. But to specify that, I think all the people would have liked that from my studies to see something like this, that someone is thinking about how we can raise awareness in fashion. So, I wouldn't say that there's something in specific.

Adriaan Kruithof
I guess another participant mentioned not putting anything suicidal or fat shaming. But I I feel like that is also a bit stating the obvious. Hopefully.

Janis
Yeah, I hope that's the common sense.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. Yeah, you would think so. But then I think of so many scandals from the fashion industry, I don't know, how interested you are in this. But for example, Gucci sent down a model down the runway at a show not too long ago, maybe two years ago, wearing like a restraining jacket. And I feel like that shows that a lot of people in this industry are not as aware as you'd like them to be, I guess.

Janis
Yeah, yeah, yeah, I think that's true. But I have the feeling you have the awareness for that, so.

Adriaan Kruithof
Thank you. I hope so.

Janis

If I talk with someone else from the fashion industry, that could be completely different that I want to start talking from the bottom. You have to think about that, that and this, and be careful about this. But yeah, I have the feeling that you are really in the topic, so yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
Thank you. Yeah, I I hope so. But that's also why I did some research and I think it's good that also, as you come from social surroundings where this topic is, is not as stigmatized as and a lot of others. Also, how do you feel about the idea just in general? Because I'm collecting all those interviews. My goal is to have 10 interviews with real people, literally. And then start creating my designs and then maybe have like a little focus group and just like meet the people again and bring as many together and kind of like show you the designs and get your input. How do you feel about that? Would you like to participate in something like that? If I can do that?

Janis
Yeah, that's nice. Yeah, really interesting. Also, to have an exchange with all the others. I think that's very nice.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, I think so too. I think it would be so cool and it's so nice because it is really just like very different people. I mean, I talked to somebody from India today. Then it's you from Germany. Then I have another friend from the Netherlands. One was from Romania, one was from the UK. So, you know, we just like really getting a lot of different people together. And I think that's exactly what I kind of wanted to have in this project as well; to really get different insights. Although I think something that you said before is so relevant as well because of course, since this is my community in the first place the age is very limited, right? Everybody is between 20 and 30, maybe. Maybe you have some good ideas how I can make it more inclusive. Also age wise and outside of my bubble. Do you have any ideas how I could do that?

Janis
Yeah, it's a good question. I think it's really difficult to get really out of outside of your bubble, but do you know people who are also older and maybe not into this topic at all? And what do they think about that?

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, that's the thing. I mean it's I guess then it's mostly family. I don't have any friends who are older than 33 or something, so I thought then if it's family at some point it gets a bit too biased.

Janis
At some point, it's biased, yeah. But also in fashion industry, do you have like connections with people who are maybe much longer into this whole thing and maybe it's also interesting to see how someone who's 50 or 60 years old and is working like for 40 years in the fashion industry, how he or she sees the development also from that point especially could be interesting.

Adriaan Kruithof
That is a very good point. I'll actually just write that down here somewhere, so I don't forget about that. I think that's a very good input actually.

Janis

I mean that will be so interesting if that person could see a difference also about mental health and awareness. If there is a difference at all or are there sometimes like waves of awareness. And then it goes down again, I don't know. So that would be also interesting.

Adriaan Kruithof

That is such a good input, actually. I'll definitely include that and try to reach out to some people. Maybe I have some people on my LinkedIn or something that I can kind of talk to. I'm actually also gonna talk to a professor from the University of Arts and London, who is specialized in the psychology of fashion. So I'm really looking forward to that. I think that's gonna be so cool because then I can, you know, already conclude the input that I got from the interviews with all of you guys and show it to her and then get her input and she might also be able to tell me a bit more of the development of this mental health awareness in the industry.

Janis

But that's interesting that she's specialized into that. That's really cool, that you also got her for an interview.

Adriaan Kruithof

That yeah, that is. I feel very blessed that she just answered within a day or something. So I was really just like, OK, cool, cool. Like people actually care about this topic. That's a nice little confirmation there. All right, good. Before we get completely off track, let me check my questions really quick. Ohh yeah, maybe that's one interesting thing to ask you as somebody who studied psychology again and because that's also kind of the last question already. I've been writing down some keywords after each of the interviews I've been doing. Umm this from what people mentioned and I talked to people who had depression, anxiety and eating disorders so far and yeah, hopefully there will be more different ones. Sounds weird to say, but you know what I mean, from a researchers perspective, to get the different input and there's some words here, just like some small terms, and I think it would be super interesting to just like get your connection to these words. So I'm just gonna shoot them at you, if that's fine.

Janis
Yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright. How do you feel about the word balance?

Janis

Balance. Yeah, that's a good question. Balance. I think balance is really important to be honest. So personally I use it a lot for myself too, I mean if you have to much of something. How should I explain it? Well, that's really complicated. I just thought about if I do something a lot, like for example playing soccer, if I do it really, really a lot, there's a point where I have the feeling it's too much and I want to step back a bit. So, at that point, I want to have a bit more balance for myself and that topic. And I think that's comparable to a lot of things in life to find a kind of a balance between things. And to feel better also, if you for example define sadness. Without

sadness, I'll always feel good, but I wouldn't. I don't have the difference or the reference. So, feeling good and feeling sadness is both so important to feel good actually, and to feel sadness, actually nothing disposed to emotions are quite important. So that's also the reason why I think sadness should be so normal, and it's also a good thing. You can say that finding a balance is important. Of course, if you feel sad all the time, I mean that can become problematic or we can talk about depression at some point that like, cut off points of course psychologically.

Adriaan Kruithof
Interesting. Yeah, I agree with that. I think the next term that would automatically come to my mind is ambivalence, because I feel like that's what everybody, every human in general experiences a lot. As I said, without the sad days are no good days and the other way around. And I think that's the biggest issue that the people that I talked to so far experience within the certain mental health conditions was this gigantic and sometimes overwhelming ambivalence with within, like short periods of time. How do you feel about the word childhood?

Janis
Yeah. Childhood. I think childhood is the most important life period which leads at the end to the point who you are. Like the influences you've got in your childhood from your parents, from your social surroundings are so strong and deep inside of you that they kind of form your character. At some point. I mean, you can still think about your character also in older age, but it becomes more difficult to change something. It's makes so much of your personality. So that's my association to childhood.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, I think that's it's like you said, it's such an incredibly important time of life and it can be both the roots of so much negativity or even trauma, and also so nostalgic and so positive and so safe and also can be very ambivalent. A lot of people have experienced both in their childhood.

Janis
Yeah, of course, yeah. If I also have my personal connection to that. And at that point, writing this autobiographical story made so much more sense at that point. Also, who I am at the end, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
That's interesting. Yeah, I'm thinking of if it's possible to somehow reflect that in designs as well.

Janis
That's yeah, that could be interesting.

Adriaan Kruithof
All right. Actually, I think that was already my question catalogue in this very confused conversation led by me. Thank you so much. Thank you so much for taking the time. Also, if there's any other input, any other ideas, anything you still want to say that's on your mind now could be the perfect time.

Janis
No, I just would like to thank you. Thank you for the interviews. Really, really nice. I don't have any input right now.

Adriaan Kruithof
Thank you so much. Cool. Then I'll just stop the recording and then we can just, like, shortly talk further.

Interview Carla

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright, let's start with some very basic questions. What's your name, age and where are you from?

Carla
Carla, 22 and I'm from Germany.

Adriaan Kruithof
And what field do you work or study at the moment?

Carla
Fashion and textile technologies.

Adriaan Kruithof
And what is your relation or your story with mental health? Why do you care about the topic?

Carla
I have a personal journey with that topic. I also suffered from some mental health problems in the past. And I'm also very interested in fashion. So, I think there is a big relation.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. Would you mind telling me a bit more with what exactly you struggled?

Carla
In the past I had an eating disorder and I suffered from depression.

Adriaan Kruithof
Can I ask if you have been in therapy related to those topics?

Carla
Yeah, a very long time.

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright. And do you feel like that that help helped you? Do you feel like you're in a better state now or did you learn how to control those stages better?

Carla
Yeah, absolutely. It helped me so much with like controlling my feelings kind. First of all, to know me better and really to see like what are my mechanisms and how do I treat myself when I feel down, for example? So it really helped a lot, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. Can I ask what kind of activities make you happy or help you to feel better if you're not doing great, do you have some coping mechanisms, some patterns of behaviour you use to feel better about yourself in those stages?

Carla
Personally, I really like to meditate or do yoga and stuff like that that really calms me down and helps me to reorganize my thoughts. Umm, but also sports like swimming or even going for a walk just like going outside and move my body, that really helps me and also being in company with other people and talking about your problems and about your cycling thoughts.

Adriaan Kruithof
I like that I've many questions following that up, but maybe first of all, when you say you go out, is it more about meeting other people and being in crowded places. Or do you prefer to go out to nature?

Carla
Well, I mean it really depends on the day and what I'm struggling with that day, but as I'm more an introverted, introverted person, I prefer to like meeting up with like one or two very close friends and talk about my issues or if I'm feeling very down, I prefer to be alone and just spend time in nature or do something for myself and by myself.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. Do you have any favorite places in nature or anything that you would consider like a safe space or feel-good space in nature?

Carla
I really like the woods. And I also have a dog at home, so this is a very good company as well. And also like just going for a walk with the dog in the woods is very helpful sometimes. But I also like to spend my time swimming or like somewhere by the water. It's calming me down; like the waves and like the movement.

Adriaan Kruithof
That's interesting. Do you feel like your dog also helps you just in general, not only through going on walks and having to be active, but also, you know, just to be able to cuddle maybe or play with the dog. Does it give you a lot of comfort?

Carla
Yeah, absolutely, I think. You see that animals and especially dogs are like so light-hearted and they're like always happy when they see you. And sometimes I just like to settle down and I'm like, OK, it helps me to really like view my situation from above. Yeah, stepping out of the situation.

Adriaan Kruithof
Can I ask when you do like meditation and stuff? How do you do that? Is it mostly like breathing exercises? Is it more like trying to find yourself, putting yourself into places? What? What do you do there?

Carla
Hmm. Umm, yeah, it's mostly breathing exercises that helps me a lot because I'm struggling with these thought cycles in my head. So sometimes it's very hard to just sit down and meditate, but I first need like something to focus on. So, to focus on your breathing is very helpful or like yoga where you can focus on your body.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. So the so bringing your thoughts and your body kind of in touch and being in control of that? Alright. How do you feel about the word balance them?

Carla
Work balance or what do you mean?

Adriaan Kruithof
No, just word. The word, the term 'balance'. I can explain it a bit more where the question is coming from, because you're the 5th person, I think I'm talking to now. And so far, everybody who I talked to mentioned either the ambivalence - so the feeling of either feeling very high or very low or just looking for some inner balance as like one of their biggest goals in terms of mental health, but also just in life. I mean, it can be work-life balance, of course. And it plays a big role, but I feel like it would be interesting to know what your associations with the term balance is.

Carla
Well, I also experienced that like for example friends of mine who also struggle with mental health have this feeling of like imbalance. But for me personally, I'm a very calm person and I feel like most of the time I'm very good at keeping my balance and my inner balance. And so, I don't know. (explains in German)

Adriaan Kruithof
All right. So you mean kind of finding the inner middle and just like a certain state of calmness, I guess? Yeah, yeah, that makes sense. So, I mentioned before we started the recording that the name of the awareness project that I'm collaborating with is community of real people. How do you feel about the word community and how do you feel about that name of this project?

Carla
I think it's a good name, especially because you mentioned real people. I believe that you normally don't talk about mental health issues and it's still like such a topic that people just don't talk about it. And I think it's so important to focus on that and also to do therapy also people that don't struggle with like mental health issues, it just helps to get to know you better. So I think the name, that's quite good.

Adriaan Kruithof
Nice. You talked about your friends and them having a lot of struggle with this ambivalence and this imbalance compared to you not having it that much, right? Do you feel like there's anything, like any patterns you see like you have in common with your friends or other people who struggle with their mental health in any form?

Carla
Umm, I mean I have more of those like very low days, but I don't experience this like ambivalence that you talked about. Yeah, I mean I can relate to those like low days with my friends that also have the same struggles or that have, like common feelings about that topic. I mean it's just very, very helpful to talk about those friends about this topic, because I believe that when you don't experience mental health issues, you don't really know so much about that topic because you don't talk about it.
So yeah, you can just relate to to their feelings and you kind of have a better connection when you talk to them because they understand what you're feeling like and what those days feel like.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. I think that's also where the word community is coming from and playing such a big role, right? This it's interesting because I actually talked to Alex on Monday. And she said she doesn't believe that there are people who do not struggle with their mental health at all. Do you agree with that or do you feel like there's actually people who just have no struggles with that? Or do you feel like it's more of a thing of not talking about it and not being as aware of?

Carla
Yeah. Well, I wouldn't say that everyone has like mental health struggles in their life, but I believe that everyone, if they would do therapy, it would help them. And I don't believe that you have to have some struggles before to begin with therapy. As I mentioned at the beginning, you just need to talk about that topic more often. So no, I don't really agree with Alex.

Adriaan Kruithof
All right. That's fair enough. OK. Maybe to build the bridge to the whole fashion topic of this conversation: How do you feel the way you feel is related to the way you dress?

Carla
Ohh, uh. Sometimes you have those days when you really don't feel yourself and then you just want to wear something that you feel comfortable in. Like today, for example, I wear my favorite cardigan just to feel comfortable and to feel a bit better about myself, but sometimes I have those days where I really like unhappy, like how I look and how I feel. So, then I dress up a bit more and it makes more fun to dress up and to really like put effort in your outfit. So yeah, you can definitely see a relation.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, it's interesting. Actually, everybody I've talked to so far mentioned that that's kind of self-manipulation in a positive way of being like, OK, if I dress the certain way, I might feel a bit better about myself. Do you have some garments that you know you can always rely on on those days. So like, do you have some favorite pieces of clothing that you know you always feel kind of comfortable and kind of confident in?

Carla
Umm yeah, for example this cardigan. I really like it a lot. It's like very warm and I like the color. And yeah, it's just so comfortable.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, that's a very nice red.

Carla
And it's actually from Amsterdam. And I also have this bright purple hat that I wear. It's my favorite one and I always feel so comfortable. And so, I believe it really suits me well. So, I just like to wear it.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. Is it for you in general related a lot to like colors?

Carla
Yeah, sometimes. I don't really like to just wear black, I think it just looks a bit sad sometimes, so I really like colors and also patterns. For example, today I wore like a black outfit, but then this bright cardigan and I think that makes such a difference. So, and also with your mood if you for example wear that light purple. I believe it also like calms you, but I believe in those energies of colors, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
So what other colors do you think will always evoke some positive feelings and could you name some more?

Carla
Pink and like uh rose, but also purple is my favorite color. And also blue. I really like blue.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, more like a light blue or more dark blue tones?

Carla
Umm, more light blue. I also I prefer the light.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, alright. I'm also looking into the psychology not only of colors at the moment, but also a bit of different prints and patterns I can use. Can you come up with some examples of like print motives or patterns that you will always have, like a positive association with?

Carla
Umm, I feel like Cheetah print is always fun. Uh, yeah, I just feel like so content about myself and so confident as well when I wear cheetah print. And yeah, also just like a basic flower print is always good. And yeah, I just like those blouses or skirts, for example dresses in summer especially. Umm, but I realize like throughout the past year I would say I rather like focus on wearing colours than patterns.

Adriaan Kruithof
All right. How do you feel about like fonts and quotes on clothing?

Carla
It really depends. There's so much variation and but I think if you have like a good staple wardrobe, then it's better to like not have big prints on your sweaters, for example. Sometimes like a cool T-shirt for example. I have like a band shirt or something. Then you really have kind of a statement or you show more about yourself and what you like with that garment, so it helps to express yourself.

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright, so you feel like in your general wardrobe of like throughout the collection, it's also about the mix of those elements? Alright, that's interesting. Maybe the other way around. Is there like any colors, any motives, anything that could be like printed or embroidered onto garments that you would feel will maybe trigger something in you, like some negative feelings?

Carla
I hate the color yellow. I just really don't like it and I don't like it on myself. Yeah, like I mean this like butter tone is acceptable, but like the bright yellow, it's just not my color, I really don't like myself when I wear it. So I feel like it would trigger some like negative emotions.

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright. And how about any print motives? Anything you could come up with of the top of your head, maybe something you've seen on shirts before?

Carla

Umm. Well, I mean there I think there are lots, but I can't really like think about something right now. Maybe if it's too loud and too much. I don't like this overload.

Adriaan Kruithof

Yeah, alright, that's very interesting. I'm just asking those questions because as I said before, the things that I will create or that will actually be sewn will be rather basic styles. I guess you could call it you know, so it's more like T-shirts, sweatshirts, hoodies, more in that direction. So how do you feel? Like what can I do to make that as positive for you as possible? If I can work with those limitations and probably also, we have a lot of like black clothes, how can I spice it up with the prints or any attachments or anything that you would feel like: OK, this this adds some emotional value in any form.

Carla

I think you could really like think about the fabrics. First of all, I think also for me this is a big factor like if the fabric has a good touch. For example, I just like to wear it more often and I feel more comfortable and confident in my clothes. But let me think. Maybe just like a good print, that like shows that message that you want to spread out? Ah, I don't know. Maybe just some very minimalistic details. I would say that's what make the clothes a bit more special. That depends on what direction you want to go. And like how it's related to the brand you're working with, I mean.

Adriaan Kruithof

That's true. That's true. That's something I can't completely shut off and forget about. Also has to kind of still go in line with their design aesthetic.

Carla

Umm yeah, but maybe something like multifunctionality. Yeah, just that maybe you could think about like what would make this sweater my favorite one? For me it would be the material and just some very good details that would make it a bit more different from other sweaters that I have, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof

How about the materials? Do you have certain materials in mind that make you more comfortable than others?

Carla

Umm yeah. For example, my favorite sweater is out of cashmere. I really like the material. It's very soft and it's warm and yeah, I also like the set of it. Yeah, but other than that, just like a good cotton is always a good option and just like materials that have a good touch, like a good wear.

Adriaan Kruithof

I also should keep in mind, sorry I didn't tell you before, but it's supposed to be a spring / summer collection, so I guess I won't be working with a lot of wool or cashmere at least.

Carla
OK. Well, maybe yeah, maybe then more like linen and I prefer in summer something very light. Or even silk, I don't know. Something like very light, that you just want to wear in summer.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, that just feels comfortable and breathable, probably.

Carla
Exactly.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, alright. That makes sense. So, you wouldn't recommend to use a lot of synthetic materials?

Carla
Exactly.

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright, let me think in general. How do you feel about since you are also working in the fashion industry, how do you feel about the fashion industry in relation to mental health?

Carla
I think the fashion industry has so many problems and issues going on and I think mental health awareness and also like just body positivity and stuff like that, just such a big issue as well. So, I think there's so much work to do and I would also like to participate in a change in the future and work towards more body positivity and inclusivity.

Adriaan Kruithof
No, I get that. So, would you also say you would be more likely to buy from brands who support these causes or in my case to be very specific to, for example say, OK, 20% of the income is getting donated to like mental health institution?

Carla
Yes, absolutely. I would love that.

Adriaan Kruithof
So the other way around, any things that would draw you away from, like buying from a specific brand?

Carla
Well, I mean, I'm personally I don't buy at fast fashion brands anymore. I try to don't buy at those companies. I prefer to buy at vintage shops, for example, or more like sustainable brands. So yeah, I look a lot at sustainability and ethics. Umm yeah, and just like how they work. If I find a new brand, like the the studies really helped me with that before that I didn't really think about that. Since then, I'm really looking into the website, for example, like what are they doing and I like to support brands that have a good philosophy.

Adriaan Kruithof
Do you feel like that can also create some more emotional value for you when buying new clothes?

Carla
Yes, absolutely. I think if you really can relate to their values, you share the same values basically. Then I think you are really supporting them and want to support them. So yeah, I think it has to do a lot with your mindset and your emotions towards the company.

Adriaan Kruithof
That's true. Yeah. I definitely agree with that. And I think you can also see that in a lot of consumer trends that are out there and trend reports that a lot of people are trying to be more conscious consumers and try to find brands who align with their personal values.

Carla
Exactly.

Adriaan Kruithof
Interesting that you share that perspective. All right, maybe some other things that can create some emotional value for you when buying clothes. So, you talk, for example, about clothes that have a nice feel to them, like hand feel, right? Do you prefer clothes that have some more texture, or do you prefer like very smooth surfaces? Do you have any preference when it comes to that?

Carla
Yeah, I really like texture. So if it's like a chunky sweater for example, on winter or in summer like linen clothes that have that soft touch and I think it really depends on the season as well. Yeah, I believe materials and colours are such a big topic. For example, if something is like light purple. I would rather buy it than something and yellow for example.

Adriaan Kruithof
That's true. Do you think there is a tendency in general like not only speaking about your own dislike for yellow and preference of purple, but do you think in general that more brighter like lighter colors are more positively influencing ones mental health? Could you say something like that or is that too much of a reach?

Carla

Yeah, I mean, we wear black at funerals. I think you always will have that association with, like, clothes even like, I mean, in my circle of people. But yeah, absolutely. I believe if you wear something very colorful and bright, you will adapt to that color a little bit and it can really help you to get more on that positive emotion, yeah, absolutely.

Adriaan Kruithof

That's interesting. As somebody who says that it's important for you that brands communicate the social and environmental efforts and beliefs: How do you think can brands or how can I for my project communicate it in the best way possible? Do you have any input?

Carla

You talked about that you want to name the collection or the sub brand? Whatever. Community, so maybe you could really try to incorporate the potential customers like via social media, or through the website and really include them and help them to raise their own voices, for example, to, like, really not only sell the collection, but really incorporate them. I believe this is always something that customers are interested in.

Adriaan Kruithof

Yeah, that's actually something I thought as well. So for example, if we do a final photo shoot or something to not use any professional models, but people from my surroundings that I mean. Hopefully based in Copenhagen, since we have a bit of a limited room, but from my community or the brands' community. And just take the pictures of them wearing them and doing it while they are doing activities that give them something, some Peace of Mind or some just some general positive effect. How do you feel about that idea?

Carla

Yeah, that's actually a nice idea. I think also these are real people, so it really fits. I think it's also good to don't really use models that have the perfect body or the perfect appearance because it's just more real and it really relates to that topic you want to spread out. So yeah, very nice idea.

Adriaan Kruithof

Nice. Thank you very much. Alright, that was already actually my set of questions that I prepared. So anything else, any input, any thoughts that came to your mind during this conversation that you would still like to add?

Carla

Hmm. Umm. Yeah. No, I I don't think that I have anything else.

Adriaan Kruithof

Alright then. Thank you so so much for taking the time. And thank you for opening up. I know it's not always an easy topic to talk about, but I think we both agree that it's some very important topic to talk about. So I really appreciate that you're helping me with this project by doing so.

Carla
Yeah. Thank you that you started with that topic and that you want to look into it. I really think it's such a nice topic for your bachelor thesis. It's great.

Adriaan Kruithof
Thank you so, so much. Then I'll stop the recording now and we can just still have a little chat.

Interview Bennet

Adriaan Kruithof
All right. What's your name, age and where are you from?

Bennet
OK, my name is Bennet. I'm 21 years old and I'm from Berlin.

Adriaan Kruithof
Nice. And what field do you work in or study at the moment?

Bennet
Umm, I'm currently studying sports science and English to become a teacher.

Adriaan Kruithof
All right. The next one is a bit more personal. What is your relation or your story with mental health?

Bennet
My relation with mental health. OK, that's a tough one because right now I don't really have that much. I'm not really struggling with mental health, so I would consider myself healthy. My mental health is is good right now because I feel like I'm in a very stable environment right now. And I have people around me that I can share my woes with if I need to, and if I don't, I don't have to. But yeah, I of course have contact with people who are struggling with mental health, and therefore I do have some contacts with mental health.

Adriaan Kruithof
All right, so would you say you have ever struggled with mental health as well or would you say you were pretty stable most of your life?

Bennet
I would say most of my life I have been pretty stable, I think. I have had some periods in my life where it wasn't perfect. I think mostly it was two times that I can really remember. Like the first

time was when my parents got divorced. And I took it pretty hard. Umm I was really really sad by it. I was worried mainly about my mother and how she's doing with it. And I didn't want to be a burden. But of course I was also pretty sad and felt maybe a bit abandoned. But I didn't want to bother her with it, so I just took it in, self-internalized it and just, you know, stayed in my room. Played video games with my friends to distract myself, you know? And sometime later - I do now realize that I can't remember - like how it all really went down. I know because I've talked to my family about it, but I can't remember everything. How I experienced it, I kind of have like a Birds Eye view of it like it's a movie. It's a strange feeling because I don't really feel sad or don't remember being too sad in that time, but it was a turbulent time, you know. Like when my father moved out and the next day I got together with my first girlfriend. Uh, so it's like up and down. And I didn't really share with anyone. Yeah. It took some time to, you know, talk about it and like I didn't know how I really felt about it.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. So, you think talking about it and actually making it a topic, did that help you to clarify your feelings towards that?

Bennet
I think so. Did it help with clarifying my feelings about it? Also it was sad to talk about it. Like it was also not easy to talk about it and my current girlfriend was very interested in how it all felt and what happened because, you know, she's interested. And I remembered some things when I talked to her that I didn't know, I didn't knew that happened, you know. So, I think it's good to talk about it.

Adriaan Kruithof
So you think during those talks with you current girlfriend, you are kind of re-evaluating those situations a bit more that were kind of, you know, just lost somewhere?

Bennet
Yeah, for sure. I think they were like sitting on a shelf in my head and I didn't really touch them. And then I just looked at them for the first time really, and yeah. Was the first time I really evaluated my feelings towards it.

Adriaan Kruithof
So what would you usually do to cope with those negative emotions? Doesn't have to be related only to this situation, but also this in general. I guess even if you feel very stable, there's better and worse days. What are you coping mechanisms? Where do you go? What do you do? How do you make yourself feel better about yourself?

Bennet
Well. If I'm sad, I cry. Which helps because instead of internalizing the feelings, I can let them out. And it's like a vent. And all the feelings stream out. And then it's better afterwards and if it's not that bad and I'm just, you know, feeling kind of down and I don't really know why. Then personally it's good to go out. See some sky. You know I have the Tempelhofer Feld next door, so just go out, take a walk, maybe. Take a basketball with me, shoot some hoops just to you keep me busy and maybe have a little positive experience. It sounds stupid, but you know, hit

some shots. See the beautiful sunset or something, and it just makes me smile. And then it's all all kind of better.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. If you talk about going outside, is it more related for you to nature and natural surroundings or is it also just going to, I don't know, a crowded place like a bar or something, if you feel very low?

Bennet
It depends. Sometimes I really feel like, OK, I need to be in nature right now. You know, I want to go to Grunewald alone and just take a little walk. Listen to some music and just be alone, and sometimes I want to feel, you know some life around me like noise. Just not really going shopping, but going to a crowded street where many shops are and just window shopping, looking a bit. It's just, I think it's distracting, but in a good way.

Adriaan Kruithof
Definitely is. I mean, I love to sit at airports because of this reason. Just feel the vibrations and all the movement around me and picture where like people coming from, where they're going, what is the situation? I feel like that can also really ask yourself, just take your mind off yourself and off the negative cycle you're stuck in at that certain time point. Maybe we can move on to the fashion side of things a bit. How is the way you dress related to how you feel?

Bennet
I think it's very related. I think it goes both ways. So if I'm not feeling so good about myself one day I have like comfort outfits. Which I just grab, put on and I feel good in them. It's not because they're the prettiest thing or something, but just something I've had for a long time, and I know it and it's comfortable in my body. And of course, if I feel great and might put on something a little more daring, right. Try something new. Put myself out there and it also goes the other way that when I do like put on my comfort hoodie, I feel better and if I do try something new, I feel excited, you know? Sometimes it can go wrong, like when I try something new and then I'm not feeling too good in it or some people look at me a second too long and I'm just thinking, oh, maybe, maybe it's a bad choice. Then I get a little more self-conscious, but mostly if I'm in a good mood and I try something new, I can brush it off pretty, pretty quickly.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, I definitely know that feeling of, you know, trying to get yourself out there and then somebody stares at you for a second too long and you just like ***********. Oh damn, that's gonna be in the transcript. Anyways. You talked about your comfort outfits. How would they look like? What do they consist of? Can you give me a little insight in those?

Bennet
OK so. It's important that the socks are long and comfortable. I don't know why, but they can't have holes in in them or something like that so. They have to be not knee high socks. But you know, not the little sneaker socks. Then I have like these Carhartt pants I've had for like 3 or 4 years, light brown. And then I just wear some shirt, doesn't matter. And a hoodie. Just this one. I think I've had this for almost five years now. And it doesn't match with the pants.

Adriaan Kruithof
One second just for my transcription, the hoodie is a dark grey with a light blue small print on the chest area.

Bennet
Yeah, exactly.

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright, so how how would you say in general can clothing create some emotional value to you?

Bennet
Umm. I think it can make me feel good, feel better. And, I think this is very valuable for me to elevate my feelings. Uh, through such a simple thing as putting on some special hoodie, you know?

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, but the question or the answer, I kind of want to have is what makes the hoodie special to you?

Bennet
I think it puts me into a comfortable headspace. I feel it on, on my skin and I feel that it's pretty loose around me, I know the fabric from the inside and I immediately feel like, OK, I know this. Uh, yeah, I know this. This is fine. I'm feeling good.

Adriaan Kruithof
Nice. So that is also related to the fabric of it, I guess. You have a preference in general what you like? More like cotton hoodies and T-shirts or maybe some synthetic yarns more like sportswear or something like that? What would you feel most comfortable or what are those hoodies made of?

Bennet
Just answering that right now, I would definitely say like some cotton. It should feel soft. Shouldn't wrap too much, and if I wear sportswear, I usually feel more exposed because it's thinner so it shouldn't be too skin-tight, too thin. Yeah, this one here is yeah, half cotton, half polyester. So it's not the best quality.

Adriaan Kruithof
OK. But yeah, I guess so if we would make some hoodies, which we probably will, it's probably gonna be 100% cotton just so to not have too many synthetic yarns in there so you can actually put it on landfill without hurting the environment too much. Interestingly, you also talked about the silhouette of it.You said sportswear is too thin and maybe also too tight on the skin sometimes. While you said your favorite hoodies where a bit more boxy and you have some room in them, right? So, do you always go for more oversized silhouettes if you want to feel comfortable in the clothing?

Bennet
I think so, yes. I feel like it also looks better on me because you know, I'm tall and thin. And if I'm just wearing skinny jeans, I'm gonna look even taller. Yeah, but it also I think it's comfortable because you can kind of hide in it. But it still looks good.

Adriaan Kruithof
Nice. OK, that's interesting. I'm also thinking about prints, embroidery, stuff you can put on, for example, basic styles like hoodies, sweatshirts, T-shirts. Are there any motives, any colors that come to your mind? Maybe that you could see on a print that would immediately evoke a positive association and maybe a positive feeling?

Bennet
Okay two things. For this to be like, you know, a calm, calm hoodie. I think it would be really nice to have something that is not like just a printed picture on it, but something you can feel like a little bit of an embroidery, more that you can perhaps touch. Probably shouldn't be in certain areas of the the hoodie. But you know, just something you can touch. I think the most Carhartt-hoodies have this little logo on the under sleeve, near the cuff. Many always have it in the middle of the chest like this one. And I think that that's nicer than like the printed picture. And if we're talking about colors, I think, I probably think it's a bit boring to say, but I think in natural colors are probably the way to go, like something blue or green. Looking out my window right now, any yellow brownish colors? Yeah, I think that would work for me.

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright, and motive wise any anything you can think of because you said for example you sometimes like to be nature, sometimes like to do sports. Is there anything, any connection if I would print I or paint something that you would immediately like feel kind of touched by in a positive way.

Bennet
Good Question. I think I am more into scenery than motives, and I think that's hard to do on a hoodie because I really like you know, trees, forests. I think that's really, really calming, but I wouldn't really think that like a single leaf would look too good. But the whole forest is probably a bit little bit too much. Also, so I think it's not easy. I'm trying to think what my favorite hoodies have and it's mostly not the motive, but the word. And then you have a nice color that is associated with the word. And I think that could work.

Adriaan Kruithof
That's interesting. How do you feel in general about words in the context of my project? Because again, the name of the brand I'm collaborating with is community of real people. Maybe first of all, how do you feel about that name?

Bennet
I think it's a nice name. I think often if you are trying to do something like this, you know a fashion project with meaning behind it, it's easy to get lost in some buzz words you know. Like if you would just like say firm on the hoodie, I think it would be a bit tacky. Umm, but I think

community of real people, is some nice name. I think it would also go well on some clothing. Yeah, but I'm not sure which other words would be good.

Adriaan Kruithof
How do you feel about the word balance in general? What is your association with balance?

Bennet
I kind of feel like it's overused. It's a great word because it's very important and it also it sounds nice. I think it has a good length for it to be on something. But,I always have to think of a friend of mine who's like a SoundCloud rapper who always says 'don't lose the balance' and it's tacky because of him. It's personal preference.

Adriaan Kruithof
Ohh yeah, so you wouldn't put the word balance on some clothes, but maybe something that symbolizes balance without spelling out the word.

Bennet
Yeah, I think that could be good. I think if it looks nice and isn't just like you know like some brands do green washing and it's not mental health washing, you know, has not the mental health washing vibes. I think a hoodie with balance could look pretty good and also get across the message.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, I hope we can dodge the bullet of being accused of mental health washing, if you want to call it like that, by actually collaborating with the people we're collaborating with and actually donating money to projects.

Bennet
And also taking the time to actually talk about the things, I think that's the first step.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yes, I think so too. I hope this research would back any claims against that up from the beginning. Maybe talking about you wouldn't like the word balance on the clothes. What other things would immediately turn you away from buying a garment?

Bennet
OK, so if it has like 'vibe' on it, I'm not buying. 'Breathe', something just that sounds like an instruction. 'Chill.' Uh, these would be some red flags.

Adriaan Kruithof
All right. Any motives that you wouldn't like to see anything that would make you cringe?

Bennet
I think a lot of people associate the ocean and water with calmness. I think it wouldn't be something for me. But I get it. So, I wouldn't be like turned off of the whole brand because of it, but I wouldn't like this. There are so many. Who's with these Japanese waves? You know this picture on it and I think it's overused.

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright, so you would be careful on the wave theme?

Bennet
The whole 'ride the wave, go with the flow' is not my thing.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, fair enough. You talked to before about greenwashing and mental health washing. Are you in general more drawn to buy from clothing brands who communicate their social or environmental efforts?

Bennet
Ideally, I think so, yes. But often the problem is that it's very expensive. You know, like the brands that have produced at high quality product, environmentally friendly and also manage to communicate it, to me are hard to afford sometimes. And it's easy to get lost in the, you know new trend. Uh, it's easy to get caught up in that and then want to buy it because I'm addicted, you know, just also want to look good but yes, of course. Apart from the Urban Outfitters hoodie most of my favorite things are from relatively environmentally friendly brands.

Adriaan Kruithof
OK, maybe in general, do you have any inputs as a consumer in the 1st place of things that you would like to see more within the fashion or the creative industry or maybe this certain project?

Bennet
We just had a little connection lag. Can you repeat the question?

Adriaan Kruithof
Yes, in general, do you have any input as a consumer in the 1st place or things that you would like to see more within fashion or the creative industry or maybe even targeted to this project that we are discussing?

Bennet
So, me personally when I go shopping, I'm very often disappointed. You know, I mostly go shopping with my girlfriend and we walk through the woman's section and see these creative, colorful things with like new colors I've never seen on a hoodie and stuff like this. And then I go to the men's section and it's just, you know, black, white, brown, and gray, some navy blue, and that's it. And I'm just always a bit disappointed, and especially if I walked through the women's

section first, then I'm just like you know. So, it's nothing there to that makes it possible to kind of express myself, you know.

Adriaan Kruithof
So you would say more expressive menswear or also more unisex clothing in general?

Bennet
More unisex clothing would of course be the great solution as well. I always thought just more expressive menswear, but if it's unisex, it doesn't matter. It's even easier.

Adriaan Kruithof
All right, that's good because I'm also very heavily thinking about making this collection as unisex as somehow possible, especially since as we are all the community of real people.
I don't want to exclude anybody by gender through making this collection, you know, from the get-go.

Bennet
Yeah, I think it's a good idea.

Adriaan Kruithof
I think honestly, we discussed most of the things I wanted to ask you before, maybe you have some other input, insights, anything you want to address? Because you mentioned before that you thought about this whole conversation before our meeting. Is there anything you would like to tell me?

Bennet
Umm. I have some really nice design ideas which I can pitch to you later.

Adriaan Kruithof
You can do it now. Maybe it's good to have it in the transcription as well.

Bennet
No, I think I have to think about it a bit more and send you a sketch. I think it's important, especially if the thing is called a community of real people, to include the community as best as possible. I think you have like 10 interviews, the more the merrier. And to get as much answers as possible. Because the spectrum is so wide and I feel like I'm pretty much in the middle of whatever spectrum it is, and not too special with which I'm fine with. But you know, have people from all walks of life. You have probably a lot of younger people. Maybe you there's some parent who's ready to talk about it. Some grown up who's down to talk? I don't know. I think it's hard to get someone like that, but it's part of the community, I would think.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, it's a thin line. It's kind of hard to choose who to interview and not because, of course our target group are more fashion sensitive, younger professionals starting around 18 to 35, I would say. So of course, that's what we're gonna focus on. But I think it also would be very interesting and very relevant to get some input of people who are not directly in the target group, but maybe in their 40s and maybe have some connection to fashion or maybe not at all. You know, I'll try to get as much research done as somehow possible in the time that I have. I think I will also have a survey to have some more quantifiable data. And then what I really would like to do and I would also like to already invite you and keep that in the back of your head, is a focus group with the people that I'm interviewing right now, so to bring as many of the 10 people as somehow possible together, most likely in an online meetings since they are living, spread out all over the world and show them the designs that I will have been doing to that point and integrate you guys into choosing and giving me some feedback on how you feel about those designs and then really try to create a collection that just reflects the community as much as possible.

Bennet
Yeah, I think that's a good idea.

Adriaan Kruithof
This is nice. That's very good to hear. Then, if there's nothing else you want to say, apart from your design ideas, which you can tell me as soon as we ended this transcription.

Bennet
Yes.

Adriaan Kruithof
Then thank you very much for taking time for this interview. I really appreciate it.

Bennet
Yes, you are very welcome. This has been great.

Adriaan Kruithof
Thank you. Then I will stop the recording.

Interview Laura

Adriaan Kruithof
Nice. Then let's start with some basic questions. What's your name, age and where are you from?

Laura
I'm Laura. I am 20 years old and I'm based in Potsdam, but I live in Valencia for six months now.

Adriaan Kruithof
Nice and in what field do you work or study?

Laura
And I work as a jewelry designer for my own small brand, like I would not say that's my real profession cause it's more like a hobby, but it's like the main thing I do right now. Umm, but for sure I want to study something like this? Yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
Nice. Do you already know what field you want to study? Also like jewelry design?

Laura
Yes, I would love to like, do something with goldsmith or jewelry design as well, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
That's really cool. I like that. OK, there's gonna is already getting a bit more personal, and I just wanted to say again, if you for some reason feel uncomfortable answering any of those questions, just let me know and no expectations, no pressure, and no stress. Yeah. All right. What is your relation or your story with mental health?

Laura
Most of the people start with their childhood, I think. But maybe this is not where I would start cause like I would say had a really nice childhood and I was not dealing with mental health at all, and I think it comes more like when you're a teenager or something. Is it also like with fashion right now or in general?

Adriaan Kruithof
This one is more about your general mental health and then we'll try to make the link to fashion on how it influences it a bit later.

Laura
Alright, so, alright. OK. So, I would say I just had like, you know, the typical teenage problems, I would say like not to know what person you are and not to know where to fit in. Like dealing with different friend groups, knowing which friends are good for you and which are not good for you. And like also maybe with first love falling in love, something with that. But I would say like all in all like my mental health was also always like pretty good. It just started like when you get older, when you like, trying to deal with like, I don't know, arguing with your parents about certain life choices, I would say, but yeah, All in all, I'm pretty, pretty happy about how my mental health was going so far.

Adriaan Kruithof

Nice. Alright, so you also wouldn't say about yourself that you have any mental health conditions or any struggles with that?

Laura
No, not really. But this also is really personal to me, maybe I don't wanna go in the details here.

Adriaan Kruithof
That is completely fine! Can I ask you though, why did you choose to participate in this interview? Why did it sound appealing to you to talk about this topic?

Laura
I think because of the fashion and mental health thing together cause I think at my point of view from a like freelancer jewelry designer, I wanted to talk to you because I think I have a different point of view than other people have. And like, especially when it comes to fast fashion or slow fashion. And yeah, I think my opinion about that could be interesting for other people. That's why.

Adriaan Kruithof
So tell me a bit more what is your opinion? How do you see the relation of the fashion industry and mental health?

Laura
I'll start a bit more from the beginning. Like I started to jewelry design two years ago and it was like more of a hobby. I was finishing high school and it was time of Corona like 2020. And it was, yeah, it was more like a hobby, like doing something creative. Like maybe you just have a coronavirus home moment and I've always been a creative person. So, it was cool for me trying something new, but with the time I saw that, everything has grown bigger and I wondered, I asked myself if this is only a hobby or maybe more, maybe it can become a profession. Like more than a hobby. And like, I've dealt with all fields of selling it, shipping it and doing finances like everything related to having a small business. I think like from the very first day where I started, I also wondered, there's so much fast fashion and I put so much work in my jewelry designs and I could not afford a prize like €2.00 for a ring or €10 for necklace. I would say I really work in this slow fashion brand. And I think most of the people don't understand how much work it really is and where the prices are coming from. Like working with my jewelry brand compared to my mental health as well. And I would say I have grown so much bigger with own thoughts about all the fashion industry things and that most of the people are so uneducated about what it means to make fashion to live fashion, to create fashion. And UM, I also understand like the side of people when they say, yeah, but I do not have so much money for expensive jewelry or expensive clothes. But on the other side, I think it's also not normal that the fashion, the fast fashion industry is so like cheap and like the circumstances are so low. So I think it's about the understanding and how everything is produced and how people suffer also from mental health, who are producing the stuff and getting not enough money for their families and all kind of stuff, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof

Yeah, I think that's very relevant. And I think it's interesting to hear your first-person perspective as somebody who's trying to be like an independent business owner, I guess you could call it.

Laura
Yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
Umm. And yeah, especially in comparison to the competition that is just on such a high scale that you can, like factually not compete with them in the price range. But how does that make you feel? Like does it stress you out a lot, do you think it's unfair? Does it drive you?

Laura
Yeah, I think so because like, I don't know, there are many people I'm meeting right now, especially because I moved to another city. And when I tell them about my small business and the prices as well, most of them are like ohh well, that's kinda expensive, but I understand you. And do you really understand it? I'm not sure cause they haven't experienced it yet. How it is like to really start a small business. So, the understanding of other people, I would say yeah, it's good, but I'm not sure if they really mean what they say, so maybe the education on slow fashion should be more important.

Adriaan Kruithof
No, that's fair enough. So how would you like people to educate themselves or would you like the brands to educate the customers?

Laura
Yeah, I think yeah, it's easy to say like just add a school subject and educate the students. But I think that's it's not that relevant. I would say it's more about the brands. The big brands should be forced to reveal how the circumstances or how the situation in the factories is going on and I know obviously they wouldn't do it because it's obviously not good. So maybe the government has to do something, but I think they see it not as a real problem. You know, there are like so many other problems.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, yeah, I I know what you mean. I feel like it's such a hard question. And I've been asking this question to myself like a lot during those studies as well, because I think yes, governmental laws and policies definitely would help a lot. But then all governments would have to kind of agree on the same goals, the same surroundings. And that is kind of hard within a capitalistic market where price competition rules. That has to have like a lot of social and maybe even socialist thoughs behind that. And I don't really see that coming anytime soon. Sadly. If you look, for example to Cambodia, where, like literally garment workers who want to demonstrate to have workers unions, which should basically be given by the working and human rights. And they get, like, beaten up by their own government. So, I feel like there's a very long way to go. And I have a hard time seeing how that can be solved. But maybe we can get a bit more again to you as a person. How would you say the way you dress is related to the way you feel?

Laura
Like as a teenager, I didn't really know like what my style is going to be like. I think many people feel like that and was always like dressing what is in or what other people are wearing. I think you are more afraid as a teenager to wear something not everybody's wearing. So, I also had a long way to find what fashion is for me so. And like the sentence like the first impression is always like how you see other people? I think that's a true statement. So, I like to dress and I like to think about outfits for the next day or something because I think that's who I am. And I think like there for sure, are several changes in how you would dress and style arts and stuff. And I think like for the last three years I changed a lot again. But I love it and I think also compared to mental health or how you feel, that was your question and it also says a lot. So, when I have a day where I'm not feeling good, I'm not standing in front of my wardrobe and thinking how could dress to feel better because I'm obviously not feeling good, so I just put on a hoodie or a long pants on. That's it. So, I think fashion is how you feel. So, I think it's a true statement, I think the way where it gets like from a teenager to young woman to older woman and it's always how you see yourself, I think, and how you want to express yourself.

Adriaan Kruithof
So you would say at like it's also kind of shows your own personal growth and also it's like a mirror of that.

Laura
Yeah, I can especially see it at my sister. I never noticed it that way. But like, when I when I moved out six weeks ago, I gave her not all my clothes, but I couldn't take everything with me. So I gave her, like half of my wardrobe and her eyes were like, thank you so much. It was like, that's so cute that you wear the same style as me. But yeah, obviously like, I'm a big sister and a role model as well. I would say so.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yes, true. I definitely have the same with my younger brother as well. Like I was also talking to him the other day and he was wearing a sweatshirt that I gave to him and all of a sudden also had his like nails painted and I was just like, yes.

Laura
That's so cute.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, I like the influence you're having there. But one thing I wanted to ask, like a follow up question. You said on days where you don't feel great you would normally wear like a hoodie and just like some black pants or something, right, is that you go to comfortable outfit on those days?

Laura
And yeah, yeah, maybe like in general, I love to wear wide clothes and like oversized stuff. Like I live in Valencia right now. It's summer, you can't always translate this. When I don't feel like I'm good, I always wear nothing which is showing your whole figure or something. Yeah, I think just

from what other people that I've talked to so far, I think it's kind of the feeling of already feeling of like those clothes making you like feeling very exposed kind of. And if you are already struggling with yourself, you don't want to feel exposed from the outside. You know, it's like the dreams where you all of a sudden are standing nakedly in a room full of fully clothed people: it just feels super, super vulnerable, which you don't want if you already are in a vulnerable kind of state of mind. You know what I mean?

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. I think that's it. But one thing I also want to ask you because I mean I guess this is also for my design part as well, I kinda want to collect things that people do that make them feel better if they feel low. And I also want to know more about motives, they feel connected to. Because of that, what would you usually do on days where you feel like pretty low and you probably don't have the greatest self-esteem or how do you cope with that? How do you feel better? Do you know, like your mechanisms on how to improve your own mood?

Laura
That's a good question. Like I really would say it sounds cliche, but like I would wear like nice jewelry as always. Like it feels it makes me feel better and I know I put my own effort in it, it's something I created and I can't lie, I get many compliments about them, and maybe that's like the last thing of my not feeling well behavior on Sundays like this, where I would say, yeah, OK, at least I have something I created. I have something I feel good with. But yeah, I don't know. Like when the days you don't feel good, there's nothing that could change it, you know, like on for clothes or something.

Adriaan Kruithof
No, but you can also think further than clothes. This doesn't have to be limited to clothes. This could also be for example living in Valencia and going to the beach without a phone and listening to the waves or whatever it could be.

Laura
OK, I understood the question, Yeah, I think since I live in Valencia, I think it's talking to friends, definitely like also having a video chat or calling them or. Yeah, I don't know. I think sometimes it's also just staying at home with it. Sounds like so basic like you know, but. So, I think when you don't feel good, there's a reason why it is like that. And I think you don't have to feel good at all days. So that's impossible. So I think yeah, staying close to family and friends always helps me. Like going to the beach, enjoying good weather. I think the sun is a really strong factor for feelings, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
Nice. Yeah. I mean, I feel like that's what a lot of people have in common. That like nature, sun, beach, forest or whatever they can get, kind of just, like, really lifts the mood. OK, now I want to know, since for example, I'm gonna do some hoodies and T-shirts and whatever. And I'm looking for print designs that make the people who wear them feel better about themselves. What would be like print designs or maybe even colors or materials where you wpuld be like: Yes, I feel like this could make me feel more comfortable and this could be my new comfort hoodie for example.

Laura
Ohh. I would definitely say wool, so good quality. It's always a factor like I have many hoodies I like because of the print, but it's a lot of like synthetic fabrics in it and you get sweaty easily and then don't feel good again. So, I think it's in first of all like off the materials and something colorful. I like pastels a lot. Yes, some nice prints. I don't know. It's a good question. Like cliche would be with the slogan which said something, but I don't know if that would make me feel better. So maybe like a motive not a slogan, but maybe like a, uh, like a cartoon something.

Adriaan Kruithof
Oh, like a cartoon. So would you say, like, something more childlike or a tiny bit childish would also, you know, feel make you feel better. Is that a connection you would make?

Laura
Yeah, I think so. It doesn't have to be like that kitsch. Yeah, I would look at it and would be more happy. More than the than just the slogan or something.

Adriaan Kruithof
That's interesting and that's great to hear because I personally kinda have the same feeling. I feel like if you put a big slogan on the T-shirt or sweater, it can easily seem a bit tacky or you know or just a bit too much in your face. Kind of. Umm and I, I think like cartoons always have a good feeling of nostalgia and childhood, and I don't know, are just like very easy and not take themselves as serious. So, I know what you mean. And it's actually funny because you are already the third or fourth person mentioning that. So, I'm starting to see a little pattern there actually.

Laura
And a friend of mine has a little brand with T-shirts and hoodies and stuff. And one time we like collaborated to that together and I I've drawn flowers with acryl colors and he printed it on the T-shirt. It was just a white T-shirt, but then, like, bright colors of flowers. Maybe some people could draw something and you could print it on it.

Adriaan Kruithof
OK. So would you say just like florals and maybe patterns or motives out of nature could be nice as well?

Laura
Sure, sure. And because, like you said, most of the people also said like nature makes them feel better, so I think everyone will agree on that.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, I actually think so too. I feel like the the childhood thing, the nature thing like there's some patterns coming through and everybody actually also says the same about like fonts or just like a lot of texts on there that everybody's like 'Yeah, can be nice, but can go south kinda easily.'

Maybe let's turn it the other way around, would there be any designs, anything you would see on the T-shirt or hoodie that would immediately just like **** you off and ruin your day?

Laura
I don't know. I think like motives I saw 100 times somewhere else. Like I don't know how to explain, but I think you know what I mean. When you go into a a big H&M or I don't know, something like that. And you see one hoodie, you saw two minutes ago in the other store and you wonder, why does everyone has to do it? Like obviously it's a fashion trend or something. But I think like when there is a T-shirt which exists, you don't have to copy it again so. I would love to see something new, so not again. The hundreds T-shirt with I feel happy or smileys.

Adriaan Kruithof
I know what you mean. I feel like a lot of times, especially with printed T-shirts the options are also somewhat limited. Can easily look very generic. And that's something I have to kind of maneuver around. All right. Umm, you said before that you would be more drawn to natural materials as well rather than synthetics, right?

Laura
Yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
I forgot to tell you before. That's gonna be spring summer collection, so it's probably not gonna be a lot of wool, so maybe more like cotton or linen or something like that. You think that's that will be fine as well?

Laura
Yeah, cotton is definitely good. Sure.

Adriaan Kruithof
That's alright, just wanted to clarify that in between. What are the other questions I wanted to ask you? That's always the way I feel like after like 30-40 minutes. I'm always just like, OK, we're talking about so much. And also, since I'm not just like, you know, going down a catalogue of questions, I'm sometimes losing track of it. I don't know. I feel like for me, it's also just interesting for you, as somebody who's also into fashion and who's doing very nice jewelry, by the way.

Laura
Thank you.

Adriaan Kruithof
To just get some more input. How do you think I can I make the most out of this collection and especially the most out of kind of basic pieces like hoodies or sweatshirts or T-shirts? How can I create some emotional value?

Laura
What I love to do when I feel uninspired with my jewelry. It's like really going out like, see what other people are wearing. Not only people. My inspiration often comes from buildings or from architecture. It's cool to see how different every like how different it is in other cities. And I always take pictures from it and then think about it how I could put it in my creative space so. I don't know, like in times of social media and Internet and stuff, you could easily like get in again into trendy things like fashion other people already did. So, I think taking inspiration from nature or like, yeah, just from your city is always a great start. And I always love to do a mood board, collect many of ideas and getting inspiration from outside.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, I think that's a very nice input. OK, then there's actually only two more questions I want to ask you. So, first of all, I mentioned before the name of the brand that I'm collaborating with is community of real people. How do you feel about that name? You can be completely honest.

Laura
Community of real people. Why not? I mean like. Some people are coming up with, I don't know, crazy names. You will not recognize after 2 minutes. So, I think that's a pretty, pretty honest name. And I think you will definitely like fulfil this name. So, I kinda like that.

Adriaan Kruithof
So what are your associations with only the word community? What are the first words that come to your mind if you hear the word community?

Laura
A group of people who feel connected to each other and share the same goals as well.

Adriaan Kruithof
It's very nice, very short and to the point. OK, then one more word, because that was something that, especially people who were struggling more with the mental health than you do, for example, mentioned during our talks. The word balance. What do you associate with that word?

Laura
Balance in life in general. Yeah, I think UM. You could like for example be the most happiest person, you have like a lot of success in your work and you earn a lot of money. But on the other hand, you don't have love or friends, like just for example. I think that's a real unbalanced life. And it shows that you could have like one good thing. But on the other side it will not make you, like, truly happy in life. So, I always try to have balance also in my jewellery works. Yeah, I think balance, just the word, shows that you need like a big variety of different stuff to reach your goal or to really be happy.

Adriaan Kruithof
Thank you so so much for taking the time. It was really nice to talk to you and I really appreciate

your input. I think there's a lot of valuable things you said that I can definitely use for my project, so I appreciate that.

Laura
Thank you. I hope so.

Interview Mariam

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright, so first of all, what's your name, age and where are you from?

Mariam
OK, my name's Mariam. I'm from Berlin, Germany and I'm 24 years old.

Adriaan Kruithof
And what field do you work in or study at the moment?

Mariam
I'm currently a student at UFA in Amsterdam. I do political science as a specification and public policy and governance. And I've also studied in my bachelors in this line.

Adriaan Kruithof
The next one is already a bit more personal. Again, just answer as much as you're comfortable with. What is your relation or your story with mental health?

Mariam
I guess generally I've always felt quite healthy in that way, but actually throughout the pandemic I would say that has definitely changed and I've had my first experience of like maybe going towards a depression kind of phase and that was definitely a very weird to experience and ever since I feel like I've become a lot more careful around that and also maybe I found a couple ways to deal with it better. Yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
So what other ways you're dealing with that? Do you have some good coping mechanisms? If you feel down?

Mariam
I felt at first that I would have to find coping mechanisms. But then I quickly sort of recognized that I wasn't really able to find any. So it was more about like coming down and like stepping back from things that were really stressing me out and sort of just having a break of things,

spending a lot more time even by myself or I don't know, just sort of getting things done, like a good sleep routine or eating better. And it's really hard sometimes to stick to it. But I think that would be what generally helps me to make better decisions for a daily life, especially when I'm going through a rather sad phase and also talking to people about it, which I find hard, but yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, I think that's something a lot of people have in common; the general need of being heard and also just express yourself is the biggest boundary for a lot of people. But as soon as you have overcome this one, it's kind of also considered as the most helpful, right?

Mariam
Yeah, I would agree. I would agree with that. (inaudible)

Adriaan Kruithof
Ohh, the connection is still not great, but I think we can make it work, no?

Mariam
I think it's because of the air pods, but I don't think I can take them out though because otherwise it'll be too loud.

Adriaan Kruithof
No, I think I think it should be fine. OK. But you said so it's more about your routines and kind of how you, yeah, how you react to those feelings in your daily life more than having specific, I don't know, patterns or activities that you would do to feel better about yourself?

Mariam
Yeah. I think like for me, I mean that kind of is a routine, right? What I've just described. Well, I have these like things, really easy fixes, I would say that everyone knows and that's probably also the things that everyone would say first to someone who's maybe becoming mildly depressed. Like you have to go outside. You should see people, eat better, sleep more. I don't know, just become more active in that way. But then I thought, like, so far before the pandemic, I've always been able to sort of like, push myself to do these things. And it was really easy. But then for the pandemic, I really had the issue of just, like, doing anything kind of, also concentrating is really hard. So, then it just didn't work for me in that way. So then I had to, really, sounds kinda cheesy, but actually like reconnect with myself. So understand how I feel about certain situations where it's coming from and where to start. And I think by doing that I sort of found a routine that I tried to stick with, but it was still kind of hard and I wouldn't say that this is like the go to thing for the next time I'm having this. So that's not something that I would rely on. And as a routine that I can do whenever this situation comes up, but it would be maybe something. The next thing that I would recognize a bit earlier and like know how to approach it in that way.

Adriaan Kruithof
Well, that sounds pretty logical. Can you? Sorry, I have a hard time formulating my thoughts

right now. Especially since I asked all those questions already 6 times, so let's move on to the next one, to kind of bridge the gap between the fashion and mental health conversation a bit. So how would you say is the way you dress related to the way you feel? Or the other way around?

Mariam
Yeah, I would say actually that like clothing or like the way that I dress kind of is an expression of me to the outside world and sort of to let people know how I feel. I don't think that people recognize how I feel from the way that I dress, but obviously feel confident and like very happy with myself. I also think especially maybe for girls or people who identify as women, it's oftentimes a thing about body image and how comfortable you feel in your body. If you wear something tighter, if you won't. And if you just consider yourself to look really stupid or dumb, or maybe quite large or whatever, and certain outfits. But I think when I'm, like, confident, happy with myself, I always also feel very confident through the way that I dress. And also, that would definitely be a be an expression for myself. And I actually really care about what I wear, although I'm not always like putting a lot of like thought into my outfits, but I think it's definitely a way of expressing happiness or boldness or these kinds of things, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
So do you see any patterns in the way you dress? For example, when you say you feel happy? Are there colour schemes, fabrics, anything that that is like a reoccurring pattern there.

Mariam
I think I would probably go for some things that I always feel like they're cool and they look really good on me, but then I sometimes don't feel confident enough to actually wear them. So then on these days I probably go for those like something a bit more bold, maybe going a bit more in the direction of stuff that I don't usually wear a lot. And I think also I enjoy dressing up for certain occasions, a lot more maybe. So, for example, I like, I like techno music. I go dancing and on these days I would say that I definitely felt feel a lot more confident wearing something that's a lot more techno-seen than I would usually walk around in. But then I really enjoy doing that. And like when I feel less comfortable or happy with myself, I would probably just go for something that doesn't stick out too much, so it doesn't attract a lot of attention. The days that I feel good I'm very happy to wear things that attract attention, like colorful things. I have this really like neon green jacket, which I really love. But that I had a for the longest time and I never would actually wear it because I thought it was like a bit too out there. But then on these days, I actually feel like looks so great and then I really enjoy wearing it. Yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
It's very interesting because I, as you know, talk to a lot of other people already today and they all actually mentioned like all of them mentioned that if they felt pretty bad, Maybe caused by depression or maybe just in general, that they tend to then dress up even more than they would normally do to kind of push themselves into getting into a more positive mindset and kind of daring themselves to go out and, you know, be with other people and just like, challenge things themselves. How do you feel about that? Do you also do that?

Mariam

I would agree to some extent. I feel like the idea of like dressing up to make myself feel better before I go out or like to seem a bit more outgoing that day makes sense. But then I personally always feel like you're not comfortable with yourself. I don't feel comfortable in whatever I'm wearing anyways. I just don't like the way I look or like things suit me. I just never get to the point where I actually like what I'm wearing. And I notice that when I'm like with friends, for example, getting ready, especially when I'm like at their place and they have all these options to choose from, and I have the thing that I'm wearing already, then I can like maybe choose a different shirt or something and try things on and just like everything just doesn't look nice. And I think that's basically because I just don't feel myself that day. So, then it doesn't make that much of a difference. And I actually feel a bit weird or I feel like it makes it worse when I try really hard and then let's just really not me in the end, so that I'd rather just like try and like not put more thoughts towards being super self-conscious. I think you become more self-conscious when you put even more effort into your outfit. But on the other hand, I understand that in certain things that you know you look good in, maybe it makes you a bit more comfortable, but I wouldn't say that applies to myself.

Adriaan Kruithof

Yeah, I personally would agree with that. I also feel like I either go to some safe options where I know, OK, I've maybe I've gotten some compliments when wearing this before, or maybe I just liked the fit of it or whatever. Maybe it's just something I know that gives me more comfort. Do you have something like that as well? Just like a comfort outfit or something like that.

Mariam

Actually I don't have a typical comfort outfit, but I think I would go for something plain like probably just black. And then like a jacket that I like above that because I feel like there's nothing you can do too wrong. And even if you feel like very self-conscious that day, at least nothing that has like a weird fit or anything like that. So, then there's not too much wrong with the outfit, I think. But yeah, I would probably just be plain black and then choose that I feel comfortable in, for sure. I hate wearing sneakers for some reason. So, it always has to be boots. And that's because I just don't think I look great in them. So that would make me feel worse. But then boots definitely make me feel better, I think. Yeah, definitely boots for 100% and then like a large loose jacket and just plain black, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof

No. Sounds like you can't go wrong with that option. Also one thing I want to ask you because, as you know, I have to design a lot and I told you before that the styles that I there will be created by the brand and the end of the day are gonna be rather basic silhouettes at least. So it's mostly going to be white, black, maybe dark brown, T-shirts, sweatshirts, something like that. So, I really have to do something with the prints or embroidery or other options that you can do with that. Can you think of any print motives or maybe colors or texts that you would see and it would automatically like evoke kind of a positive emotion in you?

Mariam

First off, I always think the mix of black and white is just great. So, I actually like that a lot. Other colours on that, I feel like a darkish blue like my nails. So, like this kind of goes well with black

and white. So I would like that color to be printed on there. Personally, I've never really worn a lot of like print shirts, even though I really liked them, and one print shirt that I've always really liked from a friend of mine, that I think she did it herself. It's like very plain and then it's just it says fuck in the middle. But then there's like the star instead of the u in it. It's just very plain and simple, but it's always really nice. And it's just as a great fit. And I think, no, she didn't do it herself. She has it from her dad, like a really long time ago. So, I always feel like I like a play with words and nothing too out there necessarily, just something small and plain. But then also I think if it's like a full print. I also enjoy wearing prints a lot and then like a loose jacket, especially if white. I think it can really give a lot of character to the outfit. And I definitely like kind of tight turtleneck, maybe see through material with prints on it.

Adriaan Kruithof
Me too. I hope I can sell that to the brand that I'm designing for because they have more of a conservative menswear following, I would say. So, the mesh turtleneck might be a bit too out there for them. But I mean, I would definitely wear that as well.

Mariam
Yeah, I think it just has always like has very like sexy attitude in it to it. It doesn't matter if it's like man or woman wearing it. It's just thinks it's really nice because it's sort of like shows the figure a little bit, but then it's kind of subtle and you can just put something above and the see through thing like you could wear something underneath or just have it like this. So, it really get to decide how sexy and out there it is in the end.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, that's true. I mean, it gives a lot of like layering options, which also like. Nice staple piece that you can combine with all the other things from the collection.

Mariam
Also, doesn't have to be see through and any kind of like stretching material, I always like. It's something that kind of gives you a bit of, I don't know. But yeah, like for being a woman, I just really enjoying it, like, not wearing a bra. And I feel better. If it's like a rather tight top in that way. So, I'm I would also I always like these tight, long sleeve tops either with turtleneck or not turtleneck. I think that's fun. Yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
Me too. Me too. I'm just thinking about how I could sell that to the brand. I mean that's one of the things since it's a menswear brand, I guess the designs, although I want them to be unisex will still be.
Umm. Kind of maybe still menswear driven, so maybe based more on oversized silhouettes, although I think the mix of both to have like for example some big pants and tight top. I mean we've seen it a lot now the last years, but it always kind of works.

Mariam
Yeah, it's very good. I think actually also what I like is that very clean-cut jumper and like really

like crisp, nice material. But then like have it with like, flared arms, maybe, I don't know, in a turtleneck.
And then I feel like that could look really nice in a unisex way as well. Could tuck it into pants or leave it out. I think like that's also (inaudible due to connection) just think it gives you like a chic kind of look and it's very comfortable though. So yeah, I'm looking for a jumper like this, actually, for a long time.

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright, I'll let you know if I make one. One thing I wondered because you mentioned before, the use of like synthetic materials, right? And I remember that some of the other people that I interviewed were highly recommending me to not use synthetic materials because I talked to some and they also talked about their experiences with depression, but especially the people who talked about their anxiety, just that the very tight fitting tops sometimes can feel almost like a like a cage or something and can like sometimes negatively influence my mental health. If I think about it myself, and my perception and the way how comfortable I feel, they of course have a tendency to get more sweaty than if you just have a 100% cotton T-shirt or something.

Mariam
True. I think it always depends on the material and I don't really know much about textiles. I have a couple of these tops which I like sweat in easily and like obviously there's like a smell quickly so I can't actually wear them for the whole night or something like this. Even like, not even when I'm dancing, especially if it is like really cheap material. But I think then also there's like really good material. So, you don't have the sweat issue so much, especially when they're like a bit respiratory like see through. But then, for someone who has anxiety, well, I understand sort of the thing about like the tight chops and not feeling great. So, then I would get back to the jumper option, which I think is like nice and comfy. I also actually think it doesn't have to be a hoodie, but like having the hood of the hoodie. Yeah, I think that's always something that I find very cool. But personally like never wear? Because I sometimes have braids and then I think it looks kind of cool. But it turns out to be really uncomfortable. Or when I have my other like normal curls, it's always kind of inconvenient to put it on actually. So, but I like the look of it being out over the jacket, so.

Adriaan Kruithof
Umm, alright, though. OK, that's actually interesting. I didn't think about it that much. I mean, you know me. I'm also not the biggest hoodie person. I feel like I have like 2 hoodies myself probably. And I also don't have anything really that is like has like, you know, the classical prints. I feel like, I don't have a lot of prints like that, but that's kind of the the biggest challenge I'm facing right now for those, like, more basic pieces that will be created in the end. How can I communicate the, you know, the feeling of community, togetherness, you know, and the mental health awareness part in a design without making it too literal or too cringy. Because I feel like if you, you know, put a lot of words about that on the T-shirt, it easily looks like a wall tattoo, people have at home with like inspirational quotes and shit. And I don't want that. So, do you have some good ideas how to make it a bit less literal and a bit more cool?

Mariam
Well, I think I would probably. I would think that the story behind the piece could be more

important than the peace actually saying this is mental health stuff. So, I would probably go for something like the comfort pants or the comfort shirt or whatever which gives you the space of being yourself and feeling comfortable in what you're wearing. It's like, I don't know, made out of material that's comfortable to you, but then also you could. I mean, I don't know if that's like a little like neoliberalist you could be like a negative towards that. Often times, if you have shirts or like pants, brands will sort of push this idea of, like, put this on and you feel sexy. But like, basically what they do is like, you put this on, you look great and then you look sexy or whatever. So that's what it's about. And I think that as a message always works really well. But then if it's about mental health. I don't necessarily know if it's a good idea to like be like. OK, well, we have mental health issues. Put this on and you'll be sexy and confident. Maybe that's a bit weird. So yeah, so rather something that, like, expresses the safe space of it.

Adriaan Kruithof
Oh, that's honestly, safe space is a good keyword, kind of. What would your associations be with that? Can you come up with some places or some surroundings that you would consider safe spaces?

Mariam
Like safe spaces for me in a very objective and broad sense are spaces where everyone can sort of be themselves, feel comfortable. Especially for others, I think I'm actually quite confident. But like, yeah, for others I feel like often times people feel really different. So, I've come conscious at the beginning when the group, so they have like need some time to loosen up. So I would say like being surrounded by people that you feel you can talk and not be judged by. I think that's a big part of it. And then also maybe an environment that you're used to something that's not new. But for me personally, I think I feel the most comfortable when I'm with people that I trust and or when I have enough trust in myself. I don't know, maybe it could be knowledge in the classroom and could be self-confidence and it's about looks and walking into a room with like a lot of people look really good or even in a discussion with friends. Uh, it would be maybe the feeling of like knowing that I'm not wrong and what I'm saying, even though it might not have all the answers to the question that's being posed. But just like being confident in what you know. And so, I think it would be about what, you know, basically sort of like knowing that you are good enough or whatever, knowing that you are with people that you can trust, knowing that you are knowledgeable enough to say something. So, understanding your position in all of this, I would say, I don't know if that makes sense.

Adriaan Kruithof
That makes sense. I mean, it is of course abstract, but to me that makes sense. So it's a bit of finding, that safe space within yourself and then that also could that contribute to making all places sort of a safe space, right?

Mariam
Yeah, I think that's the way I would go about it, but obviously if I talk about like proper safe spaces in the in the sense of like a location that would probably be home. Yeah, home, maybe. I was talking about this with a friend recently that like, university is supposed to be a safe space. Because she does gender studies and they had this incident in class. Something really bad happened. And then the teacher didn't handle that well and basically the teacher said that this is

a learning space and not a safe space and then everyone got really mad because obviously there's a lot of like transgender people in it as well and some of them just left because they didn't feel comfortable at all and then they had this big like major discussion. If universities are not a safe space, they should have known before because otherwise they would not have engaged in this kind of study program and maybe also not have been as vocal about the things that they think, because they expected the space to be a safe space, where they can talk about gender and all these ideas are rendered. But then they actually really had this pushback experience. So, I think even like learning spaces for me would have to be a safe space. Yeah, I think that's all I can say to that. I don't know if you ask more specific questions, maybe I can get more out of myself. But other than that, I think I'd rather go for from the inside of myself safe, self-safe space experience, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. No, you don't have to actually get more concrete than that because I kind of like to. I kind of like to leave those questions a bit broad because it's so interesting how different the interpretations of people are. You know, one of the people I interviewed said, OK, there's this one cafe that is, you know, exactly 4 minutes away from my home. And I always ordered the same thing. And that gives me routine. And therefore, it is my safe space. And I never had any bad experiences there. For me, it's interesting what I can do out of those perspectives and how to translate them into designs and any form. So, I like the different ideas behind it. I like how I could maybe visualize the safe space you can find within yourself, while for another person their save space might be in the park under a tree, which is of course way more literal and maybe a bit easier to grasp, but both can be like visualized.
So no, I think it's honestly very nice input and that's the most philosophical input so far, maybe. Ohh yeah, one thing I want to ask because as I said before, the name of the Mental Health Awareness Organization is community of real people. How do you feel about that name? What kind of associations come with that when you hear it?

Mariam
First off, I would say I actually really like it. I think it's cool. And then maybe I don't like the normative distinction between, like, what's real, what's not real, I don't know. That's kind of like normal, really, like a label, sort of normal people. I think that's something that people could relate to and find very cute because it's so basic. But then also like a very much sort of works with the stigma of like what is normal, what is not. So, I think real could maybe have the same thing with it. But other than that, I think the title itself sounds really nice. Also could like actually be playing with the like normal people. Like it's sort of like the opposite of normal. It's like real kind of in that sense. So, I like that, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
Ooh, I like that thought. That's very interesting. I think. I guess what the guy who founded this was intending by saying that is that we are all real people, but I guess I could also see it like you kind of distinguishing it and being like, OK, what makes you real though? Can you only be a real person if you open up about your mental health? So of course, it also can be somewhat exclusive, which is the opposite of what a community is intended to be, right?

Mariam
Yeah. I'm sorry, I just really have to go to the toilet. I'll be back in, like, 2 minutes. Sorry. (short break)
OK. Yeah, back.

Adriaan Kruithof
Maybe another term that I talked a lot about the last 24 hours. It's the term balance which has been mentioned a lot in a lot of different contexts and I know from my own personal experience in phases where I struggle with my mental health that there was maybe the word that seems almost unachievable for me because I always felt very ambivalent and very in between the highs and lows.
What are your associations with the word?

Mariam
Balance would be what I'm initially striving for, but then I also find it very hard to achieve that balance myself. I think maybe that's also my issue with it and when it comes to like mental health in the way of like what kind of balance do you need or like what do we actually need to balance to achieve mental health health in that sense. So, for me it would be a lot more things than just two like because if you have this imagination effect of a scale. On the scale you have a good and a bad. You would obviously wanna find a balance between that. But then I feel like for me it's probably like 5 things and then trying to balance. So then yeah. And also I feel like it's hard sometimes too really know which is like the good and the bad stuff. Like going out with friends. Could be really good to see people and to talk to people and socialize. But then also maybe it's bad because it keeps you from maybe a routine that you found for yourself that works or it deprives you of sleep or maybe you make decisions because of friends that are not necessarily good for you in that moment. And so, I find that hard as well. Overall, I think balance would also be something that really speaks to me and something that I'm definitely striving for. But then again, I feel like also that's important when it comes to mental health imbalance. I think what balance means changes all the time. I think that's important as well. You cannot just have like one idea of balance since obviously you're going through different phases in your life, so it could not always be the same thing. And it's just sort of a feeling of being balanced out in yourself, I would say.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, that's very true. I like the view of viewing balance as something more dynamic than a typical standing scale though.

Mariam
Yeah, it's definitely more dynamic for me than that, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. How would you picture balance then if you had to draw balance as this dynamic form of balance?

Mariam

I think it would probably be like different blocks, but like next to one another. But then all of them are like on different stages. Kinda. And then they would be flexible in the way that they move up and down maybe. And then you could eventually like get this like straight line, but it doesn't have to be a straight line. It just needs to be balanced out in the term of like if the fifth one is like down low, maybe the next one has to be a bit higher. It just has to have the same equation if that makes sense. It doesn't have to be a straight line, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof

Interesting. So any other terms that come to your mind if you think of mental health like just like keywords that directly jump to your mind?

Mariam

Yeah. Well, I think I would also come up with balance. I think communication also. Because it's very hard to communicate how you feel, especially when you already are in a dark phase. Maybe even like loneliness as a contrast of that, like not being able to communicate, and you get quite lonely with it. Happiness would come up and then sort of thought as like what makes you happy, what gives you something back, what doesn't. I think that's all for now.

Adriaan Kruithof

I like that. Also, I feel like I asked before what are good coping mechanisms for you, right? If you don't feel good. Maybe more interesting is the question: What makes you happy the most? What are like the first things that you that you connect with happiness?

Mariam

I think definitely laughing and humour. And it could be different things that make me laugh. And also, since I've been in Amsterdam and like out of my comfort zone a little bit, I definitely realized a lot more than before when I was away that actually my friends are a big part of what makes me happy and that it's not necessarily like a specific hobby that I have. Also maybe I don't have a specific hobby, maybe I should get one, but it's not like I really enjoy playing the piano. But I think mostly I'm really happy when I'm surrounded by people that I like. What I do in Berlin a lot, which I would consider my hobbies, is literally like being out with friends and just doing anything really. And I think that's what I do most of the time, like I have hobbies and then what I do with my friends, but it's not a lot of my hobbies, I realized, I think that I would do in a social context. So I wouldn't go by myself to do these things. I could, but then it's not the same. It's also maybe, I don't know, it's not the same. I think I'm all get most joy out of them because I do it with people and. If I think about mental health and loneliness and happiness, I think I would say Gesellschaft, which is a German word, in English that would having company, I think. So I think company makes me happy. Not any company but like good people. Also definitely the sun. And being outside, I always need to be outside. I can tell that I get really unhappy if I haven't left the house. I haven't had any fresh air and and I need to have to breathe for myself and very much also new experiences. So as much as I enjoy company of people that I like and love and know, I also very much enjoy being by myself in new situations and sort of like having experiences by myself, especially maybe in nature, I don't know, like I don't do that a lot, so it sounds a little bit

off, but whenever I did actually had like one of the best moments for myself, I think. And so I would wanna get around to doing that more. It's just very much a moment of like calmness for your brain if that makes sense.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. I think I personally just underestimated how much nature can sometimes touch me. When I was like doing Midsummer in Sweden on the West Coast. Yeah, somewhere next to the sea in Sweden. And you know you could just like walk up like a hill and then on the hill they had, like, an old Wiking crave, which sounds a bit more spooky than it was. It's so just like a pile, like a mountain of piled up stones on top of each other that you can kind of climb onto. And from there you could overview the fields around it and you could just like see so so far. See everything in the next 25 kilometers in all directions. And there were so many little mountains, little forests, little lakes and whatever. And the air was so fresh, and it felt so good. And since I didn't get out of, like, Germany or the Netherlands for like 3 years straight during COVID, apart from going to Spain with Luca. Then I I just like realized like, how ******* much I missed that. And how ******* beautiful it is. And it touched me so much that I literally had like, tears in my eyes and I was just like, I felt so connected to like nature and everything. And it was the first time where I was like, OK, now I understand why so many Germans go to Sweden all the time to go on hikes and stuff.

Mariam
Yeah, hiking is actually so underrated. Kind of. I don't know. Like, I think maybe among people our age because they don't get it yet, because everyone thinks it's cool to be in the city, which it is. But like, it's cool to be in the city when you have the balance of getting out. So, I think that's also a big part of me and I've always, yeah, I've always had this thing that growing up in Berlin, which is obviously a big city, but I was actually out in the woods every weekend. And I think I only started breaking with that habit when I moved out of my mom's place. Because we have a dog and then we would always go to the woods. So, I would just be there, like once or twice a week. And it's very relaxing. Even if it's just one hour or something, it definitely felt weird moving to East Berlin where there's also a lot less green than there is in West Berlin. And no really nice parks around, no woods, not having a car to get there. Uh, it was just very much concrete. And then also everything I did was like revolving around money. Like I enjoyed that. But like you go outside and like you spend money to have a nice experience in a bar, like in a small pub with maybe cheaper beer or something, but it really came down to like doing city things. So then when the pandemic hit, there wasn't really a lot of options of things that would make me happy, and I think that also contributed to me having this phase. I was a bit unhappy because even if I would go outside, it just wouldn't be something that would do much for me, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
That's interesting. OK. I'm just thinking about the design side of things again and would you say that like some nature inspired designs would also evoke this feeling and you or does it not touch you?

Mariam
I would actually say yes. What I really like in art is when people take elements from nature and make them work in like a really artistic way, and where you like have the same experience as

you do in nature where they step back for a second, having moment of calmness and just like watching and enjoying the shape. Or how things are moving, and I think that would definitely speak to me also in design of clothing. Even though I could not necessarily think about what that would be, but should I give you elements like the sun like warmth, it's always nice. Water does a lot for me. I also really like the optic of and the reflection of water. Like the really shallow water and you have really clear water, like I would wear this as a print I think because it's nice and then also like leaves have really beautiful patterns oftentimes. And I was recently, in an exhibition where they used the feathers of birds, but for big paintings. But it was basically photography and then zoomed in a lot and they played with shadow and light. So it wasn't really recognizable at the at first, but then, like, you knew it was about birds. So then you could recognize that it was actually feathers. And I thought that would actually be really beautiful prints. And, like, you couldn't have told right away that it's literally like made by nature.

Adriaan Kruithof
think that's very nice input actually! Kind of make it a bit more abstract and not directly recognizable, but then if you look at it long enough or you know you just like get a little hint, then you just like ohh, that's why it makes me feel kind of comfortable or just like seems known. And like yeah, comforting at least.

Mariam
Also, when you like, I don't know, that's more about like sound, but I think like sound can also have a big impact on like how you feel and like make you calm or obviously there's all these podcasts or whatever that you can listen to on Spotify, which have these like white noise things even. And a lot of the time if you go on YouTube, you look at one of these videos, there's just gonna be like a brain thing moving in the background. So, I think this like really like agile movement, but calm. And a coordinated dynamic, I think does a lot for me like visually, but also that noise. Yeah, I don't really know how to put this. I'm thinking about this one artist and don't remember the name. It's someone from Turkey who did an exhibition in Berlin. And it was really big in Kreuzberg, in the König gallery, I think. There were these big screens and pictures of nature, but then a lot of them sort of put into different perspectives, looking like organisms moving or whatever, and I thought that was really nice and even prints of that. I think I would wear because it was really cool.

Adriaan Kruithof
So, like digital arts kind of?

Mariam
Yeah, I think, yeah, it was definitely like I think for me this art was also about movements, but it was using actual pictures of nature to then reenact movements of nature, and I think that's why it spoke to people.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. Yeah, that's always an interesting question though. If you can kind of take out those movements and you know, put it into a frame and put it into print, will it still have the same effect or not? But definitely interesting to experiment with, yeah.

Mariam
Not quite, but yeah, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
All right, I got a lot of design inputs now! You really came through now, OK. And maybe just just to kind of conclude this. I had two more questions and I feel like the first one I kinda asked, but maybe you have some more inputs about that. So, the question, since that is the ultimate goal of this collection, is what creates emotional value for you when buying new clothes?

Mariam
OK. I think first of like buying something that I really like and feel really happy about having it because I just feel like it fits my personality, and it fits myself really well. Secondly I have a lot of like second hand pieces and I think the emotional value that I have with them, is where I bought them and in which context. Also, like remembering where you get them from. And then maybe also like the phase I was in while buying them. When it comes to emotions, I think about something maybe in France. So, I was feeling like really good about myself and just having a great time in general. Like then I definitely feel like this is something that I look good in, maybe more even. And I also still have a lot of pieces that I bought in Melbourne. Which are literally like 4 year old pants or something, but I've had them for over 5 years and they're such good quality and it makes me so happy that I like made these picks back then literally just out of the thought of experimenting or like trying something out. But then it turned out to be this basic piece that I wear all the time and I actually can't find pants like this again. Umm, so I think the emotional values also is something that is like a little bit special. I don't feel like I find these kind of pants in fast fashion shops. It's just not there. So yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
So also a level of uniqueness in some sort?

Mariam
Yeah, a lot of uniqueness, even, like little things like playing with buttons or something like this, like having a cool way to button things I don't know. Like now it's really cool to have these like buttons here. The shirt kind of thing. Do you know what I mean? Like this asymmetrical thing. I mean, this has been done like 100 times, kind of. But also, this is a really nice idea, I think. So this would be like yes, yeah, buying something unique I think would definitely be the emotional value for me behind it, like feeling like this is first of me but also it's not something like everyone's wearing at the time because it doesn't have to be stylish in the sense of like this is what's in this is what's out. I think you look best in the things that suit you as your personality.

Adriaan Kruithof
There would be a very good last words, but I have one more question. Since you care about the way you dress and you also care about a lot of social issues, do you generally want clothing brands to support social or environmental organizations? Is that something that makes you more likable to buy from a specific brand? Or doesn't it matter?

Mariam
Umm well, I think it would matter. OK, First off, I think it does matter. And I think it's important that brands make these commitments and sort of set their own standards and maybe even follow the standardization of private companies. And I think it's nice for consumers to be able to choose from that, like making a more conscious choice of what brand you buy from. So I also do that. So it means in terms of having maybe commitment to a Community Center, that would be something that I would rather buy. I recently bought a scarf at a flea market, that was €2.00 and I didn't like love the scarf, but I bought it because they told me, all of the money that we're making is gonna go to this elderly person. So OK, I'll buy it then. Actually, I wear it a lot now, it's nice and it's also selfmade. So, I think it's really cute. So, I would definitely be influenced by the brand sort of having these say commitments. Second opinion is and it's very like out there. Obviously there's like standardization around maybe having these SDG like sustainable development goals within companies and also maybe social commitments. And I think a lot of them are just very like vast. The problem that I see with it is that oftentimes it doesn't do much and is rather a way of marketing strategy. I mean, I buy things either way, kind of because we live in capitalism so that it would be even better the more specific it is, where it will go. So, if you have this idea of like, this will go to this or that Community Center and that will make me feel even better than saying like, oh, this goes to UNICEF, because what exactly does it do then? "We're having these partnerships with Asia." Where in Asia and what do you do with the money in Asia? So, it would have to be something more specific and I think also these things of like obviously that's a great thing. But like Ohh we're helping, I don't know children in Cambodia to have a meal every day. Something that's close by, maybe even a national thing, and where the brand comes from sort of giving back to the community where it comes from. I think that's a very nice idea, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, alright. So the more tangible and the more concrete the better for you.

Mariam
Yeah, the more concrete the better.

Adriaan Kruithof
All right. Nice. That sounds good, because that's what we're trying to do as well, so.

Mariam
Yeah. Also, the more conscious the better I think because sometimes. Uh, I mean, there's obviously a lot of like wokeness around lots of things right now, but then a lot of things get lost in translation and and as I said before, like the video of like having this partnership and providing a meal for children somewhere in Asia, it's a great idea, but then it's not woke enough in the sense of, like actually being transparent and maybe thinking about the framing that you use and especially that very much seems to me like a branding marketing strategy rather than something specific that they're doing. No connection really. Yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof

Yeah, I like that you mentioned the word framing as well, because I feel like that is used in a lot of those campaigns that work with a lot of different framings, and it's always I mean, as with that, it has this, like kind of post-colonialistic attitude, which I personally really disguise and try not to play into and that's why we chose… Wait, did I tell you before what kind of organization we want to support?

Mariam
You told me it's a the Community Center in Copenhagen, and it's called community of free people.

Adriaan Kruithof
No community of real people is the organization we're working with, but the money that we earn should go to fund a therapy garden. So, it's like a it is a local thing also supported by the University of Copenhagen here, where people, especially people that suffer under PTSD but also people who have anxiety and depression can go.

Mariam
Oh, that's nice.

Adriaan Kruithof
So again, safe spaces and they have this in form of like a garden which is completely designed after scientifical standards and there they have a therapy in touch with nature as well and in nature and they can kind of use this therapy garden to also have their own projects and you know have the plants that take care of. So, it's again has really a community feeling to it but it's still in a very protected space so not everybody can just like go into those gardens. But only if you are part of this construct, then you can visit the garden.

Mariam
Yeah. Nice. Yeah, that sounds great. Also, I just thought about one more thing, before I actually have to go soon. Umm, but I think when it comes to mental health, I oftentimes feel like maybe I shouldn't speak. Not that I shouldn't speak, but like I don't necessarily consider myself as someone who really struggles with mental health health, especially if I hear like other people said they feel like they can't breathe in these really tight tops because they already have anxiety, while I am just thinking about what looks sexy, you know, like, I didn't have the same trail of thinking as they did, and then I feel like maybe I'm not as legitimate to talk about it, but then I feel like what's really important as a message is that whatever your issues are revolving around mental health, it shouldn't be a situation of individual comparison. In this case all issues are kind of valid and I think that's the message that would be like important to me as well to transport. So maybe if that's something that's a good idea for designs as well. But like this, like individual struggle which is always like legitimate enough to be talked about, or to seek help. And I think that's something that's important; oftentimes you have these like articles about mental health issues which are like really big and horrible. And it's supposed to be something that everyone needs to be more conscious of. But then a lot of people don't necessarily see themselves as a part of the community who's actually struggling or also don't want to be. So I think like just giving

a bit more, there's always like already coming a lot more awareness towards what it actually is, what little things can already be a depression for example. And so, the definition is sort of broader now. But yeah, I think things like this also come to mind when we're talking about all that.

Adriaan Kruithof
Thanks for saying that again. I think that's an honestly very good and very interesting thought. And that's also why I chose to not only speak to parts of my community, where I guess that I know like severely under mental health conditions, but that's why I wanted to include very different perspectives as well. And that's why I tried to talk with different people from that I know from different countries and different surroundings to really just like broaden this whole perspective. Because in the end of the day, I'm not sure how much it matters if you have a clinically diagnosed depression or if don't have that but still struggle every morning you're trying to leave the bed, the first step both people have to do is to talk about it and find help and find acceptance both from the outside and within their self.

Mariam
Yeah, 100% also, I think it's really important to sort of like let yourself maybe even consider that it could be a mental health issue, because I think even with me when I had this like phase, I just think I took, like literally two months to understand what it actually was and for the longest time, I would just think I'm being super lazy and unproductive. And even though I know all these stories of other people where it's like you're not lazy, you just have a depression and that like, I just couldn't relate that to myself necessarily. And I was just thinking like, this is so weird and not myself. What is it? And then I think it took me a long time to actually realize like maybe this is not necessarily more normal. Maybe this is not my normal self. Is something else going on and then it had like one conversation with like a psychiatrist and that really made me feel like I was also doing the right things already, so I was thinking like, OK, nice. So, I have like the legitimacy to, like, actually step back from things and it's not me being lazy. I can like now be confident in the fact, that it's OK to take a break from things and that it's OK to have these feelings, and then it's actually really important to sort of do something in that moment. And the one thing that she told me that it, which I thought was really nice, like, and it sounds like it's not too big of a concern because I understand that I have a situation where I have to do something about it and it would be really bad if I didn't. She said something that I thought like, OK, that's nice because it gives me confidence in myself because before I felt like, I cannot really understand myself even. But that gives me that feeling back.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, that acknowledgement I think is a very important first step. Alright. Anyways, I thank you so so much for participating in that. I think I'll just end the transcription now, unless there's anything else you want to add (Mariam shakes head & smiles) OK, I'll just stop.

Interview Chanel

Adriaan Kruithof
Right, let's start. What's your name, age and where are you from?

Chanel
I am Chanel. I'm 26 years old and I am from a small town in Denmark.

Adriaan Kruithof
In what field do you work or study at the moment?

Chanel
I study my BA in design business and technology with my specialisation in sustainable fashion technology.

Adriaan Kruithof
What is your personal relation or your story with mental health?

Chanel
Ohh big question. From an early age, I've always been a little different. I would say that.
I thought sometimes that I was born with two little intervenes in my brain because when I was really young, I wasn't as happy or as outgoing as the other kids. Umm, so I was really introverted. Umm, but then through when you become a teenager, then you like, get to this rage phase where you wanna find your personality and try out boundaries and everything. Umm yeah so. I can't remember your question now.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. The question was what your own relation and maybe your story with mental health is.

Chanel
Ah, yeah. OK, so just my whole story.

Adriaan Kruithof
Your whole story, or how much you want to share, as I said. So, for example, if you have any diagnosed mental health conditions, of course it would be super interesting to know and learn about it. But also, I will completely respect if you don't want to talk about it.

Chanel
Of course, no worries. Umm, uh, when I was younger, I had Anorexia a little bit. Yeah, I didn't eat and looked in forums online how to not eat and stuff like that. I was super self-conscious about everything. And on top of that, I was also of course very depressed and I think I've been depressed a long time. I had suicidal thoughts when I was like in second grade in school. So, I was like, I don't know, 10, no less than 10 maybe. I was really young where I didn't feel like everyone else. And with parents that didn't take you seriously or classmates didn't know what to do and the teachers didn't know how to handle it. So, everything just where I was on my own. But yeah, so when I came into a my high school, I started hanging out with the popular girls and everyone looked at you and saw you and you suddenly have many friends, but I was really self-conscious about the whole world, so I knew that all of these friends are not real friends. And so I

felt really lonely, even though I had many people to talk to. So, and then it went downhill again. So, because our gymnasium is like three years, the first year was really, really good. And then more at the end, I became another person. I was really alone and every time our teacher wanted me to be in groups, I would just walk away and I was really, really sad and everything. I talked with the school psychologist, and she was really good and tried to help me. It changed a lot when I met my fiance. I met him when I was 19 and he showed me, like, how to talk about things and communicate and also deal with my emotions and stuff, so I've changed a lot since then. I wouldn't say that I am the same anymore, But of course you will never be cured from being depressed. You always have these things within you, but it's only like how you do deal with them. Yeah, I think I got like a nice overview of my life, I think.

Adriaan Kruithof
Nice. Yes. Thank you for being so open about it as well. Like, I appreciate that. How or what do you think are like your best ways of dealing with that? As you said, if you feel depressed again or maybe having this eating disorder in you still, how do you normally cope with that?

Chanel

I'm really open about it with my fiance. I try to really tell him about and we got a code for it. Umm, because you can sometimes be really dramatic when you say I have a little bit suicidal thoughts today or something. It's really heavy or like really serious. So, we have a code that I say like. Ohh, you can't really say it in English, but it's sort of I I'm not feeling that well. When I say that, then he knows, OK, I need to be extra careful and he does what he can to, like, make me the slightest bit happy. Like buy some stuff I like to eat or take care of the dog or like or the small stuff. Umm so I just tried to really communicate it, but it's really difficult. And yeah, if, for example with my body images. Like once I followed many skinny models on Instagram and that would like put images in my head that my body changed a lot through the years since I met my fiancé. When I met him I my weight 42 kilos and now I'm more like 55 kilos, so it's a dramatic change. But sometimes when you look in Instagram you feel like maybe I should go back to that body. Even though he loves my body, how it is and everything, but that doesn't make sense in my head always. So yeah, I unfollowed all the models. Umm, because when I look at my body, it's not, it's just I'm lucky where my fat is placed like. I'm going to the gym trying to be more motivated to do it in a healthy way because I know I'm really good at thinking I could lose many kilos so easily just by not eating. So yeah, I try really to be vocal about it. Yeah, even though I don't like being alone, that's a huge trigger for me. I also learned with my depression, UM I said to myself one day, like because it kept going and I've been doing it for many years. I was like, OK, either you're going to like, finally kill yourself. Or you are gonna not pick yourself up, but you're gonna make a change because no one else was there for me back then. So yeah, it's quite funny because even though I don't like being alone, that's also what made me. Yeah, because I was there for myself. That made me like, push myself through the edge to be like, OK, then I have to make a living or how do you say?

Adriaan Kruithof
Am I gonna give up or am I gonna confront myself with that shit and hopefully be better and stronger? And as cliche as that sounds and, you know, deal with it, deal with it, and fight through it. And I'm so, so glad that you as well as me when I had those phases, made the right decision. And I'm very glad to hear that.

Chanel
Yeah, yeah, we are really alike. I really like people that are also not a little bit hurt, but not perfect cause we can we have a different view every time a person is sad or anything. I would like drop everything I have to be there for them because I had no one. Uh. I would also say it makes you a little better person like in general.

Adriaan Kruithof
I know what you mean. Actually, it's interesting. There are so many different mental health States and mental health conditions that you can deal with as a human. Do you think there is something all of those mental health conditions kind of have in common, although they are so different?

Chanel
That would really be difficult because there are so many, but most of them, I would say come from a a psychological aspect. Uh, you don't have a safe, good environment to begin with, and that can start from your home with your parents and siblings. But it can also be your school and everything, just anything in the early stages of life that have a huge effect on how you're gonna deal with the kind of scars it gives you. Umm for me I have two narcissistic parents. That's also a disorder, but it's not a disorder where you think about, well, how am I? You're not self-conscious about yourself in a way that you are with anorexia. You can't be compassionate about other people. And so yeah, the disorders are really, really different, but I would say, yeah, it's really about those environments that have a huge impact on us.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. So it's mostly about all of them being somewhat rooted in childhood?

Chanel
Yeah, yeah, definitely. I had psychology in high school, in a B level, I would say. And yeah, if you look, everything can be rooted back to when you were a kid or a teenager because of the things that you see or happen. And because you're so young, you don't do anything, or you don't know that you're being treated badly. Not until you're in a different home. In a better environment, and then you figure out, OK, ****, this is not normal.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, that's true. Sometimes you really have to get out of that one perspective, change perspective and then your whole point of view will actually change.

Chanel
Precisely. Yeah, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
That's very true. Alright, I know that you have to go to dinner soon, so maybe we move on to the fashion side of things a bit. Ohh no. Actually, one thing that is still related to that that I want to ask you because you said for example spending time with your fiancé and just talking about your issues and also that he is able to lift some of the burdens that you dealing with. And even if it's

just quotation marks, you know, like everyday stuff like walking the dog or getting groceries or whatever because I know how overwhelming that can feel if you are in a depressive state. But is there are there other activities you do, for example, if you are by yourself, that's gonna uplift your mood? For example, I talked to people that said I would always walk my dog if I feel bad because I have some company or I can be in nature. How is it for you? Do you have some patterns like that?

Chanel
It depends on how deep I'm in the basement. You know how deep I am in my black hole, but sometimes I can feel it when I wake up in the morning and then I will walk my dog and I would take him for a long walk in the forest. We have one nearby. And then listen to some podcasts or some music. But I know it's super difficult to hear uplifting music or uplifting podcasts whenever you're sad, you just wanna hear sad music or sad podcasts. So it's super hard. But I try to just get out. Breathe. Feel the sun on my skin. Umm, I feel like I'm quite atypical when it comes to with the fashion wise because when I'm in my basement the last thing I wanna do is sew or do anything because I feel like I'm not doing it good enough. And like, I don't have, like, the good thoughts about the process. So, I just try to do anything else? UM. I would also say ****, yeah, it helps a lot with a dog, because he can sense when you're sad, so he will snuggle and be up in your face and like it helps a lot. But I also have a lot of self-care. I'd take long showers and put on some nice face masks. Do like some stuff so I don't feel totally bad because when you're really depressed, you can really dive into a deep hole where you don't shower, don't eat. And then you look in the mirror and I like ****. I'm like, ugly. But then of course, when you, like, don't do all these things then they affect you. So, I also try to do that as well. Yeah, and text my fiancee and call him and I'm really quick with saying it because I know it can really escalate.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, I know what you mean. And also that's one thing I definitely liked about you from the beginning after we met that I feel like you are very outspoken about a lot of things and very honest and I think I value that a lot. I think that's a very, very nice character trait that I like a lot about you as a person.

Chanel
I really like this interview. It's like we're getting a lot closer to each other.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, it's really some bonding time. It's so interesting because I talked to so many different people. You know, they were like people like you that I would consider friends. But also, I talked to my brother for example, which was very interesting and very different as well because I realized we never really talked about this topic like upfront and briefly like that. So it really is some bonding experience as well. Sometimes it's really interesting.

Chanel
It's really cool like that I don't feel bad or too close at all, like, but also because I talked many times with psychologists and that's the only reason I can be so outspoken.

Adriaan Kruithof

That helps, definitely. I think communication and community as well and just in general those surroundings that will catch you if you feel like falling or having the feeling of being hurt, I think that is one thing that I see from all the tasks that I had so far. That is one thing everybody who struggles with the mental health has in common. Just not wanting to feel like alienated and alone, but just having something. I don't know if I told you before, but the name of the mental Health awareness project that I'm collaborating with is actually called community of real people.

Chanel
Yeah, saw it on Instagram before I texted you. Then I saw that. Yeah, I saw.

Adriaan Kruithof
Oh, nice. How do you feel about that name 'community of real people'?

Chanel
I like that also because UM, it's like a sense of it's real. People often, when you are for example, at a school, you can look and be like ohh, she's so happy or her life must be perfect, but everyone, every single person has something to deal with. So, it's not how we look on the outer shell, it's more like on the inside. Once you get to know people, you can sometimes sense that there are some scars. But then if you are nice person or something then you know that's a strong personality. Yeah. So community of real people, that sounds really good.

Adriaan Kruithof
Nice,I think so too. How would you feel if that would also be kind of incorporated in the designs that I should do in the end of the day? You think it's nice to have that in there or is it somewhat tacky? Because I talked to some people and they were like, yeah, they would always be very careful about everything that kinda could sound too much like a motivational quote or something. How do you feel about the name community of real people integrated in the garments?

Chanel
Hmm. Community of real people. I can see that that will be a bit too American-motivational. But you could have some word play with them so it doesn't have to be a community of real people, but it could be like real people or just the word. Real. Maybe you could make something because I think that's the strongest word in everything. That's the word real. And how you could play around with it. That's of course up to you, but. Yeah, I feel some people would say community would be the strongest, but I think the real is more shooting for me.

Adriaan Kruithof
Umm, yeah, interesting. Interesting insight, because I feel like, I guess for me, the first impression would also be the community. It's just like standing alone, community is maybe a stronger word, but I like your way of looking at it and saying, like, the real people here might be the important thing actually. OK, one more thing personal and then we get more to the design thing. How would you say is the way you dress related to how you feel?

Chanel
When I wake up in the morning, I can usually feel that OK, what mood am I today? So, when I'm

a little more basement-feeling. Uh, I choose more baggy wear. I choose more black, dark aesthetic, villain mode. When I come to school or to work and people smile and we have fun, then it can change all the way. But like the first few hours in the morning, they really show how I am. It also depends on the weather like my mental health is also depending on the weather. If it's really gray and dark and rainy, then I tend to be a little more sad. But I try to be more like ohh it's raining outside. Maybe I wanna watch Harry Potter tonight or something like cosy movies and be more fund upon the weather. But when I'm really happy, then I'm more colorful. In my wardrobe, I have something for every aesthetic, I would say, really colorful, really outgoing pieces. I don't know if I would say that I'm always outgoing because I'm also good at being like a chameleon, like just blending in. It depends on how much I want to show and how much I want to show myself to the world.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, that's interesting. That leads me like directly to two more questions. Kind of following up on that. You said you sometimes feel like a chameleon. If you have those bad days, are you trying also to blend in a bit more maybe? And you know, like kind of hide a bit behind that and because of that choose like some things that are maybe more toned down a bit more baggy, you know, just like very relaxed…

Chanel
Yeah, yes and no. I don't know because I go to a school that is like fashion wise. Uh, sometimes I get blind on how to actually blend in because I always. I think somehow I always stand out a little bit or look like a person that likes fashion. Because when I have an outfit, where I have like this print shirt that I bought many, many, many years ago at the Roskilde Festival. And it's really not too long, it actually fits me very well. But it's really boxy and really firm in the structure and then I have like some black jeans that I have shortened because they were too long and then some sneakers. I think I've worn that outfit mostly when I was a little bit down. I've heard when people see my outfit on these days I look more sad. I have more a Japanese or Chinese fashion influence. And on the happy days the style is more Scandinavian, more happy, outgoing, colorful.

Adriaan Kruithof
That's that's interesting. Also, you said you on the good days you want to dress a bit more up. Let's say the sun is shining, you know you wake up and you're like, oh, yes, today's nice. What colors would be like the bright colors you would wear and that would boost your mood?

Chanel
OK I have many colors. I have so many.

Adriaan Kruithof
Okay maybe you can name like your top three mood boosting colors?

Chanel
White, light green and orange. And it's funny because Orange was the hate color I had. Like, I hated Orange because I thought it made me look a little too ethnical or what to say. I didn't feel

like I fit in the Danish environment wearing orange. But then suddenly I got an orange shirt from acne while I was working there and then it just grew from there. So yeah, I think Orange, green and white, of course, because you wanna show your tan and everything. Yeah, I think those are the happy colors in my wardrobe.

Adriaan Kruithof
Nice. OK. So, I'm also thinking like the print motives that I could do, you know, for this collection. And as I told you before, I'll have some options with like print techniques and embroidery and stuff. But it's gonna be a bit limited. Is there apart from happy colors also happy motives or like happy aesthetics where you would see a print and it has a certain type of motive on it or something you would see that could boost your mood today, and even if it's just like a notch?

Chanel
Yeah, definitely. Umm, the prints. I like that some, you know, clothing lines that make like T-shirts or something where it's also a little bit of a meme, like it's in a bit funny way, but only because you're on the Internet. So you know, with this font or anything that this is like a little more Gen Z and not something corny boomer-ish with a flower around real or something? Uh, I saw something at Baum & Pferdgarten. They made a print for denim. And while I was interning there, their print gave me like Matrix vibes. You know, in the matrix where the computer is like having all these letters doing stuff.

Adriaan Kruithof
The different number codes?

Chanel
Precisely. And they had it vertical and it made me reference to the movie. And like with the one pill, you have to choose this or that. Made me to like really want to get this piece even more because it gave me a stronger sense of the movie. So maybe you could find a movie or look at something that has like an appeal to a lot of people, maybe. It could be something as corny as friends. Like everyone has looked at the ******* series 'friends' and laughed. Even though it has some inappropriate jokes and everything, but. It's like, yeah, those small things that make people think and give it style an extra story at the like, you know. How if I say friends and then I come like we were on a break route then people can be like ohh yeah. Did you see this and can talk about that. So I really think you need to look at a print that could maybe get people to talk somehow. Maybe through a question, maybe through 'are you real today' or I don't know. But like maybe just some questions within the print and then people could be like what does it say and then the person that bought it knows what it says hopefully. Yeah. And then it could maybe start a conversation. So, we get to talk and communicate about stuff hopefully.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, I like that idea. Like, that way of looking at it, just because you named the movie reference or series like friends. Do you think it's about the nostalgic feeling of it in the first place?

Chanel
That was also why I said for example matrix. Yeah, it has like a lot of people with the pills, the red or blue pill, but also like fashion-wise the aesthetic is so in and has been in for a couple of

years and it's gonna be in because it's futuristic. Yeah, maybe you could look into matrix and something that could be fun or interesting in that matter?

Adriaan Kruithof
That is. Yeah, no, that's a very interesting thought. I'm automatically thinking of like, you know, copywriting things and stuff like that. You always have to be a bit careful with, like, corporate business when it comes to that. Like, some very quickly to sue you. And then, yeah, then it is not that fun anymore, but maybe it can just be, like, something very subtle. And, for example, if I think of our generation, I think like movies that maybe also remind me of childhood, because I feel like that's where the most people have the most nostalgic things and most nostalgic memories. Would be maybe things like The Lion King or Finding Nemo?

Chanel
Then the Disney movies like the animations, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yes, yes, something like that. Yeah. Ohh. In general, how do you feel about childish sounds weird, but a few people that I talked to mentioned also like that form of nostalgia that would automatically like kind of put bring them to different thoughts. And they mentioned that, for example, something, you know, that's just like, more like a child's drawing would be nice as well. How do you feel about that?

Chanel
Yeah, definitely a child's drawing. That could be also something. I actually really love something about people. That's their ******* handwriting. Because many people, me and my fiance have the same handwriting and it's ******* ugly, but I think it always makes me smile when I see it right, because then I can see like this is not perfect at all. We are not the ones in class like doing the perfect ace. So maybe some prints or something with a ******* handwriting. Something that could make it more not ugly, but like in a nice way. Like you know.

Adriaan Kruithof
But yeah, I know what you mean. I think that's such a good idea! Since OK, you said your fiance and you had a very similar handwriting, but normally the handwriting still, you know, if you're an expert on it, you will find your differences and it's still something very personal. Right? And I feel especially in this day and age where we sit behind our laptops the whole time, like right now, handwriting kind of gets lost and you don't see it as much anymore. So, handwriting itself already has a bit of a nostalgic touch kind of to it.

Chanel
Yeah, yeah, definitely. And it's also really shows you character somehow like whenever I see someone right? Like when I see a girl, right and then she makes the perfect letters and everything. I can visualize her in school. Drawing a million of As to make it perfect and then I can just think, OK. And then I start to have my image on who she is. Like I make my own shell on her personality without knowing her, but I think that's really telling and revealing somehow. Maybe you could make some design that's really like ******* futuristic or something where people maybe could draw on the clothes and show who they are and that personality.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, I actually had somewhat of a similar idea. So, I mean I will still have to design the clothes that are gonna be sold in the end, but I thought that could be something very cool to use for the final photoshoot. Because I mean, I have people like you, you know, creative people themselves to just be like, OK, you get this T-shirt and now go crazy. Do with it whatever you feel like doing. And then after that or during that process, you know, just like, take pictures of you guys and how you put your own personal spin as a part of the community of real people on this product. I feel like that could be a very nice storyline as well and really involves the community.

Chanel
And even if you are in your design process, figure something else out. I think for the photoshoot it would actually be a really cool idea to get the person to write their story or just a small part of the story. And then in the background after model, then have this ugly sentences wrote behind them, so you can see the clothes and then their story as well.

Adriaan Kruithof
That is such a cool idea. That is a very, very ******* cool idea.I really like that idea. I might steal that one.

Chanel
You do that. I'm. I'm saying everything for you to work and see if anything I said could be used. That's the whole point of the interview.

Adriaan Kruithof
Exactly, but this is this is honestly a very nice idea. Yeah, that would make the whole concept very round. Like to kind of integrate their own stories. I hope people want to do that. I mean, it would be nice. Maybe not everybody who participated in the interviews also wants to do that, but if we can only get a few people to do that, that would be a very nice part of the storyline as well.

Chanel
Yeah, and it doesn't have to be like the whole storyline, but it could just be like something like I said, like I can already feel in the morning that I'm really sad and then I talk with my fiance and so it doesn't have to be like that parking basement feeling, but it can just be a little story and it's still personal.

Adriaan Kruithof
No, true. True. I mean that would be for example, we just what you said like sometimes I wake up in the morning and I already know today's not gonna be the day. And I talked to my fiance and tell him about it and I grabbed my dog and go to the forest and listen to my favorite music or something like that. Just, you know, give some personal insights.

Chanel
Yeah, yeah, yeah, precisely.

Adriaan Kruithof
That's a cool idea. Thank you for that.

Chanel
I'm glad I could help.

Adriaan Kruithof
Thank you for that. Yes, definitely. OK. I feel like we already collected quite a few ideas, which would be positive, just maybe some general things I still want to throw at you now that you are in that unlucky position that I already got a lot of other input. So now you have to tell me your opinion on that. You said for example that you also like to be in the forest with your dog and be in the nature and feel the sun on your skin as you said. Are those like nature motives also something that you would like to see in a print, something that you would also have a positive association with?

Chanel
Definitely, but, I think I want to somehow remember that sad people are drawn to sad things. I love sad songs. I love movies that makes me feel something. For example, if I think of an image in the forest. I think of an image where the trees are really close and then maybe the sun is settling down. So, it's a sunset. So, it's still beautiful, but also a little bit scary at the same time. So, you get drawn to it can be pretty, maybe with some colors from the sunset, but also quite scary because of this woods are ******* scary and that could maybe be like with your mental health. And you know when you're alone in the woods and in the dark. Yeah. Something I would remember to not only focus on solely positive things. Like, ohh, the sun is shining, my feet are in the sand. I get really drawn to yeah, everything that makes me feel something. Feel and remember, sometimes movies that make me remember all the hurt, but also it shows like where I am now.

Adriaan Kruithof
Uh-huh. So do I understand right that you also kind of just want to, like, see this ambivalence?

Chanel
Both of them, uh, that also gives you a lot more story and character to the clothes, a good story to tell. Umm but yeah, like in the matrix movie with the red and the blue pill, like the two worlds can be combined. I would say that I would love to see that in some clothes where I can wear it while I'm sad, but also when I'm happy because it has like both of these worlds.

Adriaan Kruithof
And happiness doesn't work about sadness and the other way around. It's always debatable.

Chanel
Precisely. And you're not always only happy like you always have the other thing with you. So that shows like the personality and character in there.

Adriaan Kruithof
Maybe you should take over that project. You have a lot of good ideas!

Chanel
No, no. I just love throwing things at you and I would love to see your process and result.

Adriaan Kruithof
I'll definitely keep you updated on the whole process. I think that there's really some things coming together here, OK. One thing, because we talked about the ambivalence of things and that's also a thing that I discussed a lot during those interviews, because that's also a thing, everybody, every human just experiences, doesn't matter how good or bad their mental health is. How do you feel about the word balance? Like, what is your associations with it, if you're only hear the word balance?

Chanel
If someone asked me are you a balanced person, I would say **** no. Because balance for me, it's too stable and when you have had these feelings in your life, you don't ever feel like 100% balanced or stable, I would say. But I can also be like ********* happy. Yeah, I don't feel like I'm stable, but of course my friends and fiancé would say that I'm stable because I'm not bipolar like in in that matter. I associate balance with the non-real people like the outer shell like how I see people. She's a balanced person. She has her **** together, she's perfect. I associate balanced with being the outer shell of what we see, but often they are not balanced.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, that's interesting. I feel like a lot of people that I talked to also said that balance would be the thing they would strive for or aspire to achieve at one point in their life. How do you feel about that? Or do you actually say maybe honestly, it's also fine to not have your balance and it also spices life up a bit.

Chanel
I would say I have done a ******* huge job on being balanced. Uh, and it doesn't get better than this. But that's OK because I have all the tools to fix myself. I have all the tools to reach out and do anything, but that doesn't mean that I don't get those heavy days or get like those small depressional thoughts. But now I can deal with it so.

Adriaan Kruithof
No, I think I think you made a very beautiful and very full circle conclusion there already. OK. I actually only have two more questions that gonna be bit short as well and it's a bit more related to the fashion industry, which I think is interesting since you are a part of it already and becoming more and more of a part through the studies and the jobs that you're working in. How do you feel does the fashion industry influence mental health of people?

Chanel
How the industry influence on people. And that's personal view for like my life or like in general?

Adriaan Kruithof
Whatever comes to your mind, you're completely free to answer.

Chanel
I would say like in general. bad influence because the fashion industry always want us to be users, buy more, be more, achieve more. A few years ago, they always wanted us to have, like this body image and stuff like that. Now it's changed a little bit. Not that much. It's mostly on social media. In my own life, I would say the fashion industry's is really it's different in the headquarters than I thought. My boss and my colleagues, where I talked about my childhood and the horrible things I have experienced and my dark thoughts that are really, really personal. A really small fraction of people would tell their boss and colleagues about those, but I did because that's important to know if I have a bad day, so they know some stuff about me. And while I did that. My other colleague told about her childhood and opened up the talk. So I started to feel like, OK, ****, I'm really not alone like you know. My colleagues are lot older than me like they're in the 40s and have children. They've bought houses and stuff like that, so it's super cool to see that throughout ages and throughout where you're from, still a lot of people have deep stories. So, I think my internships within the fashion industry have actually been really, really good. Uh, better and not so snobby as I thought. There were much more welcoming. But I also think that's a huge part of people. And the time now in 2022, a lot of people have had depression and a yeah, a lot of young girls have had anorexia or bulimia or anything, so of course, we are not alone with this, but I think, yeah, sometimes we can be surprised like, yeah, the fashion industry is bad. But I think because those people that are creative and work in this have experienced a lot of these things, like a lot of creative people have been damaged or what to say.Umm, so yeah, it ******* makes sense.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. I couldn't have formulated that any better, to be honest. I think that's again as we said before, very ambivalent and can be very harmful, can be very hurtful. Umm, there's actually numbers that 25%. more people in the fashion industry are affected by the mental health than on average and I, from my personal experience would say yeah, I would think so too. But it's so nice that you found those surroundings where it's obviously not so much of a stigmatized topic and people are actually willing to talk about it without having any negative thing or holding anything back like that. Sounds like a very positive thing. And I mean, that is why I want to do this project right now, right, to normalize that throughout the creative and the fashion industry throughout the target group of the brand that I'm working at, but also just ideally, and finally, throughout society as a whole. So I'm glad that you already made some experiences like that. That's very nice to hear. Cool. Then last but not least, also do you want clothing brands that you are buying garments from to support social and environmental organizations then?

Chanel
Yeah. Without hesitation, I love to see you when brands do something. I study sustainable fashion, it's now within my DNA to always think in that pattern. UM, but a lot of brands are green washing and you always look at it like a little bit, huh? Is that true? Well, in Denmark, where we all had to choose who should be the next Statsminister uh.

Adriaan Kruithof
The election. Yeah, yeah.

Chanel

Election precisely. Thank you. And a huge part of the election as well was the mental hospitals and everything because of the shooting in fields and everything, people, even those people that didn't have it close to them, they're thinking about, OK, we need to do something as society. So, I get really happy when I see small clothing brands working within this and show it and is not only like, uh, break cancer or something because yes, of course cancer is horrible. But I think there's so many things to have as a charity or something like that. So many other things that are creative and giving a small fraction of the money to something else than fighting cancer, yeah. Does that make sense or do I sound like a horrible person?

Adriaan Kruithof

No, I think that makes sense. I feel like it's clear that you're not trying to downplay cancer, but just say it's also important that mental health and environmental issues should as well be tackled by the industry.

Chanel

Yep, Yep.

Adriaan Kruithof

All right, so now thank you so, so much for taking the time. I was so nice to talk to you.

Chanel

It really was. Oh my God. OK, we really need to have a beer after this.

Interview Kim

First of all, thank you so much for taking the time and answer my questions concerning mental health and fashion, I appreciate it!

All information obtained from the insights you give me will be used for my bachelor's project. If you do not feel comfortable with me using your real name, please just use an alias. If there are any questions you really do not feel like answering, you can of course also leave them unanswered.

1. What's your name, age and where are you from?

My Name is Kim and I am 24 years of age. I'm from Hamburg, Germany.

2. In what field do you work/study?

I began studying mathematics and physics, then changed my major to sociology and technology. Within I am in the fields of working relations and organizations.

3. What is your relation / your story with mental health?

I am depressed since about highschool. To this I must add, that I am heavily addicted to marihuana since about 5 years. I am visiting addiction counselling since a year when I began noticing how I am losing control of social and financial parts of life. To be more exact, I am struggling to work out stress properly, to the degree that my family, close friends, and partner are suspecting bipolar tendencies. I am looking for behavioural therapy since of recent.

4. What do you think, is a thing that most people struggling with their own mental health have in common?

I think many struggle to either be honest to themselves or receive proper help and develop unhealthy and destructive coping mechanisms.

5. What kind of activities make you happy and help you to feel better if you are not doing great?

I like to take walks and distract myself watching people in their daily business.

6. How is the way you dress related to how you feel?

The better I feel, the more effort I put into dressing up.

7. What creates emotional value for you when buying new clothes?

Unique and simultaneously versatile use.

8. Do you want clothing brands to support social or environmental organisations?

I would prefer, if the clothing brands would redefine themselves as advocates for social and especially environmental organisations, given that global supply chains are taking forms too difficult to manage properly on a supra- or transnational level.

9. Are there things that will prevent you from buying a garment or from a specific brand?

Problematic ethical views on a symbolic and executive level of brand firms;

To give examples, I am thinking of Abercrombie & Fitch's limited size categories or Xinjiang cotton harvested under exploitative, inhumane conditions

10. What kind of design motives evoke <u>positive</u> feelings in yourself? Could be certain fonts, imagery or colors for example.

I generally like to wear black and more toned down colors, but I also like to wear pink, just because you don't see it a lot. I also like to wear cotton and cozy materials, synthetics are often too cold.

11. What kind of design motives evoke <u>negative</u> feelings in yourself? Could be certain fonts, imagery or colors for example.

Fonts that draw attention through big size or noticeable colourways.

12. What would you like to see more within the fashion & the creative industry?

I honestly know to little about the industry to add a lot to this topic.

13. What are your associations with the terms 'balance' & 'community'?

balance - fair, but not equal

community - network with a certain collective 'fix'

Appendix D – Summaries Target Group Interviews

Interview 1 – Andreea

At the point of the interview, Andreea was 21 years old. She was born in Romania and has been diagnosed with generalized anxiety and depression. During the conversation, she said "In my home country, if you speak about depression or anything related to mental health, they flag you as a crazy person" and emphasized the importance of destigmatizing the conversation around the topic for people suffering beneath it to feel less alienated. In her opinion, an overall topic all people struggling with their mental health share is carrying any form of trauma, leading to unhealthy behavioural patterns or reoccurring negative thoughts. To cope with her own challenges, Andreea liked to revisit places she knows, giving her structure and a reason to leave the house, comforting her anxiety. The same can be said for being in nature, especially the ocean.

Asked about how the way she dresses herself relates to how she feels, Andreea explained that it can be very ambivalent. "[Either] I try to put in so much effort that maybe in a way, nobody realizes that I'm not doing that well, so it kind of compensates for that or I go the other way, like completely 180 and I do nothing like I barely wear any makeup, I barely change my clothes." Clothes that give her comfort differ with the seasons. In the summertime, Andreea liked to wear flowy, wide dresses, while in the wintertime, long coats and turtlenecks make her feel protected. She also expressed, that she loved clothes with texture and wears a lot of black. Asked about how she felt about prints and embroidery, Andreea said, she liked everything nature-inspired and was drawn to children-like motifs, although she saw the danger of those becoming too childish. She also said, she preferred embroidery over prints, giving her more of a handcrafted, luxurious feeling. During the conversation, Andreea warned about using motivational quotes as prints, saying they would not be able to reach everybody who sees it in the same way if they weren't perfectly nuanced. Skulls, roses, dolphins and everything to remembering of the Y2k aesthetic would be personal no-gos.

For Andreea, it is important that fashion brands display social and environmental efforts. Because of that and her own experience working in the Fashion & Textile sector, she thoroughly researches brands she wants to buy from, before making a decision. In general, she would like to see more transparency and communication around the garment workers and their working conditions and products that claim to be recycled.

The platform-name Community of Real People resonated with Andreea and created positive associations. Community for her meant to be "part of something - like for me, of course my depression is a lot related to feeling lonely; to feeling very alien to the world. And then when you say community, it already makes me feel like I'm part of something - like I'm not doing this all on my own, which for me is very comforting." As somebody who is very passionate about poetry, Andreea also mentioned some more keywords she likes in connection to mental health. These

words included 'being balanced', as an ideal emotional state she aspires to reach through her therapy, 'quaint' as a synonym for calmness and serenity and 'moored' as a synonym for anchored or secured.

As a last advice for this project, Andreea explained after which criteria she would choose the fabrics for the final products. Her recommendation is to focus on using natural fabrics, especially linen and cotton, but preferably nothing that can be scratchy or tangled up easily like wool, at least not for garments being worn directly on the skin. Instead the fabrics used should be warm enough, but more importantly breathable.

Interview 2 – Alexandra

Alexandra was also 22 years old and from England and was in therapy due to anxiety the first time when she was 12 years old, which helped her and her family a lot to understand each other and express their emotions. To cope, it helped Alexandra either to talk to friends or her sister and go through breathing exercises together or to do some yoga, running or meditation by herself. Natural surroundings helped her to give peace to her mind and she liked to see clothing evoking those feelings due to their print, material or color.

She saw a higher awareness and sensibility for mental health in younger generations which she considered as important to discuss that topic constructively, but still felt like she would not want to express any struggles with her mental health at the workplace, to not seem fragile or unstable, potentially scaring away possible employers. In the creative field, that she also works in, she saw the high competitiveness and the subjectivity in which work is often measured in as additional stress-factors that could influence one's mental health. In general, Alexandra was convinced, that every human had certain challenges with their mental health, mostly stemming from their childhood and the only difference was the ability of different people to acknowledge and reflect on their own mental health.

In connection to fashion, Alexandra saw her personal style as a reflection of her personal development, becoming more independent and drawn to unique designs over the years, that differ from what many people around her wore. Apart from freeing herself from the peer pressure she felt to look like the popular girls in school, she also saw the clothes she wore connected to her own body image. Alexandra experienced eating disorders and said that influenced her way of dressing, leading her to wear more baggy, oversized sillhoettes on days she felt insecure about her body and dressing more feminine on days, she felt more confident.

In general, garments that had an emotional value, like for example clothes and jewellery she received from family members, or connected positive memories with, helped her to feel comfortable. She characterized these clothes as more baggy and oversized fitting, but still stylish. Further, she mentioned she felt excited to wear newly bought things for the first times and planning outfits around those gave her joy.

Color-wise, Alexandra describes herself as a dark dresser, her favorite jacket was dark brown. Nevertheless, feeling better for her was related to dressing up in brighter colors as well. "When I put something on in the morning and it's bright, I feel like it changes my mood." Bright colors, she liked most in this context, were light blue / turquoise and bright purple / lilac. Yellow, for her was a "happy color", while she perceived dark blue and purple as "sad colors".

Knitwear, soft, natural fabrics and oversized silhouettes as well as recycled synthetics were staples in Alexandra's wardrobe, while virgin synthetics, stiff or too tight garments and gothic fonts would turn her away from buying garments incorporating these attributes.

In the fashion industry, Alexandra would have liked to see a slower pace and more transparency and saw the support of environmental or social organisations through fashion brands as a value-adding factor, increasing her willingness to buy from such brands. Since she was not a big fan of fonts or too literal messaging on clothes, she said she would like to see the support of Mental Health communicated more through the brand's social media output then through quotes or fonts on the clothes itself.

Asked about the name 'Community of Real People', Alexandra said that the word community felt very positive and inclusive to her, while real people could also be perceived as somewhat exclusive. She further mentioned, that the word balance and the struggle to reach this feeling has been an important topic for herself and many people dealing with their mental health, especially during Covid-19 and the limitations introduced due to the pandemic. Another keyword, Alexandra added was 'personal', meaning that it is hard to find a language that will make every recipient included concerning mental health, since it often is a very subjective and ambivalent matter.

Interview 3 – Niveditha

Niveditha at the point of the interview was 21 years old and from India. Although, she stated to not have any diagnosed mental health conditions, she claimed she often felt under a lot of pressure in her studies to become a fashion designer and saw an overall insensitiveness towards to the topic of mental health issues, supported by overproduction leading to extremely short-term deadlines and the exploitation of interns and freelancers for free work. She also emphasized the importance of seeing garment workers as humans instead of production machines first. "I feel like I personally do not want to buy clothes or even associate with a brand that is not sustainable or doesn't meet its employees in a fair manner."

Since she saw her self-esteem heavily connected to the pressure she herself and others in the industry put on her, she found some ways of relieving this pressure from herself through talking to friends and family members over some meals, saying "the more I share the better I feel", while also acknowledging "if you're constantly negative, right, you kind of tire them out also".

With her way of dressing herself, Niveditha motivated herself going to university, trying to dress up whenever she felt sad, to push herself to still go out and feel good about herself. Her absolute favorite color was yellow, representing her "happy, jumpy" personality and assuming that the color would evoke positive feeling is others as well. In general, she preferred wearing bright colors and warm tones over wearing darker shades and especially black, which she associated with a depressed or sad mood. Asked about print motives, Niveditha described she would like to wear prints that had a lot happening in them, were quirky and included "cool key characters" and a lot of different colors, like sketches made by kids, including child-like motives like balloons or smileys. After stating she would not negatively judge other prints or patterns, she clarified that any triggering imagery, like suicidal or racist messaging would upset her.

Community of Real People as a name to her was very intriguing and immediately raised her interest to find out more about the project. She felt that she often met superficial people who were not searching for the meaning in things like she did herself and saw Community of Real

People as the opposite to this, saying her association with a community like that would be something an individual could always rely on, due to the similar mindset and beliefs shared throughout this community. Concerning the state of 'balance', she said: "I think it has to be the highest level that one can reach".

Clothes, for Niveditha, were a medium that grew with the individual in an emotional sense, adding landmarks to certain life events and periods. "I think clothes are not just cotton or rayon or whatever. I think they're threads of memories. I think they are filled with memories and when people really start realizing that clothes are not just something you put on, they're way more important than that. I think, like this whole idea of consuming so much and throwing it away, you will rethink it." For this project, she said, the most value could be created through involving as many people as possible, making this project as human as possible, and conveying the stories of individuals into the storytelling of the collection.

Interview 4 – Janis

At the point of the interview, Janis was 25 years old. After being born and raised in Germany, Janis studied Psychology in the Netherlands. His interest in mental health came from his surroundings, where he saw many people struggle with this topic and his former job in a daycare for children with difficult family situations. While he saw a great awareness for the topic in his direct surroundings, Janis observed that in other social settings, like in his football club, mental health was a lot more stigmatized. A greater media coverage and a stronger community behind the conversation following Janis would help to reach a greater amount of people outside of his "own bubble". He emphasized that he liked the inclusivity laying in the name Community of Real People, since most people would suffer from depressive periods or other mental health conditions at least once during their lifetime. While he said, that he also experienced states he would characterize as depressive periods and that would help him understand other people undergoing similar struggles, he thought it was hard to generalize the needs or feelings of different people dealing with different struggles. Nevertheless, Janis saw the importance of opening up to other people to feel less alienated as a shared ground. Next to conversation, physical activities, getting into public spaces, reflective writing and listening to music that resonated with his feelings, all helped Janis to cope with his struggles.

For Janis, his way of dressing did not depend a lot on his daily moods, but was more an expression of his personality in a consistent manner, although he recognized, that he would dress up more thoroughly to win back confidence on days he did not feel good initially. Janis usually dresses in black, white and neutral tones and likes to incorporate small details that make the outfit feel more elevated and elegant to him. Because of that, he did not like big placement prints, but could imagine photography being incorporated into print designs.

The support of environmental or social projects through donations as well as through social media content for Janis as one of the easiest and most effective ways of promoting awareness for those topics from a brand's perspective. He also liked the idea of a pop-up community event. To get a more holistic picture, Janis recommended looking outside of the main target group and also talk to people from other age groups and academic backgrounds.

Balance for Janis was a very important keyword, and something he tries to model his own life and behavior after. In that context he mentioned that it was important to also be able to feel sadness to feel good overall and expressed, that in his view and from his experiences, childhood was the most important and influential life period for the character building of most people

Interview 5 – Carla

Also from Germany, Carla was 22 years old during the interview, interning at a fashion brand. Carla has struggled with depression and eating disorders in the past and has been in therapy, where she learned coping mechanisms. For her, next to talking to friends about her thoughts, meditation, swimming and taking long walks, sometimes accompanied by her dog were the most helpful activities. She described herself as a more introverted person, and therefore sometimes spending time alone, especially in nature helped her to recharge. Being in forests or surrounded by water or animals helped her calm her nerves and the light-heartedness of the animals helped her to change perspectives.

While Carla experienced friends of her struggling with feeling very ambivalent or imbalanced, she said she would mostly feel quite balanced and calm as a person. The name Community of Real People resonated with her as she said, that most people would at least would benefit from talking to a psychologist or being more aware of their mental health, even if they do not actively struggle with their own.

As the other interviewees, Carla liked to dress up in a comfortable, but suiting way to feel better on days, where she felt negatively about herself. Her go-to garments on those days were one light purple and one red, slightly oversized-fitting cardigan, that she used to lighten up her outfits. Apart from the warm and cozy materials on those named garments, she said, she believed in the energy of colors and their ability to influence the wearer's mood and did not like to wear a completely black outfit without any other colors, because she perceived that as sad or remembering of funerals and was really drawn to light-blue garments. Although Carla said, she felt especially confident wearing cheetah patterns, she also liked flower patterns a lot. Colors to her were more important than patterns, and she preferred to have only a few stand-out prints in a collection to not clash with her wardrobe that ideally consists of more staple, basic pieces. Compared to Niveditha, Carla did dislike the color yellow a lot, especially bright yellows. "(…) Butter-tones are acceptable."

Fabric-wise, it was important for Carla that the materials had a good touch, she liked cashmere a lot and said that "a good cotton is always a good option". In the summer, she also liked to wear light fabrics like linen and silk, which she preferred to synthetic materials due to the higher breathability of the natural fabrics. In general, she cared about the texture on clothes.

Since Carla saw a lot of issues within the fashion industry, especially concerning topics like the transported body-ideals, she would "love" to buy at a brand that supports mental health causes. Her studies in the industry made Carla a conscious consumer, leading her to research brands on sustainability & ethics before buying any products from them, saying "I like to support brands that have a good philosophy". She advised, to include the consumers as much as possible in the creation of the products through incorporating their stories and opinions and try to help them to raise their voices. "I think it's also good to don't really use models that have the perfect body or the perfect appearance because it's just more real and it really relates to that topic you want to spread out."

Interview 6 – Bennet

The 6th person interviewed was Bennet, 21 years old, from Germany. Bennet has never been diagnosed with any mental health conditions and felt generally healthy and stable in that context, but remembered times in his life, for example his parents divorcing in his childhood as phases where he internalized a lot of frustration and fear of abandonment, without really speaking to his surroundings. Over time and with the help of his current partner, Bennet said he learned how to express these emotions and get in touch with thoughts he suppressed for some time again.

He said, that now when he feels down, he thought that crying and letting those feelings out helped more than to try to suppress them. Apart from talking to his partner or his surroundings about his emotions, he also likes to get some fresh air, taking walks outside in a natural environment or play basketball to take his mind of his worries. On some days, he prefers going out to more crowded places with a lot of movement to distract himself.

Bennet had comfort outfits consisting of different pieces he owned for a long time. Her characterized his go-to comfort as "not the prettiest thing", but known to him because he owned the clothes for several years. His go-to comfort outfit consisted out of long, intact socks, light brown workwear pants and an oversized dark-grey hoodie with a light blue print on it. On days, where he felt comfortable in his own skin, he described his style as more daring and experimental. "Sometimes it can go wrong, like when I try something new and then I'm not feeling too good in it or some people look at me a second too long and I'm just thinking, oh, maybe, maybe it's a bad choice. Then I get a little more self-conscious, but mostly if I'm in a good mood and I try something new, I can brush it off pretty quickly."

Clothing that gives him comfort he characterized as soft, oversized and made out of cotton. Too tight sportswear made him feel exposed as well as skinny jeans, which made him feel uncomfortable and more conscious about his body.

Asked about potential prints and embroidery, Bennet said "I think it would be really nice to have something that is not like just a printed picture on it, but something you can feel like a little bit of an embroidery, that you can perhaps touch." He mentioned one of his favorite hoodies from Carhartt as an example, that has the brand's logo embroidered over the sleeve cuff. Color-wise, Bennet felt drawn to a natural color palette consisting of blue, green, brown and yellowish tones. He liked the idea of having motives that show a natural scenery or a a part of it and said many of his favorite prints were words with colors associated to the words used. Following him, the words Community of Real People would look good on a garment like a hoodie. Bennet liked the word 'balance', but felt like it was overused and did not have the best associations with it. Instead, he preferred a symbol of balance for the use in print designs. Other printed words, that would turn him away from buying a specific garment were 'vibe', 'breathe' or 'chill' or anything that sounded like an instruction. He also did not feel appealed by wave patterns. "I think a lot of people associate the ocean and water with calmness. I think it wouldn't be something for me. "

Bennet expressed that he liked to buy from brand's with a strong stance towards sustainable and ethical production, but also said that those products were often a lot more expensive than comparable products from competitors which were less influenced by these considerations. He further expressed, that often, when he went shopping he felt like the menswear section bored him and compared to the womenswear did not have enough clothes that were outside the box. Therefore, Bennet would wish for more unisex garments or more expressive menswear.

As other respondents, Bennet also emphasized the importance of involving the community as much in the design process as possible and thought it would be a good idea to receive some peer feedback after the first design trials.

Interview 7 – Laura

Laura at the point of the interview was a jewelry designer, 20 years old, born in Germany but living in Spain. She said she was not struggling with mental health issues to a too high degree, but did not want to go in-depth on that topic. The reason she still wanted to participate in that interview, because she thought she was able to give another perspective on the fashion industry and it's influence on mental health due to her work as a freelance jewelry designer. In that context it was important for her to educate consumers on how hard it is for independent brands and creatives, trying to craft their products in a more responsible way, to compete with the prices made by fast fashion brands. For Laura, consumers should be made more aware of the negative consequences these low prices have on all the worker's in the supply chain and their mental health. The responsibility for that she saw in the hands of the big corporates and governmental laws and regulations. For her personally, this lack of awareness made it harder for potential buyers of her own products to understand their pricing, which gave her a lot of stress.

For Laura, the way she dressed was strongly connected to how she felt and reflected her personal development. On days she did not feel good mentally, she put on clothes that hided the biggest parts of her body, revealing as little skin as possible, which she described as harder since she moved to a country with comparably high average temperatures. She said: "(…) if you are already struggling with yourself, you don't want to feel exposed from the outside. You know, it's like the dreams where you all of a sudden are standing nakedly in a room full of fully clothed people: it just feels super, super vulnerable (…)". She also liked oversized and wide-fitting clothes in general and enjoyed wearing her self-made jewellery, that gave her comfort and additional confidence when people commented on it.

In colder weather, Laura liked products made out of wool, because of their "good quality". In general, "cotton is definitely good." She did not like the inclusion of synthetic materials in clothes like hoodies, since they could easily increase sweating and therefore lead to discomfort. Laura liked pastel colors and colorful clothing in general. As an example she gave the print of hand-drawn flowers in bright colors. She preferred cartoons over slogans as print motives and thought nature-inspired patterns and prints would be everybody could agree on. The only thing that would turn her away from buying a product, would be print motives she would have seen too often.

Apart from clothes, talking to friends and family or going out into the sun were activities making Laura feel better. "I think the sun is a really strong factor for feelings." On the other hand, she also acknowledged that it sometimes can help to accept that she wasn't feeling good on a day and just staying in bed and resting could help to recover.

From her perspective as a jewellery designer, she recommended going out and taking pictures for inspiration as much as possible, finding inspiration in the surroundings.

Her connection with the word 'community' was **"**A group of people who feel connected to each other and share the same goals as well." Hence, Laura liked the name Community of Real People and felt like it was an honest name, in line with the project and it's goals.

Concerning the word 'balance', Laura said she always liked to keep a balance in her jewelry pieces and said that the terms described that you needed a lot of different factors to be aligned in a balanced way to lead to your final goal, e.g. happiness.

Interview 8 – Mariam

When interviewed, Mariam was 24 years old, from Germany, studying political science in the Netherlands. After feeling pretty healthy mentally for most of her life, during the Covid-pandemic, Mariam entered a phase she described as 'mildly depressed', leading her to struggle with everyday tasks that became harder and harder to do. In this phase, it helped her to spend a lot more time by herself, and improve her eating and sleeping routines. Mariam also tried to express her emotions to friends and family but found that sometimes hard to do.

The way of dressing herself is an expression of her feelings, her emotional state, and her self-image in periods of time and on different days. "The days that I feel good I'm very happy to wear things that attract attention, like colorful things." On days of emotional well-being, Mariam often chose for more bold looks, while on days she did not feel very comfortable she wanted to wear toned-down things which weren't too attention-grabbing. She agreed to an extent with the habit of dressing up more on days she felt less comfortable in her skin, but added that there some days where she felt so uncomfortable that almost nothing could change that. "I think you become more self-conscious when you put even more effort into your outfit. But on the other hand, I understand that in certain things that you know you look good in, maybe it makes you a bit more comfortable, but I wouldn't say that applies to myself."

While Mariam did not have a specific comfort outfit, her go-to outfit on bad days would be something all-black, topped off with a large, loose-fitting jacket and a pair of boots.

In general, Mariam did not own a lot of clothing with placement-prints, but liked when they had a simple aesthetic, preferably in the colors white, black and dark blue. She personally preferred all-over prints, for example on tight turtlenecks or longsleeve tops, maybe made out of a see-through material, that she described as good for layering on all genders. Those all-over prints she saw as character-adding to a lot of outfits. Mariam acknowledged that a lot of tops like the ones described were made out of synthetic materials and said they sometimes had a problem, not being respiratory enough and therefore leading to sweating and bad smell.

Mariam liked to wear hoodies, although not wearing the hood itself a lot, because it could easily be uncomfortable or inconvenient with different hairstyles. She emphasized, how much she liked tops with flared sleeves.

Regarding this collection, Mariam said: "I would think that the story behind the piece could be more important than the piece actually saying "this is mental health stuff." So, I would probably go for something like the comfort pants or the comfort shirt, which gives you the space of being yourself and feeling comfortable in what you're wearing (…), something that, like, expresses the safe space of it."

Mariam liked the name Community of Real People, but was unsure if that could bring up the question of what is real in that sense and what not, putting a label on different people. Concerning the term 'balance' she connected the thought: "Balance would be what I'm initially striving for, but then I also find it very hard to achieve that and balance myself. (…) I think what balance means changes all the time. I think that's important as well. You cannot just have like one idea of balance since obviously you're going through different phases in your life, so it could not always be the same thing." That's why she said to visualize the act of striving for finding balance should be showcased as a dynamic process.

Generally, being in company with other humans, laughing and conversing, going outside together and visit galleries or share activities gave Mariam happiness. For her, a feeling of

happiness was strongly connected to the sun, as well as spending time in nature, getting away from the hectic city life. Because of that, artworks that were inspired or taken directly from nature resonated with her a lot. As examples for that she named elements taken from water, the sun, trees and branches and bird feathers, but also everything mimicking natural movements and dynamics.

Emotional value that clothes created for Mariam depended on the context she bought these clothes in and the memories made in the time periods she bought them. For Mariam, this emotional value was created through garments with unique design features or high quality that fitted her personality and gave her joy.

In the fashion industry, Mariam liked to buy from brands or individuals crafting their designs with a sustainable approach, but often saw those communicated efforts as part of a marketing strategy rather than an honest try for better industry practices. To prevent these assumptions, she said working with more local organisations would make the positive impact more tangible, as well as being transparent about the connection to the brand. In regards of this project, this meant to Mariam that it made more sense to work with a local mental health institution than for example with an organisation trying to decrease hunger in Cambodia.

Towards the end of the interview, Mariam wanted to clarify, that she does not see herself as a suitable spokesperson for mental health issues in general, thinking, that compared to other people she heard about, her problems seemed to be less impactful or limiting. Nonetheless, she said "it shouldn't be a situation of individual comparison. In this case all issues are kind of valid and I think that's the message that would be important for me as well to transport." In her own situation, Mariam did not feel like herself for several weeks until talking to a psychiatrist, which helped her to understand her own behavior and state of mind better again, validating her feelings and her coping mechanisms, leading her to "understand that I have a situation where I have to do something about it and it would be really bad if I didn't."

Interview 9 – Chanel

Chanel, at the time of the interview was 26 years old, from Denmark and studying Sustainable Fashion Design. Starting at an early age, Chanel always felt different than the kids surrounding her and struggled with depression and suicidal thoughts, as well as Anorexia. She often felt alone with her emotions. For Chanel, most mental health conditions people had in general started in childhood, due to the environment people grew up in.

Talking to her school psychologist and her fiancé, that she met when she was 19, helped her a lot to feel less alone and to open up to other people about her emotions. For her own body-image, it helped Chanel to unfollow a lot of models on social media, she compared herself with before. Chanel owns a dog, that gives her a lot of comfort through his presence. On days, she felt bad, Chanel would often take her dog on long walks through the forest. "I try to just get out. Breathe. Feel the sun on my skin." To prevent herself from ruminating over negative thoughts, Chanel tried to invest time in self-care not only through getting fresh air, but also taking long showers and putting on face masks to feel more comfortable in her own skin.

Community of Real People as a name sounded "really good" to her, because no matter how happy people looked on the outside, everybody would also be dealing with some struggles, as

Chanel said: "every single person has something to deal with. So, it's not how we look on the outer shell, it's more on the inside. Once you get to know people, you can sometimes sense that there are some scars." She also mentioned that she felt like people who struggled consciously with their own mental health before were often more sensitive and empathetic to other people, unless prevented by their own mental health condition, e.g. narcissism.

Asked if she would like to see the platform's name incorporated into the garments, Chanel said that she personally felt like it sounded very American, and that she would prefer focusing on playing around with the word 'real', which she saw as an even stronger keyword than 'community'.

How Chanel felt was connected to her way of dressing herself, which was both also connected to the weather. "If it's really gray and dark and rainy, then I tend to be a little more sad." On those days, she said she would mostly dress in black and more oversized clothing. "But when I'm really happy, then I'm more colorful. In my wardrobe, I have something for every aesthetic, I would say, really colorful, really outgoing pieces. I don't know if I would say that I'm always outgoing because I'm also good at being like a chameleon, like just blending in. It depends on how much I want to show and how much I want to show myself to the world."

Her comfort outfit consisted out of a printed t-shirt, that has a short and boxy silhouette and a firm structure, a black pair of jeans that she shortened herself and some sneakers to give comfort.

She also named her three most mood-boosting colors which were orange, green and white. Print-wise, Chanel liked humorous prints, often referencing pop-cultural subjects like movies or series. Those prints she saw as potential conversation-starters, inviting different people to communicate with each other. Chanel also liked the idea of children-like drawings as prints and said she was very fond of prints that included handwriting. Here, she wanted the handwriting and drawings to be imperfect, adding a personal note to the garment. She also proposed, to let people hand-draw on the garments, telling their own stories in relation to mental health or use the hand-written stories as a background for the photoshoot of the final products.

Chanel also liked the idea of nature-inspired prints, but said it would be too one-dimensional to only focus on positive, happy prints, throughout the designs. Instead, she would have liked to also showcase the ambivalence, people struggling with their mental health often felt. She wanted to instead have designs that reflected the whole spectrum of emotions in some form, making the viewer think and feel something. "I would say that I would love to see that in some clothes where I can wear it while I'm sad, but also when I'm happy because it has like both of these worlds."

'Balanced' was a word, Chanel associated with unreal, pretentious people, giving the consideration that a truly balanced state was almost unreachable. In the fashion industry, Chanel saw a bigger need to address the issue of mental health conditions, and saw the industry as a factor often benefitting those through unrealistic body portrayals and the constant need to consume new products to be in-line with the newest trends. In her personal experience, working in the industry, Chanel had made positive experiences about opening up to her colleagues about the topic, sparking a constructive conversation about the topic.

Interview 10 – Kim

Since Kim was the only person who preferred a written interview, the answers of this interview were a lot more brief than the others. Kim is from Germany and studied in the field of sociology and technology. He has struggled with depression and his surroundings suspected bipolar tendencies which is the reason he had signed up for behavioral therapy. Kim also had a problem with substance abuse, and his marihuana addiction led him to lose control over social and financial parts of his life. A thing that many people struggling with their mental health had in common were problems to be honest with themselves or receive help or developing unhealthy coping mechanisms. To cope with his own challenges, he liked to distract himself by taking walks and watching other people outside.

Connected to clothing, Kim stated: "The better I feel, the more effort I put into dressing up." Unique and simultaneously versatile use in clothes created emotional value for him. He liked to wear black and more toned down colors, but also pink, since it's rarely seen in menswear. He preferred cotton and comfortable, natural fabrics over synthetics, since they felt warmer and more protective. "Fonts that draw attention through big size or noticeable colourways", were seen as factors not to buy clothes.

Asked, if he wanted clothing brands to support social or environmental organisations, Kim said: "I would prefer, if the clothing brands would redefine themselves as advocates for social and especially environmental organisations, given that global supply chains are taking forms too difficult to manage properly on a supra- or transnational level." As negative examples for problematic ethical views of specific brands that would turn him away from buying their garments he mentioned "Abercrombie & Fitch's limited size categories or Xinjiang cotton harvested under exploitative, inhumane conditions."

His associations with the two keywords talked most about in this research were: "balance - fair, but not equal" and "community - network with a certain collective 'fix'".

Appendix E – Open Coding Target Group Interviews

Name	Perception Mental Health Awareness	Common topics	Behavior to improve mental state	Relation fashion industry and mental health
Andreea	"In my home country, if you speak about depression or anything related to mental health, they flag you as a crazy person"; emphasized the importance of destigmatizing	Any form of trauma, physical reactions that are not visible from the outside struggling with eating & caring for yourself in general. Feeling unmoored and feeling the need to be able to express oneself	Feeling destigmatized & normal, talk to therapists or people struggling with similar things, safe spaces, routines & patterns, being in nature & at the ocean	Is definitely more likely to buy from brands communicating their sustainability efforts, supporting good causes. Would like to see more communication about the garment workers during the process within the fashion industry.

	the conversation around the topic for people suffering beneath it to feel less alienated	and be understood.		
Alexandra	Saw a higher awareness and sensibility for mental health in younger generations which she considered as important to discuss that topic constructively, but still felt like she would not want to express any struggles with her mental health at the workplace, to not seem fragile or unstable, potentially scaring away possible employers.	Being connected to oneself to a high degree, being in between extremes. But thinks it's hard to distinguish because everybody is struggling with their own mental health	Exercising, talking to people, taking time off, being in nature and surrounded by family	More likely to buy from brands who are engaged in a topic that she supports. Wouldn't talk to people from work about therapy or mental health condition openly, is afraid to seem unstable or fragile. Sees fashion industry as very competitive and the matter of artistic expression and perception being a very subjective as something that could increase frustration and the feeling of being misunderstood. Fashion industry should slow down and use its exposure to raise awareness for mental health.
Niveditha	-	Talking helps everybody	Putting things into perspective. Spending time with friends & family and talk about issues. Go out together and have good food. "The more I share, the better I feel."	Sees fashion-industry as too fast-paced and stressful, where mental health is often not talked about enough or not even acknowledged. Workers on all levels should be respected & treated better. Wants brands to take responsibility, so she can be associated with them.

Janis	saw a great awareness for the topic in his direct surroundings, Janis observed that in other social settings, like in his football club, mental health was a lot more stigmatized. A greater media coverage and a stronger community behind the conversation following Janis would help to reach a greater amount of people outside of his "own bubble".	Everybody is affected by mental health struggles at least once in their life. Sees patterns within the same conditions, but not interdimensional.	Exchange your thoughts with people that understand. Talk to professionals if possible. Physical activity like playing soccer. Getting out and outside the own bubble. People-watch. Music. Writing down feelings & thoughts.	I mean, if I see that they spend some of the of their incomes to organizations, which I would like to see growing, that would be really nice, because then also I have the consumer, I have the feeling that I did something good and at the end it's I think most of the time you as the consumer want to feel.
Carla	-	You can relate to other people struggling with the topic, talking helps a lot.	Yoga & meditation. Sports, especially swimming. Going for a walk. Talking about your problems. Going out with her dog. Spend time in nature, especially in the woods or by the water.	"I think the fashion industry has so many problems and issues going on and I think mental health awareness and also like just body positivity and stuff like that, just such a big issue as well. So, I think there's so much work to do and I would also like to participate in a change in the future and work towards more body positivity and inclusivity." Would love fashion brands to support mental health organisations. Creates value if you can relate to the brands values and norms.

Bennet	-	-	Stable environment with people he trusts and can open up to. Getting in touch with emotions, cry when sad. Go out, see the sky, the sun and some open space. Play Basketball. Feel people and noise around.	You know, like the brands that have produced at high quality product, environmentally friendly and also manage to communicate it, to me are hard to afford sometimes."
Laura	-	-	Talk to friends. Go to the beach. Sun. Sometimes stay in bed and accept that this day is not the greatest day ever.	Wants more education for people consuming fast fashion on how it affects the mental health of garment workers and independent business owners who can't compete with that. "The big brands should be forced to reveal how the circumstances or how the situation in the factories is going on and I know obviously they wouldn't do it because it's obviously not good."
Mariam	-	-	Spending time alone. Developing healthy routines. Talking to people about it, although it can feel hard. Reconnecting with herself. Laughing and humor. Friends. Being outside, fresh air, sun, being in nature and	And I think it's important that brands make these commitments and sort of set their own standards and maybe even follow the standardization of private companies. And I think it's nice for consumers to be able to choose from that, like making a more conscious choice of what brand you buy from.

			experiencing it by herself.	
Chanel	Saw a higher-getting awareness	People who suffer themselves are better at understanding and helping others who go through similar struggles. Experiences in early stages of life that affect you your entire life.	Talking to her fiancé, taking a long walk in the forest with her dog, listen to music or podcasts. Self-care, long showers, face masks. Do your routines.	I would say like in general. bad influence because the fashion industry always want us to be users, buy more, be more, achieve more. A few years ago, they always wanted us to have, like this body image and stuff like that. Now it's changed a little bit. Not that much. It's mostly on social media. In my own life, I would say the fashion industry's is really it's different in the headquarters than I thought.
Kim	-	I think many struggle to either be honest to themselves or receive proper help and develop unhealthy and destructive coping mechanisms.	I like to take walks and distract myself watching people in their daily business.	I would prefer, if the clothing brands would redefine themselves as advocates for social and especially environmental organisations, given that global supply chains are taking forms too difficult to manage properly on a supra- or transnational level.

Name	Relation emotional state & dressing	Associations with community & Community of Real People	Associations with balance
Andreea	Ambivalent, either dress up or dress down depending on the mood. Dressing up to feel better but also hide the struggle to a degree.	"Be part of something like for me, of course my depression is a lot related to feeling lonely to feeling very alien to the world. And then when you say community, it already makes me feel like I'm part of something like I'm not doing this all on my own, which for me it's very comforting."	Umm, maybe the ideal I would try to achieve in life. To come to like a balanced state for me would seem like what I achieved to do through therapy and whatever like to try to achieve that. They're going every day up and low, like just having a constant in your life. That would be very nice.

Alexandra	Sees the way she dresses as a mirror of her own mental health development, Garments from family give comfort, feeling good when wearing new garments	Likes the word community because she connects it with inclusivity. Feels like the 'real people' could also be a bit exclusive	Finding the balance between the extremes and listening to your body and mind.
Niveditha	Dresses up nicely to go out and give herself motivation to start the day, especially when she feels bad. Calls clothes 'threads of memories'.	Sounds like something appealing, I'd be interested in. Sees the world as too superficial, 'real people' sounds more meaningful to her. Community is something that's always there for you, something you can rely on.	Like this world would not function without balance. Balance is everything.
Janis	Dresses well, if he feels well. Sometimes dresses up more, if he feels bad. Feels like the way he dresses is a part of him. Get inspirations by musicians he likes. Outfit influences confidence.	There needs to be a community behind the topic of mental health which wants to change something. Community is "like a group of people who want to spread something or want to deliver a message and want to fight for that, maybe as well and want to change something." "especially with the word real people, everyone can be affected by mental health issues."	Balance is such an important word.
Carla	Clothing can give emotional comfort. Dresses up to feel better. Clothing with big prints can help you express yourself.	I think it's a good name, especially because you mentioned real people. I believe that you normally don't talk about mental health issues and it's still like such a topic that people just don't talk about it. And I think it's so important to focus on that and also to do therapy also people that don't struggle with like mental	Many of my friends who struggle with their mental health have the feeling of imbalance. Personally, I am very calm and don't experience that in life.

health issues, it just helps to get to know you better. So I think the name, that's quite good.

Bennet	Thinks, it's very related, has comfort outfits he had for a long time (long, clean socks, light brown Carhartt pants and dark grey hoodie with light-blue print). Chooses more daring outfits if he feels well.	Likes the name, says it would be nice on a hoodie. "I think it's important, especially if the thing is called a community of real people, to include the community as best as possible."	"I kind of feel like it's overused. It's a great word because it's very important and it also it sounds nice. I think it has a good length for it to be on something. But,I always have to think of a friend of mine who's like a SoundCloud rapper who always says 'don't lose the balance' and it's tacky because of him."
Laura	Fashion is a mirror of your own development and state of mind. If she feels bad, will only wear a hoodie and some long pants, not show skin.	"A group of people who feel connected to each other and share the same goals as well." "Community of real people. Why not? I mean like. Some people are coming up with, I don't know, crazy names, you will not recognize after 2 minutes. So, I think that's a pretty, pretty honest name. And I think you will definitely like fulfil this name. So, I kinda like that."	"Yeah, I think balance, just the word, shows that you need like a big variety of different stuff to like to reach your goal or to really be happy."
Mariam	Tool of self-expression. Heavily connected to body image, especially for female bodies. If she feels more confident, she will dress more experimentally.	First off, I would say I actually really like it. I think it's cool. And then maybe I don't like the normative distinction between, like, what's real, what's not real, I don't know. That's kind of like normal, really, like a label, sort of normal people. I think that's something that people could relate to and find a very cute because it's so basic. But then also like a	Balance would be what I'm like initially striving for, but then I also find it very hard to achieve and balance me. I think what balance means changes all the time. I think that's important as well. You cannot just have like one idea of balance and then obviously you're going through different phases in your life. So could not always be the same thing.

Name	Functional	Aesthetic	Expressive
		very much sort of works with the stigma of like what is normal, what is not. So, I think real could maybe have the same thing with it. But other than that, I think the title itself sounds really nice. Also could like actually be playing with the like normal people. Like it's sort of like the opposite of normal. It's like real kind of in that sense. So, I like that, yeah.	
Chanel	So, when I'm a little more basement-feeling. Uh, I choose more baggy wear. I choose more black, dark aesthetic, villain mode. When I come to school or to work and people smile and we have fun, then it can change all the way. But like the first few hours in the morning, they really show how I am. But when I'm really happy, then I'm more colorful. In my wardrobe, I have something for every aesthetic, I would say.	I like that also because UM, it's like a sense of it's real. People often, when you are for example, at a school, you can look and be like ohh, she's so happy or her life must be perfect, but everyone, every single person have something to deal with. So, it's not our how we look on the outer shell, it's more like in the inside. Once you get to know people, you can sometimes sense that there are like some scars. But then if you are nice person or something then you know that's I a strong personality. Yeah. So community of real people, that sounds really good.	If someone asked me are you a balanced person, I would say **** no. Because balance for me, it's too stable and when you have had these feelings in your life, you don't ever feel like 100% balanced or stable, I would say. I associate balance with the non-real people like the outer shell like how I see people. She's a balanced person. She has her **** together, she's perfect. I associate balanced with being the outer shell of what we see, but often they are not balanced.
Kim	The better I feel, the more effort I put into dressing up.	community - network with a certain collective 'fix'	balance - fair, but not equal

Andreea	Coats, pleats, flowy clothing, vintage feel, pretty dresses, turtlenecks, clothes that feel like armour, oversized fit. Textures in materials. Natural materials like cotton or linen. Comfort & Breathability are key. Wouldn't recommend wool	black clothes, Embroidery more quality than prints. childish motives (but thin line), nature motives in all forms, but everything related to the ocean or plants like vines`. Astrology & stars.	warned about using motivational quotes as prints, saying they would not be able to reach everybody who sees it in the same way if they weren't perfectly nuanced
Alexandra	Oversized silhouettes, baggy clothing, not too tight on the body. Likes soft knits. Accessoiries like jewelry Clothing has to be soft, comfortable. Natural fibers or re-cycled synthetics	black clothes, dark brown is favorite color, bright blue, lilac and yellow evoke positive feelings. likes nature references in clothes, especially green as a soothing color remembering of plants.	was not a big fan of fonts or too literal messaging on clothes, she said she would like to see the support of Mental Health communicated more through the brand's social media output then through quotes or fonts on the clothes itself.
Niveditha	Yellow clothes	Loves yellow more than every other color, sees it as a happy color you have to live up to. Warm tones and bright colors in general make her feel happier. Doesn't wear black. Patterns and motives that have a lot happening in them. "Cool key characters and quirky prints" and fun notes, rather than dark motives. Kid-like sketches. Bright colors clashing. Smiley motives, balloons. Take hand-prints from different people and convert it into a print or pattern. Show collaboration throughout all aspects	most value could be created through involving as many people as possible, making this project as human as possible, and conveying the stories of individuals into the storytelling of the collection
Janis	Relaxed, but elevated through details. More	Likes black & white and toned-down colors.	support of environmental or social projects through donations as well as through

	'elegant' cuts, prefers 100 % cotton	Moving things. Photography	social media content for Janis as one of the easiest and most effective ways of promoting awareness for those topics from a brand's perspective
Carla	Feminine looks for summer, light fabrics and silhouettes Fabric needs good touch / hand-feel. Can be either very soft or have some texture. Good cotton, or for warmer fabrics cashmere. Linen or silk for summer fabrics.	Purple, rose, light blue. More light colorways are happy colors. Likes colors & patterns. Cheetah patterns, flower prints, Meaningful messages as prints. Minimalistic details. Multifunctionality.	advised, to include the consumers as much as possible in the creation of the products through incorporating their stories and opinions and try to help them to raise their voices. "I think it's also good to don't really use models that have the perfect body or the perfect appearance because it's just more real and it really relates to that topic you want to spread out."
Bennet	Loose, oversized silhouettes (you can hide in it). Wants more expressive menswear or unisex silhouettes. Cotton, soft fabrics.	Natural colors: green, blue, earthy tones Embroidery & hand-feel elevates basic styles. Trees, forests. Keywords, associated by colors. Likes community of real people. Prefers symbol of balance over the word.	printed words, that would turn him away from buying a specific garment were 'vibe', 'breathe' or 'chill' or anything that sounded like an instruction
Laura	Wide clothes, oversized. Jewellery & accessories High quality materials. Wool for cold seasons. Cotton for warmer months.	Pastels, Cartoon-ish, childlike motives. Flowers & nature references. Hand-drawn prints.	-
Mariam	Large loose jackets, tight see-through turtenecks, flared arms, hoodies, clean cuts. Doing things and classic silhouettes a bit different.	Black, mix of black and white always looks great Likes dark blue print on black and white clothes. Expressing the safe space. Taking elements from nature. Sun and warmth. Moving things. The reflection of water as a pattern. The patterns of	"I would think that the story behind the piece could be more important than the piece actually saying "this is mental health stuff." So, I would probably go for something like the comfort pants or the comfort shirt, which gives you the space of being yourself and feeling comfortable in

	Uniqueness, small accessoiries	the inside of leaves. Abstract prints of natural elements like feathers, playing with shadow and lights.	what you're wearing (…), something that, like, expresses the safe space of it."
Chanel	Boxy t-shirts, straight or baggy pants	Humor, meme-culture. Movie references. Prints that engage people, questions printed on the t-shirt. Children's drawings. Handwriting. 'Ugly' / rougher prints. Let people draw on the clothes as well. Not only focus on the positive side of things but also show the negative things in the designs. Nature motives.	prints as potential conversation-starters, wanted the handwriting and drawings to be imperfect, adding a personal note to the garment., proposed, to let people hand-draw on the garments, telling their own stories in relation to mental health or use the hand-written stories as a background for the photoshoot of the final products
Kim	Unique and simultaneously versatile use. Cotton is in favour, cozy materials. Doesn't like synthetics, thinks they're too cold	I generally like to wear black and more toned down colors, but I also like to wear pink, just because you don't see it a lot.	"Fonts that draw attention through big size or noticeable colourways", were seen as factors not to buy clothes

Appendix F – Transcriptions Expert Interviews

Interview Dr. Soljana Çili

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright, the transcription started now. Maybe first of all, could you very briefly just introduce yourself and explain how you got into the role of teaching at psychology in fashion at the UAL?

Soljana Çili
So, I'm doctor Soljana Çili and I am senior lecturer in psychology at London College of Fashion, where I have worked for the last eight years. I initially joined as a postdoctoral researcher and then I became a lecturer. After a few months last year, I became a senior lecturer and since I joined LCF, I have been teaching on the MsC applied psychology in fashion. I basically joined this course since it opened. So, it opened in 2014 and that's how long I've been there and we also have a BSc 'Psychology of fashion', but I am not involved with the bachelor's course. I only

teach all dmsc and I also look after PhD students as well. The course was brand new at the time I was thinking of applying and it seemed like a good opportunity. It seemed exciting and it was obvious to me since then that it required someone who had good knowledge of personality but also mental health and that was one of the reasons why I applied and one of the reasons why they recruited me.

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright, so I understand it right that connection to fashion wasn't one of the big points for you. That was more of the of general psychological background?

Soljana Çili
Yes. Yeah, I was not and I am still not a fashion person.

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright but I saw on the website that you are still working a lot with the fashion and creative students at the university as well, right?

Soljana Çili
Yes, yes. I mean I apply my knowledge of psychology to fashion, so kind of applying, applying it to understanding various topics related to fashion and the fashion industry. But like I wouldn't call myself a fashion psychologist. I'm a research psychologist who mostly specialises in personality, psychology and clinical psychology, but I can apply these to any area and for the last eight years the area has been fashion.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, alright, so I bet you also learned a lot about that during your time there then.

Soljana Çili
Yes. It's been quite a learning curve!

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright, I think you are the perfect person actually for this interview. So, I actually also saw that you were dealing a lot with the consumer's psychological wellbeing and how it is affected by the fashion industry and its practices. And I can personally come up with countless negative examples ranging from the promotion of unhealthy body ideals, sexist and racist practises within the industry, inhumane working conditions and so on. You can probably write books about just the negative sides. Are there from your point of view, also some examples on how the fashion industry can positively benefit the mental health of its consumers?

Soljana Çili
Well, I mean that's one of the things I'm looking at. Of course, there are all the negatives that you cited and for some of them we have more research than for others. For example, how the beauty ideals promoted through the fashion industry, how they impact people, especially young people and in the past it used to be primarily females but in in the last decade or so males have

started catching up when it comes to mental health issues related to body image. So, it has become a serious problem. So, we have quite a bit of research on this. We have a tiny bit of research on mental health in people who work in the fashion industry and that's one of the things that I have started looking at. But it's a little bit, but not much. Um and then, of course we know about how mental health issues are portrayed by the fashion industry. Uh, very often they seem to glamorise mental illness, which is absolutely insane. I mean, we shouldn't stigmatise it, but it's nothing to be proud of. It's nothing to encourage people to make them feel special by declaring some diagnosis that they don't actually have. It's horrible.

In terms of positives though, one of the things that I look at is people's personal relationship with clothes, um, and how that might benefit well-being, so we do have a little bit of research. A little bit of it comes from psychology, but there's a bit more coming from material culture studies, from anthropology. The fashion studies and so on, which look at people's personal relationship with clothes and that people use clothes to express themselves and to express their uniqueness, but also their group membership. So we do have that research and we also have some research which shows that people do strategically use clothes to manage their emotions. So, it's like they will wear something to cheer themselves up. Basically, if they are feeling a bit a bit down. So, we do have this research, I mean a lot of it is qualitative in nature, so we don't have kind of proper experiments to show that actually clothes are causing this change and emotions so that kind of the quality of the research we have is not perfect yet, but we are getting there. I've tried to understand why this is the case. So what lies behind this changing of emotions that people experience? There is some quantitative research by Kate Hefferon, who is our former colleague. She used to teach at London College of Fashion a few years ago with us and in her research suggest that one of the reasons why people might kind of benefit emotionally from clothes is that the clothes are precisely associated with autobiographical memory. So, it's like personal experiences that have happened in ones past, and you know, often this would be positive experiences. So obviously when people think of these memories, they experience positive emotions, which they probably experienced at the time. The events depicted in the memories. So that is one reason and also another thing that Kate Hefferon and her colleague point out is that, again, from qualitative research, it seems like the nostalgia element is very important to it. It's not just because of this emotional aspect, but it's because nostalgia very much contributes to people's sense of meaning in life because it is associated with this sense of self continuity. And there's a lot of research which has been published in the last decade or so in psychology, which has looked at self-continuity. So, the research has shown that it's very, very important for us to have a sense of self continuity. So, it's like this idea that we know who we were, we know who we are, but we also have a direction of where we're going in the future. So, you have this sense of continuity between your past self and your present self and your future selves. Um and and very often kind of people use clothes, personal objects to help with the sense of self continuity. For example, we look at photos which remind us of our past and also remind us that even though we have changed a lot in the course of our lives we're still the same person. And we use photos, we use personal objects. You know, like I don't know, souvenirs, books, whatever jewellery. Um, and we also use clothes. And we do have again mostly qualitative research which shows the fact that some people, I mean especially women, because most of the research has focused on women. So, we know a bit less on what happens to men. Um, so the research with women shows that they do use clothes to remind themselves of who they used to be, but also who they could be. Sophie Woodward wrote a book, in 2007 I believe, and she talks about this woman who used to be a professional, kind of quite advanced in her career, and then she got married and she became a stay-at-home mom so she just had children and she wasn't working anymore. So she kind of had this change in identity completely from a professional to being a homemaker and a mother, and she kept some of her clothes from her professional days to remind herself of who she used to be, but also who she could be. So, there was this idea that

she could still be that professional person in the future. So clothes are very important for self-continuity, just like any other personal object that we have.

And such continuity, we kind of see this repeatedly from research, is essential to mental health. So it's it seems like it's really important for people to know where they're coming from, where they're going, so it's not just about being in the present, and of course some people are more oriented towards the present. Some people are more oriented towards the past, and some people are more oriented towards the future, but we see that kind of regardless of the orientation, people do need the sense of self continuity. Disruptions to this idea of self, and self-continuity can be quite detrimental to mental health. In fact, like one of the things that people very often report after a traumatic experience is kind of this change in their sense of self because they also experience a change in how they view the world. So, so it's one of the aims of therapy with these people, especially after a traumatic experience that has threatened their self-continuity to actually help them re-establish this sense of self-continuity. So, from my perspective, one of the things I've looked at and I have written the first chapter of this book which will be published soon by Bloomsbury. So, it's an edited book where I look precisely at this, at how clothes contribute to wellbeing? Why they contribute to elicit positive emotions in the present, but also why they are able to contribute to self-continuity in the long term. So, it's not just about short-term benefits. So, for me, how clothes can be beneficial for wellbeing is through this association with the self and this association with autobiographical memory and their role in maintaining self-continuity.

Adriaan Kruithof
Right, you said so many things, so many interesting things as well, and also mentioned a lot of things that I already came across duting the little amount of research that I did so far and also saw in the interviews, I did. So, for example, the factor of nostalgia was, I think mentioned by almost everyone. So many people mentioned, think of prints or patterns, more like childlike drawings and things that evoke a feeling of childlike nostalgia for them always would kind of hit the sweet spots and make them emotional in a positive way. And so, I think it's super interesting that you say something similar.

Soljana Çili
I don't know when it started, but with all the minimalistic trends in the last few years, a lot of people started, you know, throwing things away, so just following Marie Kondo. Throwing things that they didn't need and all of that stuff, so a lot of people got rid and also got rid of things which they actually need for their sense of self. But you know, some people actually didn't do that, and you know, because some people are more attached to objects from their past, including their clothes. Personally, I have a suitcase full of clothes which don't fit me anymore like they would never fit me again. Because you know, I used to be very, very thin when I was younger, but I don't throw these clothes away, they are in the suitcase. I don't even unpack them, I just leave them in a suitcase, and you know, I wash them once in a while. But they are there and I have carried that suitcase wherever I have lived in different cities, different countries, it's there. It's my past. It's especially kind of my adolescence, but I do have some things through my early teens as well. So, adolescents, early 20s and so on. So, I'll never part with those clothes, not voluntarily.

Adriaan Kruithof
So how do you think if I now have to design something from scratch, how can I maybe evoke like a similar feeling and a similar emotional attachment to those clothes that are now newly produced for different people? Do you have any ideas, generally speaking?

Soljana Çili

One of the things that I mentioned in this chapter that I told you about, is this thing called the reminiscence bump which is a phenomenon which occurs in memory and basically we kind of see consistently that people tend to remember, like if you ask them to tell you stories from their life, like memories, they seem to remember mostly memories from around the ages 10 to 30. Some studies will find you know from age 9 to 27 something like that, but it's more or less 10 to 30, so people remember adolescence and remember their early 20s, their 20s, and there are various reasons for this. One reason is that this period is a period of firsts, so we have a lot of first-time experiences and this makes them more memorable. And other reasons are associated with kind of the fact that this is a period where our sense of self is developing. So, we kind of remember better those experiences which are somehow associated with our sense of self. So, my advice to you is depending on who you intend to target in terms of age, you should go for something that is reminiscent of the period when these people were teens or in their 20s. So you know, I'm 37, I'll be 38 on Wednesday. For me the 90s are like a period of reference, so the way you get me to be nostalgic is by showing me something from the 90s, whether it's music, accessories, clothes, films, whatever, the 90s are the period. So, I think keeping in mind your target audience would be important.

Adriaan Kruithof

All right, yeah, I think so too, and I guess then for me would probably be the late 90s or early 2000s probably. I mean the whole Y2K thing I think has been very popular for the last 2-3 years now. So, I think maybe I shouldn't go too much into that, but maybe making more subtle hints to that era could be very nice. I think that's very good input! Also, one thing I thought about, because you mentioned the mental health of not only the consumers, but especially the people working in the fashion industry, right? I saw a few numbers because I was also wondering about that because I personally know a lot of people from that industry which struggle a lot with their mental health. And I also wondered if there's any reliable numbers on that, and I could find very, very little so I could find
some statistics about how mental health disorders apparently were, like more common in the creative businesses in America than in in a lot of other things. But it's just all very hard to grasp. Do you have any more concrete information?

Soljana Çili

Not about the fashion industry workforce, no. So yes, we do have statistics on, you know comparing people who work in creating professions and those who don't. That's quite an area of debate, really, because there are a lot of people who say that you know, we do find that people who work in the creative industries are more likely to suffer from mental illnesses than people who work in other industries. And you know, this is especially the case for disorders like depression, bipolar disorder, psychosis. Um, so we do find this evidence, and a lot of psychologists have speculated on why we see this connection, but then there is another group of psychologists who say that creativity has got nothing to do with it, and it's not true that there is a connection between creativity and mental illness, so it's kind of a bit of a funny debate, but there's nothing as far as I'm aware looking specifically in terms of statistics at people who work in the fashion industry. There are isolated studies. So, in my teaching and also some of my research which I still have to publish, I've kind of looked at primarily models and fashion designers. And I focus on these two, but I also focus on garment workers. And there are isolated studies, so for designers we have a few studies. For models there are a few more. And there are a few isolated studies looking at mental health and psychological wellbeing in garment workers

in various countries. Bangladesh, India, Turkey and so on. So, we do know that things are quite bad.

Adriaan Kruithof
I can see, that almost sounds a bit self-explaining to me as somebody who's been participating in this industry for a bit now. I think what you said before was so insightful, about the whole celebration almost of mental disorders and self-destructive behaviour throughout the fashion industry. Then of course the whole production cycles which are going faster and faster, putting a lot of pressure on people. I guess there's various reasons, so I, for me it sounds very understandable and very legit to assume at least that there is a big problem in the fashion industry maybe above average.

Soljana Çili
Also in the production countries! So, it's like you have a bad reputation there, like you're discriminated against and you know you're subject to verbal abuse. Plus, a lot of these workers get sexually abused in the factories, it's very, very common. So, for them I mean they're exposed to trauma there. They can't live decently. You know they can't eat, they can't feed their children. They can't do anything, so it's awful.

Adriaan Kruithof
Ohh, that's something I personally also haven't researched so far. So, we are trying to produce, um, all of the clothes in the European Union as much as possible to at least have some impact on that and have some insights on how the things are actually produced in the factories. Um, but I guess there's also similar problems and a lot of European countries, right?

Soljana Çili
Exactly. I mean there are reports that things aren't better. There are factories in, like, Hungary, Albania, Serbia, I'm Albanian by the way. You have sweatshops in Italy where trafficked Chinese people work long hours and they are not even allowed to go out during. You also have such factories in the UK. Like in the centre of England, there was kind of this big scandal, it's still ongoing, where you know these workers, most of them immigrants, were forced to work at the beginning of the pandemic with no safety measures. You know they weren't even getting paid. Their documents were withheld, so they had to continue working. They couldn't go and report anything to the police. Some of these were illegal immigrants. So yeah, you know doing things in in Europe, it is not a guarantee. I mean, of course there are good exceptions, but yeah, I mean you have these things happening in the centre of Italy, centre of England.

Adriaan Kruithof
Any good solutions for that apart from producing it yourself so you can have full control?

Soljana Çili
Well, you know it, it's good to become informed on what the conditions are. Whatever it is that you're producing, you can ask for employment data. What guarantees do they have? You know very often these workers are not even given contracts. Uh, so it's like completely precarious labour, uh, so yeah you could just ask and also inform yourself on that because people have started writing and exposing these things online, so you know if you do Google search on the on

the company that you want to connect with, that might help. But ask for data. I mean they shouldn't deny you any data on their conditions of work.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, yeah, that sounds like a good first measure to take at least. Alright, I know that we are already running out of time. It's going so, so fast and I have so many more questions to ask, but maybe since I feel like the whole scientific approach that you have to you work with is maybe the one that would benefit me the most. So, are there any other sources? Any other platforms? Any other people you would reference me to, to find more about those topics? Especially about how we relate to clothing and how clothing can make the individual wearing it feel better about themselves and improve their mental health?

Soljana Çili
Ohh well, if you haven't read so there are two papers by Kate Hefferon, so I'll put it in the chat. It's qualitative research, it's the same study, so they're reporting on it twice, but it's kind of very fascinating, and it's a very kind of in-depth analysis of participants experiences with clothing and everything that I told you about self-continuity and so on. When do you have to write your dissertation?

Adriaan Kruithof
Um I should start now. So right now, I'm still in the preliminary research phase. Kind of, but I have to write it and hand it in between January and beginning of June, end of May.

Soljana Çili
OK, so you have to start writing around January?

Adriaan Kruithof
Yes pretty much, yeah.

Soljana Çili
OK, let me see if I have it here. I could get you my chapter.

Adriaan Kruithof
Ohh, that would be awesome. When are you planning on releasing it?

Soljana Çili
The book I think will be published in January.

Adriaan Kruithof
Okay, that might be enough then. Then I have some time.

Soljana Çili

So I will attach it in the chat, but you cannot disseminate the chapter. You cannot share it with anyone. So, this is just for your personal use, you can't give it to anyone. (sends document) Okay, did you get it?

Adriaan Kruithof
Yes, I got it, perfect. Thank you so much. I promise I will not share it with anyone. I will only use it for my personal research and to really understand and digest the whole topic as far as possible.

Soljana Çili
OK, no, that's fine I. I mean, I just I only have permission to share this with my students, but it's OK.

Adriaan Kruithof
I respect that. I'll keep it a good secret for myself.

Soljana Çili
OK, thank you.

Adriaan Kruithof
Perfect thank you so so much for taking the time. I wish I would have scheduled more time.

Soljana Çili
No, I mean I can stay another 5 minutes, like how many questions do you have?

Adriaan Kruithof
Um, loads of them, there's so much coming in all the time, so I had like 6-7 as the basic outline and we talked around like about 3/4 of them. Then that's one thing, maybe just like to finish it off. I read on the article of the UAL where they have a little interview with you, that you were also doing a lot of research in using a technique called imagery rescripting. I know this is now a very big jump, but is there any way or have you ever seen that technique being used in some sort of fashion context? Or is it too individual within the therapy to apply that to a more general approach?

Soljana Çili
Ohh it hasn't been used, but there is one of our MSC students who just finished. She just finished her MSC. I haven't read her dissertation, but I spoke to her recently and she told me that she had kind of done something similar. So basically, she got some people to think about, I think, a negative experience. And then she asks them to imagine this experience, but kind of relive it while thinking that they were wearing something that is associated with a sense of comfort for them. And it was a qualitative study, so it was again, it wasn't an experiment. You can't draw any kind of massive conclusions. But she said that her participants did say that they would have felt that the experience would have been a lot better if they were wearing these clothes in those moments. Again, qualitative research. It has a lot of limitations. I confess I

haven't read the dissertation yet, and the thing is, I mean the student had kind of done it, but obviously she had completely forgotten that, you know this is similar to imagery rescripting, which I research. She had completely forgotten that I had taught them about the relationship between memory and the self, so she had completely forgotten what I taught them and she said 'No, I found this and it's all new' and I was like I told you these things. It's not news. But I mean, she's hoping to publish this research. But I don't think it will be out by the time you submit your dissertation.

Adriaan Kruithof
OK, OK. It's too bad, but I just thought about it. I saw it imagery rescripting and thought maybe there is some room to do something but maybe I can look into that a bit further.

Soljana Çili
I mean, I think there is definitely room, but kind of the only reason we haven't done it yet. For example, I myself, I have training for cognitive behavioural therapy, but I'm not licenced to actually administer cognitive behaviour therapy. So, to do a study like that I would need to hire someone who can do the therapy, who can do the imagery rescript because I know how to do it, but it would be illegal for me to do it.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yes, I guess I would have the same problem then, so maybe I focus more on the idea of self-continuity and how to integrate that in Fashion. I feel like that sounds a bit more realistic for this research as well.

Soljana Çili
Ohh yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
I think we can keep it at that level and if there's any other things you maybe still want to add anything concerning the idea. Anything I should have in mind? Also concerning the communication around this whole project apart from telling people that the interviews are gonna be transcribed before interviewing them. Is there is there anything so for my outside communication? Anything that I should just keep in mind when it comes to the topic, mental health and fashion to just make everybody involved in this project feel as comfortable as possible and not trigger any negative emotions?

Soljana Çili
But I mean, did you get ethical approval from your university for the study?

Adriaan Kruithof
So, the thing is, I sent something out to them and send back a selfcheck. Yeah, I checked it and I think I don't need it. So, I understood they said I won't need it, so I haven't, no. I haven't dealt with it anymore since then.

Soljana Çili
OK, because I've been one of the things that they should have told you is that if you are talking to someone who has kind of a lot of negative experiences associated with specific clothes, you know they might feel quite distressed talking to you about these things. So, you know one of the other things. Even though again, we don't have much research on this, but you know it's when someone has been sexually assaulted and they can't think about the clothes that they were wearing at the time, because that is a reminder of the whole awful experience. So, it could be too much for them. So you know. Ideally you would tell people that these are the things that I would like to talk to you about, but please keep in mind that you know for some people, thinking about mental health and clothes might elicit some discomfort or distress. And you know if that's the case with you, then you are free not to answer the questions and we can stop the interview. So yeah, it can be like that because this is this is the one of the things I've researched the most. What happens to people when they think about positive and negative experiences and negative experiences can be absolutely awful. It's not just about feeling negative emotions, they can. You know, they they're even associated with a reduction in what we call state self-esteem. So, it's like your evaluation of yourself at a specific point in time. So, it's like you know you might have a decent level of self-esteem generally, but you think about a failure, or, you know, you think about an episode where you were assaulted, and you felt like complete dirt and your self-esteem just goes crashing down. So, that's why it's good to make people aware of these risks, and I mean really, I mean for me, for your collection, my advice is just don't glamorise anything because there's a lot of research which is showing you know young people… May I ask how old you are?

Adriaan Kruithof
Yes, 24.

Soljana Çili
Ohh bless. So, a lot of young people, what they are doing is that they are self-diagnosing and they watch a video on TikTok or on Instagram or whatever, so they are all coming up with a diagnosis. I am bipolar, I have OCD. I have a dissociative identity disorder, like multiple personalities and you know all things which are not true but they have been made to believe that you're special if you've got one of these disorders, so it's just a way for them to feel cool and special and it's ridiculous. I mean, that's not. That's not what mental health is. It's a serious thing. It's not something for you to feel cool about. And also there is this rise in ticks. So, Tourette syndrome as well. So apparently there are all these girls all over the world, who start exhibiting ticks after watching TikTok videos and they claim to have Tourette syndrome, which obviously they don't. It's just their brain…

Adriaan Kruithof
… is like copying and reproducing what they see on social media?

Soljana Çili
Yes.

Adriaan Kruithof
That is, that is very, very interesting actually. But also just from my personal point of view. Again,

I can definitely see that's happening, because I feel like I have barely any friends who do not claim that they have any kind of issue with their mental health.

Soljana Çili
Yeah, yeah I believe that. It's like people are desperate to claim some sort of special status, so it's like to show that they're different from others and they're special. Like they've got a special identity and for some, mental illness becomes an identity and you know, it is a serious thing. It's something that can destroy your life. It's something that needs to be taken seriously. It's not something for you to identify with and claim that you're cool with.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, that is true. I feel like it's such a thin line of the positive side of people getting more aware and less stigmatised about the topic and not over interpreting and mirroring it on yourself? That seems like a very thin line to me.

Soljana Çili
And it's also something that can backfire because you have all this. You know kids who… I mean, even adults. It's not just young people who are claiming these things, and you know what happens is that it's not true that they have these disorders, but some people in the general population might develop a negative impression. A negative attitude towards these young people, which then they generalise towards everyone who has that disorder that young people claim to have. It's like the boy who cried wolf. You know in the end it doesn't work, so it might lead to more stigmatisation rather than acceptance cause they just making mentally ill people look bad. That's what they're doing.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, that's true. What would you be your solution for that? Just educating people more? On, when is it something like for example you feel bad and you have a bad period of time maybe? And what is a depression? Do people just need more education on those topics? Or how can we prevent this from happening so much?

Soljana Çili
I would get young people, and this is me being an old lady, I would get young people busy with things that actually really matter in life. I think young people have got too much time on their hands. They're like they're ruminating and they're spending too much time online. They're not living a real life very often. Actually, it's not just about edge, you can just give them a life so they develop a sense of who they are. They develop an awareness of their skills, you know their talents, the things that make them special because everyone of us is special. You know, every single one of us. There's this personality researcher McAdams, who's written a very amazing definition of who we are, and he kind of says each one of us is a never to be repeated experiment. We are like no one who has ever been and like no one will ever be. Every single one of us is special, so giving young people the chance to prove their talent. To actually test what they're good at. Discover it. Keeping them busy, making them tired instead of them sitting in front of their screens all the time. That will be important. And you know, it's feels really bad, like I'm like one of the last few generations who had the lucky escape, who actually got real life and I am in front of the screen but for work purposes. But I have a real life and I have real friends and I have real contacts and I have critical thinking. My self-esteem is not based on claiming

special status on something. It's based on my abilities and things that I have proof of because I have lived real life. So it's really not just about education, it's just about getting young people busy. It's what I always say. Just give them things to do. Keep them busy so they're not ruminating, they're actually doing real things.

Adriaan Kruithof
I feel like that's such a perfect statement to end this conversation as well. I couldn't agree more. I mean, there's seven-year-olds on the train playing with their phones for 45 minutes, right? I personally think that can only be unhealthy and bad for their personal development in all sorts. So yeah, I couldn't agree more.

Soljana Çili
Right. So, it's like people need to get real lives.

Adriaan Kruithof
Period. With that, I would like to thank you so much for taking the time. Thank you for supplying me with all the information and your documents. I appreciate it a lot and then I'll stop the transcription now and probably go out and live my real life and go out for a birthday dinner with my girlfriend now.

Soljana Çili
Ohh perfect! Ohh you go and enjoy it then. And good luck with your project. You're welcome.

Adriaan Kruithof
Thank you, thank you so much and if is it okay if I have any follow up questions that I get back to you maybe?

Soljana Çili
Yeah, that's alright, that's okay.

Adriaan Kruithof
Fantastic, then you might hear from me soon again. And yes, thanks again for taking the time and have a great day.

Soljana Çili
Thank you! You too, bye.

Interview Pak Chiu

Adriaan Kruithof
All right, then. The transcription should be started now. And I would throw the question back at

you: maybe you could also again briefly introduce yourself and explain maybe a bit already how you got into the field and into the interest field of psychology and fashion.

Pak Chiu
My name is Pak, lovely meeting you. At the moment my profession is fashion psychology specialist. What I am doing is to actually help, understand how humans behave with clothes. So, how we can design better and my mission really is to actually, you know, create a bit of a culture change where fashion can be a force for good, it can focus on values other than business. And the way to do it is to place a bigger understanding about psychologic values and also poetry values as well. So that's kind of like the bigger gifts of what I do. How I got here is that I studied psychology as my first college degree and I started working in mental health services, thinking that actually this is what I wanna do. I really wanna do clinical psychology. I care about people. I care about the well-being of people and just, you know, just really work with that passion. And through that, I learned a lot about kind of, how does the mental health system work? What things actually help someone with mental health and mental well-being and it kind of sparked my original interest also in clothes and the way we dress and fashion and really learning through experience how you know, clothes can be ways of helping us feel good, but also helping us actually see the world in a slightly different way. And it has a huge impact on us and from that I thought, hey, why don't I just transfer the psychology skills I have and take it into fashion and try to just, you know, work on it and see what comes out. So, then there was a course of fashion psychology. So, I did the course on that. And through that, I started a fashion psychology magazine: Hajinsky, which really tries to make psychology more tangible and more meaningful for the creative staff that works in fashion and again with that idea that actually from understanding people we can make a positive change in the way how we design and make clothes. So mostly I do a lot of writing, I make a lot of content but also I provide workshops for brands and education around topics from, you know, sociology consumption to looking after yourself and also how do you take care of your well-being at work as well. So it's a very fun bunch of things I do, but also that's long and short of how I got here.

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright, great. That's a lot already. It's great to hear the origin story, how you landed where you are right now. And I have to say I read some of the articles on hajinsky on the website and I must say I'm probably also exactly in your target group, I guess, since I have a big interest for both topics. But I must say good job. Very well done. I think it's very nice how you combine a bit more of a scientific approach with still having a very designed modern layout. I think that's very cool and very needed.

Pak Chiu
Ohh, I'm glad to hear. I'm glad to hear! We paused Hajinsky magazine for a bit due to really finding what's the next stage for us. We also noticed the magazine itself is becoming more of a database, so still do the perhaps do the kind of tracking and just understanding you know how the magazine floating even if the pause but we're still getting traffic and yeah so we're proud of what we're doing right now but also we're at that stage of: OK, what's next? How will we evolve this magazine to something else?

Adriaan Kruithof
Excited to see how it evolves in the next stages.

Pak Chiu
Yeah, I don't know why you need to know about that. (Laughs) Yeah. Just thought. OK, in case you do.

Adriaan Kruithof
Maybe just from my personal interest, I think it's a super interesting project honestly. Alright. You said you researched a bit into how fashion affects the mental health of people, right, and how it affects the mood of individuals. Can you maybe give me some examples of that and how the fashion industry maybe reflects on the mental health of people and especially maybe in a positive way? Because I feel like there is so many sources and so many things that I can see in myself and friends where I can see, OK, there's definitely some negative influence on mental health by the fashion industry, right? We don't have to talk about all the body images, racism, post-colonial structures that are getting exploited until this day. But maybe we can focus a bit on the positive things.

Pak Chiu
Yeah. It's certainly a big topic. And I had a little bit of time after lunch, just to go through your project again and thinking, which bit would be really helpful. I think you know, there's also a positive psychology side where there's kind of I would say pop-psychology stuff like for instance, things about the power of high heels, we really get specific about how our style is helping someone to feel confident during certain stages. You know, your heard about things like dopamine dressing, the act of wearing colorful clothes to inspire mood, but it really goes down to clothes. It's something we will wear every day. And it's really about the possibility of helping you to understand this is a tool people can use every day to empower themselves. So, it's not just about kind of like dopamine dressing or wearing high heels or wearing the color of red or something like that. I think it's a very intricate tool that everyone can use and I think it does relate to your well-being for sure and a really good example is when I used to work in mental health services. The first service I worked at for about three years was an assessment treatment unit. Let me know if the information here is a bit too sensitive, et cetera, et cetera. You can always stop me.

Adriaan Kruithof
Please go on.

Pak Chiu
With the client group I used to work with, it was a very particular niche client group. There are adults in their 30s and 40s and these adults have been in mental health services back and forth throughout their lives and and a lot of Psychology work wasn't about just treating or supporting them with the mental health problems, it was to actually empower them to also think about other parts of your life and how to improve the quality of life. So, we get into a lot of kind of like making support plans or treatment plans bigger than the clinical symptoms and a lot of it is about engaging in community. So, let's say in the service we help them to engage back in the community, a lot of times the highlight of engaging back in the community is to actually go shopping. And it's not the thrill from shopping, it was actually for them to buy clothes that they wanted. Their clothes state which are the role models they care about, but most importantly it was about wearing clothes that they liked. I think if you've been a service user or being a patient kind of an upper of your life, your idea who you are can get a bit muddled and clothes were a

really strong signifier in the way of undressing this carrot-self there and dress up in the self that they wanna be. And I thought that was a huge, huge kind of a push for me to really study this area because, you know, it was powerful on this very daily kind of self-care basis that was going on. And I think you know that's going back to the idea, I don't wanna use the word educate, that's like a different mindset or just, yeah, a different method of dressing up.

Adriaan Kruithof
That's very interesting because I talked to a professor that also teaches psychology in fashion a few weeks ago, and she really mentioned the example of this sense of self continuity that clothes can give you through, for example, looking back at your past self, but also of course looking in the future and as you said that kind of maybe seeing your past wearing those medical clothes all day long and then seeing, OK, but how and where can I progress and where can I like be in the future when I dress in the stuff that I choose myself and wear myself so I can see how that also in that sense of self continuity can be a very empowering tool as you said.

Pak Chiu
Yeah, it's kind of a bit like engaging with that past of who you are, but also which part you want to play and take with you and which part you wanna move on from and be something else. And I think that's yeah, just from the first-hand experience it really brightens people and just seeing that kind of confusion, that loss, you know being unwell, but also seeing you know, using clothes as kind of like a little bit of light in the tunnel that the pain could end. Anyway. How's that signal? Hey?

Adriaan Kruithof
Sorry, the signal was gone for a bit. I lost a bit of what you just said, to be honest.

Pak Chiu
Ohh no, don't worry, I think I just really kind of agreed with the way you said it well. And I think it's also important to address, you know, mental health problems and also mental well-being, are quite interconnected. But at the same time, I also think mental health problems are different to well-being in a way where it's kind of the care and the way of looking at the sensitivity of it, but at the same time like hard off everyday self-care. I think clothes can't look after your skin and your body in that way, and to which extent, like how far we use fashion and clothes to link those together. I think I'm curious that part.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, it's interesting that you say that, especially since you also mentioned just like the act of reintegrating into community as well and feeling that sense of community maybe to a degree as well: because that is one of my main questions right now, I interviewed 10 people as you know about the whole topic and how their way of dressing themselves relates to their mental health and mental well-being in general. And everybody mentioned that need to belong to something, right? That need to be heard, that need to be part of a community in some form and not feel alienated to that world you perceive around you and especially over social media and yeah, blah blah blah. But I think, you know what I mean.

Do you have any concrete ideas maybe, how to display that sense of community through clothes directly?

Pak Chiu
Ohh interesting question. So, in a way we're talking about belonging, right? And we talk about how do we use the clothes to display ourselves. If we talk about Community belonging, we are really thinking about self-expression. So, what is self-expression and our social identity. It's quite interesting to sometimes scroll through Instagram, I guess it's the play with the big data, right? We all are building the sense of uniformity. My curiosity will go to the power of uniforms, you know, what does a uniform do? And installed two waves. From my understanding, uniforms can help us to identify who we are. Like we said, our belonging etcetera, etcetera. And I think you know with the help of big data we're very good now at identifying these different subgroups, you know like even when we go on the social media, the first few images we see are the ones that we would tend to engage with more or likable. So, you know, it's good that you know visually big data is helping us with consolidating this color uniform we have but also it becomes intriguing about what happens after you feel you belong somewhere. What is that impact on you? And again, it goes back to the idea of uniform, where sometimes uniforms take away that mental space, that engagement, or that insecurity you have about where you belong. What you look like is out the way and you can actually focus on something else. And the reason I said this is because it just reminds me of these kind of people from popular culture like famous people, how they describe the way they dress, from people to, you know, Obama to Steve Jobs, etcetera, etcetera, where they like to stick to one thing they wear every day dear, a uniform to signify who they are, where they belong, where they spend time. Their minds are free to do other things. And I just wonder, what is that role then? You know, if clothes are important for us to identify who we are and let's say every morning we go through that ritual and we'll identify who we are already, does that free our minds to get on with the day? I think that's the kind of fit I'm very curious about and I think it does, but it also at the same time, you know, it also might signal that we do want to feel like we belong and having that knack of actually doing that already, then we feel good about it and we could do something else.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, that's a very, very interesting point. I also like the thought of saying that this uniformity can also lead to a freer state of mind. I mean, even if I think back in like a fashion sense, you know, the people at Maison Margiela who would always wear the white lab coats while creating the craziest pieces of clothing, that really seems to be a thing. And I also feel like since I did so much like consumer research so far that everybody kind of expressed very similar opinions on what makes them comfortable, what they wear on days, for example, where they don't feel completely mentally stable or perfect. And maybe it's interesting to really go back to that data that I collected so far and see, OK, where do we find like shared ground and where is the sense of uniformity that can be created into at least sort of a collection that recreates that vibe without being a too literal army or whatever inspired uniform.

Pak Chiu
Yeah. And it's kind of what is also strong related to connection as well. And you know what is that connection, what is that belonging? What is that power we get from it? And I mean famous items of identity, connection and belonging that's floating through the news in the last 24 hours sadly is the, Make America Great Whatever slogan-hat right, you know, like this symbolism or wearing something like that. What is that power that it gives to that group of people? Why do

they act in that way? You know, like, there's also a lot of learning. Well, I think like it'll be interesting to tap into again, just not so much research about this. But I think you've already acknowledged that the research in this area is still lacking. But it is that routine, that ritual of getting dressed or taking care of yourself and there's something also about seeing that fashion uniform identity in the context that it takes place in. I think, especially if we talk about men, we'll talk about mental health. I think men and mental health particularly is quite troublesome sometimes because, you know, in this kind of gendered way how the world is shaped, they find it hard to talk. But this kind of piece of research really stuck to my mind about looking at male grooming and mental health and it was just about really the space of hairdressers and barbers. So basically, I think the research was about for men who used the barbers, how is their mental health; and it looks like men who used barbers, especially, when they used the same ones, they know the people there, following that mental health essay, inventory or quiz, the researchers gave, were better or healthier than men who doesn't use their regular barber. So, it's kind of like the barbershop effect that way, where actually the context of self-care, looking after yourself, dressing yourself, cleaning yourself, grooming yourself could actually be a space where it does have an impact on your well-being. Even for men. So, you know, I just thought, OK, when we talk about fashion, we also need to talk about this context. Essentially the spaces that we do this stuff in, this could also be really great way to think about mental well-being.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, that's so interesting that you said that because in the beginning of the project, we were talking about, OK, who can we possibly still get involved also at the event and whatever. And actually Barber shops where one of the things we also extensively discussed, we also reached out to some in Copenhagen. Sadly, nobody wanted to get involved with us. But we also had that idea of exactly what you said that that seems to really be a safe space for a lot of 'typical man'. If you want to put it like that. To still yeah, actually go there maybe once a week or every two weeks and talk about their lives and their feelings and surroundings.

Pak Chiu
Yeah. And this leads me to like the idea of, you know, web free. And again, just let me know if the idea is running wild, but I think it's the idea that no one really knows about the impacts of web free yet, because it's still completely new. But, you know, is there a way of knowing this kind of beginning of evidence of about well-being about men? You know, like looking after themselves together, you know, for this kind of future platform, let's say, you know, how do we look at that? How do you look at that through fashion? How do you look at that through a discord community. You know, if we talk about men and clothes and, you know, the ritualistic act of building a wardrobe, you know, how can we include more about feelings and emotions in those spaces and speaking out or letting go kind of thing. I think it's definitely kind of seeing future opportunities and changing the way. Be constrained that fashion has around how? How it could be used. These are ideas. These are not insights really.

Adriaan Kruithof
I like how you are bouncing your ideas off as well. Maybe honestly, maybe you should take over. I'll leave the design and storytelling to you because that all that all sounds pretty valid to me. (Both Laugh) OK, alright. Maybe just to get back to some of the less specific questions, just to have some more generalized ideas. I can compare with the other data that I collected. And I told you in the beginning, it is also about the whole communication around this topic about mental health awareness. It's about to be as inclusive as possible. It really shouldn't exclude anyone. But the more I researched the topic, the more I also saw it can also have its dangerous to be

overly, it sounds weird, but overly inclusive in that topic and I'll give you an example so you know what I mean. I talked to this psychologist and asked about her perception of mental health awareness. She said something along the lines that was like: she looks on social media and she looks on TikTok and all of a sudden every person 25 and under seems to claim to have Tourettes or ADHD and that it's also a problem in general with mental health awareness that we are kind of in this like pendulum effect where we are on the side where we are as a society and especially in in the younger generations are getting very sensitive towards the topic, but sometimes maybe are also overdoing it a bit. How's your perception of mental health awareness? Maybe in your surroundings, but also maybe in society as a whole and from your role as a researcher.

Pak Chiu

I must say I've left the clinical field, so more of the mental health service side at a time just before the apps have become so accessible. And just to put it back a bit of context, when I was about to leave the mental health field, that's when mindfulness really began, becoming such a big thing for mental health services. A part of me is excited and also feeling very positive that mindfulness has escaped from the clinical rules and you know, this example of self-care, let's say or actually, you know, evidence based way of reducing the symptoms of common mental health problems, you know, yeah, etcetera, etcetera. But it's interesting, these observations and this kind of conversations you had about it because partly you get worried. I always feel like if we talk about healthcare, we need a healthcare professional. That's all. And maybe I'm very old school in that way. Sometimes I'm not sure just a simple reel on Instagram or TikTok is enough to help people address mental health problems or symptoms they're experiencing. I think, it's making the conversation much less secretive, but at the same time it is like are we misunderstanding what a diagnosis means? I think it's kind of trivializing. That's not a good word for it. So, please don't use that word. Are we just getting the diagnosis ourselves and not really from a professional? I'm understanding that on a platform such as this it's not talking therapy. It's very different. But at the same time, you know, there's kind of a term called creating psychological safety. Is that a better way for this kind of communication? How a fashion brand interprets mental health problems then going deep down on a mental health problem, breaking it into short reels and seeing what happens? Because I think, it might not address and I think yeah, it's still painful for individuals to go through it and you know, if we are trivializing it, are we making it not as understood, as deep as we should, but at the same time, having a space like this, having ways of communicating like this, what other things about mental health we can help people with? And I will look into the topics of psychological safety and psychological resilience. You know, I think those are the things that perhaps no evidence, just my personal opinion, that could be a better way for brands fashion or for online kind of communications to talk about this. In this short attention span way that we talk about things nowadays, so yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof

Yeah, I I agree with that. Actually. I also think I had that after the fourth interview or something I've done myself that I was like, ****, I am not an educated professional. I'm sensitive enough to give the people I talked to breaks and also let them know this is a safe space but I am not an educated professional. So where do I really take the right from to get this information and also how can I use it in a way, as you said that it's not overly, you said you wouldn't want to use the word, but I'll use it now, trivializing or like self-diagnosing? Yeah, almost encouraging that behavior. Right? Because that is a common theme that I see as a consumer, but also as a partaker in the fashion industry, that a lot of times it almost feels like those mental health issues are, maybe not getting glorified, but definitely putting into a different light. And I'm just thinking, terms like the heroin chiq, uh, where it's all about making the models look as drug abusive as

possible, which is definitely not a good thing for mental health. So I agree with you that it's maybe better to take a step back from that maybe not go in depth on different mental health diagnosis or struggles that people are going through but more going the other way around and say OK, this is a safe space and this is a safe community and everybody is welcome here, but leave the rest for professionals.

Pak Chiu
So, I also will be very clear as well, like my training in the clinical side of stuff really was about improving well-being and quality of life. Before I took the training into really kind of clinical mental health problems and diagnosis, they're not going into fashion. So, I part of combine more of the well-being site into fashion more than the mental health problems. So, just like a big disclaimer is that I do not want to claim I know more about mental health problems than other professionals, but at the same time I think it's just really operating the space of fashion and also what does fashion mean to many people. And I think there is this glorified, tribalized kind of association with fashion and to talk so deeply about mental health problems with fashion, I think I just have to think a little bit more to go. Ohh gosh, from what angle do you talk about this? To what extent? So, we're not trivializing it. And to an extent that if kind of does, if it's sensitive for someone and what kind of help thinking get afterwards and then it triggered my memory is that when I used to run these therapy groups kind of cycle education groups on the wards and you kind of have these ground rules at the beginning and reminded at the end that you know and you see a lot now on night reports or news articles about mental problems. If you're suffering around these, please call XYZ. There's more help out there. And I think it's always important to leave support for people. OK, the worst thing for me, I think is to leave anyone a dark or to call someone to suck them all. So, I think, those are the kind of tricks or techniques that I thought it's always good to use and to make people aware what they are and where to find help.

Adriaan Kruithof
Alright, so just to make it a bit more concrete for me and my project as well, would you then advise to in the communication around the products to not get into into too deep personal storytelling? Because that was definitely one of the ideas I played around with, to really tell the story of some people as an example and also to kind of give room for other people to identify with them and say, OK, they are not alone, but maybe to leave that out. And instead, as you said for example, put the disclaimers in the end and say if you need to talk to someone, there's help here. You know what I mean?

Pak Chiu
Yeah, yeah, yeah. Again, it's always good to check with a psychologist in that way, right. I think, yeah, it's always good to have, like you said, a support page, a disclaimer. I still do teach students around the act of self-care, mental well-being and mindfulness work, and for me always do a little support page at the end because if you are struggling with mental health problems, there's support out there. And sometimes it's surprising for myself that actually there's places, there's networks that I've never heard of that is actually quite, quite abundant and quite common so people could understand a bit more and then it goes into kind of, yeah, you know, like the creative side of I think hearing stories is very powerful. But I guess the topic was the story. How would you like to steer that topic? You know, like, it could be a different spin on it. It could be about positivity. It could be about strength. It could be about power. And, you know, other things that could perhaps tap into a different energy after engaging with it. On one hand fashion is a tool that can look after us or, you know, make us see the future or feel good at that moment. But

also, you know, we are using a vehicle that has not such a positive blood. And its history, so you know, there's that balancing act that I guess it's good to consider.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, yeah. Do you have some - Maybe it's a stupid question, but do you have some very generalized tips on the well-being side of things and maybe also how to combine that with the way you groom or dress yourself and if there is nothing to be generalized, I'm also happy if you maybe just speak from your own personal perception.

Pak Chiu
We always describe stress or anxiety like a water bucket and every day there are things that continue to fill that water bucket for you and you know to a certain extent the water bucket will get over full and that's where you don't feel great. That could lead to mental health problems, but it's the idea of recognizing it and recognizing where you are, where that water level in the bucket is. And that's kind of my work; really tap into kind of how do we see the world through our feelings, our thoughts and our behaviors and how does that interact during every day and how do you catch it before it becomes bigger than it is. So, I don't know if that helped to inspire anything for you to think about self-care. Well at the positivity of certain ways of getting dressed, that could also be a way that sometimes during my writing I would come across and I do find writing, storytelling very interesting. There's a fictional side to things that you can really tap into, for example, people found that when children are dressed up or pretend to be another character during the normal school days, they actually perform better and are happier, et cetera, et cetera. And you know what, if we help and support adults in their everyday to do this, they call it the Batman effect. So, I guess, yeah, playing on the creative designer fashion then, you know, there's kind of well-being stuff you can really dream up and see what happens. And that's how I deal with kind of well-being in, in this fashion space or when running workshops and with friends. A lot of imagination and creativity. But at the same time, having some anchors of certain kind of proven effect about clothes and what they can do.

Adriaan Kruithof
Was it called the Batman effect? Did I hear it right?

Pak Chiu
It was called the Batman effect. (Laughs) Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm working with a design process called design thinking, with a user-centered approach. It's very much like product design world stuff. But there is a part of this consultancy group, I would play around, is very much like design thinking ethos. Just play around, experiment and I recently wrote a poem about this effect on people and it can actually help us to solve problems. So yes, so I guess that's the playful side you can do with psychology mental well-being. But in this design and fashion space. And you know, yes, it's good to have displayed that. You know, the idea of difference between well-being and mental health problems and for people who are suffering, there's help out there that the same time, you know, having that balancing act, focusing on the well-being side, that is actually where fashion is a good medium to talk about and express and not trivialize those who are really suffering, I think.

Adriaan Kruithof
That will be the hardest part for me, to actually kind of find this balance throughout the whole

collection as well. And I came up with this kind of graph through the interviews that it was very interesting how people characterize the outfits they would choose on days where they felt pretty stable and good in the morning when like dressing themselves and on days where it was not that great. And I feel like you could almost like really draw up this graph from like how much the confidence, the comfort you feel in your own skin also influences that. And I feel like maybe it would be interesting to reflect that in the collection, where you have different looks, to really have some looks where you are like, OK, those are the absolute comfort outfits with the comfort colors, materials and silhouettes that people tend, at least from my qualitative research, to wear on days where they're not great. And then to go to the more expressive side of things that they would choose on days where they feel a bit more confident about themselves and kind of really see that curve and have something for yeah, each feeling on the spectrum almost.

Pak Chiu
Yeah. Yeah. And I think it just reminds me of the idea of like, like whatever you're feeling is valid. And most of the time, having a bad feeling doesn't mean that, you know, you're having a bad mental health. I think sometimes clothes also can be an affirmation of how you feel and being present and being OK with how you feel at that moment. I think that's also important. So not to be scared that you feel anxious today and you know is actually, yeah, there's ways that can help you address that or maybe simple human feelings like I don't feel confident today. I feel shy today. I think, you know, it's also the part to engage with perhaps negative feelings to an extent where you know what does that outfit look like and how does that actually cocoon and help that person? If you are always overwhelmed by it and if you're suffering it very frequently, then that's when medical help would really help. But on certain mornings, you know, maybe that's the outfit. That's the way you dress. That actually confirms how you feel. So, I think that's not a bad idea of what you've done in that way. I hope I didn't add to many question marks now to how you're doing things?

Adriaan Kruithof
No, absolutely no question marks. But it's so interesting because I told you, like I did another expert interview with this psychology in fashion teacher. She was very structured on, like psychological phenomenons. While, you are giving so much, like almost creative input, which I think is super, super interesting, because I'm also approaching this phase of my research. But right now there's so much interesting input, it just like left me right now that I was like, ****, wait, what? What questions did I still want to ask you?

Pak Chiu
I think perhaps, OK, so: It's good to get creative with it, because I think that's what fashion is, it is a creative media and that's also why people are attracted to fashion, right? But maybe let's look up a little bit more about psychological safety, psychological resilience. Those are the safety nets you can put around. And when you do something like this. So, you know, there's a part of me even like helping you right now, I feel like is it ethical for me to say any of this? Well, I think the only ethical things I can say is that, you know, like we're doing it from a point of view that is making sure people are safe and making sure that, you know, like the way we communicate things is not triggering. And also for those who are triggered, what happens next. And there's certain lots of topics on the well-being side that relates to mental health, that particular on the well-being side, I think the creative grounds can get more playful, I think, but I think you also know this already because I think you you've got really interesting questions about the way we talk about mental health diagnosis and if it has been trivialized? I think you're already aware of

this and you know, it seems natural that you are being respectful. And I think then it is not taboo, but it's still affects people, perhaps.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, yeah, yeah, I think that's interesting. As I said that we are kind of on this like pendulum in between, not tabooing and not stigmatizing the topic, but also almost sometimes, especially when I look around, some of my friends also overdoing it a tiny bit. That every tiny irregularity is almost seen as a mental health thing. It's like a friend of mine who always says Oh my God I have ADHD and I'm like yeah you just spent six hours a day on TikTok, maybe that's the reason your attention span is very short. It might be related to that as well, so.

Pak Chiu
OK. Yeah. Yeah. And I think that this takes really good evidence, proven assessments to do and sad to say, but you know, I don't think we should get diagnoses from TikTok. I might be very wrong. I might be like, you know, someone's inventing some kind of new wheel of diagnosis that I don't know, but I think it's being aware of. Like, yeah, like it's OK to experience those kind of feelings. All those symptoms, let's say. But to what extent they affect you and has it been seen by like medical personal and then I think that's also important. God this is making me feel like has my work been ethical?
But hey, like we are in a space where, you know, it's OK to talk about it and a space where, you know, we could be very critical about what's been going on as well. And yeah, it's just what part of the communications are we entering and what we offer to people and you know, I think that's yeah, that's good to always have that in the back of the mind.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, I think so too. I agree with that. And I think it was very interesting what you said earlier that you said, maybe if I tell the stories of people twisted around a bit, you know, show more the empowering sides, then the triggering sides, show what they do to make themselves feel better and don't overly focus on what their problems are. Maybe, yeah, very capitalistic saying that, but, you know, focus on the solutions instead.

Pak Chiu
Yeah. Again, I mean, one day someone might sue me (laughs). For the magazine, we did an A2 part kind of series on mental health problems in the fashion industry. Yeah, I think that's where I would wanna make sure, that the content is ethical and my experience was that we had a photographer who did a series of images that really wanted to use to support that particular issue for the articles and that's when it all kicked in for me as well, where some of the stories she was telling with the images were definitely leading really much on the suffering side. Whilst I was very keen on picking up on the stories and the images and the assets, that focused more on the steps of recovery, the feeling of you know, actually help and hope. Like what is it tapping into? We talk about mental health. That also seems to be part of my code of conduct. Let's say when I do this in in my work, hopefully one day my creative work or projects I do, are not gonna hurt anyone, but definitely setting some ground rules for yourself; that's my work and my work does not do this. OK if my work actually ticks those boxes, then actually I need to go back to the drawing board and just see. But yes, I'd be super intrigued to hear what other therapists or psychologists say about this topic, again, because I've been out of that world for five years and really engaging in this world.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah. Honestly, if I had the time to interview a lot more people, I would definitely do it. I feel like that's been giving me so much as well. Also, with the interviews with the people, people reached out that I haven't heard from in years. And we're like, yeah, let's sit down and talk about this topic. And I don't know. It's just so interesting. I could literally write a whole book about it right now. I don't have the time for that. But it would be interesting to research that also further in the future, for sure.

Pak Chiu
Yeah. And I'm got my eye on the time as well. Were there any particular questions you wanna ask to?

Adriaan Kruithof
Let me just go through them very quickly.

Pak Chiu
Of course, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
I think I think it, I think it should be fine. I'll definitely have some citable quotes from you. (Laughs) And I got more than enough creative input as well.

Pak Chiu
And just to make sure you're OK and stuff like that, is there any things you're taking away from this and you can just share a little of your mind. And I can help with saying yes. Take that away or no, actually don't. It's not what I meant to say. So just to make sure you're OK with today as well.

Adriaan Kruithof
I'm super OK with today. I've like, I've got honestly more than enough, very good input that I can definitely use in multiple different ways.

Pak Chiu
OK, good, good, good, good, good. What's next? That's the thing because I'll be super intrigued to see the final outcome, so I don't know in what forms you gonna do this, but perhaps once you know more and you, you can breathe a bit more or ascending over your final kind of project, the one you gonna send to Marité. You can also send it over because I'm just intrigued. You know however way you want to spread the words of your findings, I'll be very intrigued to know more.

Adriaan Kruithof
Yeah, that's super, super sweet of you. The first step now is collecting all the data, compressing it as far as possible. So, I don't exceed my word limits. And then go to the drawing board. So that's sketching. I'll also do a survey to get some more quantitative insights first and then really

start drawing the products up, starting producing some things and then, yeah, bringing it all together and I'm more than happy if you're interested in it, then I will just update you in between, at latest, when I got the final products and the final paper, if you're interested in reading that, then I'm more than happy to send it to you as well.

Pak Chiu
Yeah, yeah, yeah. If that's the best way, then do it. And in between now and then, just e-mail me if you've got any questions, alright?

Adriaan Kruithof
Yes, of course. I mean, I know that we already over the time but of course if you were interested in maybe if I have done my designs and you have some time to just look over it and give me some feedback that I can implement in the final report maybe that would be great as well. Like it's always good to evaluate and then see what else could be implemented in the future.

Pak Chiu
Yeah. Then send it over and just see what happens, yeah.

Adriaan Kruithof
Perfect. Thank you. Thank you so much for your time and all the nice info. It was so nice talking to you.

Pak Chiu
So lovely to meet you. And again, I hope you're OK. I don't wanna tap into any, but yeah, I hope you feel safe. There you go.

Adriaan Kruithof
I feel super, super safe. Don't worry about it. And if I seemed a tiny bit off, it's only because I was woken up at 7:00 in the morning by the lovely construction workers next to my house. So, I'm already on my 4th coffee (laughs).

Pak Chiu
You seem fine. (Smiles) Take care, see you soon.

Adriaan Kruithof
Thank you. Thank you, Pak for taking the time. And yes, talk to you in the future, hopefully! Take care.

Appendix G – Summaries Expert Interviews

Dr. Soljana Çili

Dr. Soljana Çili introduced herself as "a research psychologist who mostly specialises in personality psychology and clinical psychology, but [I] can apply these to any area and for the last eight years the area has been fashion."

Asked about the impact, the fashion industry has on the mental health of individuals, Dr. Çili mentioned different studies reseaching both negative and positive effects. On the negative side, the expert said, that while body images portrayed by the fashion industry in the past affected women more than men, this was currently shifting, She further mentioned, that the fashion industry often glamorised mental health issues, adding: "I mean, we shouldn't stigmatise it, but it's nothing to be proud of. It's nothing to encourage people to make them feel special by declaring some diagnosis that they don't actually have."

Clothes, following Dr. Çili have also shown to have positive impact on the wearer. Apart from "that people use clothes to express themselves and to express their uniqueness, but also their group membership", (…) we also have some research which shows that people do strategically use clothes to manage their emotions." Following this research, people cheered themselves up over wearing clothes on days they did not feel well initially. This effect, according to the expert, could have something to do with the connectiveness of clothes and our autobiographical memory. If one's wearing something that reminds them of positive experiences, this can boost emotional comfortability. Dr. Çili linked this effect to a term called self-continuity, that she described as "this idea that we know who we were, we know who we are, but we also have a direction of where we're going in the future. So, you have this sense of continuity between your past self and your present self and your future self."

Clothes, as well as books, souvenirs or other personal objects could have this effect according to the expert. As an example, she mentioned a woman who went from to a career-oriented professional to a homemaker, taking care of her children. The clothes she wore in her business days were not only memories from the past, but also showed her that this way of living was an option for her future, therefore strengthening her sense of self-continuity. "Disruptions to this idea of self, and self-continuity can be quite detrimental to mental health. (…) So, for me, how clothes can be beneficial for wellbeing is through this association with the self and this association with autobiographical memory and their role in maintaining self-continuity."

Another phenomenon, Dr. Çili mentioned was called reminiscence bump. This describes the fact, that most people, when asked about their life, will mostly mention memories made in the age of 10 to 30. This period is especially important and memorable for people, because it includes a lot of first-time experiences and the sense of self is developing. "So, my advice to you is depending on who you intend to target in terms of age, you should go for something that is reminiscent of the period when these people were teens or in their 20s.", Dr. Çili said, asked how to create an emotional value through clothing.

Due to the insights obtained during the preliminary literature research, the expert was asked if there was a visible connection between the fashion industry and the mental health of people working in this industry. Dr. Çili explained, that that was still a debate in her field, but that there were indeed isolated studies that showed "(…) that people who work in the creative industries are more likely to suffer from mental illnesses than people who work in other industries." As examples, she mentioned studies that focussed on designers and models, but emphasized the garment workers in production countries like Bangladesh, India and Turkey, where the state was

often "quite bad". Following Dr. Çili, many of these workers, had a bad reputation in their respective home countries, often being discriminated against and "subject to verbal abuse". Sexual violence causing trauma was common, said the expert, and added, "they can't live decently. You know they can't eat, they can't feed their children."

Asked, if this could be prevented by producing the garments in EU-countries only, she said that there were reports indicating the situation was not always better there. As examples she mentioned factories in Albania, Hungary or Serbia, but also Italy or the United Kingdom, where immigrant workers were forced to labor in sweatshops, without safety measures during the pandemic, their documents withheld by the employers. This lead Dr. Çili to concluding, that producing in the EU was not a guarantee for ethical production. Based on this, she recommended to, before working with any supplier, check their employment data and working conditions and to do some general research on the suppliers, before working with them.

Next to sending the researcher some names of other researchers and sources that were looked into and used in the literature research, Dr. Çili concluded the interview with two important recommendations.

Firstly, she said that it was very important to make all people interviewed feel comfortable and inform them priorly about what will be talked about during the interviews, giving them the option to not answer questions or stop the interview whenever they felt uncomfortable. Although the conversation with Dr. Çili happened after the ten customer interviews, that was done by the researcher.

The second recommendation, Dr. Çili gave, was to not glamorise mental health conditions throughout the designs and communication around this collection. The expert said, that there were a lot of (especially younger) people who were producing and consuming content around the topic of mental health conditions, which led to them self-diagnosing conditions they did not have. Dr. Çili thought, that this was done, because it was often showcased as something that made an individual more special, cool or interesting. "So apparently there are all these girls all over the world, who start exhibiting ticks after watching TikTok videos and they claim to have Tourette syndrome, which obviously they don't." Rather, they were (unconsciously) reproducing what they saw on social media platforms, said the expert, fearing that this could lead to "more stigmatisation rather than acceptance".

Pak Chiu

On the 5th of April 2023, fashion psychology specialist Pak Chiu was interviewed in a semi-structured way, using Microsoft Teams. Chiu started getting interested into the topic while working in mental health care, where he found out that "clothes can be ways of helping us feel good, but also helping us to actually see the world in a slightly different way". Based on that he started Hajinsky magazine, combining the aspects of mental well-being, psychology and fashion to "to make psychology more tangible and more meaningful for the creative staff that works in fashion". Next to that, he is also giving workshops to brands to educate them about these topics.

From Chiu's perspective, mental wellbeing and clothing are often connected and the things we wear can be a "a tool people can use every day to empower themselves". As an example, that goes beyond wearing high heels or terms like 'dopamine dressing', Chiu mentioned his experience in a assessment treatment unit for people who spend a lot of their lifes in mental health care units. For them, going shopping for new clothes was an essential part of re-

participating in the community and exploring their idea of self again. "I think if you've been a service user or being a patient kind of an upper of your life, your idea who you are can get a bit muddled and clothes were a really strong signifier in the way of undressing this carrot-self there and dress up in the self that they wanna be."

Talking about the question on how to symbolize community-belonging, the Hajinsky-founder mentioned the idea to look into uniforms as a tool, helping users to understand who they are and where they belong. "(…) Sometimes uniforms take away that mental space, that engagement, or that insecurity you have about where you belong. What you look like is out the way and you can actually focus on something else." He further mentioned the routine of getting ready and grooming yourself as a point that can give comfort and named the barbershop effect, that showed that men who frequently visited the same barbershops seemed to be more happy and confident than those who didn't. Chiu also mentioned the 'Batman-effect', that describes the act of dressing up in a different character in school or at work that leads to better performance in these settings.

The raising mental health awareness on social media platforms like TikTok or Instagram, where mindfulness is often promoted, was seen as ambivalent by the expert. "Sometimes I'm not sure just a simple reel on Instagram or TikTok is enough to help people address mental health problems or symptoms they're experiencing." Instead, he recommended people that were unsure about their mental health state to talk to experts in the field and brands wanting to address the topic to focus on terms like "psychological safety and psychological resilience" instead, trying to spin the narrative in a less triggering, more positive and empowering way, more suitable for the promotion on platforms with a relatively short attention span, "focusing on the well-being side, that is actually where fashion is a good medium to talk about and express and not trivialize those who are really suffering". He further recommended, to include addresses of organisations offering help in all communication surrounding the topic to create a direct link to professional support.

"We always describe stress or anxiety like a water bucket and every day there are things that continue to fill that water bucket for you and you know to a certain extent the water bucket will get over full and that's where you don't feel great. That could lead to mental health problems, but it's the idea of recognizing it and recognizing where you are, where that water level in the bucket is." To not contribute to this overfilling of the water-bucket, following Chiu it can be helpful to work with a user-centered design approach.

To make sure, there were no triggering aspects of this project, the expert recommended creating a sort of code of conduct or a check-list that the products and communication surrounding must fulfil.

Appendix H - Open coding Expert Interviews

Participant Nr. & Name	Mental Health Awareness	Relation Fashion Industry & Mental Health	Relation emotional state and way of dressing
1 Dr. Soljana Çili	- More awareness, more people falsely claiming to be affected by mental health due to social media	- More men are becoming affected by fashion industry's beauty standards - People who work in fashion more affected by mental health - Studies on designers and models, but especially garment workers all over the world show negative effects	- Research showed people cheer themselves up over the clothes they wear - Connected to sense of self-continuity and reminiscence bump - Nostalgia can evoke these emotions
2 Pak Chiu	- Ambivalent - On one hand good to see more mindfulness - On the others there shouldn't be self-diagnoses made on social media, trained professionals needed for that - "Sometimes I'm not sure just a simple reel on Instagram or TikTok is enough to help people address mental health problems or symptoms they're experiencing." - Brands communicating that topic should	- "to make psychology more tangible and more meaningful for the creative staff that works in fashion". - "We always describe stress or anxiety like a water bucket and every day there are things that continue to fill that water bucket for you and you know to a certain extent the water bucket will get over full and that's where you don't feel great. That could lead to mental health problems, but it's the idea of recognizing it and recognizing where you are, where that	- mental wellbeing and clothing are often connected - "a tool people can use every day to empower themselves". - high heels or terms like 'dopamine dressing', - assessment treatment unit for people who spend a lot of their lives in mental health care units - new clothes essential part of re-participating in the community - "I think if you've been a service user or being a patient kind of an upper of your life, your idea who you are can get a bit muddled and clothes were a really strong signifier in the way of undressing this carrot-self there and dress

include disclaimers, where help can be found

- Focus on the empowering aspects of the progress, "focusing on the well-being side, that is actually where fashion is a good medium to talk about and express and not trivialize those who are really suffering".

water level in the bucket is."

- helpful to work with a user-centered design approach.

up in the self that they wanna be."

- "(…) Sometimes uniforms take away that mental space, that engagement, or that insecurity you have about where you belong. What you look like is out the way and you can actually focus on something else."
- barbershop effect,
- 'Batman-effect'

Appendix I – Survey questions and results

Q1 – How old are you?

#	Field	Choice Count
1	Under 18	0.00% 0
2	18 - 24	62.00% 62
3	25 - 34	30.00% 30
4	35 - 44	1.00% 1
5	45 - 54	3.00% 3
6	55 - 64	2.00% 2
7	65 - 74	2.00% 2
8	75 or older	0.00% 0
		100

Showing rows 1 - 9 of 9

Q2 – How often do you struggle with your mental well-being?

#		
1	Never	3.00% 3
2	Once a year	13.00% 13
3	Once a month	33.00% 33
4	Once a week	34.00% 34
5	Almost every day	17.00% 17
		100

Q3 – What makes you feel better about yourself on days you do not feel good? Multiple answers are possible.

#	Field	Choice Count
1	Doing nothing	5.67% 16
2	Go out into nature	19.86% 56
3	Go out into the city	10.28% 29
4	Follow a hobby, like e.g. sports or arts	20.57% 58
5	Talk about my issues to people I trust	22.70% 64
6	Following routines, that give me safety	17.73% 50
7	Other, namely:	3.19% 9
		282

Other, namely:

- Facing the Problems and solve them step by step
- Therapy
- Make time for myself
- exercise, gym, sauna
- Being with friends and family (no talking)
- Therapie
- Gym!
- Familytime
- Yoga

Q4 - Do you feel like the way you dress can improve your emotional state?

5	Definitely not	1.02%	1
6	Probably not	5.10%	5
7	Might or might not	17.35%	17
8	Probably yes	36.73%	36
9	Definitely yes	39.80%	39
			98

Q5 - Please conclude the following statement. If I feel bad mentally, I tend to...

1	... not care about what I wear	28.00%	28
2	... dress up to feel better about myself	55.00%	55
3	... dress in a way that reflects my bad mood (e.g. wear only dark colors)	10.00%	10
4	don't know / prefer not to say	7.00%	7
			100

Q6 - What kind of materials make you feel most comfortable in the warmer months (spring / summer)? Multiple answers are possible.

1	Cotton	37.31%	72
2	Silk or silk-like fabrics	18.65%	36
3	Synthetic materials like nylon or polyester	2.59%	5
4	Wool, Cashmere	7.77%	15
5	Leather	2.59%	5
6	Linen or Hemp	30.05%	58
7	Other, namely:	1.04%	2
			193

Other, namely:

- I don't put much thought into the material, but the silhouette and fit. Prefer oversized and loose fit
- Oversized Nylon Outerwear

Q7 – What kind of cuts make you feel most comfortable on days you're not feeling great?

1	Skin-tight clothes	3.00%	3
2	Straight cuts and silhouettes	38.00%	38
3	Oversized, baggy fitting clothes	55.00%	55
4	Other, namely:	4.00%	4
			100

Other, namely:

- Lulu leggings
- Overdressed (but sporty)
- Baggy clothes make me feel most comfortable but I always try to dress up with more tight clothes to make myself feel better
- Baggy pants but with a straight cut jacket

Q8 - How do you feel about nature references on clothes (like pictured in the examples)?

1	Dislike a great deal	5.05%	5
2	Dislike somewhat	17.17%	17
3	Neither like nor dislike	20.20%	20
4	Like somewhat	40.40%	40
5	Like a great deal	17.17%	17
			99

Q9 - How do you feel about childlike drawings on clothes (like pictured in the examples)?

1	Dislike a great deal	10.10%	10
2	Dislike somewhat	17.17%	17
3	Neither like nor dislike	22.22%	22
4	Like somewhat	31.31%	31
5	Like a great deal	19.19%	19
			99

Q10 - How do you feel about colorful prints on clothes?

1	Dislike a great deal	3.00%	3
2	Dislike somewhat	21.00%	21
3	Neither like nor dislike	14.00%	14
4	Like somewhat	43.00%	43
5	Like a great deal	19.00%	19
			100

Q11 - How do you feel about the name 'Community of Real People'?

1	Dislike a great deal	4.04%	4
2	Dislike somewhat	10.10%	10
3	Neither like nor dislike	21.21%	21
4	Like somewhat	30.30%	30
5	Like a great deal	34.34%	34
			99

Q12 - How likely would you be to buy a garment, if you knew that 100% of the earnings would be donated to a charity supporting mental health?

1	Extremely unlikely	0.00%	0
2	Somewhat unlikely	0.00%	0
3	Neither likely nor unlikely / Depends on the price	15.00%	15
4	Somewhat likely	43.00%	43
5	Extremely likely	42.00%	42
			100

Q13 - How important is it to you that clothes are produced under fair working conditions?

1	Not at all important	0.00%	0
2	Slightly important	5.00%	5
3	Moderately important	26.00%	26
4	Very important	41.00%	41
5	Extremely important	28.00%	28
			100

Appendix J - Corozite buttons certificate

Appendix K – Calculation for donation

Finances	DKK
Earnings Go-Fund-Me	13128
Earnings Sales	26988
Overall Earnings	40116
Cost Production	15366
Collected money Isnurh	24750
Contribution World of Ukiyo	1275
Final donations raised for Joannahuset	26025