

Olive Branch

Reconnect with your partner after a fight

Spec Status: User testing

Team Name: Team MACK

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Summary

What is it? Think of this as your elevator pitch for your product. Limit it to a few sentences.

A product that allows for loved ones to maintain an emotional connection with one another during the non-verbal 'cooling off' period immediately after a conflict. The product will further facilitate communication between couples and lay the foundations for reconciliation during this time.

Problem Background

Who is the customer and what is the need or problem we're addressing? Why should we address this problem now? What are all of the things we know? How do we know this is a problem? MY: Who is the user? What is the primary need/problem

The desire for human connection is a core human need. Various products have focused on different facets of this desire, from creating online communities based on shared interest (e.g. Reddit) to developing alternative methods of synchronous communication (e.g. AIM, Facebook Messenger). While many products on the market focus on creating new connections or deepening current relationships, our team was curious about how folks stay in connection with one another in moments of disconnection.

Our target users are couples in romantic relationships that are looking to reconcile after a heated discussion. Research has shown that during times of stress, the prefrontal cortex, the part of our brain that allows for higher-level cognitive function, essentially shuts down. This happens because the amygdala signals the adrenal glands to flood our system with cortisol and adrenaline, thereby activating a "flight-or-fight" response. This emotional takeover is often referred to as an "amygdala hijack". [1]

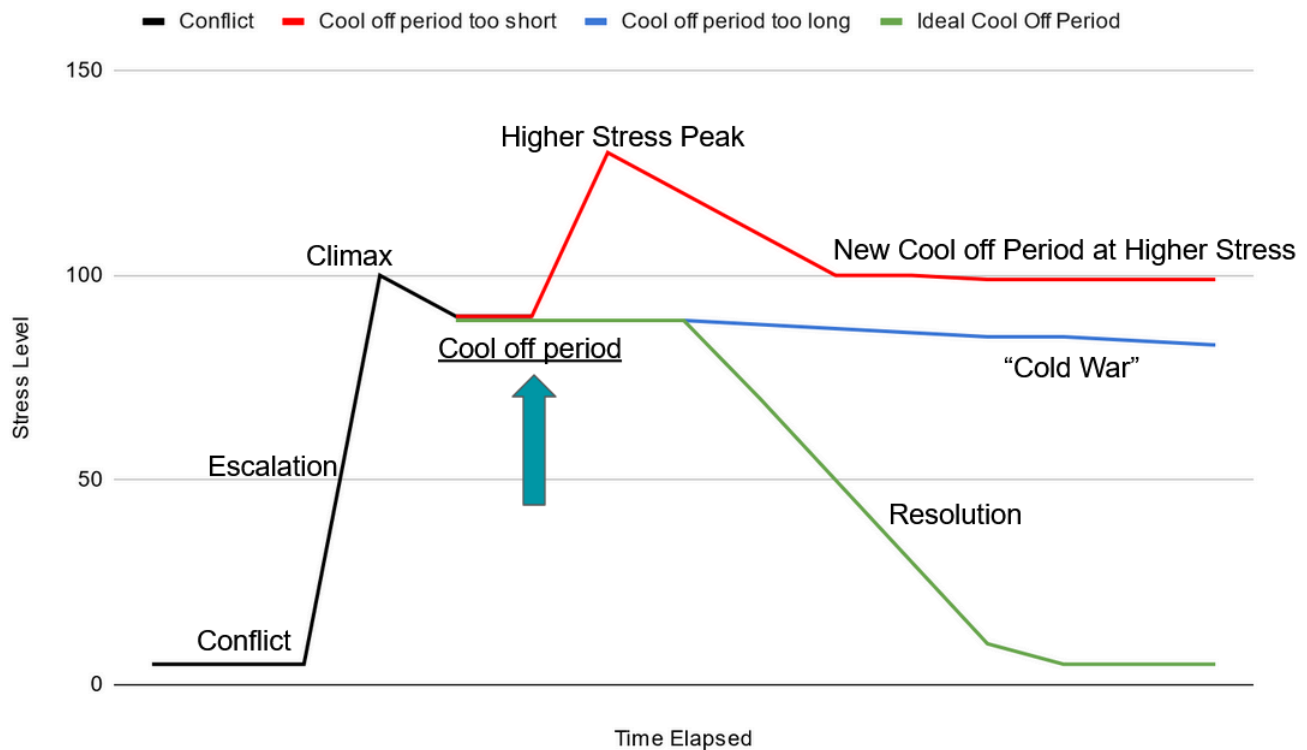
To account for this, therapists often recommend a "cool off" period when tempers flare between couples. [2] This "cool off" period, however, can be uncomfortable and frustrating because there is often an absence of verbal communication and "cool off" times may differ between a couple. A quick Quora search yields hundreds of queries such as:

"How much time should I give my boyfriend to cool down after a big big fight?"

"My boyfriend needs time to cool off after we argue, and I understand that but my anxiety gets crazy if he just ignores me. How do I deal with that?"

How much time and space should I give my girlfriend to cool down after a big big fight?"

The uncertainty, discomfort and emotional detachment during this “cool off period” is the core problem we are hoping to address. Our user research showed that our subjects felt “anger”, “resentment”, “hopelessness” and “mistrust” towards their partners after a fight. This is why finding a way to maintain an emotional connection between partners during this largely ‘silent’ period is an important step towards resolution.



Another problem that needs to be addressed is that different people have different “cool off times”. The figure above illustrates what can happen if these “cool off times” between a couple are out of sync. If the “cool off period” is too short (red line), couples might risk further escalating the conflict. If the “cool off period” is too long (blue line), couples might enter a “Cold War”, where although the intensity of the conflict subsides, the root cause is never addressed and continues to linger until the next fight. In an ideal situation (green line), both parties would respect each other’s “cool off periods” while committing to return to discuss the problem using empathetic language.

Goals

Talk about the general high-level goals of doing this work. What are we trying to accomplish by solving the problem? MY: What we want to achieve, instead of how we will achieve them → keep them goal oriented, not solution oriented.

1. We want to help couples reconcile after an argument.
2. We want to help couples learn to respect each other's cool off periods.

3. *We want to help the reconciliation process between couples be less stressful and more predictable.*
4. *We want to help couples maintain an emotional connection during the tense, silent periods immediately following a heated discussion.*

User Persona -

[Meet Cody!](#)

User Stories

Put 3-5 user stories here. Keep it high level. As a <user in this situation>, I want to <do this action> so that I can <achieve this outcome>.

Cody's perspective:

As a person who is still not ready to talk after a fight, I want a way to communicate to my partner that I'm still committed to the relationship, so that I can maintain an emotional connection with my partner.

As a person who is still not ready to talk after a fight with my partner, I want a way to clearly communicate my need for space, so that I can have more time to process my thoughts and feelings.

As a person who is overwhelmed with emotion after a fight, I want a way to make sense of all those thoughts and emotions, so that I can better communicate with my partner.

Partner's perspective:

As a person who wants to resolve a conflict immediately after a fight, I want a way to reach out to my partner at the right time, so that I don't risk further escalating the situation.

As a person who just had a big fight with my partner,, I want to know that my partner is still committed to the relationship, so that I feel hopeful about resolving our conflict.

As a person who needs time to process my emotions, I need a way to take care of myself while also honoring the way my partner addresses conflict.

As a person who has an anxious attachment style, I'd love to have a way to receive reassurance from my partner while also giving them time to process their own emotions..

Problem Statement:

How might we facilitate a way for couples to maintain an empathetic connection with one another following a conflict, so that they come to a resolution more effectively and efficiently?

Proposed Solution: *What are you proposing is the solution to the problem being tackled? Keep this to a few sentences, again focusing on the WHAT, not the HOW.*

We are envisioning our app to have two core elements. The first element involves users demonstrating their commitment to the relationship by making a "peace" offering that is generated by the app. The

second component will help couples communicate when they would be willing to re-engage in a conversation. This could be in the form of a timer or other visual representation that indicates the sender's "cool-off" period. The first feature we are working on is building the peace offering or *Olive Branch* that our users would be able to send to their partners.

[Link here to user lo-fi/wireframe design]

Scenarios

What are your key scenarios (based on your user stories)? What is the definition of done (or acceptance criterion) for each of them? Note: This should be finalized as a team

User Story #1: As a person who is still not ready to talk after a fight, I want a way to communicate to my partner that I'm still committed to the relationship, so that I can maintain an emotional connection with my partner.

Scenario #1: User is able to affirm and share a "commitment statement" with their partner.

Acceptance Criteria:

- User can record themselves reading the commitment statement
- User can upload a picture of themselves with their partner
- User can share audio recording of commitment statement and picture with their partner via text.

User Story #2: As a person who is still not ready to talk after a fight with my partner, I want a way to clearly communicate my need for space, so that I can have more time to process my thoughts and feelings.

Scenario #1: User shares a timer indicating the time they need to cool off.

Acceptance Criteria:

- User can set a countdown timer in minutes, hours or days
- User can share timer with partner via text.

Scenario #2: User receives a notification when their timer goes off to remind them of their commitment to addressing the problem.

Acceptance Criteria:

- User can set a timer
- User receives a notification in the form of text when timer expires

User Story #3: As a person who is overwhelmed with emotion after a fight, I want a way to make sense of all those thoughts and emotions, so that I can better communicate with my partner.

Scenario #1: User is able to construct a concise statement that clearly summarizes their thoughts and feelings.

Acceptance Criteria:

- User answers a series of self-reflective questions, both multiple choice and free response

- User can share statement to their partner via text.

Measuring Success

Co.Lab Success Metrics

What would you consider success to look like by Demo Day for your team? What would be the definition of done for your product by that point? Note: This should be finalized as a team.

Demo Day success would consist of

- *Completing user story #1. This would help our users lay the foundations for an effective path to reconciliation after a fight.*
 - *Users should feel like they were able to maintain an emotional connection with their significant other through the reconciliation process.*
 - *Users should feel like the product was an effective way to communicate with their partner during the angry silent “cool off” period.*
- *Demonstration of a successful “Olive Branch” being extended to partner*
- *No show-stopping bugs!*

Product Success Metrics

Consider metrics you’d want to measure to consider the product a success. How would we know if we’ve solved the problem? What are the things we’d want to measure?

- *How many times an ‘Olive Branch’ was ‘accepted’ or reciprocated?*
- *How many cases were marked resolved or closed?*
- *Understand if users felt that product was helpful in maintaining an emotional connection with their significant other after a fight.*
- *Understand if users felt that the product was helpful in keeping them accountable to coming back to discuss and address the problem that led to the fight.*

These metrics, both quantitative and qualitative, would help us understand the effectiveness of our product as well as our users’ willingness to utilize an external tool to help resolve conflicts.

Milestones & Timeline

*What are the milestones and project stages within Co.Lab? How will you consider your roll-out plan?
What about extending beyond?*

Timeline	Milestone
Week 1	Design <i>Brainstorming and explore problem spaces</i> Dev <i>Discuss which pros/cons of different tech stacks given problem space</i> <i>Scope out high level development tasks.</i>
Week 2	Design <i>Team alignment and establish protocol</i> <i>Narrow down scope of problem</i> <i>User research plan + User interviews</i> Dev <i>Discuss mobile vs web</i> <i>Discuss technical feasibility of problem space</i>
Week 3	Design <i>Interpretation of user interviews</i> <i>User persona, user journey</i> <i>Narrow scope of solution space</i> <i>Low fidelity designs</i> Dev <i>Start brainstorming on design and integration based on proposed solution space and user journey.</i>
Week 4	Design <i>User test lo-fi designs and obtain feedback.</i> Dev <i>Begin writing code for core product feature.</i>
Week 5	Design <i>Continue to gather user feedback on user stories.</i> <i>Iterate design based on feedback.</i> <i>Prioritize features based on timeline and feasibility</i> <i>Product demo upload</i> Dev <i>Iterate code based on feedback</i>

Week 6	Design <i>Hi-Fi upload Iterate design based on feedback.</i> <i>User story 2</i> <i>Start crafting pitch and blog write-up</i> <i>Start putting together product pack</i> Dev <i>Begin writing code for secondary product feature.</i>
Week 7	Design <i>Product blog Iterate on design for secondary feature</i> Dev <i>Continue developing for secondary product feature</i> <i>Debugging</i>
Week 8	Design <i>Execute product visibility plan.</i> <i>Decide Co.Lab next steps!</i> Dev <i>Debugging</i> <i>Finishing touches</i>

Open Questions / Appendix

- 1) **Are users open to the idea of using technology to help them resolve interpersonal conflict?**
 - a) **In what cases are users more willing to incorporate technology?**
 - b) **In what case are users less willing to turn to technology?**

Appendix

- [1] <https://hbr.org/2015/12/calming-your-brain-during-conflict>
- [2] <https://mainlinecounselingpartners.com/what-to-do-when-your-partner-shuts-down/>
- [3] <https://www.psychalive.org/how-your-attachment-style-impacts-your-relationship/>
- [4] [Pubmed.gov](#) - What Type of Communication during Conflict is Beneficial for Intimate Relationships?
- [5] Nonviolent Communication - Marshall Rosenberg, Ph.D
- [6] Psychology Today - Top 10 Reasons Relationships Fail
- [7] [Pubmed.gov](#) - Effects of Brief Communication Skills Training for Workers Based on the Principles of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- [8] <http://elyntromey.com/therapyblog/?p=117>