

PRODUCT DISCOVERY & STRATEGY DOCUMENT

Kindness Unlocked — A Science-Backed Happiness App

CANDIDATE

PM Portfolio Project

STAGE

Discovery & Strategy

VERSION

V1 — 2026

Grounded in positive psychology • Powered by AI • Built for intentional upgraders

01 / ORIGIN STORY

Where the idea came from

This product was born from a personal experience with Dr. Sonja Lyubomirsky's research in *The How of Happiness*. One of the book's 14 evidence-based principles is that performing acts of kindness generates measurable increases in happiness — but only when those acts remain novel. Repetition triggers hedonic adaptation, diminishing the emotional return over time.

The founder's existing solution was a hand-written list tucked behind a gratitude journal — manually curated, static, and dependent on having read the source material. That friction point became the product opportunity.

"I began to notice how I would make new prompts for myself... compliment someone, move out of my comfort zone. I made a tiny little list behind my gratitude journal."

02 / PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem worth solving

People who are intentionally pursuing happiness and personal growth struggle to consistently perform novel acts of kindness because they run out of ideas and fall into routine — triggering hedonic adaptation and causing the emotional benefit to fade — which means they abandon the practice entirely.

The existing solution — and its 4 critical gaps:

Manual	Users had to generate kindness ideas themselves from memory or inspiration.
Static	A written list never adapts, grows, or pushes the user further.
Passive	No system prompts action or tracks progress over time.
Gated	Required reading a specific book to even know this practice was worth doing.

03 / TARGET USER

Who this is built for

THE INTENTIONAL UPGRADER

Late 20s – early 40s

Already on the wellness journey. Gym, journaling, maybe therapy or meditation. Their inward practice feels complete — but something is still missing. They want to grow outward.

THEY ARE

- Curious about the science of happiness
- Readers — podcasts, books, self-development
- Already have established wellness habits
- Not beginners — they want to level up

RESEARCH NOTE

Age range and entry point to wellness apps to be validated via user interviews and survey.

Key insight: *This is not an onboarding app. It is an upgrading app. It serves people who already have a wellness foundation and are ready to add an outward, social dimension to their practice.*

04 / COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

What exists today — and where the gap is

Research method: competitive app review analysis across Happify, Finch, Headspace, Calm, and the App Store category for acts of kindness apps. Key findings below.

App	Focus	Key weakness	Threat level
Happify	CBT + positive psychology games	Repetitive tasks; \$15/mo paywall	Medium
Finch	Self-care pet + habit tracking	Entirely inward; no outward kindness dimension	Low
Headspace / Calm	Meditation + mindfulness	No kindness or social wellbeing features	Low
Acts of Kindness app	Static list of 1000+ kindness ideas	No AI, no progression, no science backing, no personalization	HIGH

White space: Every competitor turns users inward. No app uses AI to generate outward, novel acts of kindness with a progression system grounded in peer-reviewed happiness science. That is the uncontested opportunity.

05 / PRODUCT VISION

V1 and the platform roadmap

Scoping decision: V1 focuses exclusively on Principle #1 — Acts of Kindness — to validate the core mechanic before expanding to the full platform. This is a deliberate prioritization, not a limitation of vision.

V1 — KINDNESS UNLOCKED

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An AI-powered kindness prompt generator with a dynamic progression system. Users receive novel, personalized acts of kindness daily. An algorithm tracks their comfort level and gradually increases the novelty and social risk of each prompt — preventing hedonic adaptation and sustaining the happiness benefit over time.

Core features: AI prompt generation • Comfort zone progression algorithm • Personal kindness log • Science education layer

ROAD MAP	PRINCIPLE	FEATURE CONCEPT
V2	Gratitude	AI-prompted gratitude journaling with reflection depth scoring
V3	Savoring	Guided micro-experiences to pause and absorb positive moments
V4+	Remaining 11 principles	<i>Full happiness platform — a science-backed wellbeing operating system</i>

06 / RESEARCH PLAN

How we will validate before building

Two research methods selected for this discovery phase. Results will validate or challenge the persona hypothesis and inform v1 feature prioritization.

METHOD 1

User Survey

5–8 questions distributed in wellness communities (Reddit: r/Meditation, r/Stoicism, r/longevity; wellness Facebook groups). Goal: validate age range, wellness habits, and openness to kindness as a happiness tool.

Key question we don't yet know the answer to:

"What is the youngest age at which people actively seek outward wellness practices?"

METHOD 2

Competitive App Reviews

Analysis of 3-star reviews for Happify, Finch, Headspace, Calm, and existing kindness apps. 3-star reviews are the richest signal — users who like the concept but found gaps in execution.

Initial finding from review analysis:

"Repetitive tasks and clunky layouts are the top reasons users quit mental health apps." — APA-cited research

This document is a living artifact. Sections marked with research notes will be updated as user interviews, surveys, and competitive analysis are completed. The problem statement and persona hypothesis will be revised based on findings.