The use of Kenny the Chameleon to help children open up about their mental health

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Introduction

The worldwide prevalence of mental health conditions in children is estimated to be 13.4%[1]. At ages 11-14 children begin to become more independent and start to develop heightened emotions. A survey showed that 51% of teenagers are afraid of talking to their parents about personal problems[2]. Kenny is an app designed to teach children and young teenagers about emotions, and encourage them to open up.

Health benefits

The main function of Kenny is a journal, allowing teenagers to write about their thoughts and feelings – Kenny provides prompts, guiding the student to become more open about their thoughts and feelings, and helping them learn how best to convey their emotions. Confidentiality is a major issue in regards to help seeking: a fear of other people finding out is one of the most prevalent reasons that young people proposed for why they did not seek help[3],[4],[5]. The WHO has identified that there is a discrepancy in adult's perception of adolescent needs and adolescent's perception of their own. This can lead to people feeling uncomfortable in sharing certain information with their parents or a guardian, because they believe their problems to be insignificant[6].

Kenny—the character

Kenny is a Mascot for the app "Kenny" aimed to help 11-14 aged adolescents for their mental health.
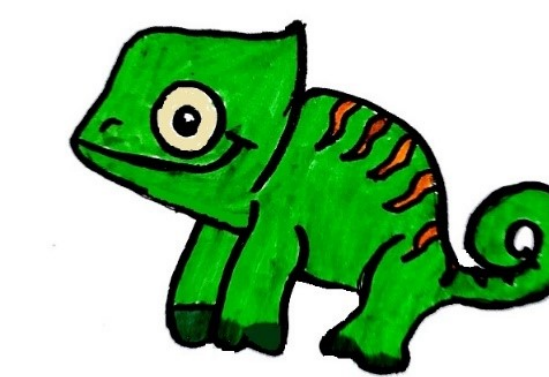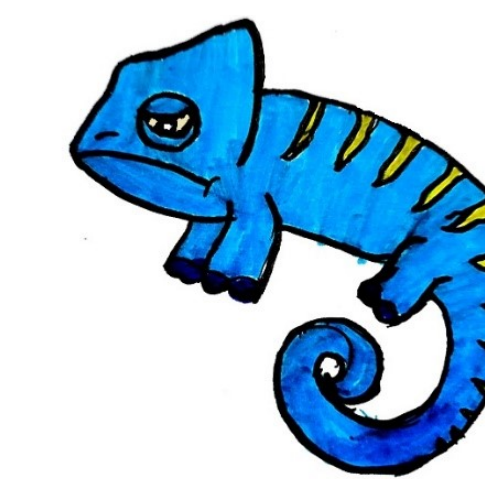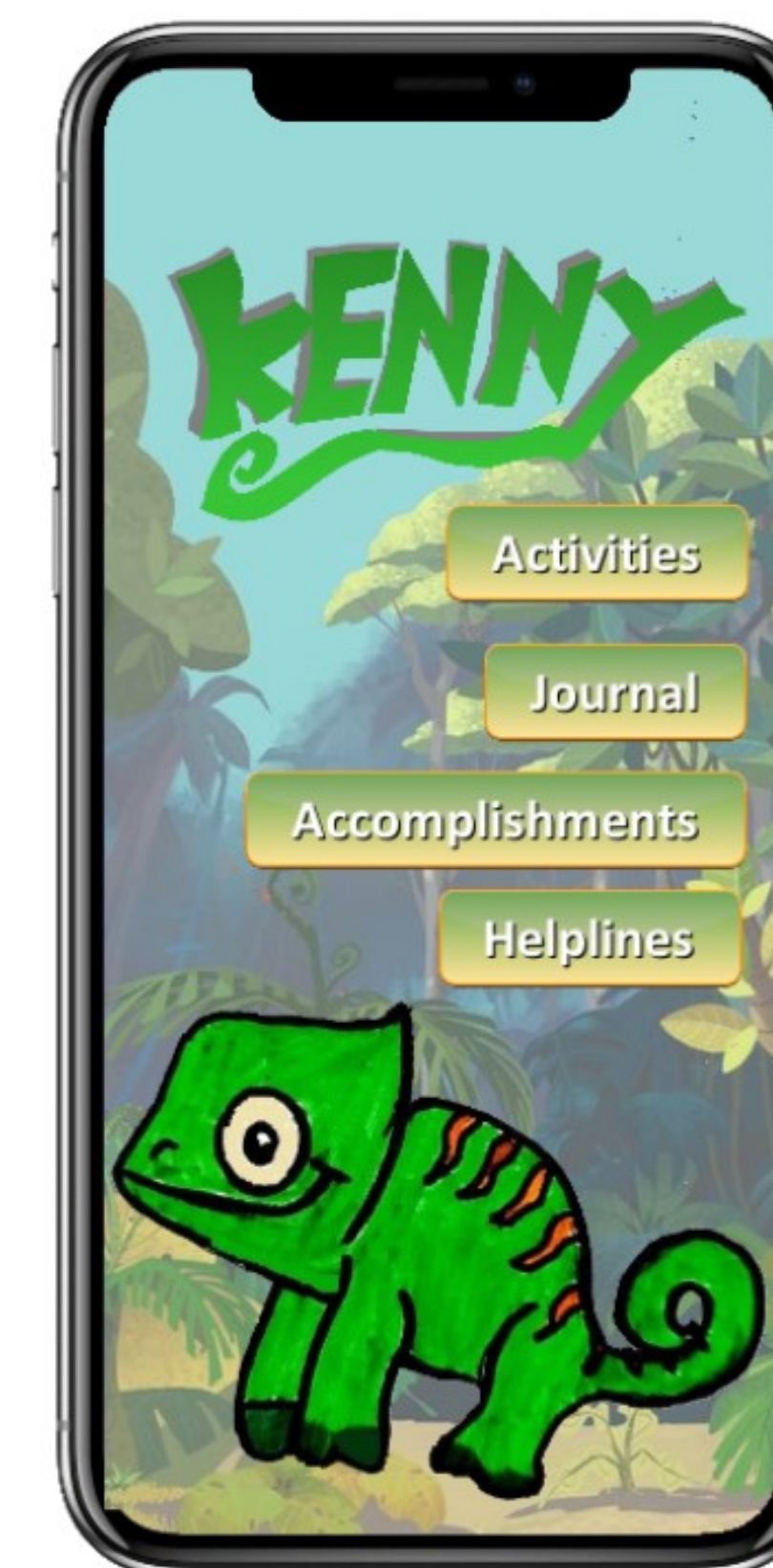
Happy Kenny   Sad Kenny

Kenny is designed as a cartoon chameleon, who acts as a friend and mentor. Kenny is a boy with a desire for travel and adventure. However, sometimes he feels stressful and anxious for his secondary school life. Luckily, he gets lots of help from his teachers, friends and parents.

The app

The app itself has a homepage for navigation shown on the left. The main feature is the journal as shown on the right which encourages you to share your feelings. There are accomplishments for filling in the journal and replying to the notifications, reminding you to use the app. The accomplishments include accessories and clothes for Kenny.
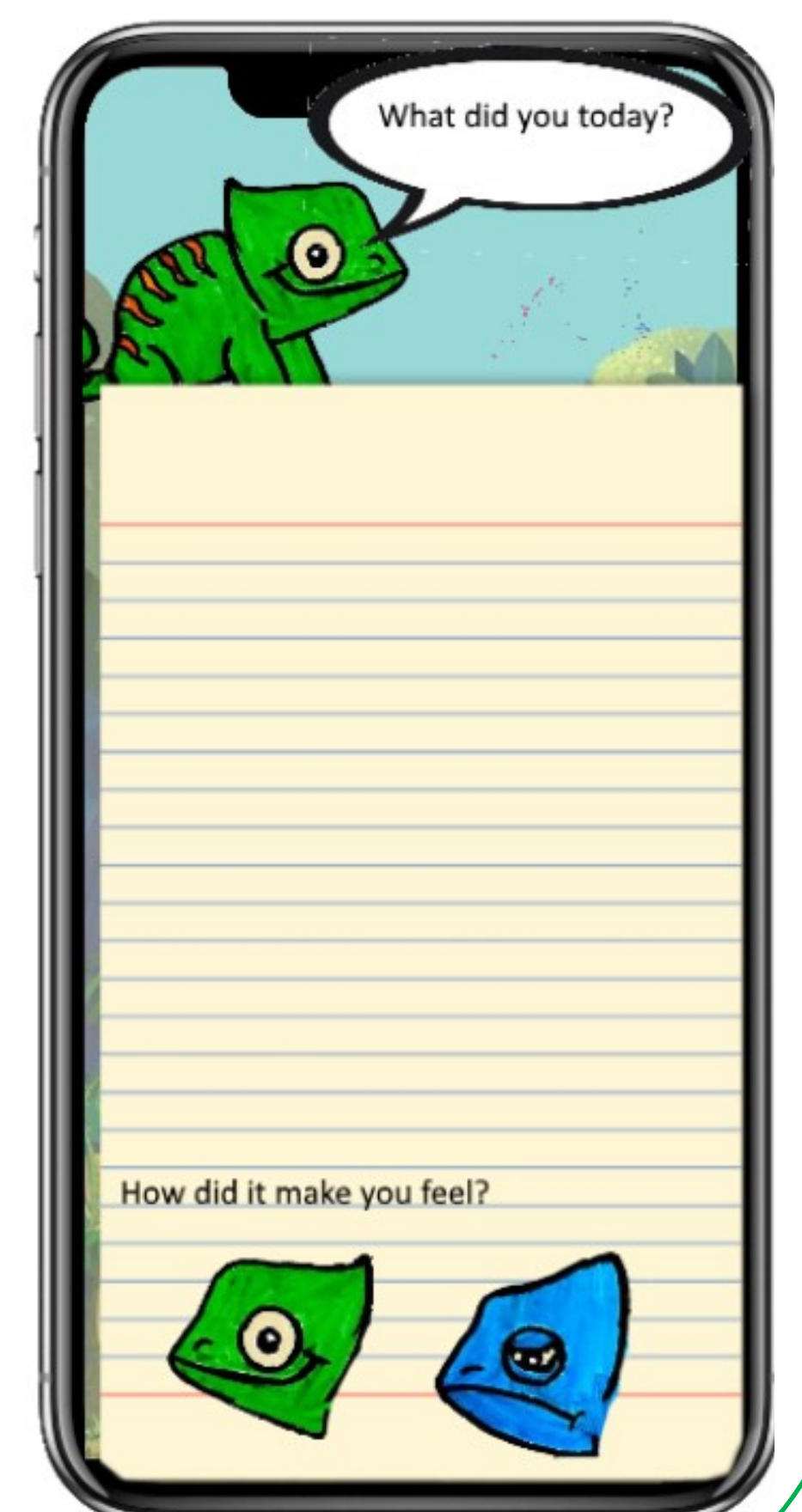
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