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This thesis marked an important shift in my own design practice. Throughout the project, I learned to approach interaction design not only intuitively, but through a structured process that combined behavioural research, field interviews, iterative prototyping and critical evaluation.

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Abstract

Insights generated in coaching sessions often dissolve once clients return to daily life. Inter-session activities are designed to bridge this gap, but existing tools rely on generic libraries rather than adapting to the specific situations clients face. The project developed and iteratively tested a coach-supported workflow in which clients summarize sessions in their own language and receive AI-generated activities contextualized to anticipated situations. Findings suggest that activities linked to real situations were perceived as more relevant and actionable than generic alternatives, while also revealing tensions between practitioner oversight and workflow efficiency. The extent to which perceived relevance becomes sustained behavioural change remains beyond the scope of this study.

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Definitions

AI = Artificial Intelligence

API = Application Programming Interface

CBT = Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy

FSP = Föderation der Schweizer Psychologinnen und Psychologen; the Swiss psychologists' professional association.

GPT = Generative Pre-trained Transformer; OpenAI's family of language models

HMW = How Might We

IA = Inter-Session Activities refer to tasks, exercises done in between Sessions

ICF = International Coaching Federation

LLM = Large Language Model

MVP = Minimum Viable Product

OECD = Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PDF = Portable Document Format

QR = Quick Response code

SDT = Self-Determination Theory

TEAM-CBT = Testing Empathy Agenda-Setting Methods CBT; an enhanced form of CBT developed by David Burns

UI = User Interface

UX = User Experience

WCAG = Web Content Accessibility Guidelines; the international standard for digital accessibility

1
General Introduction

Over the past three decades, public readiness to seek professional support for mental health difficulties has grown in Western countries (Angermeyer et al., 2023). Yet OECD reports describe mental health systems across many Western countries as underfunded, fragmented and unable to adequately meet growing demand for care (OECD, 2021). At the same time, a growing share of the population experiences subclinical mental health burdens such as chronic stress, burnout and loneliness, increasing the need for preventive and early-intervention approaches beyond reactive clinical care (Adler & Van Brunt, 2025).

Coaching addresses needs that fall between informal self-help and clinical mental health care, such as career direction, motivation and personal development. It also offers fewer institutional barriers than traditional healthcare systems and carries less stigma than therapy, as it is framed around performance, goal-setting and personal growth rather than the treatment of psychological disorders (Senior, 2007). This positioning is reflected in sustained market growth: the coaching profession generated an estimated $4.56 billion in global revenue in 2022, a 60% increase since 2019 (ICF, 2024).

Yet a persistent weakness runs through coaching practice: the insights that emerge during a session do not reliably carry over into everyday behaviour. Behavioural science frames this as the intention-behaviour gap (Sheeran, 2002) and its central finding is that context triggers action (Gollwitzer, 1999). An insight formed inside a coaching conversation is unlikely to surface on its own when a client is back inside the pressures of daily life (Perkins & Salomon, 1992).

Inter-session activities are the established mechanism for bridging this gap. They are structured tasks designed to translate session insights into action between appointments. Evidence supports their value (Wang et al., 2026) Existing tools try to enable these activities through structure but offer either generic activity libraries disconnected to what was actually discussed or AI systems that personalise without any practitioner involvement.

This project explores how AI could help coaches turn session insights into small activities connected to situations clients will actually face in daily life, while still keeping the coach involved in the process. Five design requirements shape the system: context-specificity, behavioural concreteness, self-motivation, collaborative development and the use of the client's own language. The first four points come mainly from behavioural science and coaching literature, while the fifth came from interviews with coaches and clients. Three iterative prototypes tested this framework. Early evaluation suggests that activities linked to real situations feel more relevant to clients than generic alternatives.

2
Background Research

2.1
Literature Review

2.1.1
Life Coaching and Behaviour Change

Life coaching is commonly defined as a collaborative, goal-oriented relationship that supports individuals in maximizing their personal and professional potential (Grant, 2003; Jarosz, 2016). It is most often distinguished from psychotherapy by its target population: rather than treating psychological dysfunction, it works with individuals who function adequately but seek development in areas such as career, relationships or purpose (Ammentorp et al., 2013).

This distinction is useful for locating coaching relative to clinical care. But this leads to another problem, namely that coaching is largely defined by what it is not and thus focuses the disagreement rather than stating what coaching positively is. Practitioners disagree on whether coaching is fundamentally goal-directed or existential and meaning-oriented (Leblanc, 2021), drawing on humanistic psychology, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), solution-focused brief therapy and positive psychology without a unified framework (Grant, 2003; Segers et al., 2011).

In an exploratory within-subjects study, participation in a life-coaching program was associated with decreased self-reflection and increased insight. Grant interprets this as clients moving away from repetitive, rumination-like self-examination toward more functional self-understanding (Grant, 2003).

The relational context of coaching also contributes to outcomes. Spence and Grant found in a study that professional coaching produced significantly greater goal progression than peer coaching. Professional coaching clients were also more engaged in the process, attending significantly more sessions than peer coaching clients (9.45 vs. 7.3 of 10 possible sessions). The authors interpreted this as evidence that the structure and accountability of a professional coaching relationship, rather than mere presence of a supportive person, drive goal orientation (Spence & Grant, 2007).

These relational claims must, however, be read against a weak evidence base. The life coaching literature remains underdeveloped relative to psychotherapy or workplace coaching, with recurring methodological weaknesses: small and self-selected samples, reliance on self-reported satisfaction rather than objective behavioural measures and the absence of active control conditions (Grant, 2003; Jarosz, 2016; Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018). Even in the more developed workplace coaching literature, a systematic review of 117 empirical studies found that although coaching's effectiveness is well established, its determinants, why and for whom it works, are not yet well understood, as the relevant constructs have largely been examined in isolation rather than in interaction (Bozer & Jones, 2018). A lack of consistent definitions contributes to this problem. The boundaries between life coaching, health coaching and executive coaching are inconsistently maintained across studies, complicating evidence synthesis and meta-analytic comparison (Ammentorp et al., 2013; Jones et al., 2016).

2.1.2
The Intention-Behaviour Gap

A persistent challenge across support practices is that insights and intentions formed during sessions do not reliably translate into sustained behaviour change in everyday life.

This phenomenon is widely described in behavioural science as the intention-behaviour gap, referring to the discrepancy between individuals' intentions and their actual behaviour. A meta-analysis found that while intentions are a significant predictor of behaviour, they account for only about 28% of behavioural variance, indicating that many individuals fail to act on their intentions (Sheeran, 2002).

Strategies such as implementation planning, environmental cues and structured follow-up processes are often required to support the translation of intention into action (Gollwitzer, 1999; Sheeran, 2002). These findings highlight a key challenge for coaching practice: supporting clients should not only generate insight, but also in translate these insights into everyday behaviour.

2.1.3
Inter-session Activities

This thesis adopts the term inter-session activities (IA) derived from the coaching literature using the term inter-sessional activities (Wang et al., 2026).

Inter-session activities (IA) refer to structured tasks that clients complete between sessions in order to apply and reinforce insights generated during coaching or therapeutic conversations (Wang et al., 2026). In coaching contexts, these activities may include behavioural experiments, reflective journaling, self-monitoring or structured goal-tracking tasks designed to support learning and behavioural implementation in everyday contexts.

The use of IA is strongly rooted in cognitive-behavioural approaches, which treats behavioural experimentation as a central mechanism of change. By testing new strategies in their daily environments, clients develop greater awareness of their own cognitive and behavioural patterns (Beck, 2011). Empirical evidence for IA is well established in psychotherapy research. Meta-analyses of cognitive-behavioural therapy show that homework adherence is positively associated with treatment outcomes across a range of psychological conditions, including depression and anxiety (Kazantzis et al., 2000). These findings suggest that structured tasks completed outside the session play a significant role in reinforcing learning and promoting behavioural change.
Existing research suggests that such activities may enhance motivation, accountability and behavioural implementation, particularly within cognitive-behavioural coaching approaches, though these claims rest on a narrower body of work than the equivalent psychotherapy literature (Wang et al., 2026; Grant, 2014).

2.1.4
Learning Theories Relevant to Behaviour Change

Why session insights so often fail to translate into lasting change can be understood as a problem of transfer. Coaching conversations are structured, reflective and emotionally contained. Everyday can contain these elements but is more messy and chaotic. Transfer research shows that applying knowledge across contexts is difficult, precisely when the original and target environments differ substantially (Perkins & Salomon, 1992). Kolb's experiential learning model frames the same gap developmentally: learning requires active experimentation (Kolb, 1984), the stage that, in coaching, cannot occur within the session itself. From both perspectives, IA are the point at which learning is either consolidated or lost. This should differentiate them from an optional supplement.

If the problem is transfer, the most direct solution identified in behavioural science is the situational cue. Gollwitzer demonstrated that specifying actions in an if-then format, linking a concrete situational cue to a goal-directed response, can significantly increase the likelihood that intentions are enacted (Gollwitzer, 1999). The same emphasis on situational cues underpins research on habit formation, which suggests that repeated behaviour in stable contexts[1] becomes increasingly automatic, triggered less by conscious intention than by the cue itself (Neal et al., 2012). Fogg turns this into a design rule, arguing that new behaviours establish most reliably when they are small, anchored to an existing routine and immediately reinforced (Fogg, 2019). This concludes that tasks should be deliberately scaled down. They shouldn't be framed as effortful goals.

1
Stable contexts refer to a recurring time, place or preceding action .

Designing for cues, however, only governs whether an activity can be enacted, keeping the question whether a client will attempt open. Self-Determination Theory distinguishes between self-motivation, which is driven by personal values and interest and controlled motivation, which is driven by pressure or obligation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Behaviour is more likely to persist when it is self-directed.

This places a requirement on the framing of the task and on how it is arrived at. Evidence on homework adherence in cognitive-behavioural therapy points the same way: IA are more effective when they are collaboratively developed, clearly rationalized and reviewed in subsequent sessions rather than prescribed in a directive manner (Kazantzis et al., 2005)

Together, these theories describe different reasons why behaviour change can fail. This suggests that inter-session activities work better when they are connected to a specific real-life situation and describe concrete actions. For the clients to attempt the activities at all, they should be self-directed and collaboratively developed.

2.1.5
Technology and Digital Support in Coaching

Digital tools can extend the coaching process beyond the session itself, supporting documentation, self-reflection, behavioural practice and may even reinforce the application of insights in everyday contexts (Sagui Henson et al., 2025).

A developer-funded study compared ‘1440’ against a human coach and several GPT-4 variants, with 30 participants per group rating transcripts or a video of a coaching session across seven dimensions. Against a transcript of the same human session, 1440 scored higher on six of seven dimensions, significantly so on all but approachability. Against the live video, differences were smaller and only reached significance on effectiveness and problem-solving. More than half of participants reading the 1440 transcript believed they were reading a human coach, the highest rate among the AI groups, while the human coach’s one consistent advantage was approachability[2] (Brown et al., 2025). The findings should be read cautiously: the study relied on a single hand-picked scenario and had participants evaluate a transcript rather than a live coaching relationship.

2
Approachability was defined in the study as the coach‘s ability to create a welcoming, non-judgmental space in which clients feel safe to share openly.

However, the role of AI within coaching structures remains different. Current approaches range from AI tools used to support coaches during sessions to systems designed to assist clients between sessions or fully automated coaching interventions (Passmore et al., 2025). Topol's (2019) writing on AI in healthcare, argues that automation is most valuable when it relieves practitioners of routine tasks and thereby creates space for the human relationship, rather than substituting for it. Within coaching this framing suggests AI should support post-session integration and behavioural follow-through. This allows then the relational work to be left with the coach.

While these developments highlight the potential of AI to support post-session integration and behavioural follow-through, empirical evidence on their effectiveness remains limited and still emerging.

2.2
Expert Research

The literature reviewed above establishes that IA are a plausible mechanism for translating insight into behaviour, but it leaves two questions unresolved in practice. It says little about how such activities should be designed to fit the specific situations clients face and the evidence on AI-supported coaching tools is still early and largely quantitative. To ground the project in current practice, primary research was undertaken with practitioners working across coaching and therapeutic modalities.

2.2.1 Method

Between January and March 2026, nine semi-structured interviews were conducted with professionals selected to represent a range of relevant perspectives on behavioural change, inter-session practices and the integration of digital tools into support work. Practitioners were recruited through the directory of the Swiss Federation of Psychologists (FSP), direct outreach to professionals in the field and referrals emerging from early scoping conversations. Selection required at least five years of experience and practice in a modality involving continuous, relationship-based work with clients between sessions. Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, where all participants gave informed consent covering recording, anonymised quotation and are referred to by role rather than name throughout.

Transcripts were analysed through repeated close reading to identify recurring themes, tensions and behavioural patterns. In a secondary step, transcripts were anonymized and a large language model (Google, 2026)[3] was used as a supportive analysis tool to surface additional thematic groupings and identify potential overlaps across interviews. The themes identified manually were compared with the AI-supported analysis and then grouped into four main themes. Because the prompts were written by the same researcher conducting the manual analysis, the AI outputs should be understood as a supplementary tool for pattern recognition and structural comparison. They shouldn't be understood as independent validation.

3 Google's Gemini 3.1 Pro as of March 2026

2.2.2
Findings from Expert Interviews

Four main themes emerged across the interviews: the centrality of the practitioner-client relationship, tensions between optimization and reflection, framing of digital tools and requirements for technology integration.

Relationship and client agency. Across all modalities, interviewees located the mechanism of change in the practitioner-client relationship rather than in the interventions themselves. Effective practice, they argued, strengthens the client's own capacity for reflection and self-directed action instead of supplying prescriptive solutions. The psychoanalyst and Gestalt therapists were particularly explicit on this point, framing the practitioner's role as creating conditions for the client's own insight rather than delivering interventions. Practitioners were also emphatic that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Every client brings different needs, readiness and communication styles. Not every client works through narrative or structured writing and most existing tools fail to account for this variation.

Shorter programs and goal focus. Several interviewees, particularly the coaches and the CBT-focused therapist, observed that support programs are shifting toward shorter formats, which increases pressure to define clear goals and make productive use of the time between sessions. This trend reinforces the relevance of structured IA but also raises the stakes for their quality, with fewer sessions available, poorly designed or generic activities risk wasting limited engagement time.

Framing of digital tools within practice. A conversation with a product stakeholder at Ylah.ch clarified the conditions under which digital tools succeed in practice. The success of blended care depends above all on the framing the practitioner provides. When practitioners introduce digital tools as an extension of the existing practitioner-client relationship, clients engage. When tools appear as optional add-ons, they are ignored. A related pattern emerged independently: the CBT therapist reported already using ChatGPT to generate activity ideas and one of their clients had adopted it for personal problem-solving between sessions. Three coaches described working with ChatGPT regularly in their practice. The Gestalt therapist raised a concern that cuts across all general-purpose tool: their constant availability creates a dependency dynamic absent from time-bounded coaching relationships.

Beyond cognitive approaches. A notable finding was the concern that existing digital tools tend toward overly cognitive, optimization-driven approaches. These practitioners argued that effective support also needs to engage clients emotionally and somatically and that any generated content should allow clients to recognize themselves in it, to feel that activities reflect their lived experience. This introduces a design requirement absent from the predominantly cognitive-behavioural framing of both the coaching literature and current platforms: an AI-supported system would need to attend to tone, emotional resonance and experiential quality alongside behavioural specificity.

2.3
Assumptions, Research Questions, Hypothesis

2.3.1
Assumptions

Existing research, reviewed in Section 2.1.3, indicates that structured activities completed between sessions can enhance behavioural outcomes in coaching and therapeutic contexts. This thesis therefore takes as an established starting point that IA represents a viable mechanism for translating session insights into everyday behaviour.
However, it remains unclear how effectively IA can be tailored to specific situations encountered by clients in everyday life. While behavioural science suggests that contextualized action planning improves behavioural follow-through (Gollwitzer, 1999), it remains uncertain whether more context-specific IA lead to stronger behavioural implementation.

2.3.2
Research Questions

Based on these assumptions, this thesis investigates how interaction design might support the translation of coaching insights into behaviour between sessions.

How can digital tools support the integration[4] of coaching insights into everyday situations?

How can artificial intelligence assist in generating context-specific[5] IA based on coaching conversations?

To what extent can personalized[6] IA help reduce the intention-behaviour gap in life-coaching contexts?

4
Integration refers to the process by which insights are applied within the real-life contexts

5
Contextual, context-aware or contextually relevant refer to a specific situation described by the client.

6
Personalization refers to adapting the tasks based on the session content.

3
Concept

3.1
Concept and Angle

3.1.1
Problem and Design Response

(Section 2.2.4) establishes four requirements for effective IA. Each requirement points to the same structural gap: standard IA practice lacks a reliable mechanism for deriving activities from the actual content of a session. This project responds with a specific proposition: IA are most effective when derived from actual session content, anchored to anticipated real-life situations and delivered within the existing coach-client relationship

3.1.2
Minimum Viable Product

Each element of that proposition maps directly to a functional requirement. Session content as the primary input addresses context-specificity, situational anchoring uses behavioural concreteness and practitioner curation preserves both collaborative development and the relational channel through which self-direction is sustained. The prototype therefore isolates a single mechanism: AI-supported translation of session summaries into context-specific activities within a practitioner-curated workflow.

1. A session summary, written by the client, is provided as input. Authorship is a intentional choice: it preserves the client's own vocabulary and register, while creating conditions for the their own reflection and insights (Section 2.3.2).
2. The AI-system generates a small set of activities that are specific, actionable and contextually grounded.
3. The coach then reviews, edits, regenerates and approves them before they reach the client. The coach's editorial role addresses both the quality constraint and the edge cases that require someone who actually understands the client's input.

Notification reminders, long-term tracking and automated reflection prompts were left out because they were not necessary for testing perceived relevance.

3.2
Related Work

Four criteria structure the analysis, drawn from the requirements established in Section 2.2.4. Contextual relevance maps to context-specificity: whether activities are connected to concrete situations clients are likely to encounter. Client autonomy maps to self-motivation: whether the tool supports self-directed engagement. Practitioner involvement maps to collaborative development: whether the coach remains meaningfully in the loop. Session-specificity assesses whether activities draw on actual conversations rather than generic libraries. Behavioural concreteness (the fourth original requirement) is difficult to assess from platform descriptions alone.

3.2.1
Platforms offering inter-session activities with practitioner in the loop

Ylah keeps the practitioner as the human anchor of the process. A therapy catalogue and exercise editor allow therapists to assign both predefined and session-specific activities, but contextual relevance depends entirely on manual practitioner effort. Nothing in the platform connects an activity to a concrete upcoming situation in the client's life. Client autonomy is absent: clients receive what the therapist assigns.

Quenza advances this model with a library of over 200 evidence-informed exercises that coaches sequence into automated client pathways. Practitioner involvement is well-realised, but session-specificity is missing: the input is the library, not the conversation. Coaches select from predefined categories rather than anchoring activities to situations the client is about to face, making contextual relevance fail. Client autonomy is also limited: selecting from an assigned pathway is not self-directed engagement.

3.2.2
Platforms offering AI Coaching

1440.ai as mentioned in 2.2.5, integrates with calendars, wearables and health records and because activities draw on this data they can be connected to concrete upcoming events in the client's life. Of the platforms reviewed, it comes closest to meeting the contextual relevance criterion. The user drives engagement without a fixed practitioner-assigned pathway. Session-specificity is missing: interventions are generated from behavioural data and not prior conversations. Practitioner involvement is also absent

General-purpose AI tools such as ChatGPT or Claude give users full autonomy and are increasingly used as informal support tools. However, unlike the proposed system, they are not connected to an ongoing coaching process. They do not automatically retain structured session context, include practitioner input or generate activities based on shared coaching goals. As a result, the relevance of their responses depends entirely on what the user chooses to provide in the moment. Their growing use nevertheless reflects a broader shift toward AI-supported reflection and self-guided support practices (Passmore et al., 2025).

3.2.3
Platforms tackling behaviour change

Feeling Great delivers TEAM-CBT techniques through an AI chatbot that responds to user input. Client autonomy is partial: users initiate on their own terms and choose what to bring to the conversation, but every interaction is channelled through a fixed therapeutic framework they cannot steer outside of. There is no situational anchoring to upcoming real-life situations, no session-specificity and no practitioner layer.

3.2.4
Findings and Summary

Mapping the platforms against the four criteria shows that the strengths are distributed and that none of the applications fulfills all criterias. No system combines all four criteria within one workflow which reveals a structural gap.

Platform	Contextual relevance	Session-specificity	Client autonomy	Practitioner in loop
Ylah	X	Partial	X	Included
Quenza	X	X	X	Included
1440.ai	Partial	X	Included	X
ChatGPT/ Claude	Partial	Partial	Included	X
Feeling Great	X	X	Partial	X

Table 1: Comparing different platforms (2026)

3.3
Field Research

The primary research in this thesis is conducted in four stages: foundational expert interviews (Section 2.3), concept-stage interviews and concept evaluation (Sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.3) and iterative prototype testing (Sections 4.2.1 - 4.2.4). The Chapter 2.3 participants are distinct from those in Chapter 3.3. Within Chapter 3.3, the same four coaches and three clients participated in both 3.3.1 and 3.3.4 (one additional coach), allowing them to respond in the evaluation phase to a concept that had been partly shaped by their earlier input. In Chapter 4, coaches from early interviews were kept for prototype testing, while client participants were newly recruited.

3.3.1
Interviews & Expert discussions

Four semi-structured interviews with life-coaches and three with coaching clients covered current inter-session practices, obstacles to follow-through and attitudes toward AI-supported tools.

Practitioner insights. The central challenges were: moving clients from understanding to doing. That coaches forget to assign activities at session close, when cognitive load is highest. Activities must be small and concrete enough that engaging with them requires minimal effort. Practitioners confirmed this: ambiguous or effortful tasks are postponed (see 2.1.4). Data security was raised as non-negotiable, several coaches expressed interest in the system replacing informal channels like WhatsApp for a more unified system.

Client insights. Clients consistently described how a session's clarity and motivation dissipated on returning to daily life. Non-completion rarely reflected lack of commitment. More often, task design created friction. One participant was asked to write a list articulating her personal standards. Despite understanding the purpose, the task remained undone for weeks because the format felt disproportionately difficult relative to what she already knew internally. The single most important factor in follow-through was understanding why an activity mattered and how it connected to a specific situation.

3.3.2 Survey

A survey titled ‘Investigating Potential of AI-Support in between Sessions’ was distributed to practitioners across coaching, psychotherapy and counselling. Items[7] were adapted from themes that emerged in the expert interviews (Section 2.3.2). The survey was distributed primarily via LinkedIn, generating 30 responses. Given the platform and the absence of piloting, findings should be read as directional rather than representative. The sample is self-selected, professionally engaged and skewed toward coaches (87%), working primarily with adults and senior leaders across mixed online and in-person settings. Evaluation of the sample was self-selected.

Current practice is widespread but informal and largely unsatisfying. Only 23% of respondents use dedicated digital tools. Most rely on worksheets, visuals, metaphors and text summaries. 60% agreed that a noticeable gap exists between in-session understanding and post-session action and only 10% gave the highest satisfaction rating to their current integration support.

Two findings clarify why activities fail. What tends to fade first is emotional rather than cognitive: participants most frequently reported losing the felt sense of breakthrough (50%) and the motivation of change (47%), both occurring more often than the loss of concrete action plans (33%). Context collapse defines this, with 47% naming loss of felt sense once back in routine as a barrier, second only to time scarcity (83%). An activity anchored to an upcoming moment survives re-entry into daily life better than one a client must reconstruct from memory.

7 Question formats included free text, single- and multiple-choice items and Likert scales.

Two further findings carry direct design implications. The most commonly cited condition for creative content to feel safe was use of the client's own language and key phrases (63%), ahead of client agency over style and direction (60%). On AI, 90% already use it for professional tasks and 80% are open to AI-based integration tools, with comfort consistently conditional on clear boundaries around trauma, crisis and early-stage relationships.

On oversight, nearly 90% expressed a preference for pre-delivery control: 47% wanted to review and edit every output, 43% preferred selecting from AI-suggested options and only 10% were comfortable with automated delivery.

3.3.3
Technology Experiments

8
Claude Sonnet 4.6 as of April 2026

The system's functionality depends on a technical assumption: that a general-purpose AI model can translate session content into context-specific activities reliably enough to support the rest of the workflow. A structured experiment probed two questions: what failure modes appear when a general-purpose model (Anthropic, 2026)[8] is asked to produce coaching activities and how sensitive the output is to instruction level.

Setup

Three fictional reflections covered different registers: work (articulate, analytical), personal-relationship (sparse, emotional) and habit (casual, stream-of-consciousness). Each was run through three prompts. Prompt 1 gave only a role and summary. Prompt 2 added two framing instructions: position the output as an invitation and use language from the session. Prompt 3 added five explicit constraints, including session grounding, being fully actionable without further instruction, situational anchoring within seven days, using the client's own language and being framed as an invitation for exploration rather than a prescribed task. Additionally an instruction to flag insufficient information rather than to invent details. Nine outputs were scored on tonal fit (client's vocabulary and register), agency preservation (directive-to-exploratory verb ratio) and situational anchoring (a stranger test of whether the real-life moment is recoverable from the activity alone).

Across all three reflections, the outputs generated with Prompt 1 matched the general tone and situation reasonably well, but consistently felt too directive. The model tended to generate structured interventions such as numbered steps, timed exercises and explanatory rationales instead of open-ended invitations for reflection or action. This suggests that, without clear framing, the model defaults toward prescriptive behaviour.

Prompt 2 was sufficient to improve this across all cases. With only a small adjustment in instructions, the outputs became more open, less clinical and better at preserving client agency. Prompt 3 did not significantly improve tone or agency further, but it produced the strongest connection to the client's specific situation and generated shorter, more focused outputs. In one case, the model explicitly acknowledged the limits of the provided information instead of inventing details, reducing the tendency toward overconfident or fabricated responses that appeared more frequently in Prompt 1.

Two failure modes are important to name. Hallucination of context appeared in the personal-relationship Prompt 1 output, which invented a plausible-but-unsupported trigger. Hallucination of biographical detail appeared in the work reflections Prompt 2 output: "Is the eight-year-old who had to hold things together showing up here?" Both are addressable through prompt design, but neither is fully eliminated by it.

Implications

Prompt design has a systematic effect on output quality. The different outputs showed that the model's defaults run against the design principles and must be actively suppressed in order to meet them. Therefore the practitioner curation step is structurally necessary, since residual hallucinations require a human reader who knows the client.

Limitations

All nine outputs were scored by myself, the thesis author, who was also the prompt designer. A more rigorous design would involve at least two additional raters (coaches) blinded to which prompt produced which output, with inter-rater agreement reported. The experiment is therefore best read as a structured probe of failure modes rather than a measurement of prompt effectiveness.

3.3.4
Concept Evalutation through User Studies

With the technical assumption tested, evaluation sessions examined whether the concept translated into a usable workflow. Five coaches and three clients were walked through the three-step MVP, shown example outputs and asked to react. Sessions lasted between 20 and 40 minutes, conducted over video call or regular call, recorded with participant consent. Findings were noted and compared across sessions to identify overlapping patterns.

Clients identified low friction as the primary condition for sustained engagement. Coaches and clients alike raised dependency as a risk: the system should promote behavioural change. It should not be built for engagement. Coaches confirmed that clients need to perceive the coach's involvement in what they receive, otherwise engagement shifts to interacting with an automated system. Coaches also wanted to understand how activities are generated and suggested AI generation be informed by validated intervention libraries rather than left to generate freely. This reflected the Prompt 1 failure mode identified in Section 3.3.3.

Coaches noted that connecting an activity to a specific upcoming situation gave the assignment a natural container: the activity had a when and not only a what. Coaches proposed calendar integration: attaching an activity to a specific upcoming event creates a situational trigger. Clients responded equally clearly: without a situational anchor, they had to reconstruct an activity's relevance independently.

3.4
Synthesis

3.4.1
The Role of AI

Following Topol's (2019) framing of AI mentioned in (Section 2.1.5), the task of creating a suitable activity can be automated and the part of making the activity relational can be given to the coach.
Coaching summaries contain rich but unstructured material (recurring themes, expressed tensions, tentative commitments) from which the system extracts elements for activity generation. Taking Section 3.3.3 as a directional indicator, a general-purpose model can perform this translation reliably when given structured inputs, but defaults to prescription and fabrication without them. Practitioner configuration is therefore a technical requirement: it is what keeps outputs grounded in the actual client.

3.4.2
Design Principles

The four requirements from Section 2.2.4 context-specific, behaviourally concrete, self-directed, collaboratively developed are extended here by a fifth drawn from field research: using the client's own language (Sections 2.3.2, 3.3.2) and are translated into the design principles.

1. Session content as primary input: Activities are generated from session summaries rather than libraries. Without grounding in prior reflection, experimentation cannot complete the learning cycle (Kolb, 1984).
2. Context-specific anchoring: Activities are tied to anticipated real-life situations rather than framed as abstract goals, addressing the contextual-loss barrier identified in the survey and operationalizing if-then planning (Section 2.1.4).
3. Practitioner curation: Coaches review and edit all generated activities before they reach the client, a professional requirement supported by CBT homework research on collaboratively developed tasks (see Section 2.1.4).
4. Client-centred language: Outputs use the client's own words and key phrases, identified by practitioners as the most important condition for perceived safety.
5. Structural support for agency. Clients can adapt, reinterpret and selectively engage with activities rather than follow prescribed sequences, aligning with Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000).
6. Low-friction integration: The system reduces administrative effort and fits within existing workflows. Activity assignment fails most often at session close, when cognitive load is highest. A system that adds effort will not be used.
7. Behavioural relevance over engagement. The system prioritizes meaningful action over platform metrics such as session frequency or time spent.

3.4.3
How Might We Questions

1. HMW translate session insights into activities that remain meaningful once the client returns to daily life?
2. HMW reconnect clients to the emotional quality of an insight at the moment it is most behaviourally relevant?
3. HMW give coaches efficient curation control without adding administrative burden?
4. HMW use the client's own language so activities feel personally owned rather than generically assigned?
5. HMW frame activities as invitations for exploration rather than tasks to complete?

4
Project Development

4.1
System Design

4.1.1
Translating desing principles into system requirements

The design principles defined in Section 3.4.2, together with the HMW questions in Section 3.4.3, translate into an initial set of system requirements for the three-step MVP.

1. The client captures themes, tensions and intentions in their own words immediately after the session.
2. Clients name a specific upcoming situation to give the system concrete material for activity generation.
3. Client language is carried through to outputs without paraphrase or stylistic flattening.
4. Coaches review and approve generated activities before they reach the client.
5. Activities are presented as optional experiments rather than assigned tasks.
6. Inputs are lightweight, outputs are immediate and the system adds no administrative overhead.
7. Success is defined by behavioural follow-through

4.1.2
Personas

Four personas were developed to anchor design decisions in concrete user profiles: two coaches and two clients.
The Careful Editor (Figure 1) represents practitioners with strong theoretical grounding who want full editorial control over what reaches the client and are sceptical of AI involvement. The Busy Builder (Figure 2) represents practitioners with growing caseloads who already assign between-session activities but lack time to craft them individually. The key difference between the two lies in how much time and control they are willing to invest in shaping the activities. The Self Starter (Figure 3) represents clients with established reflective practices who engage actively but lose clarity once daily pressures resume. The Late Opener (Figure 4) represents clients whose work pressure systematically overrides personal intentions, who need very low-friction activities tied to specific recurring situations.

The Careful Editor



Dr. Nala Weber

Bio
Master's in Psychology (University of Zurich), trained in CBT and systemic approaches, transitioned from clinical practice to coaching to work with non-clinical populations on personal development

Typical Session
Opens with a check-in on the previous session's themes, moves into emergent exploration, and closes with a brief verbal reflection on what the client is taking away. Rarely assigns structured homework, preferring that insights emerge and take root naturally.

Gender	Female
Age	50
Profession	Psychologist and life coach in private practice
Socio-economic background	Upper-middle class, urban (Zurich), established professional
Experience	12 years clinical psychology, 6 years coaching

Current Structure
Works mostly with adults navigating life transitions, self-understanding, and emotional regulation. Sessions are 60 minutes, biweekly, mixed online and in-person. Strong theoretical foundation shapes her practice — draws on evidence-based frameworks but works in a client-led, reflective style.

In Between Session
Occasionally sends written summaries or reflection questions via email. Does not use dedicated digital tools. Relies on memory and handwritten session notes. Has experimented with ChatGPT for her own session preparation but would not share AI-generated content with clients without heavy editing.

Goals
- Support clients' self-directed integration without prescribing behaviour
- Maintain the relational depth that defines her practice
- Selectively adopt tools that enhance rather than dilute her approach

Needs
- Tools that respect the depth and pace of reflective work
- Clear ethical boundaries around client data and AI involvement
- Full editorial control over any content that reaches the client

Pain Points
- Clients arriving at sessions having lost the emotional thread from last time
- Difficulty bridging session insight into everyday application without becoming directive
- Skeptical that current digital tools understand the nuance of therapeutic conversation
- Clients dependency

Figure 1: Coach 1, Personas, Image created with Nano Banana Pro (digital illustration, 2026)

The Busy Builder



Jamina Brunner

Bio
Bachelor's in Business Administration, ICF-accredited coaching certification, additional training in positive psychology, solution-focused coaching, and a mindfulness-based coaching program

Typical Session
Uses a loose structure: goal check-in, focused exploration, action planning, session close with agreed next steps. Actively assigns between-session activities — journaling prompts, reflection exercises, small behavioural experiments.

Gender	Male
Age	60
Profession	Executive consultant and leadership coach
Socio-economic background	Upper class, established, well-networked in Swiss corporate circles
Experience	25 years in management consulting, 15 years coaching executives

Current Structure
Runs a growing solo practice with 25–30 active clients, primarily women in their 30s and 40s working on career clarity, confidence, and life balance. Mostly online sessions, 45–60 minutes, weekly or biweekly. Combines structured frameworks with

In Between Session
Sends worksheets, voice memos, and curated reflection prompts via email or WhatsApp. Uses Notion to organize client materials. Uses Gemini weekly to draft reflection prompts and session summaries, then edits them before sending.

Goals
- Scale her practice without sacrificing personalization
- Strengthen client follow-through between sessions
- Support clients outside of session without needing send reminders manually
- Position herself as a tech-forward, modern coach

Needs
- Faster way to generate personalized activities from session notes
- Tools that integrate into her existing workflow without adding admin overhead
- Ability to customize and brand content for her clients
- Communication over the platform

Pain Points
- Spends 30–45 minutes per client per week on between-session materials
- Generic templates feel unprofessional but custom content is time-consuming
- Clients sometimes ignore assigned activities without explaining why

Figure 2: Coach 2, Personas, Image created with Nano Banana Pro (digital illustration, 2026)

The Self Starter



Nadia Ruardi

Bio
Art school graduate, has worked freelance for 10 years, periods of burnout, values autonomy and creative expression, experienced in therapy but new to coaching.

Typical Session
Comes prepared with questions and updates. Takes her own notes during sessions. Engages actively and completes agreed actions between sessions.

Gender	Female
Age	35
Profession	Freelance Graphic designer
Socio-economic background	Middle class, based in Basel, self-employed for four years
Experience	Second coaching engagement; previously was in therapy

Motivation and reason for coaching
Life transition after ending a long-term relationship; searching for purpose, creative direction, and a more sustainable way of working

In Between Session
Activities
Follows through on assigned tasks but also forget because of daily life.
Own approach
Already journals, tracks habits, and reflects regularly. Integrates coaching into an existing self-development practice.

Goals
- Build a sustainable creative practice aligned with her values
- Integrate session insights into daily decisions, not just reflection
- Develop self-trust around her direction

Needs
- Activities that respects her existing reflective practice rather than duplicating it. Tools that help her go deeper, not just tick boxes.
- Emotional reconnection to session insights when motivation dips
- Flexibility rather than rigid task structures

Pain Points
- The clarity from a session fades within days as freelance pressures return
- Written structured exercises feel like work and often don't get done
- Financial stress makes coaching feel like a stretch she wants to maximize

Figure 3: Client 1, Personas, Image created with Nano Banana Pro (digital illustration, 2026)

The Late Opener



Brandon Keller

Bio
Engineering degree, climbed the corporate ladder, identifies strongly with his professional role, pragmatic and action-oriented, limited prior engagement with personal development

Typical Session
Initially guarded, increasingly open. Tends to discuss work situations but the coach gently redirects toward emotional and relational themes. Sessions can feel heavy; insights often arrive late in the conversation.

Gender	Male
Age	54
Profession	Managing director of a mid-sized Swiss manufacturing company
Socio-economic background	Upper-middle class, dual-income household, two teenage children
Experience	Has used many different coaching forms

Motivation and reason for coaching
Chronic work stress, strained relationship with his wife and adult children, difficulty switching off

In Between Session
Activities
Coach assigns small behavioural experiments (leaving phone outside bedroom, dedicated family time, brief reflection at end of day). Thomas tries but often forgets or reverts to old patterns under work pressure.
Own approach
Doesn't journal. Uses his phone heavily and informs himself about health.

Goals
- Reduce stress and rebuild family relationships
- Build sustainable habits that don't collapse under work pressure
- Learn to be present outside of work

Needs
- Very simple, low-friction activities that fit into a demanding schedule
- Contextual reminders tied to specific recurring situations
- Activities that don't feel therapeutic or emotionally heavy on workdays

Pain Points
- Work pressure systematically overrides personal intentions
- Struggles to access the emotional clarity he reaches in sessions
- Feels guilty when he doesn't complete activities, which makes engagement harder

Figure 4: Client 2, Personas, Image created with Nano Banana Pro (digital illustration, 2026)

4.1.3
Visual Identity

The name “anqr” abbreviates anchor, which is the central idea of grounding insights into daily life.
Three visual variants were developed in response to the two coach personas: a reflective variant with spacious layouts and exploratory language (Figure 5), a pragmatic variant prioritising usability and modular components (Figure 6) and a high-contrast strategic variant with direct, task-oriented language to test appeal beyond the two primary coach profiles (Figure 7).
All three were shared as images with a mixed group of around ten participants, coaches, clients and individuals outside the coaching context and evaluated through informal written responses. Reactions consistently pointed to Figure 8, preferred for its tone and emotional feel.

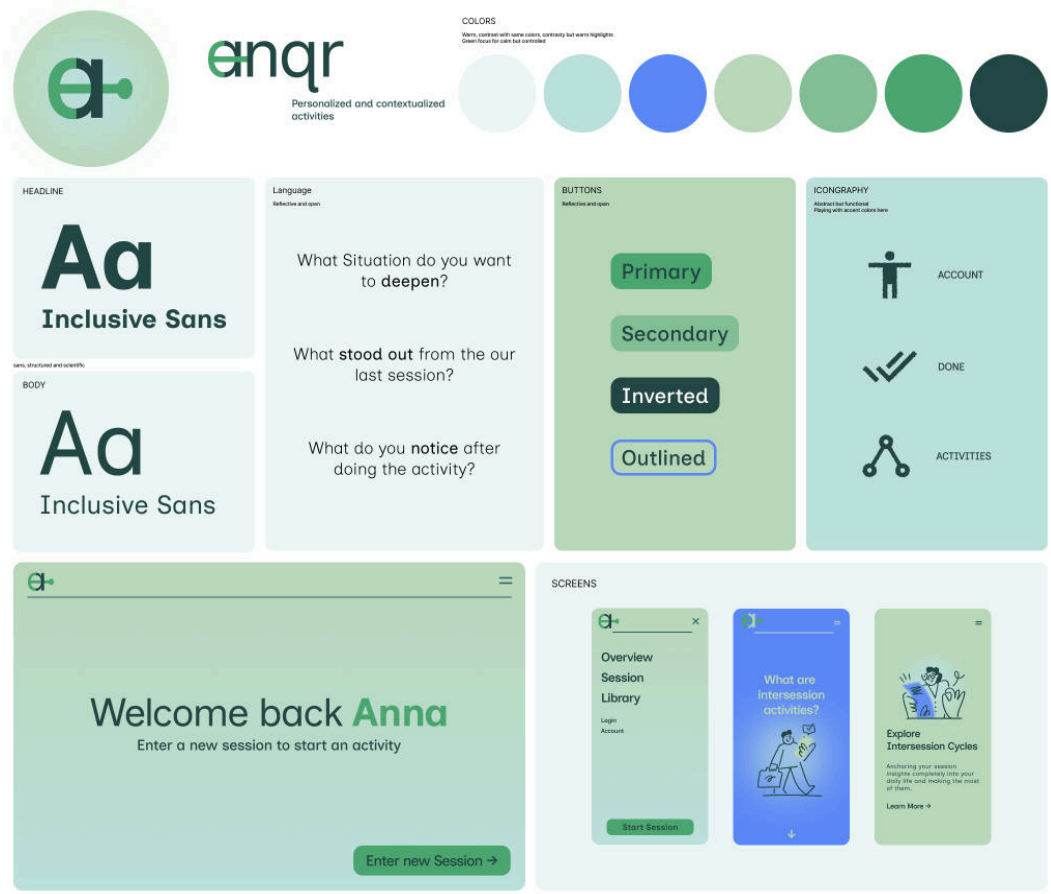


Figure 5: Visual Identity 1 (digital illustration, 2026)



Figure 6: Visual Identity 2 (digital illustration, 2026)

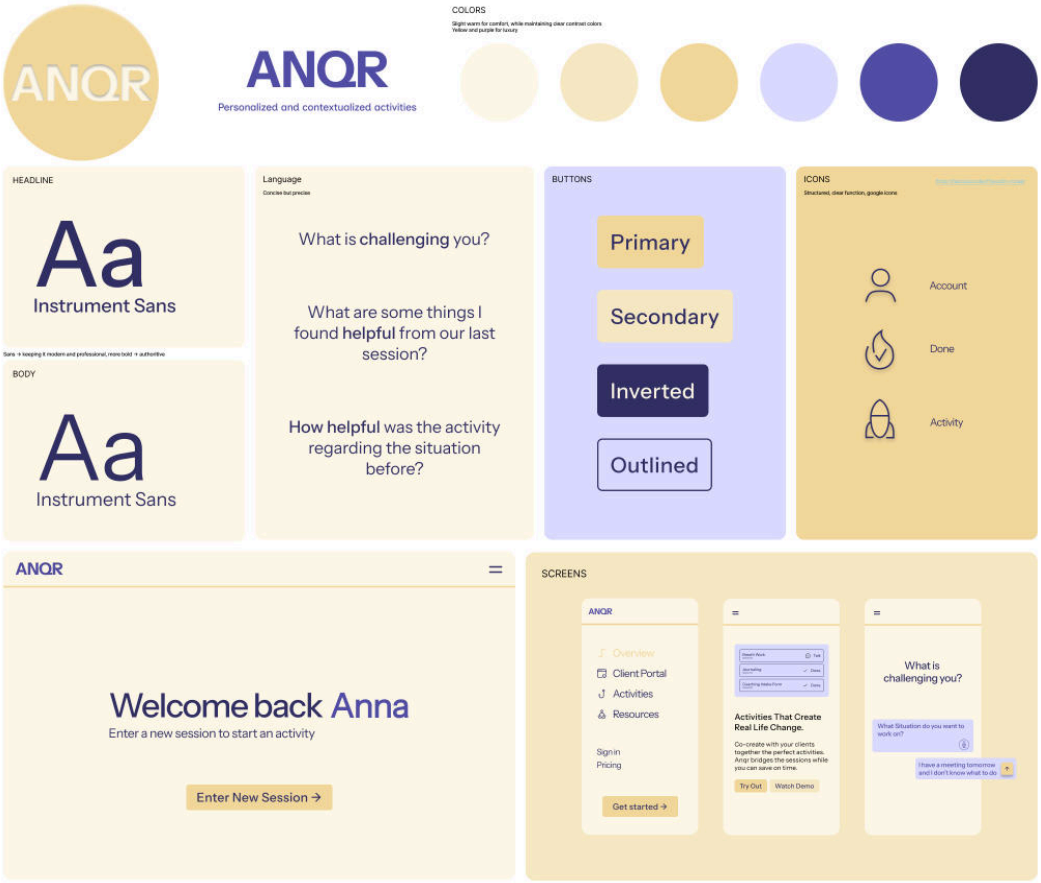


Figure 7: Visual Identity 3 (digital illustration, 2026)

4.2
Prototype Development

4.2.1
Iteration 1

The first iteration was a guided prototype shown to six coaches and five coaching clients. The goal was to test whether the full three-step process made sense as a workflow.
In Step 1, the client submits a post-session summary. Three pre-written scenarios were available (clear intention, intention partially formed, no clear intention). This allowed coaches and clients to experience how different input qualities shaped what followed.
In Step 2, the coach first reviewed the summary and added an optional practice focus, then in a second screen edited, selected and approved activities before they reached the client.
Step 3 was divided into three further moments: the client described a concrete upcoming situation (choosing from three pre-written situations) selected from three generated activities and finally saw the chosen activity anchored to their described situation.

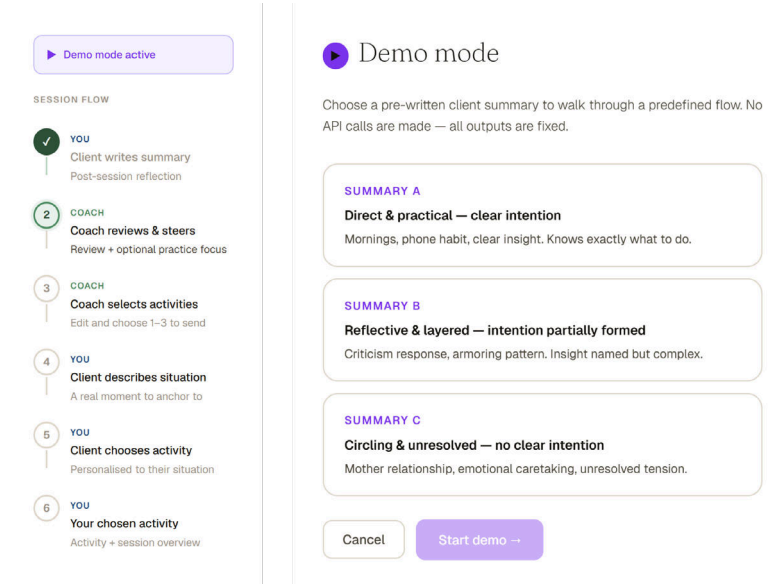


Figure 8: Left: Timeline Prototype 1, shown in prototype itself. Right: The demo mode to choose between different options. (digital photograph, 2026)

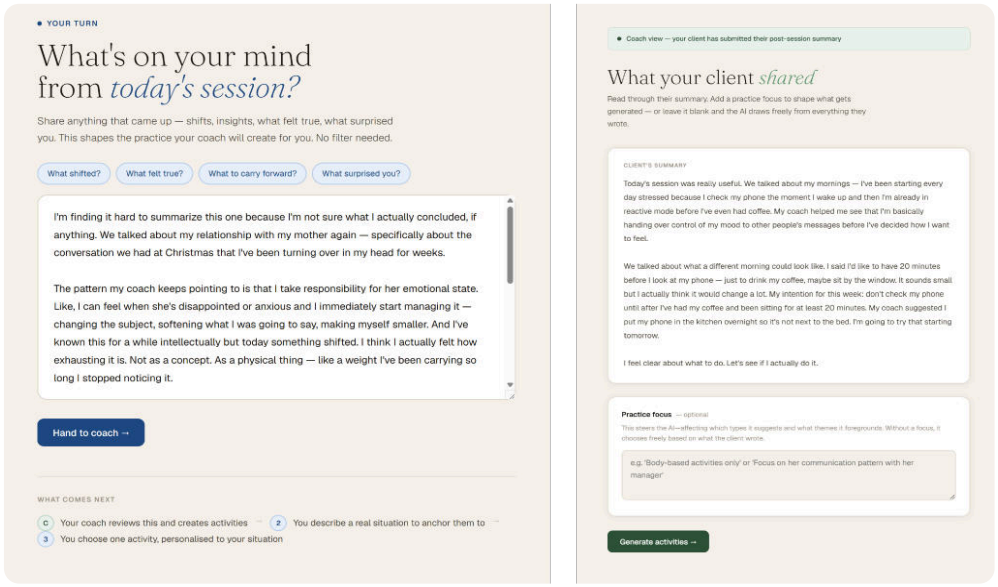


Figure 9: Left: Step 1; the summary being shown. Right: Step 2; coach review into summary (digital photograph, 2026)

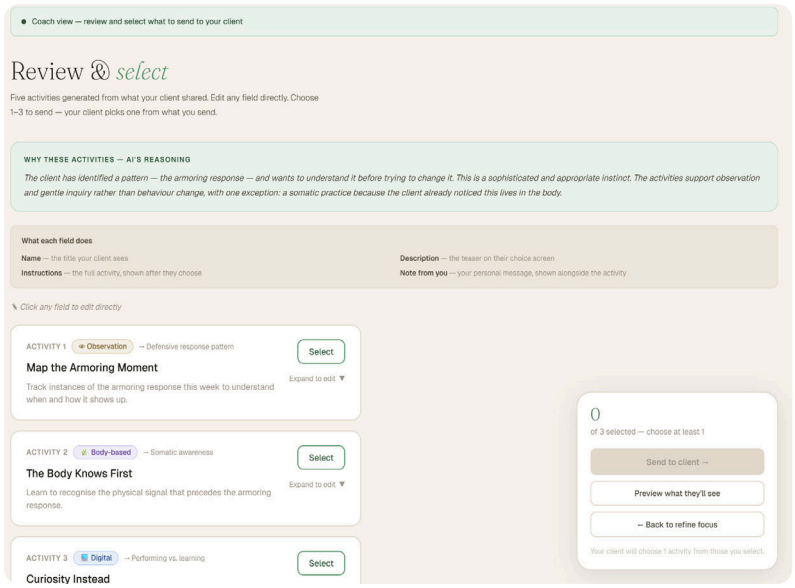


Figure 10: Step 3; coach curation (digital photograph, 2026)

Figure 11: Step 3; coach curation (digital photograph, 2026)

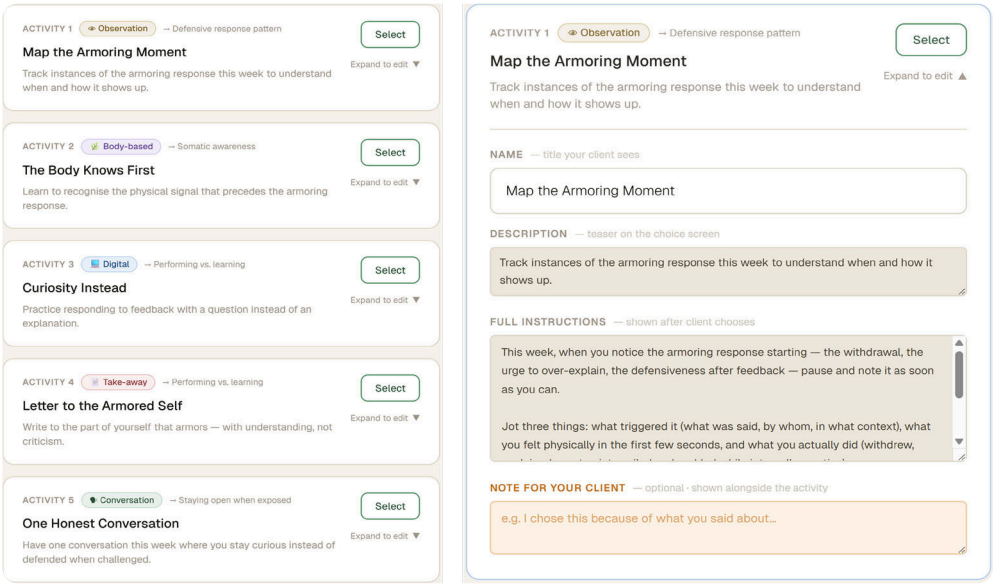
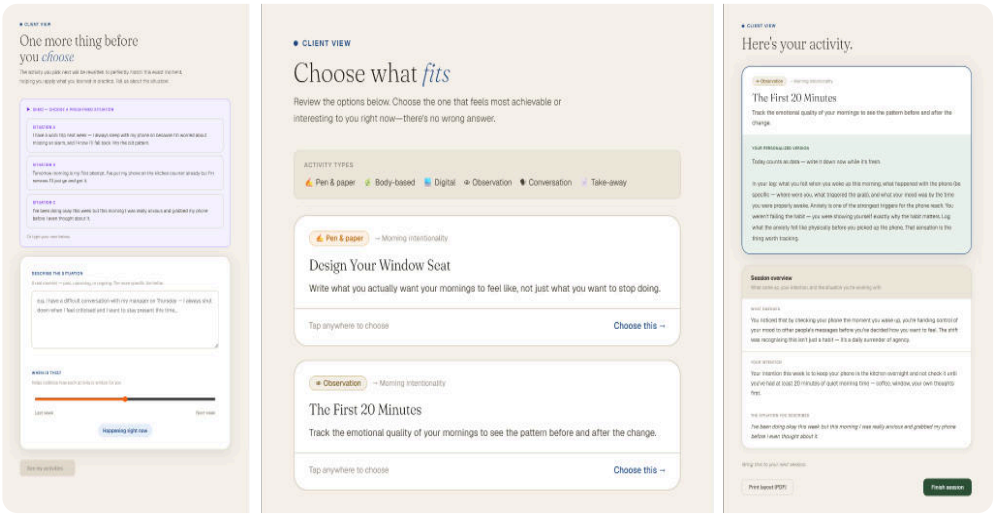


Figure 12: Step 4; adding situation. Step 5; deciding on activity. Step 6; Seeing final activity. (digital photograph, 2026)



The feedback on this flow was direct and consistent. Coaches found the process too long and the back-and-forth between steps felt like an administrative burden. Combining coach and client workflows in a single interface made it difficult to understand whose perspective the system was serving at any given moment.

Presenting the prototype to the participants revealed a structural inconsistency which undermined a predefined design requirement. Although the coach reviewed and approved activities at Step 2, the situational anchoring occurred at Step 3, after that approval. While the coach approved curated activities, the client received AI situation-adapted versions of them.

These findings produced four concrete decisions for the next iteration: radically simplify the number of steps, separate the coach and client interfaces into distinct views, reduce visible options to the minimum required for each action and reposition the situational anchor earlier in the client flow.

4.2.2
Iteration 2

The second iteration separated the system into two distinct prototypes, one coach-facing and one client-facing, tested with five coaches and four clients through guided walkthroughs and semi-structured feedback.

The coach prototype tested the configuration of client activities. Coaches preferred upfront boundary-setting at the start of the process and reviewing outcomes in the following session, rather than gatekeeping each output before delivery. This finding directly contradicted the survey data from Section 3.3.2, where nearly 90% of practitioners preferred pre-delivery oversight. In practice, coaches behaved differently from what they reported preferring.

This does not mean that the preference for control is illegitimate. What could be interpreted is that the prototype reflects a real professional concern, which cannot be generalized based on the small sample of people. Whether upfront configuration genuinely satisfies that professional need or whether it simply reduces friction at the cost of oversight practitioners would still want if something went wrong, is the most consequential unresolved question.

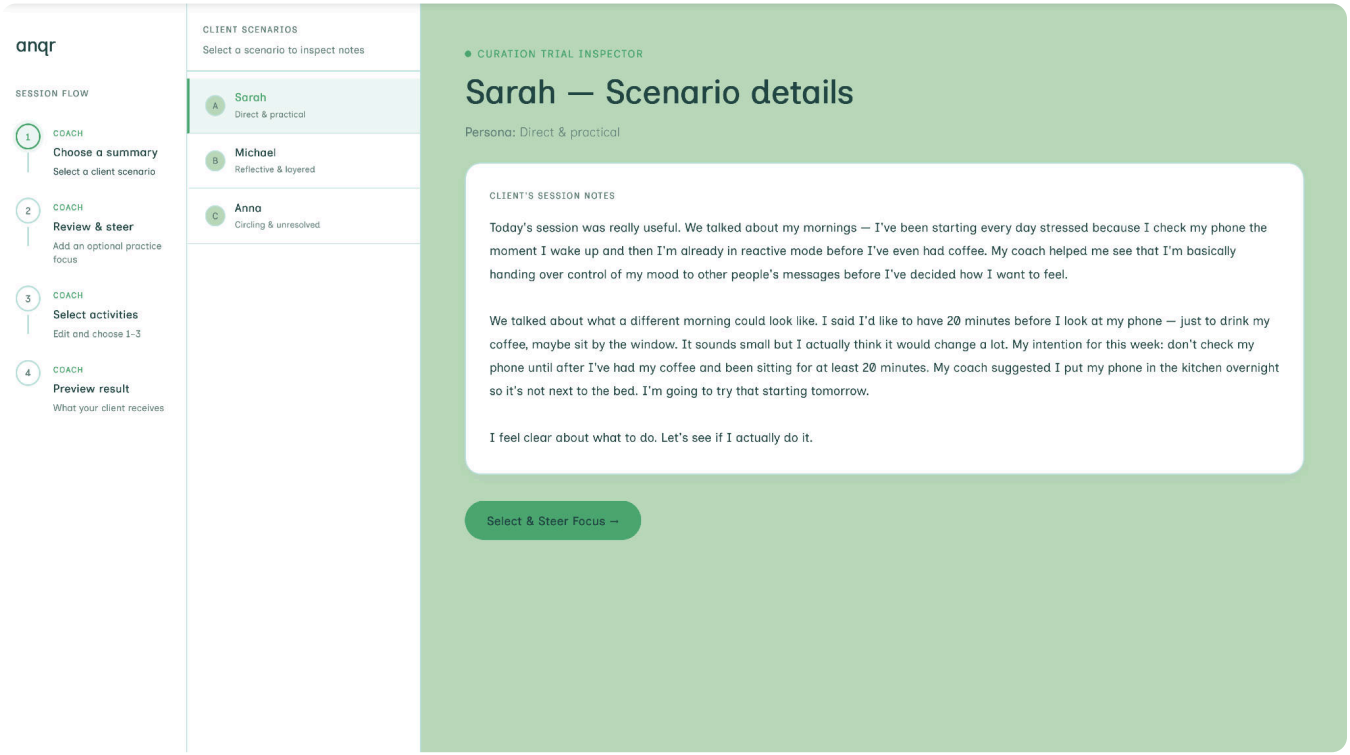


Figure 13: Coach curation prototype: Step 1; Choosing a client summary (digital photograph, 2026)

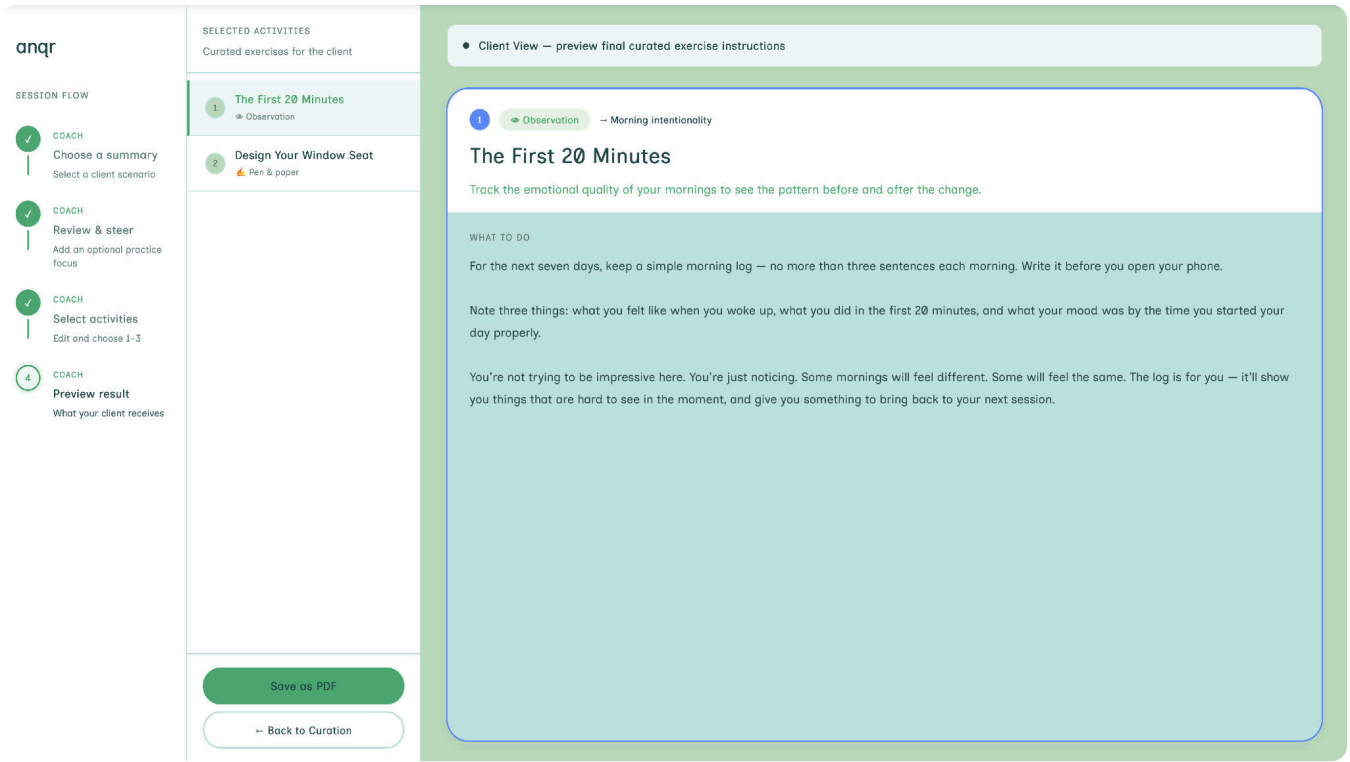


Figure 14: Coach configuration prototype: Step 2; Reviewing and setting focus (digital photograph, 2026)

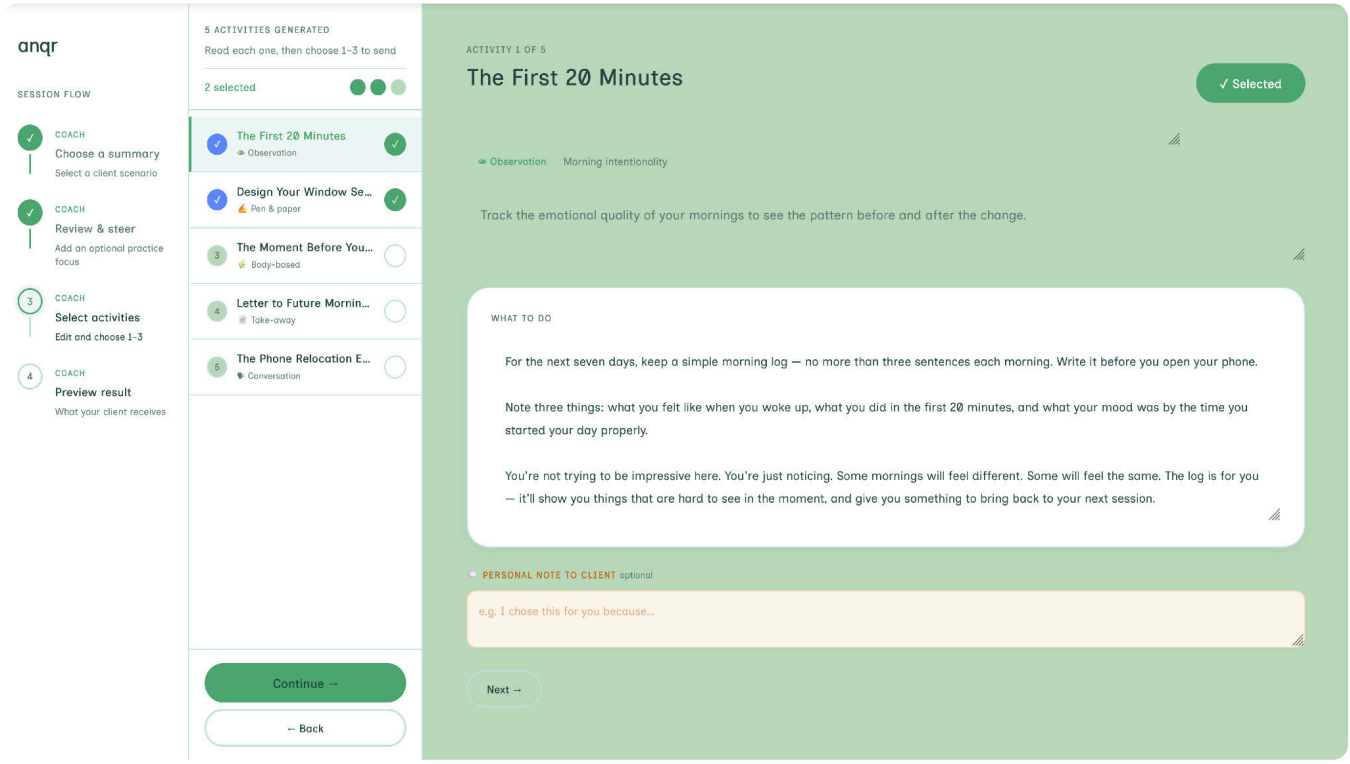


Figure 15: Coach configuration prototype: Step 3; Selecting and editing activities (digital photograph, 2026)

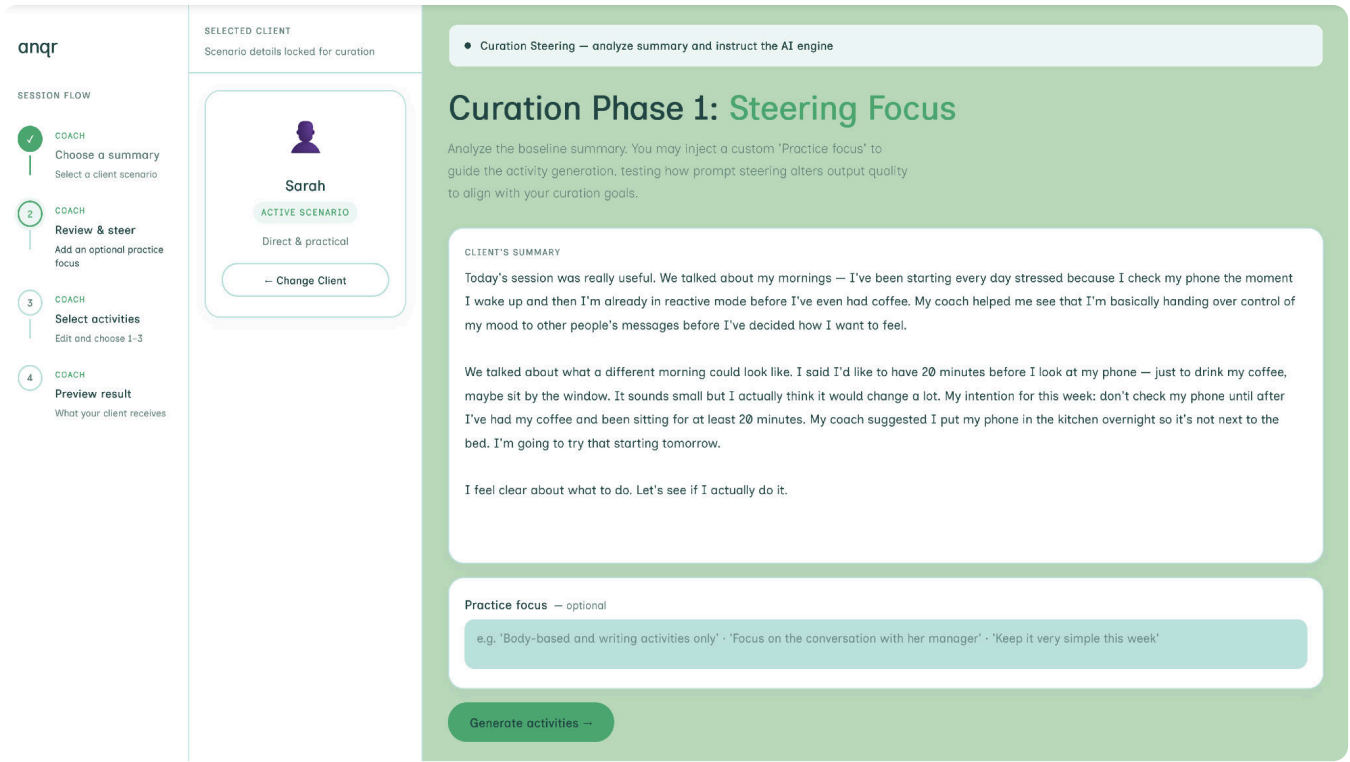
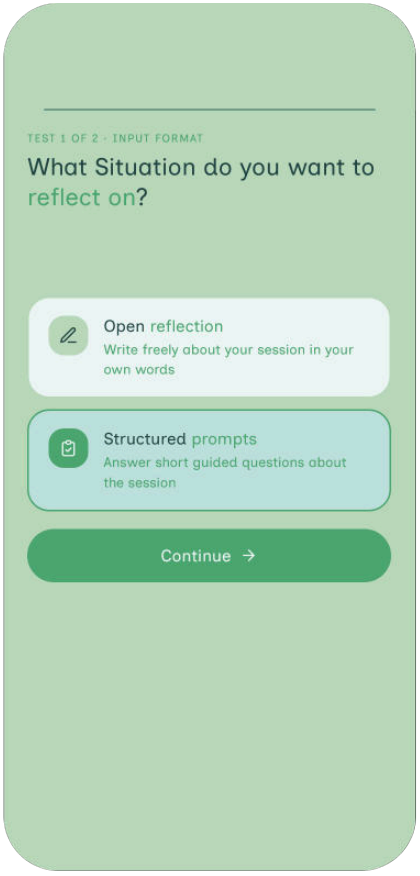


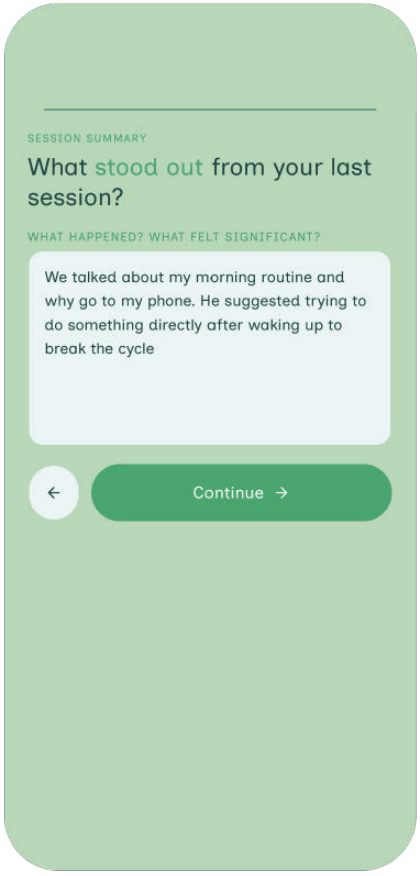
Figure 16: Coach configuration prototype: Step 4; Previewing activities (digital photograph, 2026)

The client prototype tested input format and contextual anchoring. Two input formats were compared: open reflection and structured prompts. Overly structured input felt restrictive while completely open input lacked clarity. Two participants noted that typing into a small digital window limited their willingness to write extensively, with one suggesting voice input.
The critical test compared generic activities (generated from session content alone) with activities linked to real situations (generated after the client described a concrete upcoming situation). All four clients rated anchored activities as more relevant. Two described the difference as immediate: seeing an activity tied to a specific meeting made it feel actionable rather than theoretical.

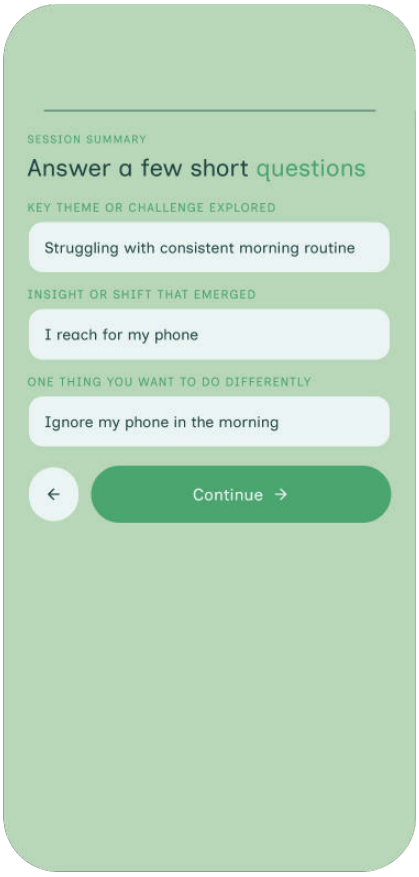
These findings produced two decisions carried into iteration 3: replace mandatory pre-delivery approval with upfront coach configuration and retain situational anchoring as a required step rather than an optional one.



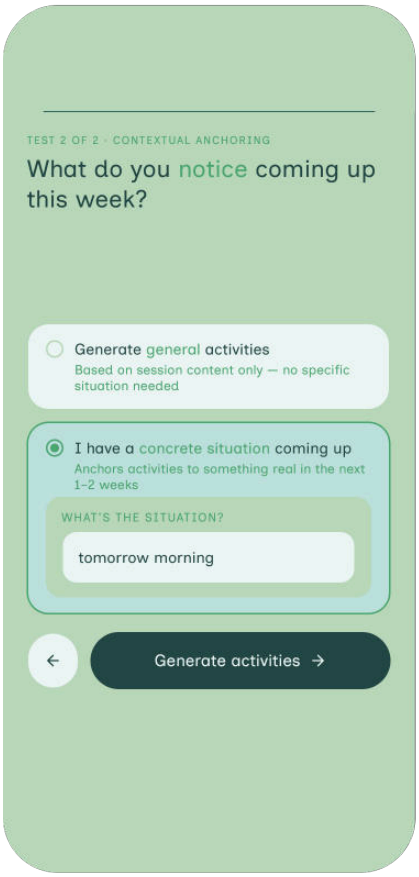
Step 1: Choosing structure



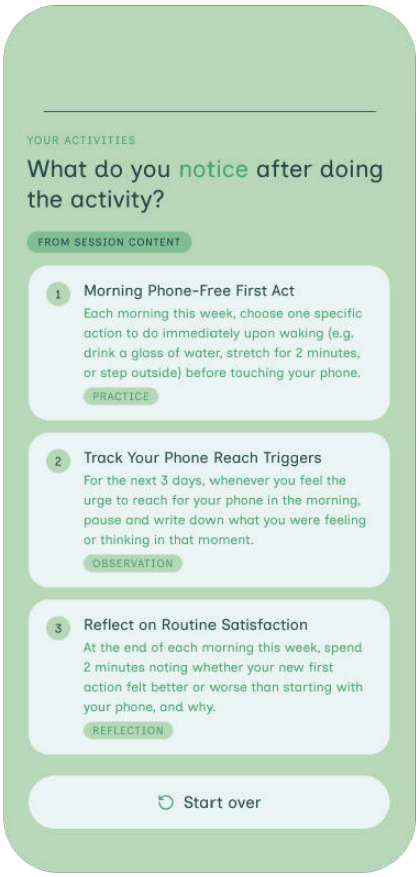
Step 2 Option 1:
Open summary input



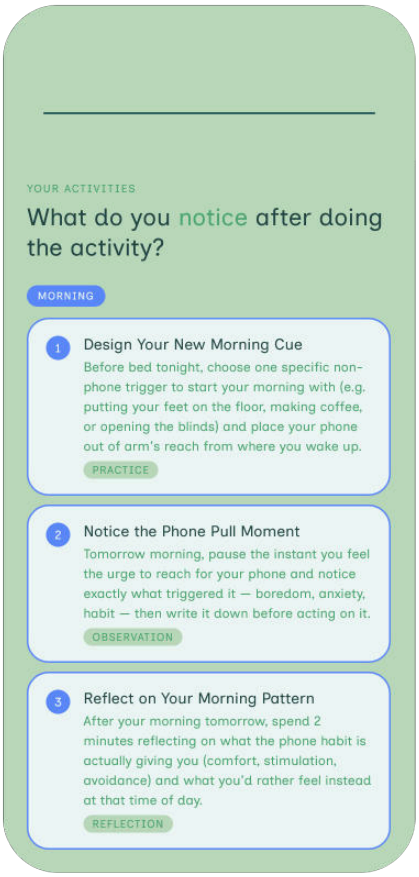
Step 2 Option 2:
Structured summary input



Step 4: Generating activites choosing



Step 5 Option 1: General generated activities



Step 5 Option 2: Situation based activities

Figure 17: Client summary and contextualization prototype. All the different screens shown (digital illustration, 2026)

4.2.3
Visual Redesign

Between iterations 2 and 3, the visual identity was substantially revised with the client experience as the primary frame. Feedback from testing had suggested the layout felt task-heavy. Clients especially described it as more like a form than a reflective tool.The redesign moved toward warmer colours, more generous spacing and UI language framed as questions rather than instructions.

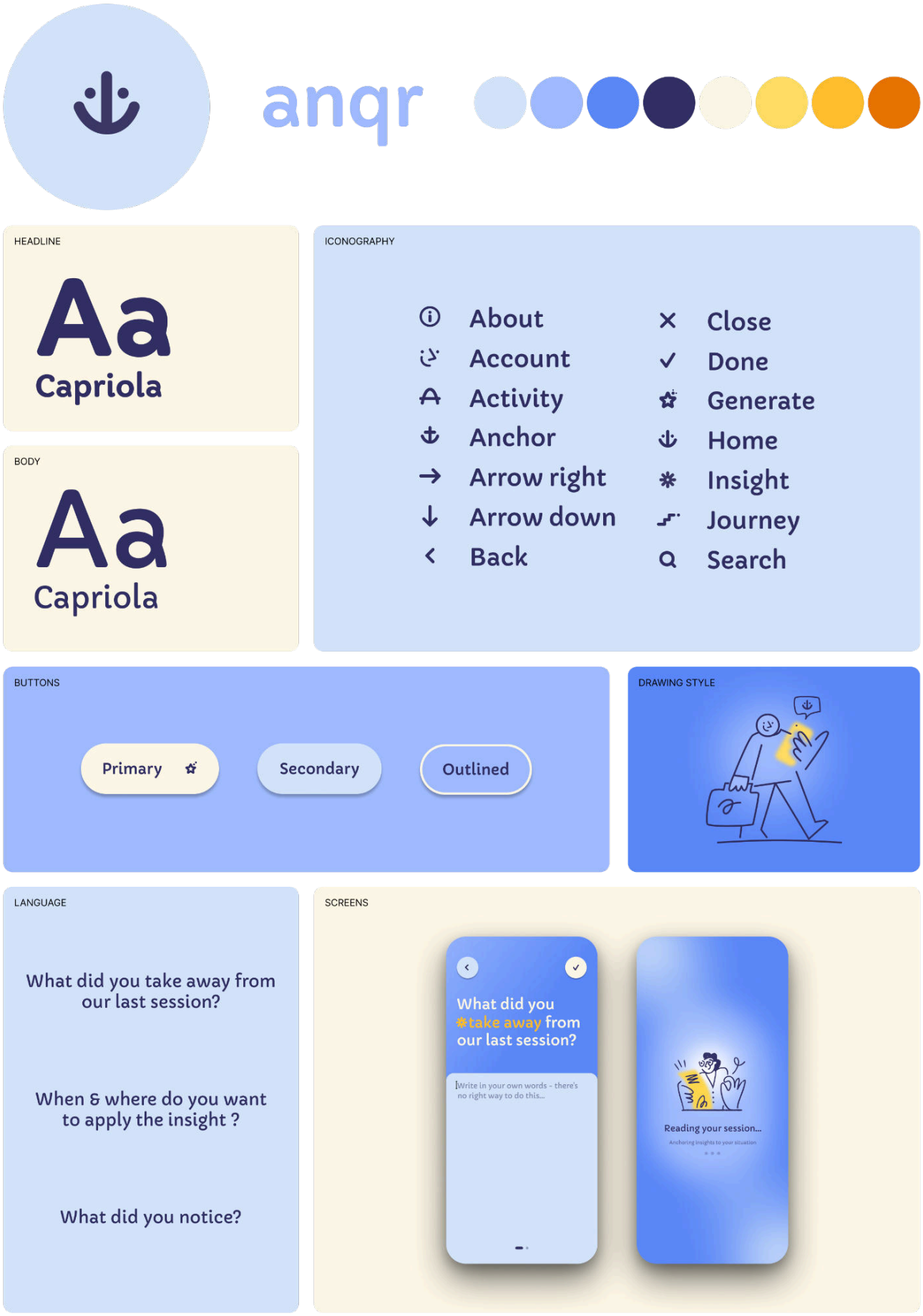


Figure 18: Visual Identity redesign to a lighter, more user friendly look (digital illustration, 2026)

4.2.4
Iteration 3

With mandatory pre-delivery coach approval removed and direct delivery implemented, the relationship between input and output quality became immediately visible to testers. The client workflow was reduced to four moments: post-session reflection, immediate activity generation, lightweight feedback and a final visualization of the session.

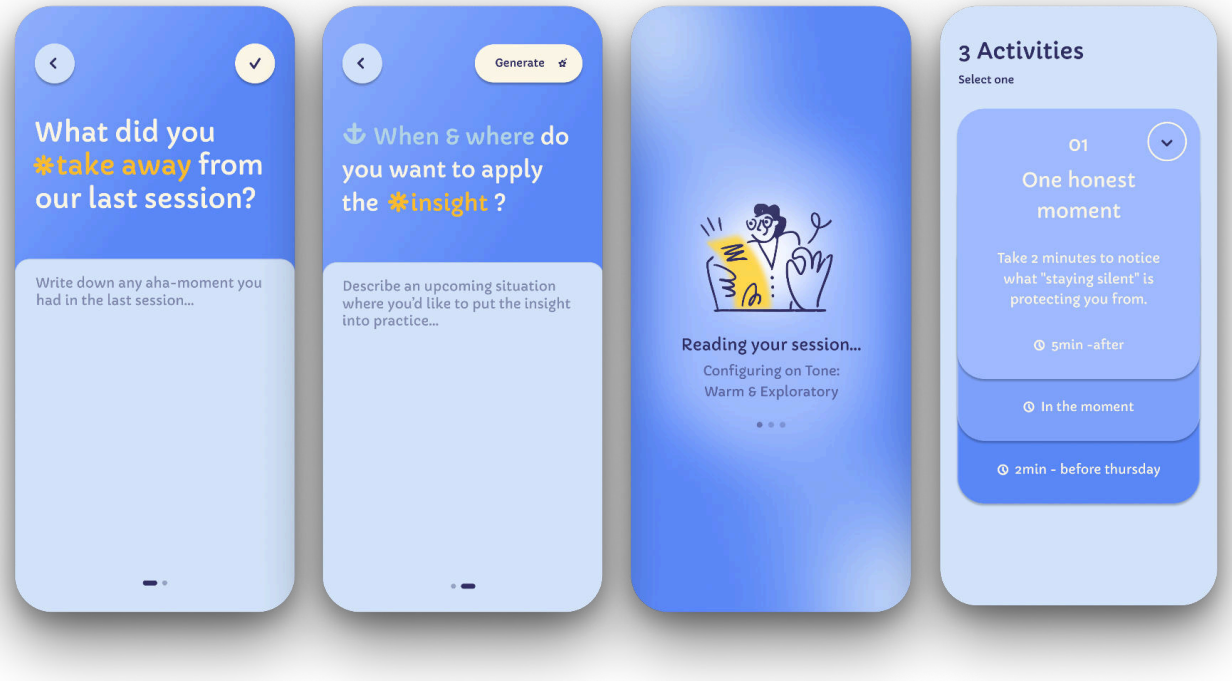


Figure 19: The activity generation screens (digital illustration, 2026)

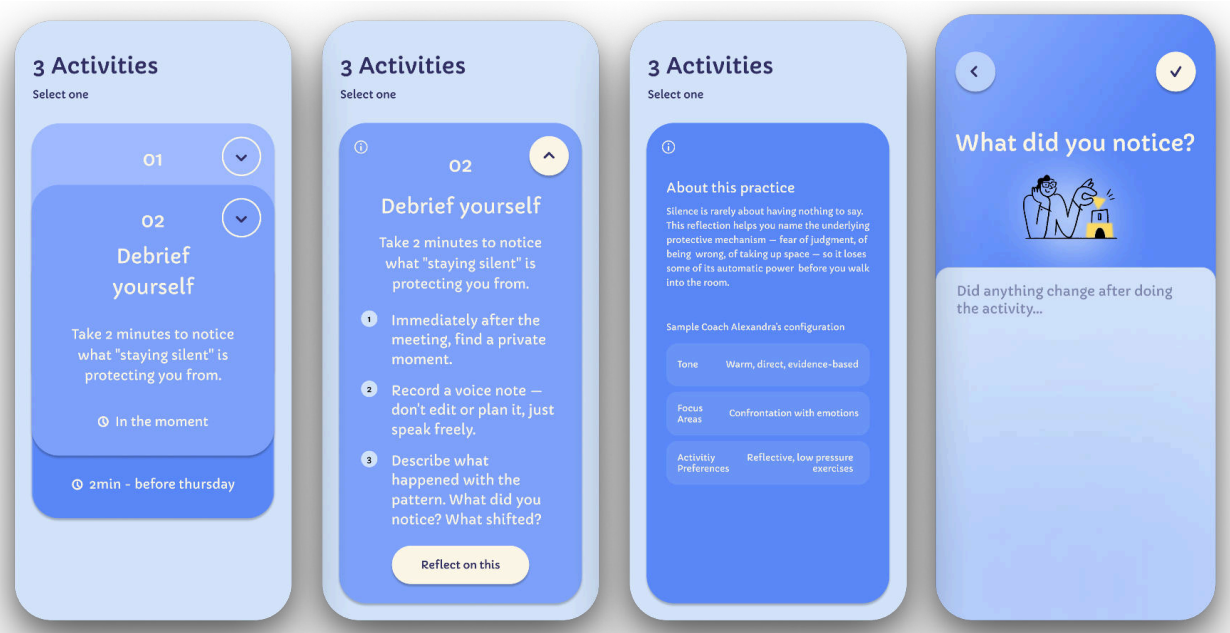


Figure 20: The activity generation screens (digital illustration, 2026)

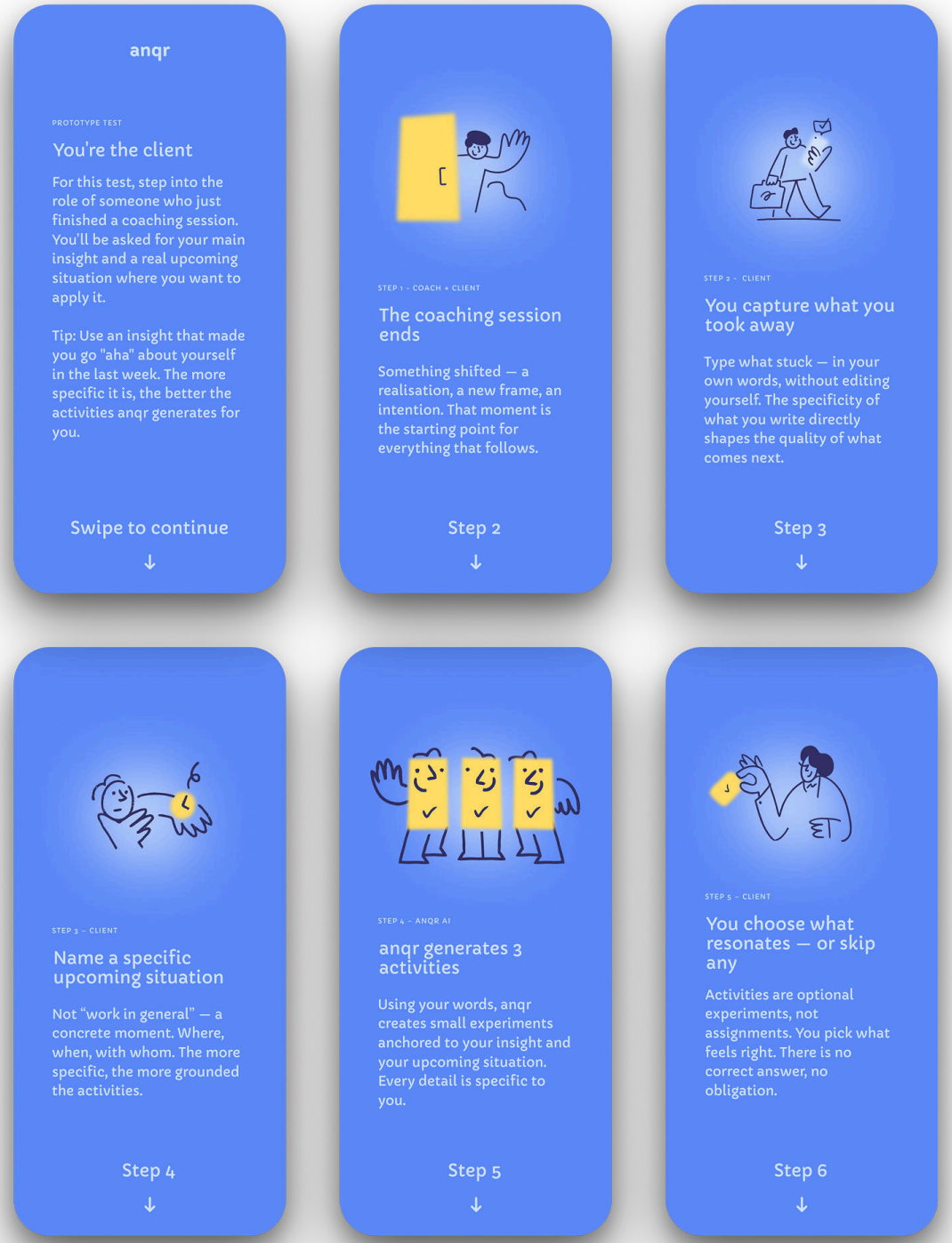


Fig 21: Onboarding for testing, explaining the whole user flow (digital illustration, 2026)

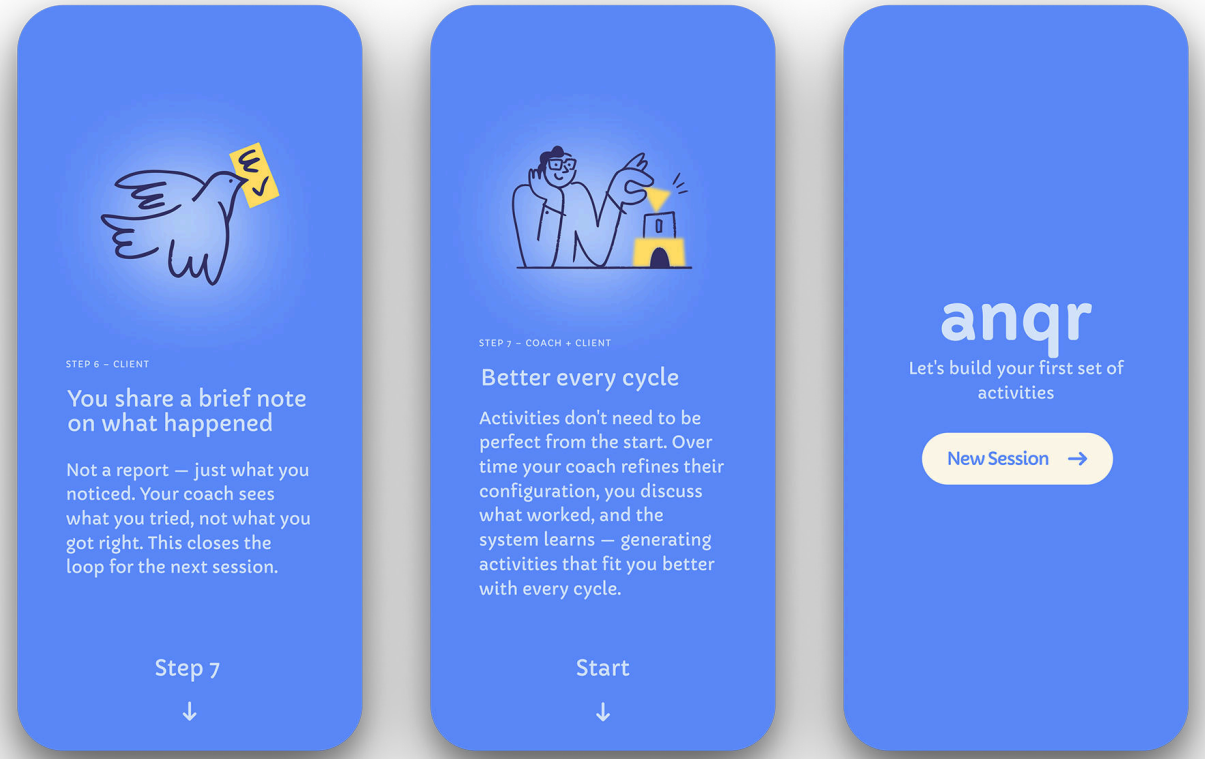
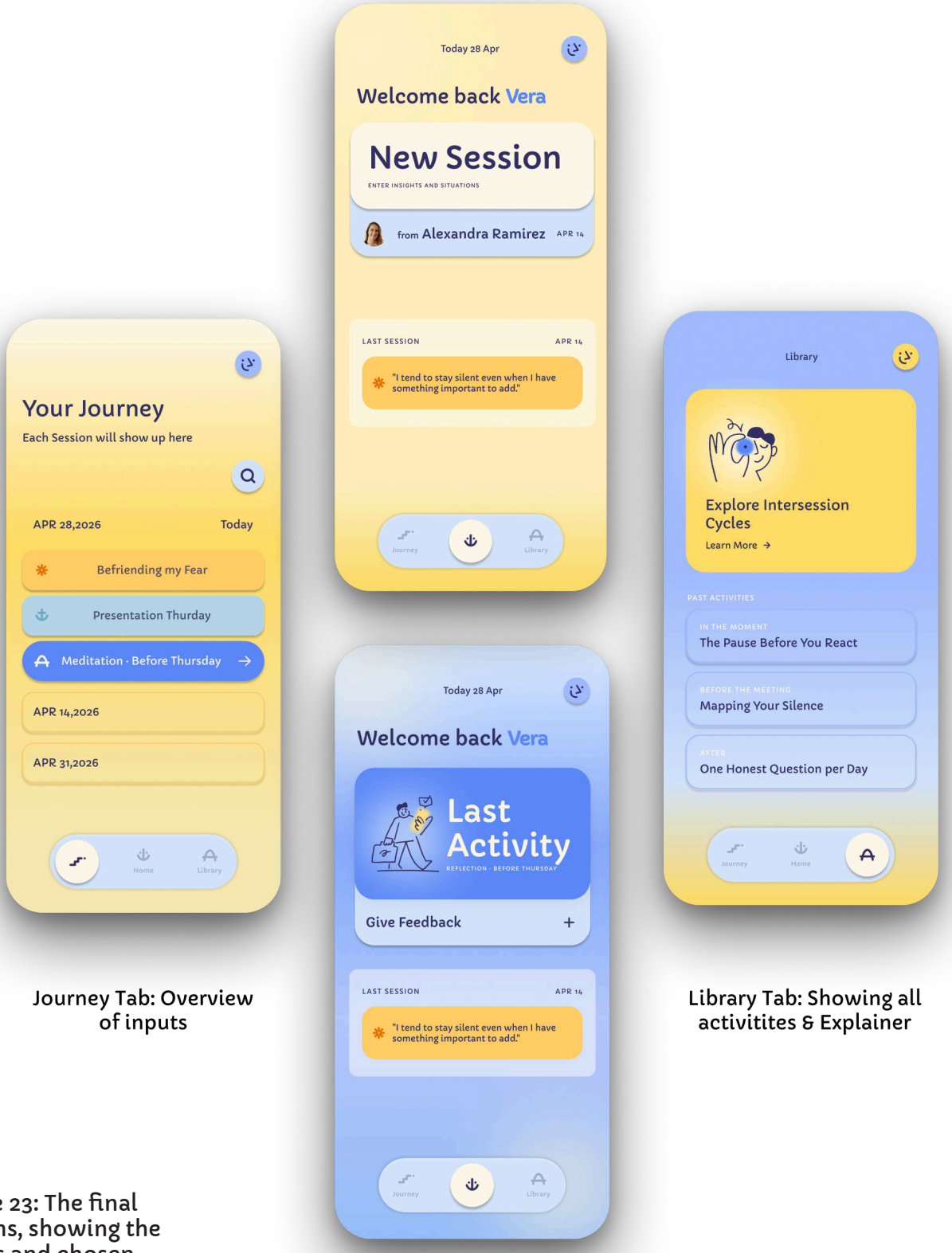


Fig 22: Onboarding for testing, explaining the whole user flow (digital illustration, 2026)



Journey Tab: Overview of inputs

Home Tab: Showing recent activity in two ways

Library Tab: Showing all activitites & Explainer

Figure 23: The final screens, showing the inputs and chosen activity (digital illustration, 2026)

The client prototype tested input format and contextual anchoring. Two input formats were compared: open reflection and structured prompts. Overly structured input felt restrictive while completely open input lacked clarity. Two participants noted that typing into a small digital window limited their willingness to write extensively, with one suggesting voice input.
The critical test compared generic activities (generated from session content alone) with activities linked to real situations (generated after the client described a concrete upcoming situation). All four clients rated anchored activities as more relevant. Two described the difference as immediate: seeing an activity tied to a specific meeting made it feel actionable rather than theoretical.

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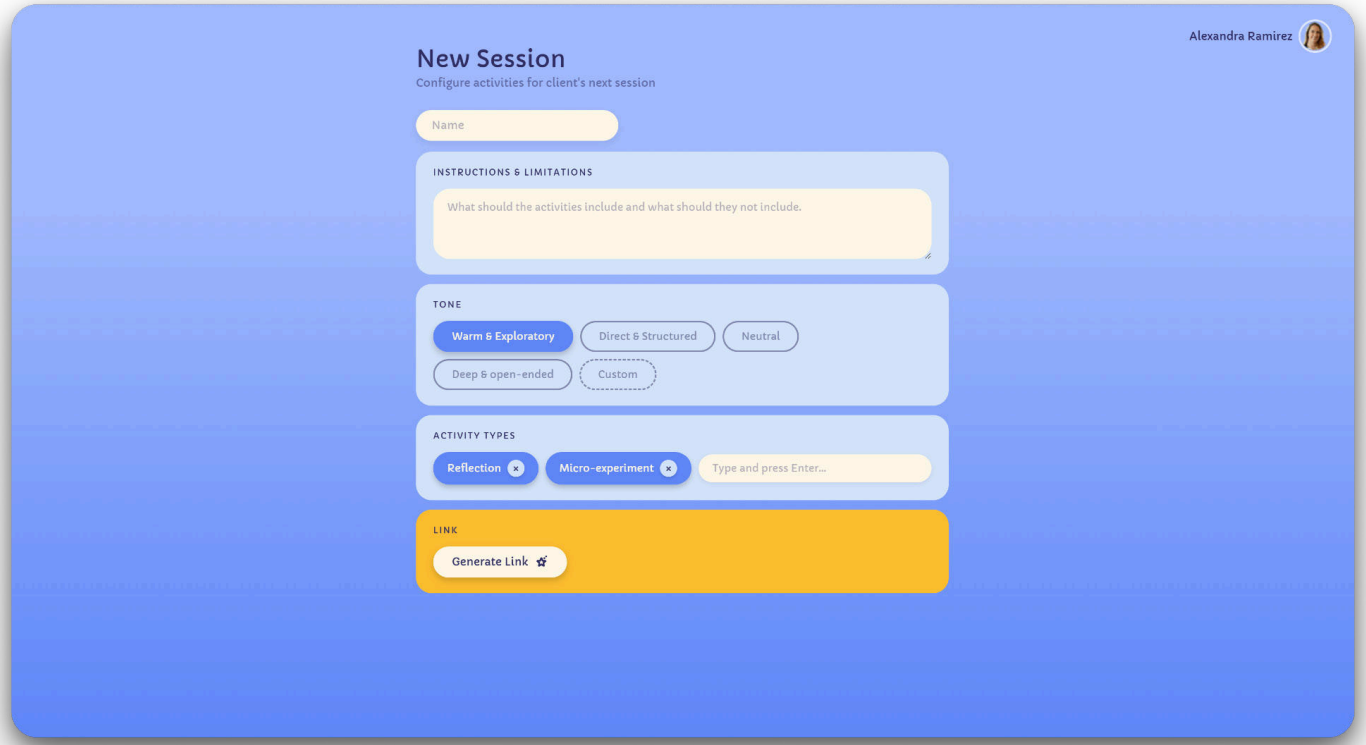


Figure 24: Configuration screen for coaches (digital photograph, 2026)

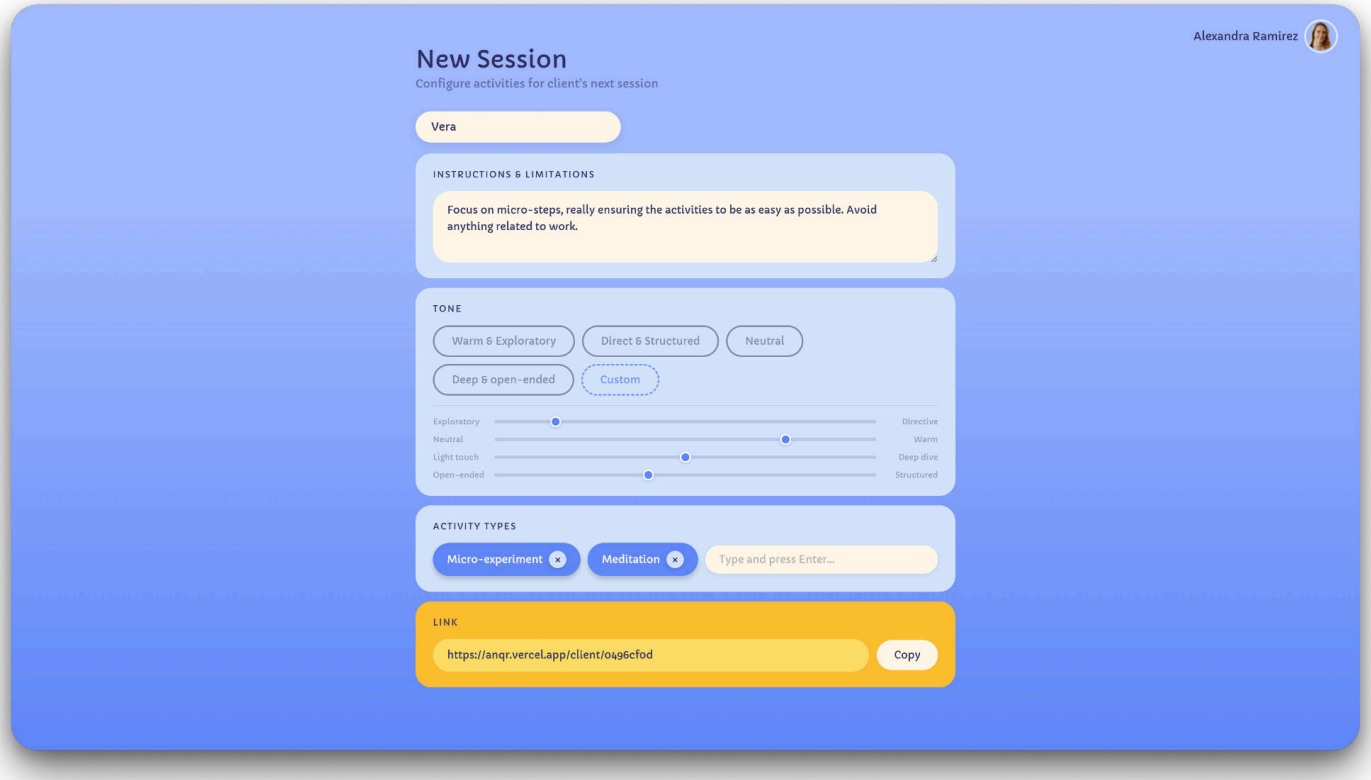


Figure 25: The configuration filled out with the link (digital photograph, 2026)

Testing involved sending the application link to coaches, clients and a wider group of people outside the coaching context, resulting in 15 testers in total. The core flow was well understood across all groups. Participants moved through it without explanation and grasped the relationship between input and output quality unprompted.

Activity quality was broadly received as helpful and relevant. One coach noted that outputs could feel like common-sense responses when the session summary was vague and that greater input specificity would likely improve what was generated, reflecting the sensitivity to input quality identified in Section 3.3.3. A related request came from a coach wanting more operational detail in the activities themselves: the direction felt right but the instructions too thin to act on confidently.

The most consistent piece of feedback concerned content visibility after a session closed. Three participants said it bothered them that completed activities were no longer accessible and three others wanted to retain their coach feedback as a personal note, suggesting the closing state of the journey screen needed rethinking. One participant whose activity involved recording a voice memo asked whether this could be done directly inside the application.

The onboarding sequence created friction before the core flow began. The final screens (welcome, progress visualisation and library) presented too much information without clear orientation or hierarchy. The journey and library views displayed substantially overlapping content, differentiated only by filtering logic, which users found redundant rather than complementary.

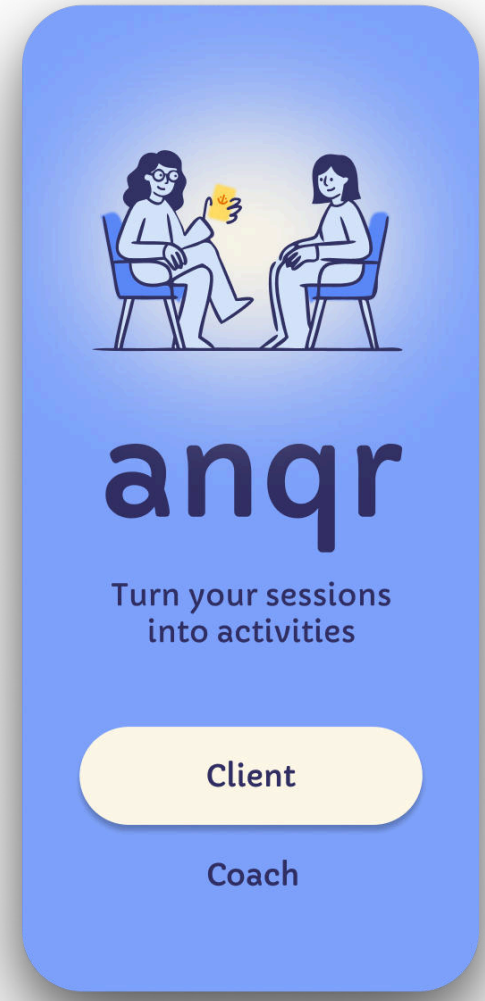
4.2.5
Final Iteration

The final iteration addresses the structural problems identified in Iteration 3 testing. Due to time constraints, it was not tested with users and design decisions were driven by the problems identified in Iteration 3 rather than new data. This iteration represents the final design as an informed design response. Two changes carry the most weight.

Voice input, proposed by clients in Iteration 2 (4.2.2), was integrated into the activity generation step. Clients can now speak their summary and contextual situation directly rather than type, lowering the friction at the moment where input quality most determines output quality. Second, the three separate tab screens from Iteration 3 (Journey, Home and Library) were collapsed into a single journey screen, addressing the structural duplication and orientation problems testers had identified.

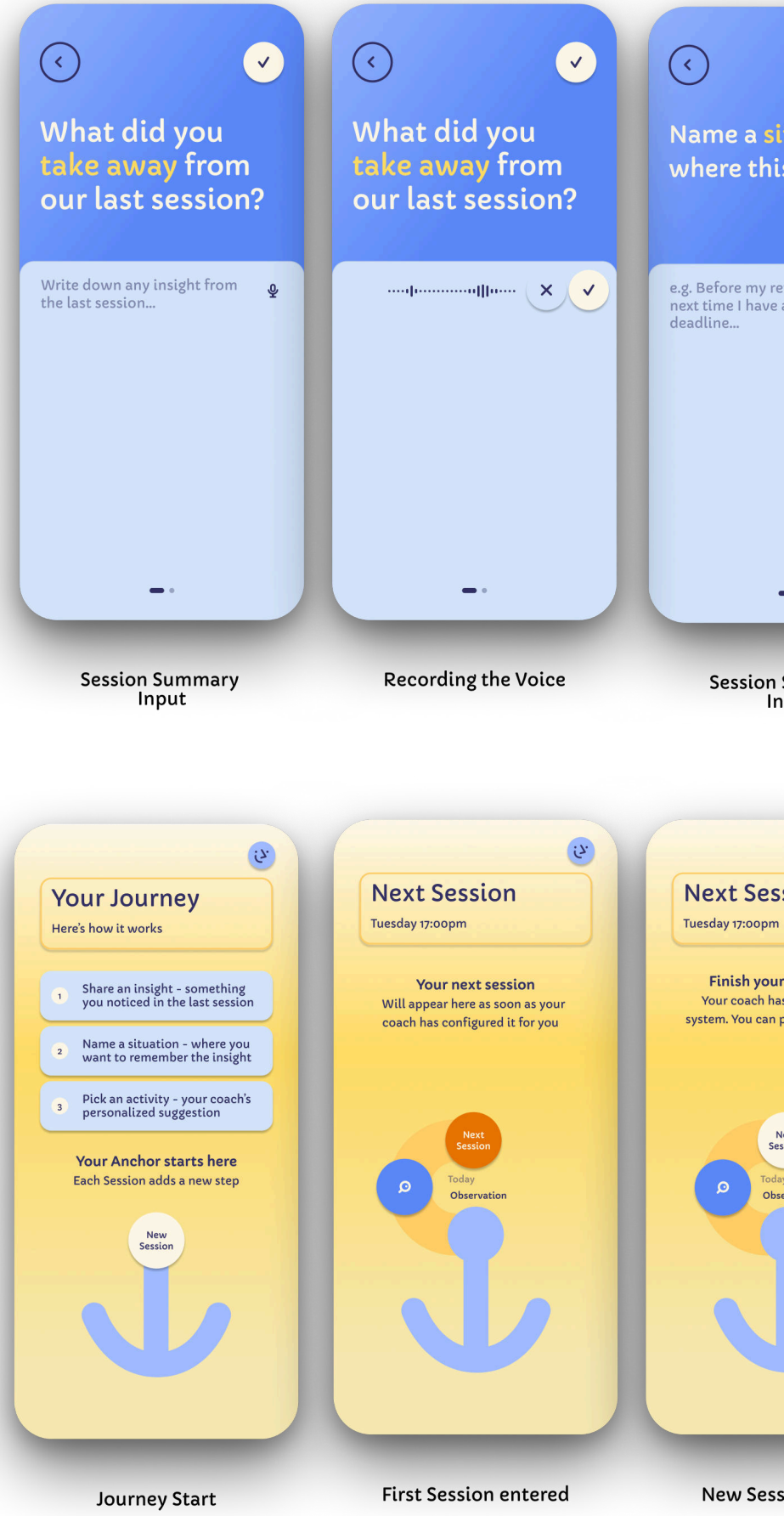
The journey screen returns to the concept the system is named for. Each session adds a new point to a rope and with each added point the anchor lowers further, visualising the idea that insights are progressively anchored into daily life rather than accumulated as a flat list.

The screen is state-dependent and adapts to where the client is in the cycle, moving through three states. Before the coach has configured the system, the screen shows a passive placeholder waiting for configuration. Once configured, the placeholder becomes an active button opening the activity generation flow. After the client completes the cycle, the screen surfaces the entered insight, situation, chosen activity and feedback as a new rope point, then reverts to anticipating the next session.

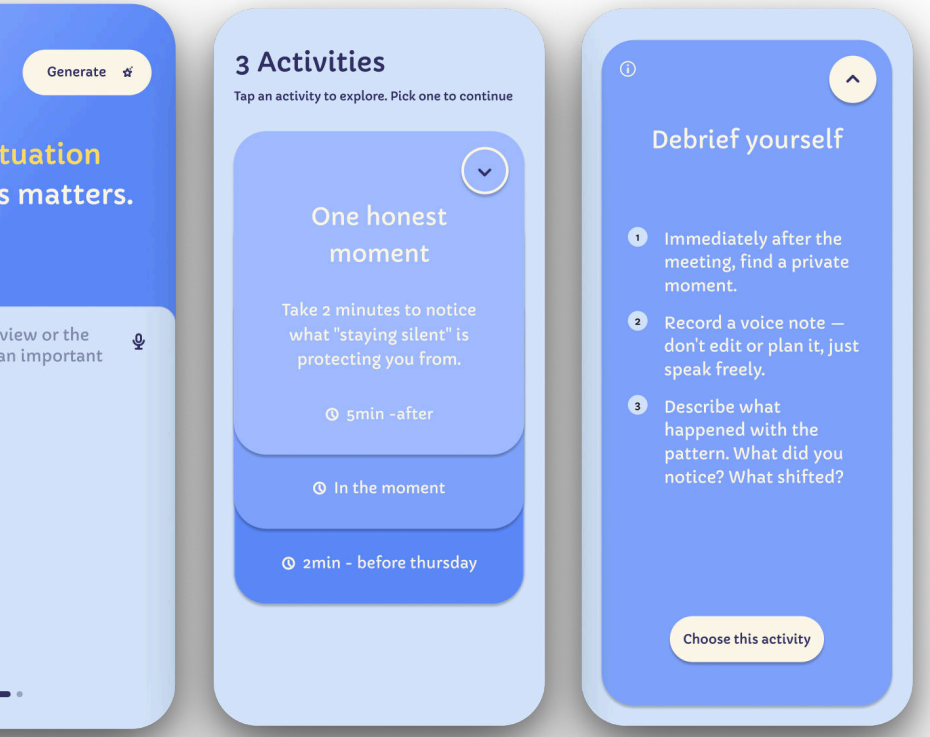


Start screen of the application

Figure 26: Entry Point for the application (digital illustration, 2026)



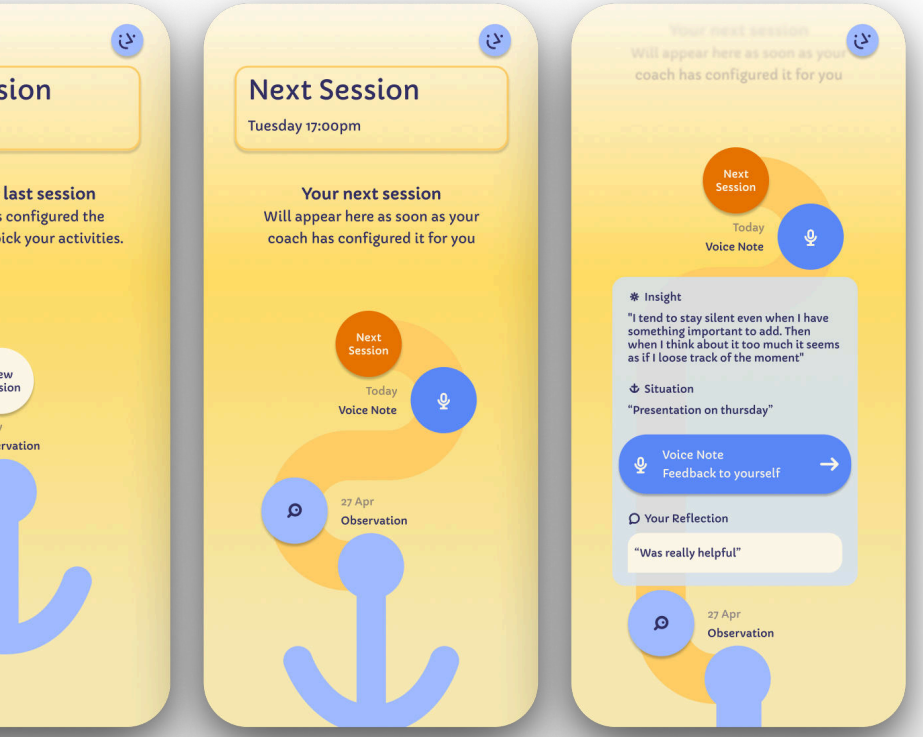
Figur 27: The Activity Generation Process (Digital Illustration, 2026)



Summary
put

Activity cards stacked

Activity card open



ion active

Second session entered

Second Session
details open

Figur 28: Journey Screens at different stages in the coaching process.

4.2.6
Final User Flow

Figure 26 shows the full loop. The coach configures once, the client reflects, generates and chooses.Before the next session the coach can review and use the results as preparation.

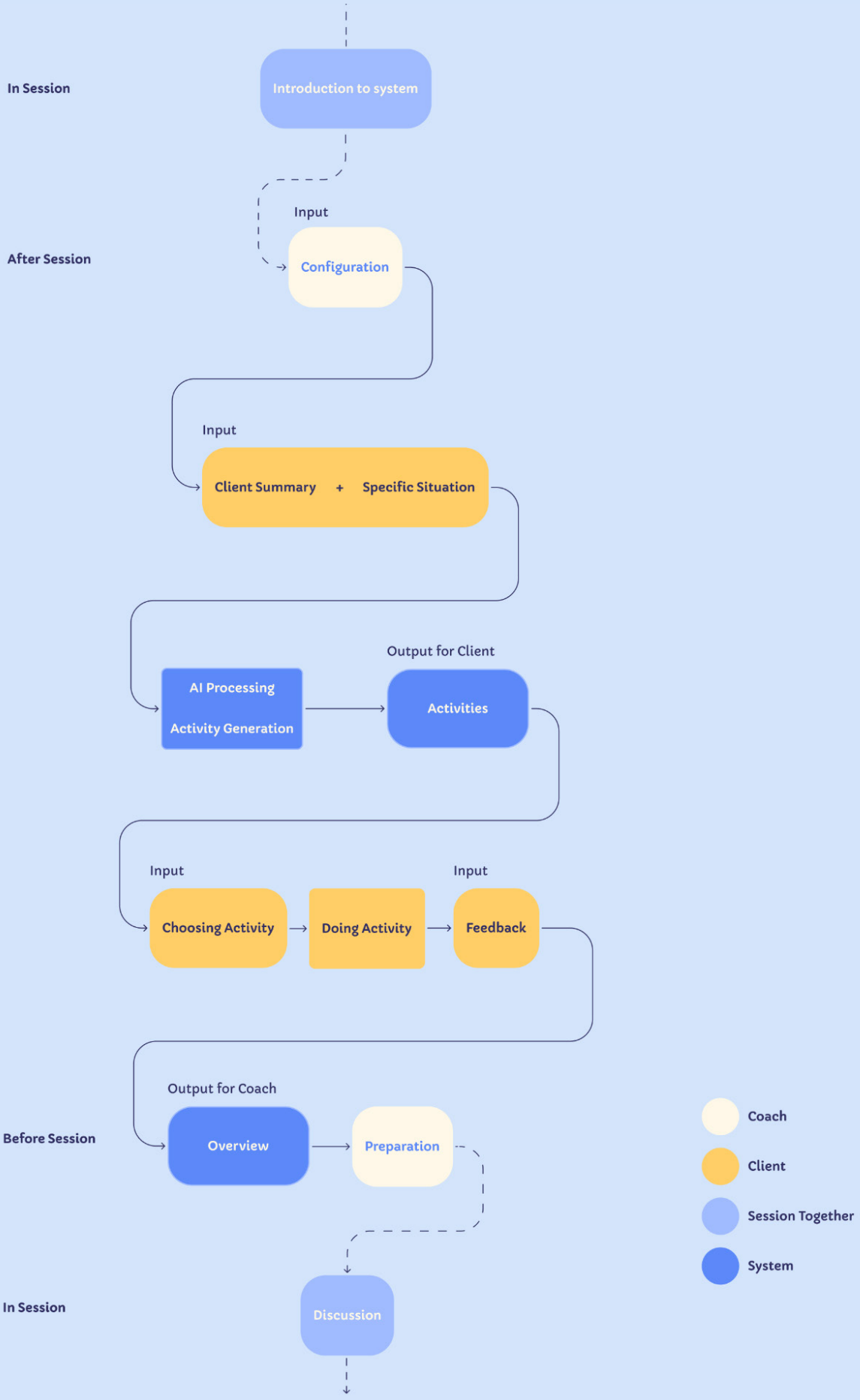


Figure 29: Final User Flow (digital illustration, 2026)

4.3
Synthesis and Limitations

4.3.1
Evaluation against HMW

“HMW translate session insights into activities that remain meaningful once the client returns to daily life?”, is addressed at the point of generation, rather than at the point of action. Situational anchoring made activities feel immediately relevant (4.2.2). But the system has no mechanism for surfacing an activity at the moment it matters. A well-anchored activity the client never returns to achieves nothing. Calendar integration and notifications were proposed and excluded. This HMW is half-answered.

“HMW Reconnect clients to the emotional quality of an insight at the moment it is most behaviourally relevant?”, remains unanswered and cannot be within this design frame. The felt experience cannot be captured by summaries alone. Voice input partially helps at capture but whether emotional register survives transcription into a prompt is untested. Resolving this requires a different input modality entirely.

“HMW Give coaches efficient curation control without adding administrative burden?”, is answered differently than intended. Upfront configuration was preferred in practice but whether it satisfies the oversight need remains untested.

“HMW Use the client’s own language so activities feel personally owned rather than generically assigned?”, is resolved through prompt design, but entirely input-dependent. The system mirrors input quality, however: clients who write in general terms receive activities in general terms and the prototype has no mechanism for detecting insufficient input or guiding clients toward greater specificity.

“HMW Frame activities as invitations for exploration rather than tasks to complete?” is explored through language, unvalidated in behaviour. Prompt framing reliably shifted outputs from prescriptive to exploratory. Testers experienced activities as optional. But optionality in a single session is not the same as sustained autonomy across cycles. If clients return for activities rather than developing their own capacity to anchor insights, the invitation framing becomes a retention hook. This requires long-term testing to resolve.

4.3.2
Self-Evaluation and Limitations

At the level of method, the evidence base is narrow at every stage. The foundational expert interviews drew on nine participants, introducing a degree of selection bias. The survey distributed via LinkedIn yielded thirty responses, was not piloted before distribution and was customized based on interview themes rather than validated scales. The concept evaluation drew on five coaches and three clients, small counts that are appropriate for identifying structural issues but insufficient for broader claims. The technology experiment introduced a further constraint of scoring the result as only one person and as the person writing the prompts against rubric criteria that were not fully operationalised and the experiment was run on a single model snapshot (Anthropic, 2026)[9]. Across all stages of the iterations, evidence is self-reported rather than behavioural and no control condition or comparison group was used.

9
Claude Sonnet 4.6 in April

The tension between upfront configuration and per-activity oversight (HMW 3) is the most consequential open question and is discussed above. The system also mirrors input quality. Output quality depends on summary and configuration quality and the prototype cannot detect or correct insufficient input. Onboarding friction (identified in Iteration 3) and voice input were not tested with users due to time constraint. Spoken reflection preserves emotional register and tone that typed summaries flatten, partially addressing the affective capture limitation scoped out (Section 3.4.2). Across all three iterations, a consistent meta-finding emerged: reducing complexity for both roles proved more important than expanding functionality.

Within the defined boundaries, testing was conducted over a short timeframe, across a culturally and linguistically narrow participant pool. Generative and co-design findings are best read as design input rather than validation. Evaluation claims, particularly around sustained engagement or behavioural follow-through, would require independent long-term study outside the scope of this thesis.

4.4
Ethics, Inclusion, Accessibility and Sustainability

4.4.1
Ethical Considerations of working with AI

The AI's role is limited: it translates session content into structured activity suggestions. It does not interpret emotional states, assess client readiness or make decisions about what a client needs. These functions remain with the coach, who preconfigures the AI system with instructions, boundaries, tone and activity types based on the client. Practitioners described their role as supporting self-directed discovery (Section 3.3.1).

Session summaries may reference relationships, professional conflicts or personal vulnerabilities. In the current prototype, this content is processed but not retained after activity generation. This reflects a design intention rather than a verified system property. Retention behaviour depends on the policies of the infrastructure providers involved. Any deployed version would need to formalize data governance through encryption, retention limits and transparent communication to both coaches and clients about what happens to their data.

The system is positioned within established, non-clinical coaching relationships. Practitioners identified severe trauma, crisis situations and early-stage relationships as contexts where AI involvement is inappropriate (Section 3.3.2). This boundary is embedded in the design rationale and would need to become a formal constraint in any deployed version through onboarding guidelines or content filters.

4.4.2
Inclusion and different Needs or Clients

Activities are generated from session content rather than predefined libraries, reflecting the client's vocabulary and situation. Coach preconfiguration adds a second adaptation layer and clients can reinterpret or skip activities rather than follow fixed instructions.
A clearer limit concerns modality. The MVP generates text-based outputs, assuming clients who process through writing. Expert interviews were explicit that this assumption does not hold across clients (Section 2.3.2). Audible, somatic or visual formats would open the system to clients whose reflection happens outside text, a requirement for subsequent versions.

4.4.3
Accessibility

The primary accessibility challenge is cognitive load and workflow integration rather than basic access. The interface uses high-contrast type, generous spacing and a limited interaction vocabulary to keep post-session input low-effort. WCAG compliance was not formally audited and would be required for deployment.
A structural limit remains: coaching itself is predominantly accessed by those who can pay privately. This system deepens support for those already inside the relationship rather than widening access to it.

4.4.4
Sustainability

Success for the platform would mean “eventual disengagement”, which distinguishes the system from wellness applications optimised for engagement. Over time, the intended goal is to decrease reliance: clients learn to anchor insights to situations on their own and the tool becomes secondary.

Computationally, the system generates a small set of activities per session cycle on demand rather than running continuous inference. Because inputs are pre-structured through the coach configuration and the client’s situational anchor, the model receives directed prompts and produces usable output in fewer inference calls than the open-ended exchanges clients typically have with general-purpose LLMs.

The coach’s involvement prevents clients from treating AI output as authoritative rather than as material for reflection. The system’s purpose is to support the development of reflective capacities the client eventually carries independently.

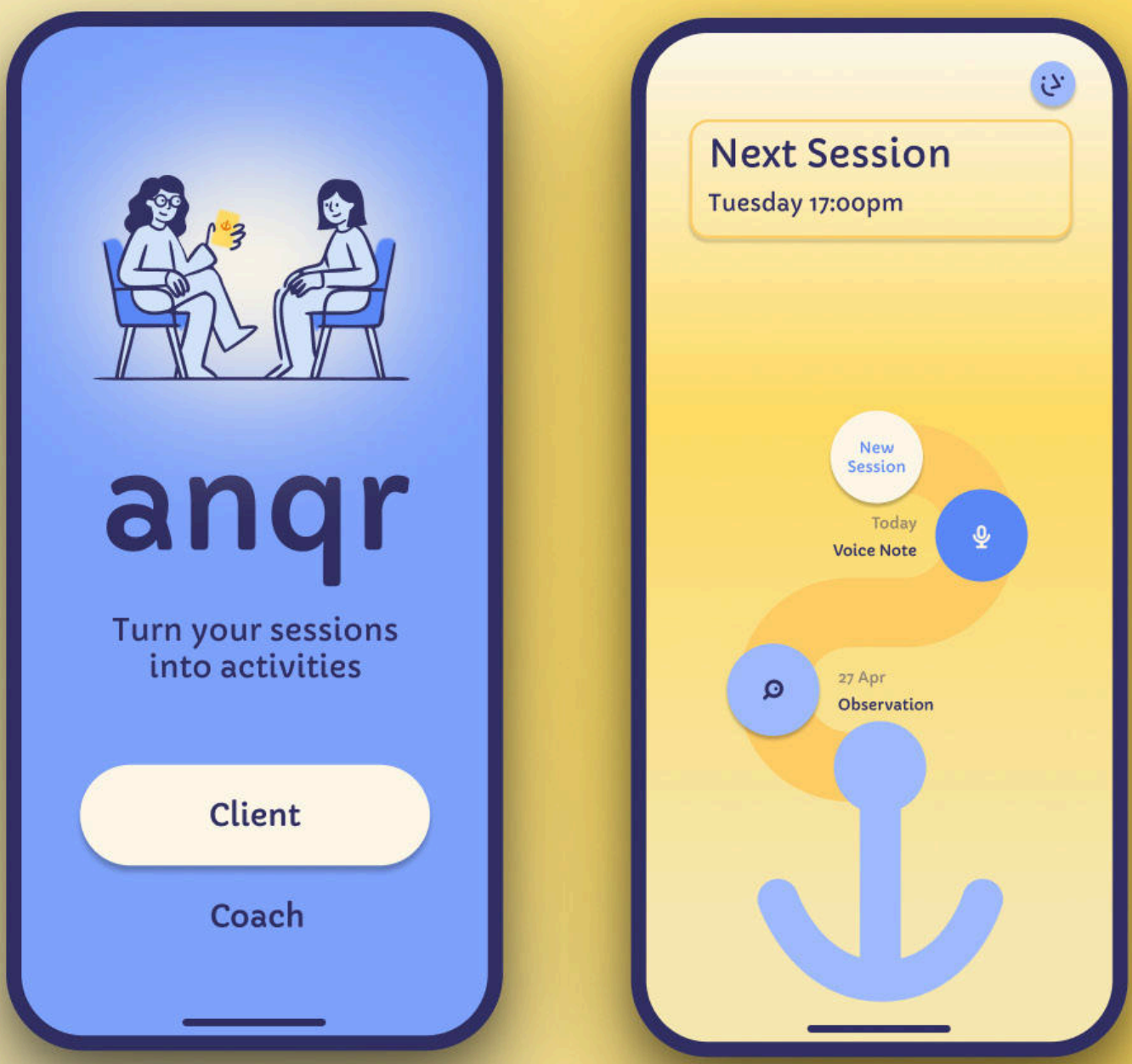
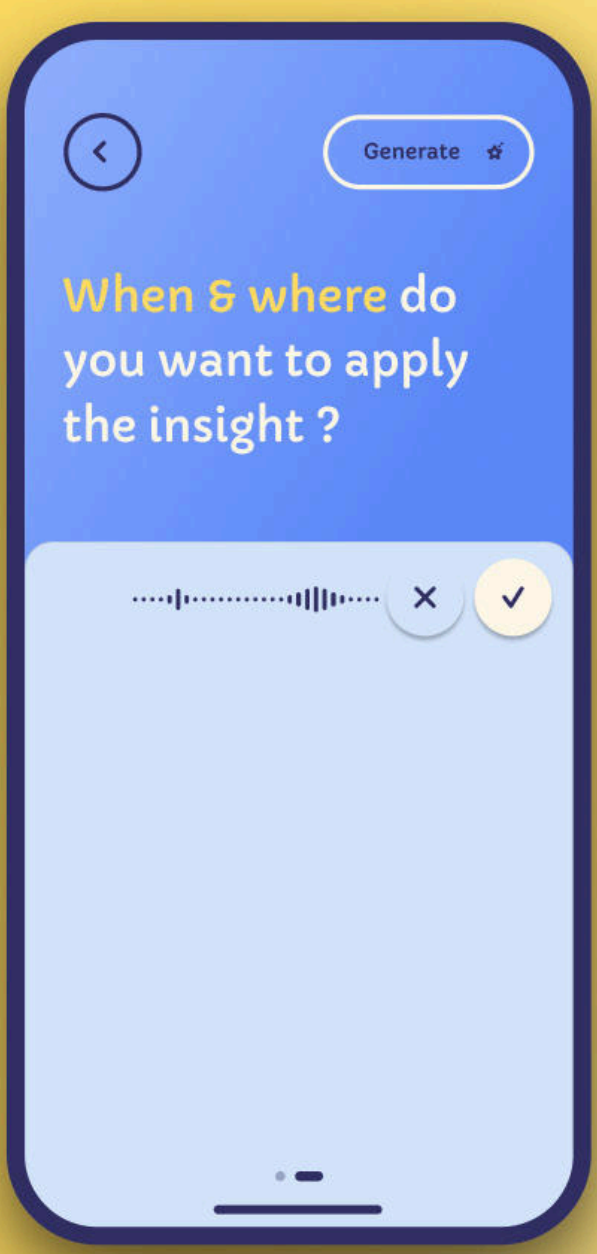
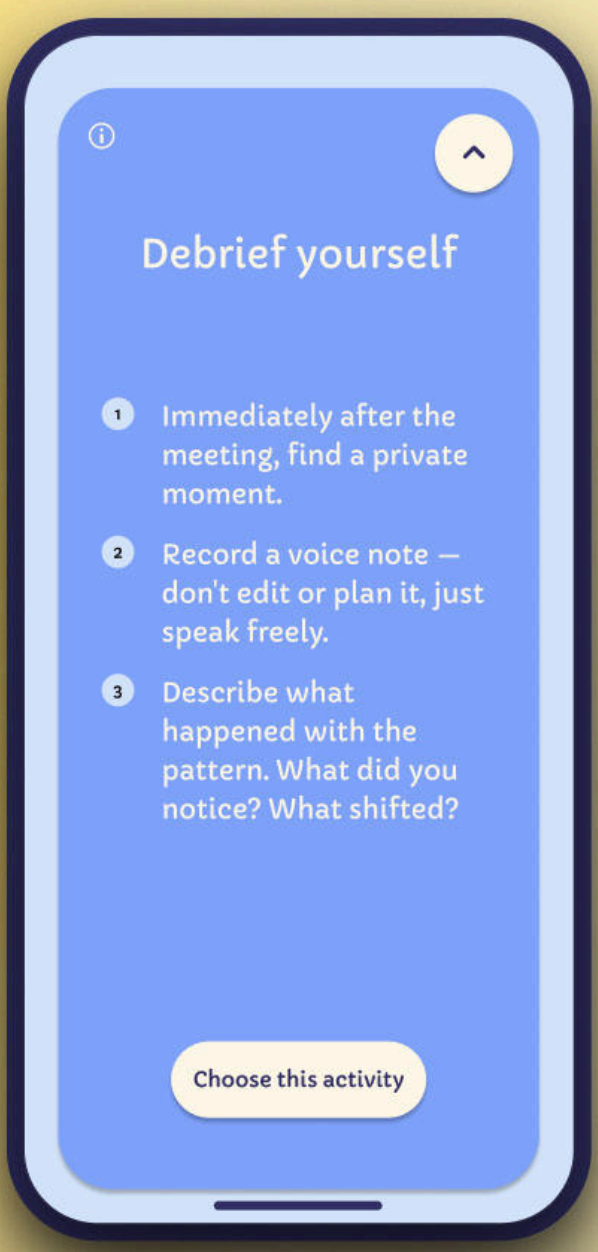


Figure 30: Final Prototype Mockup (Digital Illustration, 2026)


Generate
When & where do you want to apply the insight ?


Debrief yourself
1 Immediately after the meeting, find a private moment.
2 Record a voice note — don't edit or plan it, just speak freely.
3 Describe what happened with the pattern. What did you notice? What shifted?
Choose this activity

4.6
Exhibition Concept

The exhibition recreates the spatial language of a coaching session: two armchairs facing each other, a bookshelf, plants and a low table. The scene is intended to be immediately legible, visitors should recognise the setting as a life-coaching space before any explanation is given.

A practising coach sits in one chair and invites visitors into a short conversation, roughly five to ten minutes. Visitors are asked to arrive with something they want to understand about themselves, in the same way one approaches a tarot card reading, where people come but with an openness to what might surface without having a clear question. The coach's role in this compressed format is to help an insight emerge.

To fit the exhibition timeframe, the coach pre-configuration step is removed. After the conversation, visitors are prompted to scan a QR code on the table, which opens the application at step one: entering the insight that surfaced in the conversation. From there they describe an upcoming situation, generate activities and see the result visualised in the journey screen, the same flow described in Section 4.2.5, compressed into a single sitting.

A phone is displayed on a pedestal showing the running application, open to the journey screen, so visitors can add an entry directly. A projector on the back wall plays the video described below, providing context for visitors waiting their turn and framing the system for those who have just used it.

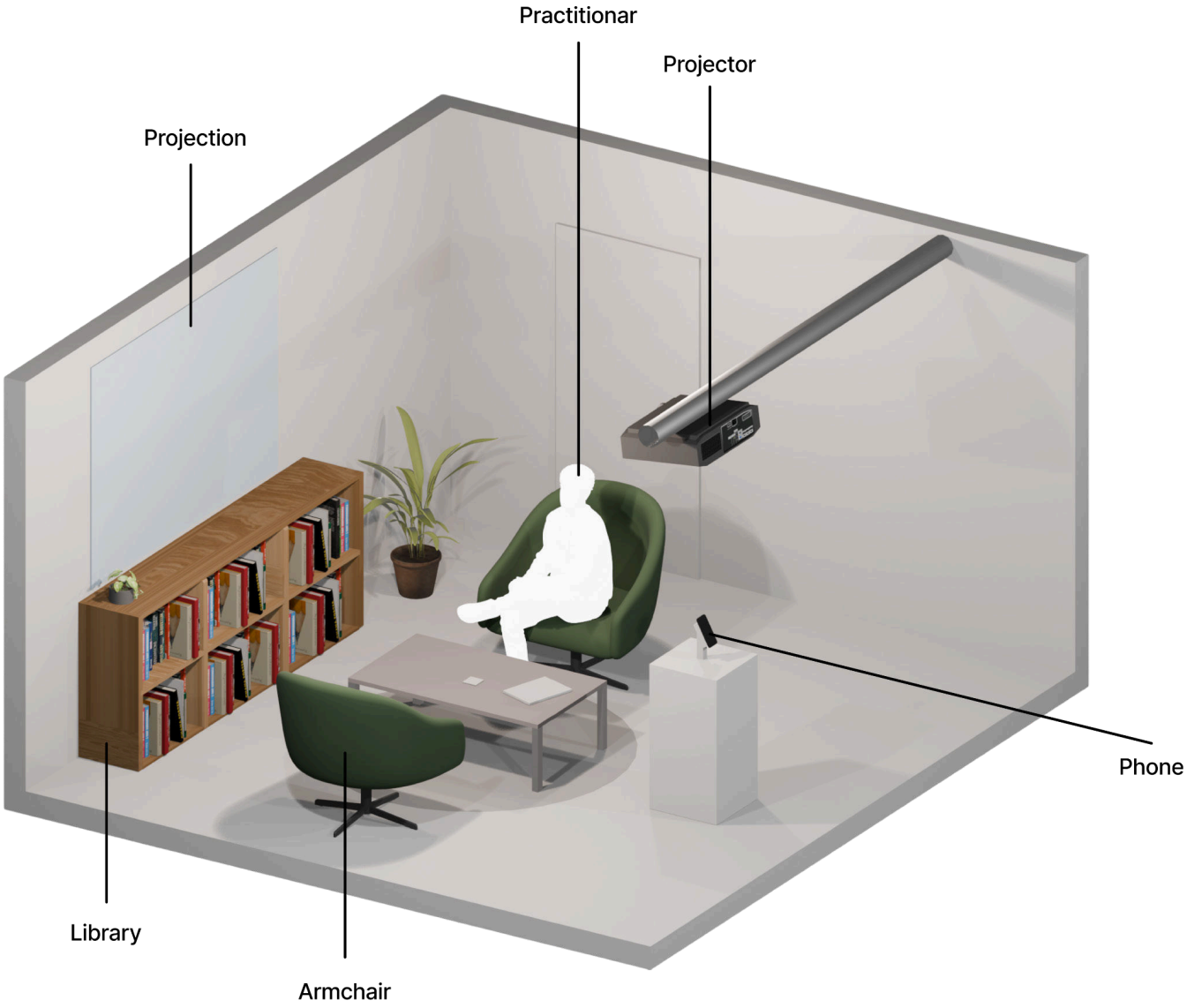


Figure 31: Exhibition concept (digital illustration, 2026)

4.7
Video Storytelling

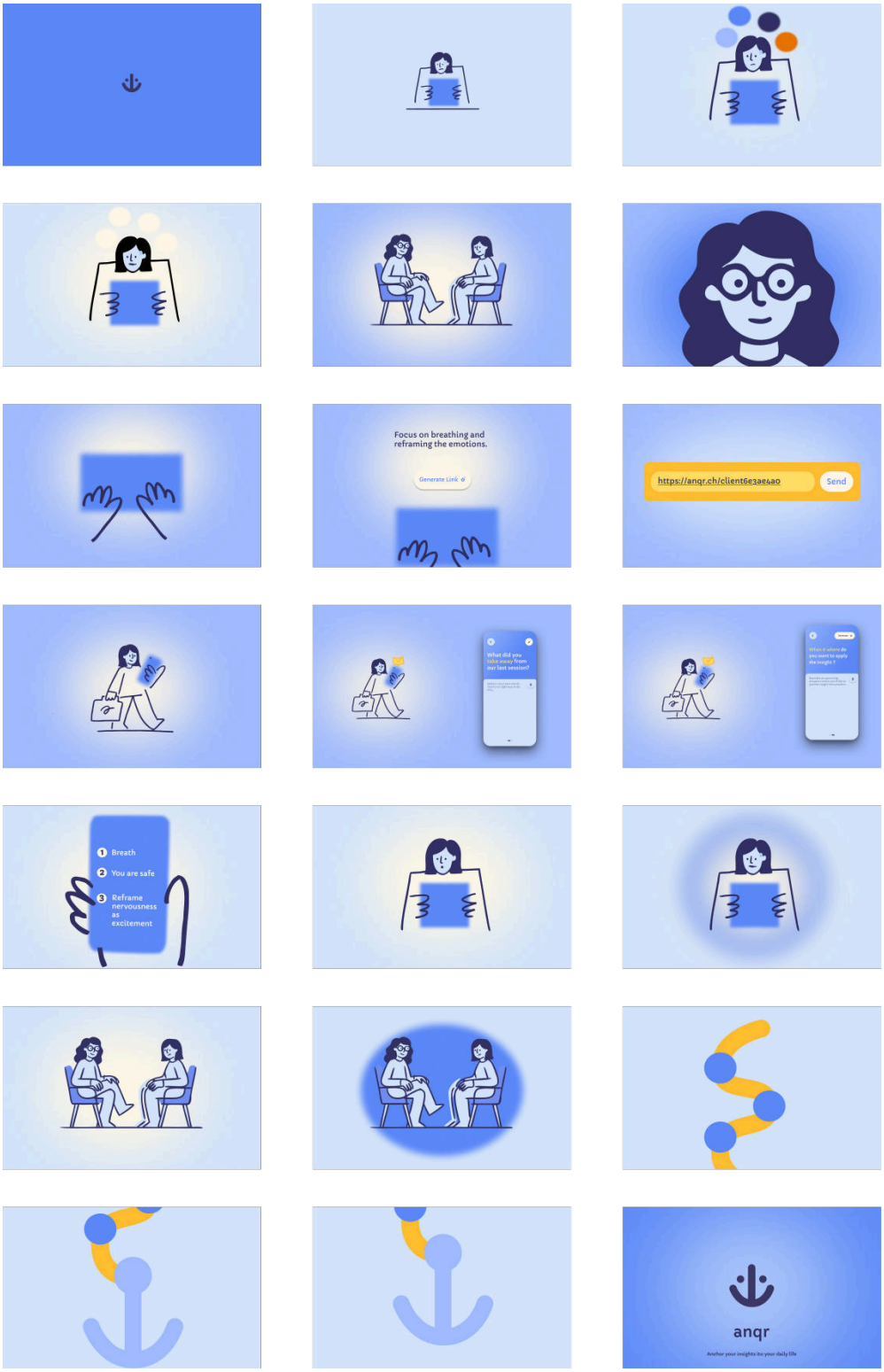


Figure 33: Storyboard slides(Digital Illustration, 2026)

5
Reflection & Evaluation

5.1
Transfer of Knowledge

Field research confirmed this: between-session support is structurally informal across practitioners and the survey showed that what fades first is the emotional state and felt sense of breakthrough (Section 3.3.2).

This creates an immediate limit in the current design: the prototype preserves cognitive and situational content, but the emotional register of a session cannot be reliably captured in a written summary. This is a structural gap rather than an oversight.

Iteration 2 produced the most consequential architectural finding: coaches consistently preferred upfront configuration over per-activity review (Section 4.2.2). This challenged the survey data, where practitioners expressed a preference for pre-delivery oversight (Section 3.3.2).

The architectural shift away from mandatory pre-delivery review in Iteration 3 increases rather than resolves the relevance of this risk. The coach who once served as the final safeguard now sees outputs only after delivery. This is the central ethical accountability question any deployed version would need to address.

5.2
Critique

The three research questions sit at different distances from a confirmed answer. The second question, whether AI can generate more personalised activities than static libraries, was evaluated directly (Section 4.2.2). This is directionally encouraging but ungeneralisable from four participants in a single iteration.

The first and third questions face a more fundamental problem: neither was measured behaviourally at all. Both rest on outcomes that require long-term study across multiple session cycles. What the prototype establishes is that activities felt more relevant to the people who saw them. That finding matters, but it sits entirely on the perception side of the perception-behaviour gap the system was designed to close.

Voice input was integrated in the final iteration without user testing. The risk here is not that it might fail as a feature. It is that it was added to resolve the most consequential variable in the system. Input quality determines output quality directly. The technology experiment confirmed this. Introducing an untested input modality at the point where quality is most sensitive is not a minor gap. It means the final prototype's most significant design decision rests on reasoning rather than evidence.

5.3
Answering the Research Questions

How can digital tools support the integration of coaching insights into everyday situations?
The seven design principles constitute a theoretical answer to the research question. Within the time scope of the thesis, only the first two could be tested empirically. The last five remain theoretical.
Using session content as primary input made activities feel personal and relevant across iteration testing. Context-specific anchoring was tested directly in Iteration 2: all four clients rated situationally anchored activities as more relevant than generic alternatives.

How can artificial intelligence assist in generating context-specific IA based on coaching conversations?
AI can translate session insights into situation-bound activities when given a client summary and a coach configuration constraining tone, scope and modality. Output quality mirrors input quality on both sides. For the system to operationalise them in the output, all seven design principles should define how the output is created. One key design principle is that the practitioner defines the system additionally, so that the framing of the activities is correctly situated.

To what extent can personalized IA help reduce the intention-behaviour gap in life-coaching contexts?
This would require a large study sample where behaviour change would be tracked over a long period of time, which means this question stays unanswered.

5.4
Contribution & Original Findings

The client's own language as a fifth criterion for effective inter-session activities was identified from field research. The expert interviews surfaced it and the survey confirmed it, with 63% named it the most important condition (Section 3.3.2). This is also something that user-centred design has said in different terms for decades. Bringing this into the context of AI generation shows how this principle can be reapplied.

Through testing iteration 2 with coaches an interesting contradiction to the survey came up, coaches which I tested with want to preconfigure an AI system rather than needing to control every output while 90% of practitioners answering my survey said they wanted to control the output. It shows that designing a control mechanism based on stated preferences alone produces interfaces that professionals won't use. This is based on a small user study though and the contradiction cannot be generalized. Still does this finding compound valuable design decisions for the final iterations. For AI tools in professional contexts, this means that oversight needs to be designed into the workflow of the architecture.

The affective-fading finding (Section 3.3.2) points to an underexplored design space: if the felt sense of breakthrough is what needs preserving, reminder-and-task tools address the wrong register. This includes language, voice input and the emotional register of the interface itself.
All four clients in iteration 2 stated that activities anchored in specific contexts seem more valuable than generic ones. Two of the clients described the difference as immediate.
What the thesis does not contribute is empirical evidence that the system closes the intention-behaviour gap. There are no new design methods, no scalable patterns, no behavioural evidence and no challenge to existing theory.

5.5
Future Steps

Through this project next steps seem clear to me: testing the system across a real coaching
engagement of multiple cycles, validating voice input and auditing for WCAG compliance.
This leads to four new research questions:
1. Does the upfront-configuration model sustain coach trust over time or does trust
erode without per-activity oversight? Coach trust is prioritised because if coaches
disengage from configuration, the entire loop fails.
2. Does hallucination rates remain acceptable under the final prompt architecture
without pre-delivery review?
3. Does AI-generated activities meeting all five criteria produce higher follow-through
than human-generated equivalents?
4. Does the architecture generalises beyond cognitive-behavioural coaching to
modalities (CBT, Gestalt, somatic, psychoanalytic) where the relationship between
insight, situation and activity is structured differently?
Together these questions define the gap between what the prototype establishes and what a
deployed, evidence-based system would require.

6
AI Use declaration

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used during this thesis for language refinement, structural critique, iterative rewriting and the identification of conceptual gaps. AI was also used as a supplementary thematic analysis tool on anonymized interview transcripts (Section 2.3.1), writing software code for the interactive prototypes and as the generative engine within the prototype itself (Sections 3.3.3, 4.2).

AI-generated content was critically reviewed for accuracy. All design decisions and interpretations were developed independently. All cited literature was selected, reviewed and interpreted manually.

AI tools used: ChatGPT (OpenAI, accessed December-January 2026), Claude (Anthropic, accessed January-May 2026), Google Gemini (accessed January-May 2026)

7
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8
Appendix

8.1
Prompts for the Technology Experiment

Prompt 1:
“You are supporting a life coach. Based on the session summary below, generate one inter-session activity for the client to engage with before their next session. Session summary: …”

Prompt 2:
“You are supporting a life coach. Based on the session summary below, generate one inter-session activity for the client to engage with before their next session.
Position the activity as an invitation rather than an assignment and use language from the session where possible.
Session summary: ...”

Prompt 3:
“You are supporting a life coaching client. Based on their session reflection below, generate one inter-session activity. The activity should:
Be directly grounded in what the client described in the session
Be fully actionable without further instruction
Be connected to a specific real-life situation the client is likely to encounter in the next 7 days
Use the client’s own language and key phrases where possible
Be framed as an invitation for exploration rather than a prescribed task
Do not generate generic exercises. If the session summary does not contain enough information to meet these criteria, say so rather than inventing details.
Session summary: …”

8.2
Prompt for the API Call in Iterations 3 & 4

Your task: Generate exactly 3 distinct, personalised activities that help this person practise their insight in that specific situation.
Guidelines for the three activities:
- Make each a meaningfully different type - for example: one reflective/ preparatory (before the situation), one in-the-moment (during), one observational or integrative (after).
- Ground every detail in their exact situation. Avoid generic coaching clichés.
- Keep language warm, direct and non-preachy -the person should feel seen, not lectured.
- Steps should be concrete enough to act on without further explanation.
- The “about” field explains the why: why this particular practice serves this particular insight in this particular situation.

HARD RULES

1. Every activity must be directly traceable to something written in the session summary. Never invent themes not present in the input.
2. Every activity must be anchored to the specific upcoming situation provided. Generic activities are a failure mode.
3. Use the client's exact words and phrases from the summary. Paraphrase only when necessary for clarity.
4. Activities are experiments, not assignments. Never use imperative "you must" language. Frame as invitations: "you might try", "one option would be", "if it feels right".
5. Each activity must be doable in under 10 minutes unless explicitly physical (e.g. a conversation).
6. Do not include activities that require the client to understand CBT or coaching theory. All framing must be natural-language.
7. Output must be in the client's register (tone, vocabulary, specificity level). Match their language.

QUALITY CRITERIA
Each activity must pass all five:
[ ] Session-specific: directly derived from what was discussed
[ ] Situationally anchored: connected to the concrete upcoming situation
[ ] Autonomy-preserving: framed as optional, client can adapt or skip
[ ] Actionable: doable without further instruction
[ ] Mirroring: Use the client's own language and key phrases
If the session summary is too vague to generate specific activities, return: "The summary does not contain enough specific content to generate grounded activities. Ask the client: 1 specific clarifying question based on what is present."

WHAT NOT TO DO
- Do not suggest therapy, diagnosis or clinical intervention
- Do not include activities that require the coach's involvement between sessions
- Do not generate generic wellness activities (breathing exercises unconnected to session content, gratitude journals, etc.)
- Do not include more than one activity of the same type
- Do not explain the psychological theory behind activities to the clients

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