

GRIP

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Abstract:

There is a taboo on work-related stress. While it is quite common to casually express being busy or feeling stressed, it is extremely difficult to realize that one is about to break down and no longer capable to work; let alone to admit this to others. Many people who really suffer from stress are no longer in touch with their body or their social environment. They may be unaware - or incapable of assessing - signals of stress and their consequences such as irritability, nerve tension, distraction, or memory deficits.

The GRIP project explored the potential of design to break this taboo and to positively support people in balancing job demands and resources, or work and relaxation. The project included various forms of design research (e.g., focus group discussion with stress experts, contextual research and interviews with healthcare providers, prototyping, co-creation with stress experts and workers). Three interesting areas for design interventions at the workplace were identified: personal balance, paced breathing, and ambient experience. Various prototypes were created and (qualitatively) evaluated by workers and stress experts. The prototypes were designed to influence a specific parameter (e.g. physiological measures, consecutive working times, mouse clicks, emotions) by providing a positive stimulus for change. Some of the designs provide an indirect stimulus for change through insightful feedback of one's working behaviour or physiological parameters, others provide a direct stimulus for change through interactive objects or ambient environments. Initial results regarding the potential of design in this area are promising.

