

Listening to the Pandemic

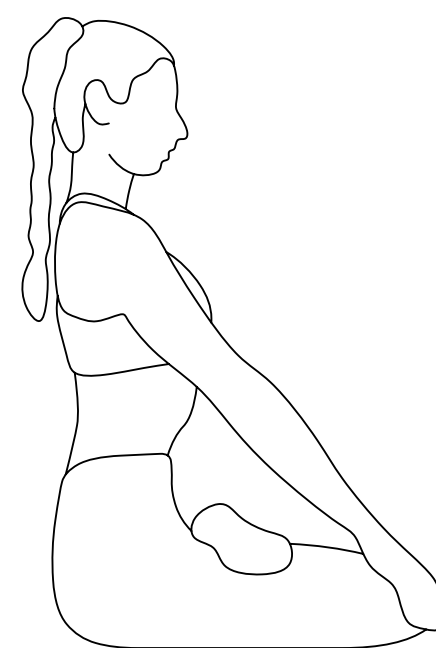
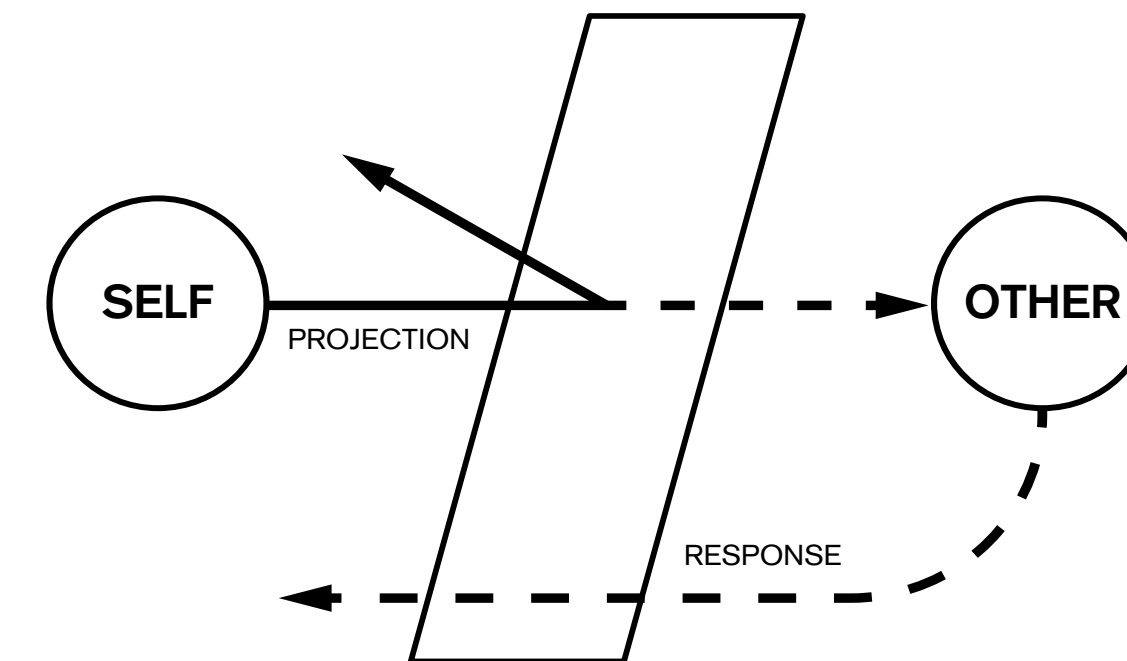
Life in a pandemic forces us to wait. Waiting for the news, waiting for things to “normalize,” waiting two weeks before seeing your family. We have never been so brutally aware to time.

The complexities of life from home keep us inside urban structures with lagging telepresence as our only vehicle into the natural world, friends, and knowledge. *Listening to the Pandemic* is a demonstration of diverting attention away from Zoom screens and cell phones. It is a journey into the interior — home, body, mind.

Reflection Inwards

We are spending more time with ourselves, with less access to “sounding boards” or external validation. How has this diminished access affected the mental care of those without an active therapist? What other entities around us serve as a mirror into our own health?

REFLECTION



RESPONDING WITH CARE

- | | |
|--|--|
| HOUSE PLANTS <ul style="list-style-type: none">- WATERING- TALKING- LISTENING | HUMAN BODY <ul style="list-style-type: none">- HYGIENE- JOURNALING- SELF CARE |
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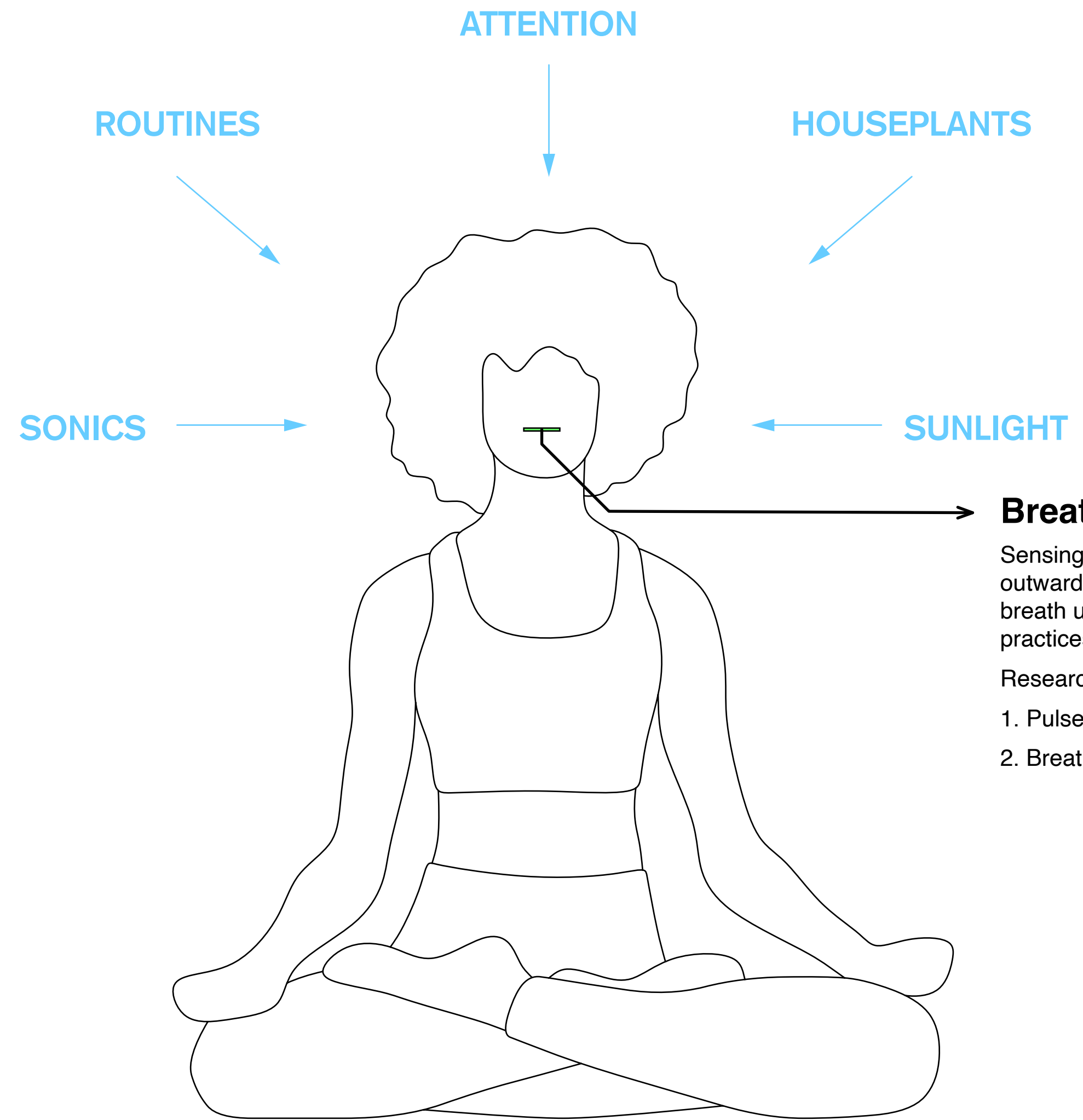
Attention Restoration Theory

Attention Restoration Theory presents the psychological restoration on cognitive function with exposure to nature. It has been shown that the effects of immersion in nature attributes to stronger cognitive functioning even weeks after the experience within nature.

The theory surprisingly transcends the outdoors. When we look at a tree or the lichen of a stone, the benefits persist.

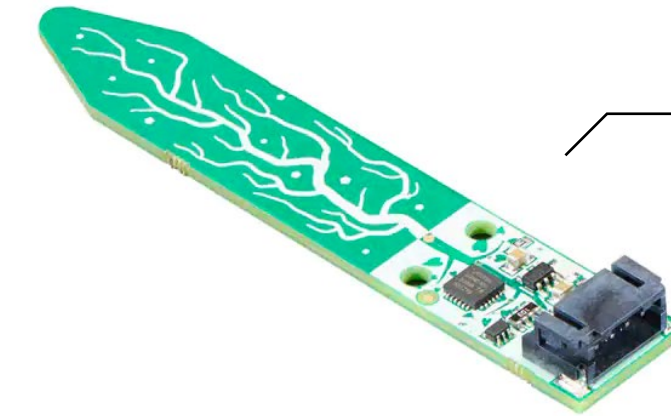
“Because urban environments often contain dramatically distracting stimulation (e.g., car horns, billboards: Berman et al., 2008), in such settings directed attention may need to be further recruited to block out that stimulation, thereby potentially exacerbating directed attention fatigue. Thus, in the most common theoretical characterization of ART, restorative nature experiences are assumed to be recovery effects: **nature facilitates the replenishment of an initially depleted resource, i.e., directed attention.**”

(Joye, Yannick, and Siegfried Dewitte. 2018)



A Living Visualization

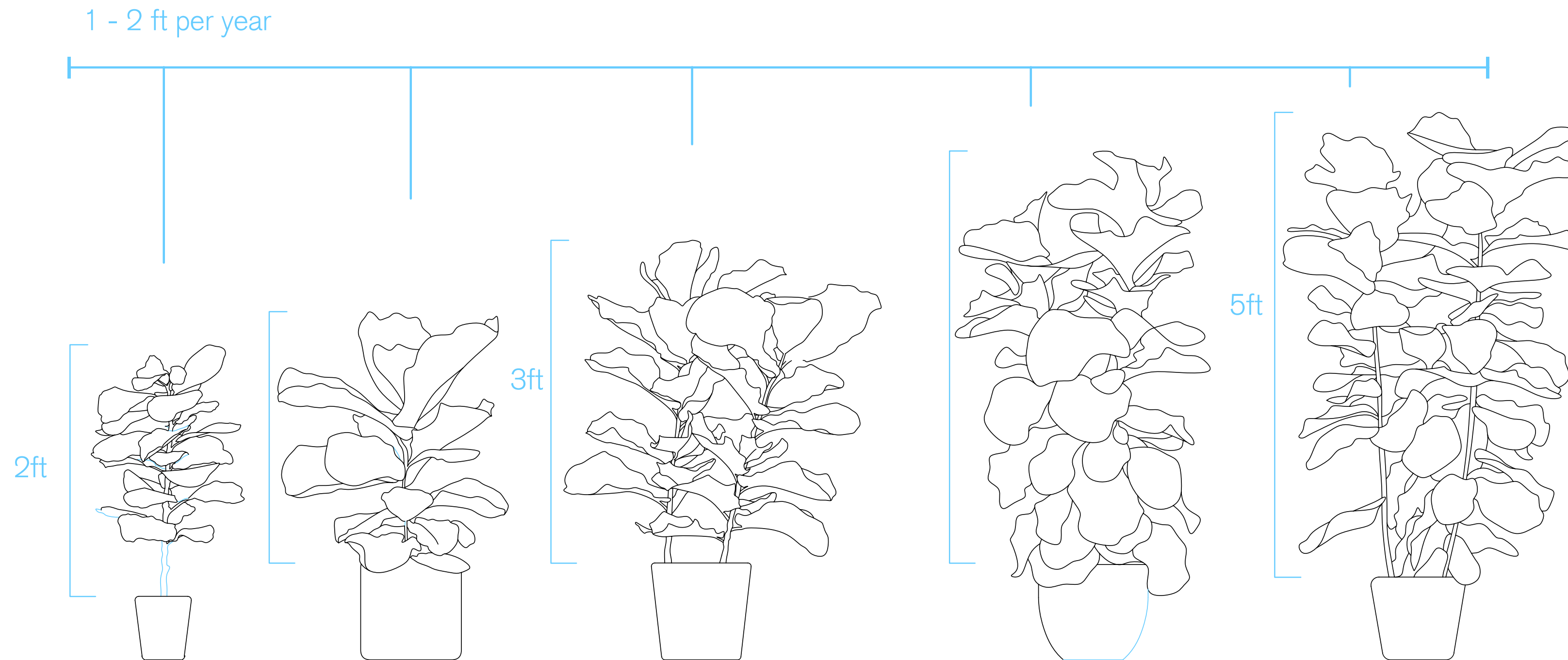
The life of vegetation proposes an interesting analogous model to our own life as humans with the main difference being the pace at which life experience occurs. The growth and life of a plant, like humans, is structured on the passing of a day. The sunlight provided from our star reaches into windows and facilitates photosynthesis. This requires a subtle passing of time and rhythmically indicates the passing of a day, month, or season.



Soil health sensor.

Listening to the foundation in which life grows.

How is my plant doing? How am I doing?



Timeline



1. Listening

Week 1-2

The first phase of the project is called "Listening." This is the research phase. In this phase I will measure, explore, and define my environment. This includes space for experience mapping of attentive focus. In this movement I will map the sounds, dimensions, and ephemeral aspects of the home-space. Research into the current landscape of at-home care will be explored here.

2. Sensing + Contextualizing

Week 2

With any information collected it is important that we place our insights into a contextual framework to understand the entities, relationships, resource-flows, and characteristics in an operating model. Here we can begin to notice intervention points to address any complexities or disparities. At this point, sensors will be attached to the botanic life to produce the information that will be visualized in the following phase.

3. Responding

Week 3-4

In the final stage of the project I will produce a response to the home-investigation. Visualization of the project takes form mainly here. Here we answer the question: So What? What does this mean for us? Have our desired outcomes been fulfilled? What does the future of at-home mental engagement look like?



Talking with Plants. (Case_01)

Using the water within the roots of vegetation, a conversation is conducted and a moment of electric connection is made.



Click image for vimeo link

PLANT

What would constitute a “perfect” day for you?

HUMAN

Well, that's a tough one, I feel like if I tried to explain my perfect day I'd take all day to explain. But I do think exercising first thing in the morning always changes my day for the better. What about you?

PLANT

I'd say a day with water, but not too much, a dramatic bright light, slight humidity and a room of about 74 degrees Fahrenheit, 24 celcius.

HUMAN

Wow, that sounds lovely. Can I take yours? Hmm, okay, so what would you say is the biggest lesson you are learning in your life right now?

PLANT

Well for the longest time I was afraid of the dark. the sun goes down and I'm like woah, will I ever experience warmth again? And then I just sit there, silent and afraid, worrying that it may never come. But it always does. So I guess I'm learning how to let go of things I can't control and learn to enjoy the dark times where I can sit with my damp roots and rest.

HUMAN

Yeah, I get that. I think for me it always feels like I have to work for something that I don't have, like any sort of break is embarrassing for some reason. What ends up happen though is that this exponential goal gives me a sort of tunnel vision where I forget to take care of the things around me and be present with surroundings.

PLANT

I wish you'd be more present with me. I mean I can go a few extra days without water sometimes but it gets to be quite taxing on me when I'm parched and dry. I start to fear I'll be deserted.

HUMAN

Wow, yeah, I can see how that must feel.

PLANT

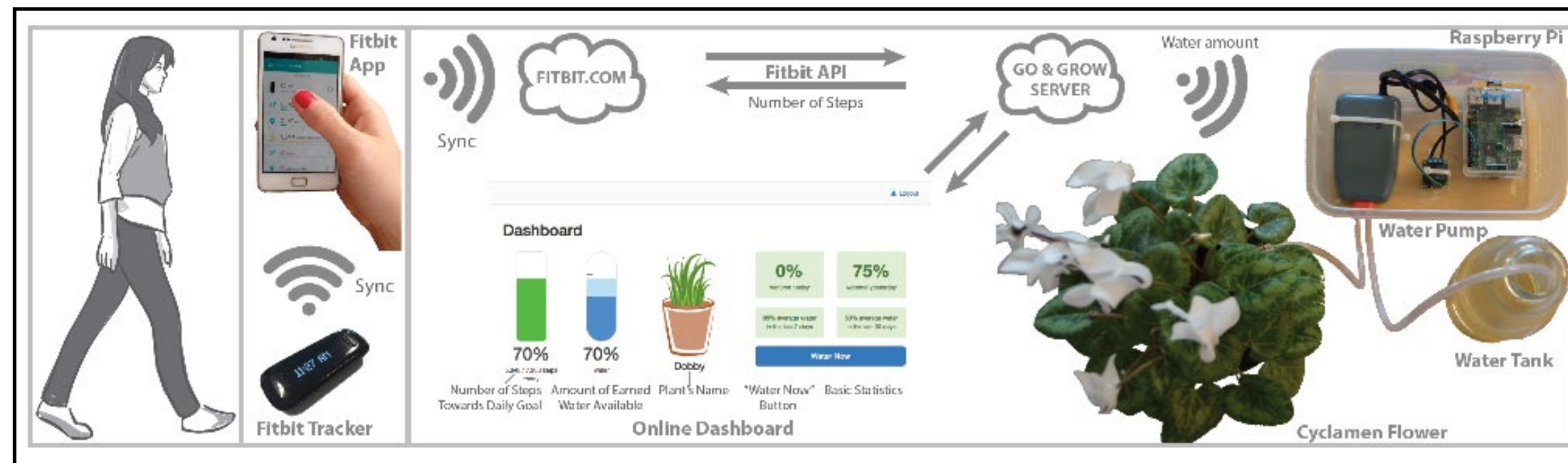
I mean, I am proud of you for pursuing your goals and putting yourself out there. But you need to come back down to earth sometimes. You can't let curiosity be an excuse for hurting or neglecting others.



Go and Grow (Case_02)

Exploring how a living plant can visualize the owner's engagement in self care when the plant's health is directly influenced by the health of the participant. This engages emotional investment both the health of the human and botanic life.

“Since living plants affect people emotionally and can change people's behavior [12, 18], researchers have used virtual plant metaphors to represent data.”
- Go and Grow



“Our results indicate that the emotional commitment to the living visualization is a key factor in motivating and engaging people towards improving their activity level. Participants connected emotionally to their plant – all mentioned that they did not want to let their plant die. Participants felt sadness, guilt, and pride towards their plant, and even compared the plant to a pet.” (AVI 2016).

AVI '16: Proceedings of the International Working Conference on Advanced Visual Interfaces June 2016 Pages 112–119 <https://doi.org/10.1145/2909132.2909267>



Brief:

Primary Objective: Address mental health practice in the context of the home under the COVID19 stay-at-home protocol.

Primary Goal: Enable participants to practice mental care in a time of limited access. Invite participants to investigate their own relation to the living world around them and experiment with photosynthesis.

Point(s) of Interaction: Designer will monitor plant health along with body health using biometric sensors. The living visualization of a plant will offer the participant engagement and motivation to experiment with this data.

Project Requirements: The at-home COVID19 order will act as a integral parameter in the process. Investigations will begin and sustain in the home and the widespread availability of the model should be considered.

Biography:

My name is Jackson Kerbs. I am a multi-disciplinary designer working in product and experience design. My interests lie in the hidden truths that can be revealed through the investigation of technology, human ecologies, and the translation of data.

I have recently graduated from the College of Architecture and Planning at the University of Utah. My education here has focused on data translation, human behavior frameworks, and design research methods. This design program focuses on areas of design ethics in both physical and digital realms through defining design products into 3 areas: physical, digital, and platform. My journey through the design program has dissolved a traditional barrier of discipline and opened up my field of view to areas of interdisciplinary design through ecosystem-diagramming, thinking frameworks, and user-centered design. This along with my experience in video journalism has distilled my talents into storytelling, a venture that I believe has and will change to include the listener as an active participant in the stories around them from a passive consumption to an active investigator.

I was born and raised in the American West in Utah and Salt Lake City. My experience growing up here has offered me a unique position of open space and an intimate connection with nature with access to 6 of our nation's national parks. This has been explored in my work including research into the infrasonic vibrations of Yellowstone National Park's Seismometer network and the sensory experience of designing a sound experience with these sped up vibrations as an installation allowing visitors to feel the voice of the volcanic caldera beneath the YNP ecosystem. These vibrations exhibit the passing of time through the striated canyon walls and present to us a new way of listening to the raw-Earth.

I believe that the future of storytelling will move from "information for consumption," into "environments to think in," allowing the viewer to be an active investigator in the research by applying their own perspective to the topic. Feelings like empathy, pain, and joy are all outputs of our internal sensing mechanisms that are brought to light through poetics. I want to facilitate conversations around stories that rarely enter our chambers of mediated narratives.

When information is expressed through abstraction we are inclined to relate in whatever way we can. This search for truth is the power poetry holds for me. In a search for truth, we respond to an analysis of observations. We sense intent, detect something, and then transform that detection into a feeling.

Up to this point, my experience in Human-Centered design has equipped me with tools to sense context and meaning. I have dipped in and out of traditional product design methods but all along a practice of understanding ecosystems has remained present. For the past year, I have been working with micro-sensors and data-sonification. These efforts are guided again by a desire to "feel" information through different senses. I have continued to explore sonic sensing and haptic transformation through the studio I am an associate researcher this fall and I would like to take what we have learned from this studio environment and apply this focus of the experiential viewer to future work.

In the pandemic, my responsibilities as a designer have transitioned into the role of the listener. My practice has turned to the questions of ethics as our society reforms and rebuilds. I believe the design parameters and principles are crucial to this redevelopment and I see this opportunity with Space10's as a vehicle to continue to develop and define best practices for the preferable future of our homes, relationships, and health.



Citations:

AVI '16: Proceedings of the International Working Conference on Advanced Visual Interfaces June 2016 Pages 112–119<https://doi.org/10.1145/2909132.2909267>

Heather Ohly, Mathew P. White, Benedict W. Wheeler, Alison Bethel, Obioha C. Ukoumunne, Vasilis Nikolaou & Ruth Garside (2016) Attention Restoration Theory: A systematic review of the attention restoration potential of exposure to natural environments, *Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health, Part B*, 19:7, 305-343, DOI: 10.1080/10937404.2016.1196155

Joye, Yannick, and Siegfried Dewitte. "Nature's Broken Path to Restoration. A Critical Look at Attention Restoration Theory." 2018, doi:10.31234/osf.io/72uhz.