RememberAll

A1: Needfinding

Today, we'll cover...

01

Introduction

Meet the Team!

02

Interviews

Meet our recruits!

03

Empathy Maps

Let's dive deeper...

04

Moving towards A2 →

Some preliminary insights

01

Intro

Who we are, and what we're focusing on

Meet the Team!

Ananya Navale

Ayana Griffin

Anthony Chu

Felix Zhan

Where could we make an actual impact?

Who are underserved learners?

Who already has some tech literacy?

Our Domain:

Neurodivergent learners who use technology on a daily basis, specifically diagnosed with ADHD.

02

Interviews

Participants, extreme users, what we asked, and what we found out

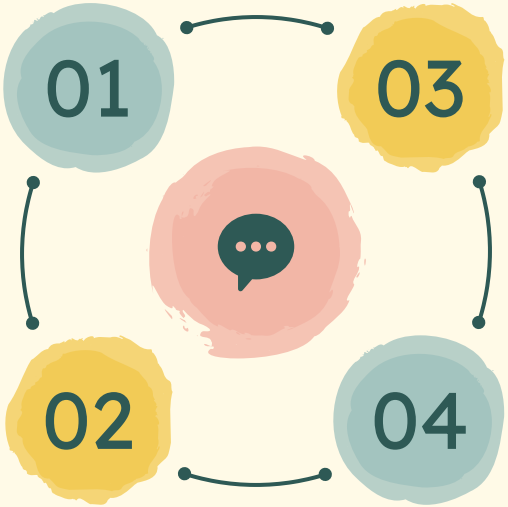
Our participants

3 high school students

Connection to SF high school with program for learning disabilities

1 early in career learner

Recently in school, but now does not have the structure school provides



2 domain experts

Who work with students with ADHD daily

1 adult learner

Longer, more nuanced relationship with ADHD

Our participants

Why were they chosen? More focus on learners in school, but not losing other perspectives. Used connections to schools to recruit.

Why are they appropriate? All 5 non-domain experts have ADHD and use technology as a part of their daily routine with school or work. All consider themselves to be learners.

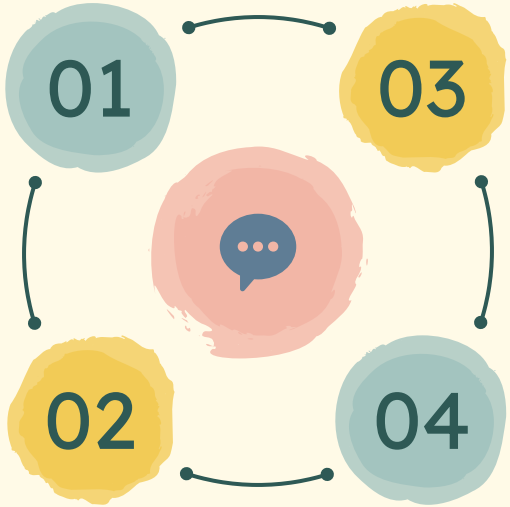
How were they recruited/compensated? Existing connections with an ADHD researcher, a dorm RF, and Stanford's CTL. Offering college advice to the high school interviewees.

Their high school

Their workplace

3 high school students

2 domain experts



1 early career learner

1 adult learner

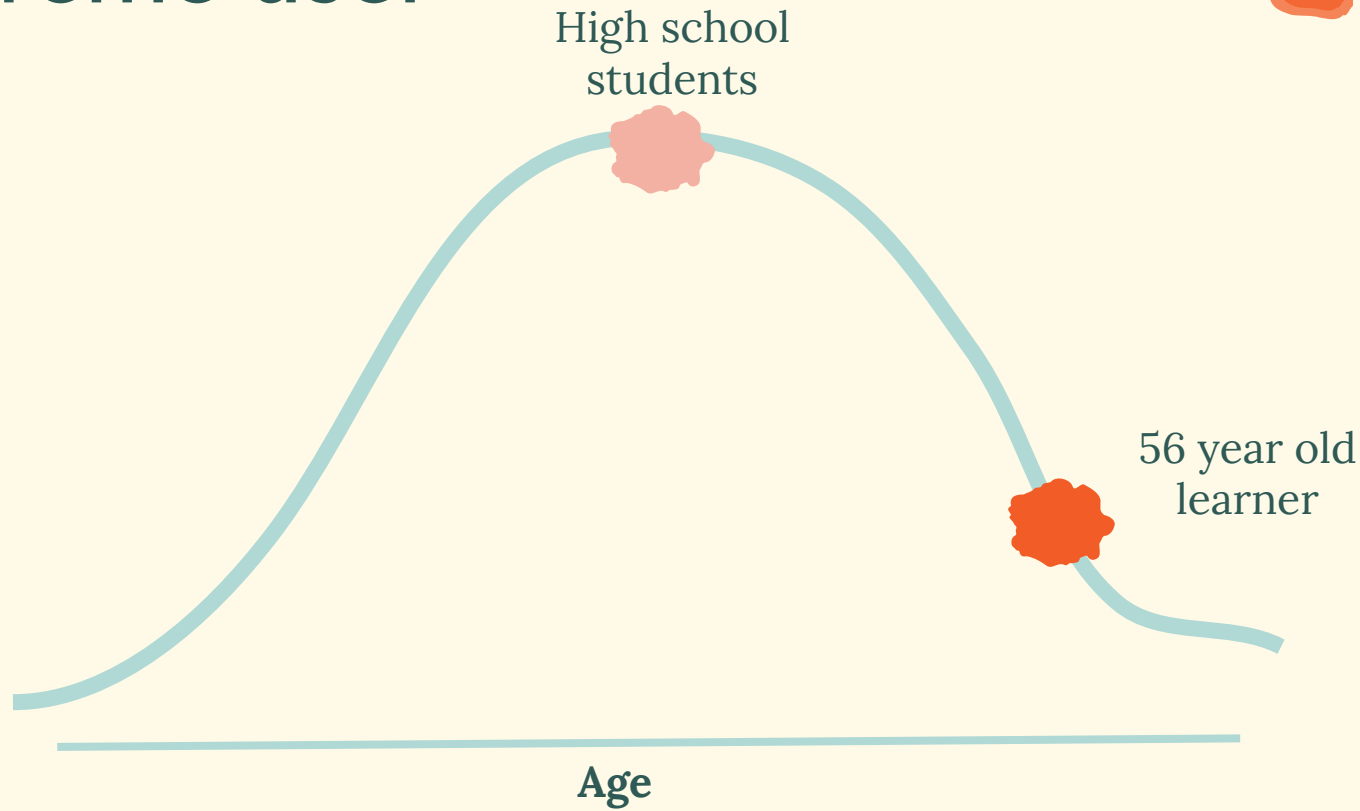
Common space in Palo Alto

His home

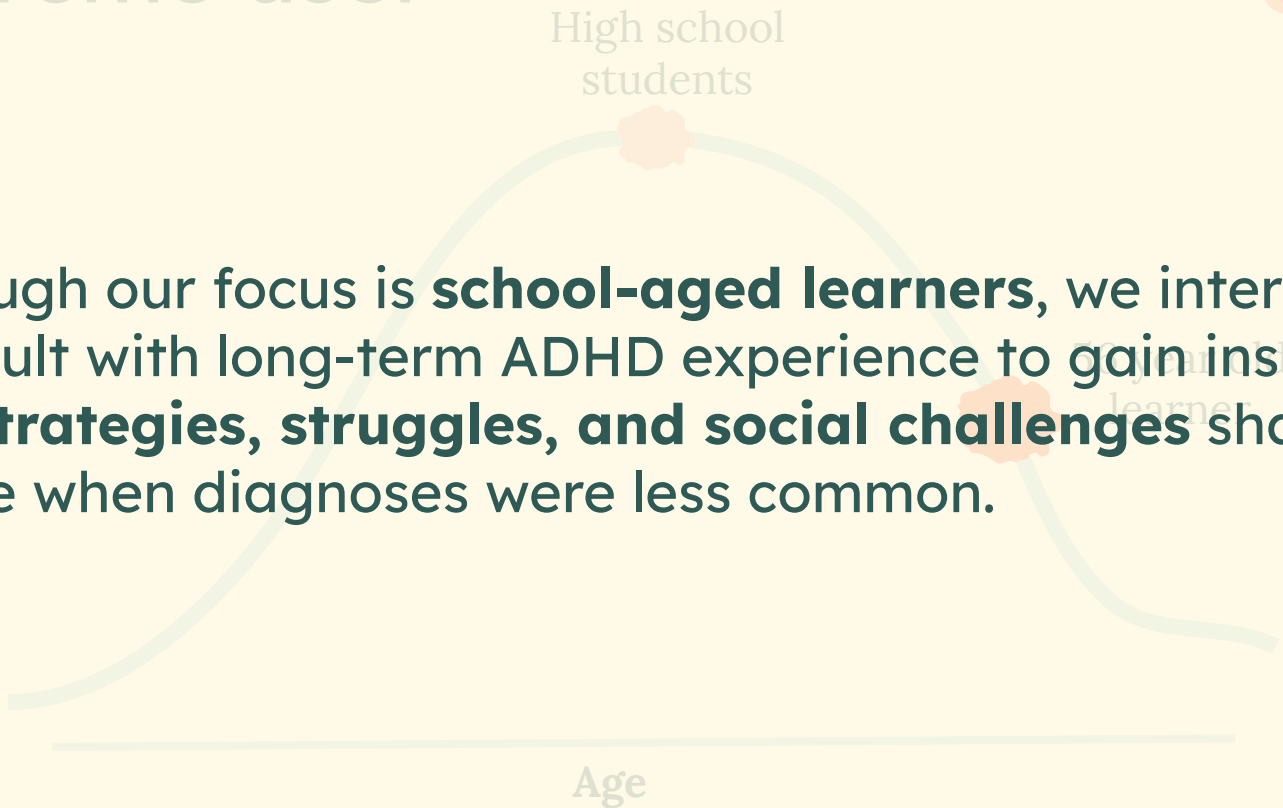
We asked...

- Typical day and the work they do
- Interactions with technology and AI
- Learning habits and struggles with ADHD
- Keeping track of tasks and assignments
- Learning preferences

Extreme user



Extreme user



Although our focus is **school-aged learners**, we interviewed an adult with long-term ADHD experience to gain insight into **strategies, struggles, and social challenges** shaped by a time when diagnoses were less common.

We used...

(HS) Students (with ADHD)

The OG learners

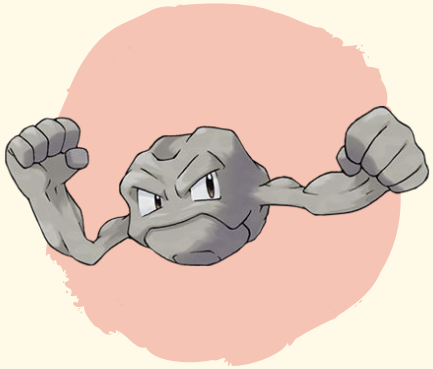
Adults (with ADHD)

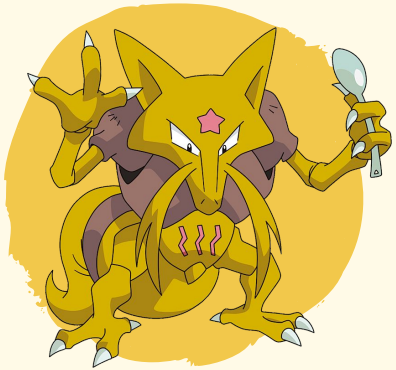
You're never too old to learn

Educators (HS and up)

They notice a lot more than we think...

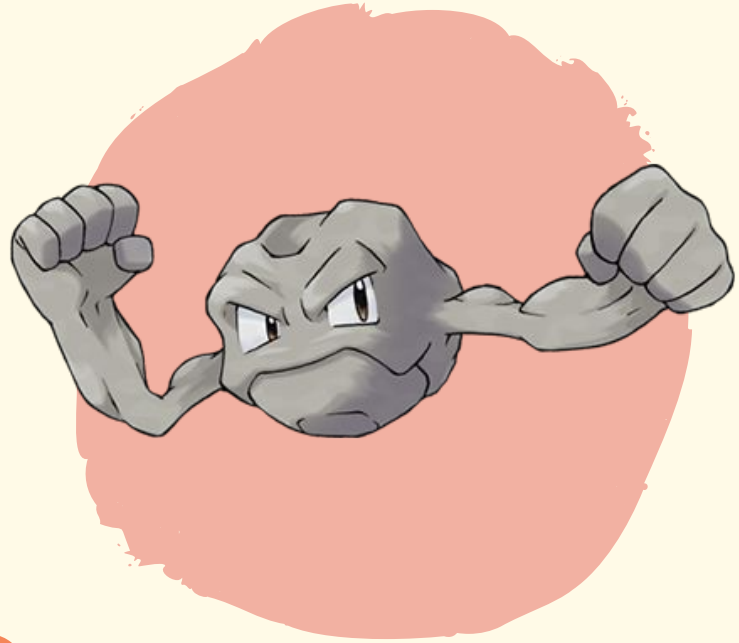
Selected Participants





Let’s take a closer look at each person →

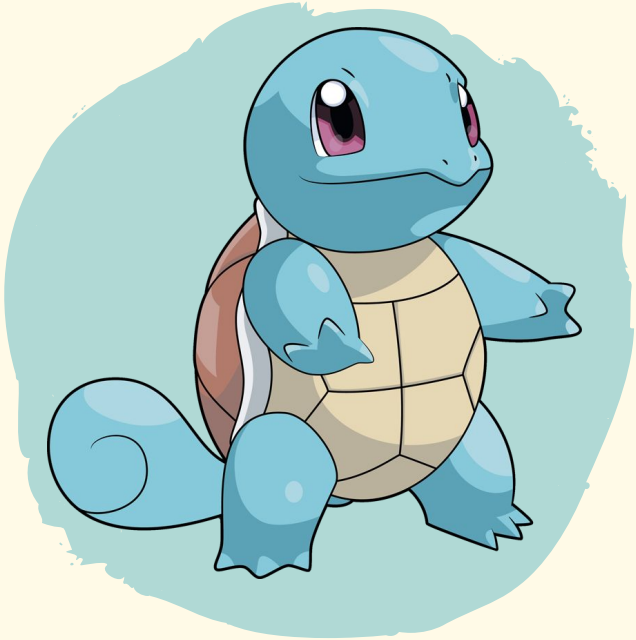
“Geodude”



- 56 y.o. leadership consultant
- program director
- Resident Fellow at Stanford

Interviewed by Ayana, notes by Ayana
Apparatus: HeyMarvin (transcript), Google Docs

“Squirtle”



- HS Junior with ADHD
- cross country runner/rower
- interested in pursuing clinical psychology

Interviewed by Felix, notes by Ananya
Apparatus: Phone video recording, Google Docs

“Kadabra”

- 26 y.o. early career freelance graphic designer
- service dog mom
- diagnosed with ADHD after losing the structure of school

Interviewed by Ayana, notes by Anthony
Apparatus: HeyMarvin (transcript), Google Docs

“Hariyama”

- HS Senior at with ADHD/dyslexia
- soccer and flag football player
- interested in pursuing psychology

Interviewed by Ananya, notes by Felix
Apparatus: Video recording, Google Docs

"I've always been a kinesthetic learner... I became more open-minded to learn more about how certain things work."

~ Hariyama

"They wouldn't encourage me to ask my teachers for help... I was struggling to the point where I would fail grades."

~ Squirtle

"It's usually [my partner], Patti, who will say, 'You've been on that task for eight hours —have you eaten?' And I'll be like, 'Oh, no, I have to eat.'"

~ Geodude

"I live by lists. I have an entire notion wiki of all of the projects I'm working on."

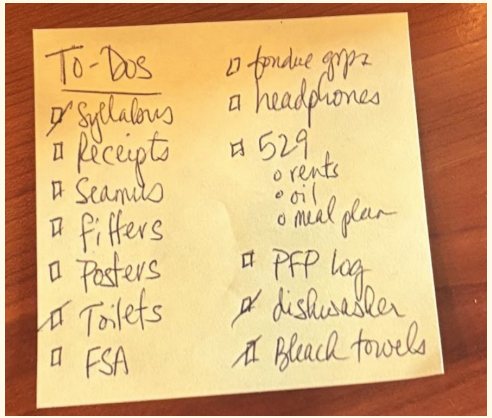
~ Kadabra

Surprises

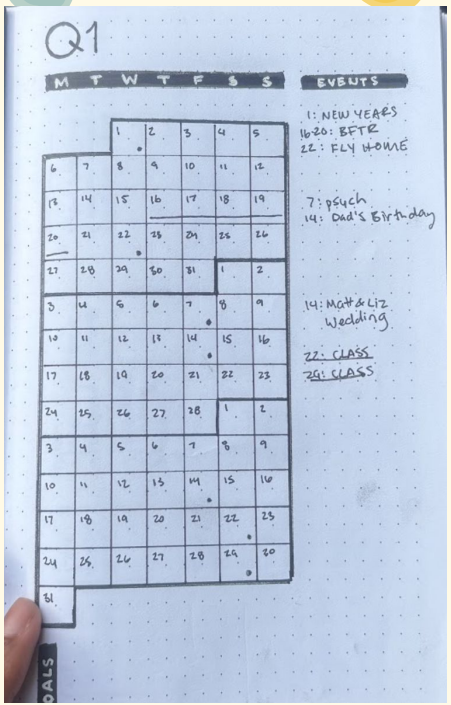
1. Rather than a single preferred tool type (digital or physical), each participant **curated a unique combination of digital and physical systems** for different aspects of their work.

2. Many **dislike directly being told what to do**, but experience greater productivity and **success with external structure.**

3. Learners often know exactly **when they're hyperfocused**, even if it takes an **external prompt** to break the cycle.



Geodude's daily sticky note



Kadabra's QI calendar

Kadabra's dog, Percy, who serves as a reminder for her to take breaks and eat

Tensions

1. **Parents** influence whether students feel AI and supports are "valid" versus "**too much help.**"

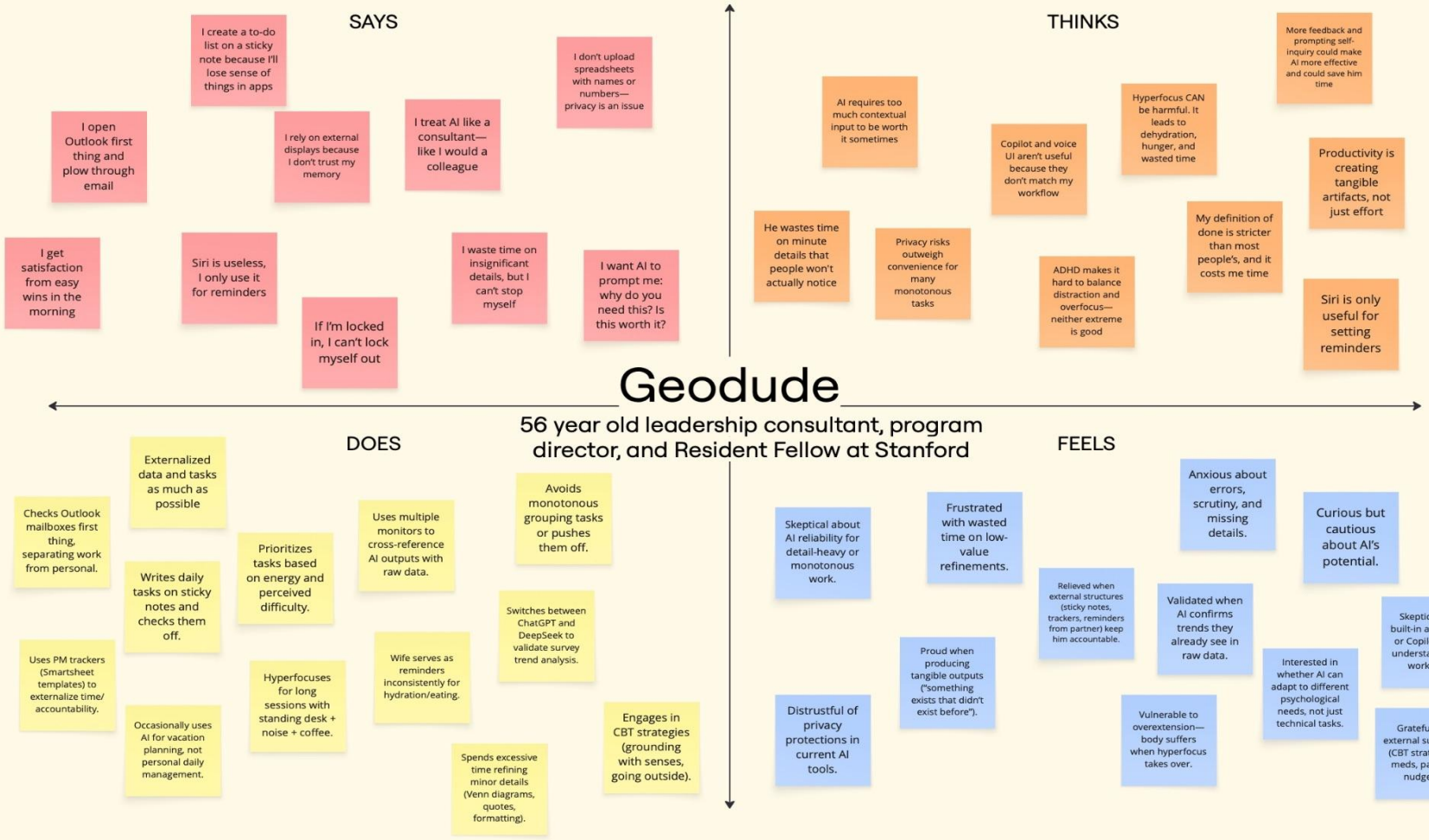
2. Students juggling many different activities express **overwhelm**, needing planning to **balance coaching with other commitments**.

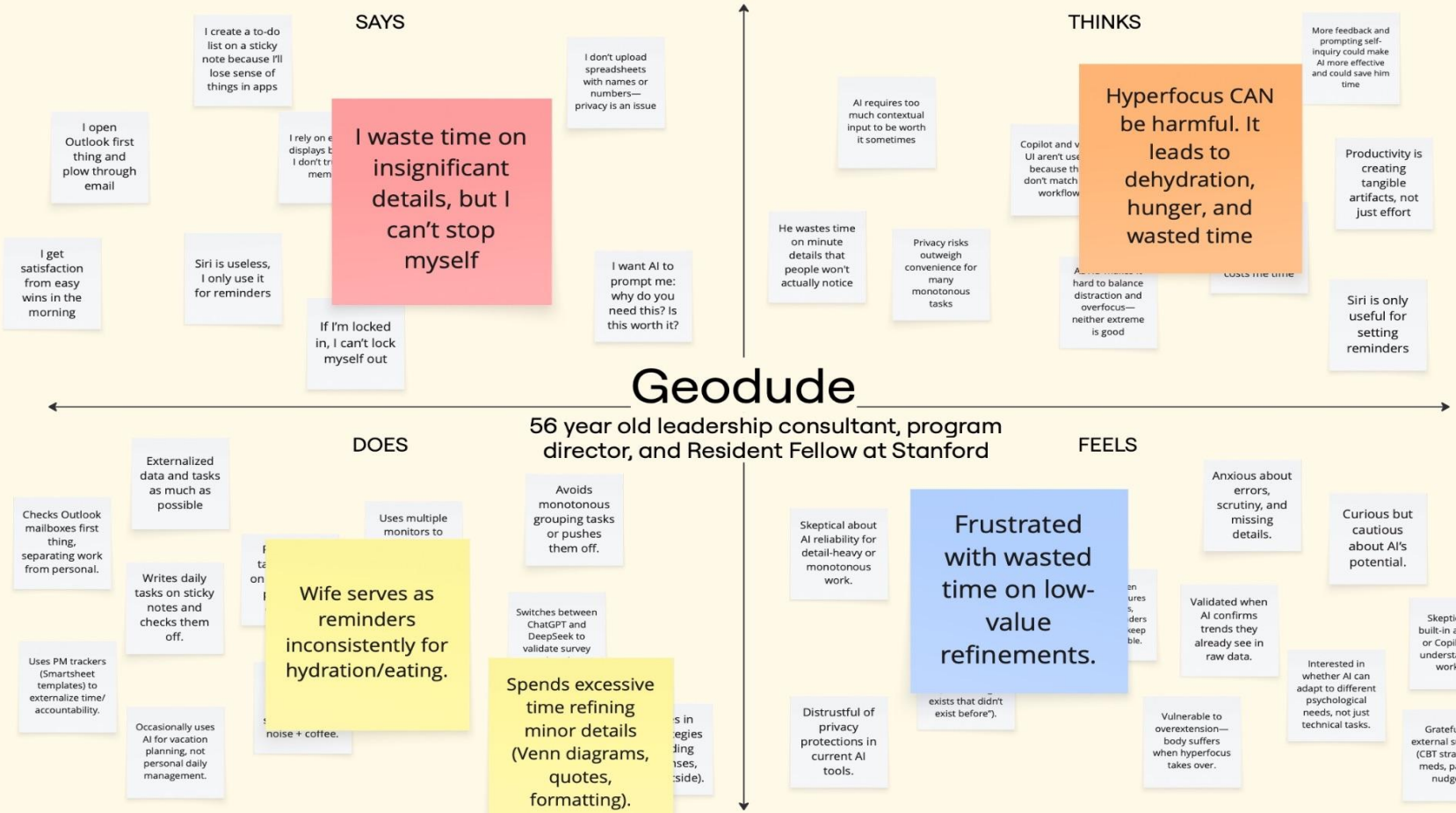
3. Some view **support program as crucial,** while others avoid it due to potential **stigma** from having accommodations.

03

Empathy Maps

Let's map it all out!


SAYS
I create a to-do list on a sticky note because I'll lose sense of things in apps
I don't upload spreadsheets with names or numbers—privacy is an issue
I open Outlook first thing and plow through email
I rely on external displays because I don't trust my memory
I treat AI like a consultant—like I would a colleague
I get satisfaction from easy wins in the morning
Siri is useless, I only use it for reminders
I waste time on insignificant details, but I can't stop myself
I want AI to prompt me: why do you need this? Is this worth it?
If I'm locked in, I can't lock myself out
THINKS
AI requires too much contextual input to be worth it sometimes
Hyperfocus CAN be harmful. It leads to dehydration, hunger, and wasted time
More feedback and prompting self-inquiry could make AI more effective and could save him time
Copilot and voice UI aren't useful because they don't match my workflow
Productivity is creating tangible artifacts, not just effort
He wastes time on minute details that people won't actually notice
Privacy risks outweigh convenience for many monotonous tasks
My definition of done is stricter than most people's, and it costs me time
ADHD makes it hard to balance distraction and overfocus—neither extreme is good
Siri is only useful for setting reminders
Geodude
56 year old leadership consultant, program director, and Resident Fellow at Stanford
DOES
Externalized data and tasks as much as possible
Checks Outlook mailboxes first thing, separating work from personal.
Uses multiple monitors to cross-reference AI outputs with raw data.
Avoids monotonous grouping tasks or pushes them off.
Prioritizes tasks based on energy and perceived difficulty.
Writes daily tasks on sticky notes and checks them off.
Switches between ChatGPT and DeepSeek to validate survey trend analysis.
Uses PM trackers (Smartsheet templates) to externalize time/accountability.
Wife serves as reminders inconsistently for hydration/eating.
Hyperfocuses for long sessions with standing desk + noise + coffee.
Occasionally uses AI for vacation planning, not personal daily management.
Spends excessive time refining minor details (Venn diagrams, quotes, formatting).
Engages in CBT strategies (grounding with senses, going outside).
FEELS
Anxious about errors, scrutiny, and missing details.
Curious but cautious about AI's potential.
Skeptical about AI reliability for detail-heavy or monotonous work.
Frustrated with wasted time on low-value refinements.
Relieved when external structures (sticky notes, trackers, reminders from partner) keep him accountable.
Validated when AI confirms trends they already see in raw data.
Skeptical that built-in assistants or Copilot really understand their workflow.
Proud when producing tangible outputs ("something exists that didn't exist before").
Interested in whether AI can adapt to different psychological needs, not just technical tasks.
Distrustful of privacy protections in current AI tools.
Vulnerable to overextension—body suffers when hyperfocus takes over.
Grateful for external supports (CBT strategies, meds, partner nudges).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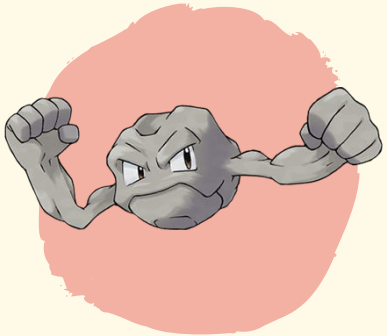
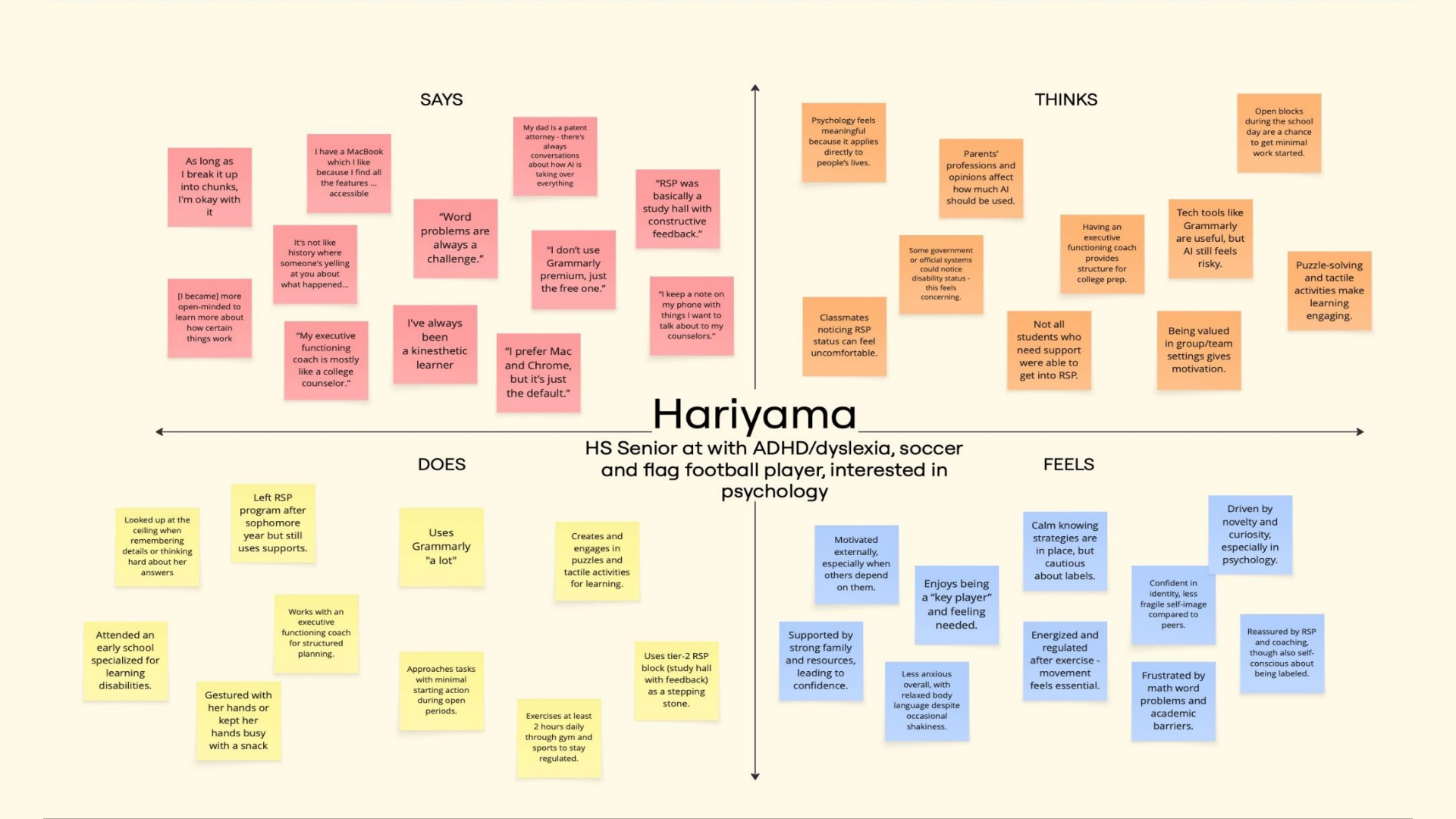
Insight

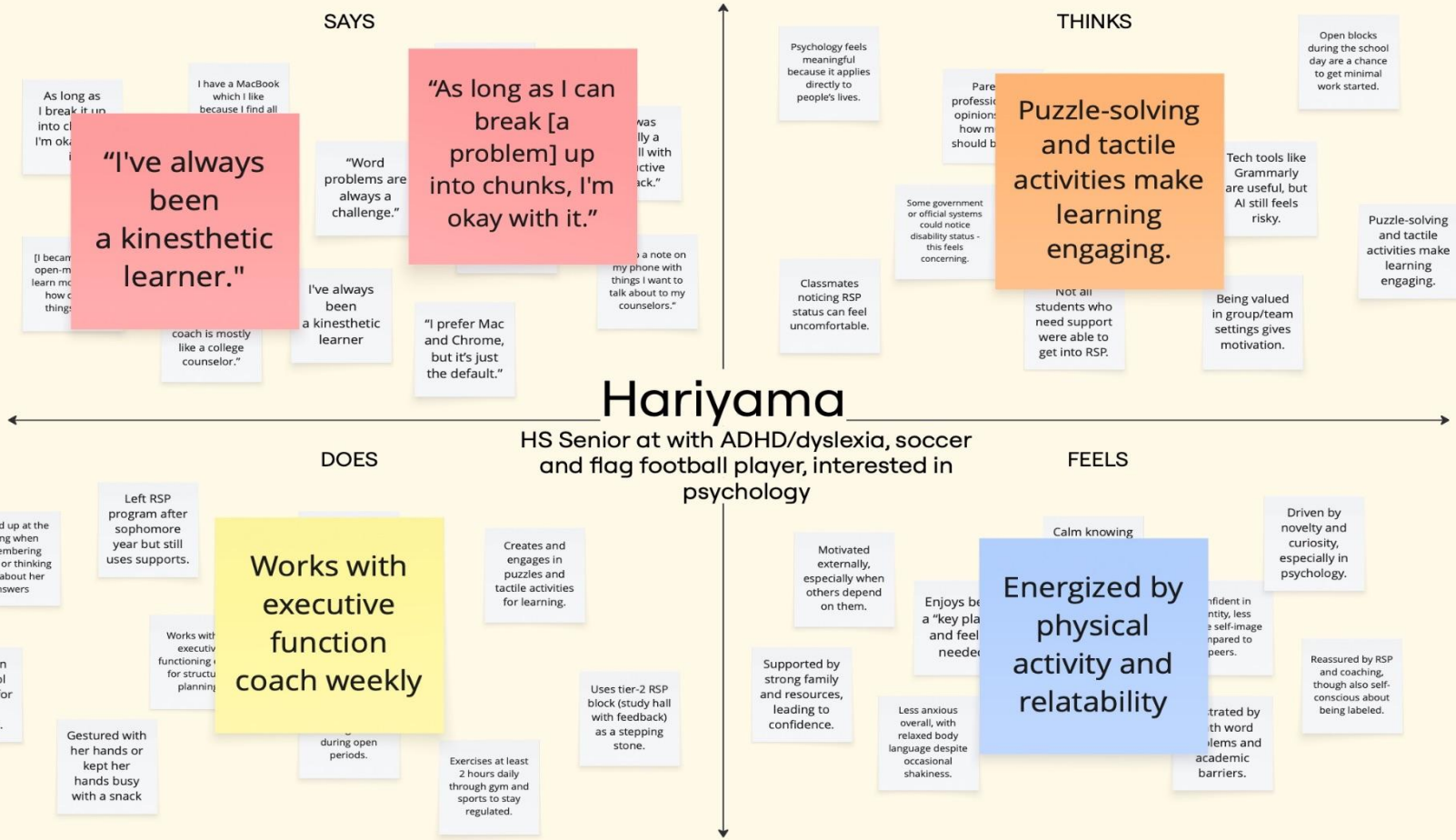
People can become **stuck in hyperfocus,** losing track of time and neglecting basic needs. They rely on **external reminders**.



Need!

People want ways to **stay aware** of when focus is no longer serving their priorities.


SAYS
As long as I break it up into chunks, I'm okay with it
I have a MacBook which I like because I find all the features ... accessible
My dad is a patent attorney - there's always conversations about how AI is taking over everything
"RSP was basically a study hall with constructive feedback."
"Word problems are always a challenge."
It's not like history where someone's yelling at you about what happened...
"I don't use Grammarly premium, just the free one."
[I became] more open-minded to learn more about how certain things work
"My executive functioning coach is mostly like a college counselor."
I've always been a kinesthetic learner
"I prefer Mac and Chrome, but it's just the default."
"I keep a note on my phone with things I want to talk about to my counselors."
THINKS
Psychology feels meaningful because it applies directly to people's lives.
Parents' professions and opinions affect how much AI should be used.
Open blocks during the school day are a chance to get minimal work started.
Some government or official systems could notice disability status - this feels concerning.
Having an executive functioning coach provides structure for college prep.
Tech tools like Grammarly are useful, but AI still feels risky.
Puzzle-solving and tactile activities make learning engaging.
Classmates noticing RSP status can feel uncomfortable.
Not all students who need support were able to get into RSP.
Being valued in group/team settings gives motivation.
Hariyama
HS Senior at with ADHD/dyslexia, soccer and flag football player, interested in psychology
DOES
Looked up at the ceiling when remembering details or thinking hard about her answers
Left RSP program after sophomore year but still uses supports.
Uses Grammarly "a lot"
Creates and engages in puzzles and tactile activities for learning.
Works with an executive functioning coach for structured planning.
Attended an early school specialized for learning disabilities.
Approaches tasks with minimal starting action during open periods.
Uses tier-2 RSP block (study hall with feedback) as a stepping stone.
Gestured with her hands or kept her hands busy with a snack
Exercises at least 2 hours daily through gym and sports to stay regulated.
FEELS
Motivated externally, especially when others depend on them.
Calm knowing strategies are in place, but cautious about labels.
Driven by novelty and curiosity, especially in psychology.
Enjoys being a "key player" and feeling needed.
Confident in identity, less fragile self-image compared to peers.
Supported by strong family and resources, leading to confidence.
Energized and regulated after exercise - movement feels essential.
Reassured by RSP and coaching, though also self-conscious about being labeled.
Less anxious overall, with relaxed body language despite occasional shakiness.
Frustrated by math word problems and academic barriers.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Energized by physical activity and relatability
Driven by novelty and curiosity, especially in psychology.
Supported by strong family and resources, leading to confidence.
Less anxious overall, with relaxed body language despite occasional shakiness.
Reassured by RSP and coaching, though also self-conscious about being labeled.

Insight

Some benefit from **tactile, audio, and visual components** in their learning. Motivation is also strengthened when **they feel valued.**

Need!

Learners want tools that **integrate multiple senses** while also **affirming their sense of value** and belonging.

04

Summary

Our key takeaways and next steps

Key findings

01

Externalization

Many externalize their mental load through digital and physical tools

02

Structure

Many dislike direct instruction, but experience greater productivity and success with structure and gentle reminders

03

Control

Participants feel their thoughts are uncontrollable, so they seek control in other areas

A1 → A2

- Continue to extract key pain points: hyperfocus, externalization habits, reliance on external prompts for self-care
- Generalize insights from individual stories to broader user behaviors and needs

05

Appendix

More fun stuff!

A note on extreme users

While we classified our 56-year-old participant as our extreme user, all five interviewees (not counting the domain experts) can be considered extreme in different ways. The three high school students each have at least one learning disability in addition to ADHD, the 26-year-old has POTS and is out of school, and the 56-year-old has long-term lived experience. We chose this range to capture diverse perspectives, all with ADHD as the common thread.

Links!

- Interview materials (access limited for participant privacy)
  - Includes more photos, interview audios, and transcripts
- Miro board (empathy maps)
- HeyMarvin (used for transcripts of some interviews)

List of team member roles for all interviews

Interview #1 (MT): Felix (interviewer) and Ayana (notetaker)

Interview #2 (KMM): Ayana (interviewer) and Anthony (notetaker)

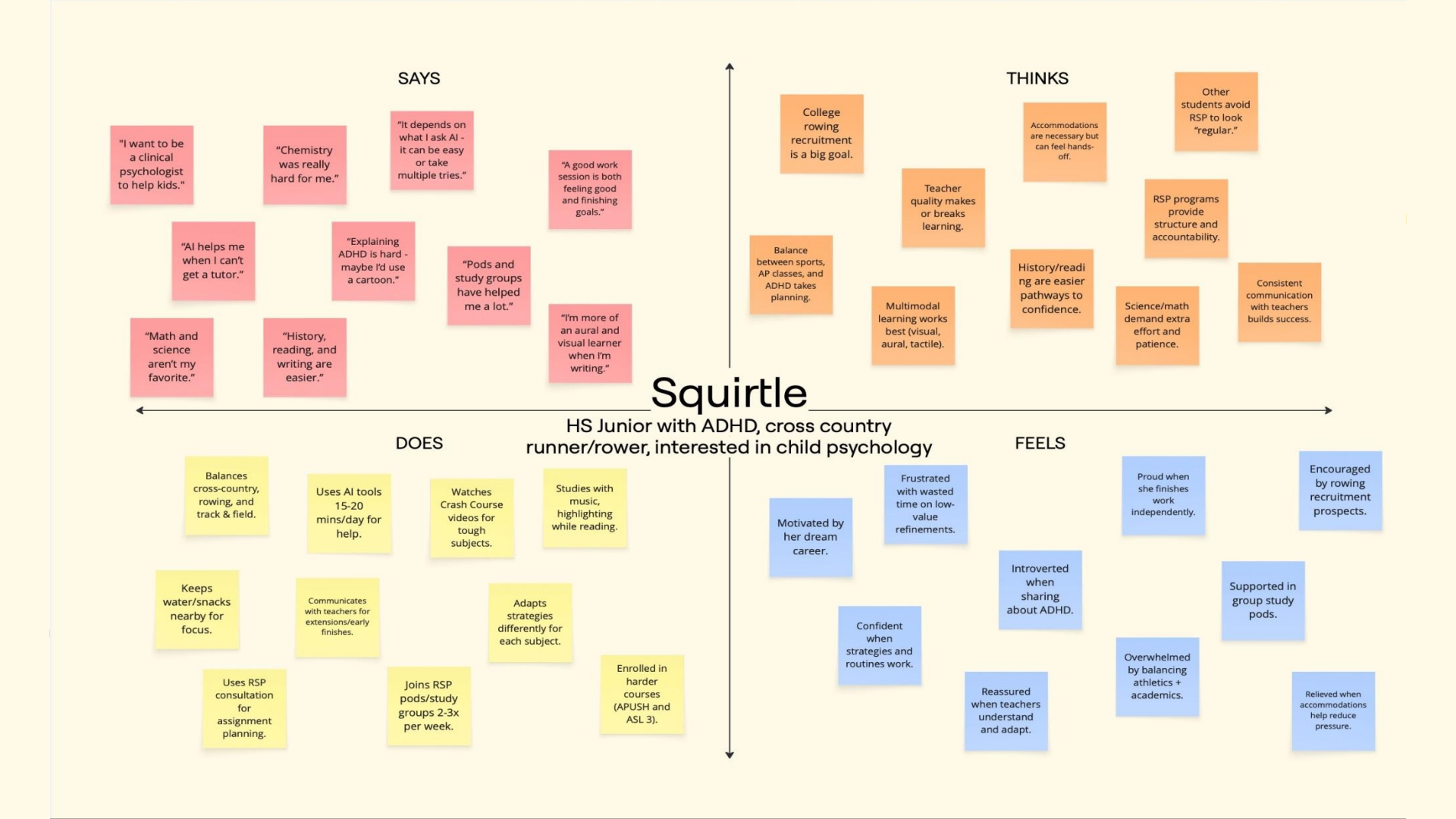
Interview #3 (GB): Ayana (interviewer and notetaker)

Interview #4 (NO): Ananya (interviewer) and Anthony (notetaker)

Interview #5 (SL): Ananya (interviewer) and Anthony (notetaker)

Interview #6 (HW): Ananya (interviewer) and Felix (notetaker)

Interview #7 (SH): Felix (interviewer) and Ananya (notetaker)


SAYS
"I want to be a clinical psychologist to help kids."
"Chemistry was really hard for me."
"It depends on what I ask AI - it can be easy or take multiple tries."
"A good work session is both feeling good and finishing goals."
"AI helps me when I can't get a tutor."
"Explaining ADHD is hard - maybe I'd use a cartoon."
"Pods and study groups have helped me a lot."
"Math and science aren't my favorite."
"History, reading, and writing are easier."
"I'm more of an aural and visual learner when I'm writing."
THINKS
College rowing recruitment is a big goal.
Accommodations are necessary but can feel hands-off.
Other students avoid RSP to look "regular."
Teacher quality makes or breaks learning.
RSP programs provide structure and accountability.
Balance between sports, AP classes, and ADHD takes planning.
History/reading are easier pathways to confidence.
Consistent communication with teachers builds success.
Multimodal learning works best (visual, aural, tactile).
Science/math demand extra effort and patience.
Squirtle
HS Junior with ADHD, cross country runner/rower, interested in child psychology
DOES
Balances cross-country, rowing, and track & field.
Uses AI tools 15-20 mins/day for help.
Watches Crash Course videos for tough subjects.
Studies with music, highlighting while reading.
Keeps water/snacks nearby for focus.
Communicates with teachers for extensions/early finishes.
Adapts strategies differently for each subject.
Uses RSP consultation for assignment planning.
Joins RSP pods/study groups 2-3x per week.
Enrolled in harder courses (APUSH and ASL 3).
FEELS
Motivated by her dream career.
Frustrated with wasted time on low-value refinements.
Proud when she finishes work independently.
Encouraged by rowing recruitment prospects.
Introverted when sharing about ADHD.
Supported in group study pods.
Confident when strategies and routines work.
Overwhelmed by balancing athletics + academics.
Reassured when teachers understand and adapt.
Relieved when accommodations help reduce pressure.

Kadabra

26 year old early career freelance graphic designer, service dog mom, diagnosed after leaving school

SAYS

- "I freelance, but I'm terrible at finding clients."
- "I am a freelance graphic designer, so kind of just sporadically work on things until my husband Chris gets home, and then work some more on things until it's an acceptable time to stop working."
- this feels interesting right now. So I'm going to go work on it while I have a little bit of, like, while I have the effort and I can engage with it. Because this thing over here feels like I'm watching paint dry.
- "I'm very proud in that I have adhd, but I have, like, one hobby I actually focus on."
- "I'm a homebody. I don't go out that much. I don't want to make more friends."
- "Because it is hard for me to notice that I'm hungry or that I need to stand up or that I need to go to the bathroom, just anything of that nature. So (my dog) Percy reminds me to do these things."
- "I don't have control over my brain, so everything else would be nice."
- "I'll rewatch the same shows and play the same songs on repeat while I work."
- "I like to have everything where I can see it. Like some multiple monitors or laying everything out before I start doing something."
- "I live by lists. I have an entire notion wiki of all of the projects I'm working on."
- "I'm never gonna get rich freelancing. I'm not good at it."
- "Deadlines are the only thing that make me finish sometimes."

THINKS

- Repetition and predictability help maintain focus.
- Rigid schedules or apps can feel restrictive and frustrating.
- AI is valuable when it accelerates creative tasks, but threatening when it replaces human creativity.
- Lists are essential scaffolding — without them, she loses track of everything.
- Deadlines and social accountability are the only reliable motivators.
- Hyperfixation is a double-edged sword: productive for hobbies, disruptive for work.
- Online social connection feels safer and easier than local, in-person friendships.
- Work is easier when it's novel or personally interesting.
- Working from home is more comfortable and sustainable than an office environment.
- She cannot consistently rely on internal motivation to start or finish tasks.
- Self-kindness and planning routines are essential to avoid spiraling or burnout.
- Pets help manage ADHD and basic life tasks.
- Having someone nearby increases productivity even if doing different tasks.

DOES

- Balances many projects and tasks at once as a freelance designer
- Maintains multiple parallel list systems (sticky notes, Notion, bullet journal)
- Controls as much of her environment as possible since she feels like she can't control her brain
- Replays the same shows and songs during work to stabilize focus
- Hyperfocuses on sewing projects and other crafts, sometimes for hours at a time
- Wakes up around 10 a.m., exercises dog, then eats.
- Works from home surrounded by Percy, husband, and controlled sensory inputs
- Delays tasks until deadlines create urgency
- Engages with online groups for social connection instead of seeking new local friends
- Selectively uses AI (Photoshop tools), avoids it for scheduling or personal organization
- Sews both for fun and for commission
- Sometimes pushes deadlines if she hyperfixates on perfecting one aspect of a project.
- Keeps multiple medication locations to reduce friction in routines.
- Takes breaks when reminded by timers or external cues.

FEELS

- Grateful for Percy and her husband as supports and anchors
- Frustrated with time blindness and chronic lateness.
- Relieved by the autonomy and safety of working from home.
- Pressured by deadlines and fear of letting others down
- Annoyed by small sensory triggers (tags, lighting, textures)
- Skeptical that apps or AI can really "solve" her productivity struggle
- Resigned to cycles of inefficiency and hyperfocus
- Proud when completing sewing or other creative hyperfocus projects
- Annoyed when people/apps try to tell her what to do
- Overstimulated by overhead lights
- Anxiety around social interactions and letting people down.
- Like she has no control of her brain
- Empowered when able to organize tasks and environments independently.