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DesignWhine

Celebrating UI & UX Designers

MR. & MRS. UX

SIX COUPLES IN UX DESIGN SHARE THEIR STORIES IN THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

Valentine's Day

ALSO INSIDE

SELF DISCOVERY: WHAT KEPT KARTIK GOING AFTER REJECTIONS?

SPECIAL FEATURE: TRAUMA-INFORMED RESEARCH & DESIGN

Love Is In The Air

Valentine's Day brings with it a slew of festivities. We've been amazed by the diversity of the UX Design community ever since we launched *DesignWhine Magazine*. We published a Women's Day issue last year, and when speaking with one of the guests, we discovered that her spouse was also in UX. That made us question whether there were a lot more couples like this in the UX Design sector. What would it be like if your spouse worked in the same industry as you? Would it add to your enthusiasm for UX, or would it be too much?

We went out to discover exceptional UX Designer couples from our network, armed with identical questions, and boy, did we receive a fantastic response!

There were far too many requests from couples to be included in the magazine, so we choose six couples to highlight in this edition based on their responses.

Hope you enjoy reading light-hearted love stories of these couples as you get to know your community a bit better.

And, oh, wish you a Happy Valentine's Day!

RAJAT AGARWAL
Editor-in-Chief

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DESIGNWHINE ISSUE # 10

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Wrong Degree, Jobs, Culture, Bosses

Kartik spills the beans on what kept him going after a series of failures to finally achieving success in UX

By Kartik Singh

I''m currently working at Microsoft, India and I describe myself as a full stack designer. This means that I can work from the conceptualization of an idea to research, analysis, design and take the product to its final implementation. I have a masters from NIFT, Delhi (one of India's premier design college) with M.Des (Masters of Design) in Experience Design. Here, I'd also like to reveal that I was the topper of NIFT 2018 PAN India entrance exam with an all India rank of 1.

When I mention these facts about my life, fellow designers usually deem me as successful which might be true. But they aren't generally aware of the hardship and struggle that went behind my success. I have now started coming out with my story so that budding designers learn something from my
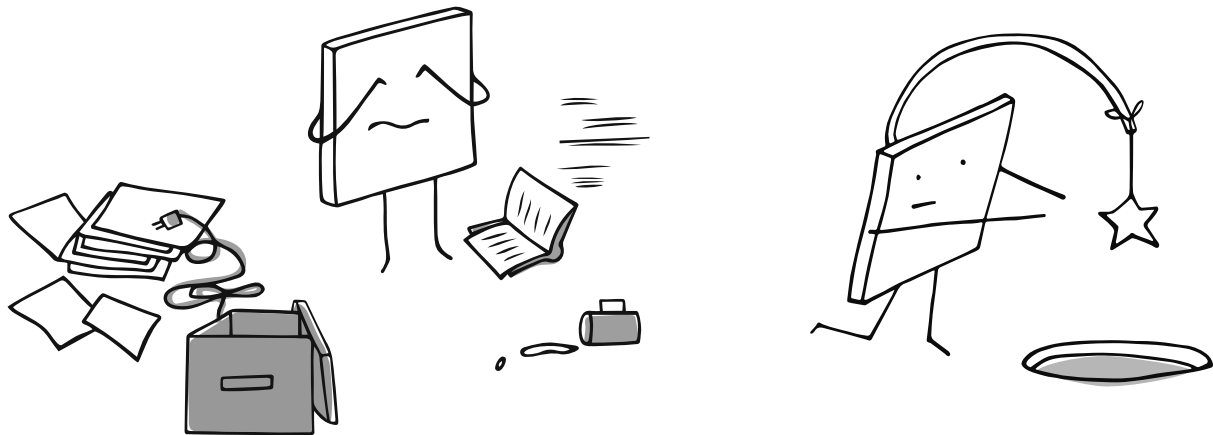
experiences and do not lose hope if their paths are laden with struggle initially.

I have faced literally every hurdle while transitioning or beginning a career in UX Design. Everything from wrong degree to wrong jobs, wrong culture to wrong bosses came my way. Being from a non tech background and with zero UX experience it was super hard to get into the entry level jobs. I ended up giving over than hundred interviews at various small start-ups to individual person owned companies, before finally settling at a startup. Sometimes even I am amazed how I got here!

During the initial days of my struggle, for well over a period of 3-4 months, I just kept getting rejections and refusals.

But I never gave up. I used to come home daily in formals with a big folder of documents, rejected and judged yet somehow I ended up smiling through it all. At least on the outside!

There were days of self doubt, sadness and I literally did not have a single person from the UX community to support me. Hell feels real when you are going through the toughest time of your life and there's no one around to support you!

Now when I look back at that time, it just makes me smile and laugh. I just muddled through it with hope. That's all it takes. Hope can change everything.

One thing I kept doing was working on my skills and taking up any side projects that I could. I believe that the best you can learn is by putting yourself out there. And soon enough my portfolio started to look decent.

My advice to anyone who's currently facing a similar situation trying to get into UX Design, know that everyone faces it at some point and don't take it to your heart. Its just a part of your life.

Many of you just get demotivated from one bad interview, please don't!

Sooner or later you'll realise that it all was for something greater! If your craft is perfect you won't need to put your hands out ever to anyone.

Afterall what doesn't kill you just makes you stronger.
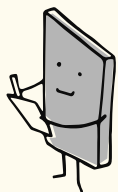
If you want your story of how you got into UX Design to be featured in the magazine, please visit -
www.designwhine.com/get-featured

Kartik Singh is currently working as a full stack designer for Microsoft and helping them design products for million of users. He holds an M.Des. in Experience Design from NIFT, Delhi. When not designing, he loves new experiences whether it is music, travelling or meeting new people.

Trauma-Informed Research & Design

UX Designers are not just obligated to design interfaces to bring joy, but also avoid pain

By Dr. Bre Gentile

What is Trauma?

There are several definitions of the word trauma. For this article and in the context of research and design, trauma is any adverse experience where trust was broken. The trauma that I focus on is largely around the ten adverse childhood experiences (ACEs): sexual abuse, emotional abuse, emotional neglect, physical abuse, physical neglect, incarcerated family member, divorce, mental illness, mother treated violently, or substance abuse. In each of those experiences, trust is broken and without support those experiences can be left unexamined and lead to several negative health outcomes like heart disease, cancer, suicide, and depression.

Trauma has different levels of severity and pervasiveness.

For example, we have all experienced a level of trauma with the pandemic. For some it was very traumatic, for others it was jarring and impactful. In user experience we have a particular insight into the trauma some people experienced. Some of us are asked to hold life experiences through surveys and interviews and expected to turn those into actionable insights the design team can prototype.

What does it mean to be trauma-informed?

Being trauma-informed means you have a working knowledge of trauma and you have a way of operationalizing tenants of trauma into concrete items. For example, you would be considered a trauma-informed UX researcher if you understood the trauma some have around finances, you could operationalize fear of being

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WHILE ORGANIZATIONS SAY THEY'RE USER-CENTRIC, VERY FEW OF THEIR DESIGNERS HAVE MORE THAN A BACHELOR'S LEVEL UNDERSTANDING OF PSYCHOLOGY

poor into concrete items like low-balance reminders, automatic transfers to savings, autopings to users that they have $100 more in their savings than they did 30 days ago. Your knowledge informs your insights. While organizations and startups are quick to say they're user-centric or human-centered, very few of their researchers and designers have more than a bachelor's level understanding of psychology. The truth is to be truly user-centric, human-centered, or trauma-informed you need to have at least a bachelor's degree in psychology. Why? Because you have to be

trained to listen, observe, and hold space. An in-depth interview is an opportunity to listen, observe, and hold space but without being trauma-informed we have no way of knowing that opportunity existed. Without being willing to sit with users and listen to them, observe them, and hold space for them we're getting surface level sample of who they really are and what the problem really is.

Being trauma-informed oftentimes requires teams to do a different type of professional development. Yes we want our UX teams to be proficient in methodologies, in platforms

like Figma, etc. However, to truly repair a rupture, we have to understand the rupture and what that means so we can not only repair it but make it the best experience they've had yet. For example, when e-commerce makes stylish clothes inaccessible to the middle class they are sending a message that the middle class is not worthy of delivering a solution allowing them to easily purchase stylish clothes online. Perhaps the middle class is left thinking "if only we had more money, then they would invest in solutions for us." Before we make a solution to solve that problem, we need to frame it as a rupture and become intensely curious. What did it mean to not be able to buy clothes online? What were the problems created by not having affordable online shopping? What was it like not having a solution? Now that we see the rupture we can start to

ask about the repair. What would an accessible tech solution look like? What would it mean to be able to buy clothes online? What would make this solution a burden?

By the time you go to design your prototype you have an acute understanding of what it felt like to exist in the problem space, you've taken that understanding and applied knowledge you acquired during your research to propose a repair. (i.e. stylish clothes not being accessible to the middle-class)

Why is being trauma-informed so important?

We have an obligation as UX researchers and designers to create products and services that bring joy and delight. I'd like to add to that obligation - we are also obligated to

create to avoid pain. If we can agree that part of living is suffering, then we need to focus on researching and designing products and services that avoid pain. What does this look like? Here's an example. I'm trying to learn a new language using Duolingo. I was on a roll and logged in 10 days in a row but missed a day because I was travelling. I'm super bummed about missing a day, I'm starting to get down on myself that I was on a roll and now I'm not, and now I'm even starting to doubt that I can learn a new language. I log onto the app and see that even though I missed a day, Duolingo understands and keeps my streak alive! I was given a redo. Before using the app I was experiencing suffering - pained by negative self-talk and self-doubt. They designed a feature knowing that ending a streak is tough. That feature made me tell my colleagues, it led me to write a review, it kept me engaged and I continued to use the app.

Being trauma-informed is important because it gets at the real reason people use our products and services: we solved a problem. Yes, the joyful and delightful features keep our products and services sticky, but the reason people engage in the first place and stay engaged is because of the many times your product or service alleviated pain.

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THE REASON PEOPLE ENGAGE WITH A PRODUCT IN THE FIRST PLACE IS BECAUSE OF THE MANY TIMES YOUR PRODUCT OR SERVICE ALLEVIATED PAIN

In 2020 I lost my grandfather who was like my father to COVID. I wanted to look at the news but I didn't want to see the word COVID for many months after. I thought if I deselected a few industries where I knew COVID would show up like politics, science, medicine - that I would be able to browse the news. Unfortunately as I browsed fashion news there was an article on COVID, even as I browsed sports headlines there was mention of COVID.

At that point my news app failed me. Had I been able to start my app with an opportunity to choose topics that would bring me joy or select topics that I'd like to avoid, that would have been a trauma-informed product. This is one of many apps that miss the mark and inadvertently retrigger users.

How do we become more trauma-informed?

Most job descriptions of UX roles are doing a better job at

"

SHIFTING TO TRAUMA-INFORMED RESEARCH AND DESIGN IS AN ADOPTION OF A PERSPECTIVE WHICH TAKES A CHANGE OF THINKING

listing psychology as a domain of study. You may still find your team lacks sufficient training in listening, observing, and holding space. Here are 3 ways to boost your team's emotional intelligence and showcase your user-centeredness:

1. Begin hiring people with stronger psychology backgrounds. Many psychologists are curious about making the jump to tech. Use job descriptions and hiring ads to reach more psychologists or folks with psychology degrees.

2. Engage in a team mindfulness practice. When you slow your team down to really be with their own

thoughts, energy, and attitudes they can better hold space for users when the time comes.

3. Learn from experts like Indi Young, Rachael Dietkus, myself and other experts dedicated to disrupting how research and design are done with a single goal: research and design for the users. We all have free offerings and paid opportunities to partner with us.

Putting it all together

Shifting to trauma-informed research and design is an adoption of a perspective. It takes a change of thinking and adopting processes that take time and happen over

time. You can certainly put it in words but if someone was to audit your human-centernedness or your use-centricness, how would you fair? The goal is that over time you would improve by increasing user involvement in design or by holding in-depth interviews asking only one question. It's quite a lot to take in as an individual yet alone to adopt as a leader and train your team in. Remember, this is an adoption of perspective.

Here are a few things you can do to get started:

Start by familiarizing yourself with work in trauma-informed design, social workers in design, and the like. Follow passionate experts doing this work like Rachael Dietkus, George Aye, Vivianne Castillo and myself. Contract with consultancies doing this work like: Dr. G's Lab, Greater Good Studio, and Social Workers Who Design.

When you're ready to learn more and want support for yourself and/or your team, reach out to the aforementioned. The best part about this work is its typically customizable and you usually work directly with the founder or principal researcher/designer.

*A clinical psychologist turned user researcher, **Dr. Bre Gentile** is the Senior Product Designer & Researcher at Center for Youth Wellness @ Safe & Sound and is Founder and CEO of Dr. G's Lab, a trauma-informed design consultancy in San Francisco, California, U.S.A.*

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In this Valentine's Day special issue, *DesignWhine* chats with six couples who are both in UX Design to find out what it's like to have your spouse as a UX Design partner alongside you

DESIGN COUPLES

COUPLE # 1

AKSHITA BHANDARI & TRIAMBAK SOOD

A keen learner of Product Design and an avid sketcher, **Akshita Bhandari** is a Sr. UX/UI Designer at CreateBytes, Gurugram, India where her better half, **Triambak Sood** works as a Principle Product Designer.

Describing herself as "ardent and hardworking" Akshita fondly remembers how she and Triambak met during their internship at an an interior design company in Delhi.

"*So, both of us were interning and I found him very cute. After talking and working together for a little more than a month, I proposed him and guess what. HE SAID YES! This is how it started for us!*"

While they aid each other with UX and UI (Triambak with UX and Akshita with UI), Akshita admits that because they're both in Design, at times it becomes tough for them to reach an agreement, leading in a dispute!

Asked how UX Design might have transformed their relationship, Akshita is quick to point out that both Akshita and Triambak empathize with each other (even in their fights!) and that the love for UX Design has kept both of them together and made them reach this far.

"

UX DESIGN HAS HELPED US UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER BETTER AS WE CAN EMPATHISE WITH EACH OTHERS' PROBLEMS

As a UX Designer, Akshita thinks that Triambak possesses great empathy skills and patience which she thinks she lacks and wishes she had for she loses her cool and gets irritated easily.

Triambak, on the other hand, thinks that Akshita is fairly fast and intuitive when it comes to designing interfaces. He wishes he had that sense of creativity in delivering a beautiful product which she does!

To the young love birds who might both be in UX Design, Akshita and Triambak have a message -

"Listen to each other, help each other at every point and do your work with love. (with the same love that you both have for each other!)"

COUPLE # 2

KIRTI GROVER & SAMEER GUPTA

Kirti Grover and **Sameer Gupta**'s story of how they met could very well be tranformed on to the big screen!

They first met during an in-person interview in which Sameer interviewed Kirti for the organisation in which he was working to establish a Design team. Kirti didn't impress him, and he wasn't going to hire her. But

Sameer's supervisor saw Kirti's latent Design talent and insisted on recruiting her. That's how fate brought them together!

Kirti further remembers, "*After I was hired, we gradually began to feel more at ease with each other professionally—basically in a mentee-mentor arrangement. We were similar in many ways-*

"

UX DESIGN STILL PLAYS A PART IN OUR RELATIONSHIP BY WORKING AS AN ICE BREAKER WHEN WE GET INTO SILENT FIGHTS

our values, personalities, and beliefs- and this drew us together right away.

When I learned that Sameer was single and looking for a life companion, I decided to look for one for him. One day, a colleague mentioned in passing that we both look great together. That got me thinking!

I ultimately decided to propose to him after much deliberation. Because I was nine years younger than him, this came as a huge surprise to him. But, after some hesitation, he consented!"

It's now been five years since Kirti and Sameer got married and have a two and a half year old lovely daughter Samaayra.

Not just bringing them together, UX Design still plays a part in their relationship by working as an ice breaker when they get into silent fights (that's Kirti's way of showing disagreement!).

Kirti finds her hubby's skills of people management and simplifying complex problems at hand to be something she wishes she had, while Sameer finds Kirti's passion for sketching and the skill to document admirable.

To the young Design couples, Kirti leaves a piece of advise with a chuckle -

"*Don't try to solve your relationship problems with the UX mindset. Go with the flow (not workflow) ;)*"

COUPLE # 3

ANSHUMALI BARUAH & VARUN PRABHAKAR

Both of them working as Sr. UX Designers in Germany's *Deutsche Telekom*, it was indeed "*all thanks to UX Design*" that brought **Anshumali Baruah** and **Varun Prabhakar** together!

In Anshumali's words, "*Our design careers got us working together. And it was during that time that we realised we complement each other and help reduce each other's 'cognitive load'!*"

Coming from very distinct backgrounds- Architecture and Engineering, there's a connection between Anshumali and Varun owing to Design like bouncing off ideas, understanding challenges in the field of Design, bringing in differing perspectives to the table, able to connect over Design and building digital products.

However, there's another side to their relationship that goes well beyond Design as well. They connect over their passion for travelling, experiential learning, exploring cultures & cuisines and steaming cups of chai!

The main benefit of being in the same field of work, according to Anshumali, is that it's very easy to

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THE INNATE SENSITIVE NATURE AND CREATIVE ASPECTS OF DESIGN HELPS OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THRIVE AS WELL

empathise with what the other person is going through in a particular situation at work or in personal life. The innate sensitive nature and creative aspects of Design helps their relationship to thrive as well.

When questioned about the skills their other half has that they admire and wish they had, Varun is quick to answer,

"*Anshumali has this infinite source of energy which is contagious! She has amazing people skills, always super approachable & continuous drive to help people out.*"

Anshumali finds Varun to be a perfectionist and an amazing story-teller, précise and to-the-point, something that she wishes to imbibe in herself someday.

To the young couples who happen to be in love and happen to be UX Designers as well, Anshumali goes,

"*It is important to understand each others' complete 'journey' with 'pain points' and 'opportunities' for intervention to have a desirable & engaging experience!*"

COUPLE # 4

MANISHA GUPTA & ABNEET CHAUHAN

While **Manisha Gupta** works as a Design Lead at Adobe, Bangalore and **Abneet Chauhan** is a Senior Product Designer at VMware, their romance dates back to college days. They were batchmates during M Des. at IDC, IIT Bombay where both were quite impressed with each other's crafts.

Abneet was pursuing Industrial Design course and Manisha was into Visual Communication. As their

"

DESIGN HAS ENHANCED THE ACCEPTABILITY TOWARDS DIFFERENT FACETS OF EACH OTHER'S LIFE

friendship grew over topics of art, crafts, design, and life in general, Abneet proposed to Manisha in the last semester of his course. Later, she went to Chennai for job and he moved to Pune. But after a year of a distant relationship, felt the necessity for one another and got married.

Talking about the role of UX Design in their relationship, Abneet says, "*I naturally fall into a structured problem solving approach with engineering and design skills, while Manisha has been into exploring aesthetic solutions mostly. Whenever we combine our approaches, magic happens!*"

Apart from being spouses, they enjoy talking about Design, Art and Crafts, Films, Tech, etc.

"*Design has taught us not just to empathise with each other but has enhanced the acceptability towards different facets of one another's life also,*" adds Abneet.

While Abneet wishes to be as dynamic and organic as Manisha, Manisha wishes to push the creative and functional aspects of task at hand à la Abneet.

Head over heels for each other, they advice young Designer couples, "*There are no limits to your creativity and wildness. Having experience in UX Design would have given you deep skills in structuring things, creating blueprints, and adding knowledge, aesthetics, and values that really matter. The life of two designers can be truly magical and unimaginable!*"

COUPLE # 5

RITIKA BHAGYA & CHIRAGH KIRPALANI

Ritika Bhagya is the Founder & CEO at Studio Flolab, Jakarta, Indonesia while **Chirag Kirpalani** is the Founder & COO at Ayoconnect, Jakarta, Indonesia. Their love story started with UX Design.

They met for the first time at a job interview. Chirag became Ritika's reporting manager after she was hired as a UX Designer, so their conversations were mostly about Design. They eventually became friends over Sindhi food and Twitter conversations, began dating, and married three years later.

Ritika thinks that UX Design has also contributed a lot in transforming their relationship over the years.

"*Our polar opposite opinions have definitely strengthened our relationship. There are very few things we argue about, Design being one of them. UX has definitely been a pillar that strengthens our relationship from time to time,*" says Ritika of her relationship with Chirag.

"*The biggest advantage of being with someone in the same field as you, is that we can bounce off ideas, discuss challenges and look out to each other for advice. It definitely helps to be with someone who understands your work inside out. We understand when either of us*

"

UX HAS DEFINITELY BEEN A PILLAR THAT STRENGTHENS OUR RELATIONSHIP FROM TIME TO TIME

"

OUR APPROACH TO DESIGN IS TOTALLY OPPOSITE BECAUSE WE'RE BOTH SO OPINIONATED, THAT'S A CON OF BOTH OF BEING IN UX DESIGN

needs help and we also understand when either of us needs space.

While there are certainly pros of both of them being in UX Design, Ritika also tells us some cons.

"*The cons of both of us being UX Designers is that we often have extremely heated discussions on Design. Our approach to Design is totally opposite because we're both so opinionated. But eventually we always find a way to work out a solution that works for both of us.*"

Ritika finds Chirag's "knack for thinking outside the box" to be a quality that she wishes she could possess. Chirag is also excellent at networking which is an important skill for any field.

"Connections with the right people can help go a long way in your career," remarks Ritika,

Chirag, on the other hand, finds Ritika to be super organized and detailed at problem solving.

When questioned about their piece of advice to the young couples in love and in UX Design, this is what both of them have to say -

"*Just like how we UX Designers are curious about our users and try our best to empathize with them, it helps to be curious about your partner when getting to know each other and most importantly, empathize with them during challenging times..*"

COUPLE # 6

POOJA CHAWLA & RUPENDRA SINGH

Pooja Chawla and **Rupendra Singh** first met through UX Design at *Appstudioz,* Noida where both are currently UX Designers.

Pooja fondly recalls, "*Firstly I fell in love with UX Design Then I started loving Rupendra because of his efficiency, his ethics as a UX Designer. So, in a way, UX Design played the most important role in our relationship!*"

Pooja thinks UX Design has transformed their relationship big time and that they bond well over UX Design.

Pooja and Rupendra learn from each other where Rupendra admires her management skills and Pooja wishes she had his decision making skills.

An Upcycled, Creative Design Desk

*A Postgraduate in Industrial Design, **Nishant Rathod** works as a UX Analyst at Cybage India and likes to sketch, paint, illustrate and explore any new style or medium of art*

An artist, designer, and explorer, Nishant enjoys pushing the boundaries of an environment by being involved in the design process and coming up with creative ideas. His desk setup is like a mood-board which helps him stay creative and motivated, it comprises all tools that one can need to stay fanatic. This setup gives warmth with a beautiful view and the plants around make him feel fresh and energetic.

Almost all the items on his desk setup are upcycle (reusing discarded products). In his words, "I like to sketch places I visited, things I did, or food that I ate on my trip rather than taking a picture which goes on the mood-board."

Apart from his intense love for arts, Nishant is a cricket fanatic, studies different cultures, and is always up for a creative discussion.

If you want to feature your desk in the next issue, write to us - designwhine.com /get-featured

Nishant's lovely desk is made by upcycling discarded materials in his house

DESIGN HOROSCOPE
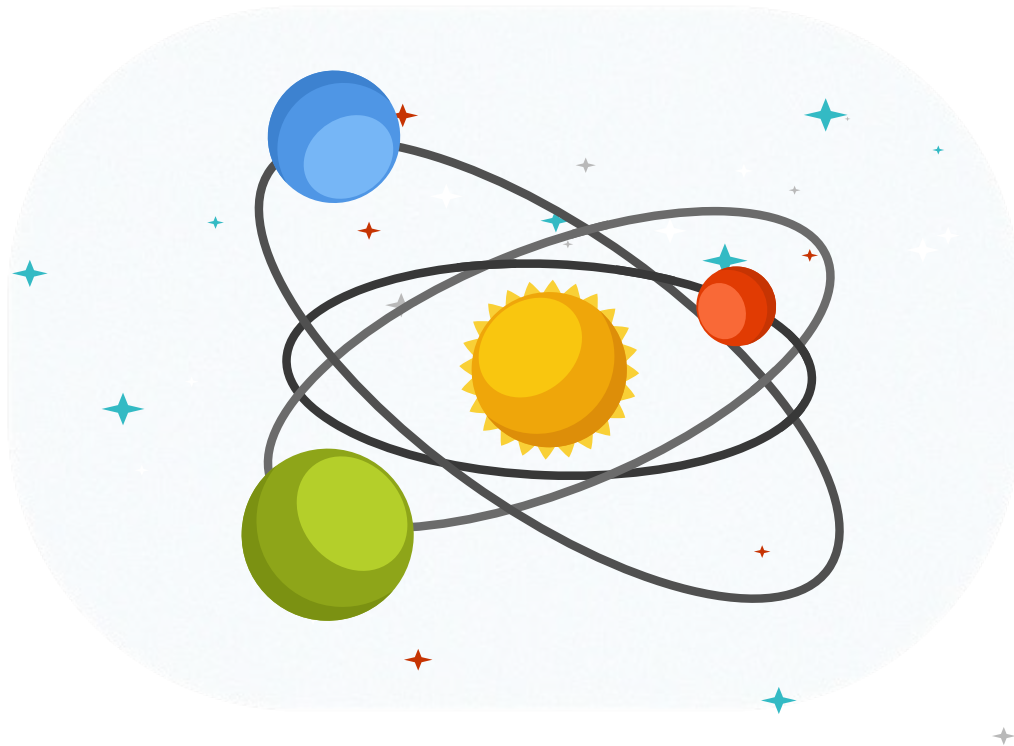
What do celestial bodies say about your work life as a designer?
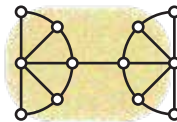
AQUARIUS
Jan 20 - Feb 18
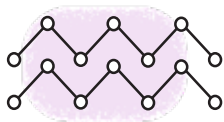
You have the tendency to set high standards for yourself and challenge yourself to achieve the impossible. The Universe is helping you emerge as the master of your craft
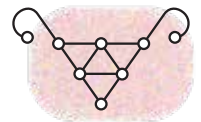
Tip - Let go for greater good

PISCES
Feb 19 - Mar 20

Explore the possibility of what you can create as you free yourself from your own judgments and biases. Your designs will get appreciated if you consider feedback with positivity

Tip - Be your own boss

ARIES
Mar 21 - Apr 19

You are but the Universe indulging in a human experience. Instead of shying away from your true nature, meditate on what you need to satiate your creative soul

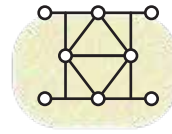Tip - Look within

TAURUS
Apr 20 - May 20
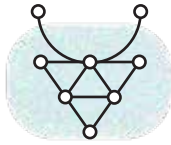
It's now time to start a dialogue with your boss about your boundaries, about the things that you need for a fulfilling design career or about the growth you deserve. All will be well

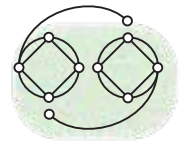Tip - Be open and receptive

GEMINI
May 21 - Jun 20

Now is the time to learn a new skill you've been procrastinating for long. Taking up a course and applying it up on a side hustle will work wonders for your career

Tip - Explore new skills

CANCER
Jun 21 - Jul 22

Your need for external validation is robbing you off your authenticity as a designer. Move beyond what others expect and look within for what satiates your creativity

Tip - Follow the process
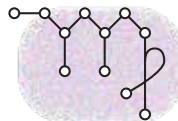
LEO
Jul 23 - Aug 22

This month is perfect for you to take mentorship sessions. Empathizing with juniors and walking in their shoes would help you gain clarity on what it is that you have come in UX for

Tip - Empathize

VIRGO
Aug 23 - Sep 22

Working our designs is one thing and presenting them with a data backed story is another. Learn the art of storytelling and focus on presenting your designs with a story and data

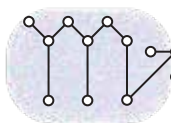Tip - Channelize your talent

LIBRA
Sep 23 - Oct 22

You have been thinking of that collaboration for a long time. Connecting with new people in your team and taking the leap of faith will be fruitful. Get out of your comfort zone

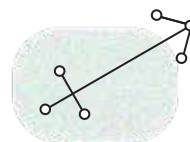Tip - Network and engage

SCORPIO
Oct 23 - Nov 21

Keep working on the designs the way you find them authentic. Open dialogues with the client and team members will help resolve conflicts and steer forward

Tip - Data would help

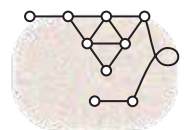## SAGITTARIUS
Nov 22 - Dec 21

Take the waiting period in your stride. Become aware of the soul lessons that are being revealed to you in each moment. Research behind your designs will help you succeed

Tip - Hold your ground

CAPRICORN
Dec 22 - Jan 19

Begin to eliminate what doesn't serve you. Reaffirm your boundaries and gain a greater sense of clarity on your purpose. Learning new skills might help you achieve your goals

Tip - Avoid collaborations

We need your ❤

DesignWhine was born and continues to grow in moonlight.

It's a small independent venture run by a handful of team members after office hours. A lot of hardwork and resources go into it's production but we do it for the love of the UI & UX Design community.

If you enjoyed reading this issue, we request you to please share it with your professional network on LinkedIn and follow us on Twitter to support us.