



2024 CASE STUDY

The 2024 Well-Being by Design Fellows participated in a four-month professional development program for designers and producers of interactive kids' technology and media. They met online to workshop their current projects, network with other fellows, and gain insights from research and industry leaders as they worked to incorporate principles of well-being into their designs. We are delighted to share highlights from each fellow's experience.

Carissa
Kang



Carissa Kang is a developmental psychologist who has been working with kids, tweens, and teens for over 15 years across both academia and industry. She is currently a Principal User Researcher at Roblox. Over the past two years, she has led research on helping teens connect and communicate with friends and finding like-minded communities on Roblox. Prior to Roblox, she led research at YouTube Kids.

Roblox is a global immersive platform for connection and communication. Every day, millions of people come to Roblox to create, play, work, learn, and connect with each other in virtual experiences built by a global community of creators. Our vision is to reimagine the way people come together – in a world that's safe, civil, and optimistic.

My research at Roblox encompasses all things social. This includes how and why users (kids/tweens/teens) connect and communicate with friends: to play together seamlessly or to connect with friends and family, through a combination of avatar, voice or text chat. All of this helps youths build critical social-emotional skills, and the friendships formed and/or maintained can be sources of positive emotions and support.

We want to promote healthy socialization and to provide users with more control and options over their experience, with a focus on how we can provide kids and teens with more nuanced ways to better represent themselves on Roblox.



PRODUCT: Roblox
TARGET AGE: Everyone
→ ROBLOX.COM



HOW WE INCORPORATE WELL-BEING COMPONENTS NOW

Social connection: Roblox’s mission is to build a co-experience platform that allows users to come together to play, learn, communicate and explore. Everyday, over 77 million people connect and communicate on Roblox. We’ve seen billions of friendships made on the platform (ex. ~5.9 billion accepted friend requests) and billions of in-game chat messages sent daily.

Creativity: Roblox has an intuitive creation system where anyone can create experiences and games with Roblox Studio, a tool that allows users to design, build and script their experiences.

Safety: Roblox also has “Content Labels” that provide parents with guidance as to what experiences and games are appropriate for their child depending on their maturity level. Based on these recommendations, parents can use parental controls to manage content their child has access to. In addition, users can easily mute or block players they come across in games, and report inappropriate content and/or behavior. Roblox also filters all text chat to block inappropriate content. For users under 13, filters are even stricter.

WHAT MORE CAN OUR PRODUCT DO TO ADDRESS CHILDREN’S WELL-BEING?

Diversity, inclusion: Roblox is currently working on how we can increase the diversity of avatars available on the platform. For example, we’re thinking about how we can allow users to create an avatar doppelganger directly from a photo that they could then further customize (e.g., body shape, height, etc).

Competence: Roblox Studio provides accessible ways for users to learn the fundamentals of coding and game design. In addition, many users also create and sell virtual items. However, there’s much more we can do to lower the barriers to entry for creation and user generated content (UGC), so more users are able to effectively use these.

Emotional regulation: We’ve made a lot of progress in improving public voice communication on Roblox, for example, making it easy for users to report and block others or inappropriate content. We’re also exploring how we can better help users feel safer and to maximize positive emotions through private communication channels. This will allow users to better express themselves with close friends only (vs publicly visible communications) so they have more opportunities to self-organize and share content and ideas in a safer space.



I learned a lot from the guest speakers from different backgrounds. In particular, Amanda Third talked about how children’s experiences online are fundamentally oriented towards “sociality”. However, this also inadvertently exposes them to harms and risks. What stood out to me from her research on what safety means to kids was the importance of feeling safe about being who they are, being able to express their identity and be who they are without experiencing discrimination. This made me think about how we need to brainstorm ways to ensure kids feel emotionally safe on the platform, so they feel like they can experiment with and express their different identities.





REFLECTION

Throughout the fellowship, I have learned about different approaches and strategies in which wellbeing can be incorporated into the product. For example, the RITEC framework has been tremendously valuable in helping me to think about different ways in which we can incorporate children's well-being into our product. Given the multidimensionality of each component, there are many ways to think about how different features can be designed to support children's well-being.

The youths reinforced the importance of **online safety**. Teens are keenly aware of online risks and dangers, including scams and the risks related to sharing personal information. Fostering a sense of security so they can express themselves authentically without compromising their safety will encourage healthy risk-taking and exploration, all of which will be key to their well-being and development.

LOOKING AHEAD

I'm planning to share what I've learned about the RITEC framework and designing for well-being at a Lunch & Learn workshop with cross-functional stakeholders. This is both to raise awareness about thinking about well-being in design (which many may not be familiar with yet), and also to kick-start brainstorming ways we can incorporate different components of well-being into our product design across different features.

In addition, we'll continue iterating on early concepts and ideas and will check in regularly with youth through user research studies to ensure that we're taking their needs into consideration.

BUILDING MORE SOCIAL CONNECTION

Being on Roblox isn't just about playing games; it has evolved into a social hub. In the [most recent report from the Digital Wellness lab](#) (April 2024) with 1400 adolescents (13-17), 54% report having real-time or extended conversations frequently with friends/family and 32% do this with strangers while playing video games. All of this can help with fostering connections and building a sense of community.

Roblox's vision is to enable everyone to connect with others, and express themselves with immersive communication. In 2023, we launched [Roblox Connect](#), which allows friends to call each other with their avatars. Friends can hang out in an immersive space while being on a voice call together. Soon, we'll allow users to initiate video calls on Roblox across experiences. All of this will eventually help users better connect and communicate with their friends while having fun on Roblox.



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For more information about the Well-Being by Design Fellowship program, please visit joanganzcooneycenter.org/fellowship2024