



CASE STUDY

The 2025 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.

Stephanie Ojo



Stephanie is a Staff Product Designer at Pinterest, specializing in Trust and Safety and teen experiences. Previously, she led design for YouTube's Supervised Experience and contributed to Google Search and Amazon Echo Frames. A self-published children's book author, Stephanie is passionate about empowering youth through safe, engaging design and believes in the power of storytelling to drive positive change.



PRODUCT: Pinterest, bring everyone the inspiration to create a life they love

TARGET: Everyone—but for this project, teens 13-17

→ [PINTEREST.COM](https://pinterest.com)

Pinterest's mission is to bring everyone the inspiration to create a life they love—and when we say everyone, we truly mean it. People come to Pinterest not just to dream, but to find real ways to bring those dreams to life. We are committed to being a positive corner of the internet; and our company leaders have emphasized this commitment publicly, making it clear that Pinterest stands apart by prioritizing user well-being and positivity. Pressure to perform is everywhere on social media. Eight in ten teens feel pressure to look their best or present themselves in a certain way online ([New Survey Shows Young People Are Under Pressure About Their Achievement, Appearance, and Future](#), 2024). Pinterest can create a safer, more private space for young people to grow and explore interests. With Gen Z as our fastest-growing user group (*Pinterest analysis, global, Jun 2023*), it's more important than ever to understand how teens use Pinterest.

As Pinterest becomes more integral to teen culture, we have a unique opportunity—and responsibility—to create an online environment that is trustworthy, expressive, and trend-forward, while meeting teen's developmental needs. We're moving beyond simply designing out the bad; we're actively seeking opportunities to design thoughtful experiences that amplify the good. By focusing on both safety and inspiration, we aim to empower the next generation to explore, create, and thrive in a space built for positivity and growth.



RITEC COMPONENTS PINTEREST CURRENTLY INCORPORATES WELL

Safety & Security

Pinterest prioritizes the well-being of teens by embedding safety and security into every aspect of their experience. Accounts for users aged 13-15 are private and can't be changed. Only the (13-15 year old) teens and people they invite to follow them can see their saved Pins and boards. Their Pinterest account and profile details, like their name, age, or location, won't be discoverable and they can only exchange messages with mutual followers. Accounts for teens aged 16-17 years are private by default, but these teens can change their profile visibility in settings. We also offer a parental passcode that can be set to ensure parent visibility and supervision of settings controls. By minimizing negative interactions and exposure to harmful content, Pinterest empowers teens to explore their interests, express themselves, and connect with others in a positive, supportive, and more secure environment.

Inclusive Experiences

Pinterest's body type ranges, skin tone filter and hair texture filters deliver better and more inclusive search results so that broader ranges of people can feel seen on the platform. Given that Pinterest offers powerful visual search tools, it is important for users to be able to see themselves reflected in their search results. This is incredibly vital for teens as they are forming their own identities and balancing societal pressure.

Creativity

Pinterest nurtures teen creativity by providing a vibrant, visual platform where self-expression and exploration are encouraged. Teens can discover new ideas, play around with new ways of creating (collages), experiment with trends, and share their own projects in a supportive and more positive environment. By prioritizing positive content and community guidelines, we help teens feel more safe to express themselves authentically, and develop their creative skills as they shape their unique identities.

RITEC COMPONENTS PINTEREST CAN AMPLIFY TO BETTER ADDRESS CHILDREN'S WELLBEING

Relationships

The teens in our co-creation session with the Youth Design Team already viewed Pinterest as a creative and safe space, but found its social features (and teen account limitations) restrictive and connecting with peers complicated. One Youth Design Team member said, "I genuinely forget that Pinterest is used as an actual social media platform." While they appreciate the platform's safety, these teens also desired more social interaction. By introducing safer, but still social experiences, Pinterest can better engage teens and highlight the value of collaborative community in co-creating a life you love.

Competence

There's a clear need for better education on privacy, content guidelines, and account changes for everyone on Pinterest. By being more transparent and proactive in our in-product education, we can reduce the frustration that stems from uncertainty and empower teens to make confident and informed decisions about their accounts. In addition to in-product contextual education, we can also encourage skill development and real life action for teens by offering more video tutorials and DIY content, helping them turn inspiration into action, beyond just shopping.

Autonomy/Empowerment

Visual discovery on Pinterest is often a joyful, creative experience, given our algorithm that offers related Pins. But not all content is inspiring. Pinterest can address this by taking a thoughtful and more nuanced approach to our search interventions and offering supportive resources, guidance and gentle pivots when needed. By minimizing dead ends and promoting agency, we can empower teens to make positive choices, fostering a safer and more growth-oriented experience as they explore their interests on the platform.

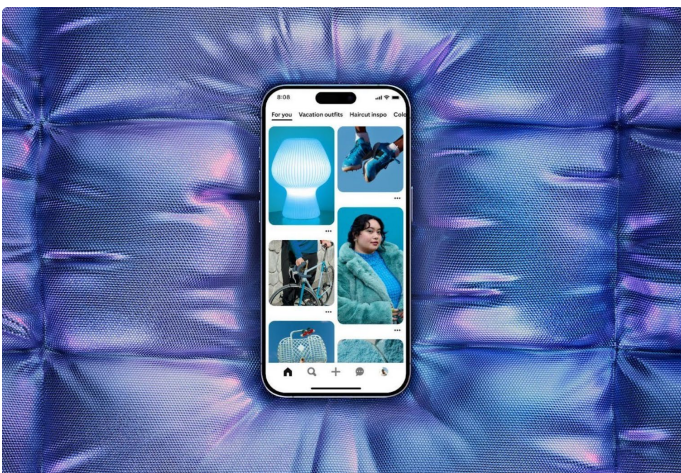
REFLECTION

Throughout the fellowship, I was reminded of the value of co-design and consistently talking with young people, especially when focusing on youth well-being. While adults have many great ideas, a lot has changed since we were teens and it's important to hear and truly listen to what young people tell us about their experiences and needs. I was taken aback when a Youth Design Team member shared, *"I was surprised that all of the adults in the room were listening deeply to our thoughts and ideas. At some times I would think my ideas were silly or not on par but they always asked more about my thoughts and it made me feel seen."* Not only does this illuminate the importance of active listening during co-design, but also the impact our interactions with youth can have. If we want them to join Pinterest, explore and grow for years to come, it is crucial that they feel seen and a part of our process.

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LOOKING AHEAD

In the coming months I plan to share more about my learnings, the RITEC framework, and youth well-being with various groups across Pinterest, such as our well-being working group and teen safety cross functional partners. I will also plan a Lunch & Learn workshop where anyone interested can learn more about the fellowship, designing for youth well-being, and the RITEC framework. I'll continue to incorporate my learnings into the prioritization of ideas represented in our teen experience product vision.

I am confident that Pinterest can be an innovative leader in creating an online space for teens that is more safe, empowering and feels “made for them”—We'll do this by continuing to talk with teens, listen to their needs and feedback and thoughtfully weave their insights into our design solutions.

I encourage all designers interested in driving positive outcomes for youth well-being, to think beyond just capturing the attention of young people and focus on amplifying their intention. The result → a sense of fulfillment and time well spent.

REFERENCES

New Survey Shows Young People Are Under Pressure About Their Achievement, Appearance, and Future. (2024, October 10). Common Sense Media. <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/press-releases/new-survey-shows-young-people-are-under-pressure>

Pinterest analysis, global, Jun 2023 [Gen Z was defined as ages 13-24 at the time of the analysis.]. (n.d.).



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For more information about the Well-Being by Design Fellowship program, please visit joanganzcooneycenter.org/fellowship2025