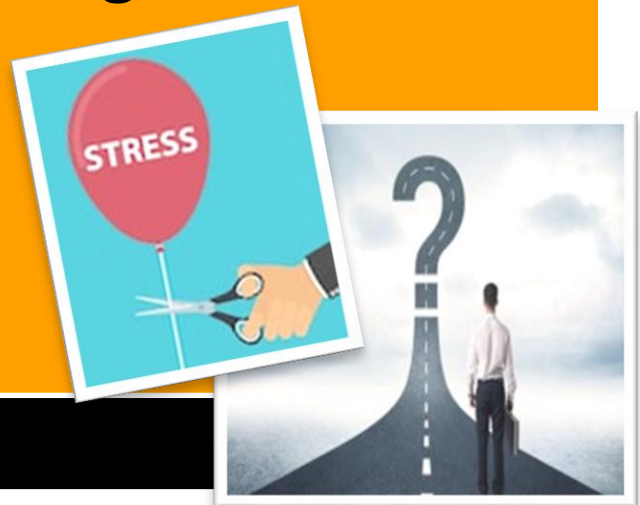


## Designing the Next Best-Selling Stress-Relieving Desk Toy

Using InsightsNow's  
Product SPARK™  
to uncover sensorial cues for relevant  
new product development



May 1, 2020

**THE OBJECTIVE:** To help create the next generation of a stress-relief product people can use at their desks. This product needs to be designed to connect with an individual's kinesthetic side and provide stimulation and sensations which help them relax and work through their stress.

**THE METHOD:** We conducted two, 4-day Product SPARK™ sessions with individuals who volunteered their time to learn about the method via an interactive demo, using an asynchronous qualitative research platform.

### People are facing increased stress

During the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals are dealing with significant stress in their daily lives. Contributing to this are the realities of working from home, having kids/family members present all the time, not being able to go out, a lack of socialization, etc. Many people feel they are “trying their best” and are looking for ways to bring “sanity” to a very uncertain time. Some of the ways people are achieving this:

- Getting away from surroundings (walking around neighborhood, getting fresh air).
- Using electronics as a distraction (music, videos, social media).
- Consuming a beverage (coffee, tea, soda, alcohol).
- Fidgeting with items (rubber bands, bubble wrap, pen).



A note about the Product SPARK process: In a series of visual, aroma, texture and sound exercises, participants discussed sensory cues to leverage and avoid in building a new product prototype.

**Key Insight:** Stress-relief when social distancing is cued by **clean & natural** sights, scents, textures and sounds that are associated with **being outside** or **having an experience with living things**.

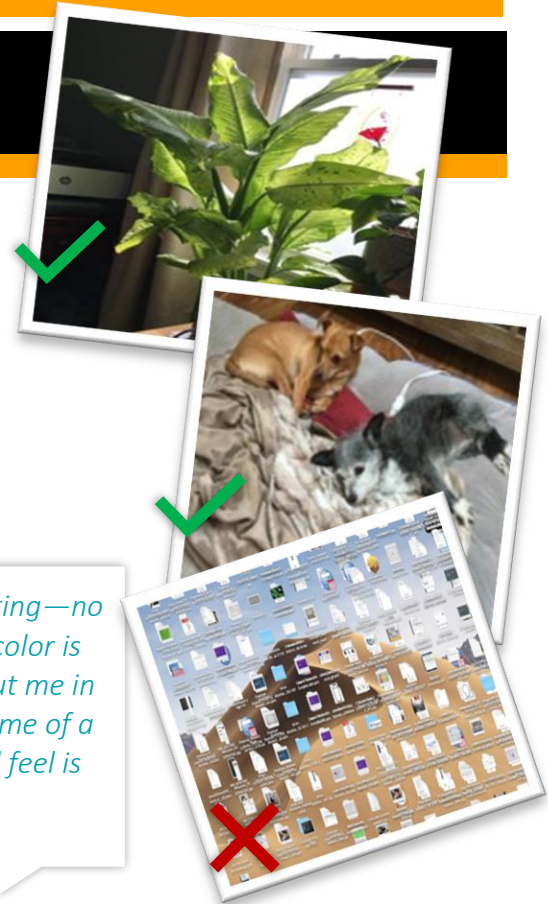
## Visual Cues to Leverage and Avoid

### ✓ LEVERAGE:

- Natural colors (green, brown, blue, white)
- Smooth
- Fluffy/cuddly/fuzzy/furry
- Clean
- Simple
- Lightweight

### ✗ AVOID:

- Cluttered/messy
- Industrial
- Electronic/technology/industrial
- Hard
- Square/rectangular
- Dark colors (grey/black)
- Busy



*“The tree from my office surprised me today by opening up and blooming. I watch the wind gently blowing through the flowers and it focused me and relaxes me.”*

*“Being angular it is not inviting—no soft edges and dark grey color is not welcoming—doesn't put me in a positive mood. Reminds me of a dull grey sky. an industrial feel is not calming.”*

## Aroma Cues to Leverage and Avoid

### ✓ LEVERAGE:

- Fresh
- Natural
- Herbal
- Refreshing
- Citrusy
- Vanilla
- Sweet
- Floral/woody
- Clean

### ✗ AVOID:

- Strong
- Harsh
- Chemical
- Overpowering
- Cloying
- Astringent
- Antiseptic
- Pungent

*“The floral, green notes cue nature and springtime which makes me think of flowers and trees blooming, cleanliness, and sunny days - which always boost my mood and help me feel more relaxed and less stressed.”*

*“It makes me think of hospitals and nursing homes which are both stressful places.”*

## Texture Cues to Leverage and Avoid

### ✓ LEVERAGE:

- Soft
- Fluffy
- Smooth
- Thick
- Warm
- Squeezable
- Cushiony
- Cozy
- Malleable
- Fuzzy
- Plush

### ✗ AVOID:

- Hard
- Sharp
- Firm
- Cold
- Gritty
- Harsh
- Scratchy
- Rough
- Pointy
- Coarse
- Rigid



*“The feel of my pillow is always a comfort. It is the signal that the day is over, and it is time to relax and recover for the next day.”*

*“This is common for gravel, sandpaper and even the sharper size of Velcro. The unevenness and jagged scratching aspect cue irritation and discomfort.”*

## Sound Cues to Leverage and Avoid

### ✓ LEVERAGE:

- Flowing
- Swishing
- Peaceful
- Calming
- Gentle
- Blended
- Natural
- Rhythmic
- Soft
- Quiet
- Consistent/ repetitive

### ✗ AVOID:

- Loud
- High pitched
- Erratic
- Hissing
- Shrill
- Explosive
- Inconsistent
- Annoying
- Alarm
- Sharp
- Uneven






*“The light, consistent sound of water flowing helps release the weight of whatever is causing me stress.”*

*“This is not stress-relieving because it is so obnoxious, and it startles me so that I'm not merely distracted but also annoyed.”*

A note about the Product SPARK process: This project did not require the study of taste. If your studies do require taste, we incorporate exercises to discover those cues to leverage and avoid.

# How current products deliver/do not deliver stress-relief



Product	Why it works	Why it doesn't work
<p>Stuffed Animal</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soft</li> <li>• Flexible</li> <li>• Squishy</li> <li>• Comforting</li> <li>• Natural color</li> <li>• Cozy</li> <li>• Nostalgic</li> <li>• Silent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Childish</li> <li>• Would be embarrassed to have colleague see on desk</li> </ul>
<p>Squishy Ball</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Squeezable</li> <li>• Malleable</li> <li>• Smooth</li> <li>• Movable</li> <li>• Quiet</li> <li>• Airy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vibrant yellow color not natural</li> <li>• Rubber smell not natural</li> <li>• Might be sticky</li> </ul>
<p>Fidget Spinner</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rounded</li> <li>• Smooth</li> <li>• Motion</li> <li>• Silent/quiet</li> <li>• Color could be natural (flowers)</li> <li>• Repetitive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bright colors not natural</li> <li>• Metallic</li> <li>• Buzzing sound</li> <li>• Mechanical</li> </ul>
<p>Rubik's Cube</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Movable</li> <li>• Odorless</li> <li>• Smooth</li> <li>• Quiet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bright colors not natural</li> <li>• Rigid</li> <li>• Plastic</li> <li>• Hard</li> <li>• Requires thinking/challenging</li> <li>• Angular</li> <li>• Clicky noises</li> </ul>
<p>Magnetic Beads</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smooth</li> <li>• Round</li> <li>• Movable</li> <li>• Light</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cold</li> <li>• Hard</li> <li>• Metallic</li> <li>• Pinching</li> <li>• Clicking when put together</li> <li>• Clanging</li> <li>• Messy (if they come apart)</li> </ul>

**Next steps:** If this were an actual project (vs. a demonstration of the method), we would work with the R&D department to take these product cues into account and begin to develop prototypes which leverage appropriate cues, knowing what to avoid, working to overcome concerns with in-market “stress-relief” products. With prototypes developed we conduct iterative co-design sessions to fully develop the product and get it ready for successful market introduction. **Contact us** ([info@insightsnow.com](mailto:info@insightsnow.com)) to see how Product SPARK gets you to market faster and with greater success.