

# SCAFFOLD

Independent UX Research Project

## USABILITY FINDINGS + ITERATION DECISIONS

### Evaluation Goal

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The prototype walkthroughs explored whether Scaffold:

- reduced task-initiation friction
- clarified actionable next steps
- preserved user autonomy
- reduced overwhelm during interaction
- felt emotionally supportive rather than pressuring
- supported re-engagement during moments of cognitive overload

**The walkthroughs reinforced the importance of designing support systems that reduce cognitive friction without introducing behavioral pressure or emotional escalation.**

# Observed Interaction Patterns

## Observation 01

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### **USERS HESITATED BEFORE COMMITTING TO TASK FLOWS**

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Participants appeared cautious when entering workflows that implied escalating responsibility or hidden complexity.

#### **Interpretation**

Many users associate productivity systems with pressure, failure, or obligation.

#### **Design Response**

- Increased clarity around reversibility
- Added explicit pause/exit pathways
- Reduced pressure-oriented language

## Observation 02

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### **SMALLER TASK FRAMING REDUCED ACTIVATION BARRIERS**

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Participants responded more positively when tasks were reframed into smaller, bounded actions.

#### **Interpretation**

Reducing ambiguity lowered emotional resistance and cognitive load.

## Design Response

Expanded “make it smaller” interactions and focused on single-step progression.

# Observation 03

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## EMOTIONAL REASSURANCE AFFECTED WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE

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Participants appeared more comfortable continuing once the system communicated safety, flexibility, and non-judgment.

### Interpretation

Emotional state directly impacts task initiation capacity.

### Design Response

- Softened onboarding language
- Removed punitive framing
- Increased transparency around interaction scope

# Observation 04

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## CONCRETE NEXT STEPS REDUCED OVERWHELM

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Once the system translated larger goals into actionable sequences, users appeared calmer and more able to proceed.

### Interpretation

Executive friction often occurs at the translation layer between intention and execution.

## Design Response

Prioritized next-step clarity over full-task planning.

# Observation 05

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## BOUNDED FOCUS INTERVALS SUPPORTED ENGAGEMENT

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Participants responded well to structured but finite focus periods.

### Interpretation

Clear time containers reduced anticipatory overwhelm.

### Design Response

Refined focus-timer interactions and transition pacing.

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# Primary Usability Insight

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Participants did not need more pressure.

They needed:

- reduced ambiguity
  - emotional safety
  - lower activation energy
  - reversible interaction
  - support that preserved agency
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# Iteration Decisions

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## Refined

- onboarding language
- task breakdown structure
- visual simplicity
- consent-based prompts
- transition pacing

## Reduced

- feature density
- competing decisions
- urgency framing
- cognitive clutter

## Strengthened

- transparency
- reversibility
- user control
- emotional validation