

# Student developing smartphone app to prevent and treat anxiety and depression

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Monash University Doctor of Psychology student, David Bakker, is developing a smartphone app, MoodMission, which uses an intuitive and engaging interface to help users learn better ways of coping with low moods and anxious feelings.

Mental health and well-being apps are being used ever widely with users of all ages and [mental health](#) needs. Melbourne-based app Smiling Mind has received international acclaim for bringing mindfulness meditation to over 300,000 users' phones. It is now being used widely in schools and organisations around the country.

David, and supervisor Associate Professor Nikki Rickard, have been working on MoodMission for the past 18 months. The project is now seeking support from investors through crowdfunding site Pozible, to start coding the software with help from Spark Digital – the same app development firm behind Smiling Mind.

David and Nikki are part of a team that has developed another mental health app, MoodPrism, which is due for release on the [app store](#) in the

coming months.

MoodMission is designed to be used by anyone, whether they have a clinically significant anxiety or mood disorder, or just want to find ways of coping with day-to-day feelings of anxiousness or low moods.

MoodMission is based on [cognitive behavioural therapy](#) (CBT), as CBT shows the strongest evidence as an effective computerised treatment for anxiety and depression. Users report their low moods or anxious symptoms to MoodMission, which then recommends five useful, brief, easily achieved coping strategies to help them deal with negative thoughts, feelings, or behaviours. These could be relaxation strategies, cognitive reframing exercises, physical activities, or anything else that evidence shows can lift moods or reduce anxiety.

Users choose one of these "missions", and when they have completed it MoodMission rewards them with points, badges, and other achievement acknowledgments. These rewards can promote positive psychological health through boosting self-esteem and feelings of mastery. To correspond to CBT practices, users also report how they feel after they have completed the mission. This enables MoodMission to suggest missions in the future that have had more past success. Psychoeducation is also employed throughout the app.

MoodMission will be experimentally validated via randomised controlled trialling to ensure that it is effective. No other mental health and well-being apps currently available on the app store have been validated by randomised controlled trialling. The [app](#) will be free to download when released, scheduled for next year.

**More information:** For more information about the project visit: [www.moodmissionapp.com](http://www.moodmissionapp.com) or [www.pozible.com/moodmission](http://www.pozible.com/moodmission)

Provided by Monash University

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