

Still-Light

Designing Digital Spaces for Emotional Safety Without Expectation

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The Hook

Where many support platforms are designed to inform, direct, or mobilize, Still-Light is designed to hold space — creating a trauma-informed environment where users can feel accompanied without expectation

Description

Still-Light is a trauma-informed digital support environment designed to offer presence without pressure. While many existing platforms focus on providing information, crisis intervention, or structured pathways toward recovery, Still-Light occupies the quieter space that exists before a person is ready to take action. It is designed for moments of emotional overwhelm, where users may not have the capacity to engage, decide, or explain what they are feeling.

Rather than directing users toward next steps, Still-Light creates a gentle, non-directive experience that prioritizes emotional safety and autonomy. Through shared presence, validating language, and calm, ambient environments, the platform offers multiple ways for users to feel supported without expectation. The project explores how digital design can reduce pressure, foster a sense of connection, and remind users that they are not alone — even in silence.

Keywords

Tone

Quiet • Gentle • Safe • Reflective • Softness • Stillness

Experience

Non-directive • Grounding • Ambient • Still • Exploration • Slowness • Observation

Intent

Compassionate • Human-centered • Supportive • Low-pressure • Autonomy • Agency

Research

- Trauma-informed design principles
- Co-regulation & emotional safety
- Non-directive / low-demand UX
- Sensory design for calm (visual pacing, motion, space)

My research focuses on how digital experiences can support users emotionally without requiring action. I'm drawing from trauma-informed design principles, which emphasize safety, autonomy, and reducing triggers. I'm also exploring the concept of co-regulation — how people can feel supported simply through presence, even in digital environments.

Additionally, I'm looking into non-directive UX patterns that move away from task-based interaction, as well as sensory design elements like pacing, motion, and visual minimalism that help create a calm, grounding experience.

Like-Minded Examples

I looked at projects that prioritize emotional experience over task completion.

The Quiet Place Project allows anonymous expression without expectation or structured interaction, which aligns with Still-Light's low-pressure approach.

WindowSwap creates a sense of connection through shared environments, without requiring participation — just presence.

I also explored ambient and meditative digital experiences, which focus on mood, pacing, and sensory calm rather than goals or outcomes.

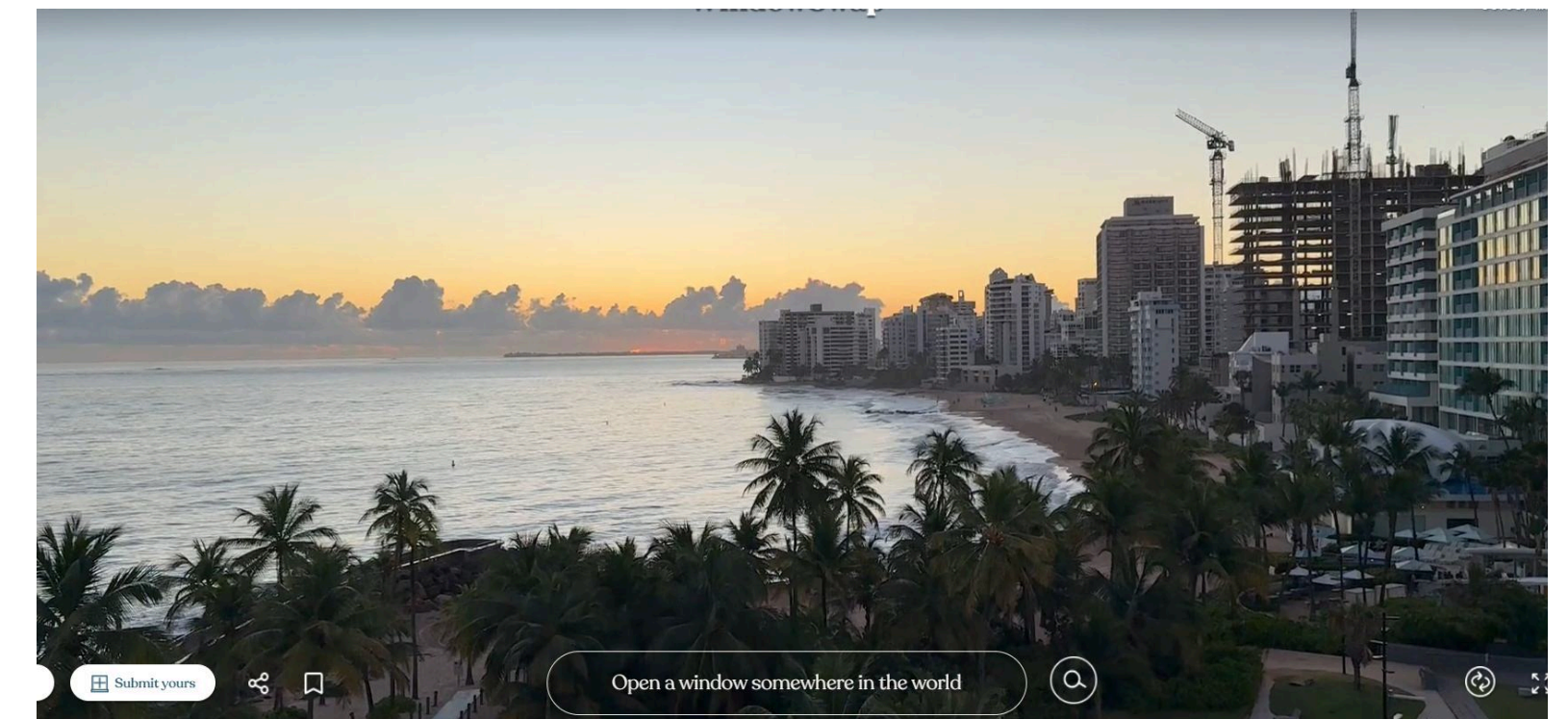
These examples helped validate that digital environments can be meaningful even when they don't ask users to take action

<https://www.window-swap.com/Window>

<https://thequietplaceproject.xyz/>

communication with the quiet place will be operated via the [spacebar] key

gently squeeze that key, now



Model Project

This project builds on an existing foundation rather than starting from scratch.

Quiet Gathering serves as the core prototype, demonstrating how shared presence can exist without requiring interaction or engagement.

In addition to that, I've developed the underlying concept framework for Still-Light, along with an early language system focused on validation and emotional support.

There is also an emerging visual direction centered on minimal, calm, and non-triggering design. Together, these elements act as a model for how the project will expand into a more complete system

<https://heatherhdesign.github.io/quiet-gathering/>

Assets

The homepage serves as the primary point of entry into the Still-Light environment, introducing users to the overall intent of the project and offering three distinct pathways: Quiet Gathering, Words to Rest In, and The Quiet Glow. Rather than directing action, it provides a gentle point of arrival where users can orient themselves and choose how — or if — they wish to engage. It represents the core philosophy of Still-Light by emphasizing openness, autonomy, and emotional safety, framing the experience as something that can be entered on the user's own terms, without expectation or urgency.

Still-Light

Quiet Gathering

Words to Rest In

The Quiet Glow

Still-Light

A quiet place to arrive, without expectation.

A Quiet
Gathering

Words to
Rest In

The
Quiet Glow

About

Approach

Accessibility

Portfolio

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Potential Partners or Audience

Who This is For

- Individuals experiencing emotional overwhelm
- Users not ready for structured support or intervention
- Those seeking quiet, low-pressure spaces

Potential Insight & Support

- Trauma-informed therapists or counselors
- Survivor advocacy organizations (for ethical guidance)
- UX and design peers

The primary audience for Still-Light is individuals experiencing emotional overwhelm — especially those who are not yet ready to engage with structured support systems like therapy, hotlines, or resource platforms. This includes people who may not have the capacity to act, speak, or make decisions, but still need a sense of support or connection.

In terms of collaboration, I would look to trauma-informed professionals and advocacy organizations for guidance, particularly around ethical considerations. Their role would not be to shape the platform into a resource hub, but to ensure that the experience remains safe, respectful, and appropriate.

I also see value in engaging with UX and design peers as I explore non-directive interaction patterns

Beginning with the End

The final outcome of this project is an interactive Still-Light experience centered on presence without expectation.

The system is built around three core types of support: presence through Quiet Gathering, validation through Words to Rest In, and regulation through Stillness Space. Each of these offers a different way for users to feel supported without being asked to act.

In addition, Echoes functions as a subtle, integrated layer of expression — appearing as small traces of shared feeling within the environment, rather than as a standalone feature. This allows for connection without introducing pressure or structured interaction.

Together, these elements form a cohesive, trauma-informed experience supported by a defined interaction system, visual language, and working prototype.