

# Neareal

*Helping shy hearts  
find real connection.*

DEFINE

DISCOVER

DESIGN

DEPLOY

Case Study

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UX Design · Product Strategy

Academy of Art University · 2025–2026

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### ROLE

UX Designer + PM

### TOOLS

Figma · Adobe After Effects

### TIMELINE

15 weeks

### PLATFORM

iOS Mobile App



# Why I Built This

For me, the most important things in life are human connection and the relationships I build with the people around me. Physical presence, shared space, and face-to-face conversation are irreplaceable. Neareal wants to bridge the gap between how people used to meet — organically, in real life — and how we navigate connection today. It uses technology not as a replacement for human interaction, but as a gateway to it, helping a new generation feel more confident approaching others in person.

*"The strongest connections don't live on screens — they're built through real, human closeness."*

**1 in 3**

young adults report social anxiety in everyday situations

**40%**

of Americans identify as shy

**45%**

of Gen Z men have never approached someone in person for a date

# Swiping Isn't Working.

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Despite the desire for real connection, many people struggle to meet in person. Swipe culture dominates, but it often leads to burnout, shallow interactions, and missed opportunities for genuine face-to-face connection.

**63%**

of people want clearer social cues to approach others in public places.

**45%**

of Gen Z men (ages 18–25) have never approached someone in person for a date.

**40%**

of Americans identify as shy. Approaching someone in real life isn't easy for most.

*"It's hard to tell when someone's actually open to conversation or just minding their own business."*

— Michael, single, San Francisco

# How Might We?

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How might we help Michael navigate public social spaces for dating in a way that reduces awkwardness and increases confidence?

THE BIG IDEA

*Use technology as a bridge — not a barrier — to real human connection.*

*Neareal lowers the social friction of initiating real-life interactions and helps users feel confident connecting face to face.*

# What the Data Says

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## Dating App Disillusionment

Men are increasingly frustrated with app-based dating. Superficial conversations and endless texting rarely lead to meaningful real-world connection. (Mentor Research Institute)

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## The Gen Z Social Gap

Post-pandemic Gen Z struggles with face-to-face social skills. 46% of U.S. adults report experiencing loneliness, up significantly since 2012. (Cigna Group)

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## Real Life Still Wins

Most meaningful connections happen through shared environments — events, mutual friends, hobbies. People overwhelmingly prefer meeting in person but need a nudge.

# What Already Exists

I analyzed existing apps to understand what the market offers and where the gap lies.

## DIRECT COMPETITOR

### Hinge

#### What it does well

Designed to be deleted — promotes real-world meetings.

#### Gap / Opportunity

Still entirely swipe-based.

Doesn't reduce the anxiety of in-person approach.

## ADJACENT COMPETITOR

### Meetup

#### What it does well

Facilitates in-person gatherings with real-world events.

#### Gap / Opportunity

Requires planning and it isn't designed for romantic connection.

## THE GAP

### Neareal's Opportunity

#### What it does well

Real-time proximity + AI compatibility + just enough messaging to build courage.

#### Gap / Opportunity

No app reduces the anxiety of spontaneous in-person approach.

# Meet Michael

28 · Marketing Specialist · San Francisco, CA · Single

**Lifestyle** Live music · Rooftop bars · Co-working spaces · Coffee shops · Fitness classes · Book clubs

**Audience Strategy** Young adults frustrated with app dating who prefer organic, in-person meetings but lack the social tools to initiate them.

## Goals

- Meet potential partners in everyday settings, not just apps
- Build deeper, more meaningful connections
- Make dating feel natural — not another task

## Pain Points

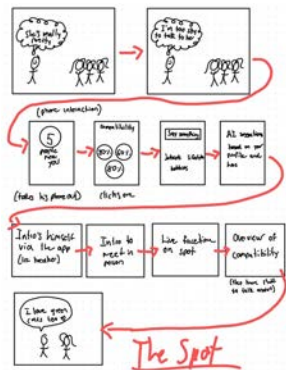
- Can't tell when strangers are open to conversation
- Swipe culture feels transactional and exhausting

*"I don't mind dating apps, but I'd rather meet someone in person. The problem is, it's hard to tell when someone's actually open to conversation or just minding their own business."*



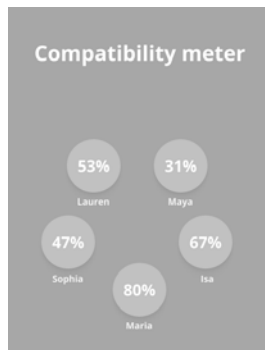
# From Sketch to Screen

I started with loose storyboards and quick hand-sketches wireframes — not to make them look perfect, but to test flows and iterate fast before committing to the final interface.



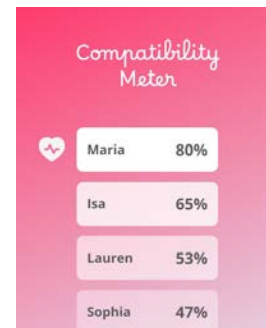
## 01 Concept Sketches

Loose hand-sketched storyboards to explore flows quickly. No polish — just speed.



## 02 Mid-Fidelity

Digital wireframes exploring layout, IA, and key screens: onboarding, matching, messaging.



## 03 High-Fidelity

Final screens with Neareal's design system — pink gradient, Open Sans + Borel, warm voice.

# Build Your Profile

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Michael opens Neareal for the first time. Instead of filling out a form, he's introduced to his AI coach, who walks him through a voice conversation to build an authentic profile.

## 01 Meet AI Coach

"Hello Michael. I'm here to help you build a profile that actually feels like you."

## 02 Speak Freely

Voice input — no typing pressure. Deep answers stay private in the backend.

## 03 Review Profile

Coach generates a short bio + 5 personality words. Michael can edit.

## 04 Public Tease

What connections see: a short intro. Just enough spark — you'll meet face-to-face anyway.

# Find a Connection & Go Meet

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Michael is at a coffee shop. He opens Neareal, sees who's nearby, finds someone compatible, breaks the ice — and is pushed to meet in person before the conversation goes cold.

## 01 See Who's Around

Opens app at venue. Heart shows 5 possible connections nearby.

## 02 Compatibility Meter

AI ranks nearby users by compatibility score based on coach conversation.

## 03 Read Their Bio

Short honest intro + 5 words. No scrolling — just enough to feel the spark.

## 04 Break the Ice

App suggests openers based on shared vibe. 10 messages max — then go meet.

*"Don't let a good connection stay behind a screen — Go meet!"*

# Reconnect

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Michael met someone but was too caught up in the moment to ask for their number. Neareal remembers who he crossed paths with — and if she felt it too, they can reconnect.

## 01 You Met.

Too present to ask for details?  
The app logs who you  
connected with and where.

## 02 Get a Reminder

Their photo + location where  
you met. Just enough to refresh  
the memory.

## 03 Request Info

Send a reconnect request.  
They'll get notified and can  
choose to share their contact.

## 04 Connect Outside

If mutual: phone, Instagram,  
Spotify — whatever they  
choose to share.

# What Didn't Work — And How I Fixed It

[ USABILITY TESTING · 5 TESTERS · TIMEFRAME: 1 WEEK ]

## ITERATION 01 — LAYOUT

### Problem

Users found floating circles on the Compatibility Meter confusing. The layout felt chaotic and the percentages weren't clear.

### How I Fixed It

Replaced circles with a clean, ranked list. Added color + icon to spotlight the top match instantly.

### Result

Users immediately understood who to focus on — zero confusion.

## ITERATION 02 — VOICE & TONE

### Problem

Even during testing, users hesitated when it was time to meet. The app's tone felt neutral — missing the warmth and reassurance people needed.

### How I Fixed It

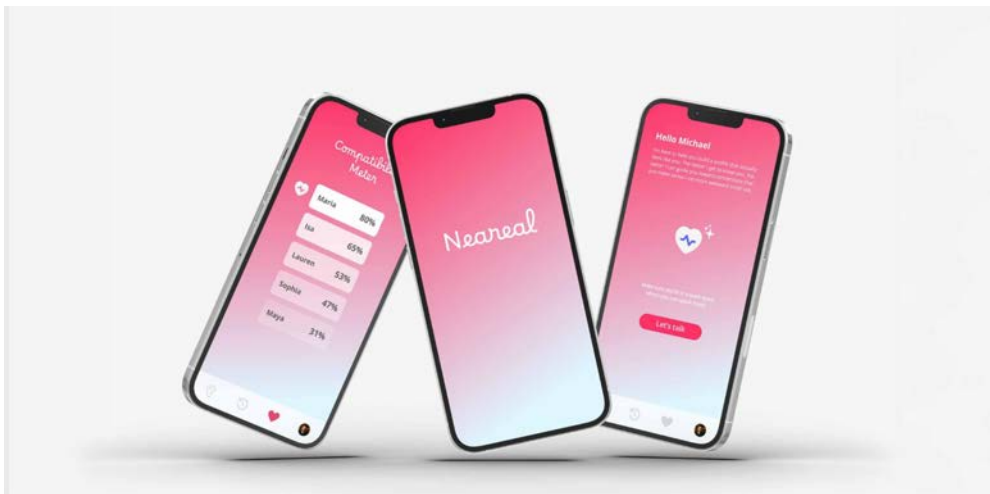
Reworked the copy across the entire app to sound like a supportive friend: casual, encouraging, anxiety-free.

### Result

Consistent, friendly tone that made users more at ease — and more excited to connect in real life.

# Interactive Prototype

Built in Figma — flows include: AI coach onboarding, proximity discovery, compatibility meter, limited messaging, and the Reconnect screen.



[\[ FIGMA PROTOTYPE LINK \]](#)

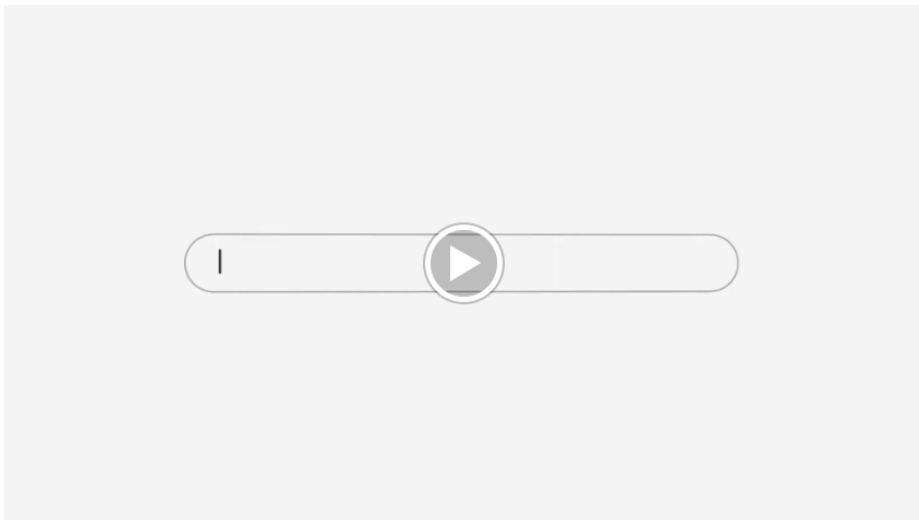
## What's in the prototype

- AI coach onboarding flow
- Voice profile creation
- Proximity discovery screen
- Compatibility Meter
- Limited messaging (10 msgs)
- Go Meet prompt
- Reconnect screen

# Promotional Video

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As a second design component, I created a promotional video in Adobe After Effects — combining motion and storytelling to show how the app works and how it encourages people to move from messaging to meeting in real life.



[\[VIDEO LINK\]](#)

## Production process

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### Storyboarding

Mapped out key app moments to narrate

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### Motion Design

Built in Adobe After Effects

# What I Learned

## **Design for emotions, not just usability.**

Designing for human connection is more complex than designing for task completion. People need to feel safe. Tone and clarity matter as much as layout.

## **Treat people as people — not just users.**

Letting go of my assumptions and listening to real reactions led to better, more empathetic design decisions throughout the project.

## **Technology should enable connection, not replace it.**

Neareal's core insight: the best role for technology in dating isn't to find your person — it's to give you the courage and context to approach them yourself.

## **What's Next**

- Define safety & privacy guidelines for real-world proximity sharing
- Validate AI coach + compatibility system with real users
- Collaborate with engineers to explore technical feasibility
- A/B test the message-limit mechanic

# Neareal



*"Because the best relationships don't start with a swipe — they start with showing up."*

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UX Design · Product Strategy · Academy of Art University

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