

Meet Stix Mindfulness, the creators of a device making mindfulness fun for children

For our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Liam Murphy, cofounder of Stix Mindfulness, about launching on Kickstarter, making mindfulness fun and accessible for children, and future product development.

What is Stix Mindfulness?

Stix is a screen-free electronic device that guides the child through a variety of fun and therapeutic mindfulness based activities. It is supported by an app to reward children for continued practice – we have gamified mindfulness for children, and through practice of mindful activities, enable them to take control of their mental wellbeing.

The product is made up of two Stix remotes, one held in each hand; the child selects an activity and follows instructions provided by the Stix. Stix then monitors movements and gives visual, haptic and auditory feedback. Progress and rewards can be reviewed on the app and are illustrated through the development of an interactive cute ‘monster’ character.

What was the catalyst for launching Stix Mindfulness?

The Stix concept was first created when I was studying Product Design at Brighton University. My final year project, exploring alternatives to medication for children with mental health challenges, was driven by my own family experiences of mental health at home.

After graduating, I had a drive to turn Stix into a business, but didn't quite know how until the Central Research Laboratory Accelerator programme approached me to apply for their next cohort.

I pitched the business idea alongside my father and cofounder John, and we were successful in getting a place on the programme.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

Stix launched on Kickstarter on the April 12th 2022. In our two years of development, we rediscovered what our customers actually need and the product changed based on these findings – for example, introducing a speaker into each Stix remote, enabling us to get rid of a screen focussed element during activities. This, in turn, formed the screen-free nature of our activities.

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How are you funded?

Stix won an Innovate UK smart grant in late 2020, helping to fund eight months of product development. Alongside this award, Stix received several smaller grants to boost our funding, including me winning the Innovate UK young innovators award. In early 2022, Stix closed part of their pre-seed round, they are currently looking for new investors to help complete the round.

What has been your biggest challenge so far?

Our biggest challenges so far has been tech-focused. We've been through several prototype developments in our two-year journey, and each

development has come with its own challenge, from bluetooth connectivity to audio processing.

Once you get over one hurdle, there are five new ones to jump over!

How does Stix Mindfulness answer an unmet need?

Mental health rates are rising and people are looking for at-home interventions to help manage their mental health. Mindfulness has become extremely accessible over the past 10 years, but the kids mindfulness market is typically underserved. Apps are passive and do not encourage continuation, which for kids is vital.

Stix provides children with access to fun therapeutic activities that are screen-free, interactive and are followed up with rewards to encourage continuation.

What's in store for the future?

Our future plans involve testing out the Stix product in a clinical trial, developing new products to help children mental health and to start developing products for teens and adults.

What one piece of advice would you give to other founders or future founders?

Enjoy the journey – it's a real privilege to be able to run your own company and be your own boss. Whilst the stressful times are hard, the wins are something you can cherish forever!

Liam Murphy is cofounder of [Stix Mindfulness](#).

