

SPARK

play · connect · belong

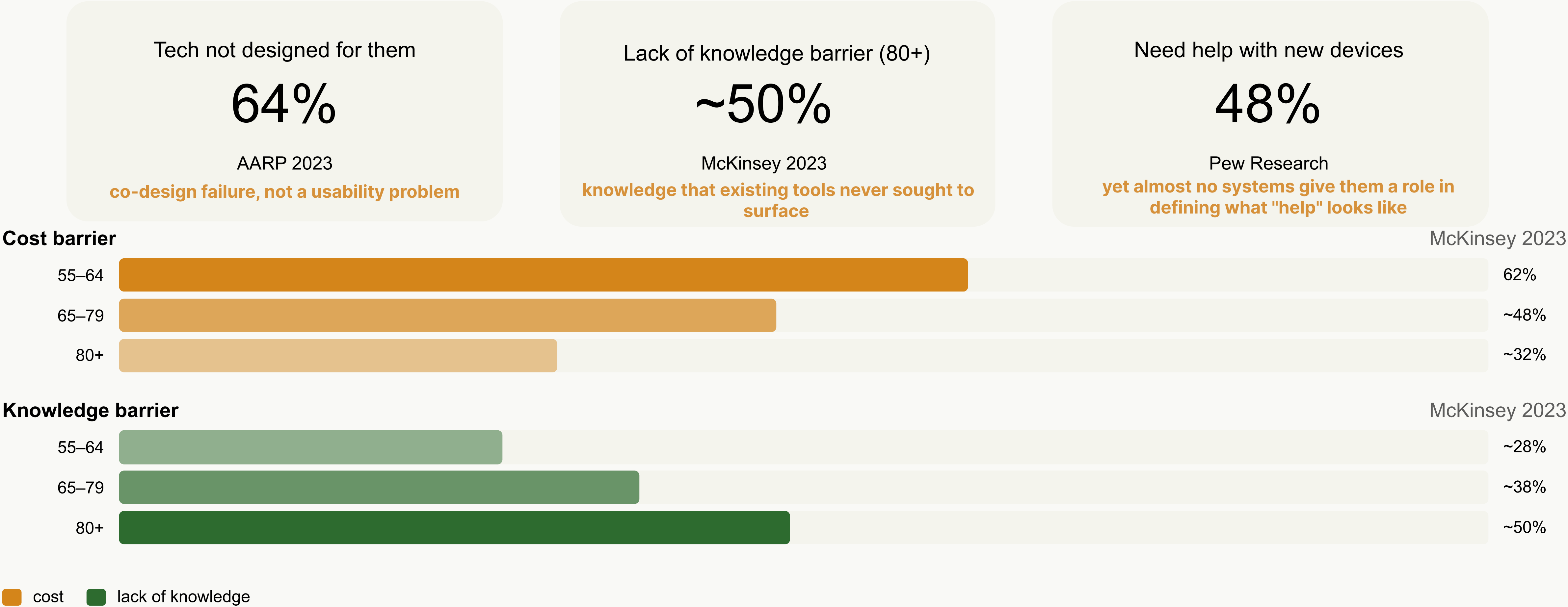
"Play your way closer"

Intergenerational Digital Co-Design for Older Adults



PRIMARILY RESEARCH: Existing systems were never designed to ask older adults what they need

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Sources: McKinsey & Company (2023). Barriers to technology use among older adults. Via Statista. | Pew Research Center (2017). Tech adoption climbs among older adults. | AARP Research (2023). 2024 Tech Trends and Adults 50+.

PERSONA



Margaret

72 · Retired teacher · Boston, MA

PROFILE

Lives with	husband, neighbor nearby
Tech owned	iPhone (gift from daughter)
Uses daily	Phone calls, basic texts

GOALS

- Send message to family
- FaceTime grandkids
- Connect with family

FRUSTRATIONS

- Don't know which button to click
- Forgets steps next day
- Hates feeling like a burden

"I don't want to keep asking Emma to show me again.
She's busy and I can see it on her face."

SPARK ROLE

Expert on her own needs — she defines what connection means, and teaches that to her granddaughter.

TECH NEWCOMER



Emma

19 · College sophomore · Boston, MA

PROFILE

Studies	Communication, Northeastern
Tech fluency	High — iPhone, social media, apps
Visits grandma	Monthly, more on holidays

GOALS

- Stay connected with grandma
- Help without being condescending
- Make visits meaningful

FRUSTRATIONS

- Doesn't know how to teach patiently
- Grandma shuts down quickly
- Feels guilty when too busy

"I show her three times and she still can't do it.
I don't know if I'm just bad at explaining."

SPARK ROLE

Tech guide — explains how the phone works, but follows Margaret's lead on what to learn and why it matters.

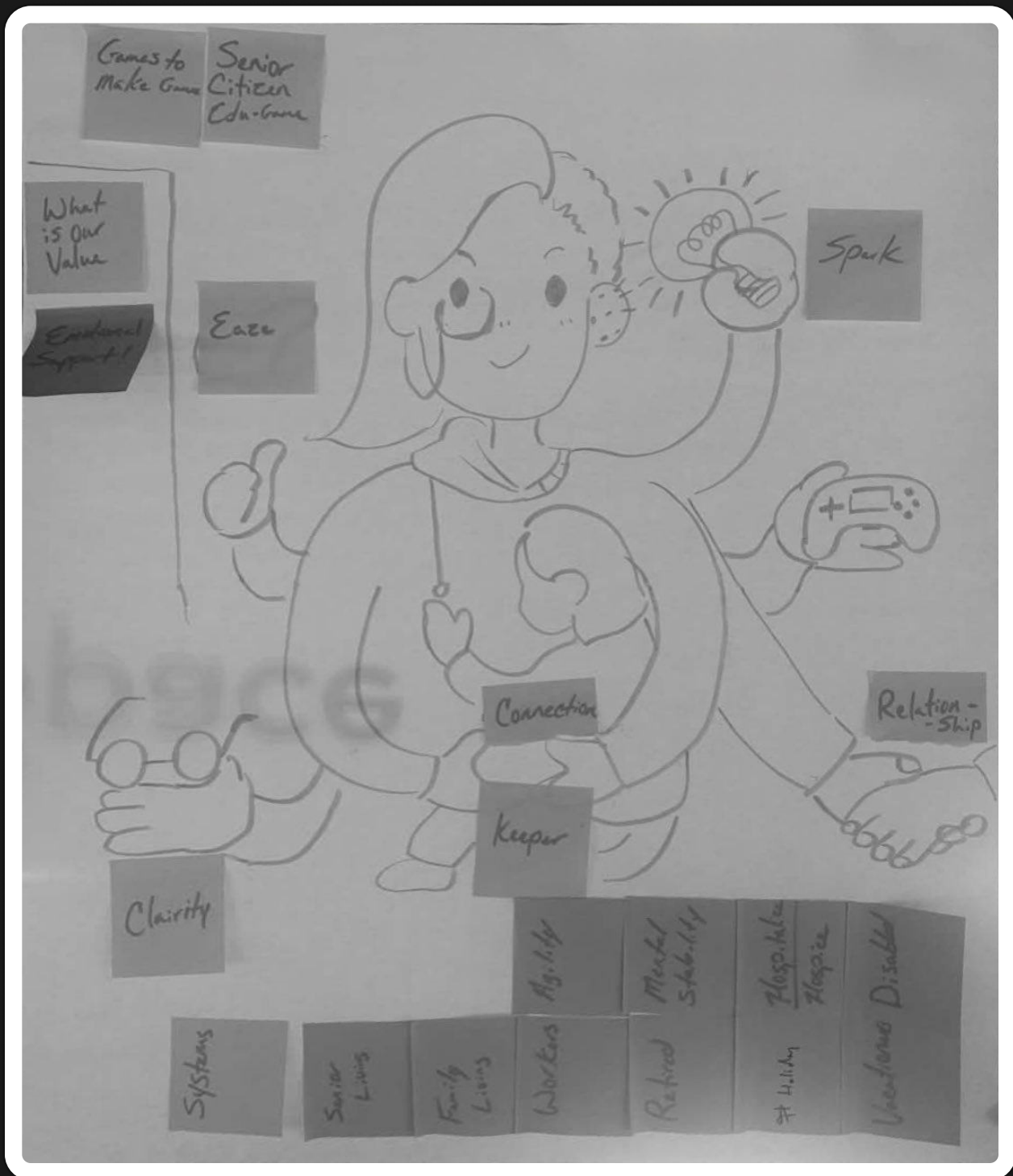
TECH GUIDE

Design Identity: Everything flows from one principle: the elder defines the goal

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DIGNITY CORE VALUES



Connection

Rebuilding bonds through shared doing

Spark

Joy, play, and genuine engagement

Clarity

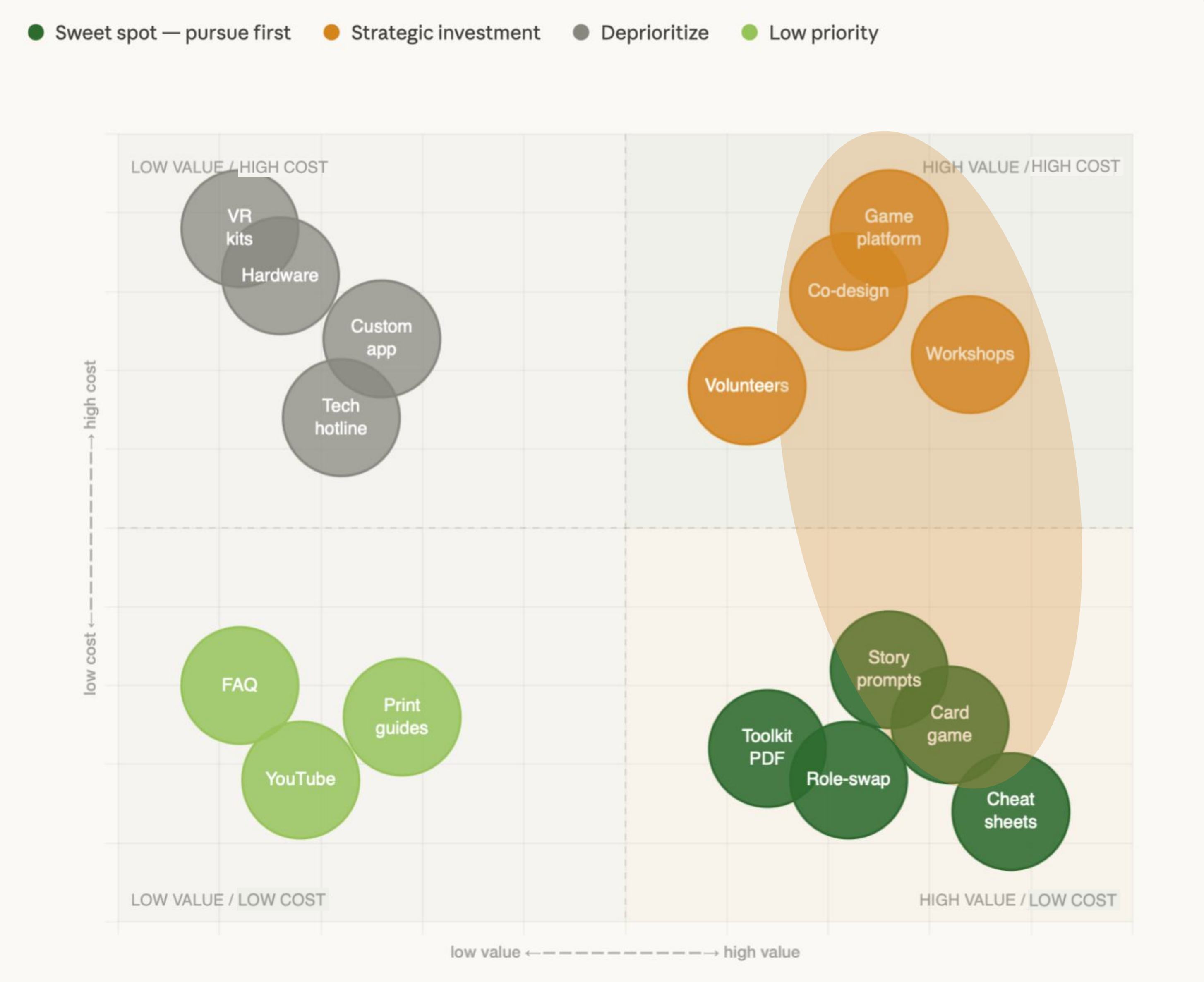
Technology reduces cognitive load

Ease

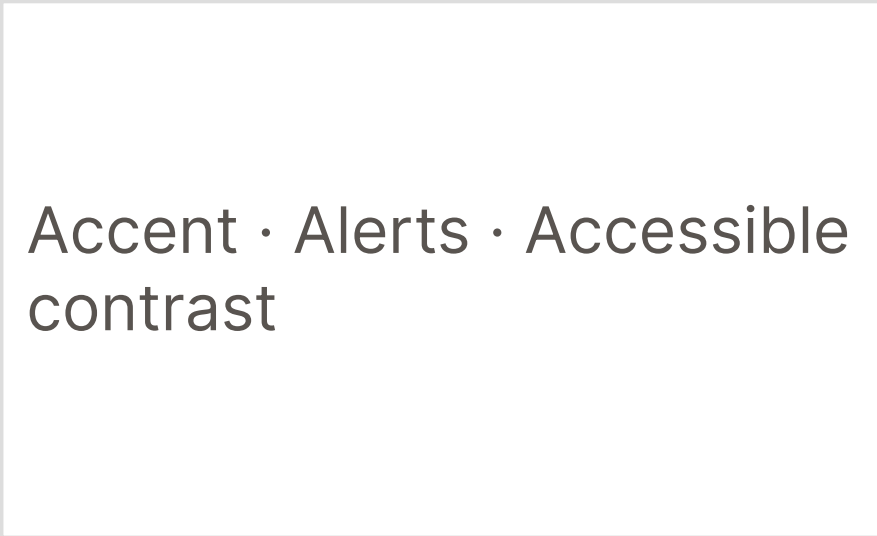
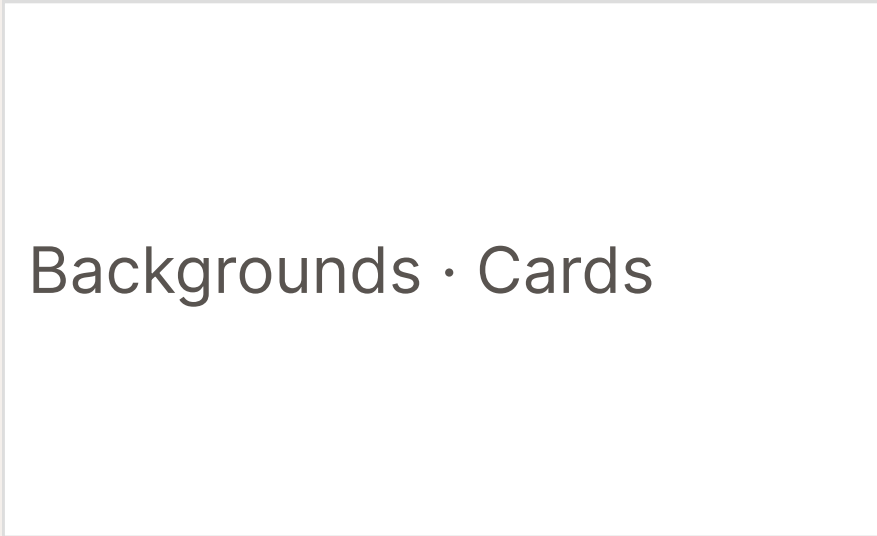
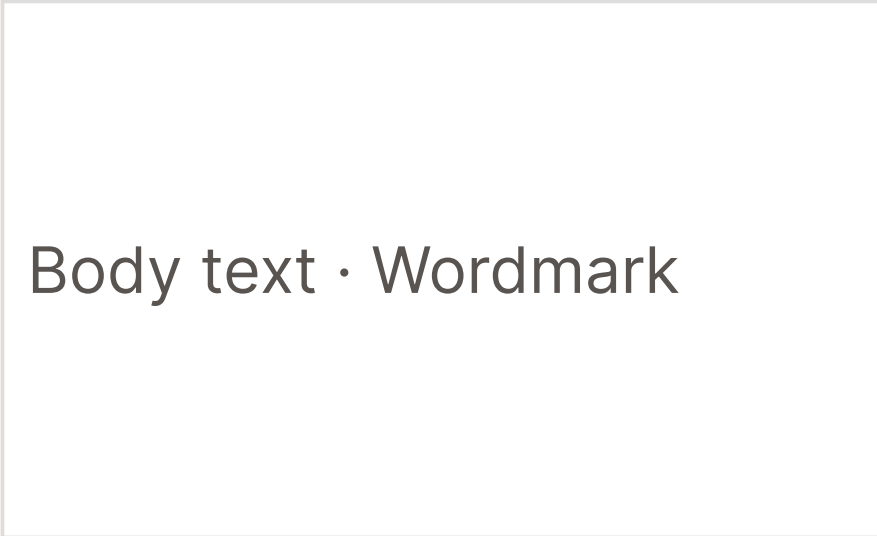
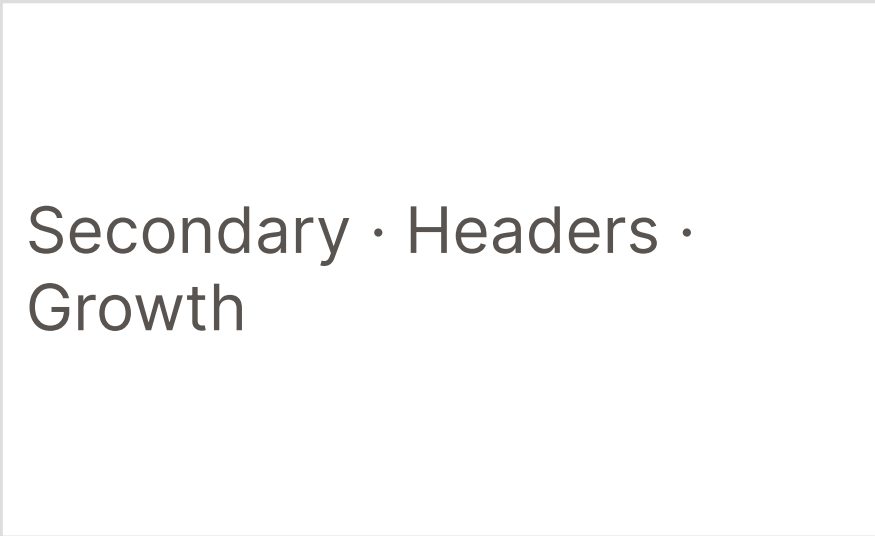
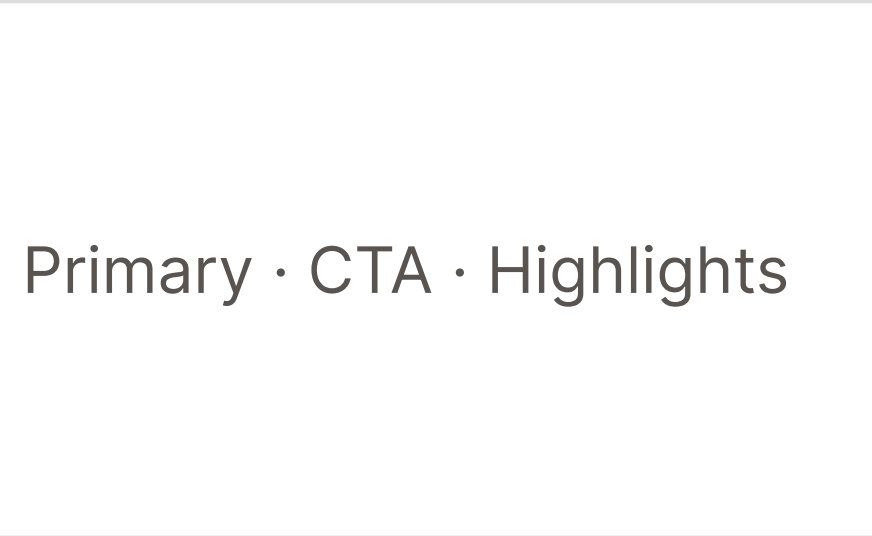
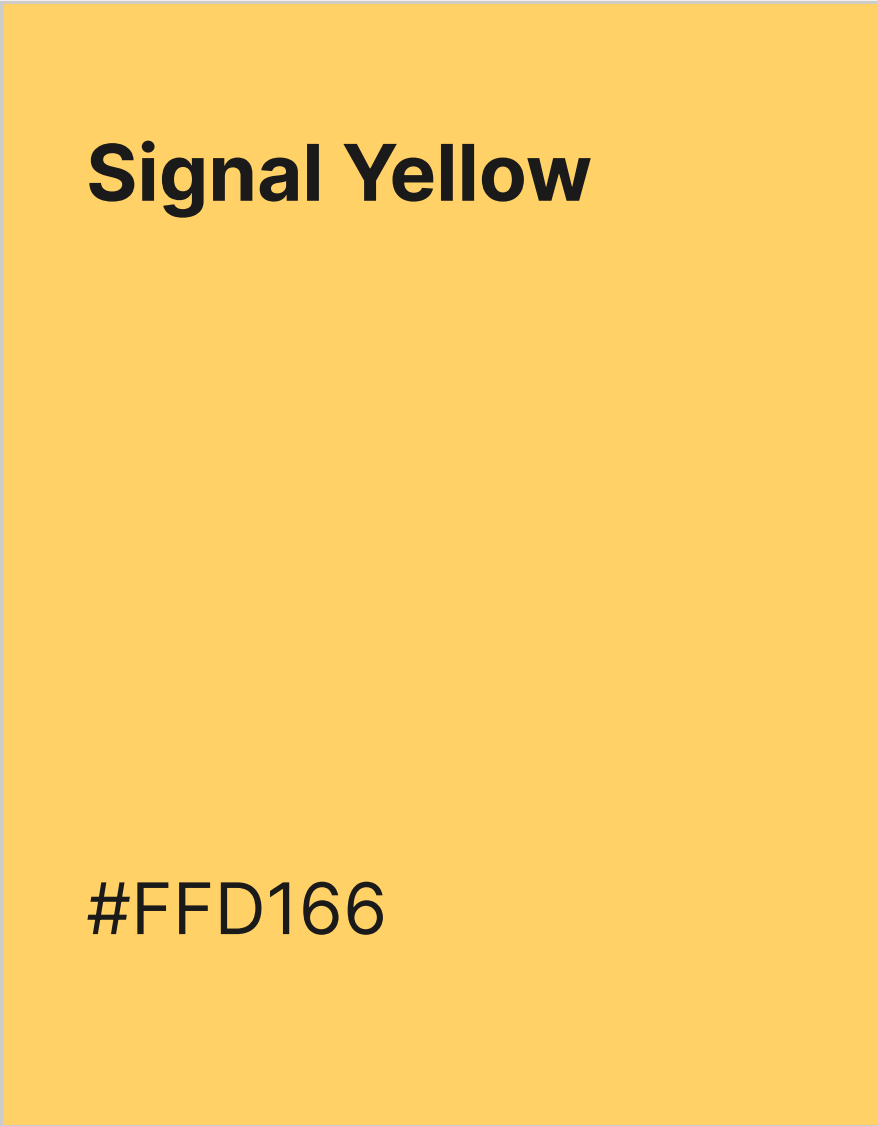
No downloads, or new devices



COST-VALUE ANALYSIS

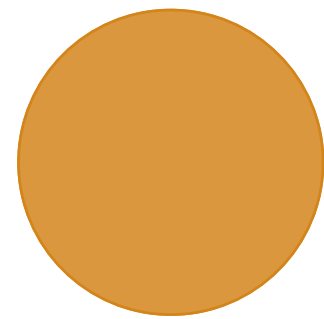


COLOR PALETTE & TYPOGRAPHY



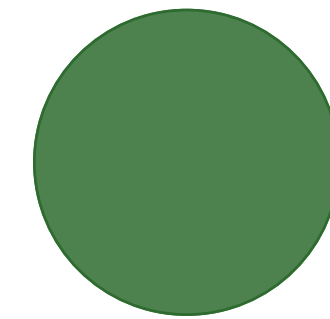
✓ WCAG AA Compliant — Amber/Black · Green/White high-contrast pairings for low-vision users

Display: Nunito (rounded, friendly) · Body: Inter



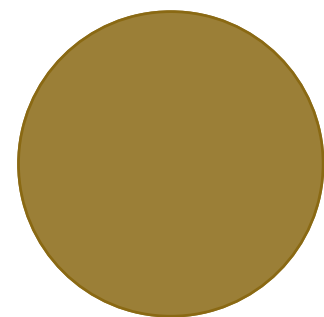
Physical Card Deck

- Role cards: Elder Expert / Tech Guide
- Prompt cards: iMessage, Photos, FaceTime
- Reflection cards for session close



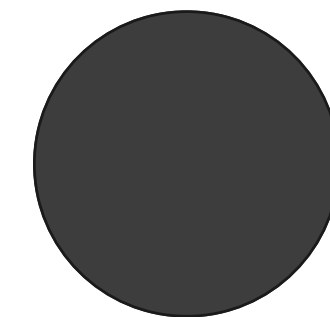
Facilitator Guide

- Print + PDF session structure
- Dignity-first language guide
- Accessibility tips (large print, voice option)



Community Outreach Flyer

- 1-page, large print format
- Posted at senior centers, libraries
- Family caregiver networks



Workshop Poster

- "Spark Workshop — Play Your Way Closer"
- Free · 90-min · All skill levels · Dignity first
- Bring a phone. Bring someone you love.

PERCEPTION GAP

“

"I don't want to feel like a burden asking my grandkid for help."

“

"I keep forgetting — it's embarrassing."

“

"Tech stuff is just not for me anymore."

SPARK'S RESPONSE

These aren't knowledge gaps. They're what happens when a person has been a passive recipient of other people's systems for long enough.

SPARK doesn't fix that with better instructions. It fixes it by changing who holds the pen. The elder sets the goal. The younger participant learns how to follow their lead. The facilitator's job is to make that handoff real — and then step back.

The measure of success isn't whether Margaret can FaceTime her grandkids at the end of the session. It's whether she and Emma leave with a shared ritual they can return to on their own — one she feels entitled to initiate. ***That's what a system looks like. Not a workshop they attended. A dynamic they now own.***

Thank You!

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Spark!: "Play your way closer"

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