

## Pilot Study of Aurora, a Social, Mobile-Phone-Based Emotion Sharing and Recording System

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### Abstract

#### *Background:*

Emotion is a ubiquitous aspect of humanity that governs behavior in a number of ways and is linked inextricably with health. Pausing to evaluate one's emotional state in the face of decisions and reflecting on past patterns of emotion have been shown to improve behaviors. Further, social expression of emotion has been shown to directly improve health outcomes. While the virtual reality research community does not ignore emotion on the whole, there does exist a need to explore what roles emotional awareness and emotion sharing can play in this domain.

#### *Methods:*

A mobile-phone-based social emotion recording and sharing system, Aurora, was developed to provide individuals with a means to pause and evaluate their emotional state, reflect on past emotions, share emotions with others, and participate in socially supportive activities with peers. A study was conducted with 65 subjects to evaluate Aurora as a tool to encourage emotional reflection and awareness as well as social sharing of emotion.

#### *Results:*

Users of Aurora reported an increased comfort in socially expressing emotion and were encouraged to share emotions, even with strangers. Subjects also reported liking reflecting on their emotional state and found it valuable. Subjects' behavior also suggested that the system encouraged individuals to reach out to one another in acts of social support.

#### *Conclusions:*

The Aurora system offers a tool for encouraging emotional awareness, emotion sharing, and socially supportive behavior. Such a tool could be impactful in numerous health settings where emotion is considered to be an important indicator of or influence on outcome, such as for weight loss, alcohol cessation, or cancer sufferers.

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