

Different ways to visualise health

Looking at games and fitness apps

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This month I did some research into how health is visualised in fitness apps and games. For a new app involving personal health I am looking for an intuitive way to visualise how healthy one person is. There are many colourful approaches out there!

How healthy your are

The app I am working on is still very much under development, but it provides a way to calculate how much risk you have on a cardio vascular event, like a heart attack or illness. For this app I am looking for a modern, fresh way to visualise this risk / health ratio.

Research

I looked at various health and fitness apps to see how they visualise health. In addition to these "serious" apps I thought it would be fun to look at games, too. Game designers sometimes have found creative ways to visualise health. It can be a good source of inspiration for the app I'm working on.

Apple Health, Activity and Apple Watch

As companion app to the Apple Watch, the [Activity app](#) is the central hub for everything the Apple Watch measures with regard to personal health and fitness tracking.



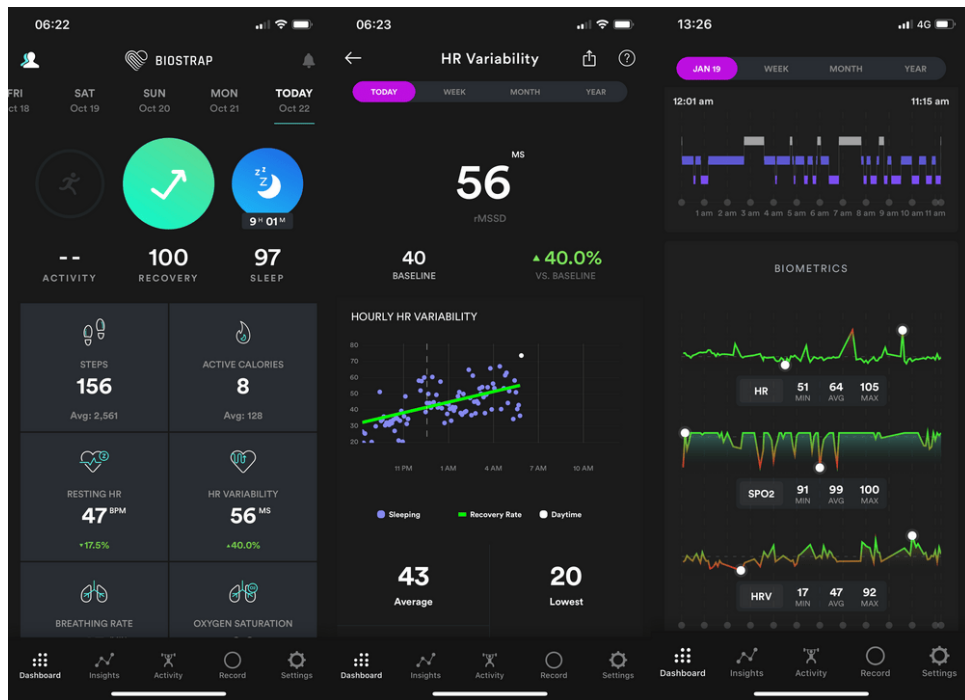
The Activity app by Apple shows data measured by Apple Watch

Things to take away:

- bright neon colours
- main graphics are circles ("rings")
- different colours indicate different metrics
- there are colourful medals to be earned
- these medals can be shared with others (look how healthy I am)

Biostrap

The [Biostrap](#) app is the way to access data collected by the [Biostrap sensor](#).



The Biostrap app shows data collected by the Biostrap sensor

Things to take away:

- bright neon colours
- colourful graphs and circle icons
- green indicates 'good', red indicates 'bad'

Pillow

Using the [Pillow](#) app users can analyse their sleep. The app works with Apple Watch to collect sleep data such as heart rate and body movement.



Pillow sleep app

Things to take away:

- bright purple colour as main theme
- bright colours in graphs
- main graphics are circles
- circles work well on the small (squarish) Apple Watch display

Whoop

The [Whoop](#) app allows access to data collected by the [Whoop sensor](#). The app consolidates large quantities of data into two main metrics "strain" and "recovery".



Whoop showing strain and recovery

Things to take away:

- bright colours
- different colours have different meanings
- green indicates 'good', red indicates 'bad'
- main graphics are circles with percentages in them
- graphics are supported by "the voice of Whoop" text boxes

Mario

Nintendo's Mario is possibly the worlds most famous game character. The Japanese game company is known for their creativity and friendliness in their game design.



Mario 64 and a the Super Mario Galaxy life bar

Things to take away:

- bright colours
- life counter "4x Mario" (upper left)
- life meter in a circles (bottom)
- different colours for different "life"-values
- numbers inside the circular graphics

Doom

Possibly one of the most legendary first person shooters is [Doom](#) from 1993. This video game by ID Software greatly influenced many other games, it's an absolute classic.



Doom and the protagonist "Mud" showing how he feels

Things to take away:

- health is expressed as percentage
- Mud (the protagonist) is visible, showing how he feels
- The lower his health score gets, the more beaten up he appears

Conclusion

By looking at different apps and games you can get an idea of how to design health visualisation yourself. This is certainly something that helped me understand how to visualise health.

Visualising health is done in various ways, but there are common themes across most of the apps and games. Circular graphics and bright (neon) colours are often used. It's funny to realise that game design overlaps with the design of the more serious health and fitness apps. Therefore I think I need to spend more hours gaming, purely for work of course. :-)