

The LuvMug Design Concept Explained

The LuvMug helps loved ones stay connected when living remotely by allowing them to directly send messages via the mug and by letting them indirectly communicate their presence through the mug as they interact with it. Since the mug's exterior is digital and touch sensitive, it allows one loved one to use their finger to trace messages onto the mug, and the message will then automatically show up on the other loved one's mug. Tracing messages on the mug only works while the mug is on a flat surface, and all messages on the mug are cleared as soon as it is lifted; this prevents the mug from becoming cluttered with messages and ensures that messages are always new and current. When both users happen to be touching the mug simultaneously, it starts glowing, communicating a sense of warmth and connectedness.

Dominic, a 27-year-old software engineer living in Seattle who typically works from home, and Lena, a 24-year-old student in Toronto who spends many hours studying at home, have started using the LuvMug in their respective homes to help them maintain a sense of closeness in their long-distance relationship. While they have often used video chat, such as FaceTime and Skype, or text messaging, such as email or SMS, they want to add ways of staying connected that veer away from traditional technologies and that fit more naturally into their daily routines. Lena prefers to limit her time on her phone and computer, and Dominic has been struggling with feeling connected in their relationship as he's been working long hours, which has allowed the LuvMug to fill both partners' needs by turning their daily coffee drinking routines into a space for many chance encounters throughout the day. When they notice that they're both using their mugs simultaneously, they typically play an impromptu game of tic-tac-toe or hangman, letting them easily maintain an element of play in their relationship. Unfortunately, there is a 3-hour time difference between them, and their schedules don't always align, so they often use the mug to send loving notes to each other, which the respective partner will find the next time they use their mug.

Since mugs are generally used at the kitchen table or in a home office, the LuvMug will typically be in a prime location where messages and mug activity can easily be spotted as loved ones go about their day having meals, working, studying, etcetera. At times, mugs are kept in kitchen cabinets, which can be useful in adding an element of surprise to people's relationships as they might open their cabinet to find a surprise note from their loved one displayed on the LuvMug. By being integrated in people's homes and lives, the LuvMug has multiple uses: it helps people's relationships stay fresh by allowing them to easily send surprise notes; it allows loved ones to communicate and interact through non-traditional technology since they can send messages back and forth via the LuvMug; and it provides a sense of implicit connectedness when the LuvMugs are both in use and loved ones see their partner's presence as they're using the LuvMug throughout the day.

People will likely respond to the LuvMug in a wide variety of ways. While some might find it exciting to have a new tool that can help improve their long-distance relationships, others might consider it just another digital device that they have to check regularly for messages. The LuvMug, like most new technologies, would probably be met with skepticism initially, but once embraced, it could enable remote loved ones to stay connected in meaningful new ways.