

Michelle Matthews

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Portfolio: michellematthews.net · Password for confidential case study: wearable

Product designer with 15+ years building consumer products for startups and growth-stage companies, across web and mobile. My core skills are interaction design, mixed-methods research, journey mapping, prototyping, design systems, and growth design, and AI is part of how I work every week, from research synthesis to building working prototypes with Claude Code. I came to design from social work, so I start with research and plain language, and I care a lot about how a product feels to the person on the other side of the screen. I've built and led design teams, and I do my best work with my hands in it: running the study, designing the flow, and staying with the copy and edge cases until it ships.

Experience

Independent · Product Designer and Fractional Design Lead

Consumer startups · 2025–Present

- **BetterSleep.** Led design for the growth squad (March–May 2026), focused on onboarding and retention. Ran a diary study that became the quarter's growth experimentation roadmap, then designed the onboarding entry points, copy, and loading states that came out of it.
- **Evara.** Fractional design and product leadership for a bilateral stimulation wearable heading into beta: ICP research, beta architecture, app design, a 6-week testing program with roughly 70 participants, and MVP definition.
- **Kalya.** Lead designer and MVP definition for a meditation app with an in-person component. Built the pilot web app using Claude Code, and established the brand design and design system.
- **Quilt.** Lead designer for a grief support community app. MVP scoping and user journeys grounded in 50+ grief stories collected by the founder and user interviews.
- **Radical Health.** Brand identity and marketing site, from brand direction through homepage, interior pages, and animated data visualizations.
- I use coding agents and LLM workflows daily for research synthesis, prototyping, and production design, and I help clients decide which problems AI should own and where human judgment still wins.

Brightline · VP of Design and Research

Pediatric mental health care: virtual therapy and coaching for kids, teens, and families · 2021–2025

- Designed alongside the team as a player-coach. Led the onboarding redesign and shipped it in 9 weeks: completion went from 35% to 65%, account creation from 16% to 29%, and member trust scores from 4 to 8.75 out of 10.
- Designed across a multi-surface care platform: family-facing web and mobile apps, clinician tools, care navigator workflows, and billing and insurance flows, all on a design system I stood up early so we could ship fast without losing quality.
- Built the research practice and a growth experimentation system that moved roadmap decisions from intuition to evidence, pairing qualitative insight with product analytics.
- Built the design function from scratch (a team of 10 at its largest across product design, content, research, and brand) and led the company rebrand, including the move from virtual care to brick and mortar.

Headspace · Design Lead, Healthcare

2019–2020

- Led 0-to-1 design for Headspace's first clinically validated product, a 12-week behavior change coaching program for chronic migraine.
- Designed on the growth and acquisition squad: the headspace.com redesign, onboarding upsell screens, and SEO acquisition.

- Designed a modular content system that let clinical writers build personal-feeling programs from reusable pieces, and kept a clinical product feeling like Headspace.
- Research included diary studies, a 3-week service dress rehearsal, and physician co-design through a Cedars-Sinai partnership. Clinical trials validated significant symptom reduction.

Soothe · Head of User Experience

On-demand wellness marketplace · 2018–2019

- First design hire, designing for both the people booking a massage at home and the therapists showing up at the door. Research with women users surfaced a trust problem that was hurting conversion, which led to a rebrand and redesign around safety and professionalism.

Heal · Lead Product Designer

In-home primary care · 2017–2018

- First design hire. Designed consumer apps across iOS, Android, and web, a provider iPad app, and an internal EHR. Joined doctors on house calls to understand what it takes for a family to open the door.

Previous freelance work

Tone It Up. 0-to-1 fitness app that turned a 1M-person Instagram community into a daily habit. 100k+ paid subscribers, Top 500 Grossing on iTunes, GDUSA Health and Wellness Award.

Storybook. Full redesign of a content-heavy wellness app, rebuilt around card sorting and diary studies. 56% increase in content starts and a 15% NPS increase.

Ferly. Growth and content strategy that drove a 120% lift in content starts, a 60% increase in conversion, and a 13% increase in product-market fit.

Education and teaching

- MSW, NYU Silver School of Social Work
- BA in English and Gender Studies, SUNY Buffalo
- Taught UX and inclusive design at UCLA
- Before design: social worker and journalist

Strengths

End-to-end product design · Interaction design · Onboarding and growth design · Mixed-methods research · Journey mapping · Behavior change design (Jobs to Be Done, 3B) · Content design and plain language · Design systems · Brand and visual design · AI-assisted prototyping · Designing for trust