Considerations

Understood.org is an amazing resource library. It has several features for customization that I hope to emulate in my designs. It also using inclusive language and considers accessibility excellently in its UX/UI throughout (excluding their resources library page, which I will discuss further below). The content is digestible, peer-reviewed, and thorough, covering information that would appeal to a wide range of users. Understood caters specifically to neurodiverse individuals, their parents and caregivers, and educators.

The first opportunity that I believe understood.org misses concerns limiting the three major user groups to neurodiverse individuals, parents and caregivers, and then educators. I believe that the partner perspective is equally important as the educator perspective, and is different than a caregiver role in many important ways. They are equals, working toward life goals together, and the power should be balanced between the individuals in a way that caretaking by its definition is not. Further, relationship-focused resources were a common request in user interviews. Whether platonic or romantic, relationship navigation skills and advice were identified as a major need for both neurodiverse individuals and their relationship partners. Additionally, partner-specific information about self-care strategies, recognizing needs, and how to coexist when differences are present were all requested by users.

The ability to customize a site to show only information that is relevant to the user (plus save resources that are helpful) is an amazing functionality. With Understood, the intent is there, but I noticed some limitations with the methods the site uses for personalization. For example, keywords and topics are limited, but are the main tool used by the site to tailor user experience. Users might find themselves very frustrated with their personalized experience when they're unable to find the topic or content medium they're looking for, and give up on the site entirely.

Also, Bookmarking is the only real option associated with the user profile icon, with no dedicated user information space. Selecting Bookmarks takes the user to the Bookmark page which is separate from "My library" which also seems strange. The saved/bookmarked articles will show under the "Saved for later" subheading *well* down the page in My Library, and are not organized /subcategorized in any way. In my opinion, the user's profile information and their saved resources should be housed together under a user dashboard. The My Resources area of the dashboard would allow to user to easily locate the information they want close-at-hand, with clearly labeled subdivisions such as topic and/or medium for quick, easy access. The Library could have a clearly visible link to the user's Dashboard and saved Resources, but individual resources don't need to be listed on the library's page space. I also noticed there were functionality issues with saving resources consistently.

Finally, there was room for improvement around connecting users to outside/off-site resources. I struggled to find options for non-traditional mediums. There were a few site-operated podcasts that looked great, but only four! When you consider the sites own statistic that "More than 70 million people in the United States have a learning or thinking differnce," offering a wide range of content mediums is crucial. Recommendations of podcasts, videos, social media sites, blogs, and even fictional representations of neurodiversity in popular media (books, TV series, films/documentaries, etc.) would be an invaluable resource to differentiate my app on the market.