Catch Your Breath

Synopsis

A young girl has difficulty dealing with school and other daily struggles. She dreams of a horizon where she can fly, but is still bombarded with representations of her daily stressors. Now ready to face those stressors head-on and achieve tranquility, she flies towards the large storm, keeping her breathing in check to stay afloat and traverse the obstacle-ridden sky.

Genre

On-Rails Action/Rhythm Game

Team

Isaac S. (Programmer, Game Designer, UI Artist)
Jordan M. (3D Artist)
J. Isaac G. (Narrative Designer)
Carson (Level Designer)
Arnaud (Composer)

Formal Game Elements

Player Format
Single-player PvE game

Objective(s)
Escape (get to an end space in the game; in this case, the eye of the storm)

Procedures
- Directional keys (WASD/Arrows): move player up/left/down/right
- Q/I key: Breathe in
- E/O key: Breathe out

Rules
- The player is constantly moving forward, flying.
- If the player gets hit by an obstacle, they wake up from the dream ("die") and return to the previous checkpoint.
- If the player hasn't maintained breathing for 15 seconds, the screen will become red/gray and the player will begin moving slower (in terms of directional input, not forward speed).
- If breathing is not maintained for 30 seconds, they wake up from their dream ("die") and return to the previous checkpoint.
- The more accurately the player maintains breathing, as indicated by the circular UI on the center of the player, the more speed the player will obtain after a round of inhaling, holding the breath in, and exhaling.
- The player must perform the actions of breathing in (holding i), holding the breath (halting any breathing actions), and breathing out (holding o), in this order, to "maintain breathing". The timer for 'time since breathing has been maintained' resets to zero after a successful performance of these actions (as in, after successfully breathing out).
- The breathing will speed up each time a checkpoint is passed, requiring more accurate breathing input timing. The time before the player wakes up from improper breathing also decreases.

Resources
- **Breath:** must be maintained manually with rhythmic input timing, but will speed up the player's direction movement with a multiplier (max of double directional movement speed)
- **Speed:** obtained by proper breathing

Conflict

- Stay asleep, maintain breathing, and dodge obstacles to reach the eye of the storm

Boundaries (how the game affects non-game elements; i.e., player emotions)

The game delves into personal topics (social pressures, nightmares, anxiety, and breathing difficulties), and these topics shouldn't be portrayed fairly accurately to better connect the player with the character and their situation. The game can potentially remind the player to focus on keeping calm, even after they've finished the game.

Outcomes

Win, or Lose (by not finishing the game)

Assets

Music

Level Theme
- Should evoke a dream-like state
- Should also convey hope and adventure
- Should build tension as the player progresses towards the storm
- Smooth looping

Menu Music
- Should be calmer than level music

Cutscene Music
- Should be triumphant or somber, depending on scenario
- Quieter than the level theme too

Art

Art will use a hand-painted style, with lower-polygonal models. Elements like the clouds and sky should use multiple clouds or be available in a variety of colors for an ominous dreamlike visual reflecting the approaching storm (purple, orange, white, yellow, pink, green, light blue, gray, black).

Level Assets
- Storm
- Cloud
- Tornado
- Girl in pajamas
- Homework packet
- School Desk
- Backpack
- Soccerball
- Soccer Goal
- Textbooks

Cutscene Assets
- Bed
- Room + Window
- Desk

Sound Assets

- Falling
- Flailing
- Grunting
- Storm
- Winds
  - Gentle
  - Moderate
  - High/fast
  - Tornado-like
  - Sound of wind flapping against pajama fabric
- Thunder
- Breathing in
- Breathing out
- Laughing (from bully)
- School bell
- Coughing
- Waking up
  - A gasp
  - Heavy breathing
- Snoring

Animations

- Player gliding
- Player falling (w/ camera pointing downwards as girl flaps arms frantically)
- Player getting hit by object (could wake her up immediately instead of making her fall down)
- Player waking up

UI Assets

These assets will utilize cloud imagery to match the environment and theme.

Breath Indicator

- Two empty circles; a large circle in front of the player and a small circle inside the large circle.
- A filled-in circle that expands and deflates the longer it's held when inhaling or exhaling
- A UI bar or pair of lungs might be better, in case Nintendo has a copyright on breathing with circles (Wii Fit)

Menus

- Restart Game/Level
- Quit Game
- View Controls

- Choose Difficulty
- Pause Text
- Game Over Text

Level Design

- The player is approaching the storm in the tutorial.
- The tutorial takes 30-45 seconds, introducing the player to mechanics.
- The more stress-inducing objects will be larger and more difficult to avoid.
- Potential for variables difficulties:
  - Object size
  - Object speed
  - Object frequency
- ~5 minutes of overall gameplay

Story

Setting

Imagery

A calm dreamlike horizon on a body of water, with a storm brewing in the distance.

Location

Suburb (UK or US), outside of the dream.