Avatars, the identities and roles with which we and the characters we inhabit in games interact with our respective worlds, are extremely important to keep in mind when designing games. Not only do the avatars we intentionally design for the players affect how games play and what can be done, but also how they feel to play and how taking certain actions can feel differently between different avatars. Additionally, unique avatars can lead to more impactful and engaging storytelling experiences in games, such as a character being forced to either embrace or go outside of their normal persona.

For example, take the difference between Joel and Ellie in The Last of Us and The Last of Us 2. The characters have exactly the same control scheme and affordances, but playing as Joel and Ellie feel distinct in the first game. Joel's avatar is a jaded survivalist with decades of survival under his belt, shooting and killing come second nature to his character. Ellie is a literal child, when the player finally gains control of her during the winter segment the game feels distinctly different even though it controls the same. By the time The Last of Us 2 takes place, years later, Ellie has become the hardened survivor, and gameplay feels different yet again. This is just one example that illustrates how the fluctuating identity/avatar of a character can change how the game feels when played, even when the gameplay itself is mechanically identical.

On a more meta note, the concept of avatars can be very, *very* helpful in the actual process of designing games. As a designer, being cognizant of the avatar which you are currently embodying is key to effective and inclusive game design. Being able to adopt and step into the shoes of an avatar which you are unaccustomed to or which is not one of your natural identities can help you think of game design from the perspective of different types of players by yourself playing the role of those players. This idea of adopting alternate avatars while designing games is not that dissimilar to de Bono's Six Thinking Hats strategy.