Emotion Rush - Design Document

This document details the whole design behind Emotion Rush, a Serious Game designed for promoting Emotion Regulation in Adolescents in Residential Care. It contains all the ideas that were thought of for the game. This document will certainly suffer changes throughout development, sometimes influenced by the outcomes of the co-design process and other times by design, technical and/or time constraints, or limitations of any other nature.

Working Title

The name of the game is Emotion Rush, as the game consists on teaching the player Emotion Regulation strategies through giving emotional support to others and seeing which approaches work better to help people with them.

Development Log and Current Status

- **27/03/2025:** Assets started being collected for development
- **30/03/2025:** An successful initial test was made in Unity 6, including the implementation of basic player movement through a touch joystick. Unity was chosen as the engine to be used for development and the project is already configured.
- **06/04/2025:** First version of the Game Design Document finished.
- **07/04/2025:** Beginning of Development
- **09/04/2025:** Very basic prototype with basic game logic implemented in Sprint 0.
- **10/04/2025:** Adjustments to the Game Design Document, resulting in this version.
- **24/04/2025:** Added Main Menu and Dialog mechanics, implemented in Sprint 1.
- **08/05/2025:** Added UI elements (Pause, Timer, Dialogue UI…) and Basic Scene Transitions, implemented in Sprint 2.
- **23/05/2025:** Added School Map, Static and Break Scene Logic, In-Game Day, Week Logic, Scoring System, Coins System, In-Game Upgrade Store Logic and UI and Upgrade System, implemented in Sprint 3.

Concept Statement

In Emotion Rush, you play as an adolescent that has just arrived a new school. But it's not just an ordinary school. Here, student classes are rewarded when they use Emotion Regulation strategies in their daily student life! Will your class stay on top and get the biggest coin prize?

(for more detail, check [Concept Paragraph and Unique Selling Points](#))

Genre

Emotion Rush is a Role-Playing game with Arcade elements, simulating the daily life of an adolescent school student.

Target Audience

Emotion Rush is a PEGI12 game, as it aims to be played by adolescents from ages 12-to-18. The game is specially developed for adolescents in Residential Care, based on the elements that were identified as more appealing in carried out research and co-design processes.

Concept Paragraph and Unique Selling Points

Emotion Rush is an arcade role-playing serious game developed with the intent of teaching Emotion Regulation to adolescents in Residential Care. In this game, players play as a new student in a school where they don't know anyone. Emotion Rush simulates the daily life of the student through three types of scenes:

- **Classes:** Scenes where a situation is presented during a certain school class and the player has to choose how to react to it. The player cannot walk freely around the environment in these scenes. The scene ends after the player makes the choices and the situation is solved in some way.
- **Breaks:** Scenes where the player can explore the school between classes and choose where to go, interacting with situations where they choose. These scenes last 5 minutes, shown in the screen, and each interaction decreases 5 minutes from the timer too, but the player can use coins to raise the break time up or decrease the time an interaction deducts from the break scene, as well as raising the movement speed of the character.

To ensure replayability, interactions are not linear, meaning that they will not always happen in the same order.

There are no known games for promoting Emotion Regulation in adolescents in Residential Care, so this game aims to be the first Serious Game for this specific group.

Player Experience

In Emotion Rush, the player is a school student that just moved into middle school where they don't know anyone and where other adolescents from their institution also study. As part of a school program, the school keeps track of all students behavior and weekly rewards each class according to the behavior of its members, using coins that can be used to unlock prizes in the school.

During the game, the player gets involved in multiple situations where they have the chance to use emotion identification and regulation skills to either improve their own behavior or to help their classmates improve theirs. Choosing more regulated reactions and identifying emotions result in more points for the school program results, at the same time that the player explores the outcomes of different reactions to each situation.

While the game aims to simulate what would already be the daily life of the player, it aims to provide a safe space where the player can explore possible emotional reactions to situations involving interacting with other people, testing different options out and learning their consequences, being able to play the game again to test new possibilities and learn through repetition.

Key Moments

- **Tutorial Sequence:** As the player starts a new playthrough, a tutorial sequence begins where an older adolescent from the same institution as the player explains them how the game works.
- **School Weeks:** Each school week consists on 5 School Days, that are similarly structured.
- **School Days:** Each school day is structured in the following way:
  - **Morning Class 1:** A class scene. Sometimes, situations will happen during these classes and the player has to choose how to react to them. In other occasions, this sequence can show only a regular class where nothing relevant happened, and skip to the next scene.
  - **Morning Break:** A break scene. The player can explore the school and decide what to interact with, including visiting the school store to buy upgrades with gained coins. The scene lasts 5 minutes and each interaction decreases the timer in 5 minutes. When the timer hits 0, the scene lets any ongoing interaction finish and then the scene ends.
  - **Morning Class 2:** Same as Morning Class 1.
  - **Lunch Break:** Same as Morning Break.
  - **Afternoon Class :** Same as Morning Class 1 and 2.
  - **Outcome Sequence:** A short sequence lists the outcomes of the day, in the form of sentences that express the impact that this day's decisions had on the relationship with classmates.

Art, sound and music

Emotion Rush uses a 2D pixel-art style asset pack available here for the characters, animations and environments. Game's GUI will use this asset pack.

Music Tracks were obtained from pixabay and are specified below:
- **Main Theme**
- **Break Theme**
- **Interaction Theme**

Sound Effects were also obtained from pixabay and are specified below:
- **Button Push**
- **School Bell**

Current Target Platform (and any system requirements)

This game is for mobile Android devices and aims to be a lightweight game, to ensure most Android users can play it smoothly. The possibility for iOS compatibility is also being considered and evaluated.

Similar Games

Emotion Rush draws inspiration from two different role-playing games, one of them following the same visual style (Stardew Valley). These three games served as the main inspiration for the mechanics of the game and its functioning.

Persona Series

Persona is a series of role-playing games that tell the story of a group of adolescents that, while living the daily life of regular students, also take the time to fight monsters in another dimension in order to change evil people's hearts and get them to be better people.

Emotion Rush takes inspiration from Persona and its in-game day structure, in the sense that both games portray the daily life of a school student, between classes.

Stardew Valley

Stardew Valley is an indie role-playing farming simulator game where the player plays as someone who just inherited a farm in a small town called Stardew Valley, that belonged to their deceased grandfather.

The friendship mechanic that was thought of for Emotion Rush takes inspiration from the heart system in Stardew Valley, where your relationships with the locals can get you rewards and new interactions and in-game events, as you improve them by attending to requests from them, giving them gifts and interacting with them. Additionally, the timed duration of each in-game day is also a mechanic that was inspired by this game, despite it working differently in Emotion Rush.

Additional Details

Player Objectives and Progression

As a newcomer school student living in a Residential Care institution, the main objectives of the player are:
- **Objective 1:** Understand how Emotions and Emotion Regulation works
  - **How?** By noticing how other characters react to their choices regarding how they regulate their emotions and how they help others regulate themselves.
  - **Why?** Understanding how to react in more adaptive ways and how to help others regulate their emotions will improve relationships with other characters.
- **Objective 2:** Raising their class score
  - **How?** Correctly identifying emotions and reacting using adaptive Emotion Regulation strategies, which results in point rewards at the end of the day.
  - **Why?** To receive points for their class that will raise their score.
- **Objective 3:** Obtaining coins
  - **How?** Correctly identifying emotions and reacting using adaptive Emotion Regulation strategies, which results in point rewards at the end of the day. Also, staying as closest to the top of the leaderboard, as in the end of the week this results in a bigger bonus prize.

o **Why?** To spend them in upgrades that make progress and success in the game easier.

The gameplay flow is described in the Key Moments section above.

Game World

The game world has the **School** as its main environment. During classes, the player will always be shown in the same classroom, as cutscenes take place. During breaks, the player can explore the whole school on their own.

User Interface

There are different important UI elements in Emotion Rush:
- **Coins UI [Done]:** A counter where the number of coins a player has is displayed throughout the game.


- **Daily Outcome UI [Done]:** A page that appears at the end of each in-game day, showing how many points each class has, how many points and coins the player received in that day and feedback about what they did well and what could improve.

- **Dialog Prompts [Done]:** Boxes with dialog from other characters and sometimes dialog options for the player to answer them, that are necessary for interacting with NPC's. Also used as **Emotion Identification Prompts.**

- **Main Menu [Done]:** A small menu for the game, from where the player can start a new playthrough, load a game save or leave the game.
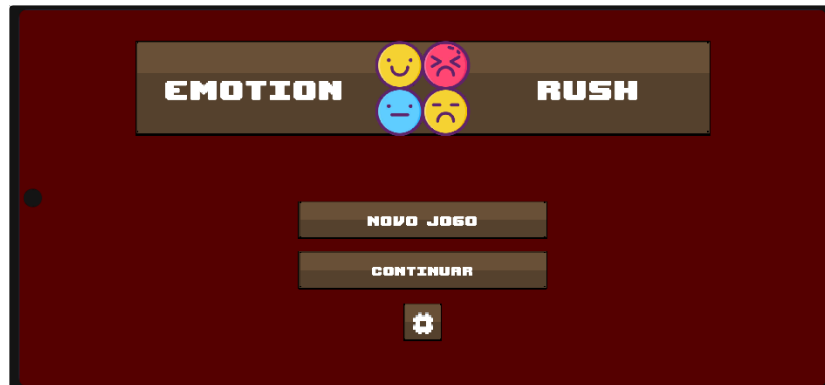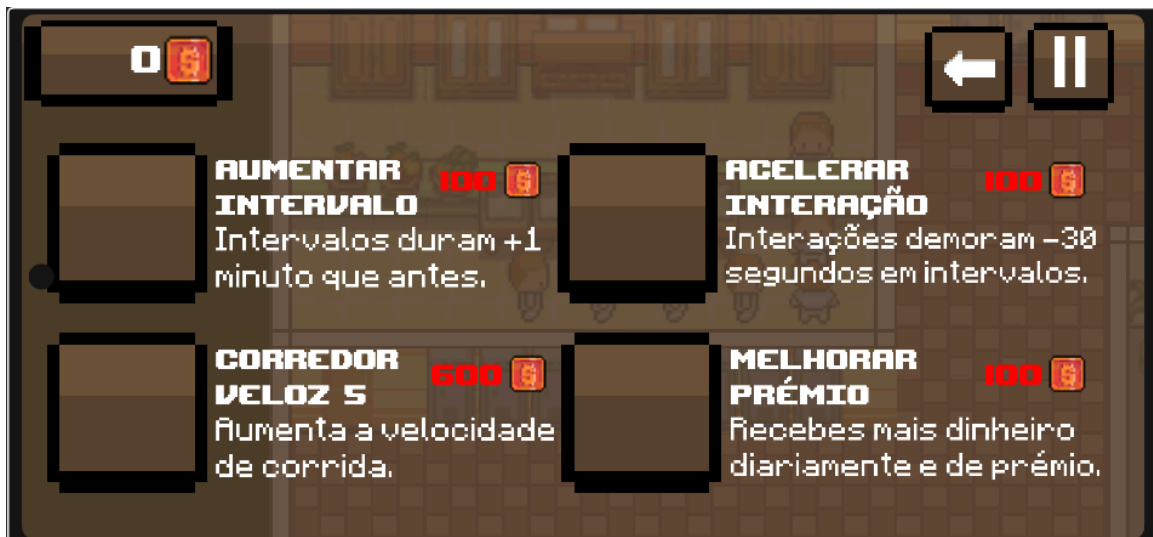

- **Interact (A) Button [Done]:** A button that can be used for the player to interact with elements around them, in school break scenes or in the game hub.

- **Joystick [Done]:** A small joystick with which the player can control the movement of the character during school break sequences and while in the game hub. The joystick appears in any point of the screen the player touches that doesn't already contain another UI element.

- **School Store [Done]:** A page containing available upgrades, their costs and their effects.

AUMENTAR INTERVALO   100 $
Intervalos duram +1 minuto que antes.

ACELERAR INTERAÇÃO   100 $
Interações demoram −30 segundos em intervalos.

CORREDOR VELOZ 5   600 $
Aumenta a velocidade de corrida.

MELHORAR PRÉMIO   100 $
Recebes mais dinheiro diariamente e de prémio.

- **Timer [Done]:** A small timer is shown in the corner of the screen everytime a timed sequence begins. This is used for breaks, so that the player knows how many time left they have. Audio feedback such as a clock ticking can be used complementarily.

MVP Systems and Features

Below are specified the main features that are absolutely required for the base game concept to work:

- **Calendar System [Done]:** The system that counts the in-game weeks and the in-game days of the week and presents the information to the player. At the end of each week, the system also triggers a short scene where the player is informed how many coins they received and the four class ranking.
- **Class Sequences [Done]:** Sequences where the player cannot move freely and a situation occurring during a class is presented for them to solve.
  - **Interaction System [Done]:** The player is confronted with situations that either trigger their feelings and give them options of reactions, or that represent emotional reactions of other characters where the player can help them regulate themselves.
  - **Adding Interaction Scenarios [Done]:** Set of Different Interaction scenes that can happen in the game during class sequeneces.
- **Break Scenes [Done]:** Sequences where the player moves freely around the school for a limited amount of time and can choose where to go.
  - **Interaction System [Done]:** The player is confronted with situations that either trigger their feelings and give them options of reactions, or that represent emotional reactions of other characters where the player can help them regulate themselves.
  - **School Store [Done]:** A place where the player can buy upgrades for their character.
  - **Adding Interaction Scenarios [Done]:** Set of Different Interaction scenes that can happen in the game during break sequeneces.
- **Player Movement and Actions [Done]:** Player can walk in all four directions and has a Interact action to interact with characters and objects around them.
- **Save System [Done]:** The system that allows the player to save their progress at the end of each in-game day. The user can also start a new game, deleting their previous progress.
- **School Environment [Done]:** The whole school map for the player to explore.
- **Tutorial Sequence [Done]:** A sequence where the basics of the game are explained inside the game narrative by the institution caregiver before the first day of school starts.

Game Objects

- **Doors [Done]:** Interactive Doors that allow the player to enter areas in the Break Scenes.
- **Non-Player Characters [Done]:** Other characters that appear in game interaction scenes, including teachers, classmates and other school staff.
- **Upgrades [Done]:** Purchasable powers that improve different gameplay aspects and make progressing quicker for the player
  - Raising movement speed
  - Increasing duration of school breaks
  - Decreasing how much an interaction in a break deducts from the timer
  - Raising amount of coins gained daily and weekly

Localization

- The game will be in Portuguese only, in order to simplify usability testing.

Tools

- **Engine:** Unity 6
- **Version Control:** Github and Github Desktop

Ideas and Expansions

Below are specified ideas that are not necessary for the MVP development but can be added later if there is time available.

- **Classmate Name Customization:** The player is able to name classmate characters in the beginning of the game.
- **Classmate Customization:** The player is able to customize classmates appearances.
- **Player Name Customization:** The player is able to name their character in the beginning of the game.
- **Player Character Customization:** The player is able to customize the appearance of their character and change it throughout the game.

Prototypes

All releases of Emotion Rush are available for download on GitHub. The final version can also be tested through browser (though Android installation is preferable and reccomended) on Unity Play.