Anxious Architect: A Video Game About Anxiety

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Summary

This proposal is for a video game project with a focal narrative on General Anxiety Disorder (GAD) awareness and mental health management. Our team will seek to create a narrative rich interactive experience for players to learn about mental health in an entertaining environment. Our goal is to create an open mindset toward mental health and give players insight into healthy strategies for dealing with mental health issues. We will use Twine to begin forming a basic outline of the interactivity with the narrative for the user experience and story structure, after which the team will begin to use GDScript to code the game in the Godot engine. We expect to create and release a finished game for Windows OS with in an 11-week time frame beginning on September 23rd until Dember 9th that partners with mental health organizations to bring more awareness of mental health management and anxiety disorders.

Project Description

Anxiety is an innate emotion every person experience at some point in their life, however in recent years mental health has become more prevalent in modern society and is a threat to the wellbeing of people. While some anxiety can be normal, more than 40 million adults in the United States have an anxiety disorder and of that 40 million only about 40% of people are treated for their anxiety. Recognizing symptoms of anxiety in yourself and others is an important factor in being able to begin treatment or acceptance of an anxiety condition. Anxiety disorders range from Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), panic disorder, to social anxiety and phobias, all of which can lead to depression, substance abuse, and trouble sleeping for an individual. The problem is that those who suffer from anxiety or other mental health issues due to anxiety do not always have access to the right facilities to be able to manage their mental health.

The game our team seeks to create will be a helpful educational and entertainment tool for those who choose to play through it. We will craft a narrative around a character with GAD that will teach the player signs of anxiety through dialogue options and gameplay elements, giving the player entertaining opportunities to help the character use healthy coping strategies to work through their anxiety. Our team will learn about GAD and mental health management to apply these healthy coping skills to the narrative and gameplay to help the players recognize their own anxieties and healthily deal with them at home. After completion of the general gameplay narrative players will have gained healthy strategies to deal with anxieties through an interactive narrative. At the end of the game players will also be given links to mental health organizations and communities to promote further research for the players benefit.

Audience

The target audience of this project are gamers as well as those who suffer from General Anxiety Disorder and/or other mental health issues between the ages of 18 – 26 whom reside in the United States. This project aims to educate young adults on healthy ways to cope with anxiety and increase their overall mental and physical health. Gamers are a crucial target audience for this project because they will be drawn to a video game, but also because ~84% of gamers reported having minimal to mild anxiety symptoms in a 2022 study. Anxiety disorders are one of the most common health concerns in the United States with more than 19% of adults having a reported anxiety disorder. Both target audiences, whether aware or not are likely to have underlying levels of anxiety of varying severity, this will teach these groups how to manage their anxiety and how to create healthy habits to combat mental health in an entertaining environment.

Objectives

Our team will learn about mental health management and symptoms to create a streamlined and thoughtful narrative for the user and team members. Learn to code in GDScript in the Godot engine to craft a unique and creative user experience. We will understand what it means to work as a team to take down tasks suited to each team member’s strengths. This will give our team members a look into the game development process and the challenges of crafting a narrative structure that works with game play elements.

Implementation Details

In the first two weeks of the project the team will carry out brainstorming sessions to fulfill requirement documents and design documents to finalize the project timeline as well as narrative structure of the game on paper. In weeks two and three the team will use Twine to create a prototype of the interactive elements of the game and create a compelling narrative space to communicate our theme of mental health management. Weeks 4 & 5 the team will begin to learn and program the game in GDScript for the Godot engine and implement visual elements into the game such as character models, environments, and menus. Week 6 the team will produce its first Godot prototype as an executable file for Windows OS which will allow for player testing and feed back to begin in week 7. After recording feedback, we will make changes to the game and add to it, accordingly, focusing on performance and aesthetics after the game is in a stable playing position. Weeks 9 and 10 we will release a finely polished prototype as an executable file for Windows OS for another round of player testing and begin to reach out to mental health organizations for input and collaboration. Week 11 the game will be fully finished and released, we will reach out to influencers and communities interested in the game to bring awareness to the final product.

Timeline

September 23rd, 2024 – December 9th, 2024

11 Weeks

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| Goal | Tasks | Week of Completion |
| Project Analysis & Narrative Writing | * Write out requirements document * Solidify timeline and deliverables * Brainstorm narrative structure | Week 1 |
| Research & Refining Narrative | * Write out design documents * Begin in depth research of anxiety and mental health management * Settle on a final narrative outline | Week 2 |
| Prototype Story in Twine | * Basic interactive narrative Twine prototype * Focus on interactions between user and in game character * Basic interfacing and performance | Week 4 |
| Begin Work in Godot | * Learning GDScript * Begin coding game in GDScript * Start a GitHub Repository | Week 4 |
| Graphic Design | * Design characters, objects, and environments for game * Designs correlate to arcing themes of anxiety * Basic art implementation into GDScript | Week 5 |
| Game Designing and Refining | * Continuation of coding game in GDScript * Implementing gameplay beyond interactive buttons | Week 5 |
| Prototype Gameplay in Godot | * First Godot prototype designed for Windows OS * Titles, menus, and general gameplay | Week 6 |
| Player Testing and Feedback | * Testing gameplay with project team * Testing with external groups * Record feedback | Week 8 |
| Refining Gameplay & Final Story Edits | * Implement changes and additions from player testing feedback * Finalizing narrative story structure and coding it into the game | Week 9 |
| Reach Out to Mental Health Organizations & Investors | * Reach out to mental health organizations for input, collaboration, or endorsement * Initiate outreach to investors interested games for social impact | Week 10 |
| Polish & Additional Outreach | * Polish code, visual assets, menus, and sound design * Outreach to influencers, journalists, and communities who may be interested in the game | Week 10 |
| Final Playtesting and Final Product | * Another round of playtesting to larger groups and making last minute changes * Final game export * Prep for game release and marketing | Week 11 |

Project Deliverables

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| Deliverable | Description | Due Date |
| Requirements Document | * Documents defining the scope of the project with solidified timeline for deliverables | 09/30/2024 |
| Design Document(s) | * Documents detailing the narrative structure and game elements | 10/07/2024 |
| Twine Prototype | * Early prototype of the narrative with minor interaction and notable placements for coded game segments | 10/21/2024 |
| Godot Prototype | * Initial Godot prototype showcasing improvement from the Twine prototype with more gameplay interaction * Minimal art and performance | 11/04/2024 |
| Refined Prototype | * Polished Godot Prototype ready for player testing and feedback * Fully implemented art and clean performance | 11/18/2024 |
| Final Product | * Finalized Game Product * High performance and polished art * Playable game in GDScript executable on Windows OS | 12/09/2024 |

References

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