

competing needs

an analysis of
the game and
my process!

(title befitting
the process
as much as
the product)

Today's Agenda



- 1 Why did I want to make this game
- 2 First iteration: concept matters
- 3 Second iteration: “too much”
- 4 Third iteration: what is the goal?
- 5 Next steps: more iterations to come
- 6 Bibliography

why did I want to make this game



As a neurodivergent, I've long battled with time management. To keep myself engaged, and to create a system for the lack of a natural one, I cope with task prioritisation by gamifying gains and losses in self-talk. This made me think that it could be interesting to extend and emulate that experience.

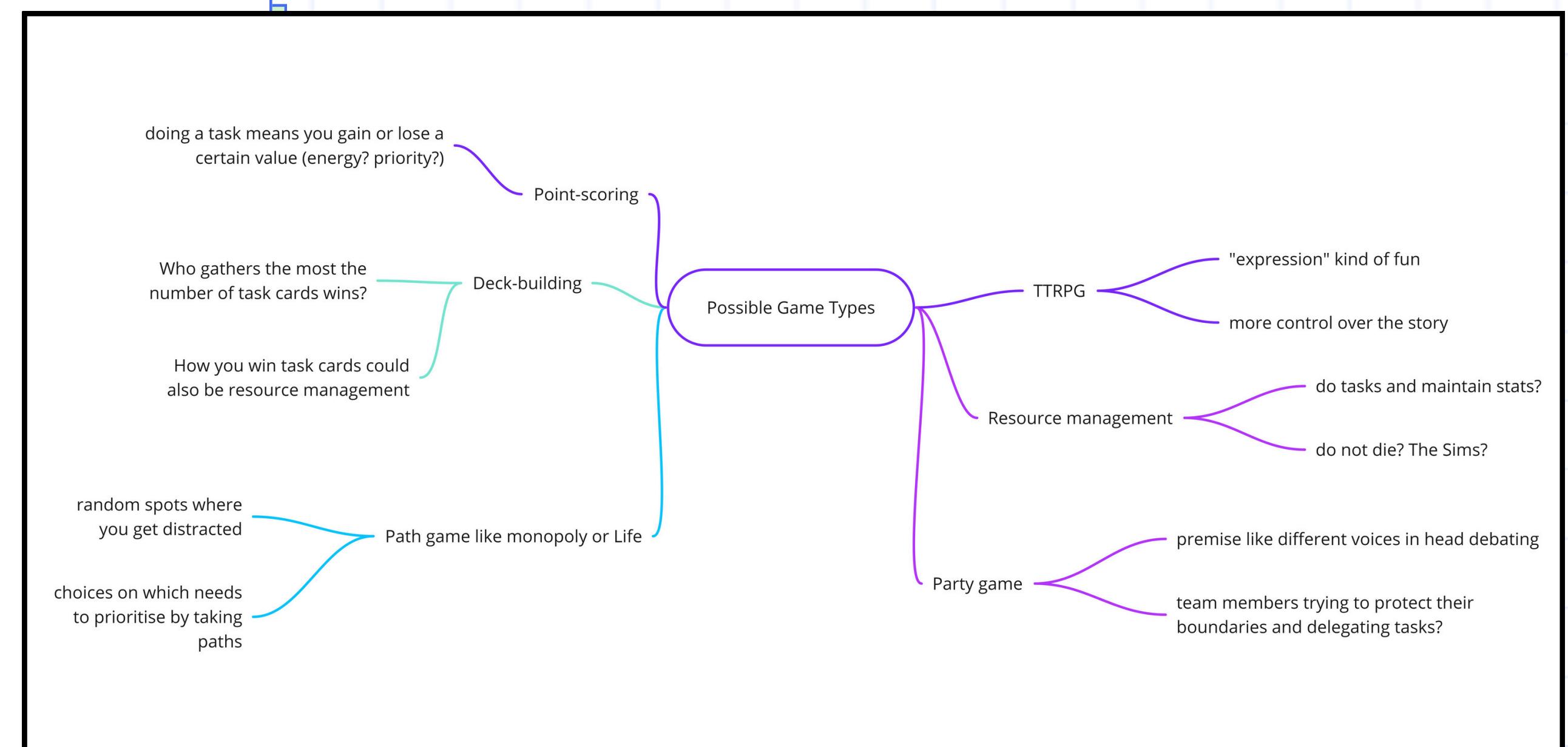


Fig 1.1. narrowed down mind map of game ideas after a quick brain storming session

why did I want to make this game



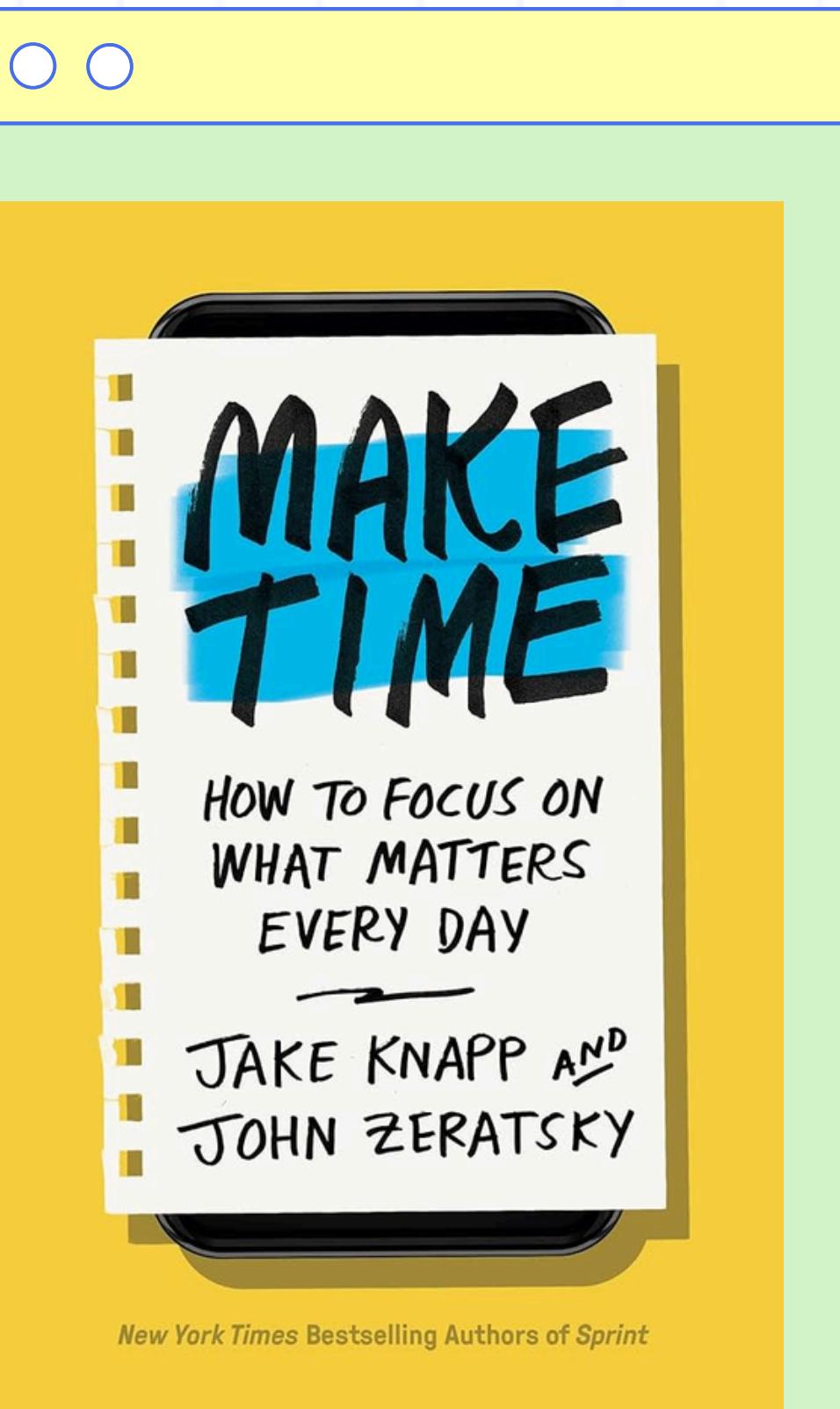
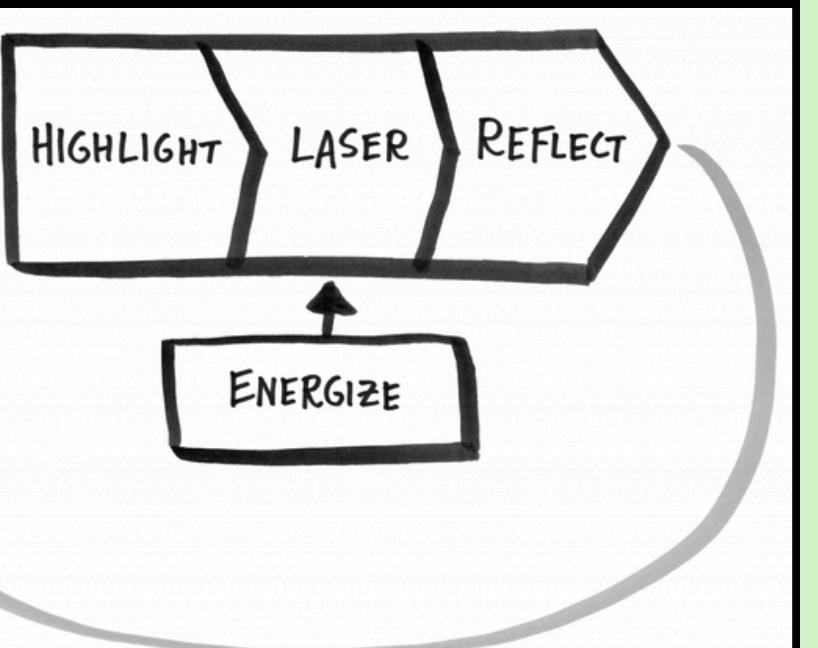
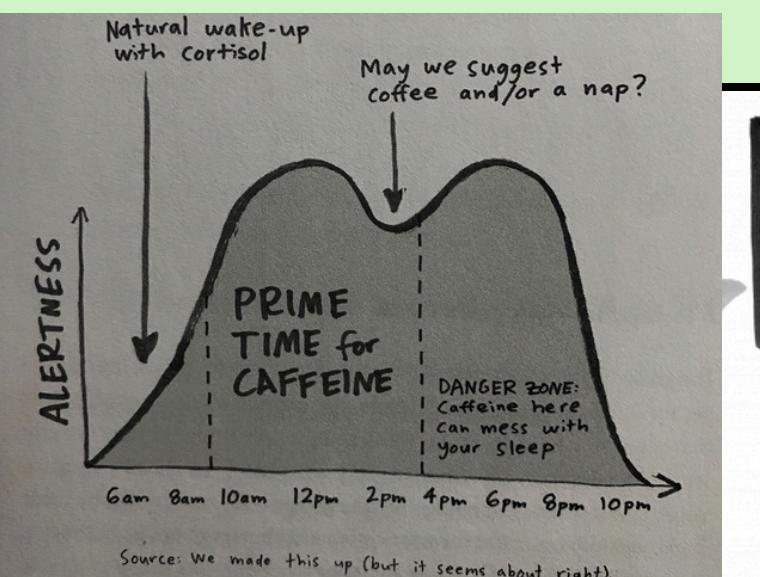
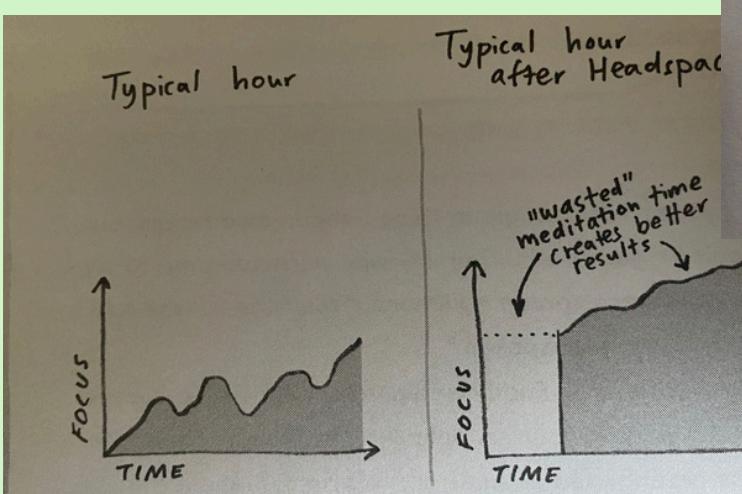
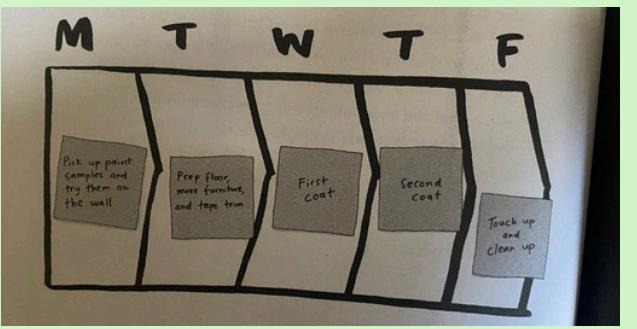
		What cannot change?	What can change?	Questions to answer
<p>My original goal was to create a transformational game about ADHD, but I broadened it to the general experience of living in an attention economy because</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. I was already working on a serious game this semester and it'd have been out of scope to work on two research-driven projects2. Struggles with time management are universally resonant still, and this gives me leeway to borrow my own experiences to drive the experience.	theme	task management transformational game	adhd-simulation	can it be developed to be more authentic or research driven belatedly
	goal	individual fulfilment → Personal goal card	how that looks for different roles in the game agency over time	is research time consuming
	mechanics	making a schedule	individual gain collaborative gain + competitive gain: narrative and individual choice how making a schedule looks	what do you do in the game to place a task on the schedule
	opposition	brain counterparts luck/randomness/chance (distraction)		
	roles/players	parts of brain self-care stimulus → fulfillment	character of the brain-haver	

Fig 1.2. attempt to clarify what I knew and didn't about the game before first playtest

inspirations



I had recently started reading this book which was helping me with executive function, and I thought I could use its framework to make a game loop and its statistics to inform balance-related decisions.



inspirations



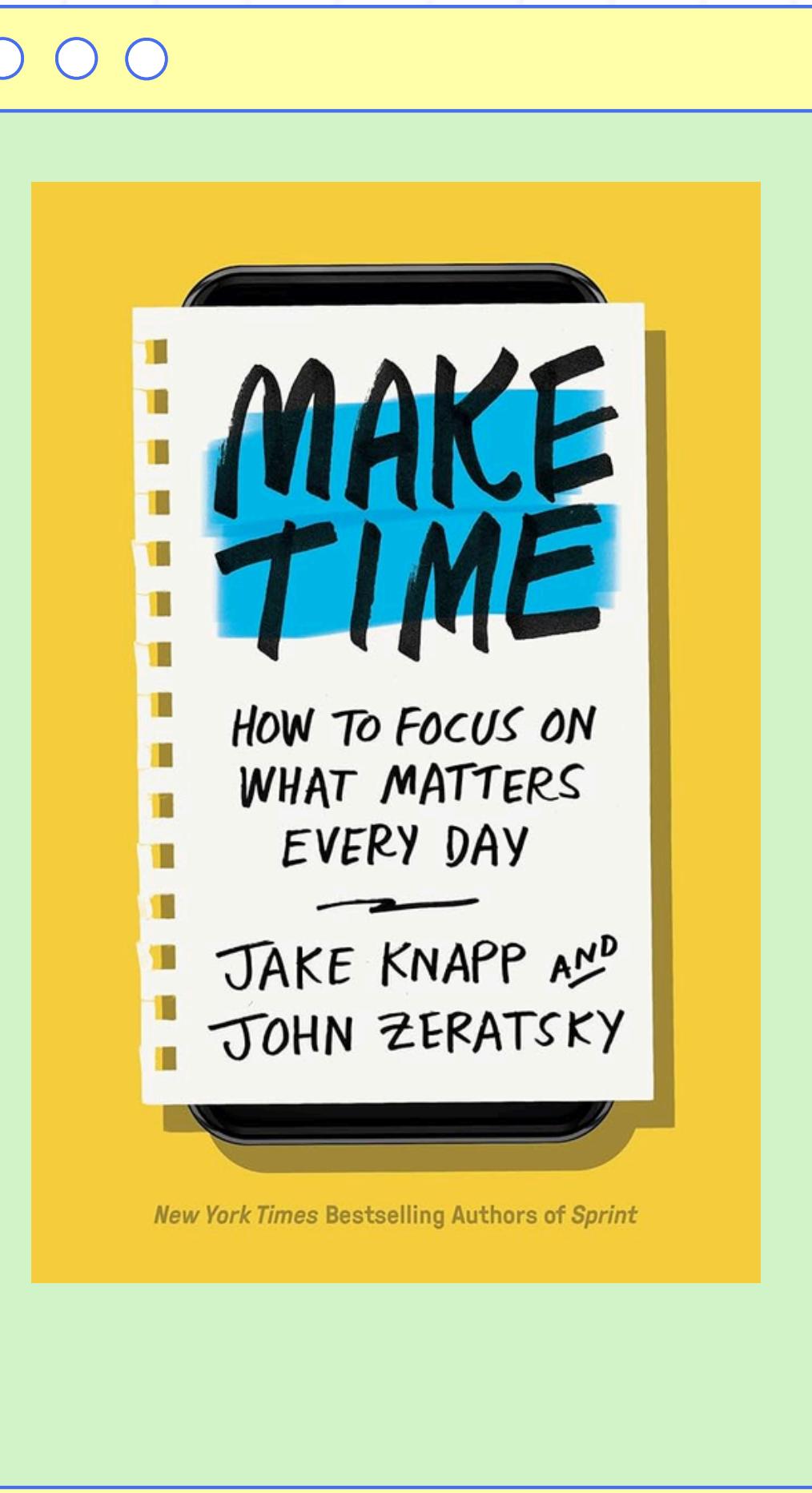
The was really helpful for early brainstorm.

MAKE TIME FOR YOUR HIGHLIGHT	
8. Schedule Your Highlight	57
9. Block Your Calendar	59
10. Bulldoze Your Calendar	61
11. Flake It Till You Make It	63
12. Just Say No	63
13. Design Your Day	64
14. Become a Morning Person	66
15. Nighttime Is Highlight Time	69
16. Quit When You're Done	73
	75

More than 80 tactics to choose from—
we'll help you find the ones that work best for you.

No	Tactic Name	Benefit	Game benefit
1	Stack Rank Your Life	Strategy	
2	The Might-Do List	Strategy	
3	Run a personal sprint	Strategy	
4	Schedule Your Highlight	Strategy	
5	Block Your Calendar	Strategy	
6	Bulldoze your Calendar	Power card	
7	Flake It Till You Make it	Power card	
8	Just Say No	Power card	
9	Become a Morning Person	Strategy	
10	Nighttime is Highlight Time	Strategy	

Fig 1.3. derived game verbs from the tactics mentioned in the book



inspirations

But it also informed my decisions through the multiple iterations.

This figure is from my submitted game design.

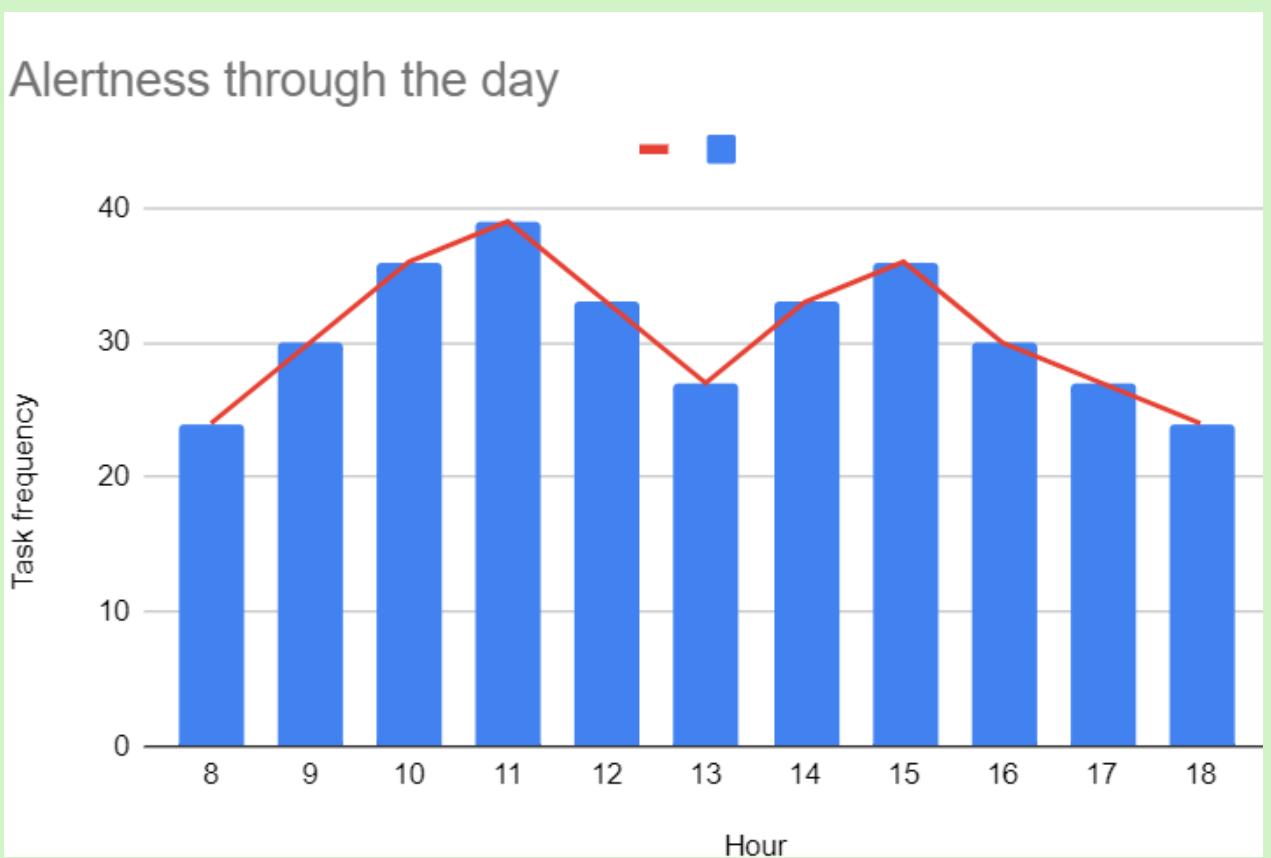
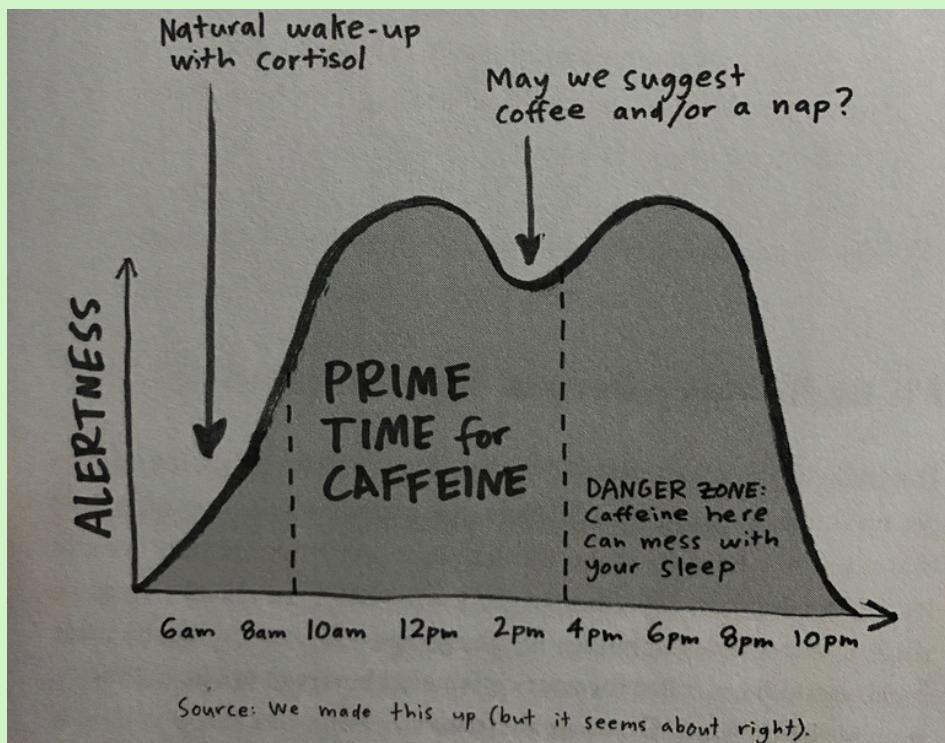
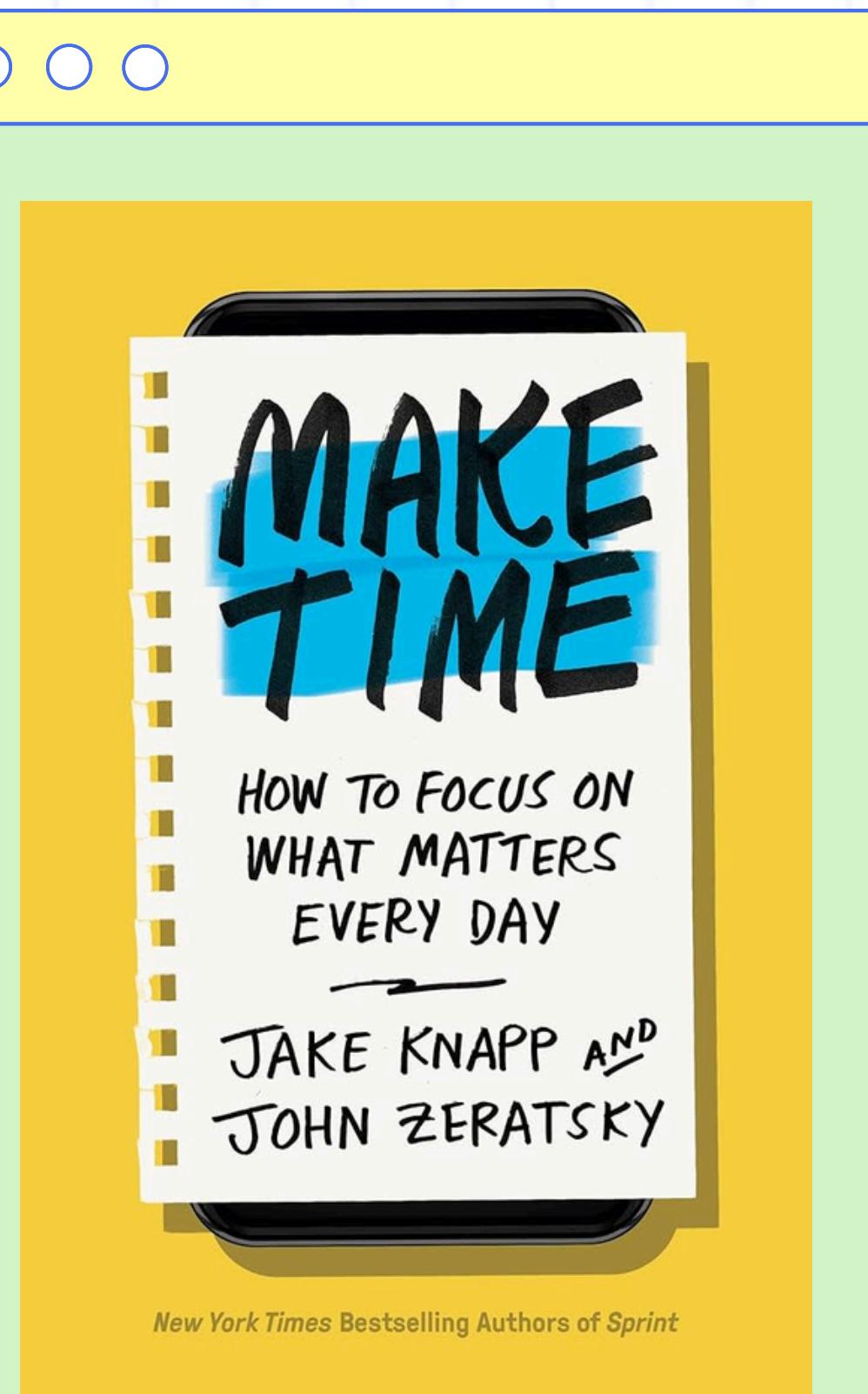


Fig 1.4. Task Frequency distribution across different hours
game attuned to daily alertness level



gearing up for first iteration!



I continued consuming relevant media, doing research and brainstorming before I settled on a concept. I realised the thematic goals I was aiming for were related to the multiplicity of thought, its conflict and need for compromise, and decided to hone in on that for player roles.

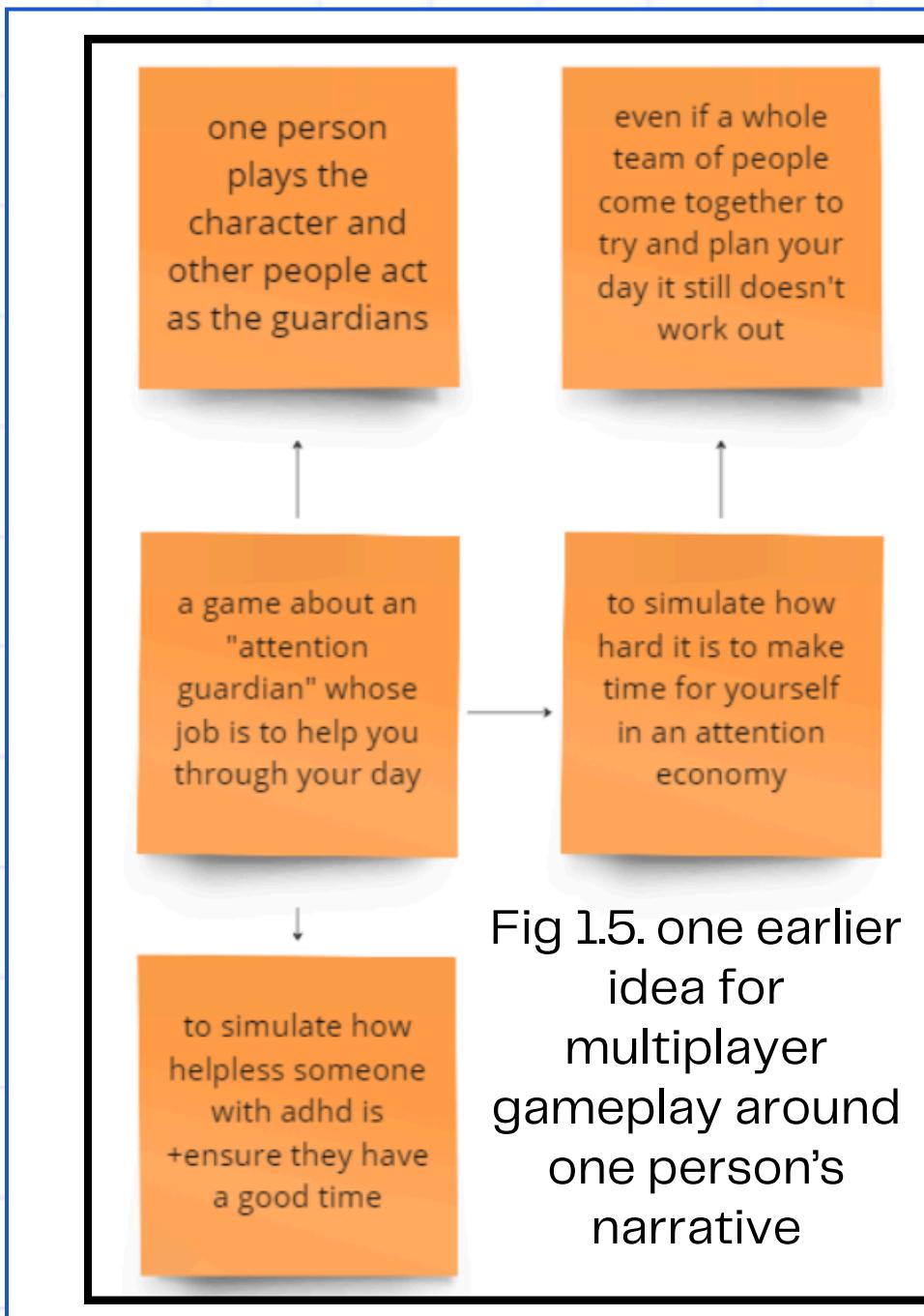
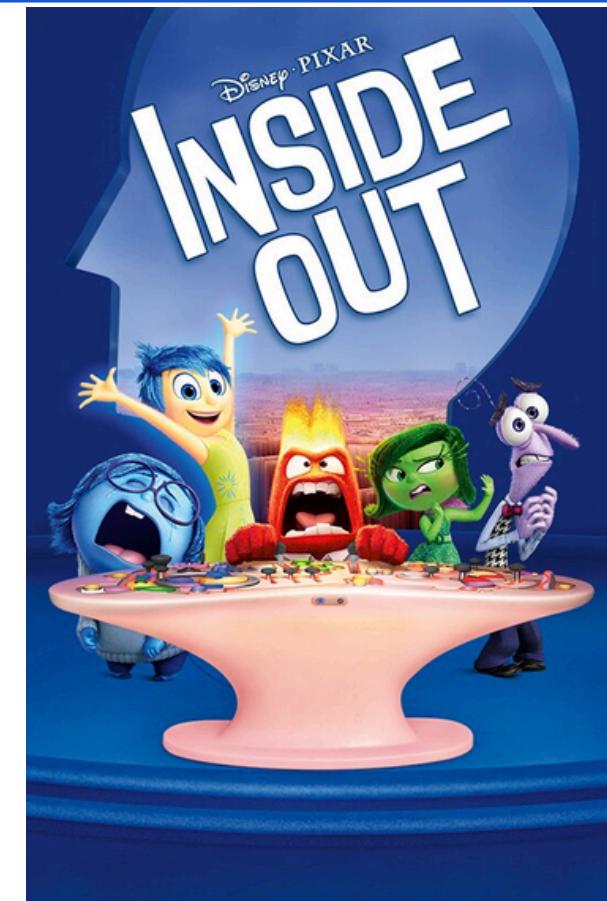
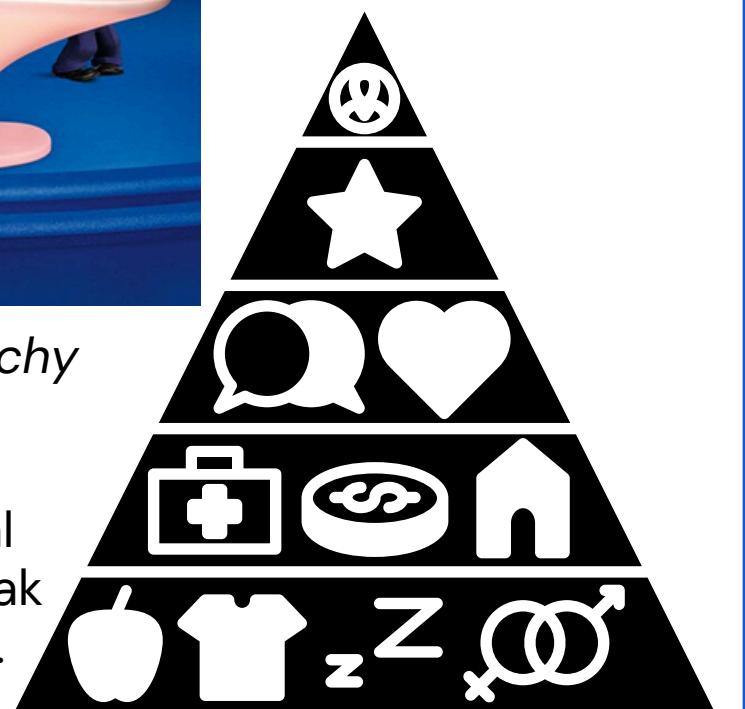


Fig 1.6. first time deciding calendar will be the game board.

Inspired by how designing my day everyday felt like a game and how I find color coded calendars stimulating



Inside Out:
inspiration on
how to theme
different voices in
head, even if my
goal wasn't
related to
emotions



first iteration



Final Project Review 1



Fig 2.1. Final Project Review 1: Set Up

To-do or not to-do

Play as needs for Autonomy, Competence or Relatedness in their head.

Help Alex determine who they are by ensuring that the need you represent is attended to with the tasks they do in the day. But also help them not get too distracted or run out of energy!

[Link to first rulebook.](#)

observations



At this stage, the game was more of a probe towards the concept than a playable experience. But playtest helped me prioritise what worked.

theming

Intuitive: People are familiar with setting up their calendars: so people instantly knew that the task card goes on the calendar game board.

Initial pull: While this isn't high fantasy immersion with monster slaying, having control of your time is a rewarding feeling and people were interested to play on first glance.

goals

Competition: One of the goals was to gain the most energy points, and that was easy to follow. Players were competing for the tasks that helped them the most.

Collaboration: As the energy reserve and the time were shared constraints, and how each task appealed to multiple needs, it demanded some collaboration. But competing goals (how meta) led to confusion.

flow

Set up and clean up: The turn order could be more engaging if immersion didn't keep breaking due to slightly tedious set up and clean up. Didn't foresee this while designing the game in my head.

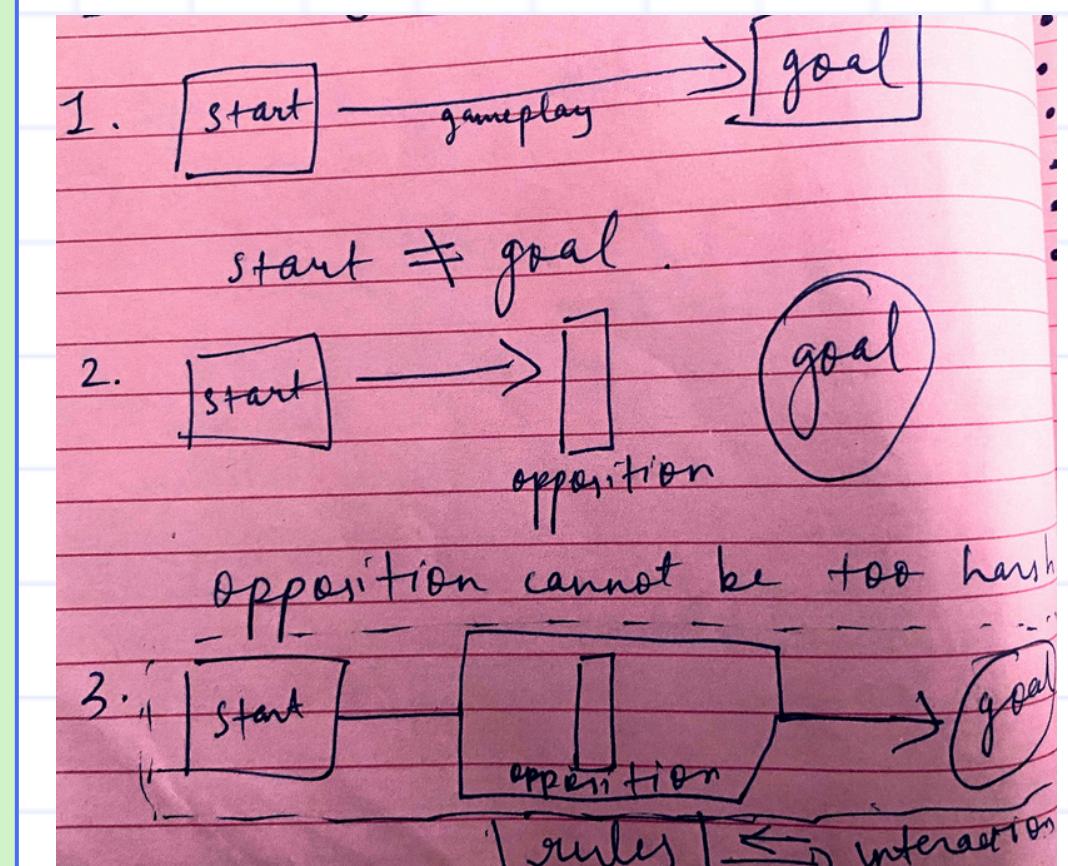


Fig 2.2. Review of Class Notes for base requirements of a good game

gearing up for second iteration!



I realised that the experience of being in the same head with shared interests may be better communicated with a co-operative game play. I looked up experiences that created the kind of emotion curve and team dynamic that I wanted to generate.

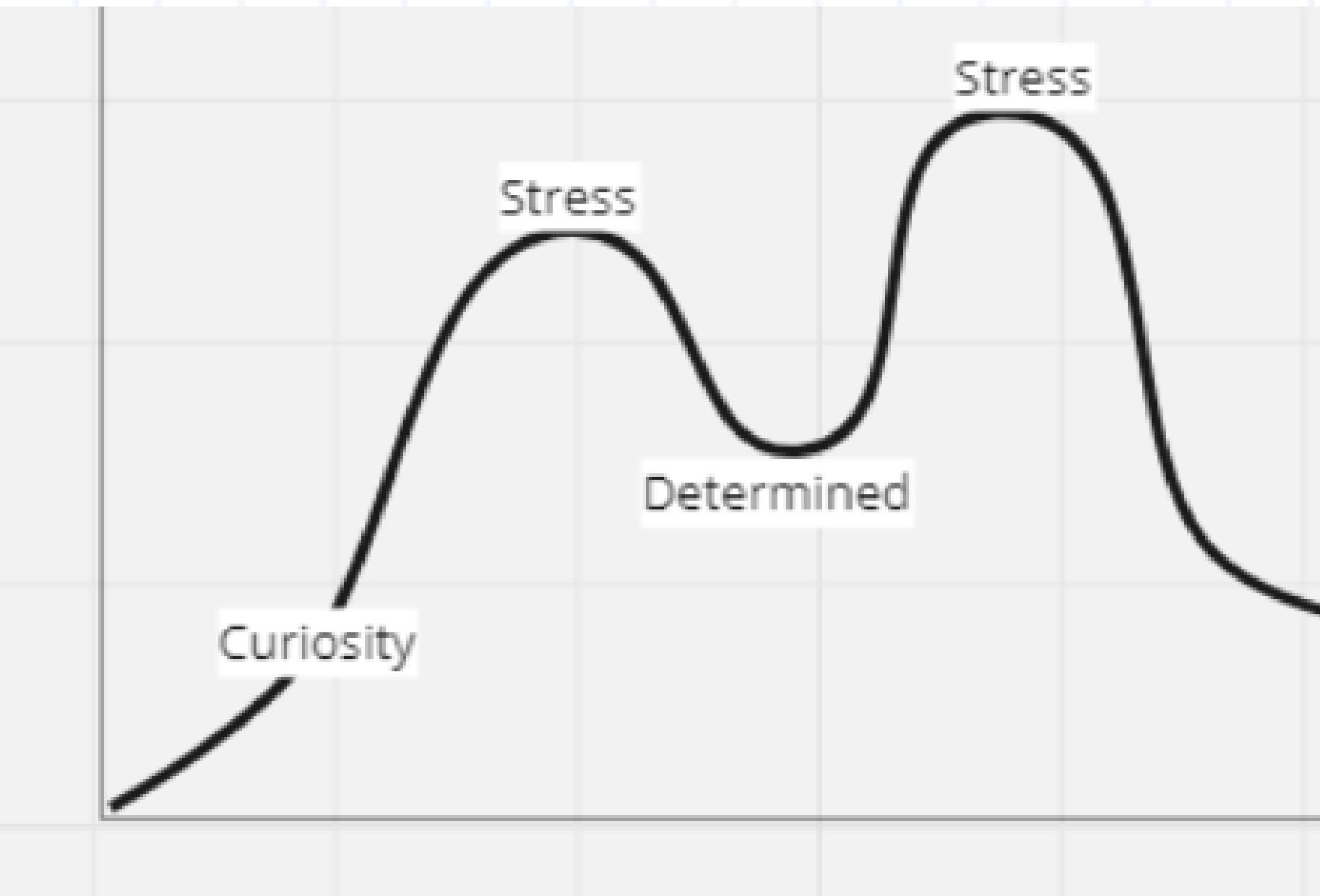


Fig 2.3. Emotional curve design

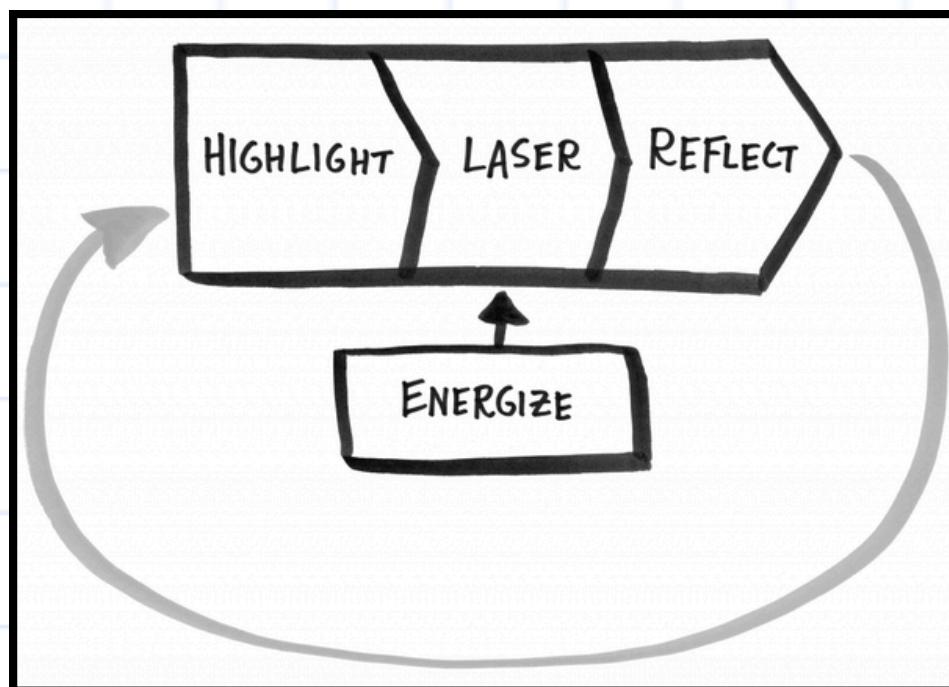
gearing up for second iteration!



I chose Space Alert to refer as it emulates the chaos and quick decision-making required to manage time effectively when multiple forces are maneuvering your brain ship. I also went back to Make Time to define winning goals.



*Inside Out +
Space Alert =
Internal Chaos*



*Make Time:
base
framework*

second iteration



Final Project Review 2

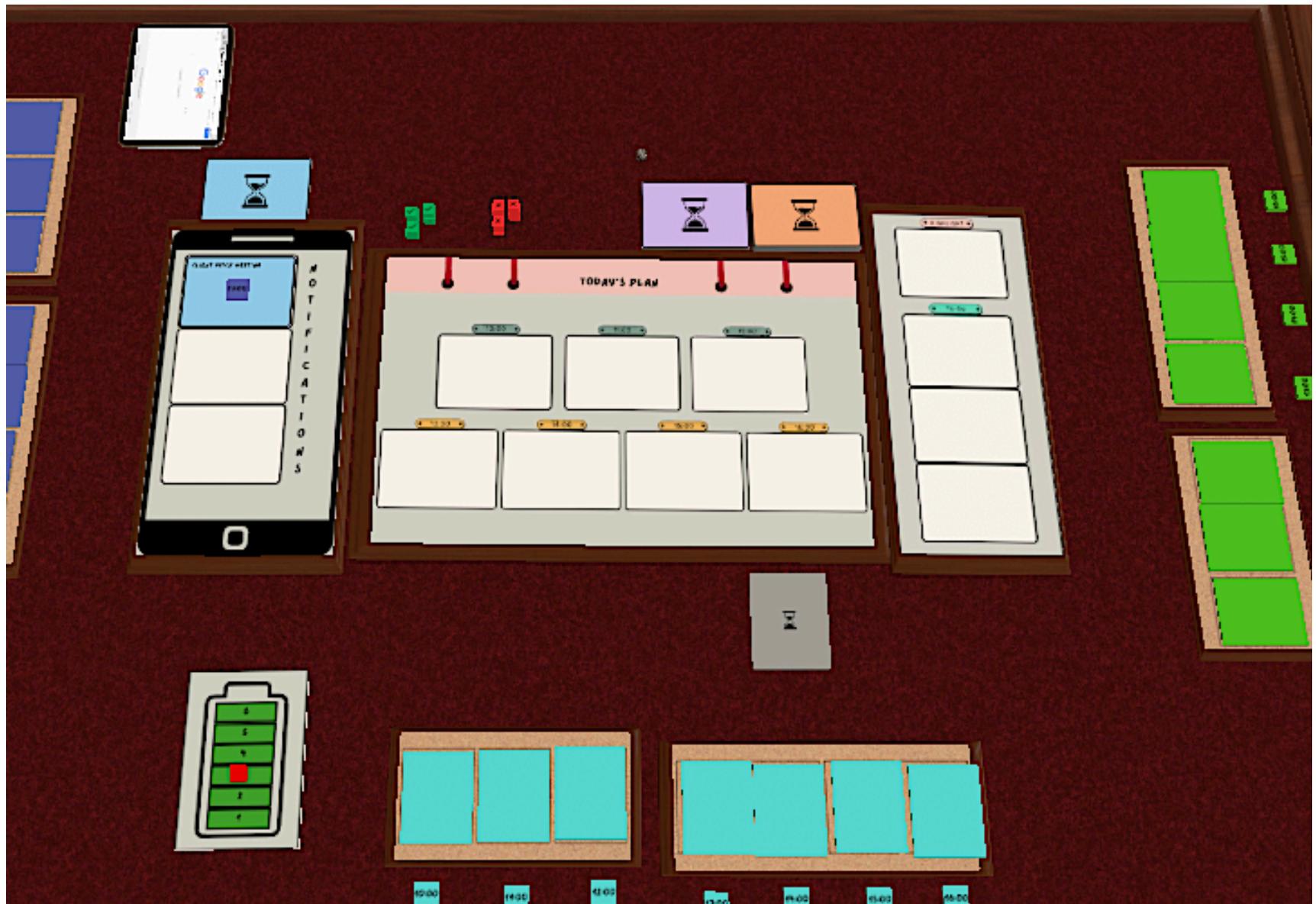


Fig 3.1. Final Project Review 2: Set Up

Make Time

Play as a team to help Alex maneuver their day full of meetings so that they have enough energy for the highlight of their day.

[Link to second rulebook.](#)

observations

- ○ ○ ○

This iteration had been theoretically designed to create most of the experiences I wanted to create with this game but in practice, due to how difficult it is to understand the game and start and there isn't enough reward to justify the work that takes, it was a bit of a failure.

theming

- ● ●

Too many pieces: Multiple cards, multiple tokens, only a rulebook written in a convoluted fashion to ramp up the player's cognitive load

Emotion target: The audio timer created an air of tension and urgency that was in line with the goals, however the negative emotions were more due to disconnect than immersion in role.

goals

- ○ ●

Personal incentive: Team goal with similar terms meant that players had no clarity of what they would get out of the experience, or how they could contribute in an individually meaningful way.

Backseat gaming: An unbiased player (someone not inclined to help me playtest the game) was more likely to disengage as they wouldn't have immediate clarity of goal or its reward.

flow

- ● ○

First time players: With my personal playtests, as I was always a player assisting with player engagement I was unable to foresee that drops in engagement curve for the general experience.

It's also hard to start, with an unclear goal/reward which is unable to guide the

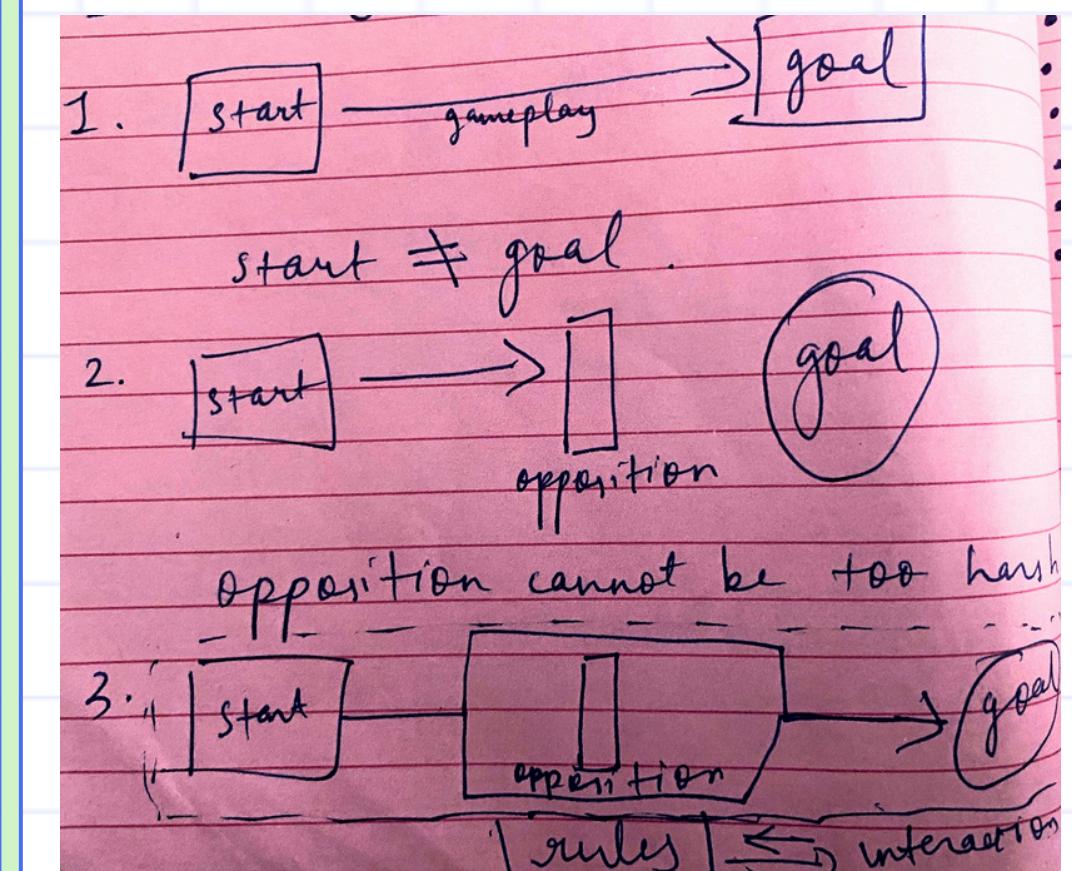


Fig 3.2. Another Review of Class Notes for base requirements of a good game

Competition vs Cooperation



The experience I wanted to create combined elements of both competition and collaboration, but designing them together was challenging. So, I decided I needed to focus on one to first work on a playable game loop before adding to the complexity.

Competition	
Pros	Cons
↳ engaging	↳ gives wrong message that only one voice can win
↳ communicates difficulty in accommodating different voices of head	↳ harder to iterate(?)
↳ clarity in goal	↳ cannot communicate common goal in a meaningful way
↳ simpler to design	↳ will have to change the game version significantly

Collaboration	
Pros	Cons
↳ have one number of the goals	↳ lack of clarity in goal
↳ communicate the difficulty of tasks	↳ symmetry is hard to design
↳ can have individual goals	↳ disengagement if individual contribution isn't defined
↳ true to narrative	

Fig 3.3. Comparing pros and cons of competition and collaboration to help decide one.

Review of previous goals



Most my problems kept coming down to the lack of focus for my goals for the experience, and my attempt to achieve all of them at the same time. So I decided to revisit what I wanted to do with this project. I first made an exhaustive list of everything I wanted to do, and then picked those I wanted to focus on.

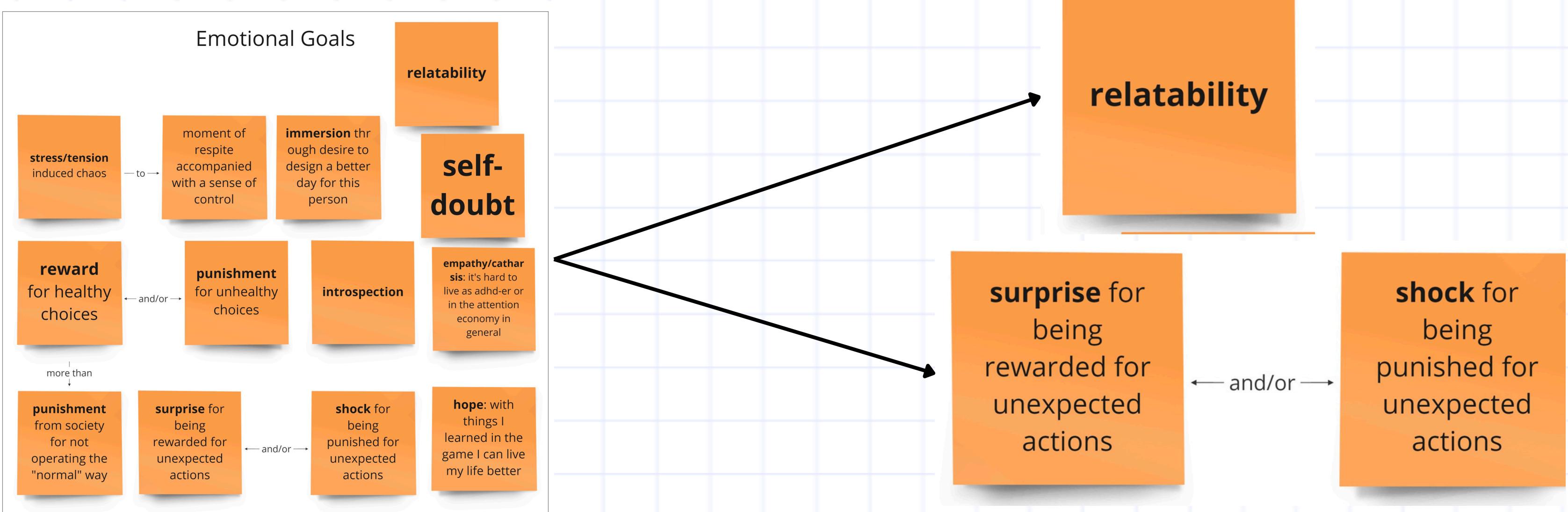
Transformational Goals



Review of previous goals



Most my problems kept coming down to the lack of focus for my goals for the experience, and my attempt to achieve all of them at the same time. So I decided to revisit what I wanted to do with this project. I first made an exhaustive list of everything I wanted to do, and then picked those I wanted to focus on.



Review of previous goals



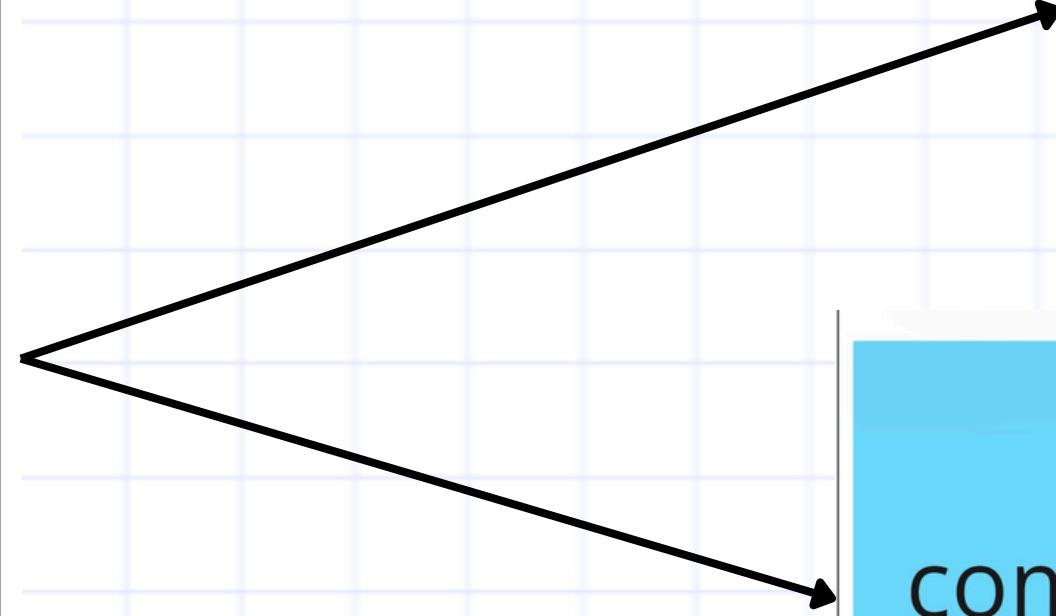
Most my problems kept coming down to the lack of focus for my goals for the experience, and my attempt to achieve all of them at the same time. So I decided to revisit what I wanted to do with this project. I first made an exhaustive list of everything I wanted to do, and then picked those I wanted to focus on.



strategise

create a self-narrative

compete



gearing up for last iteration!



I worked on a new mechanic combining action cards from my second iteration and the competing needs aspect from my first one. While I wanted to create a more complex gameplay for 3–4 players, I realised that it was more pivotal to fine-tune this game loop little by little with the limited time and playtesters I had.

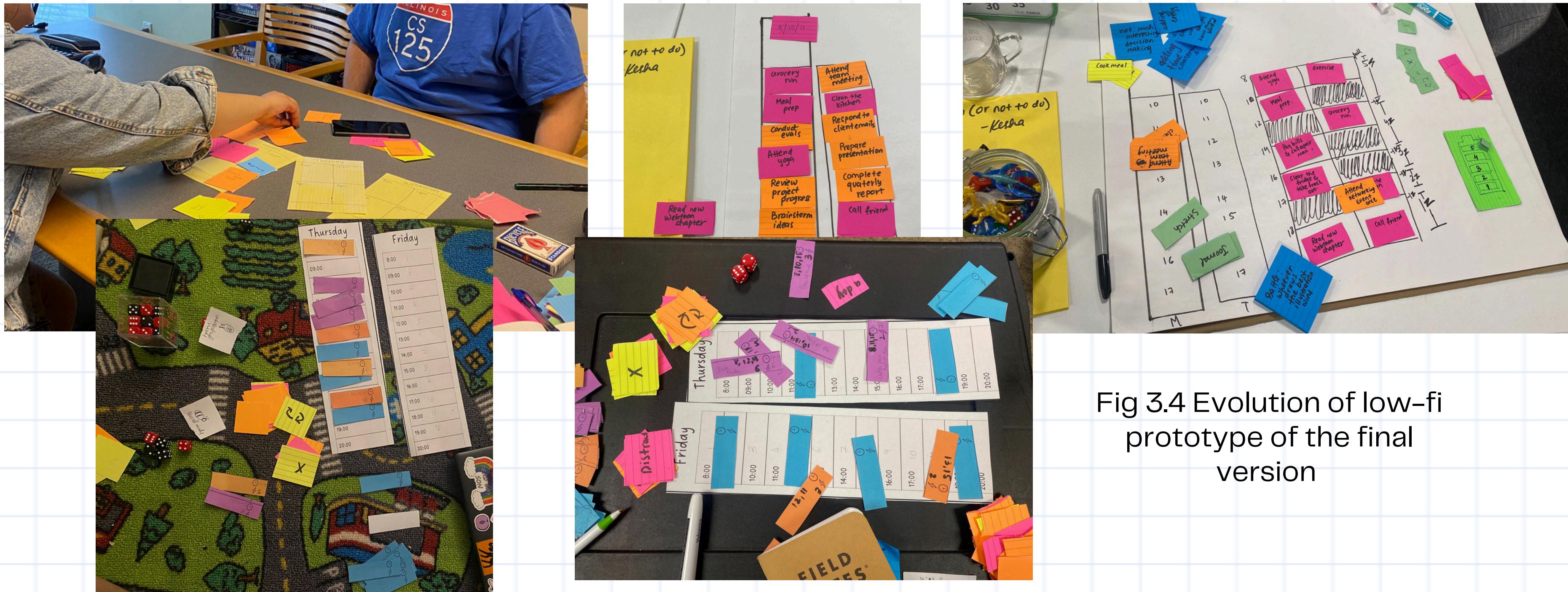


Fig 3.4 Evolution of low-fi prototype of the final version

gearing up for last iteration!



I also spent a lot of time just ensuring that the balance wouldn't break the game. It needs more work but it helped to have math bypass corner cases. I also attempted to make different cards be stronger and weaker to different action cards! [Link to game balance spreadsheet.](#)

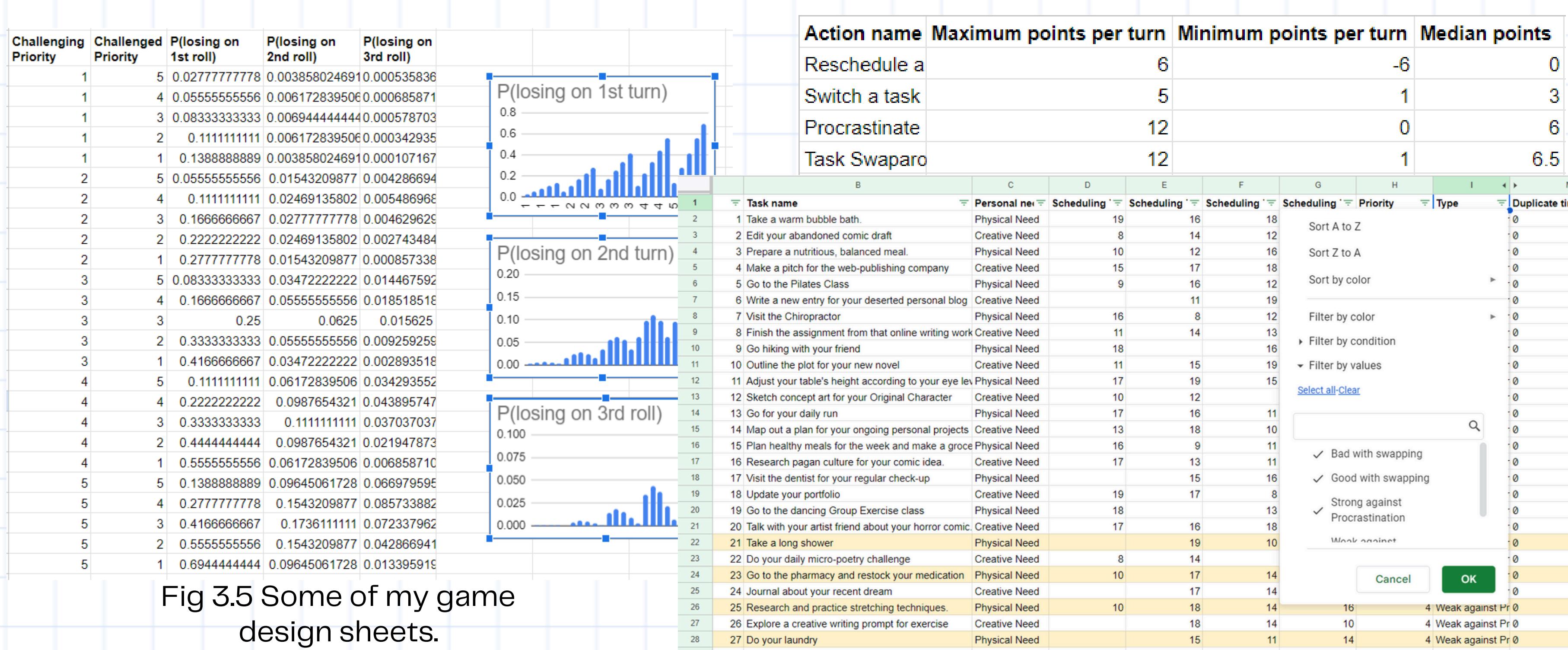


Fig 3.5 Some of my game design sheets.

third iteration



Final Project

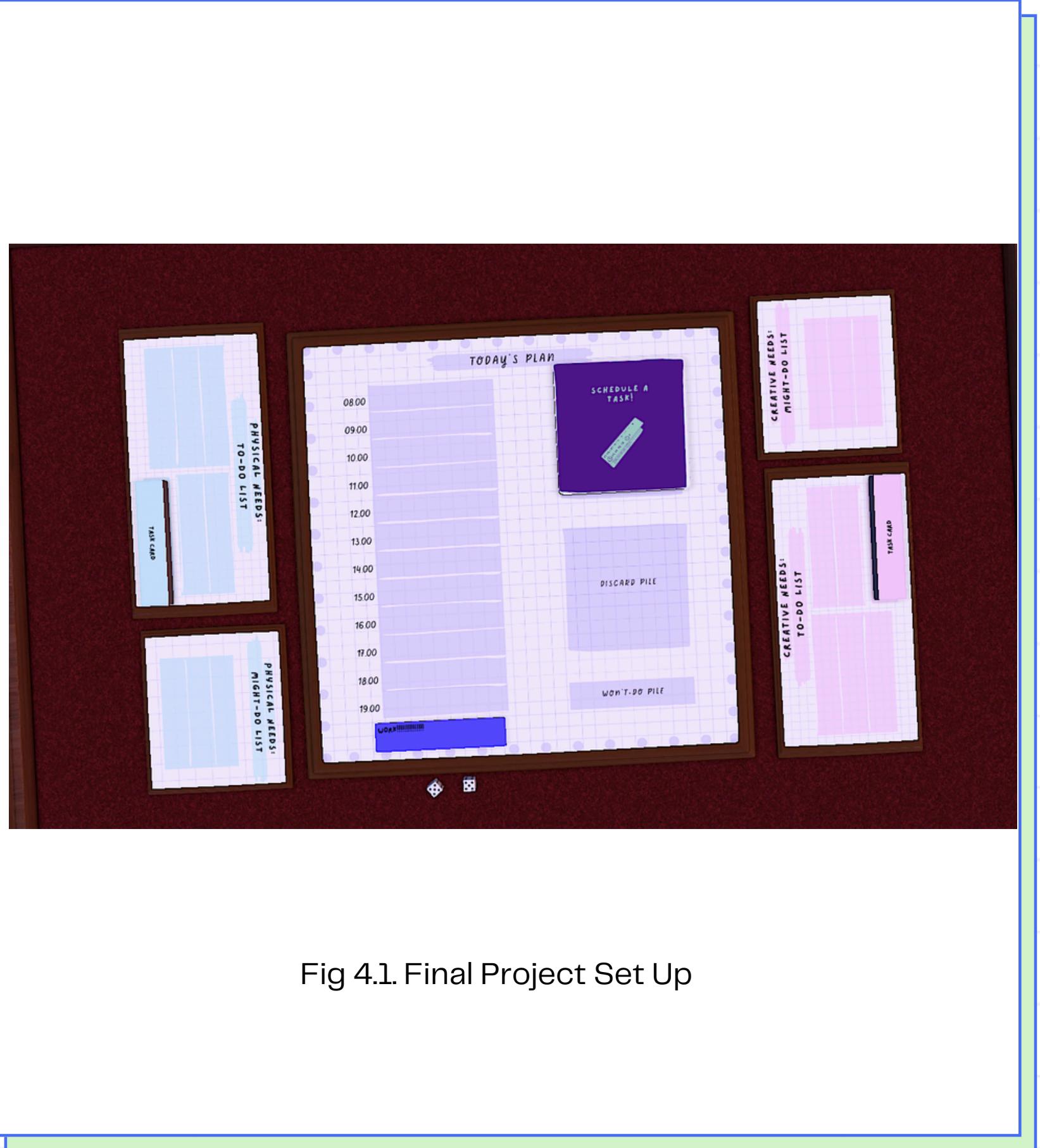


Fig 4.1. Final Project Set Up

Competing Needs

Play as needs for Autonomy, Competence or Relatedness in their head.

Help Alex determine who they are by ensuring that the need you represent is attended to with the tasks they do in the day. But also help them not get too distracted or run out of energy!

[Link to third rulebook template](#)

[Link to polished final rulebook.](#)

observations



It's a playable game with a few interesting moments! There are ways to tweak the experience for greater ludo narrative connect and player interaction, but it's got a foundation for iteration

theming

Visual resonance: I went back to the visual design of task cards from the first playtest as it was received well. Iterations on UI for clarity were successful in enhancing information access

Meaningless pieces: As I iterated on the game through major changes, there are certain elements that still remain as graves or placeholders for constraints that were discarded or pushed for revision. This caused break in immersion.

goals

Priority points: The goal is straightforward and it's easy to start playing and devising a strategy: "should I aim for high contesting time slots or high priority point cards?"

Challenge: There is some interesting decision making about whether to focus on gaining more points or making the other player lose theirs, but it is still slightly random and dependent on cards in hand. There is also not sufficient reward to warrant risks.

flow

Clear flow: Overall, the game is comfortable to start and simple to finish. The pacing works to an extent with some rising tension when there are less slots to schedule tasks. And there's an opportunity to end game when it seems to have run its course.

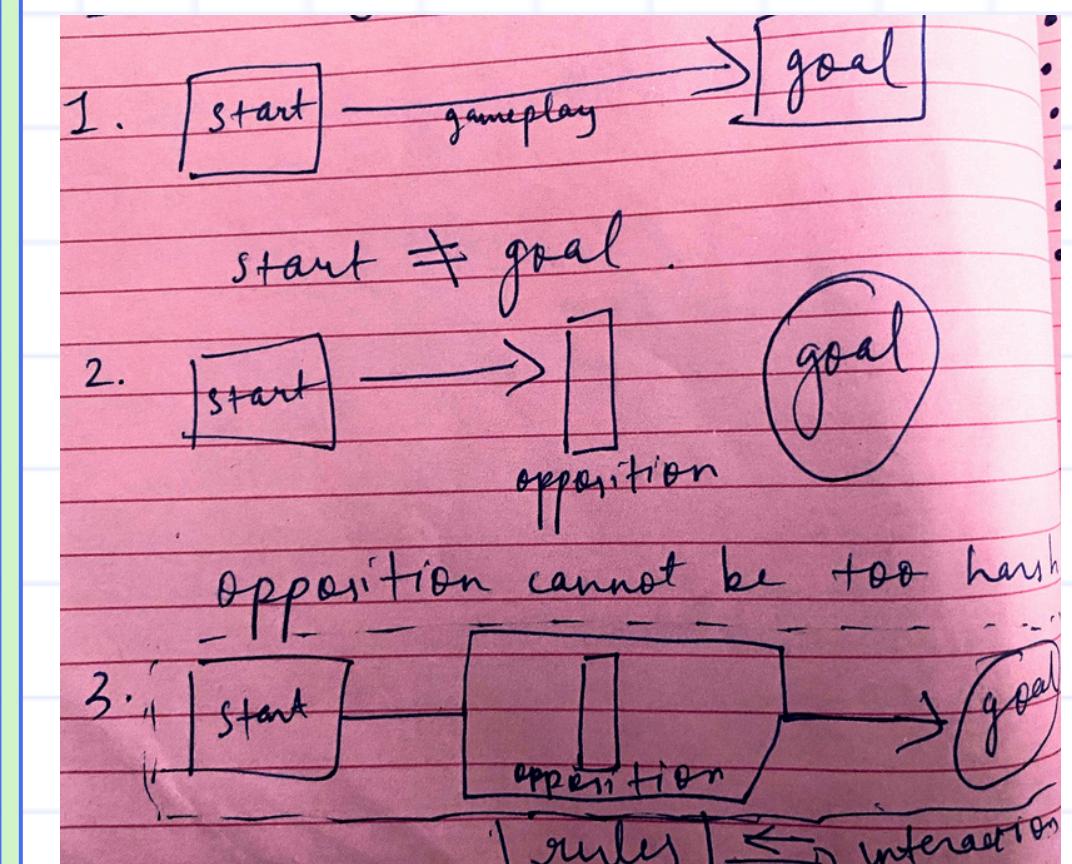


Fig 4.2. (Not Final) Review of Class Notes for the Final Submission

challenges!



Theme to Game: design process

With a theme-first approach, it's hard to compromise on moments of ludonarrative dissonance which can prolong some bottlenecks.



Time management (LOL)

Due to my semester project, I had issues splitting time between 2 games that I deeply cared about and had to pull a couple all-nighters to catch up.



Playtesting IRL for TTS

Designing for TTS was tricky because all my willing playtesters were available in person. There wasn't enough time to set up a hi-fi game both in person and on the platform. If I playtested in person, I lacked a TTS deliverable to playtest in class; if I focused on TTS setup, I couldn't test it until class review.

learnings~



Prioritize Clear Goal

Having clarity in your goal with the game, helps scope the project when needed and ensure all decisions support that goal.



Rapid playstorming>>>

Playing the game as you design it is the fastest way of weeding out fatal flaws with ideas early on and finding out what works for the experience quicker



Preparing for biased playtesting

With a smaller sample of playtesters, especially friends, there's a risk of biased results due to their vested interest in helping. It's crucial to playtest with impartial individuals to get diverse feedback, even if it is polarizing data.

References



1. Knapp, Jake, and John Zeratsky. *Make Time: How to Focus on What Matters Every Day*, 2018.
2. Docter, Pete, director. *Inside Out*. Walt Disney Studios, 2015.
3. Ryan, R. and Deci, E.L. *Self-Determinism Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being*, 2000.
4. Pichère, Pierre, and Anne-Christine Cadiat. *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*, 2015.
5. Minor, Amanda J. *Internal Family Systems Model*, 2016.
6. *The INCUP Secret: 5 Motivating Factors for Adult ADHD*,
www.donefirst.com/blog/the-incup-secret-5-motivating-factors-for-adhders.
7. *Space Alert Handbook*, czechgames.com/files/rules/space-alert-handbook-en.pdf.
8. *Reiner Knizia's Decathlon*, boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/6955/reiner-knizias-decathlon.

**thank
you for
your time**



and thank you
for the great
semester!