

Game Title:

**Semicolon;**

Intended game systems

The game will plan to launch on PC, using the Steam platform to distribute, as this will allow the game to access a large range of players from day one. The PC platform is the best fit for my game as it will work well with a computer's control scheme and will allow the player to focus on the story, unlike a mobile platform where the user may not play with their full attention. In the future, the game could move to consoles such as XBOX-ONE, Playstation 4 and Nintendo Switch.

Target age of players

The game will be aimed at young adults ranging from 14-24 year olds due to the themes within the story. The themes are quite complex and about a very serious topic that younger players may find too difficult to understand/ gain a full experience from.

Intended Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) rating

The game will aim for a Teen rating as it will contain suggestive themes and infrequent use of crude humour and strong language. This will fall in line with the game's target audience.

Summary of game story with focus on game play

In this game, the player will play as a teenage boy in an american high school who suffers from Anxiety, Depression and suicidal thoughts. The player will follow the boy through his journey through high school as his mental health issues escalate due to factors such as bullying, failed crushes on girls and bad grades. This will be shown with the Anxiety Monster character reaffirming how he feels and making him feel worse. Throughout the game, his mental health issues will become more and more significant until it drives him to consider suicide. The level design will reflect this as the world around him will fall apart as his mental state deteriorates. At the end of the game, the player will see the story of the character with flashbacks and flashforwards on why he shouldn't kill himself. The character then walks away from suicide and the game ends. The gameplay elements of these levels will use platforming puzzles for him to gather items he needs and reach the end goal of each level. The puzzles will increase in difficulty as the game progresses and in the final level there will be a time objective as the bad thoughts, in the shape of the Anxiety monster, will chase the character forcing the player to solve the puzzle quickly, escape the school and get to the Beach.

Distinct modes of game play

The game will be single player only to allow the player to fully focus on the story. A multiplayer aspect would distract the player from the story as they would have to communicate with another player. The story is also only designed to have one main character. There will also be no difficulty settings on the game as the main purpose is too deliver the story and not to incredibly challenge the

player with incredibly difficult puzzles. The game will be challenging but not too hard as that would distract from the narrative.

## Unique selling points

- Story: An emotional story that will hopefully make the player feel sad and sorry for the main character
- Issue: This game covers a very significant issue in the modern world, Mental Health
- Get people thinking: This game will hopefully get people thinking and talking about mental health as it is an issue that, in society, is rarely discussed and more communication will help more people overcome their illnesses.
- Help people with mental health issue: Even though this is just a game, the story can show people suffering that it can get better and there is hope for them, as there is for the main character. I will also show that they are not suffering alone and other people feel this way too

## Competitive products

My game will be competing with most other story based games that were made on an indie budget. One game in particular that would be competition is Thomas Was Alone. This is a competitor of mine as it tells a short, emotional story whilst also using platforming as a gameplay element. There are little to no games that delve into the issue of mental health as much as mine so I feel that there will be little to no competition in this area.

# Semicolon;

By James Owen

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## **1: The Story Summary**

**1.1:** The story begins with our main character standing on a beach listening to the sounds of the sea, he looks sad but the player at this point doesn't know why. After a couple of seconds with this scene, there will be a cut to a point earlier in the week. The Player will then see the Boy standing by his locker looking at Girl from across the corridor. The Boy will then try to speak to Girl but struggle to do so because of nerves. The conversation will be interrupted by Bully and his friends who will antagonize the Boy with hurtful comments about him attempting to talk to Girl. The Anxiety Monster (AM) will be introduced here who will reaffirm what the Bullies say and add that you shouldn't speak to Girl as she will never like someone like Boy. The school bell will then ring and all characters apart from AM, who will disappear, head to their class.

In the class characters will get their grades back from a previous test and Boy will not have done well in the test. This makes Boy nervous about showing his grades to his Mum and Dad. The Teacher will not be supportive of Boy and ridicule him for his bad grades. Other classmates, including Bully and Bully's Friends, will laugh at Boy for this ridicule from the Teacher. The class will end with AM returning and suggesting that everyone is staring at him and judging him. The player will see this as all of the classmates will be staring at boy but this is just in Boy's head, in reality, no one is staring at Boy and no one is judging him.

**1.2:** Boy will then head home for the day with his Mum in her car. Here the Mum character will show that she does care for Boy but Boy will still hide his bad grades from her as the AM will tell him to do so otherwise she will react very badly and will not love him anymore. Once they are home the grades come out during dinner and the parents react in a disappointed but not angry fashion. After this, the Boy goes to bed but cannot sleep as the AM will not let him sleep.

Due to the Boys lack of sleep, he misses his lift to school with his mum and has to walk/run to school but once there he meets the bullies at the front gate. They insult him, push him over and delays him so he is late for class. Once he is in class he struggles to focus and falls asleep in class. Because of this he just misses the important information that they must create a presentation for the class tomorrow but the player will be aware of this as they will stick around for short amount of time. The Boy is woken up by the teacher who will joke around about him falling asleep during his lesson; the entire class, including the Bullies and the Girl, will laugh at him as this takes place which will cause the Boy to have a panic attack. As he feels this coming on he runs out for the class to look for a quiet, safe place where he can be alone.

The Boys hides in a Toilet block as his panic attack gets worse, the AM is also present confirming what the Boy is thinking and suggesting that he should commit suicide. The boy will try to combat this but struggle. To try to escape the AM, the Boy runs out of the Toilet Block only to run into the Bullies who also tell him to kill himself. The boy cannot handle this anymore so runs out of school, heading home.

Once home his parents tell him off about running away from school and ground him. The boy then heads up to his room and cries. The AM is there now all of the time and is constantly telling him to hurt himself and to kill himself to escape the pain. The AM also tells the Boy that nobody likes/loves him and he would not be missed. The Boy tries to combat these thoughts but struggles, as they are his own thoughts and the AM is only a metaphor. The boy tries self-harm for the night and struggles to sleep again.

The next day the boy goes to school and makes it straight to class. The AM is constantly there now pointing out why every little thing the boy does is wrong and why everybody is judging him for it. The teacher called the Boy up for his Presentation and he panics that he hasn't done it, the teacher tells him off and the class laughs and bullies him for not being able to do the presentation and also not being able to say why he hasn't done it. This causes another Panic attack but much worse this time. The AM keeps pushing that the boy should kill himself and the boy then agrees, Runs out for the school and heads to the beach. He plans to kill himself by walking into the sea and swimming until he can't anymore.

**1.3:** The player will then return to the scene that the game started off with, with the Boy standing on the beach, crying and getting ready to kill himself. The AM is there now pressuring him to do it, all of the bad times that the player has witnessed the Boy go through are seen again and the boy starts to walk towards the Sea. He then is stopped by a good thought of his mum and dad, they love him and would care so much if he died, he then thinks about all of the things he would miss in the present and the life he could have in the future if he didn't die that day. The AM is gone now and the boy is no longer walking. He gets his phone out and searches for a number he can call to seek help. He calls this number and walks away from the ocean, the screen then fades to black and the game ends. A number will then appear with a message telling the player that if they or someone they know is being affected by similar issues that the Boy faced then they can call this number for help.

Throughout the game, the Level design will also reflect how the boy is feeling with the world literally falling apart as the boy mental state deteriorates. The AM appearance will also get more disgusting and grotesque as his mental help deteriorates. This game shows how mental health can escalate very quickly into life-threatening situations.

## **2: Main Characters**

**2.1:** Boy- The Boy is the main character in the game and the one that the player will control. He is an American high school student who lives with his mum and dad in a seaside town on the west coast of America. He is the victim of bullying in school but has a happy home life. The Boy has serious mental health issues that will affect him throughout the game's story. The Boy and all of the other characters have no name as this will allow the player to relate to the Boys story better as they can project themselves onto him and the other characters.

**2.2:** Anxiety Monster- The Anxiety Monster is the personification of the Boy's mental health issues. With Anxiety, it often feels like there is another person in your head giving bad thoughts and making you feel bad about yourself, The Anxiety Monster will deliver this in a way that the player can easily understand what the Boy is going through. The AM appearance will grow more grotesque as the game's story progresses to symbolize the Boys worsening mental health.

**2.3:** Girl- The Girl is a Character that the Boy has a crush on. She is a high school who falls into the cool girl, cheerleader click. She doesn't feel the same way about boy as boy feels about her but she is not cruel or mean about it. Deep down she is kind of heart and not a mean person but she may sometimes act mean to boy to keep face with her friends.

**2.4:** Bully- The Bully is a leader of a gang of bullies in the school who pick on the Boy. They are the Jocks of the school, popular and very good at sport. As the stereotype goes they are not that smart but their skills at the school's sports competitions compensate for this in the school's eyes. They are very mean at heart and have no pity for the Boy's situation and help cause it at times.

**2.5:** Teacher- The Teacher teaches Mathematics and really hates his job. When he left University he had bigger aspirations than working in a High School in a "Dead-end Town". Because of this, he puts little effort into his teaching and really doesn't care what his students are feeling or if they are learning anything.

**2.6:** Mum- Mum is the mother of Boy and wife of Dad. She is an independent woman who works for local government in the Parks and Recreation department. She loves her job and is very dedicated. Mum and Dad are happily married and love their son very much. She is unaware of Boys mental Health issues.

**2.7:** Dad- Dad is the father of Boy and husband of Mum. He works in a dead-end job and a local factory which he hates. He often works long hours and comes home very tired most days. When he was younger he also suffered from mental health issues but he was able to overcome them through preservation. He is also unaware of Boys mental health issues.

### **3: The Controls**

**3.1:** In this game, the player will only be able to control the character in the platforming sections. During cutscenes, the player will only be able to pause the cutscene. Here are the controls for the game split into the three areas where the player can have an output on the game:



### 3.2:

<b>Input when playing platforming sections</b>	<b>Output in the game</b>
'W' or Up-Arrow key	This will make the character jump, a double press of this key will make the character double jump. Players can use the arrow keys or 'WASD' keys to play.
'A' or the Left-arrow key/ 'D' or the right-arrow key	This will make the character move left and right when moving on the ground as well as when the character is in the air due to jumping or falling off a platform.
'S' of the Down-arrow key	This will make the character crouch or fall to the ground faster if the character is in the air.
Space Key	This button can be used to collect items within the levels as well as ending the level once the player has reached the end goal.
Esc Key	This will pause the game and open the pause menu where the user can change the controls from their defaults, change the graphics/sound settings and quit the game.

### 3.3:

<b>Input when cut scenes are playing</b>	<b>Output in the game</b>
Space Key	This will make the cut scene pause and come up with a message informing the player that they can press the space key again to restart the cut scene. There will be no key for skipping the cut scene as the player should focus on the story of the game.

### 3.4:

<b>Input in the Main Menu/ Pause Menu</b>	<b>Output in the game</b>
'W' and 'S' key or Up and Down arrow keys	These keys can be used to navigate the menu by either going up the list with 'W' or the Up-arrow or go down with the 'S' key or the Down-arrow key.
Enter Key or Space Key	This will enter the sub-sections of the main menu once they have been navigated too.
Mouse control	Alternatively, the user can navigate the menus by moving the mouse and using the left click to select sub menus.

## **4: The Gameplay**

**4.1:** The game will be a series of platforming levels with cutscenes telling the story sliced in between levels. Some story elements will be told within levels but the bulk will be told through cutscenes. The levels will get consistently harder for the player but never so hard that the player may give up. The main goal of the game is to deliver the story and to do so we don't want to make the levels too hard that they become a distraction from the story. As the levels get harder two new mechanics will be added, the Crouch and the Double jump. All levels after these mechanics are introduced will require the player to use these mechanics to complete the level.

**4.2:** To complete each level the player will have to traverse some floating platforms, these platforms will move in later levels, to first get an object, such as some homework or a key, and then take the object to the end goal and the end of the level. The object will relate to the story, for example, if the Boy is heading to a lesson he may need to go get his Homework or his bag and will change each level depending on the story. The end goal will be also different for each level as it will depend on the story.

**4.3:** The levels will make the player go in all directions and even may have to go back on themselves on some levels. Each level will be quite large in size and the player will have to do a lot of exploring to find the items they need as well as the end goal. The player will be given a small arrow telling them which general direction they should head in to find each item and the end goal. The player can die if they fall too far and if this happens they will start the level again but still have the items that have already been collected. Falling can sometimes be used tactically to get closer to the next goal but the player must be careful not to gain too much damage as health will not renew within each level.

## **5: The Game World**

**5.1:** The game is set in a small seaside town on the west coast of America. The Town is a peaceful town similar to towns like Derry from Stephen King's It, Castle Rock from Stand By me and Hawkins from Stranger Things but without the supernatural/horror elements. There isn't much to do in this town with very limited shops and social areas. Most of the children spend their time in their homes or go to the beach to hang-out but they would only go to the beach in summer, this story is set on a cold November week so no one really uses the beach at this time of year. In the game, we will explore the beach, the school, the local streets and the Boys home.

**5.2:** The Beach is ok in quality but doesn't attract any tourists like the beaches further south in Los Angeles due to it being nothing special and quite out for the way of any other tourist hot spots. In the summer many locals will use the beach but in the colder months, it is pretty much deserted most of the time.

**5.3:** The School is a pretty average American high school with nothing special about it. It is the only local high school in the town so nearly all of the town's children go there. There are about 700+ students in the school so the corridors can get quite busy at times and the school can feel quite crowded. The school is in the suburbs of the town so the local streets have little to offer with just rows and rows of houses with the odd corner shop on some streets.

**5.4:** The Boy lives in one of these houses in the suburbs which looks identical to the other houses on the street. Inside the Boy's house, the walls are painted plain color like magenta with little of the family's personality seeping through. In the Boy's room, he has his games console setup and gaming posters on the walls. His room is very messy with items of clothes, books and other things all over the place.

## **6: The Game Experiences**

**6.1:** The player will feel remorse and sadness for our main character during the game's story. His journey is one of sadness and things constantly get worse for him as the story goes on. The player will experience this pain and may relate to it if they suffer from a mental health issue or know someone who does.

**6.2:** The player may also try to seek help if they are suffering as our main character does. The game may help players seek help and help fight their mental health issues. Mental health can be a tricky subject to seek help for as that is the last thing the mind wants you to do when the disease is in control.

**6.3:** The player will also be challenged by the platforming puzzles in the game. This challenge will keep the player interacted and thinking about how to solve the puzzles. The game's gameplay will allow the player to feel a reward when they complete the challenge will make them want to feel this feeling of satisfaction again by completing another challenge.

## **7: The Game Mechanics**

**7.1:** One of the main mechanics will be platforming. This will involve the player having to develop a skill of jumping between platforms to get to an objective. There are a couple of ways the game will get harder to do as the game plays on so the player is always challenged.

**7.1.1:** One of these ways is moving platforms. In later levels of the game, some platforms will be constantly moving so the player will have to judge when to jump on and off the platforms to advance. These platforms can be used in multiple ways to make the levels harder for the player and the speed of their movement can be altered to also make the game harder.

**7.1.2:** Another will be the complete moving of platforms. Once an object is reached on later levels, all of the platforms on the level will be jumbled around to create a completely new map so all of the level that the player has learned already will become useless.

**7.1.3:** Finally, some platforms in later levels will have health that will get damaged when the player jumps on them. This will make the platform crumble to dust once the health is gone and then the player will have to find another solution to the puzzle without using that particular platform.

**7.2:** The main character will have a health bar on each level that will decrease when the character gains fall damage. In the later levels, the player will have to gain fall damage to complete levels as this will add an added level of difficulty. At all levels, the player can choose to make the character gain fall damage to complete a level quicker or make the level easier by avoiding certain platforms and jumps.

## **8: Enemies**

**8.1:** The Game will not have traditional enemies that will try to defeat or kill the player but there will be obstacles in the way of the player reaching their end goal. One of these obstacles will be the difficulty of the platforming levels within the game. The platforming levels will get harder as the game goes on and there can be a fail state if the player gains too much fall damage. This difficulty of the levels will be an obstacle for the player. Another gameplay obstacle will be the moving platforms in the later levels, platforms can be constantly moving or may disappear or move to completely different places in the level. This will offer a challenge to the level and the player will have to figure out where the platforms will move to and how this can either help or hinder them.

**8.2:** In the story there will be two main enemies, the Anxiety Monster and the Bullies. The Anxiety Monster will torment the Boy throughout the game and invoke his mental health issues. He will be a constant within the game and his influence on the Boy will grow as the game goes on. The Bullies will again torment the Boy with physical violence and verbal insults within the game, same as the Anxiety Monster but the Bullies are real and not just in the Boy's head. They will bully the Boy throughout the game's story and invoke the anxiety monster to arrive and invoke the Boy's anxiety even more.

## **9: Cutscenes**

**9.1:** The game will be quite heavy on cutscenes as that is how the majority of the story will be delivered. Nearly all of the material covered in **1.1**, **1.2** and **1.3** will be in the cut scenes throughout the game. They will be fitted in between the gameplay levels. Once a cutscene has been completed then it will appear in a separate menu on the main menu where the player can rematch cutscenes if they wish to do so.

**9.2:** They will be delivered in the same pixel art style the rest of the game will be based in with facial expressions of the characters being exaggerated slightly so the player can easily tell how the characters are feeling. There will be audio in the form of spoken dialog, thoughts of Boy, background noise and thematic music to fit the scene.

## **10: Bonus Material**

**10.1:** There will be multiple incentives for the player to return to the game. One of these incentives will be Trophies. The game will have multiple trophies for completing certain tasks within the game. The player will not be able to collect all of the trophies in one playthrough so they will have to come back and replay certain levels within the game to unlock all of the trophies. Some of these trophies will be quite easy to obtain, some will be easy but take a lot of time and some will be quite hard to get. This will interest a wide range of players who may enjoy earning different types of trophies.

**10.2:** Another incentive for the player to return will be future DLC that will be released for the game. There will be two main large expansions to the game that will add new story segments to the game.

**10.2.1:** One of the big expansions will continue the story of boy as he seeks help and continues to fight his mental health issues. Unlike the main story, in this story, his mental health will improve as the game goes on and the presence of the Anxiety monster will decrease dramatically until he is finally defeated in the final level of this DLC.

**10.2.2:** The other big expansion of the game will follow a different character in a different school who is suffering from similar issues to Boy. To make it still interesting a new the main character will be suffering from different forms of mental health issues and the source of their issues will come from other places.

**10.3:** Finally, another incentive for the player to return is the unlocking of speed runs on levels once they have finished the game. Once the player has completed the game they will unlock a new menu on the main menu that will allow them to pick any level on from the game to complete in a time as fast as they can. Their time will be recorded on an online leaderboard so they can compete against their friends and the rest of the world. There will be daily, weekly, and all-time leaderboards to always give the player something to complete for if they are not good enough to compete will the all-time record holders.

# Semicolon;

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# Overview of the game

- ❖ Title: Semicolon;
- ❖ Story Based Platformer
- ❖ Audience: 14-24 year olds
- ❖ ESRB Rating: Teen
- ❖ Story is main focus

# Story

- ❖ Boy has mental health issues
- ❖ Anxiety Monster Personifies Mental Health issues
- ❖ Set in a High school in america
- ❖ Mental Health gets worse
- ❖ Drives boy to contemplating suicide
- ❖ Doesn't, Gets help



# Characters

- ❖ None of the characters have names
- ❖ Boy
- ❖ Anxiety Monster
- ❖ People in the High School: Bullies, Teacher and Girl.
- ❖ Parents, Mum and Dad

# Gameplay

- ❖ Cutscenes bookmarking the levels
- ❖ Platforming
- ❖ Open Big levels
- ❖ Objects to gather, collect and then bring to exit
- ❖ Levels will increase in difficulty
- ❖ Moving Platforms, disappearing platforms

# Reasons to return

- ❖ Trophies
- ❖ DLC
- ❖ DLC 1: Boys continued story
- ❖ DLC 2: A new character's story with similar themes
- ❖ Speed Runs

# The End

Any Questions?