Design Thinking and User-Centered Approach

Empathy-Driven Research

The primary goal was to create a game that meaningfully supports children with autism in recognizing and understanding emotions—a well-documented challenge for many on the spectrum. Through observation & Iterations we studied how children interact with digital emotion-learning tools, specifically identifying sensory overload triggers, reading preferences, and varying literacy levels.

Child-Centered Game Design

Key design principles for the project included:

- Simplicity and Focus: Cards show only situational text in clear, high-contrast fonts—no emojis or emotion labels—to reduce distractions and anxieties around labeling, letting children focus on the *context*.
- Multi-Sensory Engagement: Audio feedback and gentle animations reward success, keeping engagement high without overwhelming the senses.
- Accessibility: The interface is navigable via keyboard and screen readers; text content is age-appropriate and presented in short, manageable sentences.
- Gradual Challenge: Difficulty levels are scalable, enabling children to progress at their own pace, reducing feelings of frustration or cognitive overload.
- Inclusivity: Example situations are diverse, relatable, and avoid cultural specificity, ensuring all children can see themselves in the scenarios.

Iterative Feedback Loops

The design incorporated repeated cycles of prototyping, testing, and refining the game.

- Rapid Prototyping allowed for exploration of different scenario phrasings and layouts.
- Testing provided insights for continuous improvement.