

Thought Process and Intent of the Game

Project Rationale

Children with autism often find it challenging to deduce emotions from faces or abstract icons. Research suggests that contextual, scenario-based learning makes emotion comprehension more accessible, as it bridges concrete experiences with emotional meaning. The intent was to move the focus away from symbolic or literal emotion decoding toward *understanding situations* that evoke feelings in real life.

Game Intent and Educational Value

- **Teaching Through Context:** By presenting real-life situations, children learn to identify emotional undertones not from labels or expressions, but from narrative context.
- **Promoting Empathy and Communication:** Situational learning mirrors daily social experiences, helping children link events to internal states. This can foster better communication strategies and social engagement.
- **Building Reading and Cognitive Skills:** Scenarios are crafted to be age-appropriate, supporting language development and comprehension alongside emotional learning.
- **Supporting Differentiated Learning:** The game format allows children to progress from simple, obvious situations (e.g., “You get a birthday gift”) to more nuanced scenarios, mirroring the natural growth of emotional literacy.

Benefits for Children with Autism

- **Reduced Pressure and Anxiety:** Removing explicit emotion cues (like emojis) avoids the stress of “guessing right.” Children instead engage in open-ended, low-stakes exploration of what a situation *feels like*.
- **Encouraging Generalization:** By exposing children to diverse everyday scenarios, the game fosters the ability to generalize from in-game experiences to real-world interactions—a core challenge for autistic learners.
- **Scaffolded Self-Regulation:** The safe, repeatable environment allows practice at recognizing emotional content, providing opportunities for self-monitoring and reflection without fear of negative outcomes.

Design Elements Supporting Autism Development

Element	Reasoning & Benefit
Situation-only cards	Focuses on scenario comprehension, not labeling or visual guessing
Short, direct sentences	Supports developing readers; minimizes cognitive load
Adjustable difficulty	Prevents overwhelm, enables personalized pacing
Neutral, friendly visuals	Avoids sensory overload
Positive feedback system	Builds confidence, motivation, and perseverance

Alignment with User Needs

This tool is intended to act both as an educational resource in classrooms/therapy sessions and as a safe, independent practice tool at home. Its scenario-based focus is rooted in evidence-based practices for social-emotional development among children on the autism spectrum, offering an engaging, user-centered, and highly accessible learning experience. By harnessing the power of everyday situations in a thoughtfully designed digital environment, this game helps autistic children achieve a deeper, more intuitive understanding of emotions—empowering them for social connections and real-world success.