

Emoji Me

Narrative Design Document by Kayleigh Robinson

Introduction to 'Emoji Me'

'Emoji Me' is a play on 'Talk to me' or 'Humour Me'. People say this phrase when they try to connect with one another through the act of conversation. The goal of the game is to walk through life and make meaningful interactions with the people around you.

The intent of this game is to demonstrate how friendships and relationships are a lot of effort to maintain especially over long periods of time. Relationships bring various flavours of colour into people's lives and creating memorable events. In the end, we all die, it's how we chose to live our lives and who we chose to live them with. Not only this, it is to demonstrate the impact of the three emotes and what they can mean in conversation.

Game Overview

Using the mouse click to navigate the scenes by pressing next or an emote, the player progresses through an abstract narrative tale of relationships in life.

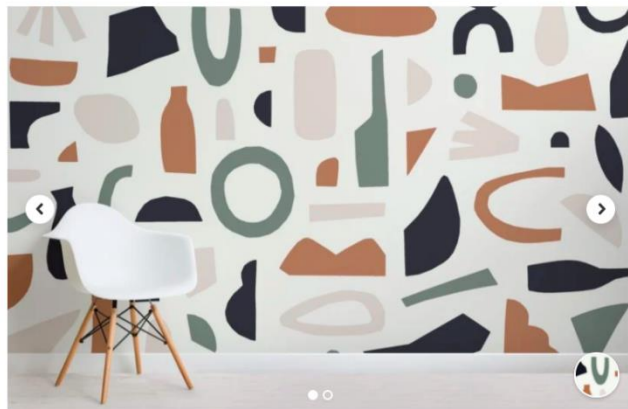
The Game World, Space Designs, Narrative Structure and Aesthetics



'Emoji Me' Play Wireframe

The game world is set in a modern era of communication, where the format of communication and conversation is based on 'emojicons' and 'emojis' which were invented and in continued use from 1999 to present day. People have taken some preferences to use 'emojis' than to talk, especially when wanting to give a quick, easy to digest response to a cause. My audio choices feedback to the chosen era as I have made use of being a fun and consistent "happy" tune regardless of the seriousness of the situation you end up in. Even when the sadness seems to be taking over, people put on "happy tunes" and pretend it isn't happening or isn't as bad as it seems. This is a playful use of how integrated our lives are with technology in communications and the fake, elusion sense of virtual relationships.

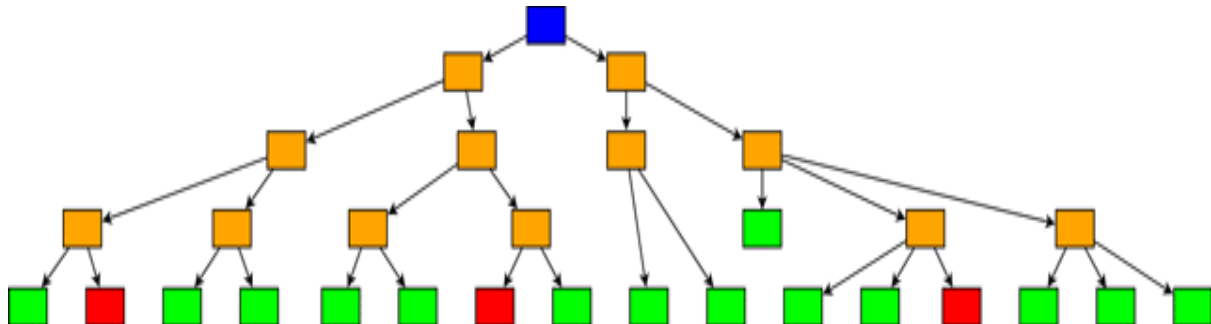
The environment is full of different colours which represent the various opinions, biases, and ways of life in the late 2020s, with the acceptance of Pride, Women's Equality, Transgender Rights and Polyamory. Ways of different societal living have become much more normalised and therefore more colourful with the availability of choosing different options. The background colours are pastels, which is important, as they are an underlay and influence on a person's bold personality 'colour'. People tend to take influences that they enjoy from their environments, adding it to their personality to make a stronger embodiment of their passions. This contrast is reached and demonstrated with the bright 'pop' that people give compared to their surroundings.



'Emoji Me' Concept Moodboard

This also feeds into my spatial design, which is completely open with absolutely no obstacles to bar the way. The goal is to be entirely accepting and focused on building relationships with people around you regardless of their way of living and instead is aimed at the method of reciprocal communication and understanding basic empathy as a foundation of relationships. For example, to

make somebody feel understood and that they can relate to one another, if they complain about an experience they had with lemons, you could reciprocate this negative experience with one you've personally had with lemons. Thus, this builds upon your relationship with that person because you 'get' them. You have listened and understood and have demonstrated that you understood.



The above is an image that describes my narrative structure. The structure known as the "Time Cave" is all about freedom and open possibilities. As time caves tend to have relatively short playthroughs, but strongly encourage replay, this allows me to convey the multiple messages broadly that all intertwine with instant messaging. For example, on one of my storylines, 'Red' has a relatively long life with a sweet light broadcast upon it. Red has always had choice, and generally some good luck in the people that they met. This contrasts greatly with 'Purple', who suffers from depression and never even got the option of emoting happy or angry. It was just sadness, each time, and people were not forgiving with this disablement. The benefit of using the 'Time Cave' in my instance is that even with multiple playthroughs, most players will probably miss a good deal of the content.

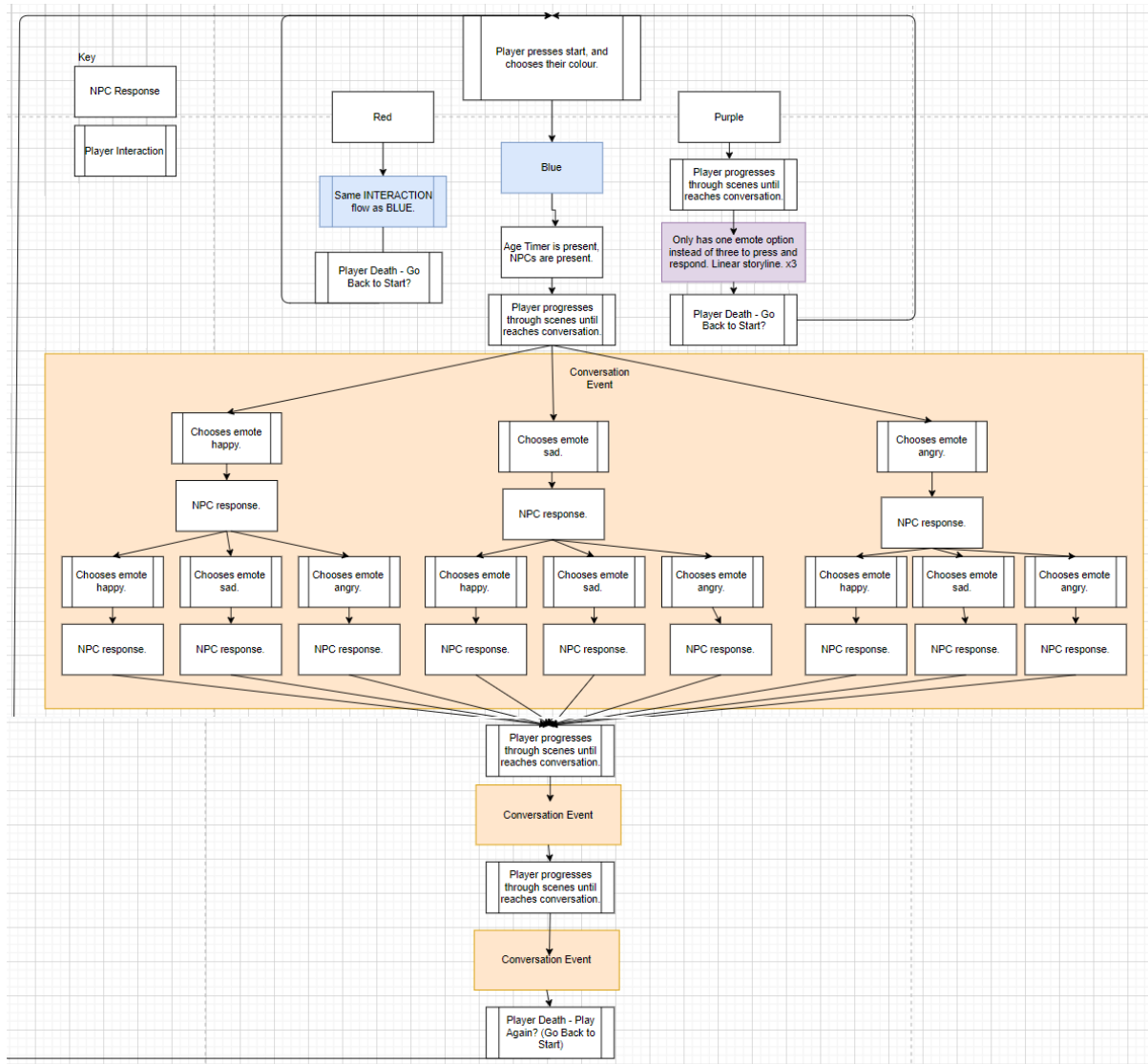
Metaphors and Mechanics

Besides the colours, backgrounds, each of the mechanics have their own relation from the abstract to reality.

Mechanic	About	Metaphor	Desired Experience
Choose Your Personality	Click and select: Blue, Red or Purple.	Everybody feels differently about who they are!	Gives the player a choice to connect/relate to the PC.
Press Play	Starts the Game	N/A	Starts the interaction.
Player's Age Timer	Your Death-day has been automatically predicted from numbers between 1 – 100. Timer counts up and the game ends when PC dies.	The time we have in our lives. As the timer continues, so does our remaining time diminish.	This gives the player time pressure.

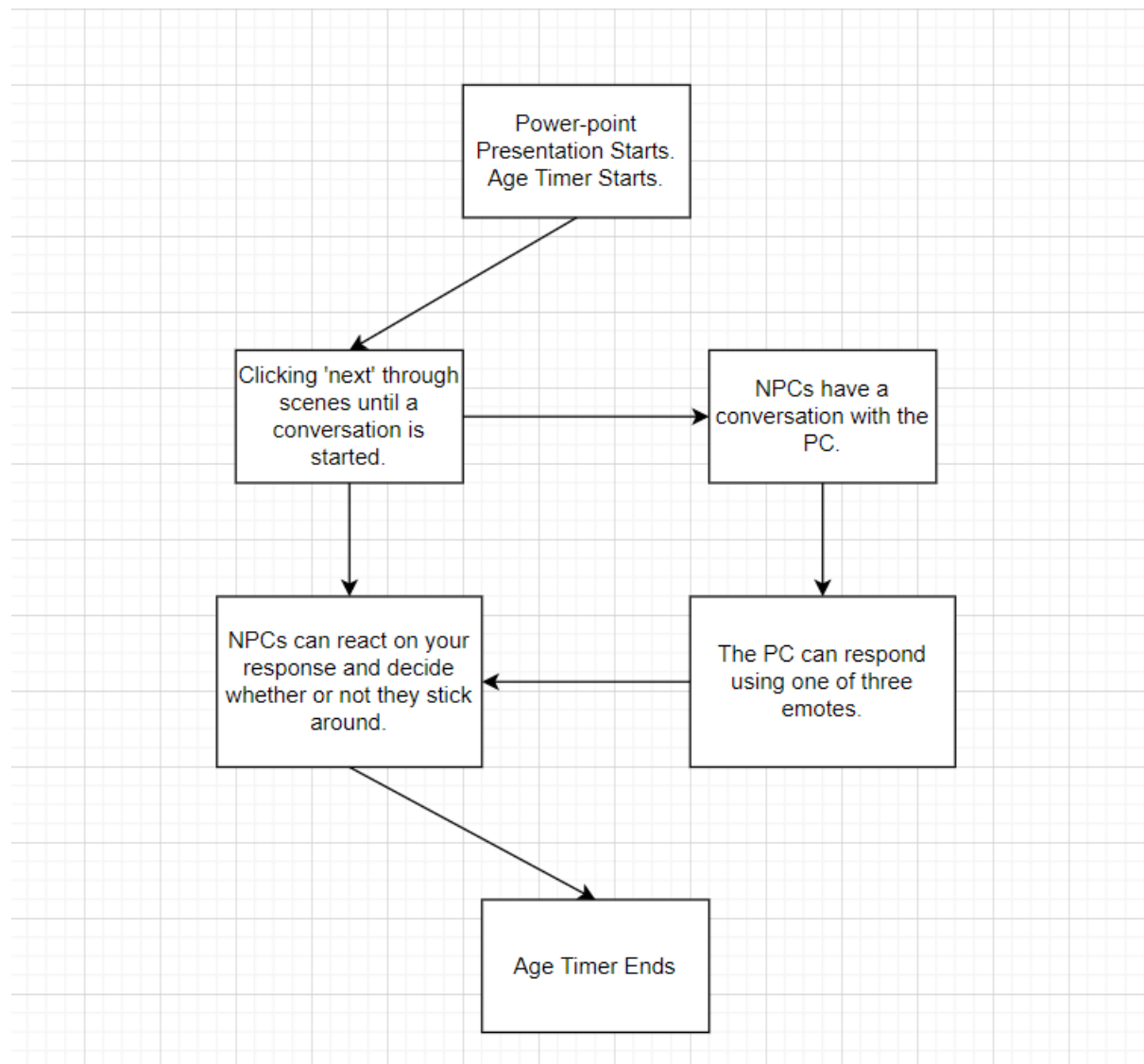
NPC Personalities	Appear around the PC and can initiate conversation.	People meet other people throughout their lives, and these people die at different and unpredictable times.	Various NPC personalities to interact with.
Emoji Bar (PC React)	The PC has a choice in how to react to conversation, but only with the options of three emojis.	The metaphor is to simulate a real-life conversation.	A bar with three interactive emojis on which allows the player to express their emotion or respond to other NPCs.
Emoji (NPC React in Return)	NPCs will react differently depending on your initial response.	People's emotions, feelings and reactions and can build judgement and affect their friendships/relationships with each other.	In return to what the player has interacted with on their emoji bar, the NPC will either move close or drift further away depending on if they like what they heard.
End and Start Again?	Upon PC death, "You DIED! PLAY AGAIN?" UI pop-up.	Death is inevitable.	Ends the game/experience.

Interaction Flow Diagram



Gameplay Player Interaction Flowchart

Core Game Loop

*Core Gameplay Loop*

Game Design Reflection

The successes within my game primarily come from the heavy metaphorical value that is carried through the messages, art-style, audio, and mechanics. With a heavy emphasis on recreating real-life scenarios but then taking away the ability to speak or explain and replacing that with the most primitive forms of communicating, 'Emoji-Me' brings light to a topic in the shadows. Even with these defined THREE emotes, throughout the playthrough, happy wasn't just a happy face! It was able to be interpreted as sarcasm, humour and mocking alongside the generic "happy" face. Anger was inferred to being feelings of unfairness, guilt, and genuine rage. The more I play through my own designs and games, the more I realise there are immersive mechanics that created their own meaning – when I wrote an NPC's dialogue, those three emote options really became nine, and writing the NPC responses according to how those characters were going to interpret the emote response.

Another success that I am happy to label is the surrealism that the artwork and simplicity of the game makes it feel. There is no complicated mechanic the player has to comprehend, only what they are going to "say", ironically. With the optical choices that have elements of hypnotisms and hallucinations, the intertwining and relative colours merge and compress into one scene. It was inspired by Andy Warhol's 'Marilyn Monroe' print. Each time that her face was reprinted onto the paper, she merged and embodied disparate colour-schemes, all the while holding her foundational form, shadowing, and highlights. This reflects on the imagery and words in 'Emoji-Me', all the while the conversation is the same concept we have been using over and over again it is consistently held and embodied by various lighting, colours, perspectives, and opinion. All of these variants and the only "tone of voice" that exists is the one inside the players heads. Regardless of my planning and writing, I have seen my play testers understand a scenario in a completely unrelated way that I had originally intended.

The most fascinating thing I have learnt from creating this game was the many above-mentioned unintended possibilities that are fabricated from both the minds of the creator and the audience. To improve this type of game would only be to expand the types of conversation, to play with these mechanics and utilise it to its full capabilities. Broadening the 'Time Cave' for more versions and virtual interaction.

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