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Intentionally Designing a Game to Help Alleviate Symptoms of Depression

Pandi Çunoti



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Why design for depression?

- Common condition
- Lack of treatment resources
- Often a taboo topic
- Games have been shown to have a positive effect
- Gaming industry growth



**World Health
Organization**



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Games may be a useful tool

- Widespread
- Accessible
- A chance to practice a different way
- An opportunity to learn



Representation

- The first challenge
- Enables self-identification
- Might enable Bleed
- Might improve social stigma



Games and Mental Health Representation

- Often Poorly Represented
 - Horror Games (Outlast for e.g.), AAA titles (Cyberpunk 2077)
- Good Representation
 - Gris, Celeste and Hellblade
- Often Design is intuitive and not researched

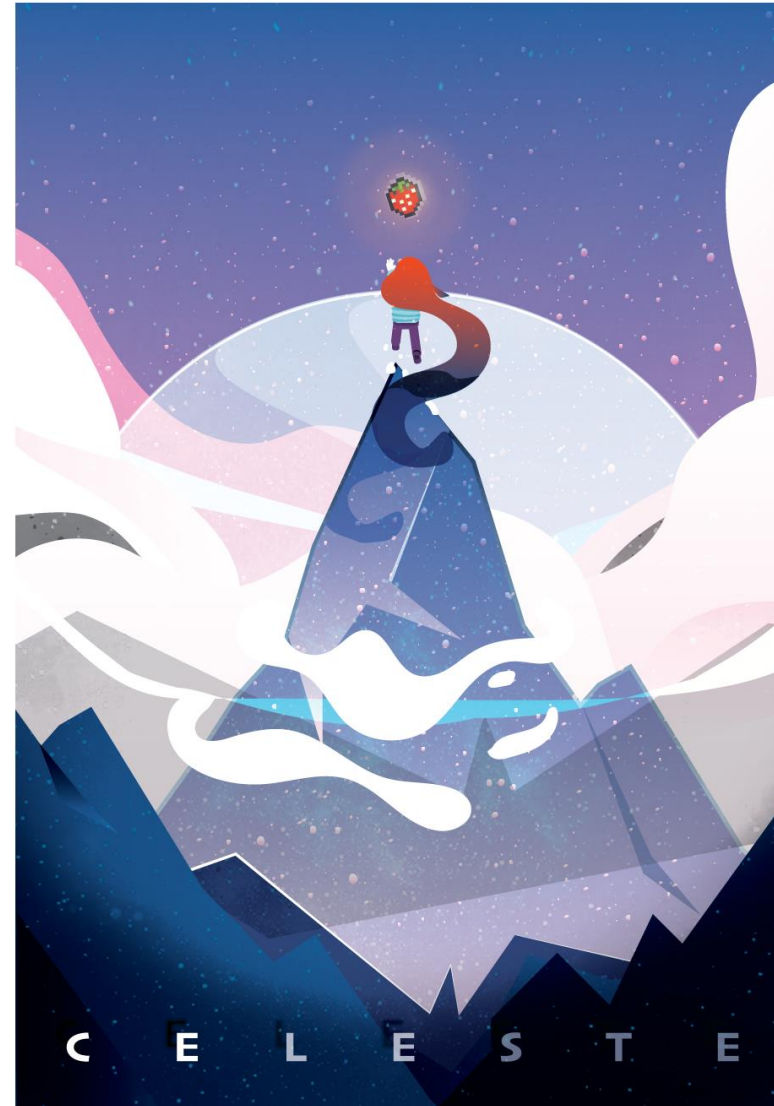


Theoretical Background

- LARP and Empathy
- Goffman and Performance
- Bleed: bleed-in and bleed-out

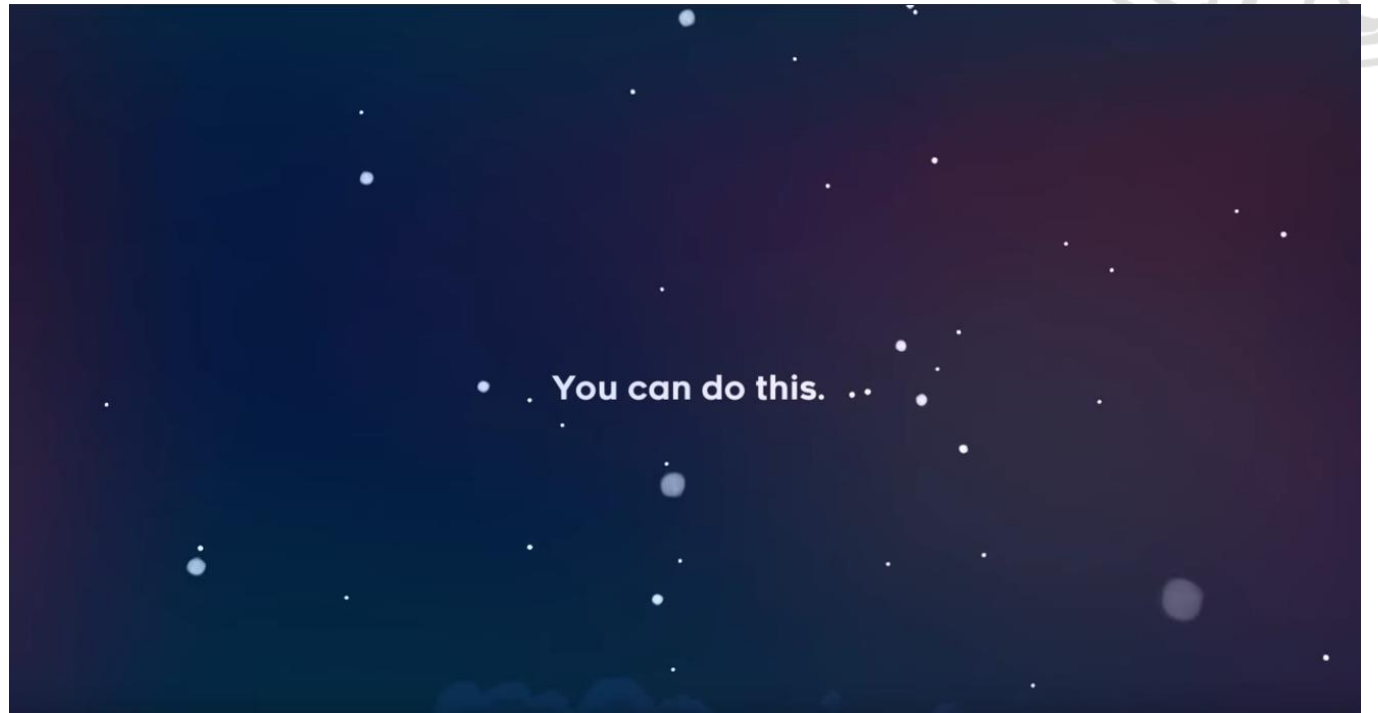


Celeste and Hellblade:Senua's Sacrifice



Analysis Results

- Accuracy of Representation
 - Can never be 100% accurate for everyone
- Respectful
- Challenging Stereotypes
- Inclusive Design
 - Hellblade has Collaborative Design
- Impactful and Empathetic
- Promoting Positive Behaviour



Design Iteration

- Adding onto 'Break It' Design
- Based on lessons learned from Analysis
- Decisions Must Fit the overall design



Break It

- Identification with the character
- Exploring different scenarios
 - Familiar and not
- Practicing change
- Encouraging positive Behaviour
- An attempt to cause Bleed



My future plans for the topic

- **Debriefing**
- Color Theory
- Sound Design
- Symbolism

