Catherine Chen
Michael Annetta and Liz Ryerson
CTIN 488 - Game Design Workshop Lab
February 27th 2018

Daisies, the Board Game: a Progression of Emotions to Communicate Peace

In class, I chose Yoji Yamada's "Twilight Samurai" (2002) as the movie that inspired me. The emotion that I felt as I watched it was "peace". To approach my emotion, I started by brainstorming ideas by looking at visual inspiration on Pinterest and by researching "peaceful games" on Google for examples of peaceful games. I also closed my eyes and tried to imagine myself in a peaceful situation When I imagine peace, I imagined myself at the beach alone, or hanging out with only one other person - a best friend or a soulmate. I saw myself as my friend meditating at the beach. I also thought of sleeping on the couch under a warm sunlight, wrapped in a scarf, holding a mug in my hands with steam drifting off of it. I thought of the slow Wind Rises (2013), beautiful animated movie by Hayao Miyazaki. I was worried, because it requires time to feel peace - how could I make my players feel an emotion in only 12 minutes?

From my Pinterest and Google research, I learned that most people did not associate games with peace. Peace is mostly sensory, derived from smells of hot tea or windy nature, warm touches, and off-white blue and green colors. Peace is not commonly associated with being involved in a game, and from the examples I found, it seemed as if "peaceful games" felt peaceful because of its music and visual sensory overload. They were visually beautiful and enthralling. All of the games were also digital, which let it have recordings of music and gentle graphics. Without these skins of art and sound, I was troubled in how I could find the bare bones game mechanics of peace for my game.

The concept of "peace" seemed to conflict with "conflict". I assumed that all games derive from situations with conflict, so I was confused. In order to move on, I tried to redefine the game. I thought of activities such as drinking tea and drawing in the middle of a field of daisies and talking with friends. Drinking tea, because it is commonly associated with zen, involves a time of patience and waiting - as the tea cools down, and is a sensory experience of heat, taste, and steam. I thought of drawing, because it is fun: it makes players focus, and allows players a freedom of creative self-expression. I think that this element could create a time of quietness in the game as players focus on their drawings. I associated the field of daisies with sleep, napping, and nostalgic childhood, which I hoped would help draw players towards a gentler dynamic. This is the origin of the concept for this game, and where I derived the name: *Daisies*. It did not occur to me until later, after I talked to Michael and Liz, that peace is the aftermath of chaos and conflict. It is not the absence, but the removal of conflict.
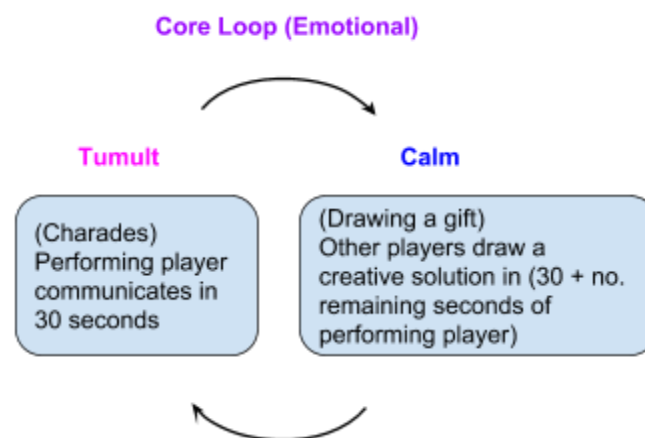
Before then, I redefined the goal of the game into a more objective "goal" that I wanted the player to arrive at, in order to create a gameplay that arrives at peace. I wanted the player's goal of the game to be to make another player feel better, instead of being better than another player, and I wanted the core game mechanic to be gift giving. I think that there is something special about receiving a gift that makes me feel a sense of glee that is a bit humbling and touching. I think that gift giving is an affectionate and mutual exchange that dispels a grumpy mood. And like signing a compromise after a war, giving a gift is like a compromise: it is giving up a part of yourself to be received by another, created after giving considerable thought for

understanding the other person. Giving a gift is a risk, and gift givers humble themselves to be judged by the receiver. Receiving a gift creates a moment of reflection.

At the time, my own conflict was social. I felt detached from a sense of community and social group, and I was irritated by the lack of empathy I felt in specific social situations. So in a way, I tried to fill in that hole, my own conflict, by creating this game. In other words, I wanted to focus on peace derived from a feeling of community, removing the feelings of detachment. Therefore, my player experience goals was to get a player to focus on the happiness of another player instead of focusing on their own. Forms of gift-giving such as for Christmas, Valentines day, and sharing food, are displays of affection in the human community, and the act of giving gifts may feel even greater than receiving a gift yourself. I have seen that many of my peers feel some sort of detachment from communities or friend groups in general, so I think that my conflict is also shared among my peers.

To make the sense of community stronger, I wanted the game to recreate the experience of people coming together despite their diverse backgrounds. I wanted this game to be inclusive, so that all kinds of players could play this game. Therefore, I used a diverse cast of characters to act as player roles. Moreover, I wanted to encourage self-defeating players to give gifts in real life. I have felt inferior before, and I have friends who feel incompetent, so I want to support them with a "you can too" attitude. I started off with these "misfortunate" characters, meaning characters that we don't originally think of as kind or as model citizens. Using these characters, I wanted to show that everyone can give a gift, no matter who you are, even if you are a "monster" such as a vampire or a criminal such as a pirate. Originally this game was called *Misfortune*, a game that focused more on silly misfortunate events for this reason.

I thought the charades part of the game was important, because I wanted players to be aware that communication and perceiving others are helpful in a social group or community, and from my own experiences, I learned that people drift apart because of a void of both of these actions. And environments can become toxic and unhealthy when communication is lost and people do not choose to look outside of themselves for the well being of others. Although I did not realize it at that time, I figured out later that the charades mechanic of the game was an important part of its core loop to generate peace.

Core Loop (Emotional)

Tumult   **Calm**

(Charades) Performing player communicates in 30 seconds

(Drawing a gift) Other players draw a creative solution in (30 + no. remaining seconds of performing player)

If the aftermath of chaos is calmness, then that create peace.
The feeling of peace could not be achieved without one or the other.

I was nearly successful with my first few playtests towards my experience goal. Players said that *Daisies* was a "feel good" game, and they felt happier and incredibly better afterwards. However, three of my early play-testers said they wanted to play the game with a larger group of friends instead of playing with just two people. But this appears to contradict with my goal of making players feel peaceful. But because the playtesters felt that having more players is natural for this game, I decided to try it out, knowing that it would be more difficult to achieve a feeling of peace with more players because now the game deals with a larger pool of player personalities:

In calculating possible player relationships or dynamics where
(#! = Factorial of number of players = possible player interactions),
Isn't a game of 2 players (2! = 2) much less risky than a game of 5 players (5! = 32)?

In other words, there's 30 more chances for a chaotic pairing of players.

I was also concerned that adding more players will make the game feel less intimate towards players trying to outdo each other at being funny and excelling through the act of gift-giving. And the latter proved to be true, but I later embraced this, and did not think that it steered me from the direction of my game.
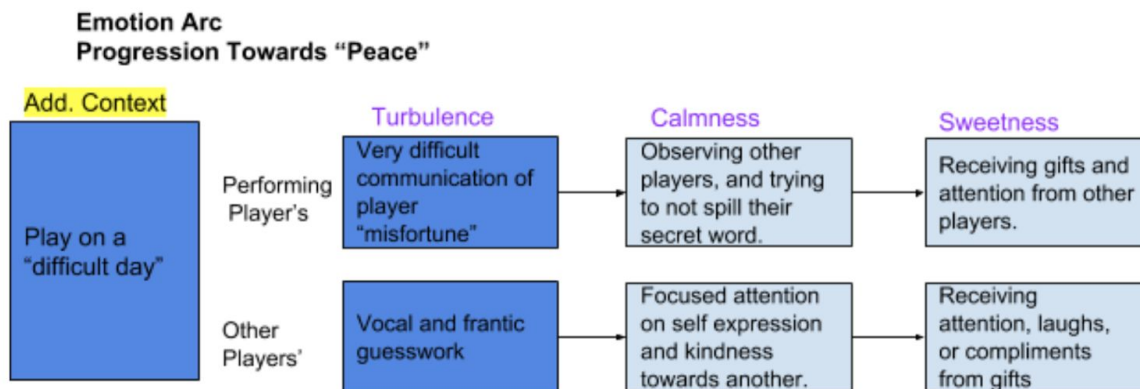
I was hesitant, but I eventually decided to take the risk and adjust the game for more than two players, because it seemed like all of the players wanted it, even when I played it with my significant other. Players yearned to extend the magic circle out of curiosity to see what other players contribute, and later, I did not feel like the game gained or lost intimacy among players. I am happy with this decision, because it appears to have made the game less boring to my playtesters. With two players, the game was quick and temporary, like an afterthought while multitasking. With more players, the game felt like an event, and the magic circle definitely felt more established.

When I play tested the game with five players, the players still felt the same way, but this time they said that the game was "funny" and players felt both a sense of camaraderie and solidarity, and they felt "loosely together." Players said that they liked the low stakes of the game and that they felt "calm." The greatest challenge wasn't competition, but creativity. Also notably, players said that they felt "creatively bankrupt", which I didn't heed as a warning until the next play test. I did all of this the first week of the project. Because increasing the number of players was a risk towards my goal, I do not think I made the wrong decision. Players had more fun, but this time they felt a loose sense of community, and calmness. I was satisfied with the creative component of the game, because it allowed players to focus, which I used as a tool as a method to reach peace.

At this time, I wanted to focus on turning my play testers' calm into peace. Calm is a synonym of peace, including other words such as tranquility, restfulness, and harmony. After considering this issue, I discussed with Mike and Liz and learned that peace comes after conflict. I remembered that in Twilight Samurai it was not just a feeling of affection from loved ones, but also unwanted conflict that brought about peace. We discussed that we needed to make the game more tumultuous before the calm happens - to make the game peaceful. What I realized was that "peace" is a difficult emotion to replicate, because it is not one emotion alone, but a progression of emotions towards a tranquil outcome.

From my playtests, I realized that there was a gameplay emotion arc that happened with my first three groups of players. In order to decide what I wanted to keep or adjust from the

feedback that playtesters in class have given me, I created an emotion arc. I was hoping that the players progress from a turbulent, more chaotic state, to a calmer and sweeter feeling. For example, I made sure that the players did not have much time for charades: they only had 30 seconds. Although the playtesters in class wanted more time, 40 seconds was too much time for my early playtesters. To make this decision, I referred to my emotion arc, and I decided to keep charades part short, in order to create more chaos. In order to support the calm emotion, I extended the time for players to draw their gifts to include the leftover performing players' players. This also helped fix minor issues where players were waiting for the sand timer to run out to start the next part of the game if they finished early.

Emotion Arc
Progression Towards "Peace"

Add. Context		Turbulence	Calmness	Sweetness
Play on a "difficult day"	Performing Player's	Very difficult communication of player "misfortune"	Observing other players, and trying to not spill their secret word.	Receiving gifts and attention from other players.
	Other Players'	Vocal and frantic guesswork	Focused attention on self expression and kindness towards another.	Receiving attention, laughs, or compliments from gifts

I remembered how many of my peers in my class felt negatively in 2016 Fall semester after the election. Especially because we were freshmen and trying to adjust to a new college community, many of my peers did not sleep and melted into depression for weeks. Although some friends brushed it off lightly, others struggled both mentally and socially and failed to catch up on classes, because their family and identity were directly affected. In addition, I realized how often my peers struggle in their day to day life with smaller issues, and how one insignificant event can impact someone's entire day. Because of this, I recognized that I originally made this game to help temporarily cheer up those peers during difficult times. So I thought that adding context and setting to the game should be included:

"The game should be played on a difficult day."

This reflected my original intent for this game, and helped add a bit of "tumult" to the start of the play. I wanted this game to be used for a purpose. Similar to how a caretaker takes out a first aid kit to aid a friend who has fallen, I imagine that this game could be pulled out to help a friend who is having a difficult day. I am not implying that this game will fix the player's issue, but like a bandaid that prevents further damage to an exterior, the game can help alleviate a player's mood by catching a troubled friend, so that they do not slip into depression. Hopefully, by exploring the premise of *Daisies*, troubled players could feel alleviated and feel that others care for their well being. After my first playtest with five players, I chose to keep the game for three to five players instead of just three players. I observed that the game is funnier with more players and could feel less confrontational than just playing with one or two people. Hopefully, this will alleviate players' moods and make them feel more welcome, ameliorating their conflict

by making them feel like they do belong. But always, some of my friendships consist of just three people, and some people prefer a much more intimate group. Thus, I allowed three to five players for *Daisies*.

By giving this game a purpose, it also can be more easily recalled to memory. Therefore, it does not decrease, but increases the playability of this game. And although it is a detail, I think that this was a questionable but necessary decision.

The emotion arc worked to a degree. For my next play test, the players had a very chaotic beginning, but then gradually fell into a calmer state. However, I did not know that another emotion is derived from an unforeseen issue, and it threw off the emotional progression of my game: *Although some players wanted to be sweet, other players did not. The players enjoyed poking fun at the others who were actually trying, and they liked to destroy the gifts.* While the game mechanics went from chaotic to calm, the character roles were not balanced in difficulty, creating an unintentional secondary emotional arc from frustration to chaos. So the gameplay experience went from chaos to calm, then back to chaos.

There were two things I realized from this: 1) although players tried to mess with each other, it didn't make the game a negative experience. It still kept the game funny and positive, and only made the game even more chaotic than intended. Therefore, the number of players was not an issue. And 2) balanced gameplay is crucial for any game. I did not foresee that the game would become more chaotic because there was a second factor at play. This frustration caused players to break the rules and contribute wild card gifts. Some players had much harder character roles than others, making them feel too "creatively bankrupt" that they have given up on the game.

This, I had to fix.

I did not want chaos to stem from frustration again. Therefore, I spent the last week of the game rebalancing the game. I got four play testers to help me rate the difficulties of each role, including new ones, and re-selected the characters roles for the game. Now, I am much more careful about balancing gameplay.

If I could begin again, I would start by searching up the definition of my word. Peace has two main meanings. One is the freedom from disturbance; characterized by quietness and tranquility. The other is the freedom from or the cessation of war or violence. If I had done this first, I would have probably came up with very different games, and I would have had a clearer understanding to what peace is before I started the game. I would have been able to discover the emotion arc of the game earlier on and implemented it into the first draft of my design.

I received a lot of feedback asking for more clarity for the instructions. Writing the rules for this game was difficult, even after I have improved from my last card game that I co-created, so I am glad that I performed many playtests in the first week of the game. I think that I could have asked ex-playtesters to proofread new instructions before performing a new playtest.

As for my process, I think it worked best for trying to achieve my emotion in particular. Since peace is tied to sensory experiences so much more than mechanics, I think it was a good idea to have chosen and created the final images for the game early on. I had no complaints about the aesthetics of the game, and players thought of words like "love", "pleasant" and "formal/fancy" when they tried to pinpoint the emotion of my game from the packaging alone. The icons of the black hand character cards paired with the daisy cards effectively communicated the premise and the gift-giving mechanic easily, and playtesters picked it up immediately.