

Chapter 10

Positive Play: Games for Human Potential and the Yet Unexplored Case of Anorexia Nervosa

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ABSTRACT

This chapter's first goal is to present the concept of Positive Play as an expression of play focused on social, psychological, and physical well-being and human potential. It presents some of its foundations in the form of eight maxims that emerged from an analysis on various games developed in the industry and in research settings. Afterwards, it demonstrates of how Positive Play can be integrated in different contexts of action, from diagnosis and intervention to contexts focused on prevention and promotion of awareness and knowledge in the scope of mental health, regarding treatment for Anorexia Nervosa, through a series of in-progress case studies in the form of game prototypes.

INTRODUCTION: IN THE AGE OF POSITIVE PLAY

Being positive and happy is the more natural state. (...) Self-improvement is a gradual process that accepts all manners of ups and downs. But it should start today. Not tomorrow because tomorrow never comes. (De Bono, 2018, p. 41)

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Positive Play

People's self-reports of their subjective well-being are today a focus of public debate. The Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress argued that economic performance is an insufficient indicator of societal progress, and that self-reported well-being is to be considered as one of such indicators (Stiglitz et al., 2008).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Two of the 2013-2020 WHO's mental health action plan major objectives consist of implementing strategies for strengthening information systems, evidence, and research for promoting mental health and preventing disorders. According to the Greenbook from the European Community Commission, it is mental health that allows the expression of human intellectual and emotional potential, as well as integration in school, work, and society. It is then safe to say that good mental health allows people to fully explore their human potential, to cope with the stress of life, to work productively and to contribute to their community.

Human Potential theory has emerged as an important framework for assessing individuals' well-being within an organization allowing them to develop a variety of human capabilities that foster the flow of experiences (Calvo & Peters, 2014; Peterson, 2006; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Vesterinen, 2001). We can define human potential as the ability for human-beings to improve themselves through study, training, and practice. This often means working on the edge of one's abilities and competencies to improve at intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social levels, sometimes in the face of hardship and affliction.

To play is to be in the world. Playing is a form of understanding what surrounds us and who we are, and a way of engaging with others. Play is a mode of being human. (Sicart, 2017, p. 1)

The potential of games has been explored to achieve the most diverse goals in the most diverse areas of knowledge and fields of study. In the context of healthcare, many are those that aim to foster human potential and well-being, in treatment and prevention contexts and usually featuring multi-disciplinary teams. In this context, more than providing answers, this chapter aims to raise questions regarding current directions of Game Design applied to Healthcare and human potential.

The first mission of this chapter is to present a novel concept in Game Design and Game Studies we call *Positive Play*. Positive Play is a term that derives from Positive Computing (Calvo & Peters, 2014), which consists of the design and development of technology to support human potential and well-being. Positive Play takes its premise, detaches it from the design of technology and localizes it to the humanistic field of the Design of games and play. The second mission of this text is to support the concept of Positive Play with a series of case studies developed in the scope of mental health, in an yet unexplored context: that of Anorexia Nervosa.

This chapter is divided into four major sections. The first is about defining the concept of Positive Play. The second presents eight maxims that seed foundations for a future manifesto of Positive Play, presenting a series of cases in distinct contexts and across diverse fields of knowledge in which Positive Play can be witnessed. The third section explores such concepts in the scope of Healthcare presenting six games that are being developed with multidisciplinary teams, resorting to co-design methodologies to consider the feedback of clinical populations of patients with Anorexia Nervosa, researchers, clinicians, psychologists, psychiatrists, and others involved parties. Afterwards, conclusions are drawn, and future work is pinpointed.

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