

# Memories: Echoes of Resilience – A Narrative Gameplay about Living with Autism

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## Abstract Introduction

Memories: Echoes of Resilience is a first-person narrative experience that takes players through different experiences of a boy with autism. The game aims to show how everyday interactions can be different to someone with autism. Experiences such as making friends in school, being in overstimulating environments, or managing adult life are experiences we want to simulate for the player. The player will be able to interact with the world around them but will also have to be aware of how their environment impacts them, so they don't become overstimulated.

## Introduction

When selecting topics for our studio project, we were interested in doing this topic because many of us have loved ones that are autistic. There is a lot of negative stigma and harmful misinformation about autism, so we are hoping this experience can help not only teach people about autism, but also give people a more positive outlook on autism. We chose to make our game's narrative follow one person, because even though autism is a spectrum, we want players to have one cohesive experience to reduce confusion and keep the gameplay more immersive.

## Research

- We wanted to make sure the experience was accurate, so we researched when symptoms of autism start showing and what those symptoms are. Our tutorial level takes place in both the player's home and in a doctor's office, so as the player learns how the game works, they also learn about the character's symptoms and diagnosis.

## Gameplay

### Levels

#### Tutorial

The tutorial level will take place when the main character is a young child that is starting to show symptoms of autism. They will be able to explore their home and a doctor's office while learning how to interact with objects and NPCs.

#### School

The school level will take place on the first day of school, where they will have to deal with other children not understanding why he is different. The player will also have to manage their stimulation to avoid being overstimulated, which will result in the gameplay audio and visuals becoming more intense.

#### Aquarium

The aquarium level will feature player's going on a stamp hunt to fill a stamp sheet of different animals throughout the aquarium. There will be similar mechanics to the previous level, but different interactions and objectives.

#### Apartment

The apartment will feature the player living on their own and having to manage more responsibilities.

## Gameplay Mechanics

### Stimulation Meter

Different interactions and environments will cause the player's stimulation meter to fill up. Once the meter is full, the player will become overstimulated and have to find a way to calm down before they can proceed with completing objectives.



## Conclusions

While our game is not going to be able to capture the full complexity of autism, we are optimistic it will be able to change people's perspectives on autism. Many shows, movies, and games have portrayals of autism, but those are often inaccurate, or even worse, meant as a mockery. Autistic people may have different experiences, and consequently, a harder time communicating their thoughts to others, but that does not mean we should not try to understand their experiences.

## Scope

Our initial goal was to have five levels(including the tutorial), we reduced it to four levels so we could focus on polishing the gameplay and overall experience. We had other ideas we wanted to implement, but we had to be realistic about the semester time limit.

## Interpretation

We wanted to keep the game realistic to the experience of Autism without making the gameplay seem insensitive to individuals with Autism. This posed a challenge as many people can think of gameplay ideas that do not actually work.

## Conclusion

With all the decisions made regarding our game, we feel that we have created a truly unique experience that not only showcases how it is to live with Autism, but is also made in mind with how real life individuals with Autism feel about their diagnosis.