

On the Way to Fun

**An Emotion-Based Approach to
Successful Game Design**

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Foreword

Have you ever felt really happy and joyful or really angry because of playing a video game? How often do you experience those deeply emotional moments in games? I remember quite vividly when I angrily punched my Game Boy's screen while playing *Double Dragon*, cracking the screen, and how happy I was when I finally beat the boss that gave me so much trouble. I remember my amazement during the opening of *Half-Life* and when I couldn't stop laughing as I clicked my way through *Monkey Island*. And the several occasions of breaking into tears playing *Shadow of the Colossus* are following me around to this day. But despite all the games I have played, there are less than a handful that I still remember vividly, if at all.

When I started to get interested in game design and able to analyze games properly, I quickly realized that what most differentiates games from any other medium is not their interactivity, but their lack of emotional impact. The fact that you would really care about a game character or the game world was, for most games, not a priority.

When I had the opportunity at the beginning of my career to join Lionhead Studios to work on *Black & White* and learn about game design from Peter Molyneux, it became quite clear why he was hailed one of the geniuses of the industry. Almost a year after my short stint in the UK, I fortuitously met Shigeru Miyamoto and was able to probe his brain for a bit. I learned that he has a very similar thought about games—the player needs to get attached to something in the game world and really care about it. Then the player experiences the game hand-in-hand with this object of attachment and thus the game creates emotional moments. This notion is not limited to story-driven

games. Any game can and should create those moments. Some are very easy to create, but the ones with most impact are tough. I made it a rule from then on that everything I design must consider the emotional reaction of the user. That premise should be applied to any kind of design, not just games.

During the past year, I worked closely with Roberto on the Music and Emotion Driven Game Engine (M-EDGE) research project, and finally had the opportunity to incorporate emotion into games in a way almost unheard of before. Roberto helped me to design a game that could, like a living being, have a real emotional reaction to music, and have an impact on the game world as well as the player. It sure did change our moods very quickly at times.

Roberto's expertise in music and his experience with emotional systems became very quickly a valuable resource for me. He is someone who, with his dedication, critical thinking, and decisiveness brought out the best in our endeavor of creating a game with emotional consideration and impact. Both of us have had the good fortune to experience the world in many ways and his openness to new ideas helped me progress in my own field.

Roberto is an excellent researcher who is looking at the advancement of game development through new and sometimes unusual means, and who doesn't take things for granted. I wish many of the points raised here by Roberto had been as explicitly written out much earlier—maybe I wouldn't have broken my Game Boy in the first place. I hope this book will become a very valuable tool for you too.

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