



Unravel - Using empathy as a game mechanic

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It's a game about love





It's not a power fantasy



You don't get to
save the world

But you do get to be nice



Games really are powerful





Games can be great at inspiring empathy

Games don't always get it right





Unravel turned empathy into a game mechanic

A warm, sunlit interior scene, likely a dining room. A wooden table with a green and yellow striped tablecloth is in the foreground. On the table, there's a bowl of food and a small cup. A wooden chair with a green seat is on the left. In the background, a large window with a wooden frame looks out onto a lush green landscape. A potted plant sits on the windowsill. To the right of the window, a globe is on a stand. A hanging lamp with a white shade is positioned above the table. The walls are covered in floral wallpaper. A red object is visible on the windowsill.

I wanted players to
fall in love...



Then break their hearts!

Then we make it all worth it.



How did we make people care?



Yarny was someone people could
care about, and care for





Yarny had to look real



Yarny had to be expressive





NILSSON & SÖNER

Yarny had to be aware









The game world had to feel real

GO

Gameplay had to be challenging





Death had to matter



Things had to just be sweet sometimes



How did we get the point across?



We wanted the story to
feel like a painting, not
like a film





The music speaks volumes

A scenic view of a lake at sunset. In the foreground, a pine tree branch with green needles and a small brown pine cone is visible. A large, light green kite with a long, thin tail is flying in the sky. The tail is decorated with a red bow and a small, colorful, circular ornament. The sun is setting on the right side of the image, creating a bright, golden glow that reflects on the water. The sky is a deep blue with some light clouds.

Inspiring moods through
gameplay works SO well

Nostalgia works





Fear works

A screenshot from a video game showing a swampy environment. In the foreground, a red cloth with white patterns is tied to a tree trunk. The ground is covered in green moss and ferns. In the background, there are more trees and a body of water. The scene is filled with many small, brown, mosquito-like insects flying around. The text "Even frustration works (in a way)" is overlaid at the top.

Even frustration works (in a way)

QA: The mosquitos are really annoying!

Me: Yeah! They're spot on!



We really should have tested more



A collection of red crocheted items, including hearts and small figures with white bead eyes, arranged on a yellow textured surface. A large red crocheted figure, possibly a bear, is prominent on the left. Several smaller hearts and figures are scattered around it.

We touched a lot of hearts
We did some actual good



The world is kind of starving for empathy



People who play games are more likely
to have lucid dreams

If games can change how people dream...



...maybe they can change how people act too?

A red string figure, resembling a small person, stands in a field of autumn leaves. To its left is a green wheelbarrow filled with leaves. The background is a soft-focus field of tall grass and more leaves.

Thanks!

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