FINDING OUR WAY ON THE PATH LESS TRAVELLED

Aderyn Thompson
Accessibility
Design Lead/Strategist
UBISOFT

@NeonAderyn
They/Them

ACCESSIBILITY BY DESIGN

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Design Lead/Strategist
UBISOFT

@NeonAderyn
They/Them

David's Talk: https://youtu.be/mlPCM2WlyPY

UBISOFT ACCESSIBILITY

David Tisserand
Accessibility Director

Billy Gregory
Accessibility Program Manager

Aderyn Thompson
Accessibility Design Lead/Strategist

QC Accessibility
Multiple Teams

Clinton Lexa
Accessibility Design Specialist

Stacey Jenkins
Accessibility Design Specialist

Ian Hamilton
Accessibility Design Consultant

Helen Kelly
Project Manager

FARCRY6

WATCHDOGS LEGION

ASSASSIN'S CREED VALHALLA

HORIZON II FORBIDDEN WEST™

DESTINY 2 BEYOND LIGHT

MARVEL AVENGERS

dreams

hyper|dot

CARDPOCALYPSE

REFLECTION

GA Conf 2018:

A Love Letter to the Games Industry

DISRUPT

THE ROAD TRAVELLED

THEN

Accessibility by Design:

Intentional
Holistic
Opportunity

NOW

FINDING OUR WAY

The Magnifying Glass

Impact of Bias and Stigma

Compassionate Design

A Definition of Game Accessibility

Establishing a Practice

Tech Industry Pitfalls

Process is One Tool

Design Thinking

How We're Changing the Tide

We have **a lot** of buy in, with **little knowledge.**

FINDING OUR WAY

Accessibility in the past was down to a few people's hard work and luck, now it's time to make it everybody's responsibility.

Jo Bedard, UX Director (Ubisoft)

We have **a lot** of buy in, with **little knowledge.**

WHERE ARE WE?

"ACCESSIBILITY"

OPTIONS / SETTINGS/ FEATURES

Calling Us In

EMPATHY

https://everydayfeminism.com/2015/01/guide-to-calling-in

Calling Us In

~~EMPATHY~~

https://everydayfeminism.com/2015/01/guide-to-calling-in

Calling Us In

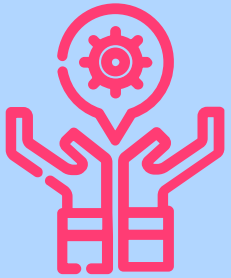
COMPASSION

https://everydayfeminism.com/2015/01/guide-to-calling-in

Calling Us In

MISGUIDED

Compassion without Knowledge



LOST

Knowledge without Compassion

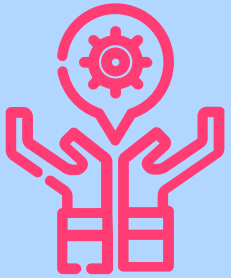
https://everydayfeminism.com/2015/01/guide-to-calling-in

Calling Us In

MISGUIDED

GOOD INTENTIONS

Compassion without Knowledge



LOST

PATERNALISM

Knowledge without Compassion

https://everydayfeminism.com/2015/01/guide-to-calling-in

Compassion + Knowledge =

COMPREHENSION

Systems of Bias & Privilege

Systems of Systems

by Tatiana Mac

https://youtu.be/TzGfBV67Tac

Compassion + Knowledge =

COMPREHENSION

Intent does not erase impact.

Compassion + Knowledge =

COMPREHENSION

Systems of Bias & Privilege

Systems of Systems

by Tatiana Mac

https://youtu.be/TzGfBV67Tac

The Quest

- **Fight:** instinct to protect / provide
- **Destroy**: subtle forms of pity
- **Vanquish**: guilt, **Build**: trust

ACCESSIBILITY UNDEFINED

Cognitive Bias

Good Reaction = Right Action

Narrative Fallacy

Options = Accessibility

Potential Hindsight Bias

Converse Logic

Options = Bandage = Accessibility Solved

~~**Tangible Object:**~~ ~~Does / Doesn't Have Accessibility~~

https://www.nngroup.com/articles/narrative-biases/
https://www.britannica.com/topic/converse

https://thedecisionlab.com/biases/hindsight-bias/
https://thedecisionlab.com/biases/bandwagon-effect/

EVERY GAME HAS ALWAYS BEEN MORE, OR LESS ACCESSIBLE.

We give it a solid shape so it can be talked about.
We should discuss the **efforts made for accessibility** instead.

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE:

Where the magic happens??

Billy Gregory @thebillygregory · Sep 23

Never a "feature". The absence of #a11y is a BUG. Change my mind.

> **Steve Faulkner** @stevefaulkner · Sep 23
>
> From @thebillygregory
> #accessibility 👏
> is not 👏
> a "feature"!
> etsy.com/uk/listing/107...

1 10 27

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE:

Where the magic happens??

Bryce Johnson
@brycej

Replying to @thebillygregory

Voiceover is a feature of iOS. Closed Captions are a feature of Movies.

Accessibility is not _____, except when it is.

We are not in the business of absolutes.

9:03 AM · Sep 23, 2021 · Twitter Web App

GAME ACCESSIBILITY DEFINED

Accessibility is:

a player's **access** to the gaming **experience** that's either **improved**, or **impeded** by the **design decisions** we make.

ACCOMMODATION OR ACCESSIBILITY?

ACCOMMODATIONS:

Concessions or “assistance”.
Systems are least malleable.

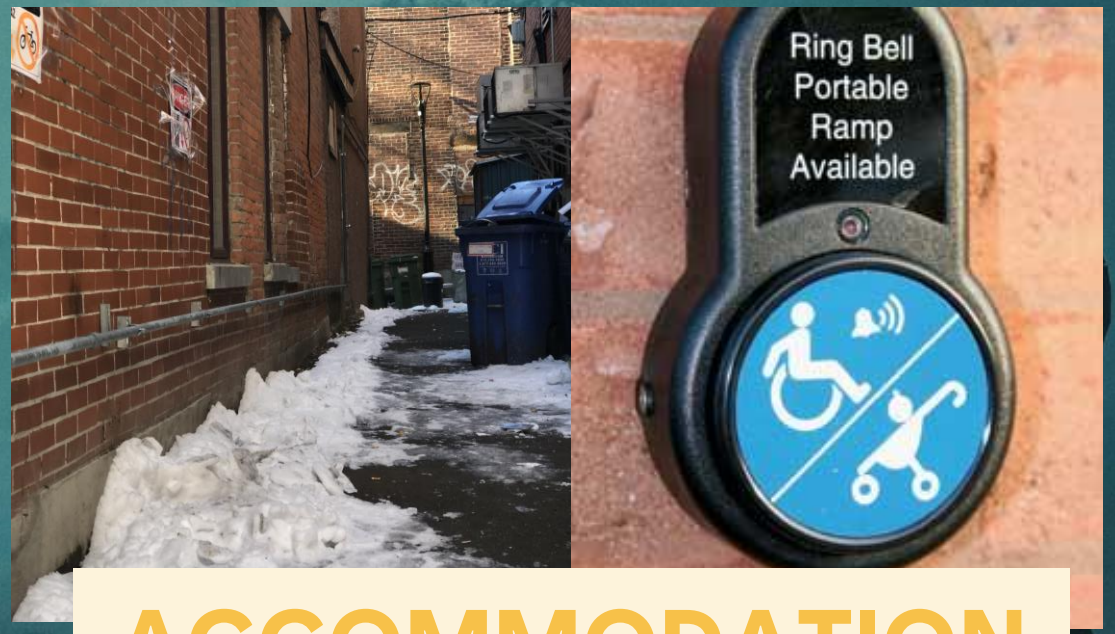
ACCESSIBILITY:

Equitable, inclusive access.
Game Systems = highly malleable.

Impact

ACCOMMODATION OR ACCESSIBILITY?

ACCESSIBILITY



ACCOMMODATION

Impact

ACCOMMODATION OR ACCESSIBILITY?

ASSIST NEEDED

Impact

ACCESSIBILITY IS

Participation on par with everyone

Not a separate experience.
No inconvenience, embarrassment, pity.

Impact

ACCESSIBILITY IS

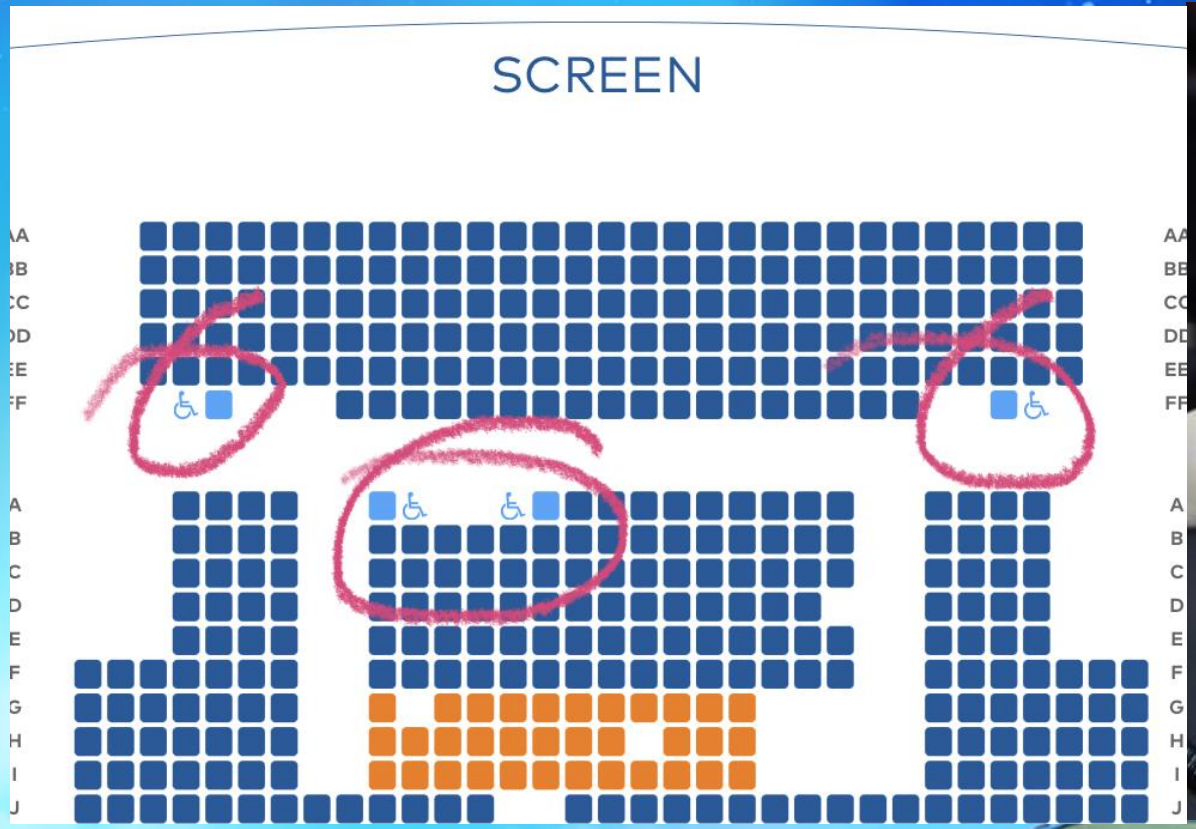
Participation on par with everyone

How does accommodation **feel**?

Impact

ACCESSIBILITY IS

Participation on par with everyone



Impact

ACCESSIBILITY IS

Participation on par with everyone

How does accommodation **feel**?

People disengage from the world.

Impact

WORK FOR THE FUTURE, NOT TODAY.

Are players being **siloed** based on who they are?

Accessibility isn’t **done**, it must become a part of **everything** we do.

OPTIONS

a limited approach

OPTIONS

a limited approach

Players are not controls designers.

HADES CONTROLS: DEFAULT

HADES CONTROLS: (RE)DESIGN

HADES CONTROLS: (RE)DESIGN

To implement controls pre-sets, we need:

1. An Understanding of Player Issues.
2. Solutions that work for a spectrum of people.
3. Room in interaction, navigation, character, and combat design.

MENUS

Options, not "accessibility" options.

ALL options are for everybody and **impact accessibility.**

Ubisoft Research:

"Accessibility" menus are confusing and can lead to stigma.
Every player expects something different.
Many players don't identify as disabled.

Organize settings by the area of the game they affect, not the people we think will use them.

TAKEAWAYS:

The Foundations

It's our **responsibility** to be analytical, thoughtful, and intentional in making equity a reality.

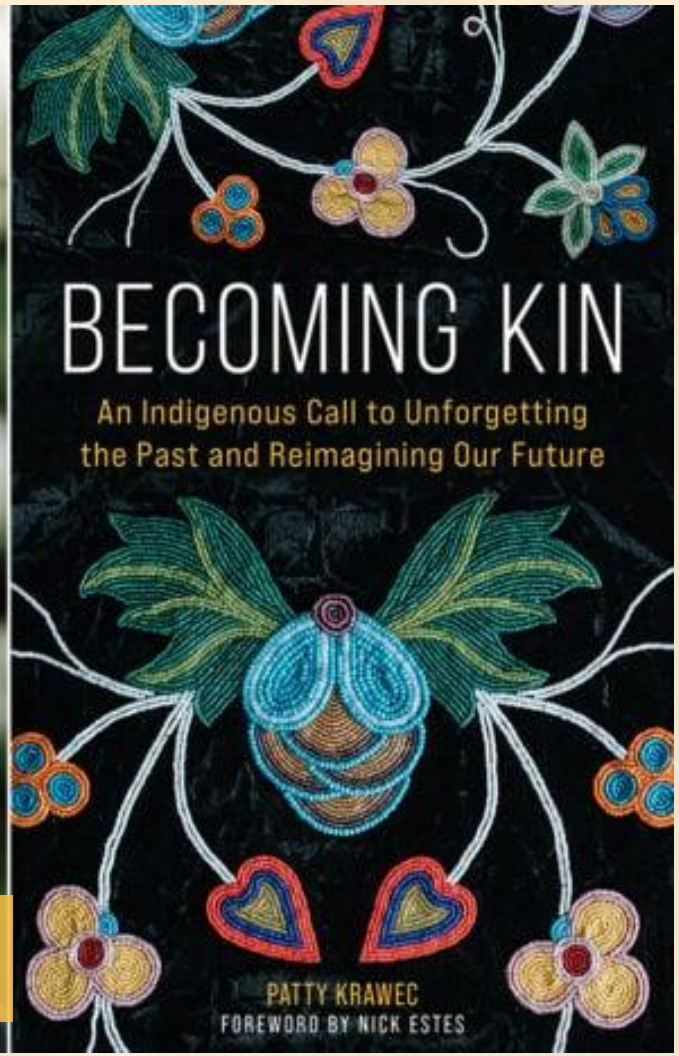
- **Comprehension** = Knowledge + Compassion.
  - Reduce paternalism and pity to **increase** compassion.
- Accessibility isn't a tangible **thing** a game does or doesn't have.

- Reduce assumptions: about players and **industry efforts**.
- Options have a **role.**
- Avoid accommodations, assists, stigma and **segregation.**

TAKEAWAYS:

The Foundations

Patty Krawec



HEY, IT'S TECH & UX

USER RESEARCH
Evolve Comprehension

PRINCIPLES
Inform Design

GUIDELINES
Background Knowledge

STANDARDS
Maintain Focus

GAME DEVELOPMENT IS DIFFERENT

Should we standardize?

Games are:
Complex systems crafted to **elicit feelings** like **challenge** or **mastery**.

Highly interactive!
A set of **intentional barriers**!

WE HEARD YOU LIKE GUIDELINES!

Want a side of guides?

For background and an introduction to WCAG, see Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Overview.

Page Contents

- Different documents for different purposes
  - WCAG 2 Standard
  - How to Meet WCAG 2 (Quick Reference)
  - Understanding WCAG 2
  - Techniques for WCAG 2
- Getting from one document to the other
- Additional Resources

WE HEARD YOU LIKE GUIDELINES!

Want a side of guides?

How to Meet

Understanding WC

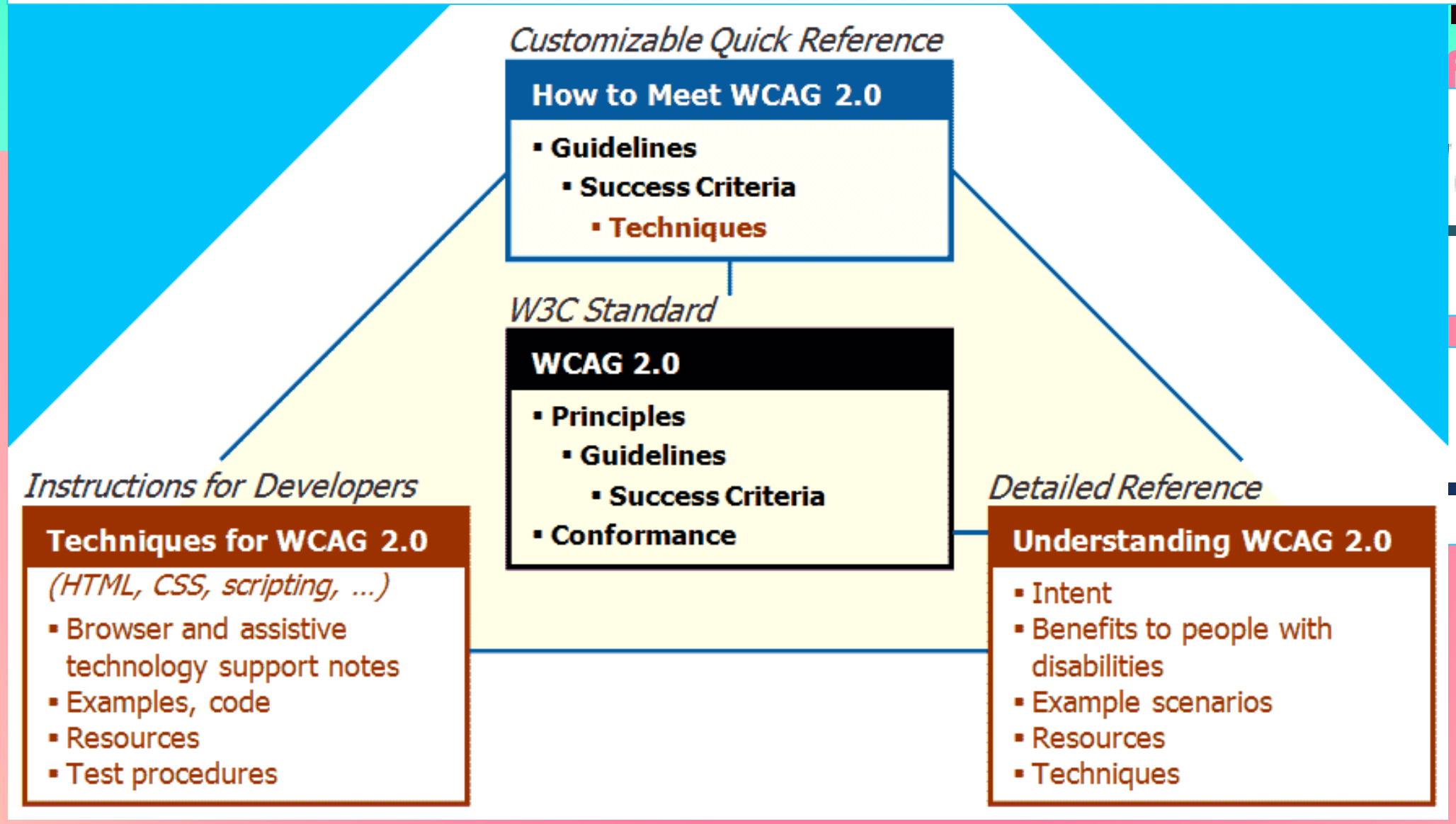
Techniques

Other guidelines

More Information

- Getting from one document to the other
- Additional Resources

Getting from one document to the other



Getting from one document to the other

WCAG 2.0

1.1.1 Non-text Content: All non-text content that is presented to the user has a text alternative that serves the equivalent purpose, except for the situations listed below. (Level A) How to Meet 1.1.1 Understanding 1.1.1

How to Meet WCAG 2.0

Understanding WCAG 2.0

Sufficient Techniques for 1.1.1 - Non-text Content

Situation A: If a short description can serve the same purpose and present the same information as the non-text content:

1. G94: Providing short text alternative for non-text content that serves the same purpose and presents the same information as the non-text content using a **short** text alternative technique listed below

Techniques for WCAG 2.0

Instructions for Deve

Techniques for WC

(HTML, CSS, scripting

- Browser and assisti technology support
- Examples, code
- Resources
- Test procedures

GUIDELINES, GUIDE, NOT PRESCRIBE.

- Guidelines organized by disability type are difficult for developers to use.

- Try not to validate with only one or two players, or single disability types.

There's **no such thing** as Blind/Deaf/Motor/Cognitive Accessibility or Features.

ABOUT PROCESS

[Pre-Production]

[Production]

UBISOFT Stage Gate Process

Kick Off Meeting

Accessibility Checkpoint

QC Checklist: One way to measure the unmeasurable.

First Playable

Alpha

ACCESSIBILITY CHECKPOINT

THE **CHECKPOINT IS:**

- ✓ **Opportunity** to demonstrate intentions and requirements.
- ✓ Critical time to scope.
- ✓ Based on our QC Checklist including CVAA (USA communication law).

THE **CHECKPOINT ISN'T:**

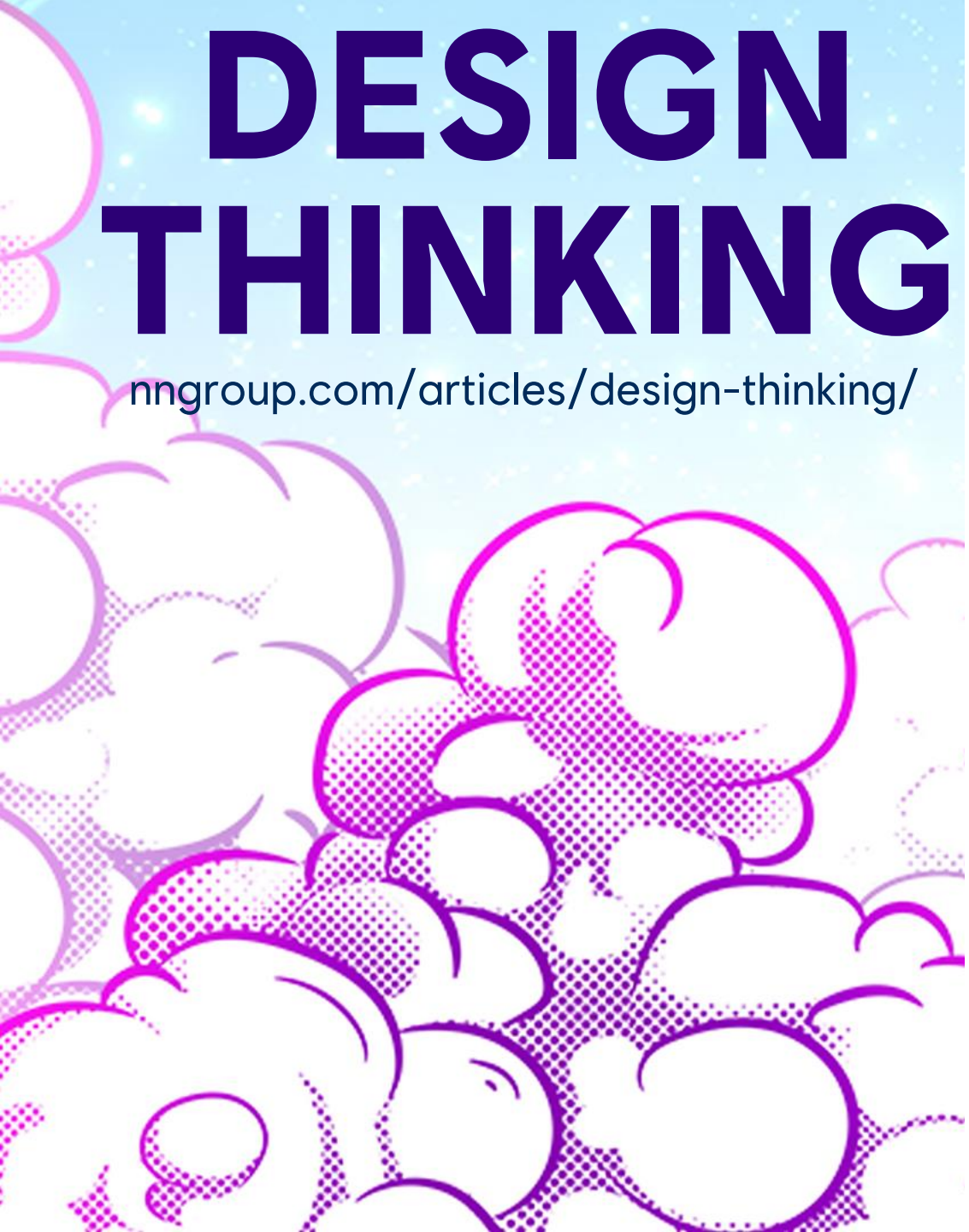
- Guarantee a game will be accessible.
- Mandate to make games a specific way.

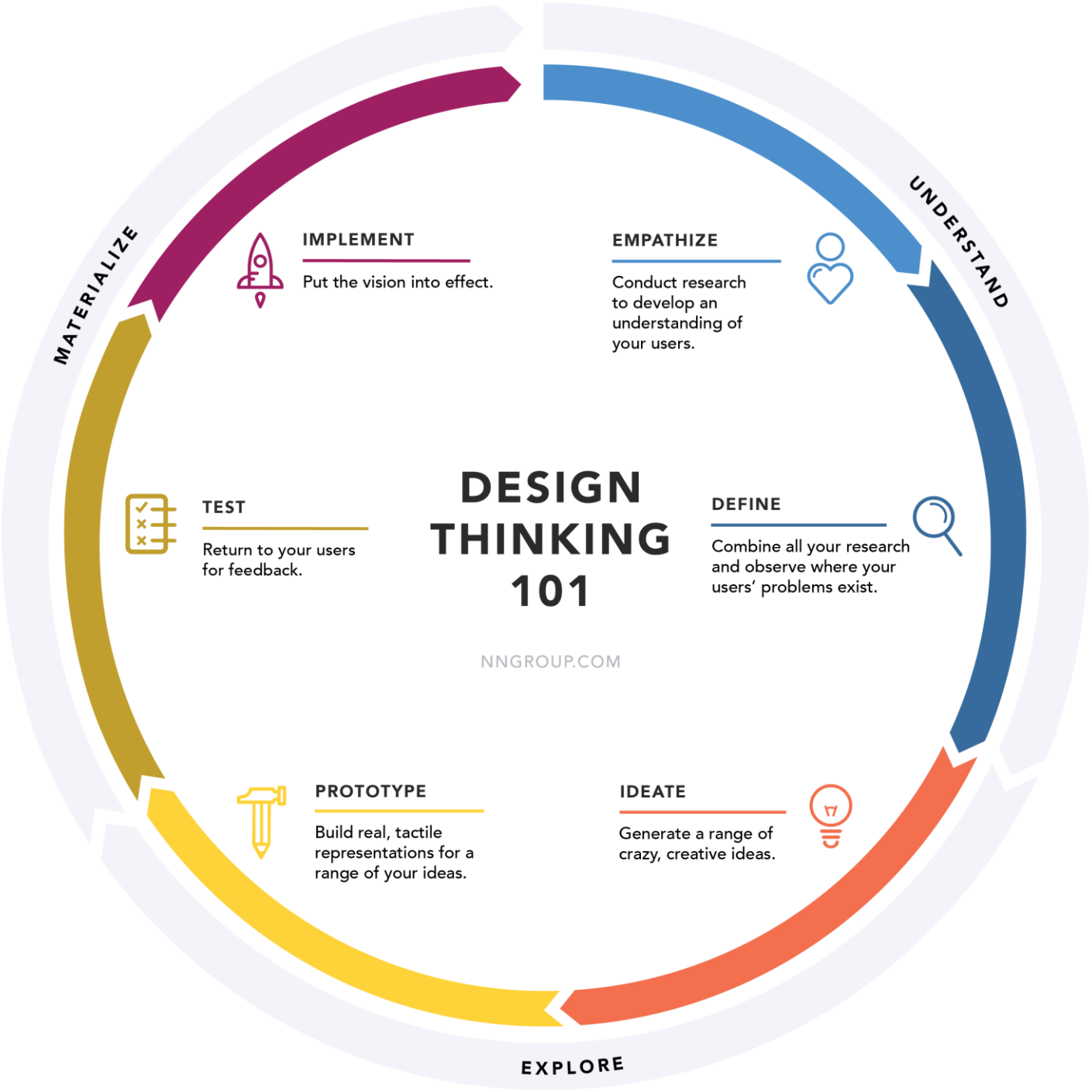
WE ALSO NEED TO **CHANGE** MINDSETS:

so process doesn't create too narrow a perspective.

DESIGN THINKING

nngroup.com/articles/design-thinking/





DESIGN THINKING

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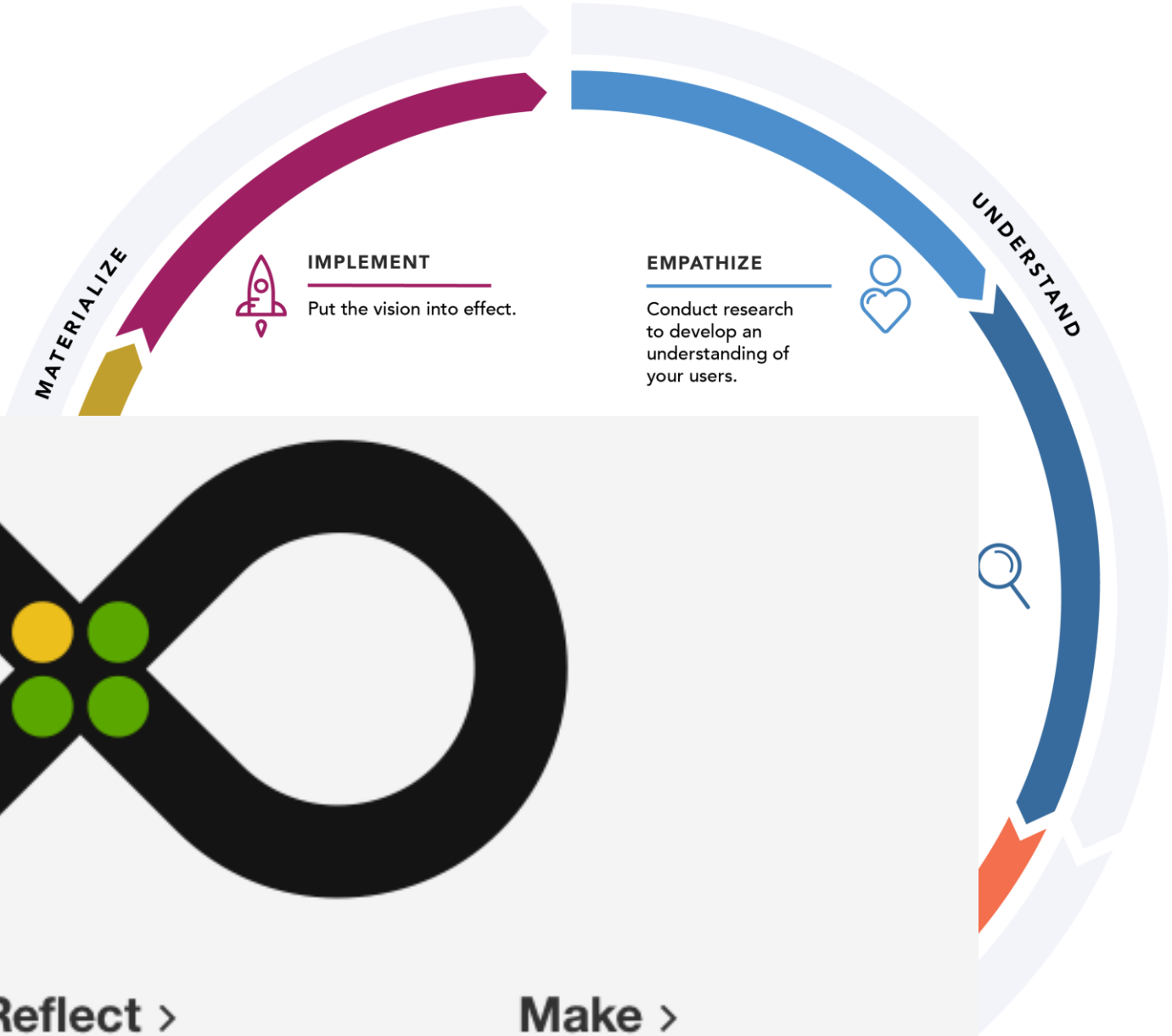


IBM

Observe ›

Immerse yourself in the real world.

Reflect ›

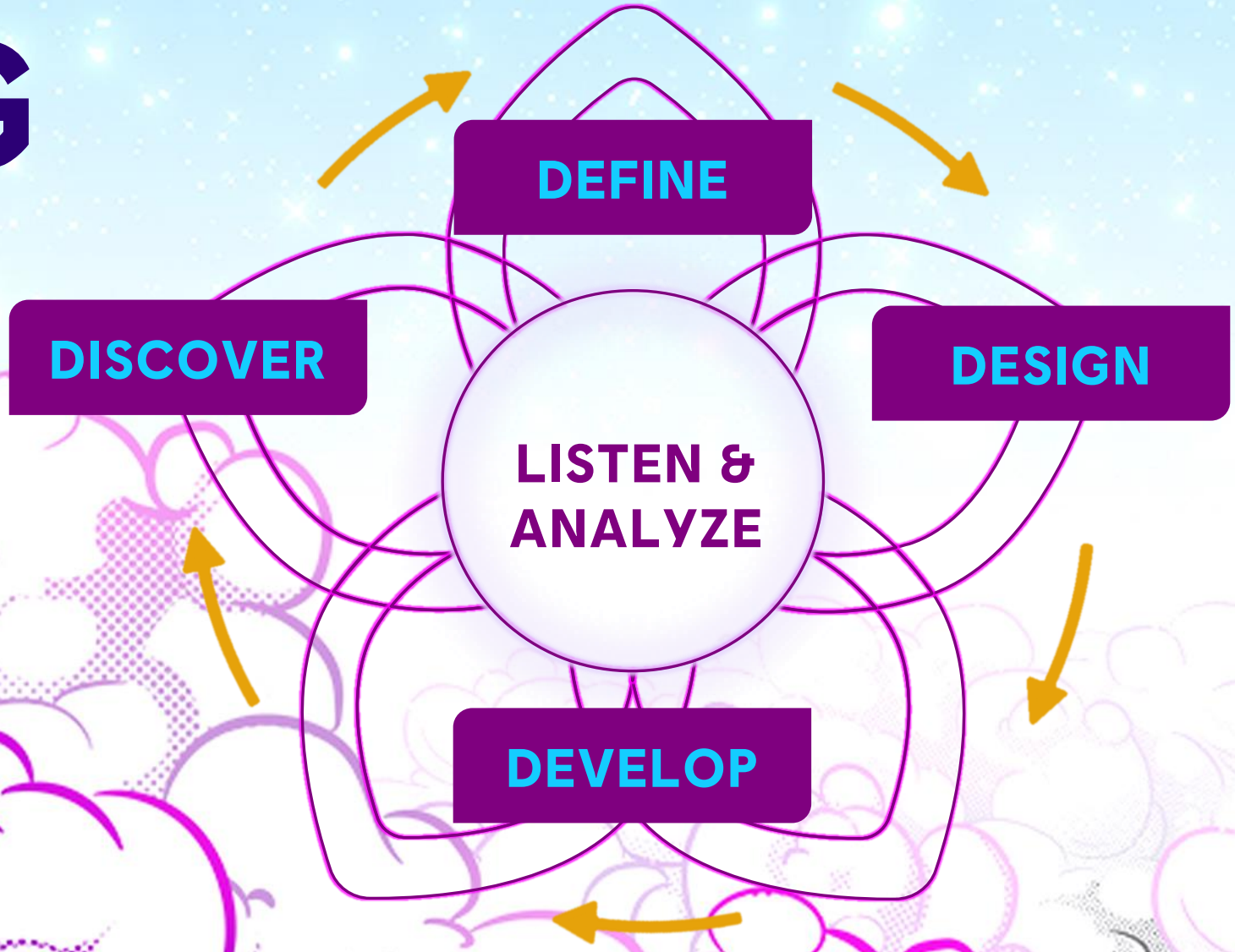
Come together and look within.

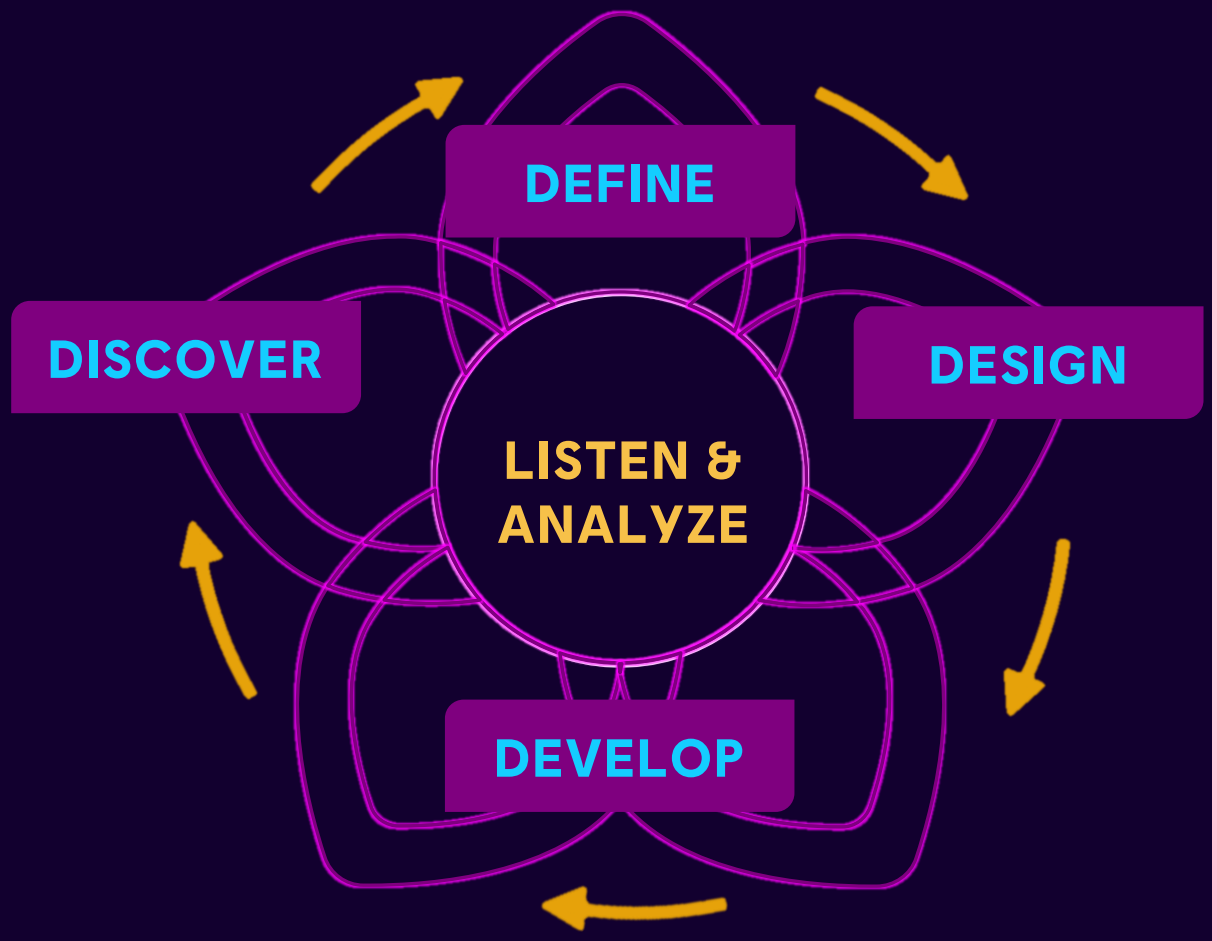
Make ›

Give concrete form to abstract ideas.

DESIGN THINKING

nngroup.com/articles/design-thinking/





Mindsets Create Practice Not Process

DISCOVER

Research, Observe, Understand

- Start early!
- Find accomplices
- Talk with players & experts
- Workshop & learn
- Research guidelines

DEFINE

Spectrum of Players

- Core experiences
- What is "challenge"?
- Establish pain points
- Best practices
- Checklists ≠ instructions

DESIGN

Beyond Reflexive Ideas

- Stay curious!
- Brainstorm & workshop
- Design for inclusion
- Identify barriers, not solutions
- Settings are last line
- Collaborate with specialists

DEVELOP

Experiment and Refine

- Cross discipline
- Trust design intentions
- Mock-ups, prototypes
- Early in builds
- Include accessibility in validation processes

LISTEN

First Hand Experiences

- Testing, advocates
- Development playsessions
- Inclusive UR, esp. alpha/beta

ANALYZE

Specialists, Experts/Champions

- Analysis & feedback
- Use resources & benchmarks
- Assess impact & priorities

HOW WE'RE TEACHING IT

OUTLINE

aka the plan™

3 HOURS

PART 1: An Example

Lens? What Lens?

PART 2: Presentation

Big Picture Design Thinking

PART 3: Intro Concept

Game Design is UX

PART 4: Group Exercise

Reverse Brainstorm

PART 5: Discussion & Take-Aways

It's Dangerous To Go Alone!

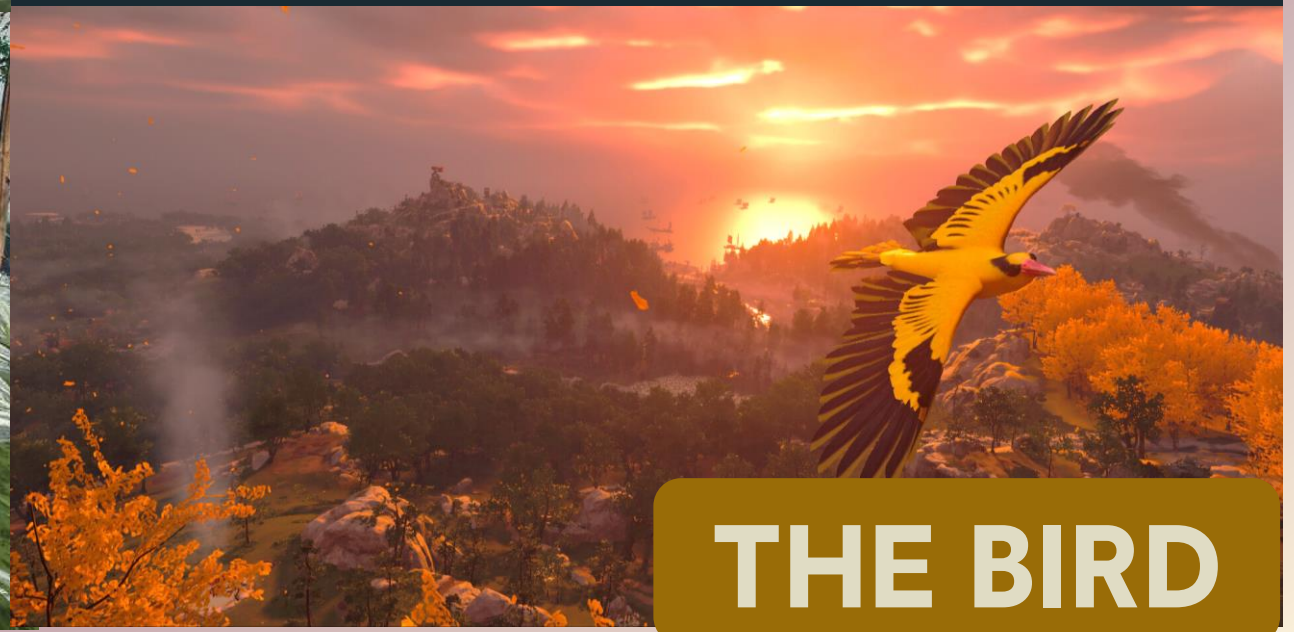
PRIMARY NAVIGATION SYSTEMS

FOLLOW

THE WIND

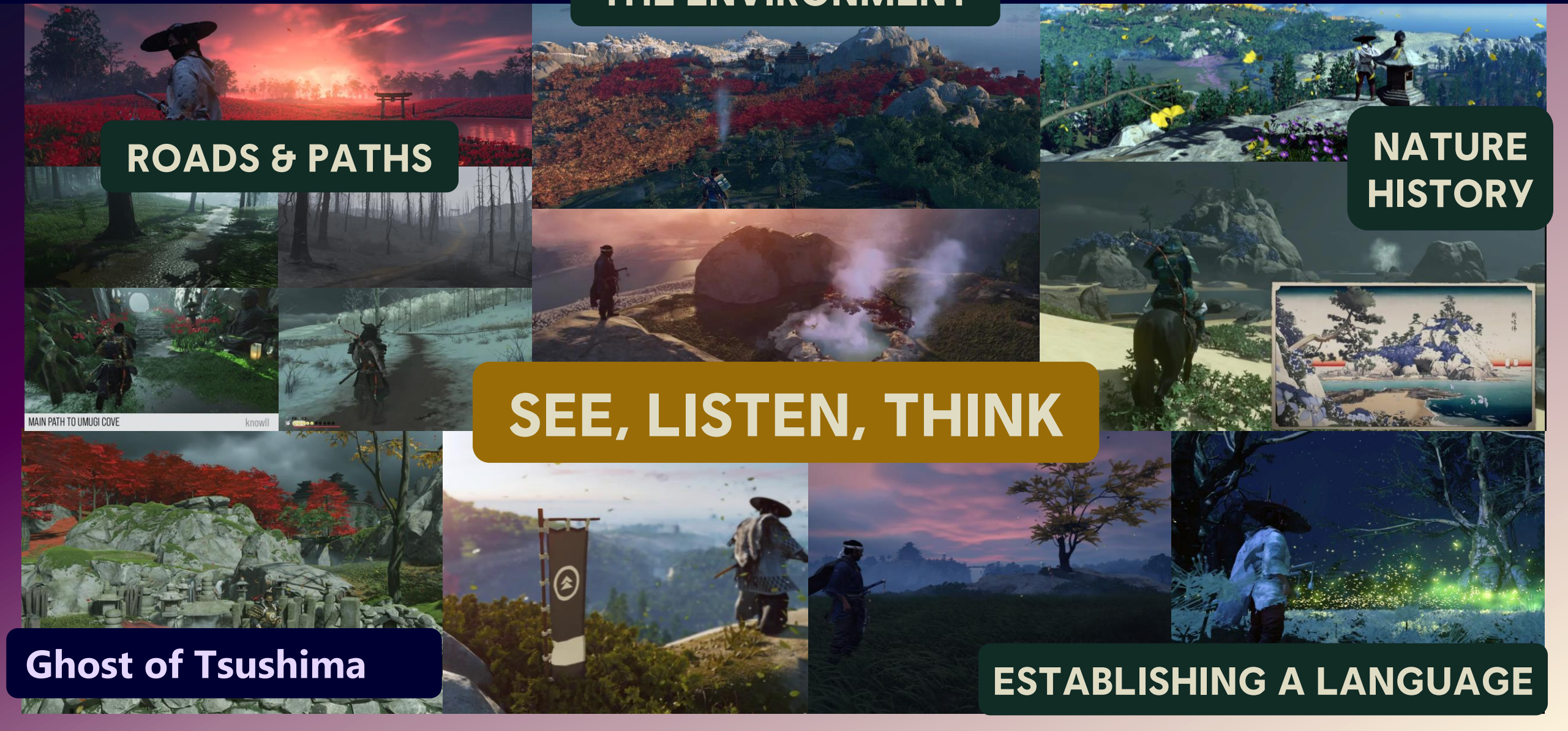
THE FOX

Ghost of Tsushima



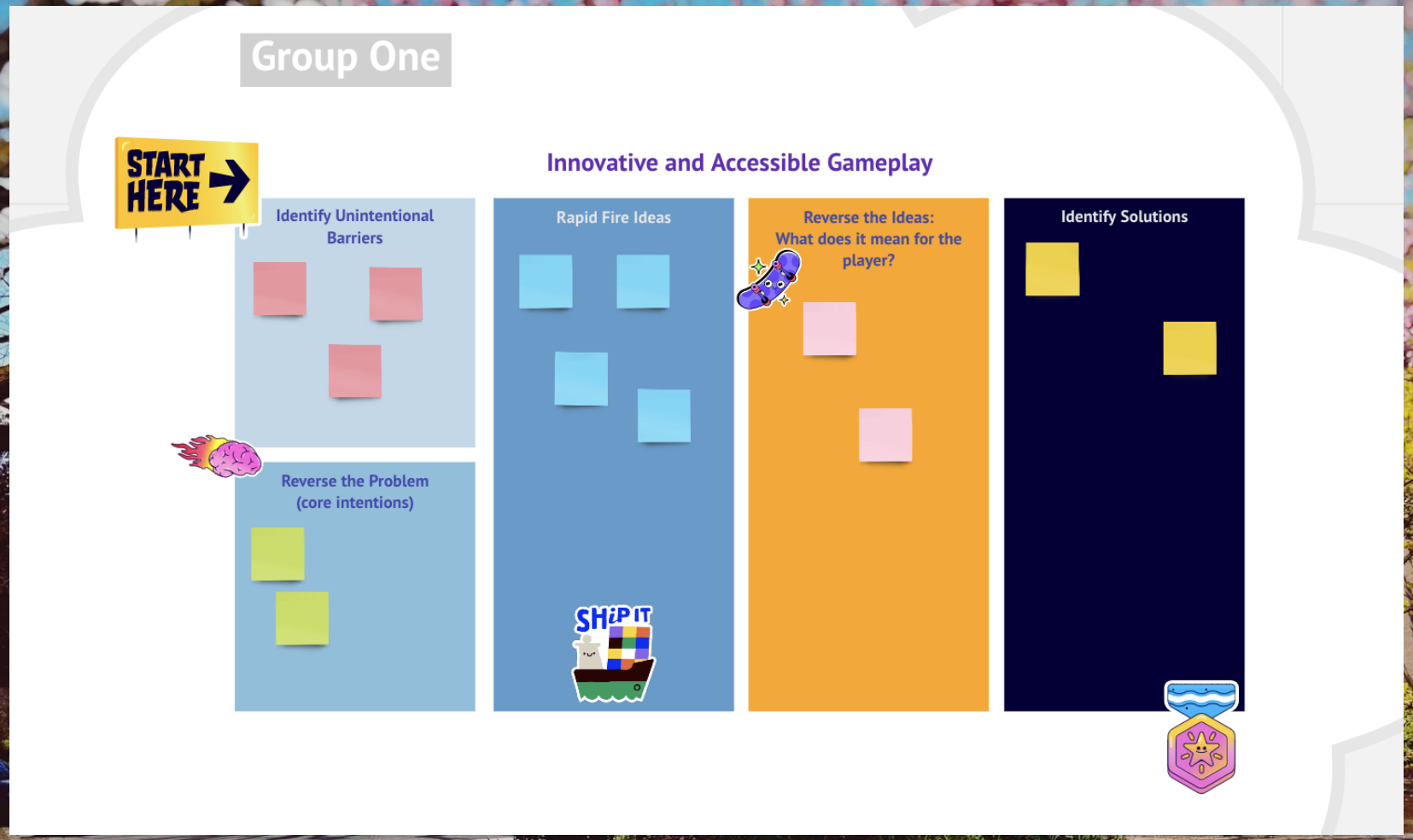
THE BIRD

SECONDARY NAVIGATION SYSTEMS



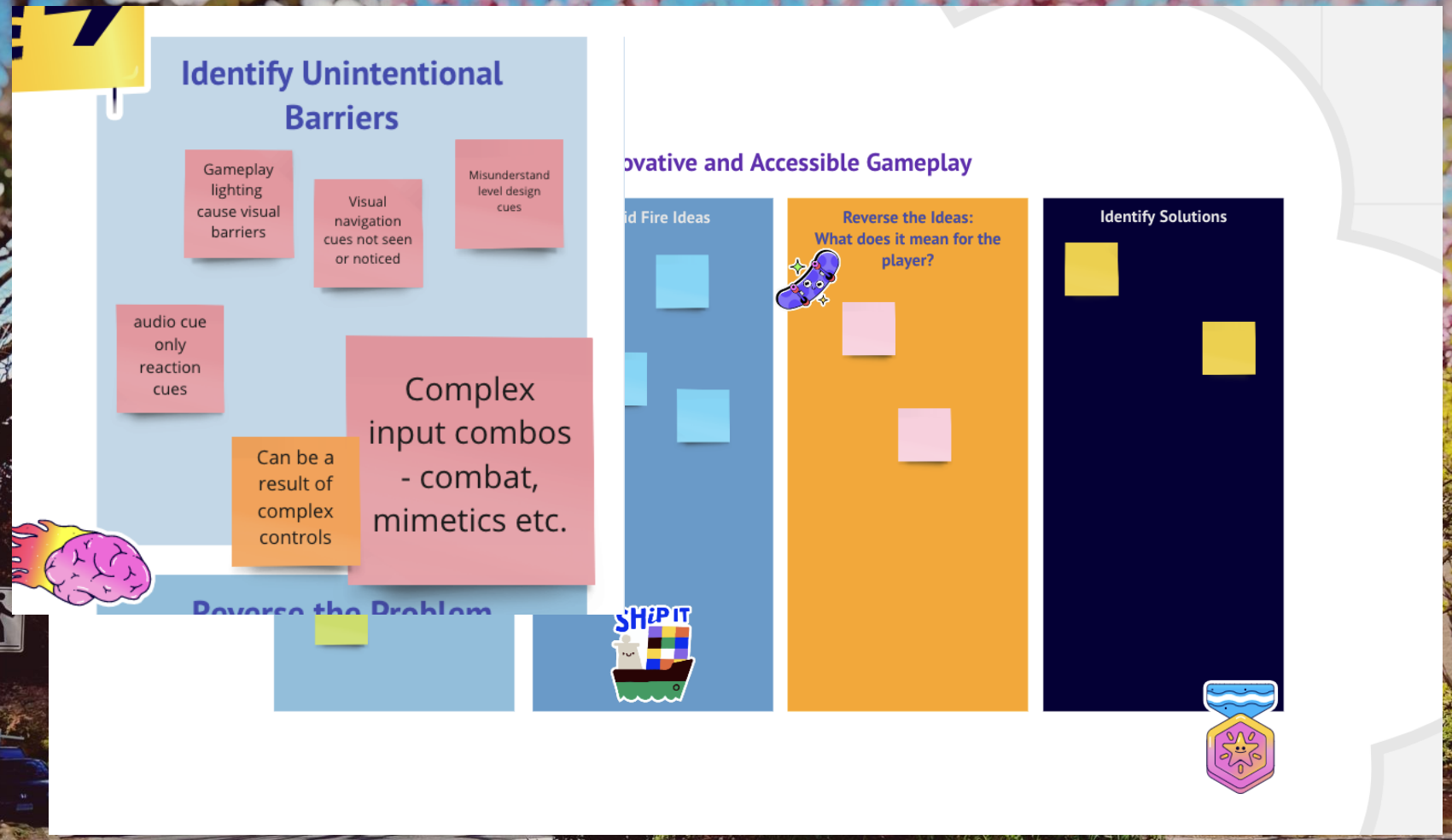
HOW WE'RE TEACHING IT

The Exercise



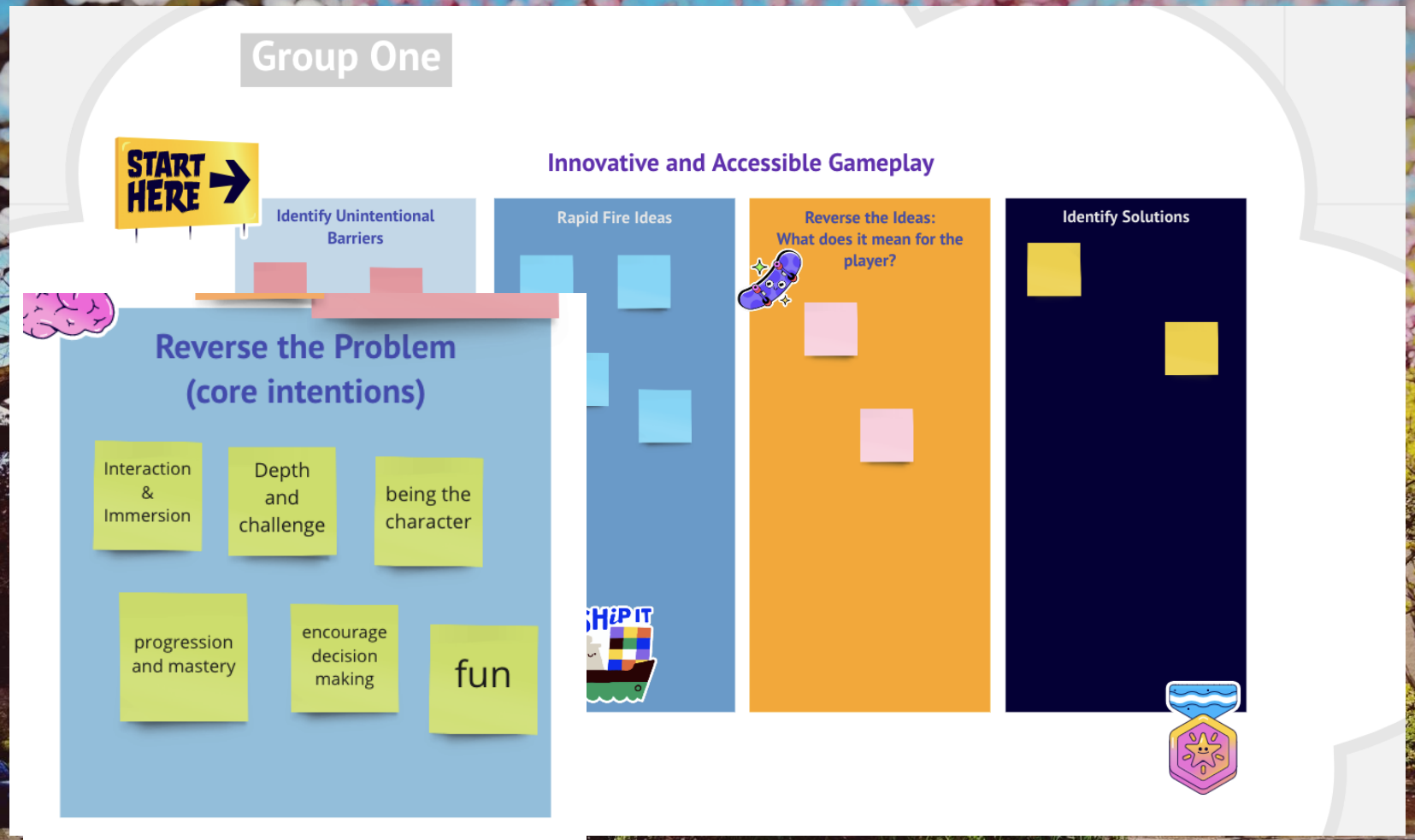
HOW WE'RE TEACHING IT

The Exercise



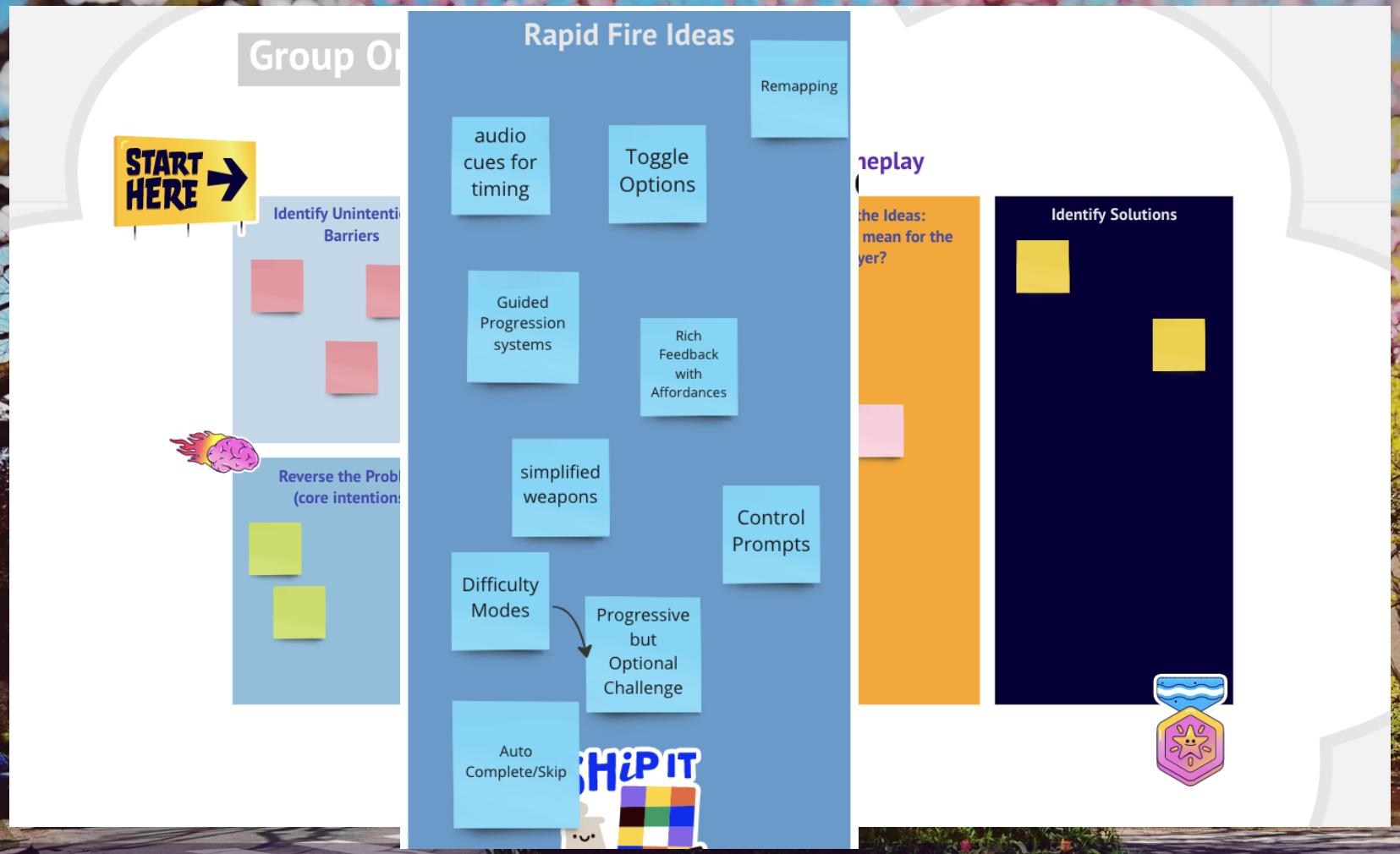
HOW WE'RE TEACHING IT

The Exercise



HOW WE'RE TEACHING IT

The Exercise



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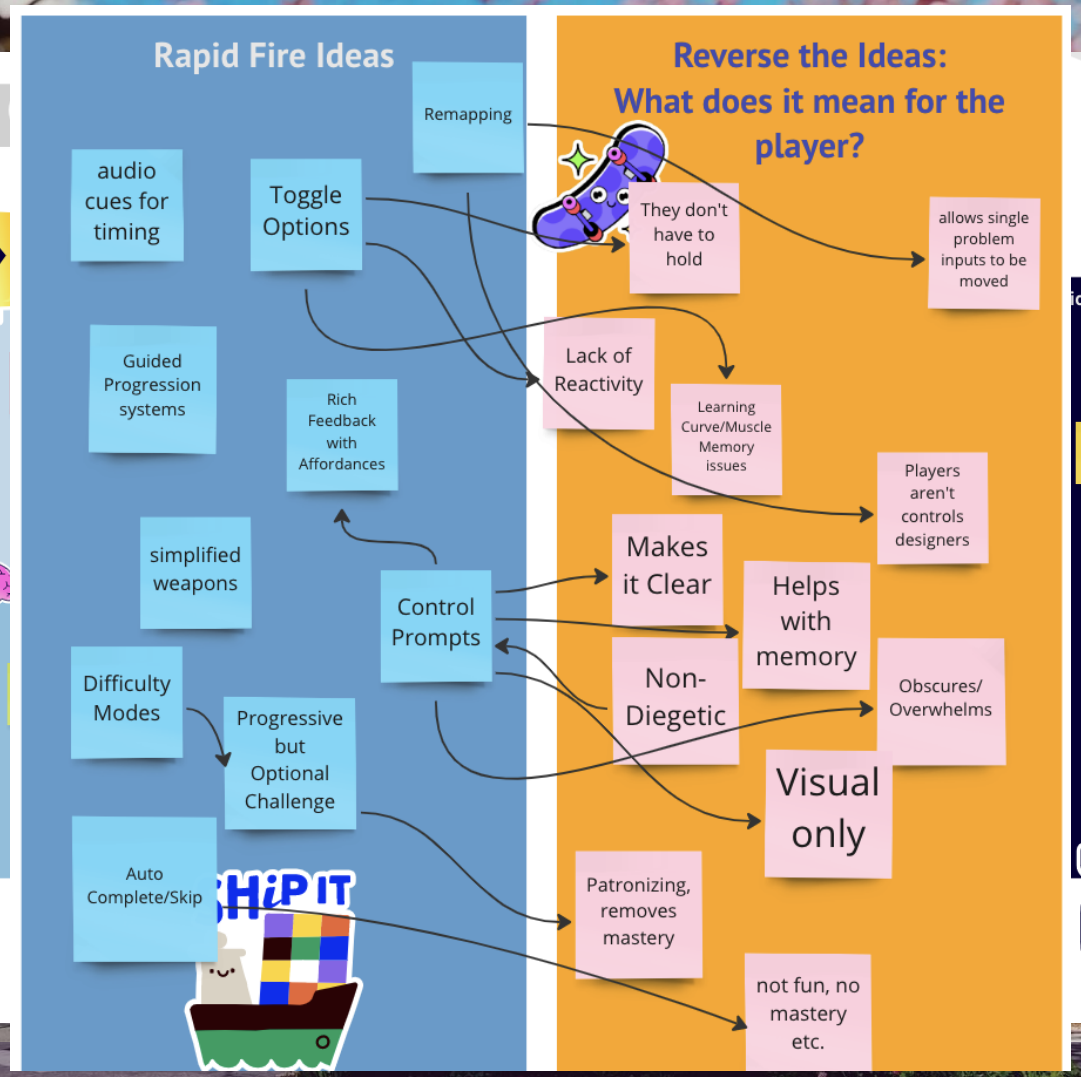
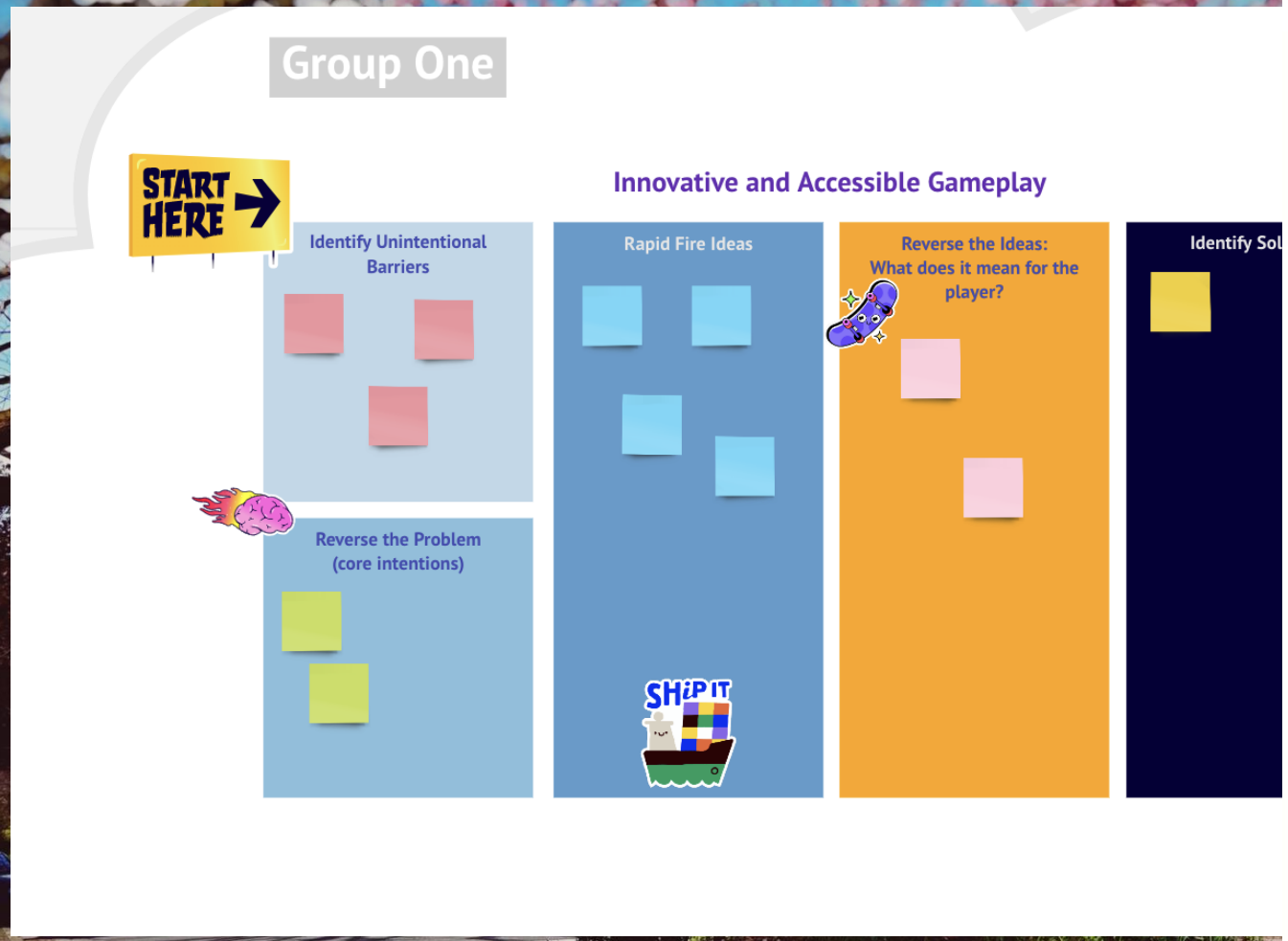
The Exercise



HOW WE'RE TEACHING IT

The Exercise



HOW WE'RE TEACHING IT

The Exercise

START HERE

Innovative and Accessible Gameplay

Identify Unintentional Barriers

- Gameplay lighting cause visual barriers
- Visual navigation cues not seen or noticed
- Misunderstand level design cues
- audio cue only reaction cues
- Can be a result of complex controls
- Complex input combos - combat, mimetics etc.

Reverse the Problem (core intentions)

- Interaction & Immersion
- Depth and challenge
- being the character
- progression and mastery
- encourage decision making
- fun

Rapid Fire Ideas

- Remapping
- audio cues for timing
- Toggle Options
- Guided Progression systems
- Rich Feedback with Affordances
- simplified weapons
- Control Prompts
- Difficulty Modes
- Progressive but Optional Challenge
- Auto Complete/Skip

Reverse the Ideas: What does it mean for the player?

- They don't have to hold
- allows single problem inputs to be moved
- Lack of Reactivity
- Learning Curve/Muscle Memory issues
- Players aren't controls designers
- Makes it Clear
- Helps with memory
- Non-Diegetic
- Obscures/ Overwhelms
- Visual only
- Patronizing, removes mastery
- not fun, no mastery etc.

Identify Solutions

- Communication
- Supported Progression systems
- Understanding Player Choice
- For lighting/level design etc.
- Working Cross Discipline
- complexity of archetypes
- Requires precision
- Consider level and AI design to avoid overlaps
- Player Misunderstanding Context
- Contextual Actions
- Contextual Timing
- Cognitive Overload
- Simplify Control Schemes
- Area of Effect Mistakes
- Increase Immersion
- Memory Load
- Making sure controls are for player's benefit
- Control Presets
- Understanding separation vs grouping like actions

JUDGEMENT FREE ZONE

30-60 Mins: Deep Discussion

"I didn't expect it to be, but this was a lot of fun!"

-World Designer

Increases:

- ✓ Cross discipline collaboration
- ✓ Self Sufficiency
- ✓ Knowledge Sharing

Tricky Topics:

- ✓ Difficulty
- ✓ Combat

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Technical Writing & Resources

KNOWLEDGE MA

Tec

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Technical Writing & Resources

Design Documentation

e.g., controls, legibility, colour

- Long form: 2-6,000 words
- Development topic
- Design Goal
- Benchmarks
- One Pagers
- Tracking
- Language Primer
- Process Guides

We **avoid** focusing on singular disability types

USER RESEARCH & EXPERT PLAYERS

ⓧ **Avoid Feature Requests**

✓ **Find the barrier**

Players are experts in their **own experience.**

Designers are experts **in design.**

Routine UT: Recruit & ask about barriers.

UBISOFT Player Workshops

Expert players from each disability group.

Have to **coach** to look for barriers, talk about experiences, **not features**.

THE PRACTICE

Takeaways

YOUR practice may be unique

Intentionality

- "They did it that way" is a potential distraction.

  Ask: does it solve our players' barriers in **equitable** ways?
- Process is important but without a **mindset** we can't create a **practice.**
- Work Design Thinking into everyday design.

Adrian Roselli:

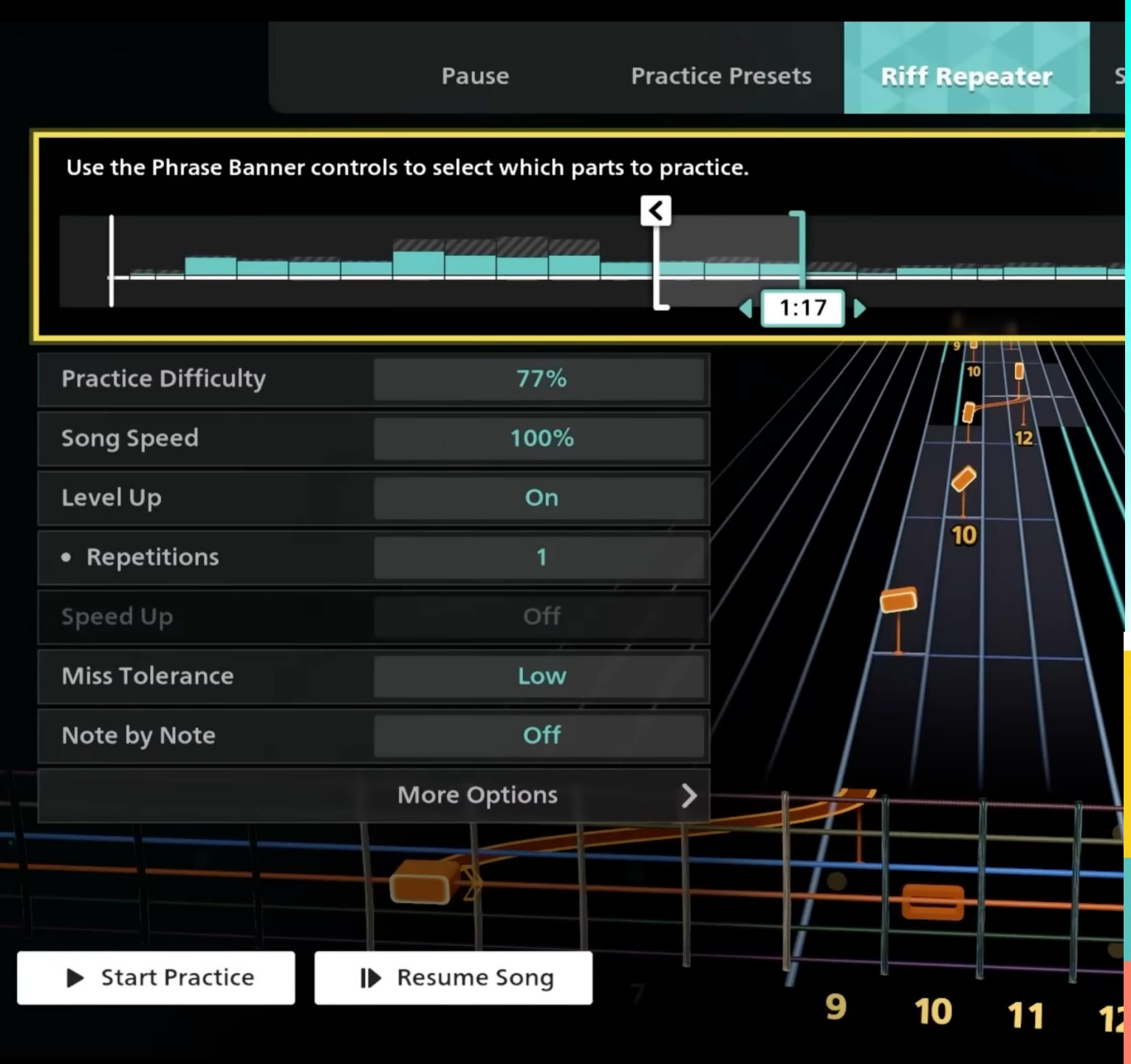
https://adrianroselli.com/2020/03/i-dont-care-what-google-or-apple-or-whomever-did.html

THE DOING

Takeaways

- **Teach:** Educate to shift lenses to compassionate, equitable design.
- Spread the **mindset** in workshops, group exercises, or watch parties.
- Create a **cross discipline** task force for each project.
- **Research:** Each player is **one experience** in a **spectrum** of people.

  Seek **barriers**, not **solutions.**
- **Designers** should **Design!**
- **Solutions:** intentional and refined through Design Thinking.
- Checklists and guidelines can **guide**, but don't use them as a **prescription.**



EVERYBODY'S ALREADY DOING IT

Don't lose progress: see it!

ACCESSIBLE BY DESIGN

Few settings
Sequel = Increase Challenge
Challenge is about how players **feel**

- Player controlled character movement (no cursor interaction)
- Nothing is communicated by colour alone
- Key pathfinding and exploration tools
- Settings presented in-line with battle flow

REPRESENTATION + ACCESSIBILITY

Side Quest
THE VALLEY OF THE FALLEN
→ Kill the Machines near the Horus
35 TREMORTUSK
Weak vs.
Strong vs.
Locked
View in Notebook
R2 Tag Target
HORIZON II
FORBIDDEN WEST™

THE
LAST
OF US
3
89

“ULTRA HARD“ GAMES

An Exciting Design Problem!!

Rogue likes/lites
Souls likes
Metroidvania
Multiplayer
Precision Platformer
Horror!

WE MAKE THE RULES!

"ULTRA HARD" GAMES

An Exciting Design Problem!!

Rogue likes/lites
Souls likes
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Precision Platformer
Horror!

WE MAKE THE RULES!

"ULTRA HARD" GAMES

An Exciting Design Problem!!

Disabled players want **challenge** and **mastery**.
Difficulty modes may not be the answer.

DEFINE Challenge and Mastery (Feelings)

Challenge:
Can be worked through, not get stuck!

Mastery:
Doing so fluidly, gradually increasing skill.

It’s not what we **didn’t know** yesterday, but what we do tomorrow, with what we **know now.**

- CLINTON LEXA

THANK YOU!

Aderyn, They/Them
@NeonAderyn

MY FAVE LOGIC PROBLEM
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confusion_of_the_inverse