

Meditation as Entertainment: The inverse of serious games

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I spent about a decade designing, studying, and teaching about serious games. I was intrigued by possibilities for leveraging the power of play for meaningful outcomes. Over the last 2 years I have engaged in a personal journey and exploration into the idea of creating technology-enhanced meditation experiences (cybermeditation). I have meditated more than 1500 times, experienced more than 100 guided meditations on different meditation objects. I took a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction workshop to be knowledgeable about that modality. I participated in yoga therapy as a yoga therapy client with a goal of learning more about the mind-body connection, and ended up healing through this relationship. I have been studying in the ancient one-on-one tradition with Marcel Allbritton, my teacher-mentor/yoga therapist/meditation expert for more than 2 years.

Marcel agreed to collaborate with me as I started a company to design and distribute cybermeditation experiences. I have learned 7 programming languages and systems, developed and tested and revised myriad prototypes. I've read hundreds of PubMed research articles about the psychological, physiological and neurocognitive benefits of yoga and meditation. We're developing two flavors of cybermeditation experiences: outcome-based meditations to help achieve a particular outcome, and the one I'll talk about today: meditation as meaningful play.

For me, meditation is fascinating and fun. I'm intrigued by the expertise that goes into structuring and guiding an experience and by the role the player (or meditator) must take in order to have the experience. The meditation objects in our meaningful play cybermeditation are things like wizards and purring cats. An attitude of playful exploration is very helpful. Player motivation and gamification concepts apply. And cybermeditation as meaningful play has all of the same body-mind benefits as more traditional meditation objects.

With serious games, we took something fun and added a serious twist. It's not surprising that when I got interested in meditation (something serious), I wondered about adding fun. In this short talk, I will elaborate on the journey and share example experiences.