Mind Loop

DES350

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In Mind Loop you are thrown into a physical manifestation of Covid anxiety. This experience simulates the endless cycle of stress and uncertainty which we have been living under the past year. It aims to be a cathartic experience where the feeling of dread doesn't really stop, partly because in the real world we don't really know when it's going to end, if at all. The basic layout of Mind Loop involves two circular rooms where you'll have to make your way through indefinitely. The first room consists of a barrage of type spelling "COVID" which was arranged in a chaotic and overwhelming way. You have to physically pick up and drag these letters to clear your path towards the next room. You'll occasionally trigger an echoing news broadcast sound effects, which further adds to the hectic atmosphere. There are beams of light on the floor that the participant can collide with to trigger a personal story sound effect. The personal stories are implemented to spark familiarity in the anxieties felt during Covid. Upon reaching the end there is a teleporter which seamlessly transitions you to the next circular room, where you'll encounter these very imposing, pandemic-related words. The idea for this second room was to further emphasize the more tangible aspects of the pandemic, with words like "Unemployment" and "Death" being very real situations which we've all had to deal with. The end of this room transports you to the beginning, except this time everything's more chaotic as you've had to push your way through the letters the previous time. This is meant to symbolize the monotony of our lives under quarantine and the fear that comes with it.

Development

We were all pretty new when it came to coding and using Unity so we wanted to make something simple yet presented the topic in an engaging way.
The layout of the rooms is something that we kept changing due to difficulties with scripting however we managed to fix the issues by having the rooms themselves be round. Apart from scripting, we also had to work out how to import models from Maya properly and that was also something we were all unfamiliar with. Despite these challenges, the overall process ran smoothly and we mainly used Discord to talk and share code with each other. We all regularly communicated and shared screenshots and videos of our work. One of the things that might have made the process easier would've been using the Unity Collaborate option, that way we could've all worked on the same file without having to send in scripts to one computer. Either way we feel like using Discord was an easy and intuitive way to quickly share our progress.

Summary

Mind Loop was developed for the CAVE2 Virtual Environment in the Electronic Visualization Laboratory (EVL) at UIC. This VR project was an exciting learning experience that teaches students how to communicate different topics. Mind Loop is a strive to bring mental health awareness during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mind Loop emphasizes the Covid anxiety that we are still living in by reiterating the participant to go through this never -ending cycle of words and sounds that provoke anxiety. The anxiety-provoking word "COVID"(a grabbable object) is blocking the vision of the participant who needs to interact with the words in order to move them out the way. The never-ending cycle of the pandemic is shown through the use of the teleporter that the participant collides with. The second room serves to highlight personal stories of how people felt during the start of the pandemic. This serves to bring familiarity and connection between the participant and the stories heard. Overall, this project was developed in Unity for the purpose of bringing a real word experience into a virtual reality realm that casts Covid anxieties.
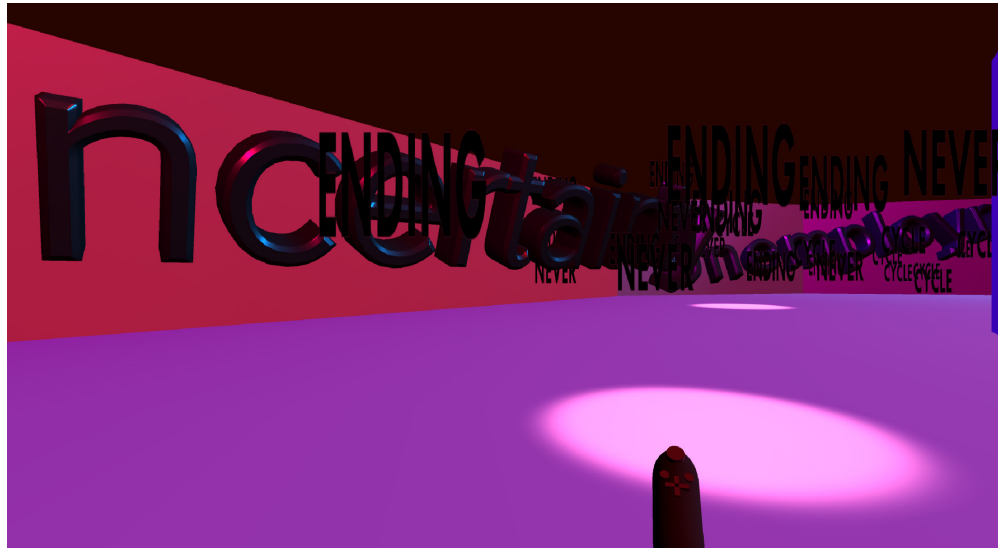
The participant has to pick up the word "COVID" to unblock their vision to get to the next room.

In this second room, the COVID news broadcast will keep on playing. In this case, the words related to COVID are not interactable.

The round spotlights on the floor have a collision script attached to them that initiates the personal story sound effect to play.

Once teleported back to the first room, the words "COVID" will remain how the participant left them to emphasize the desperation of our lives under quarantine.