



**GAMES FOR HEALTH EUROPE**  
**2025**

# CO-DESIGNING AN ESCAPE ROOM FOR E-MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING

A Research Through Design Approach

# WOUTER / PROFESSOR MEDIA DESIGN

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<https://brains4buildings.org/>



*Photo generated by prompting Midjourney:*  
**"A WOMAN OPERATING A THERMOSTAT IN AN OFFICE BUILDING  
FOCUS ON INTERACTION"**



## TAKE-AWAY

A co-designed escape room is effective and engaging for training mental health care professionals in e-mental health practices.

# EMH ADOPTION IS SLOW

## eMental Health

Increasing number of effective digital tools

High production demand

- Minimal room for exploration
- Minimal room for innovation
- High demands for ROI

Lack of knowledge and skills



Photo by World Sikh Organization of Canada

# EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING REQUIRED

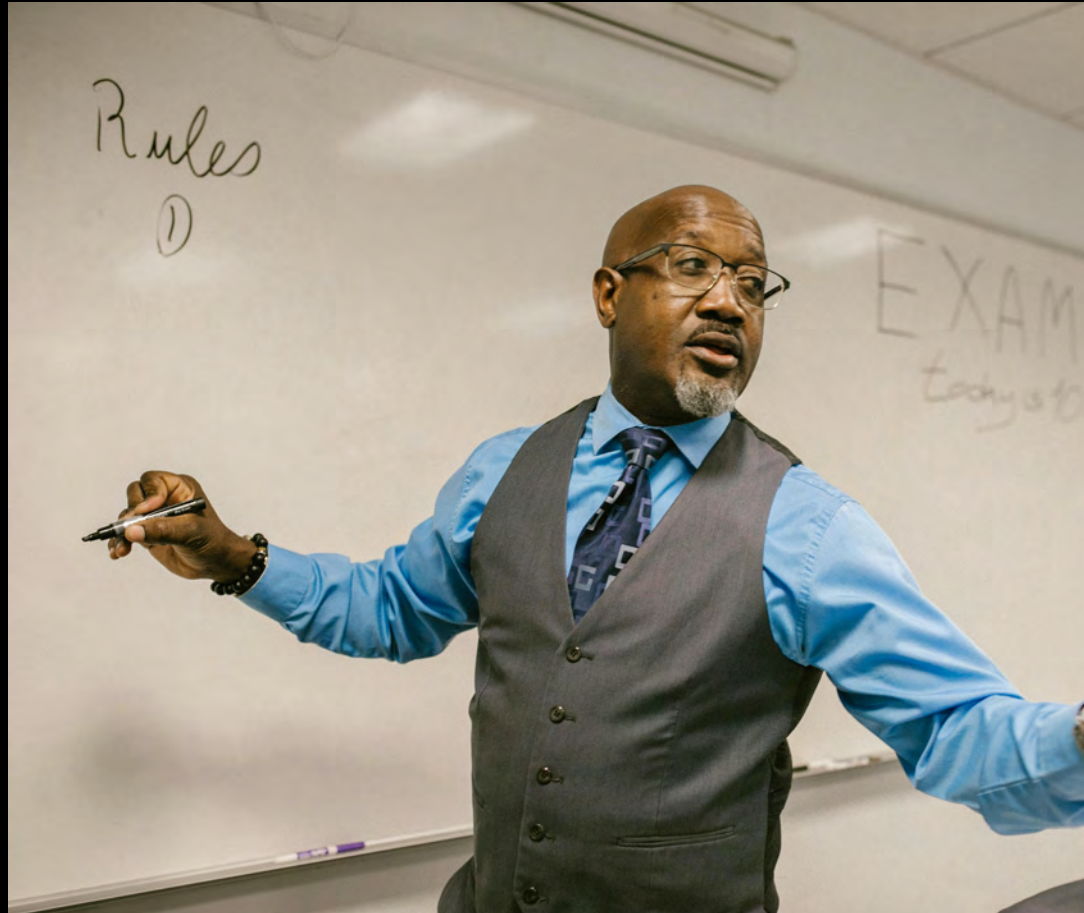


Photo by RDNE Stock project

- Current training methods are rather traditional, for example in classrooms or in self-directed e-learning modules
- Mental health professionals need practical, engaging training to effectively use e-mental health tools: experiential training



# EDUCATIONAL ESCAPE ROOM COULD RESOLVE

## Engagement

- Escape rooms provide an immersive and interactive learning experience.

## Practical Skills

- The escape room design allows for the application of e-mental health principles in realistic scenarios.

## Co-Design

- A Research Through Design (RTD) approach ensures the training is tailored to user needs.

## Knowledge Gain

- Significant improvements in participants' knowledge of e-mental health principles were observed.

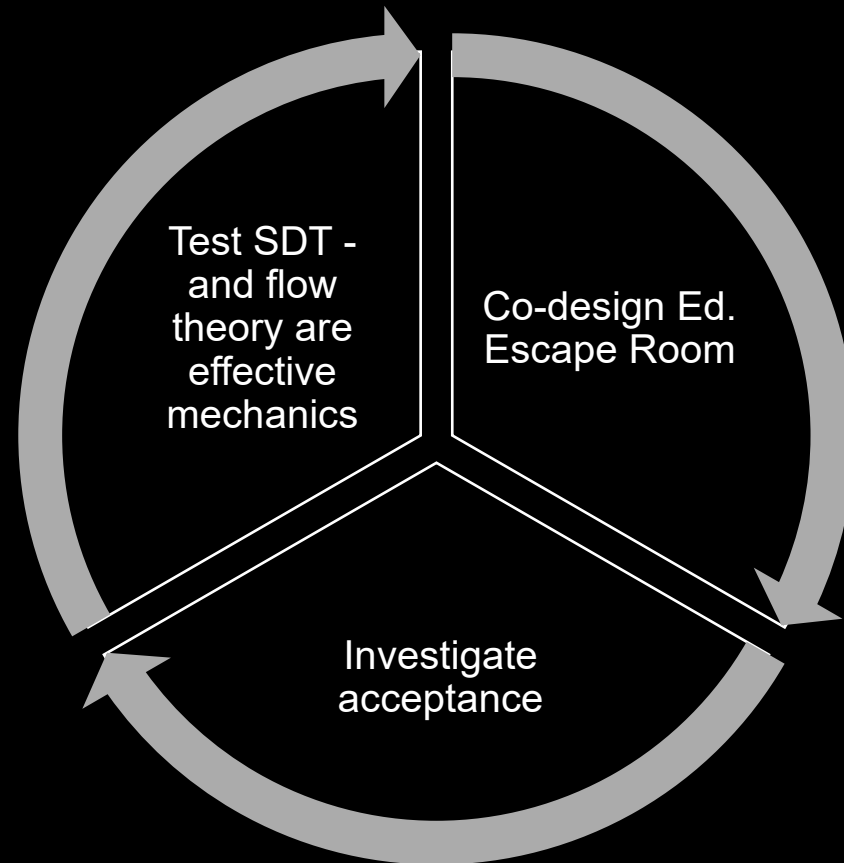


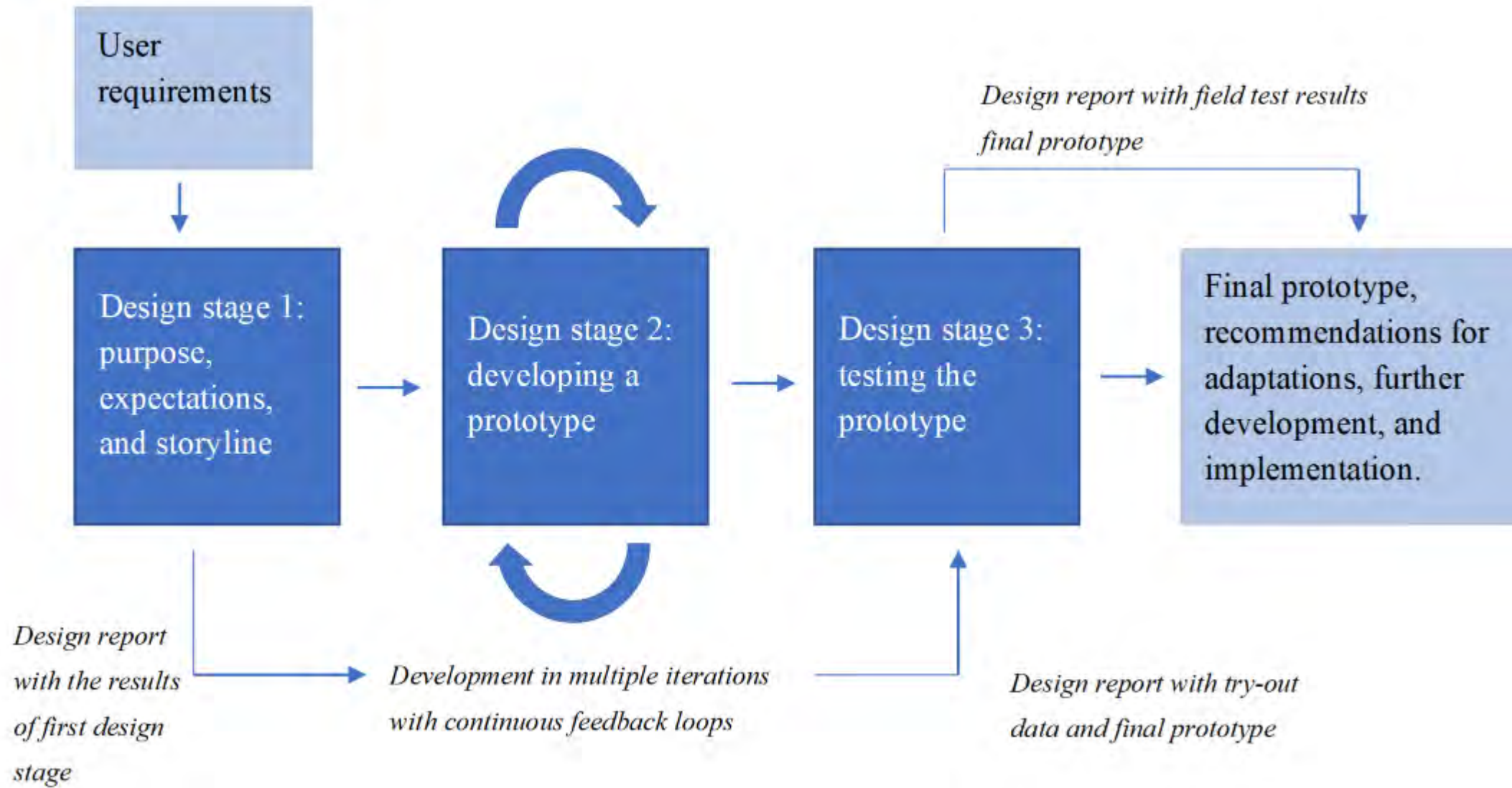
21

Whiteboard with notes and diagrams.



# STUDY EDUCATIONAL ESCAPE ROOM, ACCEPTANCE AND GAME EFFECTIVENESS





We missen  
succes verhalen  
v. eHealth

eHealth support niet  
te vinden.

Wie kan me  
helpen?  
Uitdagend  
om hulp te  
vinden

Te veel informatie  
Verwarrend?!?

Why?   
geld.  
porde  
pauze  
verkeerder.

Topdown  
opgelegd  
(100% online)

Match tussen  
inhoud en  
aanbod in  
onduidelijk

Behandelaar  
overschot  
Zich zelf  
in onderschot  
de cliënt



Dassie voor  
de inhoud,  
voor mensen

eHealth is  
niet "kak" -  
willen zelf  
uitleggen.

eHealth  
kost veel tijd  
(denkt men)

Angst voor  
verlies van  
betekenis

eHealth is  
meer persoonlijk

eHealth  
moet stop-ten-stop  
begeleid worden

Mind District  
(n.v. beeldbellen)

Werkwijzen  
beeldbellen.

Invloed hebben  
op de inhoud  
v.d. online modules.   
↳ eigen  
tools maken  
en delen

eHealth moet  
"Supereasy"  
zijn.

Van angst naar  
vertrouwen.

! succes  
ervaringen  
→ cliënten voelen  
zich gehoord &  
empowered.

→ therapeut is  
efficiënt &  
effectief.



Zelfvertrouwen  
&  
delen v. ervaring.

meer  
vrijheid  
ervaren

IDEE:  
cliënten  
maken een  
filmpje om  
zich voor te stellen  
in hun eigen  
huis

(ÉN WEDERZIJDS)  
→ welke vanuit  
de instelling.

Sommige  
mensen hebben  
waarschijnlijk expertise  
die gedeeld wordt  
(e.g. via filmpjes)  
- voor cliënt én  
behandelaar

# TAKE AWAYS CO-DESIGN SESSIONS

## Participant needs

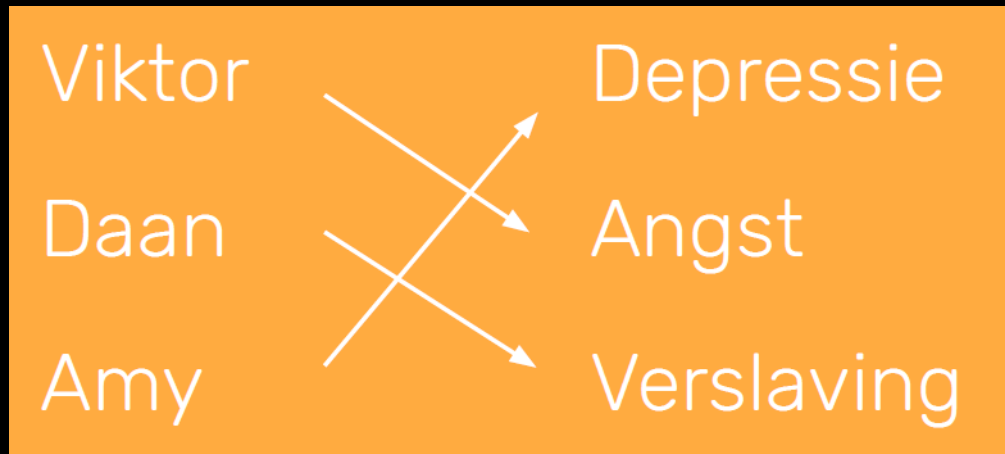
- Sense of purpose
- Expect robust technology
- Genuine learning experience
- Realistic and sufficiently complex storylines
- Multiple client types to create sufficient reach

## Requirements

- Story line that evolves around helping a client with a specific problem
- Portable format
- No workarounds: eMH is required to unlock the vaults
- Introduction and reflection required

# ESCAPE ROOM DESIGN

Narrative centered on three virtual patient cases.





061512981

Papa ging altijd mee naar  
atletiek. Ik mis die momenten  
wel, die waren altijd erg fijn.



# WHICH E-HEALTH APPLICATIONS WERE CONSIDERED?

## Conventional:

- Minddistrict
- Video calls

## Somewhat new:

- Whatsapp
- Aiding websites
- Clientportal
- Online screening

- Augmented Reality
- 360 photography
- Biofeedback (incl wearables)

- Puzzles related to data privacy, online therapeutic alliance, and online resource navigation.





# DESIGN STUDIES

## Test sessions (prototype validation)

- Technical performance essential for game flow
- Facilitator required for introduction and reflection
- Explanation of purpose essential for key-take aways
- Flexibility required to adopt story lines and to adapt complexity

## Field study sessions (acceptance)

- Creates open mindset towards eMH and is fun and educational
- High perceived usability for first exploration, more is needed for skill enhancement
- Organisational support required to integrate escape room in training programs

## SDT AND FLOW

Results:

- Observations, evaluations and questionnaire indicate that the principles of self determination theory and flow in this escape room were successfully implemented to explore and experience the possibilities in eMH.



Photo by Eren Li

# EDUCATIONAL ESCAPE ROOM FOR PROFESSIONALS

The resulting escape room

reinforces the value of co-design and gamification in professional development

Highlights the potential of educational escape rooms for enhancing e-mental health training.

## PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Bierbooms J, Sluis-Thiescheffer W, Feijt M, Bongers I  
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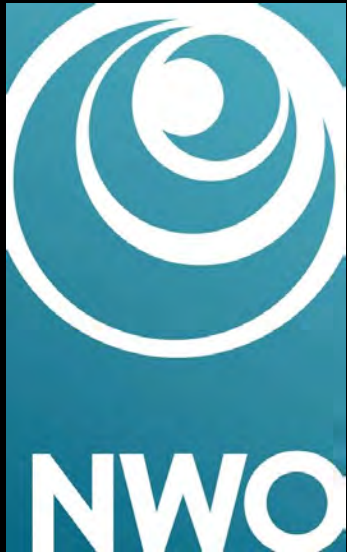
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