



OVERVIEW

Psychonauts 2 tells a serious story that never takes itself too seriously. It approaches mental health with compassion and creativity, and gives players the tools to empathize with the people around them.

LESSONS

Translate overall storytelling techniques to characterization - while dialogue and actions are important, symbolism, metaphor, and allegory can capture deeper levels of a character, making it easier for the player to see them as a person and not an abstract idea.

Pay attention to implications - while using realistic conflicts can ground a story, they also mean you have to contend with the real-world implications of those events.

Let players figure things out - when players come to realizations on their own, the effect of the realization is much stronger than if they were explicitly told.

EMPATHY & HEALING

Psychonauts 2 is exactly what it says- a game about empathy and forgiveness. These themes are built into the narrative through the game's objectives: helping people to overcome their trauma and mental health struggles through their 'mental worlds'. The player literally enters the minds of different characters, providing a unique chance to build empathy that isn't seen in more conventional stories. Additionally, the normally comedic tone enhances the emotional impact of serious moments by providing contrast between those moments and the rest of the game.

CHARACTERIZATION THROUGH SYMBOLISM

The deepest characterization in Psychonauts 2 happens in the 'Mental Worlds', metaphorical representations of characters' minds- their thought processes, emotions, worldview, etc. The representations enhance the emotional impact of each level by linking them to familiar objects and situations and letting players make the connections themselves. Even if players don't have personal experience with the issue at hand, they understand how said issue can affect someone and, through the process of connecting signifier to signified, feel a bit of how it would affect them. Levels like Bob's Bottles impart strong emotions through their layered symbolism.

