



Warrior GMR
Foundation

Gaming is Good

Transforming Veteran Mental Health

Harnessing the Science of Gaming and the Power of Generative AI to
Transform Veteran Mental Health

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Executive Summary

A Dire Situation

The VA has spent over \$100B on veteran mental health over the past decade and will spend \$17.2B in 2024. 60,000 veterans have died by suicide in the past decade, with 22 veterans dying by suicide each day. 8,030 veterans are estimated to die by suicide this year alone. This rate is four times higher than the number of veteran deaths in combat since 9/11. Addressing this crisis requires innovative solutions that target the root causes of loneliness, isolation, and depression among veterans.

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Our Solution: Changing Behaviors

This white paper introduces a groundbreaking approach developed by the Warrior GMR Foundation (WGMR) in collaboration with August Interactive. Our partnership leverages the cutting-edge capabilities of Generative AI alongside the therapeutic benefits of gaming to transform veteran mental health. Generative AI enables us to create personalized, adaptive experiences that resonate deeply with veterans, addressing their unique mental health challenges. By embedding therapeutic interventions within the gaming environment, we can influence behaviors, promote resilience, and foster a sense of belonging. This initiative not only entertains but also heals, offering veterans the tools they need to thrive in their post-service lives. Join us in making a lasting impact on the lives of those who have served our country by harnessing the science of gaming and the power of generative AI.



Introduction

Veterans encounter extraordinary challenges as they transition back to civilian life, often battling mental health issues like PTSD, anxiety, and depression. This journey can lead to overwhelming feelings of isolation and loneliness. While traditional therapies offer valuable support, emerging evidence reveals that the fusion of gaming and advanced technologies, such as Generative AI, holds unprecedented potential in revolutionizing mental health care for veterans.

The Science of Gaming Meets the Power of Gen AI

A Quantum Leap Forward in Veteran Mental Health

1. The Science of Gaming

Gaming provides a unique medium that offers veterans a dynamic and engaging way to interact with their environment, facilitating mental health improvements that are both effective and enjoyable. Scientific research supports the notion that gaming can significantly reduce stress, anxiety, and depression by immersing players in environments where they can focus on strategic objectives and teamwork. The interactive nature of gaming allows veterans to experience a sense of accomplishment and progress, which can be crucial for mental well-being. By leveraging the science of gaming, we create experiences that are not only entertaining but also therapeutic, providing veterans with a platform to enhance cognitive functions, build resilience, and foster a strong sense of community.

2. The Power of Generative AI

Generative AI introduces a revolutionary tool for mental health intervention, with the ability to create personalized, adaptive experiences that resonate deeply with individual veterans. Gen AI can process vast amounts of unstructured data to generate new content that meets the specific needs of each player, ensuring that the gaming experience is tailored to their unique mental health challenges. This capability allows us to design micro-interactions within the game that encourage positive behaviors and discourage negative ones, effectively guiding veterans toward healthier mental states. The combination of AI's adaptability and gaming's immersive nature provides a powerful platform for addressing complex mental health issues in ways that are both impactful and enduring.

3. Changing People's Behaviors

Changing behavior is one of the most challenging aspects of mental health treatment, but with the combined power of Generative AI and gaming, we are equipped with a potent tool to drive meaningful change. By embedding therapeutic elements directly into the gameplay, we can subtly influence veterans' behaviors in real-time, reinforcing positive actions and discouraging harmful ones. This approach allows us to create an environment where veterans are continually engaged and motivated to improve their mental health. The seamless integration of AI-driven interventions within an engaging gaming experience offers a unique and effective way to support veterans in their journey toward better mental health, ultimately helping them build resilience, reconnect with their communities, and thrive in their post-service lives.



Social Health, Emotional Health and Community Building

Social and Emotional Health

1. Connection

Our cooperative multiplayer game and gaming communities offer veterans a platform to connect with others who share similar interests and experiences. These connections can be instrumental in building new friendships and a sense of community. Participating in group activities within a game can foster teamwork and collaboration, helping veterans feel part of a cohesive group. In addition, fostering a sense of connectedness with others is one of the most significant risk-mitigating factors for depression.

2. Peer Support

Veterans can find solace in sharing their experiences with peers who understand their background. Our vision of online gaming provides a non-judgmental space where veterans can talk about their challenges, share their experiences and offer advice, and support one another. This peer support network can be crucial for mental health, as it provides both emotional support and practical advice on navigating post-service life. Shared experiences are the primary way humans bond with one another – our gameplay will be designed from the ground up to create situations where veterans can experience enjoyment with their peers and strengthen the relationships they have with one another.

Community Building

1. Create Safe Spaces

Safe and supportive environments within the game are crucial for veterans to feel comfortable sharing their experiences and challenges. By incorporating features such as moderated forums, safe chat functions, and community guidelines, we can ensure that veterans have the opportunity for a positive and inclusive gaming experience.

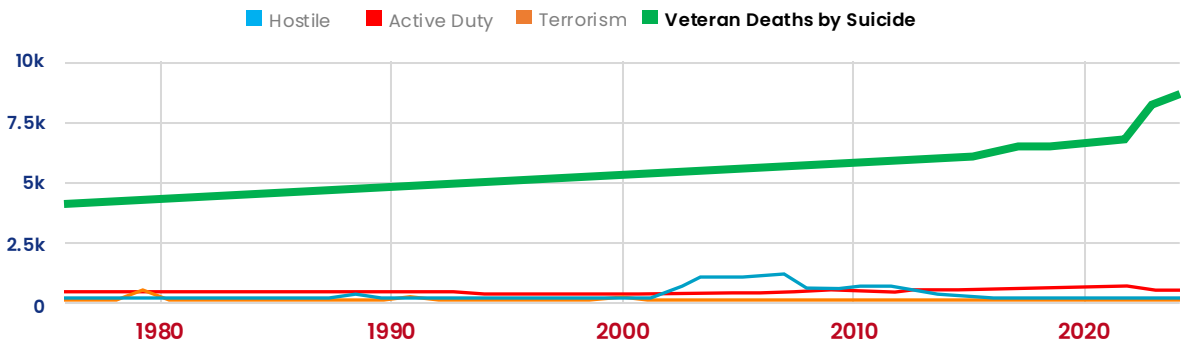
2. Foster Inclusivity

The game will be designed to be accessible to all veterans, regardless of their physical abilities or technological proficiency. This inclusivity ensures that every veteran can participate and benefit from the game, helping to create a diverse and supportive community.



Veteran Statistics

Depression, isolation, and loneliness are significant, complex and multifaceted issues among veterans and are influenced by a range of factors from combat experiences to the difficulties of reintegration into civilian life. "In 2021, research found that 30,177 active duty personnel and veterans who served in the military after 9/11 have died by suicide - compared to the 7,057 service members killed in combat in those same 20 years. That is, military suicide rates are four times higher than deaths that occurred during military operations.



1. Loneliness

Loneliness is a significant issue among veterans. A study conducted by the Department of Veterans Affairs found that many veterans report feeling lonely, especially during the initial transition to civilian life. This loneliness can lead to further mental health issues if not addressed promptly. (Veterans Affairs Department, 2024). A study by the American Legion in 2019 found that nearly 60% of veterans reported feeling chronically lonely even when physically surrounded by friends and family.

2. Isolation

Veterans often feel socially isolated due to the loss of camaraderie and support that they experienced during their service. The civilian world can seem alien and unwelcoming, leading to a sense of disconnection. Addressing this isolation through gaming can help veterans rebuild a sense of belonging (Veterans Affairs Department, 2024).

3. Depression

Depression rates among veterans are notably high, with the National Institute of Mental Health reporting that veterans are more likely to experience major depressive disorder than the general population. Factors such as PTSD, chronic pain, and the aforementioned loneliness and isolation contribute to this increased prevalence (Veterans Affairs Department, 2024).



Veteran Statistics

The Game Concept

Our game is designed with features specifically aimed at addressing these issues:

1. Multiplayer Modes

Multiplayer modes encourage social interaction and teamwork, essential components for building a sense of community. By creating missions and challenges that require cooperation, veterans can develop bonds and friendships that include variables beyond the gameplay.

2. Narrative Therapy

Incorporating storylines that reflect veterans' experiences allows for a form of narrative therapy, where players can process their experiences in a safe and controlled environment. This approach helps in dealing with trauma and provides a sense of validation and understanding.

3. Mindfulness Elements

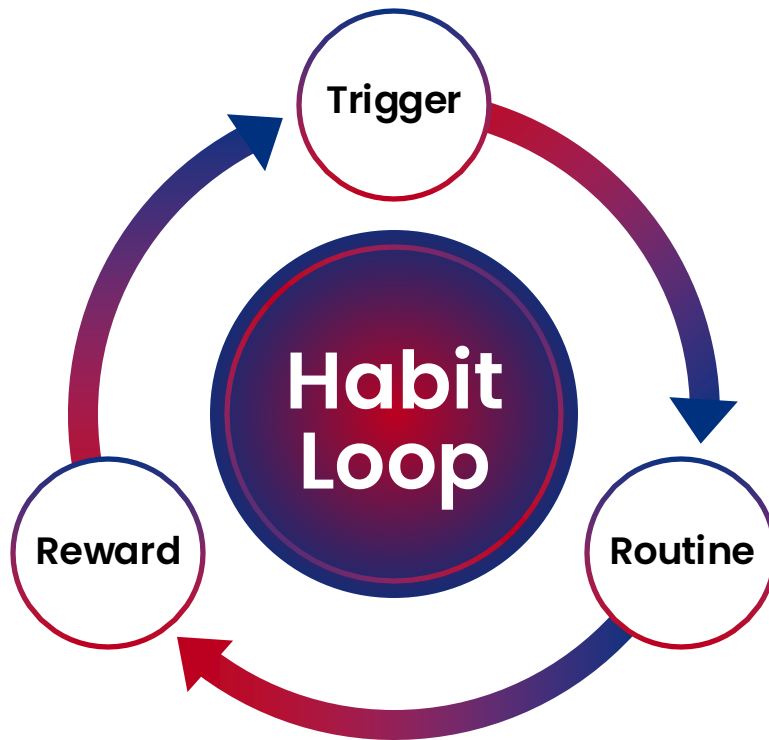
The game will include mindfulness techniques to help players gain, regain, or maintain composure, build resilience, and cognitive development, resulting in increased game performance. These elements are integrated into the gameplay to help veterans manage anxiety and improve overall mental health through fun mechanics that reward composure, presence and awareness. Games with progression mechanics that we value include Helldivers 2, It Takes Two, and Celeste. Mechanics designed to encourage social interaction, teamwork, and communication foster a sense of community and help veterans build supportive relationships. Narrative design that reflects relatable challenges provides a space and place to process experiences in a safe environment. Ultimately, game mechanics promoting a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose are essential for reducing isolation and building connections.

4. Constant Iteration and Improvement

We will learn about the most effective game designs, features, mechanics, interventions, and therapeutic approaches as veterans play the game and provide feedback. Our intention is to start with known best practices, but we will constantly improve the game as a consequence of that feedback to create even larger positive impacts over time. The game will act as a constant source of data about what is working, what isn't, and what might be even better than what we're currently doing.



How Our Game Helps



By integrating these elements, our game aims to:

How We Impact Veteran Mental Health

Our game leverages the science of gaming and the power of Generative AI to create a highly engaging reward-based learning environment that is rooted in the Trigger-Behavior-Reward model and the habit loop. By designing gameplay that incorporates specific triggers—such as in-game challenges or scenarios that resonate with veterans' real-life experiences—we encourage desired behaviors like teamwork, problem-solving, or mindfulness practices. These behaviors are then immediately followed by rewards, which could range from in-game achievements to positive feedback, all carefully tailored by Generative AI to resonate with each veteran's unique motivations. This cycle of Trigger-Behavior-Reward not only reinforces positive actions but also builds lasting habits that extend beyond the game into veterans' daily lives. Through this approach, we help veterans cultivate resilience, improve mental health, and foster positive behavioral change in a way that is both enjoyable and sustainable.

Conclusion

The Warrior GMR Foundation is at the forefront of a pioneering movement to transform veteran mental health. By harnessing the profound science of gaming and the cutting-edge capabilities of Generative AI, we are not merely creating a game—we are crafting a lifeline for veterans grappling with the invisible wounds of trauma. This initiative offers far more than entertainment; it is a powerful, innovative tool designed to heal.

The potential to significantly reduce loneliness, combat social isolation, and alleviate depression among veterans through our immersive and engaging gameplay is unparalleled. Our game is meticulously designed to foster a supportive community, instill a renewed sense of purpose, and provide a safe space where veterans can process their experiences and rebuild their lives. This is more than a game—it is a beacon of hope and resilience for those who have sacrificed so much.

Call to Action

We invite you to join us in this innovative project by providing the necessary funding and resources. Together, we can create a game that not only entertains but also heals, offering veterans the support they need to thrive. Your support is critical to bringing this vision to life and making a lasting impact on the lives of those who have served our country. Let's honour their sacrifice by giving them a place and space with the tools they want to build a brighter, healthier future.

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