

12. Progression & Rewards

Progression in *Escapism* is tightly linked to emotional growth rather than traditional power scaling. Each reward represents a step toward self-acceptance and awareness.

- **Core Progression:**
 - Abilities are unlocked by confronting and overcoming emotional manifestations (bosses).
 - Each ability reflects emotional insight rather than raw strength.
- **Ability Examples:**
 - *Calm*: Slows time briefly, allowing careful navigation and combat.
 - *Courage*: Enables forward dash through obstacles or enemies.
 - *Acceptance*: Allows interaction with previously hostile environments.
- **Narrative Rewards:**
 - Short internal monologues or visual memories unlocked after major encounters.
 - Environmental changes reflecting the protagonist's mental healing.
- **Optional Rewards:**
 - Hidden areas representing repressed thoughts.
 - Collectibles that deepen story understanding but are not required to finish the game.
- **Player Motivation Systems:**
 - Emotional curiosity (understanding the self)
 - Mechanical curiosity (unlocking new traversal options)
 - Completion incentives for exploration-focused players

13. Risks & Challenges

- **Thematic Risk:**
 - Mental health themes may be misinterpreted or feel too heavy if not handled carefully.
 - Mitigation: Use symbolism and visual storytelling instead of direct exposition.
- **Design Risk:**
 - Metroidvania maps can become overly complex.
 - Mitigation: Strong visual landmarks and clear ability gating.
- **Technical Risk:**
 - Scope creep due to too many environments or mechanics.
 - Mitigation: Focus on a small number of highly polished emotional areas.

- **Time Constraints:**
 - Balancing narrative depth with development deadlines.
 - Mitigation: Lock core mechanics early and iterate only on content.

14. Development Plan

Development follows a staged, milestone-based approach suitable for a team.

Phase 1: Pre-Production

- Finalising core concepts and themes
- Decide engine and tools
- Create rough map layout and ability list

Phase 2: Prototype

- Implement player movement and camera
- Basic combat system
- One test enemy and one ability

Phase 3: Vertical Slice

- One complete emotional area
- One boss fight with narrative payoff
- Temporary art and audio

Phase 4: Full Production

- Remaining areas and bosses
- Art and animation polish
- Sound design integration

Phase 5: Polish & QA

- Bug fixing
- Balance adjustments
- Performance optimization

Tools Used:

- Game Engine: Unity
- Version Control: GitHub
- Art: TBA
- Audio: TBA