| **Vampire Therapist Combines Supernatural Comedy with Real Cognitive Therapy to Transform Interactive Experiences**  *In an increasingly crowded gaming space that is ripe with repetition, players are looking for new ways and new types of content to engage with. This is where Vampire Therapist looks to stand out. Developed by Little Bat Games and slated for a July 18th release, this innovative game blends cognitive behavioral therapy with vampire lore, offering a novel gameplay experience that enlightens while it entertains.*  *Players step into the shoes of the titular vampire therapist and engage with historical vampire clients to navigate complex mental health issues and behaviors through a series of therapy sessions. We sat down with Cyrus Nemati, the Creative Director of Vampire Therapist to discuss this unique mix of fantastical humor and real therapy-based gameplay mechanics.*  *In a podcast interview for journalists, Nemati discusses the creative process behind Vampire Therapist, including how the game is looking to use its comedic cast of vampires to make mental health discussions more accessible.*  *Here is what he had to say:*  **Q: Cyrus, thank you so much for joining us today. I know you are busy as we are just days away from the release of your game, Vampire Therapist. How are things going as you approach the launch?**  **Nemati:** Thank you for having me. I'm very excited to discuss Vampire Therapist and am happy to share that the game is nearly ready for release. At this point, I am primarily focused on bug fixing. All voiceover work is completed, the gameplay is fully implemented, and all additional features are finalized. Now, it is just a matter of polishing until the release day on July 18th.  **Q: Fantastic. So, let’s delve in here. Could you describe the premise of the game? The title offers some hints, but we would love to hear more details about what players can expect.**  **Nemati:** Certainly. As the title suggests, Vampire Therapist involves playing the role of a therapist who is also a vampire. Your clients are vampires as well, and you will use real cognitive behavioral therapy terminology to assess their thoughts and help them achieve inner peace.  **Q: There seems to be a blend of absurdity and serious thematic elements. Can you elaborate on the tone players should expect from the game?**  **Nemati:** Vampire Therapist is fundamentally a comedy game. While many games addressing mental health tend to be quite heavy, I aimed to create something that was focused on entertaining first and foremost. The primary gameplay mechanic revolves around therapy and we handle that with care, but the comedic, silly nature of the vampire characters sets the tone. They come from various historical eras as well, which we use to create a lot of the humor.  **Q: Is the game purely satirical? Or does it include earnest elements? For instance, are there moments during therapy sessions that are serious?**  **Nemati:** We took a heartfelt approach with Vampire Therapist, despite the comedic overtones. The humor primarily comes from the vampire characters, but the problems they are dealing with are real problems that the characters care about and are invested in. The reason we picked vampires to do therapy on is that vampires are still human. They have human problems and human concerns that they have been carrying for a very long time. So we are getting into the nitty gritty and talking about experiences that are relatable and will resonate with the player. The vampire part – the immortal part – I think softens a lot of the harder edges. So it makes the conversation a bit easier. When a character has been dead for hundreds of years, certain wounds become scabbed over and easier to talk about.  **Q: Balancing comedy and earnestness seems challenging. Could you explain the gameplay mechanics? Is there a similar game that players might be familiar with?**  **Nemati:** I have not seen any games that use real mental health principles in this manner. But gameplay-wise, Vampire Therapist is akin to the Phoenix Wright series, where you challenge statements with evidence. Here, you challenge cognitive distortions, which are emotionally or socially driven thoughts misaligned with reality. These distortions are categorized in clinical therapy, and you will learn and apply these categories to your clients' statements.  **Q: It is evident that you treat the mental health aspects with care. The player’s toolkit includes real therapeutic terms and techniques, correct?**  **Nemati:** Exactly. Throughout the game, you will learn 13 different cognitive distortions that you can apply as you progress.  **Q: Undertaking such a nuanced and complex topic must have been challenging for your first project at Little Bat Games. Why did you choose this approach?**  **Nemati:** I enjoy a challenge. My interests lie in history, psychology, and acting, and this game combines all of those elements with some comedy thrown in as well. It is a really tough line to walk, as you've said, which is why I've taken the approach of writing the game as compassion first. Any client that comes to you, and we have some out there clients in this game, all of them are approached first with compassion no matter what they've done. Considering that these are vampires who have lived for hundreds of years and by their very nature they are abominable. They kill people at the very least, and they hurt lots of people. Still, we approached them with compassion first. With that leading the charge, the therapy and the comedy both became easier.  **Q: What can you tell us about some of the characters, including the therapist? Is the therapist a defined character or a blank slate for the player?**  **Nemati:** The therapist is a defined character—a Wild West cowboy gangster who, after a change of heart influenced by the transcendentalist movement of the 1800s, roams the woods for 90 years. He gains an appreciation for life despite being dead and eventually goes to Europe to learn from a 3,000-year-old vampire psychologist named Anjos.  Our vampire patients are either real historical figures or inspired by them, such as Isabella d'Este, a Renaissance patron, and Edmund Kean, a notable Shakespearean actor from the late 18th century. Another of our characters was a 17th-century doctor who worked with William Harvey. He was known for his studies of the circulatory system, which is particularly relevant to a game about vampires.  These characters bring a depth to the game that goes beyond the usual vampire stereotypes like Dracula  **Q: Can you tell us more about the historical characters in "Vampire Therapist" and how you developed them?**  **Nemati:** Certainly. One of the characters I enjoyed creating is Isabella, a patron from the Renaissance who supported famous artists like Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo. She wrote like 20,000 letters, and I got to work with the historian who translated those letters. This allowed me to capture Isabella’s voice authentically for the game.  **Q: How did you ensure the psychological elements in the game were accurate and effective?**  **Nemati:** We took the game's psychological content very seriously. Alongside consulting with a historian to get historical characters like Isabella D'este right, I also worked with a consulting therapist to review the entire game.  They checked each challenge involving cognitive distortions to ensure they were depicted correctly. That said, even though the game uses real psychological concepts, it's meant to be educational and not too technical. We're not training players to be psychologists, but we aim to increase awareness and understanding of psychological principles. It's important that players know not to use the game to diagnose or analyze others; it’s about exploring self-awareness and personal growth in an engaging and fun way.  **Q: What do you hope players will take away from their experience with Vampire Therapist?**  **Nemati:** I hope players understand that cognitive distortions are a normal part of being human. Experiencing difficulties *is* natural. The game aims to normalize these experiences and encourage compassion for oneself and others. By applying these concepts to quirky and humorous characters, the process becomes less confrontational.  **Q: That is an empowering message. What would you say to someone considering whether to try Vampire Therapist?**  **Nemati:** Vampire Therapist is primarily about having fun. It features a colorful cast of characters and top-notch voice actors. While it has educational aspects, it is designed to be entertaining first and accessible to a wide range of audiences. There are no lose-states in the game. So anyone can jump in and help these vampires find inner peace.  **Q: Excellent. One more time for us, where and when can players access Vampire Therapist?**  **Nemati:** Vampire Therapist will be available on Steam and GOG.com on July 18th for PC, Mac, and Linux, with hopes of expanding to more platforms in the future.  **Q: Thank you for your time today, Cyrus. Congratulations to you and the team at Little Bat Games on the upcoming launch.**  **Nemati:** Thank you.  ### | *Cyrus Nemati,*  *Founder and Creative Director,*  *Little Bat Games / Vampire Therapist* |
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