



PLAY ALONG

PROPOSAL FOR "LET KIDS BE KIDS – IDEA CHALLENGE"

SHORT DESCRIPTION



Play Along ('leg med') bridges the gap between child and the unfamiliar hospital through an invitation to play. The invitation to play reaches beyond the hospital by sending home a *Play Along* kit prior to the first meeting with the hospital, establishing a foundation for play throughout the entire patient journey.



ESTABLISHING FAMILIARITY

” Conceptualizing Play

Utilizing the concept of play as a quasi-object to reimagine the reception of children, and to establish familiarity with the hospital prior to the first meeting with the hospital.

The Play Along kit serves as a medium, which transforms the hospital from a scary non-space into a familiar playground. The current design of the hospital creates social networks, which creates distance between the child and the treatment. The *Play Along* kit disrupts these networks, and shows how play can be used to reconfigure the social space of the hospital.

Play as a Quasi Object

A quasi object is an inclusive medium through which social interactions is created. If the hospital is a non-space then play is the quasi-object that can reconstitute the social space of a traditional hospital environment by introducing new social relations.



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” The Patient Journey

Louise is 9 years old and has just visited her doctor. The doctor is worried that Louise might have cancer, and her parents are terrified of the possible prospects. The doctor has referred Louise and her parents to the oncology department at Riget. A week later, Louise and her parents receive a *Play Along* kit. The kit contains a teddy-bear and a LEGO-set. The LEGO set consists of a friendly LEGO doctor, a small LEGO replica of the teddy-bear and a LEGO MR-scanner, all placed in an easy to assemble LEGO version of the new hospital at Riget. Inside the kit is also a small leaflet written for Louise’s parents by Riget in collaboration with the Danish Psychologists Association. The leaflet instructs Louise’s parents on how they can use the *Play Along* in the weeks up to the initial contact with the hospital and guides them with advice on how to talk to their children about illness. Besides the physical kit, *Play Along* also exists as an app with playful educational videos, stories and games.

Changing The First Encounter

The Play Along kit moves the first encounter with the hospital to the safe environment of the child’s home and thereby utilizing one safe zone to establishing another.



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The Patient Journey

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A few weeks pass, and Louise and her parents go to Riget for their initial meeting. Louise has her teddy-bear with her, which she has grown very fond of. When they go, Louise recognizes the lobby from the LEGO and the educational videos: It has the same funny LEGO sculptures that await her on the other side of the door, and the same LEGO-castle reception desk. Louise and her parents go up to the desk where they check in together. There is a staircase, enabling Louise to climb to eyelevel and check in her teddy-bear while her parents check Louise in right beside her. Louise's parents are told that a doctor will be with them in half an hour, and until then they can take a walk around the Teddy-bear hospital.

Psycho-Educating Parents

Play Along works as what in Danish is known as "psykoedukere", helping the parents talk to their children about the illness.



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The Patient Journey

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A young girl, working at the hospital, comes up to Louise, Teddy and the parents. Since Teddy is checked in, they can now do a tour of the teddy-hospital together and make sure that the teddy is OK. Together, while waiting for the doctor, they make their way around the teddy-bear hospital, where Louise and the young girl get to play with all the different machines. Teddy has his X-ray taken and his stomach turns out to be filled with buttons and cotton. Teddy's arm is hurting, and the young girl puts bandages on it. Finally, Teddy has an MR-scan taken inside a teddy-bear-size scanner in the teddy-bear hospital.

When the doctor shows up half an hour later than expected, it's not a problem, because Louise and Teddy have been playing in the teddy-bear hospital the whole time. And because Louise knows what is going to happen, and because she has seen it and played through it herself, she is no longer worried. In fact, while she might be a bit nervous, she recognizes all the familiar elements from all of her playful and fun experiences from the first encounter.

Play The Treatment

Using Play Along, the child plays its own treatment process with the LEGO teddy-bear. The LEGO kit familiarizes the child with the medical equipment. This play-experience is repeated at the hospital where the child visits the teddy-bear hospital. In the teddy-bear hospital the child plays the teddy-bears patient journey, using the same machines, the child will later encounter. In this way Play Along ensures a familiarity, which carries through the entire treatment.



KEY ACTIONS



- Identify and establish partnerships. In this example, we have used LEGO, but for other possible partners, see below.
- Design the lobby of the new hospital in a fun playable theme (e.g. LEGO) and the waiting area in a teddy-bear hospital theme.
- Design the reception with a staircase, meeting the children at eye level
- Create Play Along kits to be sent home to children prior to their arrival at the hospital, which contains:
 - Link to download the Play Along app
 - A teddy-bear
 - LEGO miniature replicas of the reception and the waiting area. This should include a LEGO teddy-bear, a LEGO doctor, LEGO hospital machine (MR).
 - A written guide for the parents detailing how to play with the different elements of the kit, as well as what the intended purpose of receiving the kit.

” POSSIBLE PARTNERS

- LEGO, whom we have reached out to and they have shown interest in the project
- BRIO
- Teddy the Guardian smart toy for combining healthcare and play <http://teddytheguardian.com/>
- Danish Psychologists Association
- Teddy-bear hospital (Bamsehospitalet) for equipment, facilitation and experience) <http://bamsehospitalet.com/bamsehospitalet/index.html>
- Volunteers or student workers from Danish nursing and medical schools to help run the teddy-bear hospital

” FURTHER IDEAS

- Making the route to e.g. the MR-room a teddy-bear treasure hunt, where the children need to follow funny drawings on the wall
- Theme rooms e.g. if you follow the pirate ship on the walls, you will get to the pirate room, where the MR-scanner is (maybe dressed as a pirate ship)
- Creating furniture in the waiting area for both children and adults