

PLAY WITH PURPOSE — GRADE 5 · TAKING OWNERSHIP, EVEN WHEN LIFE IS MESSY

The Case of the Worst Day Ever

Developer: Hero Game Co | 2025 | Family Friendly | Steam Tags: Cozy, Cute, Deduction
Steam \$12.99 · itch.io \$12.99 · Windows, Mac, Linux · 97% Positive on Steam ·
Text-based (confident reading required) · Progressive hint system · 6–8 hours across ten
self-contained chapters of 30–60 minutes each

Primary DGO: DGO 15 — Become More Accepting of Others

Supporting DGOs: DGO 4 (Overcoming Self-Pity) · DGO 10 (Slow Down in Study and Consumption)

Best For: Ages 10–14 · Confident readers — the game is text-based with no voice acting · Excellent as a collaborative read-aloud game for developing readers · One chapter per session is the natural rhythm

Grade 5 Theme: Taking Ownership, Even When Life is Messy — the game's ten family members are all so consumed by their own catastrophe that they can't see anyone else's. Your child is the only one who takes ownership of the full picture. That's the curriculum.

How the Game Works

A family has gathered for a celebration. Someone has graduated. A banner hangs proudly. The food is laid out. The photo is about to be taken. And every single person in the frame — from the granny to the toddler to the family dog — looks absolutely miserable. Not politely disappointed. Not mildly inconvenienced. Properly, dramatically, catastrophically miserable. Your child's job is to find out why.

That's the entire game. Ten chapters. Ten family members — humans and pets included. Ten separate stories about one single, disastrous day, each experienced from a completely different perspective. The dog had a nightmare at daycare. The grandmother's bingo game went sideways. The mum's pyramid scheme imploded. The dad got humiliated. The kids were embarrassed at school. Everyone showed up to this celebration carrying their own private catastrophe, convinced that nobody else could possibly understand how bad their day was. And every single one of them is wrong.

Each chapter drops your child into a series of hand-drawn scenes from one family member's day. They click on objects, read descriptions, examine posters and timetables and phone messages and personal belongings, and collect colour-coded keywords. Then they take those keywords to a deduction board — a set of fill-in-the-blank statements — and construct the story of what went wrong. Who is this person? What were they trying to do? What went catastrophically sideways? How does their disaster connect to the family's larger picture? The game gives them the pieces and says: figure out what happened to this person.

The hint system: Three levels are available — auto-collection of keywords (easiest), nudge-style text hints that point toward the answer without giving it, and a 'how many are wrong' indicator for deduction boards. Try with no hints first. Add hints at the level that keeps the game

enjoyable rather than frustrating. The deduction challenge is part of the curriculum — but so is not giving up.

The reading requirement: Unlike Duck Detective, this game is entirely text-based — no voice acting. Your child needs to be a confident reader to engage fully. If they're developing, consider reading descriptions aloud while they examine scenes and collect keywords. The deduction boards work excellently as collaborative puzzles, and the cartoon visuals provide constant context.

Why This Game for Becoming More Accepting of Others

The game's central premise is deceptively simple and developmentally extraordinary: every family member thinks they've had the worst day. They're all right. They're also all wrong — because everyone else's day was just as terrible, in its own completely different way. Your child is the only person in the game who gets to see all ten perspectives simultaneously. That position — outside observer of a family that can't see each other's experience — is exactly the position DGO 15 is training them to occupy in real life.

DGO 15 — Become More Accepting of Others — is built through the game's structure in a way no single-protagonist game could achieve. Ten chapters, ten family members, ten systematic exercises in stepping into someone else's shoes and taking their experience seriously. A bingo disaster. A bake-off gone wrong. A pyramid scheme collapsing. These are objectively funny, low-stakes problems. The game's most important question isn't 'what happened?' — it's 'why does it matter to them?' And answering that question, repeatedly, across ten chapters and ten completely different people, builds the muscle that real acceptance requires: the willingness to believe that someone else's small problem is real to them, even if it looks ridiculous from the outside.

DGO 4 — Overcoming Self-Pity — enters the game through what the family members are doing, not what the player is doing. Every family member in *The Worst Day Ever* is so consumed by their own catastrophe that they have completely stopped being able to see anyone else. The grandmother can't see that the dad is struggling. The dad can't see that the kids are embarrassed. The kids can't see that the mum is in crisis. This collective self-absorption — ten people, each certain that their own bad day is the worst and therefore the most deserving of attention — is what your child is solving. The game puts them in the position of the one person who has transcended this self-focus enough to see the whole picture. And in seeing it, they discover something your child needs to understand: self-pity doesn't just hurt you. It makes you invisible to the people around you.

DGO 10 — Slow Down in Study and Consumption — is what the game's investigative mechanics require. Each chapter rewards thoroughness: every clicked object, every read description, every examined detail contributes a keyword that may or may not be essential. The child who rushes will miss evidence that changes the deduction board later. The child who examines everything — who reads the poster on the grandmother's wall, who looks at what's in the dad's bag, who notices what the dog's lead is attached to — is building the same habit they need to actually understand the people around them: don't rush to a conclusion about someone's situation. Look at all the evidence first.

The interconnections between chapters elevate the game further. Characters who appear in one person's story show up in another's — but from a completely different angle. The person who ruined someone's day might have been having the worst day of their own. Your child starts to see that everyone's worst day is tangled up with everyone else's — that we're all walking around affecting each other's experiences without realising it, all convinced that our own problem is the most important one in the room. That realisation, arriving through play rather than through instruction, is the closest thing to genuine empathy training that a game can provide.

Duck Detective and The Worst Day Ever Together

These are the two Grade 5 Play With Purpose games. They share the same deduction mechanic — fill-in-the-blank keyword construction — but teach completely different things through it.

	Duck Detective: The Secret Salami	The Case of the Worst Day Ever
The central question	Who did it, and why? The mystery is a crime. The detective is external to the suspects' lives.	What happened to this person, and why are they so upset? The mystery is an inner experience. The detective is outside all ten of them.
The DGO focus	Raising consciousness above the collective: thinking past surfaces, questioning first impressions, forming independent conclusions from evidence.	Becoming more accepting of others: taking each person's experience seriously enough to investigate it with care, recognising that everyone has an inner story.
Number of perspectives	One detective investigating multiple suspects. You form a unified account from competing versions of events.	Ten protagonists, each with their own complete story. You hold all ten perspectives simultaneously — which nobody in the game can do.
The emotional depth	Eugene's personal struggle (DGO 3) adds emotional texture, but the investigation is primarily cognitive.	Empathy is the entire point. Emotional reasoning — why does this matter to this person? — is the central skill being practised.
What it leaves your child with	The investigative habit: question what you're told, form conclusions from evidence, hold them loosely enough to revise.	The empathy habit: before assuming you know why someone is acting the way they are, investigate their story. Everyone has one.

Seven Moments to Watch For

You don't need to watch every session. Check in between chapters and let the discussion questions do the work. These specific moments are worth noticing.

Which family member they connect with most.

Over ten chapters, your child will encounter a grandmother, parents, children, and pets — each having a uniquely terrible day. Watch which stories engage them most. Do they lean into the kids' chapters because they relate? Do they find the adult chapters harder to care about? The chapters that feel least interesting to your child are often the ones with the most developmental value. Those are the perspectives they don't naturally consider — which is exactly the point.

The moment they see the connections.

Characters from one chapter reappear in another, but from a completely different angle. The first time your child says 'wait — that person from the last chapter is the reason this person's day went wrong!' is a significant moment. They're seeing the web of interconnected experience — the realisation that your actions ripple outward and affect people you might not even think about. Watch for that click. It's the DGO 15 argument made visible in real time.

How they handle the 'silly' problems.

A bingo disaster. A bake-off gone wrong. A failed pyramid scheme. These are objectively funny, low-stakes problems. Watch whether your child dismisses them as unimportant or engages with them as genuinely worth investigating. The willingness to take a silly problem seriously because it matters to the person experiencing it is the heart of empathy — and this game tests that willingness ten times across ten different people.

The deduction board process.

Watch how your child approaches filling in the blanks — do they rush based on first guesses, or go back to the scenes to verify? Do they read the full statement before committing, or jump to the first gap? The game rewards patience and thoroughness over speed, and your child's approach reveals their natural thinking style. The instinct to verify before concluding is worth naming explicitly when you see it.

The family photo.

The game begins and ends with the same image: a family gathered for a celebration, everyone miserable. At the start, it's a mystery. By the end, your child knows exactly why each face looks the way it does. Watch for the shift in how they see that photo — from confusion to complete understanding. That shift mirrors what empathy does in real life: transforming a crowd of strangers into a room full of people whose stories you know.

The pets.

Yes — there are chapters from the perspectives of the family pets. The dog had a genuinely awful day at daycare. This sounds absurd, and it is. It also quietly reinforces the game's core lesson: every creature in this family has an inner experience, and every inner experience is worth understanding, even when it seems trivial or foreign to you. Watch whether your child takes the dog chapter as seriously as the adult chapters.

The difficulty ramp.

Later chapters are genuinely challenging — complex webs of relationships, subtle clues, red herrings. Watch whether your child gets frustrated or gets hooked. Reviewers consistently describe the game as 'deceptively difficult' — the cute art style masks serious deduction work that will stretch even adult thinkers. The most important skill the game builds isn't deduction: it's persistence in trying to understand someone else's situation when it isn't immediately obvious.

How to Play With Purpose

One chapter per session: Each chapter is self-contained and takes 30–60 minutes. After each one, ask two questions: 'What happened to them? Why were they so upset?' Let your child narrate the story they just reconstructed. Then: 'Do you think anyone else in the family knew this was happening to them?' That two-question pattern — what happened, and did anyone notice — is the engine that drives perspective-taking. Repeat it for every chapter.

For developing readers — read aloud together: The game is text-based with no voice acting. If your child is a developing reader, sit beside them and read descriptions aloud while they examine scenes and collect keywords. The deduction boards work excellently as a collaborative puzzle — you both see the blanks, you both propose answers, you both discuss the evidence. Reading together is not a compromise. It's a richer experience.

Notice which chapters feel boring: If your child skips through a chapter quickly or says 'I don't really care about this person,' that chapter is the most important one in the curriculum. Don't override the feeling — but name it after: 'You seemed less interested in that one. Do you think their problem mattered to them as much as the other chapters mattered to those people? What's the difference?' The gap between 'this matters to me' and 'this matters to them' is the exact gap DGO 15 is designed to close.

After the final chapter: Look at the family photo together. Ask your child to describe each face: 'What's happening with this person right now? What are they carrying?' By the end of the game, your child has the answer to that question for every face in the frame. That's what the game has built — and naming it explicitly makes it transferable to the family photos in their own life.

Family Discussion Questions

These questions are designed for after individual chapters and after the complete game. The last question is the most important — ask it when your child has finished, not before.

1. Everyone at this family party thinks they've had the worst day. The granny. The parents. The kids. Even the dog. Can they all be right? Is it possible for everyone in the same family to have the worst day at the same time?

BUILDS: DGO 15 — PERSPECTIVE AWARENESS AND DECENTRING

This is the game's central question — and it's designed to break open the assumption that there's a hierarchy of suffering, that some people's bad days 'count' and others' don't. The game's answer is that everyone's experience is real and intense from the inside, regardless of how it looks from the outside. That insight is the foundation of acceptance.

"When you've had a terrible day and someone in your family says 'I've had a bad day too,' what's your first reaction? Do you compare? Do you think yours was worse? Why do our brains do that — and what changes if you stop competing and start listening?"

2. Each chapter made you investigate one person's day from their point of view. Was there a family member whose bad day surprised you — where you thought it would be silly but it actually made sense once you understood what happened?

BUILDS: DGO 15 + DGO 4 — EMPATHY AND SUSPENDING JUDGMENT ABOUT OTHERS' PROBLEMS

This question targets the gap between how a problem looks from the outside and how it feels from the inside. A bingo disaster seems ridiculous until you understand why it mattered to the grandmother. The willingness to move from 'that's a silly problem' to 'I understand why it mattered to her' is the DGO 15 movement in its most basic form — and the game produces it naturally by making the investigation rewarding enough that your child does it ten times.

"Has anyone ever dismissed something you were upset about because it didn't seem like a big deal to them? How did that feel? Now flip it — have you ever dismissed someone else's problem because it seemed small to you?"

3. Characters from one chapter kept showing up in other chapters — sometimes as the cause of someone else's bad day. Did you notice anyone who ruined someone's day without realising they'd done it? Why do you think they didn't notice?

BUILDS: DGO 15 — INTERCONNECTION AND UNINTENDED IMPACT

This is about recognising that you affect other people constantly — and usually without knowing it. The game makes this structural: the person who ruined the grandmother's bingo game was having their own terrible day and wasn't thinking about anyone else. Your child has just spent hours inside the experience of everyone's story — the only position from which all the ripple effects become visible. The question asks them to bring that perspective into their own life.

"Can you think of a time you accidentally made someone's day worse without meaning to? What about the other direction — has someone ever made part of your day worse and had no idea? What would change if we all paid more attention to how our actions ripple outward?"

4. The game started with a family photo where everyone looked miserable, and at first you had no idea why. By the end, you knew every person's story. How did that photo look different to you after all ten chapters?

BUILDS: DGO 15 — DEPTH OF UNDERSTANDING AND SURFACE VERSUS REALITY

This is about the transformation from seeing faces to seeing stories — the core empathy movement the game produces. At the start, the photo is a puzzle. By the end, it's a room full of

people your child knows. The question asks them to feel that shift explicitly. Then it asks them to generalise it: this is what understanding other people actually looks like — not at the start of knowing them, but after you've done the work.

"Think about a room full of people — your classroom, a family gathering, a public space. Everyone in that room has a story you don't know. What would change about how you treat people if you assumed that everyone you meet might be in the middle of their own worst day?"

5. Some of the bad days in this game were objectively funny — a bake-off disaster, a dog escaping daycare, a pyramid scheme falling apart. Did you find yourself laughing and feeling sorry for the person at the same time? Is that okay?

BUILDS: DGO 15 + DGO 4 — EMOTIONAL COMPLEXITY AND COMPASSIONATE HUMOUR

This is about holding two responses simultaneously — an emotionally sophisticated skill that 10-year-olds are just developing. The game is explicitly funny while also being genuinely empathetic. These aren't contradictory responses; they're complementary ones. Understanding that something can be funny to observe and genuinely painful to experience — at the same time — is a significant step toward treating others with care even when their situation is absurd.

"Can something be funny and genuinely upsetting at the same time? Is it possible to laugh at someone's situation and still care about how they feel? What's the difference between laughing at someone and laughing at a situation? Where's the line?"

6. Every chapter made you figure out not just what happened but why the person was upset. Sometimes the 'what' was small but the 'why' was big. Did any chapter have a gap between how small the event seemed and how much it mattered to the person?

BUILDS: DGO 15 + DGO 10 — EMOTIONAL INFERENCE AND LOOKING BEYOND SURFACE EVENTS

This is the empathy skill that matters most in real life: understanding that the size of an event and the size of the emotion it produces don't always match. The grandmother's bingo disaster might seem trivial — but if bingo is how she connects with her friends, if it's the one social event she looks forward to all week, then its collapse is enormous to her. The game trains your child to ask 'why does this matter so much?' before concluding that it doesn't.

"Have you ever been really upset about something that other people thought was no big deal? What was the thing behind the thing — the real reason it mattered so much? Do you think everyone has a 'thing behind the thing' when they're upset?"

7. You investigated the same day from ten different perspectives. Did any two family members experience the same event completely

differently? How is it possible that one moment can feel like a disaster to one person and be completely invisible to another?

BUILDS: DGO 15 — MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVE-TAKING AND COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY

This is the game's deepest structural lesson: reality isn't one story — it's ten stories happening simultaneously, and each person is the main character of their own. Your child has spent hours being the only person who can see all ten. This question asks them to take that omniscient perspective and use it to understand something about how their own daily life works: every scene they're in is also someone else's scene, and those two experiences of the same moment may be completely different.

"At school, when something happens — a conversation, a conflict, a funny moment — do you think everyone experiences it the same way? What might a teacher see that a student doesn't, and vice versa? Has anyone ever described a situation you were both in very differently from how you experienced it?"

8. Was there ever a chapter where you thought you knew what happened early on, and then had to completely change your theory once you found more evidence?

BUILDS: DGO 10 + DGO 5 — INTELLECTUAL HUMILITY AND THE VALUE OF SLOW INVESTIGATION

This connects the deduction mechanic to real-life thinking. Forming a strong first impression and then having it overturned by evidence is the game's most useful learning experience — and the one most directly transferable to interpersonal situations. The habit of holding a conclusion loosely enough that new information can change it is the foundation of both good thinking and genuine empathy.

"When you form an opinion about what happened in a situation — at home, at school, in a friend group — how often do you go back and check whether your first impression was right? What makes it hard to change your mind once you've decided something? What makes it worth doing anyway?"

9. If you had to pick one family member and say 'this person genuinely had the worst day,' who would you choose — and do you think the other family members would agree with your choice?

BUILDS: DGO 15 — EVALUATIVE REASONING AND FAIRNESS ABOUT SUFFERING

This question has no right answer — and that's the point. Different players will choose different people, and both are defensible. The reasoning matters more than the outcome. The underlying question — who decides whose bad day counts? — is one of the most important questions in any community or family, and the game has given your child the evidence to engage with it seriously.

"How do you decide whose problem is the 'biggest'? Is it about what happened to them, or how they feel about what happened? If someone's feelings are just as intense as yours, does it matter if their problem seems smaller from the outside? Who gets to decide?"

10. Now think about your own family — your parents, your siblings, your grandparents. When you come home after a hard day and want to talk about it, do you ever stop and wonder if they might be having a hard day too? What would happen if, next time, you asked them first?

BUILDS: DGO 15 — REAL-WORLD EMPATHY AND FAMILY CONNECTION

This is the transfer question — from game to life. Your child has spent hours investigating other people's bad days with curiosity and care. This question asks them to bring that same energy home. It doesn't ask them to suppress their own needs — it asks them to hold both: their own experience and someone else's. That's the complete DGO 15 movement, and it starts with one family, on one day, with one question.

"What if, for one week, you started every family conversation by asking the other person about their day before talking about yours? Not because your day doesn't matter — it does — but because understanding theirs might change how you both feel."

DGO 15, DGO 4, and DGO 10 in This Game

DGO	What the Game Practises	The Bigger Skill	What to Say
DGO 15 — Become More Accepting of Others	Stepping into ten completely different people's experiences and taking each one seriously enough to investigate it with care. Discovering that silly-looking problems are real to the people inside them. Recognising that every person in a shared space is carrying a story that isn't visible from the outside.	The habit of treating other people's experiences as worth understanding rather than dismissing — not because they're similar to your own, but because they're real to the person having them. The shift from 'that's not a real problem' to 'I wonder what this matters to them.'	'So why did that matter so much to this person?' Ask this after every chapter. The question builds the habit of moving from 'what happened' to 'why it mattered' — the complete empathy move.
DGO 4 — Overcoming Self-Pity	Watching ten family members be so consumed by their own catastrophe that they become invisible to everyone else's — and being the one person who can see the full picture because they're not inside any single catastrophe. Understanding that self-absorption doesn't just hurt you: it makes you blind to the people around you.	The recognition that being preoccupied with your own suffering — even legitimate suffering — has a cost: it closes off the ability to see and receive from others. The player is, throughout the game, the only character who has transcended this closure.	'Do you think any of the family members noticed what the others were going through? Why not?' Ask this after chapter three or four, when the interconnections are becoming clear. The answer names DGO 4 without using the term.
DGO 10 — Slow Down in Study	Examining every object in every scene before moving	The investigative discipline of not	'Have we looked at everything in this scene?

DGO	What the Game Practises	The Bigger Skill	What to Say
and Consumption	to the deduction board. Reading every description thoroughly — the game is text-based, and missing a detail means missing a keyword. Holding a first theory loosely enough to go back and verify when the deduction board reveals something is wrong.	concluding before looking at everything available — and the patience to stay inside someone else's experience long enough to actually understand it, rather than settling for the first surface impression.	Have we read every description?' Say this before each deduction board. It builds the examine-everything habit that transfers to real social situations: don't decide why someone is acting the way they are until you've looked at everything available.

Parents' Note

The Case of the Worst Day Ever was developed by Hero Game Co — a husband-and-wife-and-corgi indie team — and released in December 2025. It holds a 97% positive rating on Steam and has been compared to The Case of the Golden Idol and Duck Detective, distinguished by its entirely family-friendly content and its focus on everyday domestic catastrophe rather than crime. Reviewers consistently describe it as 'deceptively difficult' — the cute art style masks deduction work that will stretch even confident adult thinkers by the later chapters.

Why Grade 5. At 10 years old, children are navigating an expanding awareness that other people have inner lives as complex as their own — but they're not there yet. They still default to self-centred thinking, not out of selfishness but because imagining other perspectives is cognitively demanding work that their brains are still developing the capacity to do automatically. This game makes that work the entire experience. Every chapter is a structured exercise in stepping into someone else's shoes, taking their experience seriously, and reconstructing their story with the same care you'd give your own. That practice, repeated ten times across different ages, relationships, and situations within the same family, builds the empathy muscle in a way that a single-protagonist game cannot.

The Grade 5 pair. Duck Detective and The Worst Day Ever share the same deduction mechanic — fill-in-the-blank keyword construction — but teach through it in completely different directions. Duck Detective trains the habit of questioning what you're told and forming independent conclusions from evidence. The Worst Day Ever trains the habit of investigating other people's experiences with the same rigour and attention. Together they complete the Grade 5 theme: taking ownership — of your thinking, of your understanding of others, of the effort required to see beyond your own immediate experience.

The deeper value. There will be a moment — perhaps around chapter four or five, when the interconnections start revealing themselves — where your child stops seeing this as ten separate puzzles and starts seeing it as one family. One day. Ten completely different experiences of the same hours. And the family photo that opens the game — where everyone looks miserable — will stop being a mystery and start being a mirror. Your child knows people exactly like this. They live with people exactly like this. They are one of the people in this photo. The game's gift is showing them that the person sitting next to them at the dinner table — the one who seems grumpy or distant or quiet — might be in the middle of their own worst day. And

the most powerful thing your child can do is exactly what they've spent six hours doing: stop, pay attention, and try to understand.