

# *Bond: Doctor Tiger and Nurse Elephant in the Emergency Room*



*Design by Mirjam de Korte*

*Text by Pieter Desmet*

Imagine you're five years old. You had a nasty fall at the playground and need to go to the hospital - to the Emergency Room. Holding your mother's hand, you walk through the clinical hallways of the hospital, feeling quite anxious. The sterile environment is overwhelming, and all the unfamiliar faces confuse you. As you enter the treatment room, your anxiety grows. Meanwhile, your mother tries to find a way to calm you amidst the hustle and chaos. Overall, not a pleasant experience. But it's one that plays out daily in hospitals around the world, presenting a challenging task for healthcare providers: providing care to anxious children.

## **Children in the Emergency Room**

The Emergency Room in a hospital provides acute medical care for unplanned or urgent medical needs. For healthcare providers, it is a demanding environment with high levels of work pressure. They must act quickly and flexibly in response to a wide range of injuries and conditions. They constantly adapt to new situations and challenges. Can we make this hectic environment more child-friendly? With that question in mind, designer Mirjam de Korte embarked on a six-month design project. She found inspiration in an unexpected place: the medical wristband. Every patient receives one upon arrival.

Essential for the process; functional but it is meaningless to children. Mirjam transformed it into the key to an adventurous safari journey featuring exotic animals. It's a journey shared with the healthcare providers, offering a few welcome bright moments during an unpleasant experience.

### Three Principles

Mirjam got in touch with pediatrician Dorien Geurts, who offered her the opportunity to shadow the nurses at Erasmus MC for several days. Eagerly accepting the offer, she immersed herself in the dynamic environment of the Emergency Room. For days, she observed all the actions, interactions, and other events. She delved into the systems and had conversations with healthcare providers and parents about their experiences and perceptions. From her observations and impressions, she distilled three principles for her design ideas:

#### (1) Overwhelming adventure.

The Emergency Room can be quite overwhelming for children. All those unfamiliar places and faces can greatly unsettle them. They interact with many different people, most of whom they only have brief



Image 1. Child in the Emergency Room

interactions with. It's understandable that this can be confusing. How can we reassure children and make them feel more at ease?

#### (2) Communication at the child's level.

Nurses sometimes struggle with communicating with children. It's a challenge to speak at the child's level, in a way that resonates with them. How can we help healthcare providers communicate in a playful and understandable manner?

#### (3) Positive moments.

A visit to the Emergency Room is hardly a party. However, there are also moments when it doesn't have to be all negative. Small enjoyable moments can have a significant positive impact on a child's

mood in this situation. How can we provide children with some fun and distraction?

### Medical wristband as anchor point

Mirjam saw an opportunity in the medical wristband - a simple white band with the patient's personal information. The wristband is printed at the reception. She observed that only half of the wristband is used for information, while the other half is empty. That offers possibilities. She created a fun safari journey with the wristband as an anchor point.

Image 4 shows how it works. Each healthcare provider is represented by an exotic animal, which you can see from the image on their badge - for example, Nurse Elephant and Doctor Tiger (1). At the reception, you receive a booklet with an explanation (3). It states that you're going on an adventure. You visit various places in the building where you can discover animals. In the waiting area, you read the booklet with your parent (4). Your wristband is printed (5). After being examined by Nurse Elephant, he gives you an elephant sticker for your wristband (6). You



Image 3. The animals in the Emergency Room

can give him a cheerful sticker from your booklet in return (7). This way, you collect all the animals in the hospital (10). Once at home, you stick the wristband in the booklet as a memory of your adventure (12).

### Protective Frame

It's remarkable how a seemingly simple design can fulfill three objectives simultaneously: transforming unfamiliar people into cheerful animals, providing a fun conversation starter for healthcare providers, and offering a thread of positive moments during treatment. I personally believe



Image 2. First prototypes of the design

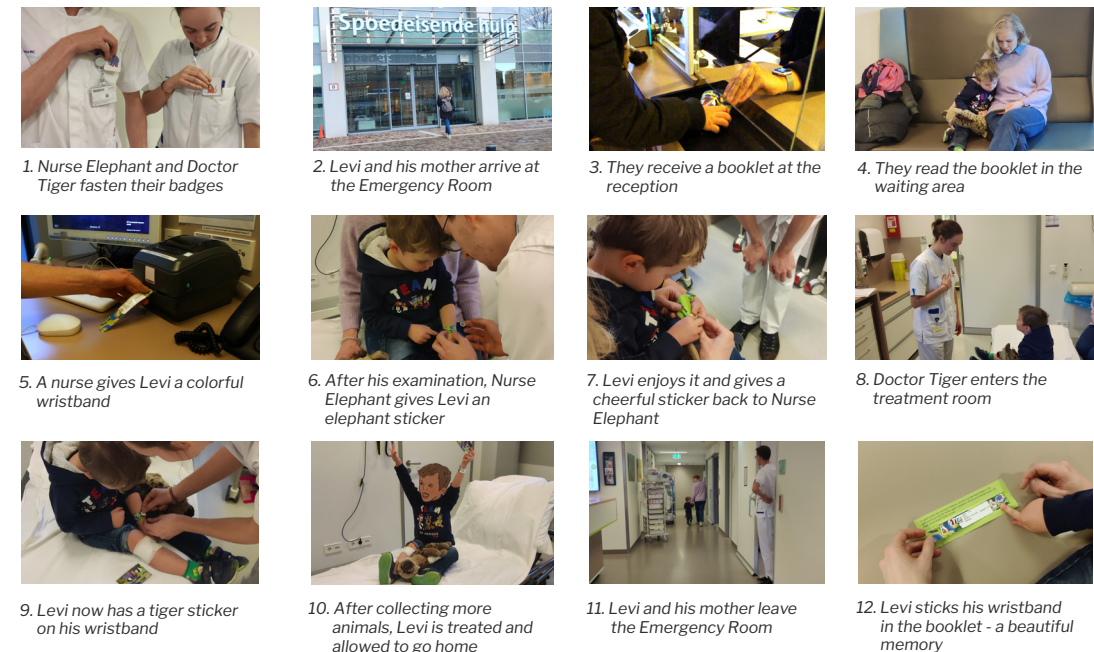


Image 4. The shared adventure

that Bond can have a profound impact. The design reminds me of the work of British psychologist Michael Apter. He developed a theory that explains how negative emotions can be transformed into positive ones (Apter, 1989). The key to his theory is what he calls the “protective frame,” which mentally shields oneself from the source of negative emotions. This can be achieved by placing something in a different perspective. This is, for example, how we experience fear on a roller coaster as “fun fear.” With remarkably simple means, Mirjam created an effective protective frame: a new perspective on an exciting journey through the hospital.

### References

De Korte, M. (2023). Bond: Creating a child friendly Emergency Department at the Erasmus Medical Centre (internal report). Delft: Technische Universiteit Delft.

Apter, M.J. (1989). Reversal theory: Motivation, emotion, and personality. Taylor & Francis/Routledge.



Mirjam de Korte (photo) developed Bond in 2023 as part of the course Exploring Interactions for the master's program in Design for Interaction. Supervisors were Maurizio Filippi and Siyuan Huang (TU Delft), Dorien Geurts, Peter Roedoe, and Isabel Monteiro (Erasmus MC). The Bond prototype utilizes animal illustrations designed by Studiogstock / Freepik and nature landscapes designed by Upklyak / Freepik. With her design, she won the V.O. Kickstart Award of the TU Delft Impact Contest this year, which helps her further develop her innovative idea. Currently, she is working on further refinement of the design in collaboration with Erasmus MC.

## Colophon

### Bond: Doctor Tiger and Nurse Elephant in the Emergency Room

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### Reference

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