

A way out

MADE BY
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Disclaimer

It's important to notice that social groups are a good things, but sometimes they could be bad or could have bad sides: this game is about a bad group and his bad sides. Not every group leader is a little dictator, not every group has distorted mechanisms, but i think that's simpler to make you aware and conscious of the bad sides while picturing and playing a bad group.

As a matter of fact, while you're playing this game, you're not going out of a closet the group as made for you, but a closet you have made for yourself.

What is this game about?

This game is about people in a group, social anxiety, social pressure and the difficulties of step out of the closet and doing something that is taboo inside the social group of your choice.

What do you need for playing?

First of all you need some friends, going from 3 to 5, then you need 10 coins from every friends, it's a good choice to take 2 of the biggest kind, 2 of the smallest kind e other 6 of the same small kind.

In the end you need an open space, something where you and your friend could put some chair or stand still at two step back from a center.

Don't forget to take some piece of paper or post-it, and some pencils or pens.

Set-up

Before starting the game make a little brainstorming about how you are going to play, the set-up phase should last less then 20 minute.

Think about the tone of the game, if you want something with bleed and drama you should take a realistic group like a group of teenager in high school, if you want something funny try with a group of pirates or choppers, if you want something serious try with a group of religious or political activists.

First game

If it's the first time you play, you can skip the Question 1 and choose one of this suggested groups:

- **Drama:** A group of friend for a long time. They met each other during the high school. Now, they see each other regularly but for some reason the group is not alive anymore. They hang out together just for habit.
The leader want to maintain the group united but, obsessed by the status quo, is unable to find out new activities to make the group interesting or to let the group go.
Some good rules could be: "We do everything together", "We see each other at least once a week".
- **Funny:** A group of pirate on a old vessel. They just started their piracy activity and their out of money. Every scene can take place in a different place where the group arrived by ship. Probably the Captain is dumb, there could be some non-sense rule like "you can walk the plank only for diving and if the other pirates judges your performance", "you should never take a bath", "we can drink only rum", eccetera. Probably the members of the group are also dumb and they have stupid rivalry with each other like "Jackson is a thief - I think he stole my best wooden leg", "Andrew is my top command - His arrogant, i hate him but i never told him".
- **Serious:** You're activist: ambiental, religious, political. Choose a subject you like. Your leader is a tyrant because he thinks that "the end justifies the means", this could probably be a rule of the group. Probably he is a control maniac and everything have to be done exactly like he says. The member of the group shares the cause but probably their not extremist, they just want to promote and defend some rights.

So, where do you start? First you need to create a social group of people together for a reason. During all the set-up you will answering some question about you and your group.

Question 1: "Why you are all together?"

It could be that you are all members of the same group because you have the same hobby, you like playing rpg, you like take pictures, you share the same political idea or something natural like "we are/was in the same class in the high school" or something like a little organization like a gang of gangster.

Therefore, because this is a game, we are stating that "your social group is not good" and now you have

to find out why. In every game, one reason because the group is not good for you is: “your social group has a leader. He doesn’t want changes and he defends the status quo because the status quo is the identity of the group”. How the status quo is depends from your type of group.

Question 2: “Why the group is not good for you?”

Starting from the fact that you have a strong leader, the one fighting for the status quo, choose one of you too take that role, and continue your brainstorming saying something about the group that answer the question above. From these suggestions the leader, who has power of marking a choices, will create five rules that constitutes the social identity of the group and everyone will write them on their sheet of paper.

Now, when all the five rules are written in the stone, all players write them down in their sheet of paper and write near every sentence a size of a coin (be careful, if you have two coins of a size, you can use it only two times). For the purpose of the game the bigger is the type of the coin, the bigger is the difficult for overcoming it, so the bigger is the relevance that this rules have for your characters while he is think about “this group is not good because...”.

Everyone will remain with five coins, you’ll use them for the question number 4.

Rules Examples

Example 1:

- *Player 1*: “I think I’m not comfortable with the group because I don’t feel free to say my opinion and disagree with the leader or other members”

- *The Leader*: “Fine. We will add this rule: you cannot openly disagree with the group. Oh, and you know what? If you like it, I’ll also add: the leader always has the last word.”

Example 2:

- *Player 2*: “I think we should attack bigger ships, Yaaaar!”

- *The Leader*: “The pirates attack only easy pray, this is one rule”.

When you are inside a group, you always have a role. Always. You may not know it consciously but that does not mean that you cannot feel it in some other way, like social pressure.

Question 3: “What is your role in the group?”

Choose one, you can be everything you want, here I left you some general suggestion so you can be inspired: the joker, the one pragmatic one (the implementer), the enthusiastic one that always propose something new to do (the shaper), the organized one (the finisher), and so on. Also decide a name for your character and write it down on your piece of paper. Obviously the role of the leader is “the leader”.

Moving from question 3, everyone’s been part of a group at some points during his life, because even a couple of two friend could be a group with a leader. And when you are part of a group for a long time you’re never only attached with the group itself, you have some bonds that make you care about the individual member of the group. Probably your best friend or your lover is the leader, or the black sheep was your best friend, or everything you like.

Question 4: “Which are your relationship with the members of the group?”

A relationship is composed of a bond and statement. The bond is the type of relationship, like friends, lovers or enemies, the statement is something that describes something particular about your bond with this person.

So you choose one person, and you write it down on your sheet his name and the bond. If is something like “I’m in love with...” you can just write it down, if it is something more official like “I’m the girlfriend of ...” just ask your friend before write it down and ask him if it is okay with your decision. And every time you write down a bond with a person, you have to add a statement about something that puts social pressure on you.

Here some example:

“John is my best-friend – I don’t like how he speaks to me when we are in the group but I never say it to him.”

“Mr. Smee is my friend – I’m not able to clean the ship deck when he is around.”

Everyone, even the leader, have to write down 5 of this bonds with a statement, and write near the statement the size of a coin; as always the bigger is the type of the coin representing the bond, the bigger is the value and the difficult to break it.

You can have only one personal bond with the leader, because you have already five bonds with him, in fact every group rule is also a bond with the leader. You must have at least one bond with every member of the group.

Now, you can start playing, go in an open space, put something to mark a center and everybody makes two steps back starting from here. It's good if you're trying to create a regular geometric shape like a triangle, a square, a circle and sit here on a chair. (I think is good also to sit on the floor or stand still but this could make the game a little bit easier or more difficult.)

Now you put your right hand facing up and put on your fingertips your ten coins. You can stack the coin on a fingertip or more, make sure they don't fall down. When everybody is ready, you can start the game.

Playing the game

It's time to play.

First the Leader describe where the group is reunited in this moment, he is framing the scene, it's a place where all the group is together, they could be doing something specific, like playing football or chess, or they could just be together and chatting. It's better if in this fictional space the members could chat in couple without the other hearing them at least sometimes.

Then, starting by the Leader, every member describes in a sentence how is passing his time: talking with someone, playing something, etcetera. Then the player sitting to the left of the Leader looks at his written bonds, choose one statement with a person how want to break and yell out the name of this person, every group rule is a bond with the group, so is a bond with the Leader. The player you named is your destination.

After you said the name, you stand up, and you walk toward the center. When you are on the center, you close your hand with the coins in a fist. If no coins fall of your hand, you walk toward the player. If you're player are very good with dexterity or the dexterity level if very different, you can add more difficulties to the walk, like walking two times in circle around the center before walk to the destination.

While the player is walking, the other players should talk to him, tell jokes and make noise. Their trying to break his focus so he would drop the money. This represents the social pressure of the group.

When you are near the player, you read out loud the statement you want to break, you take a coin of the size of this statement from your closed hand, and you put it over one of his fingertips. If no coin falls of the hand of your friend, you've done it. You describe how you approach your friend in the fiction and what you say to him. You have to say something that contradict the statement that you're trying to broke in some ways, if you never doing something to him, so do it, or if you always doing something for him don't do it or tell him that things have to change.

How to correctly use the coins

- you can put them only on your fingertips.
- your fingers can't touch each other.
- a coin on a fingertips can't touch another finger or coins on other fingertips
- while playing, you can't lay your hands on your legs or anywhere.

If someone break this rule, apply the rule "if a coin fall down in any other moment".



During this phase the players out of the scene are the referee of the game, so pay attention if your competitive friends take away the finger, while another is trying to putting his coin on a finger! Now return at your place, cancel the broken statement and put the money on your fingertips another time. It is time for the player on your left to play.

The game proceeds clockwise and when the Leader ended his turn, he has to describe another place because this time together his finished and the group will meet again in another day. If in the day before no coins felt down, the members of the group are working in the direction of breaking down the status quo, so every player (even the leader) choose one coin and remove it from the game.

What happens if a coin fall down?

- **If the coins fall down while you are closing your hand at the center of the circle or while you were not sitting**, the leader of the group has seen you going around the place and, in some ways, distracts you from your objective, describe how the leader stops you. The leader take one money from his hand and give it to you. The group won over your will.
- **If the coins fall down while you are putting one of them on the hand of another player, the bond with him is too strong**, you can narrate how you approach your friend but he tells how wasn't able to overcome the statement you wanted to break.
- **If the coins fall down in any other moment, an habit has grown stronger in you, you describe what happened**, it could also be something psychological, and every member of the group give you a coins of the type of a bond they have with you. You take one of the money with the bigger size and you remove it from the game.

What's happening during the game?

When you left your place, you're trying to breaking the habit of not-doing or doing something.

When you are in the middle of the group, you're battling with your inner anxiety and with the social pressure of the group.

When you are in front of your friend and you're putting the coin on his fingertips, you're trying to overcome the social pressure made by your bonds with your friend/the group member, so you can break a statement that you no longer like.

Remember, when your character contradicts his statements, he's performing a sort of rite, you have to believe that the action is meaningful so you can have a grasp on the meaningful part of the game. Your characters is doing this action like a "rite of passage", for assert himself out of the closet, you have to believe in him to discover if and how he will change during the game. You fail in obtain something? No problem, be a fan of your character, you'll have another possibility the next turn to make him step out of the closet.

When a "if the coins fall down" rules applies, until all the indication are made out no other falling coin trigger an "if the coins fall down" rules.

What happens if a leader's coin falls down?

If you're the leader, you can break a personal bonds or re-affirm and blame a member who break a rule of the group.

Also, for a leader every group rules is a bond with every member and he chooses one if i want to re-affirm one of it. But you can also fail, so:

- **If the coins fall down while you are closing your hand at the center of the circle or while you were not sitting**, your faith in one of the rules faltered. You choose which one. Then choose one member, he's the one who saw you during this moment, he describes what you've done and he remove one of his coins from the game.
- **If the coins fall down while you are putting one of them on the hand of another player**, the bond with him is too strong, you can narrate how you approach your friend but he tells how wasn't able to overcome the statement you wanted to break.
- **If the coins fall down in any other moment**, the members of your group broke one of the rules with a collective action. They decide one rules, you decide how they broke it. Every player give you a money of the size of a bond they have with you and you remove one coin of the bigger size from the game.

One rule exception

if you're walking and one of your friend drops some coins, you arrive at the center and close your hand(if you haven't done it already), and wait until he put his coin on his hands. Then you finished you return as always.

When your turn is finished, you apply on your friend the rule "if a coin fall down in any other moment".

End Game

The game ends when one player have finished all the coins or all the bonds and group rules have been deleted.

If it is a normal member of the group, it's free from the logic of a "wrong" group and he could choose to stay or to leave the group. If he chooses to stay, every member of the group decides if he sees him like a member of the group or a black sheep.

If it is the leader, he obtained his goals: make the group stronger, the group is complete and no-one is left behind. However the Leader is now conscious of his power over his friends and can choose to be a conscious tyrant or change the way he behave and become a spiritual and democratic guide.

The person who wins the game stands up, going in the middle of the circle and tells how his story ended. Remember that in the end you have changed, so you have to describe what is changed in you, it could be something in your behavior or you could make a direct talk in front of the other member of the group or both.

If you like, you could go on with the game, "the winner" doesn't play. When only two player remain with coins, the game must stop.

Some of you might ask: "but, i always have a bonds written in my piece of paper, did i won?"

Yes, you don't really need to break all the bonds, just enough for obtain the necessary esteem.

And while the members of the group change, also the bonds changes, sometimes the things simply change, you only have to be aware of it.

Debriefing

Talk about the experience you lived. Everyone of you in turn talk about what does he think of the story of his character during the game. You could say, for example, what are the moment where something's gone wrong but you was really caring about.

At the same time, you should ask your self and answer loud to this question:

How did you come out of your closet? Have you been aggressive? Did you focus your attention on the statements instead of the bonds? If you answered "No" to one of this question, you wasn't assertive. Ask your self why you wasn't assertive.

Assertiveness

"a form of behavior characterized by a confident declaration or affirmation of a statement without need of proof; this affirms the person's rights or point of view without either aggressively threatening the rights of another (assuming a position of dominance) or submissively permitting another to ignore or deny one's rights or point of view" - Wikipedia

