

For a Long Time I Would Go to Bed Early

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For a long time I would go to bed early. Sometimes, the light barely out, my eyes closed so quickly that I did not have time to tell myself: "I'm falling asleep." And when I awoke in the middle of the night, not knowing where I was, I could not even be sure at first who I was. But then the memory of various other places where I lived and might now very possibly be would come like a rope let down from heaven to draw me up out of the abyss of not-being. In a flash I would traverse my life and gradually piece together the original components of my ego.

An American freeform about memory, empathy and sensation inspired by Proust's "In Search of Lost Time." For three to five players and one facilitator with a roughly 90 minute running time. Requires a private space big enough to move around in (preferably with dimmable lights) and one raisin (or similar small food item) per player.



- 5 This script is written for the facilitator. Your job is simply to facilitate the game and solve any disputes. You do not play the game or shape the narrative. Read the next section out loud to the players.

10 *You are all the Narrator. The Narrator is in bed at night at the edge of sleep. They are remembering things from their life as they lie here. This game is about reconstructing one particular memory of the Narrator. You are going to describe what the Narrator remembers together whilst moving around the space. You will start narrating very separate truthful memories and gradually merge these together into one fictional story. This will take thirty to forty five minutes. First I will run three warm up exercises for you to connect with each other and understand the concepts behind the game. This will take approximately an hour.*

- 15 Whenever you see the three swan symbol below get a player to read out the paragraph in italics in the preamble beginning with "for a long time I would go to bed early."



This exercise is about awareness and using sensation to access your memories.

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Given one raisin to each player. The players will be exploring the raisin with all their senses and then discovering what memories this brings up. Read the following steps aloud leaving time between each. The whole exercise should take ten minutes.

25 *Start by placing the raisin on your palm and looking at it closely. Examine every surface and detail. What can you notice about this raisin that you have never seen before?*

Now close your eyes. Use your fingers to explore the texture of the raisin.

30 *Smell the raisin. How does this affect you? Does it conjure up any memories?*

Place the raisin in your mouth carefully and examine it with your sense of taste. Begin chewing the raisin very slowly without swallowing. Notice how the sensation evolves.

35 *Now swallow the raisin. How do you feel? How has eating the raisin made you feel? Are there any thoughts or memories swirling around?*

Keeping their eyes closed each player should now share a brief memory triggered by the experience of eating the raisin.

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This exercise is about connecting the players and practicing swapping narrative control. This consists of three stages of increasing complexity.

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Players now form a circle. One player should lead and improvise a movement and accompanying sound. Other players should simultaneously mimic this movement and sound as precisely as possible. Rotate the leading player around the circle two or three times.

50 Suggest the players start with slow and simple movements. The leading player should not copy other players.

For the next two stages one player should stand in the centre of the circle and become the leader. The leader retells a short, simple, recent memory in their natural voice whilst rotating to make eye contact with other players. Other players should simultaneously mimic the body language, tone and words of the leader. Every player should take a turn at leading.

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Correct the leader if they intentionally slowing down to make it easier for the other players. Remind the other players to keep up both the voice and physical mimicking. Stop the current story if it runs over one minute.

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The final stage is a repeat of this exercise with one alteration. Now other players can tag out the leader to take leadership and continue the story. The story should start as a real memory but continue as fiction. Every player should take a turn at starting a story.

65 Players should allow the starting leader to establish the basis of their memory before tagging them out.



This exercise is about honesty and open communication.

70 Players form two lines facing a partner on the opposite sides of the room. Designate one side of the room as “callers” and other side as “walkers.” The goal of the exercise is for the callers to get their partner to walk across the room to them. They do this by saying the word “come” to their partner.

75 After receiving the word “come” walkers step forward only if they honestly feel inspired to do so. Otherwise they stay standing still. The callers should play with body language and tone to get the walker to step forwards. Repeat this exercise swapping roles and partners several times.

80 This stage should take a few minutes and you should decide when it ends. Get the players to spread out in the room with their final partner. They face each other, put their hand on their partner’s shoulder and close their eyes. First players synchronise breathing with their partner. Secondly the pairs should start making the same noise at the same time.

85 No one member of the pair should lead or follow but instead they should aim to swap constantly between these states. The contact through the shoulder will help the players. Starting with smooth, slow sounds is easiest but players should try to explore a range of sounds.



These are the rules for the game itself. Read out the instructions and answer any questions before beginning play. It may be helpful to demonstrate parts of the game. You may also gently coach players during the game.

90

The players will be telling the story of what the Narrator remembers as they lie there in the darkness half asleep. The aim is to take very separate true memories from each player and gradually merge them together into one narrative. Once the players have achieved a singular narrative any player may end the game by reciting the introductory paragraph. All players should then join in saying the introductory paragraph, speaking at the same time. A guideline is for each player to get three turns narrating before the game ends.

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100 Here are some instructions on how to narrate. The aim is also to implicitly construct the singular character of the Narrator from these separate memories. Therefore when speaking the players always use “I” and not give a name to the Narrator. They also do not refer to the Narrator’s age, gender, race or orientation unless it is directly relevant to the story. The motivation behind this is to prevent dissonance between the stories and the Narrator becoming male and so on by default. Whilst narrating players use gestures to illustrate their story and make eye contact with other players.

I longed to call her back, to say to her “kiss me just once more.”

105

My uncle advised Swann not to see Odette for some days, after which she would love him all the more.

110 At all times there will be exactly one person narrating the story and all players should be clear on who this is. If you are narrating and someone else starts then stop speaking. Conversely if no-one is speaking then step forwards and pick up narration. For the first two rounds players should aim to give everyone a turn before

speaking again. After this players begin to intermix narration more.

115 Players will start narrating their own separate memories . They stop before the story of their memory is finished. On the second round they begin to tie their memory to other player's. They can continue their previous story or start a new one. The connection can be causal or thematic. The aim is to all end up speaking about the same story but this can start very slowly. Above all players should not "overcook" the connections.

In this round I told a memory about a trip to a Brazil. Another player told a memory about a breakup. I pick up my story again and talk about how the breakup caused me to go to Brazil.

120 *I spoke about buying a house. Another player spoke about a proposal. I jump forward in time and talk about the Narrator being newly married and moving into the house.*

125 *I retold a memory about a walk with a friend over fields. Another player spoke about playing by a lake as a child. I pick up my story again but add a fictional element and introduce the lake. I also have a character from another player's story join the walk.*

Here is what players do if they are not narrating . They will be making movements and sounds in response to the narration. This is done intuitively rather with careful planning.

130 The movement can be broken down into two parts. Firstly they should move in relation to the narrating player based on how they feel about the narration. This is similar to the "come" exercise. If they are enjoying and empathising with the story they should move closer to the narrating player. Conversely if they feel disconnected from the story they should move away. If the story is going in a direction where they do not wish to continue with the game they can simply leave the room.

The narrating player is talking about a garden and their description is very beautiful. I move towards them.

140 *When I narrated the character of Pierre he was calm, kind and gentle. Another player is describing Pierre as being brash and arrogant and I find this confusing. I move away from them.*

The narrating player begins describing an assault. I don't want to play a game with this in so I leave the room.

145 If players are very close to the narrating player they can make physical contact. If they are in physical contact and feel comfortable they may close their eyes. Movement can still be played with whilst in contact by changing the intimacy of the touch. Players should not touch intimate areas.

150 *I am touching the narrating player's hand. They are describing a tender moment of the Narrator with their first love which I am really enjoying. I move my hand up to their upper arm.*

Secondly players can move in a way which is sympathetic to the narration to fill out the story.

155 *The narrating player starts speaking about the Narrator's grandfather, so I bend over and move like an old man.*

They can also make sounds to compliment the narration but should avoid dialogue. This could represent part of the environment for instance. Players are advised to build sounds with each other.

The narrating player describes a flock of swans so I begin making bird noises.

160

The narrating player is speaking about a dinner party. Another player begins murmuring like the sound of a crowd, so I also begin murmuring.



Here is how the game begins . This section can be read out to the players as they do the steps.

165

Spread yourselves in the room and stand at its edges. Make eye contact with other players.

Take a moment to think about what makes you different from all the players. Physically, mentally and emotionally. What life experiences might you have had that they have not? Did you grow up in different circumstances?

170

Now turn your back to the other players.

Dim the lights in the room if you are able.

175

Focus on one sensation in the room. It can be something you see, smell or even just feel. One by one I would like you to talk about this sensation in as much detail as you are able.

Do not let this step run longer than a minute or two.

180

Close your eyes. Is there a memory lurking just beneath the surface of your mind? Concentrate on how you are different to other players and the sensation you have just described. What comes up? When you have a memory in mind turn to face the other players keeping silent.

When all players have turned around bring up the lights.

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Now the game begins. Someone please narrate your memory.

During the game you may need to remind players of rules, particularly the following:

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- Stop the initial memories before they reach their conclusion
- To move and make noises
- To keep eye contact with the other players

Once they have finished talking about the same story and one player begins saying the introductory text the game ends.

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195

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