



Golden Cobra 2015

G U I D I N G

L I G H T

*A short freeform game for **four** to six players*

*by **Shawn Stokes***

Introduction

GUIDING LIGHT is a freeform game about depression and the clouded thoughts, ideas, and indecision that comes with it. I was heavily inspired by *Exile* and *White Death* when I conceived this game. This game concept and play was stimulated by my own personal struggles with depression, among the other depression-related problems. This game requires only a light facilitator role; someone who's read the text and brought materials for play.

Each player will be taking on the role of a voice in a person's mind. Each player has a candle they can light off the central candle. Play involves players lighting candles off each others candles, the center candle, and blowing them out. If the center candle is ever blown out, the game ends, signifying that a decision was put off, being delayed or entirely avoided.

Requirements

- One slender and long unscented candle per player (to be held in the hand)
- One large and stout unscented candle (placed in the center of the table)
- A tablecloth or paper towels (something disposable or cleanable, as wax may drip on this)
- A lighter, torch, or matches
- A copy of each of the voice cards
- A table suitable for your group
- A vessel of water just in case
- A small ventilated room that can be very dark
- One to two hours

Warm Ups

- *Facilitator, lead these exercises. Set the table as appropriate with candles, lighters, and whatever wax catching objects you have selected. Sit around the table.*

GUIDING LIGHT explores very personal states of emotion; therefore participation come from a place of love, respect, and acceptance. If players feel uncomfortable with depicting depressive motivation and self-talk base in personal experience, then this game may not be for them. *This game will most likely involve touching and will be required to be in close proximity to other players as well. Make sure to discuss personal boundaries before proceeding!*

CHECK IN

Check in with your players on a personal level before jumping into warm ups. Ask them a few questions (answer yourself after they are done):

- How was your day?
- How are you feeling?
- Anything notable you want to share?

SILENCE

Close your eyes and listen to the ambient noise of the room. Do not speak or move. Follow an ambient noise around.

- *Facilitator, take eighteen slow breaths before moving onto the discussion.*

DISCUSSION

- *Facilitator, guide the group through the following questions.*

Each player is going to share there answers to some questions. When you are ready to answer, light the central candle and begin talking, in as much detail as you feel comfortable sharing. The rest of us will light our candles off of the central candle when we feel that we have experienced something similar. When you are done talking, blow out the central candle, and we'll blow out ours. Then we will move on to another player and repeat the process until we've answered all of the questions. It's okay for our answers to be short and simple, but give us some time to consider and relate to your answer before blowing out the central candle.

QUESTIONS:

- Do any of the players know or have experience with depression?
- What are your observations or experiences?
- What did you notice or how did you feel?
- What were your daily routines like? What basic things did you have difficulty doing?

Play

- *Facilitator, read this aloud.*

As a group, let's brainstorm some basic daily situations that might be challenging for a person with depression. It's okay to reuse things we mentioned during the warm up. These do not have to be complicated; mundane tasks that most people perform routinely are perfectly fine. Speak whatever comes to mind, and try to come up with at least two, but if you can't, that's ok. We may not need them all anyway.

Claim a narrow candle. Notice where the central candle is, and where the tablecloths are to catch the wax. Notice also where the stack of Voice Cards are; we will need to draw from this stack. We will take turns presenting a basic daily task that we need to address or ignore, and for each task we will each draw a Voice Card and speak for the voices described there. After each task is resolved, we will shuffle the Voice Cards and draw new voices. Notice where the vessel of water is. We are using actual fire, so pay extra attention to where everything is, and then pay extra attention again to where everything is so we can be safe and responsible.

LIGHT

- *Facilitator, explain the following.*

Soon we will each draw a voice card, and speak for those Voices.

When your candle is out, you may not speak.

When you light your candle from the central candle, you may speak for your Voice. You will be speaking alone about a basic daily task. Advocate for your Voice. Hide nothing. *No other player may light off the central flame until this task has been resolved or avoided.*

Once a task has been introduced, and another player's candle has been lit from the central flame, you may now **initiate a dialogue by lighting your candle from that player's flame.** *You may not light from the central candle once a task has been introduced.* During the dialogue you may or may not be heard by the other Voices, but you should speak regardless.

If your Voice disagrees with the current direction of the ongoing dialogue between the active Voices then you may blow out the Voice's candles and end the discussion. *Do not blow out the central candle.* Once you do, light your candle off of the central candle and begin the discussion about this task anew. *Each player may blow out the candles three times, on the fourth time they must blow out the central candle instead, followed by the other players candles, which ends the game.* Count your ability to extinguish on your other hand beneath the table.

Once we have all gone silent, though the central candle is still lit, we may assume that we have reached a decision regarding this task. We will now embark upon a new task, introduced by a new player, by the same process, until the central candle is extinguished. Each player's ability to extinguish is renewed with each new task.

- *Facilitator, turn the lights off, light the central candle, and invite the players to light their candle and begin once they have a task in mind. And instruct the following.*

Draw a Voice Card; when you speak you will speak for the interests of this Voice. Inhale deeply. Exhale slowly, release your worries, your stress. Close your eyes and embrace the Voice. Once you have embodied the Voice, open your eyes. Once all eyes are open the game will start.

The game ends whenever the central candle is extinguished.

Debrief

- *Facilitator, once your in your new area, guide them through the following.*

Extinguish candles, leave them on the tablecloth, open the doors, and leave the play space for a brighter area. Don't take any play material with you except this text.

- Thank you for playing!
- Close your eyes, inhale slowly and exhale deliberately. Release the Voices you spoke for, and the resulting conversations.
- Remind everyone that we all played fictional roles, and that we should not hold play events against each other. The game is over.
- What was your experience like? What moments were the most real to you?
- How did the things said by other players resonate with your own experiences of depression?
- Did those statements and behaviors relate to the behaviors you've seen in others?
- Were there any voices that were unfamiliar to your experience of depression? What was different?
- Is it possible to speak against those Voices, for yourself or for others? In what small ways can you do that?

Contact

- *If you have questions or comments about this game, please feel free to contact the designer - Shawn Stokes: cuckoococoon@gmail.com*

Acknowledgements

- Nina Runa Essendrop
- Simon Steen Hansen
- Michael Rude
- Asbjørn Olsen
- Tayler Stokes
- Jay Sylvano
- Jefferson Lee
- [Games to Gather](#)
- [The Game Garden](#)

