

Golden Cobra Challenge 2015

ICU

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Theme: Empathy

Players: 4

Facilitators: 1

Time: 2 hours

“People need to have their specialness reflected back in the eyes of others in order to see themselves”

Helen Riess

The Power of Empathy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=baHrcC8B4WM>

ICU

ICU is a freeform larp wrote for Golden Cobra Challenge 2015 (<http://www.goldencobra.org>). *ICU* last for two hours and it needs 4 players plus facilitator. This larp is about empathy and the famous saying that empathy is our ability to step in somebody's shoes. I had the idea for this game after I watched the Ted Talk: The Power of Empathy by Helen Riess (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=baHrcC8B4WM>). *ICU* also intends to explore body and self awareness.

During the game the players will have two important meetings, which could be a date, an interview, a meet with an important friend, or anything else. Although there are 4 players playing the game, there are only 2 characters, but two versions of each character. The game is divided in several acts and the facilitator will coordinate the transition between acts.

Empathy

ICU has the intention to talk about empathy. Although most people believe that empathy is something you are born with or without it, actually empathy is something that people can learn. If you plan to run this game, I suggest that you watch the Ted Talk mentioned above. In her talk Helen Riess mentioned the acronym **EMPATHY** which stand for:

Eyes Contact

Muscles of face expression

Posture

Affect

Tone voice

Hearing the whole person

Your response

This larp incorporate those elements during game play as an exercise to notice, to see, the person in front of you.

Characters

20 minutes

In this part players will create characters. First of all separate players in two pairs. Each pair will role-play a different character, but each pair is one character. The first thing to do is to determine what is the purpose of the meeting between characters. It could be any kind of meeting as long it is important and meaningful. Every process I describe next will apply for both pairs.

Each partner will represent a different side from the same character. For example one could be the male side while the other is the female side. One side could be the confident, outgoing, and extroverted while the other side could be the lonely, and depressed side. Although some parts could seem contradictory, just think about how our mood changes. Some days we are happy and somedays we are sad. If you have watched Inside Out from Disney, each player is like the

different characters that exist in everybody's mind: Joy, Fear, Anger, Disgust and Sadness, but players can choose which characteristics they want to represent and they must be a mix of many things. Give some time for player to figure out which parts they represent. Those traits, emotions and feelings will guide players how to role-play their characters.

Each pair must answer the following questions:

What is my name?

How old am I?

What is our profession?

Do I have family?

What I like to do most?

Do I have a partner?

What I like most about my life?

What I'm unhappy about my life?

Introductions

20 minutes

Once they have figured out who they are, ask them pair up side by side. Then ask them to close their eyes and slowly walk forward and hug each other, but keep hugging until you tell them to stop. Give some silence time, at least 20 seconds.

Say aloud: Repeat after me: I'm you, and you are me.

Ask them move one step back but hold hands.

Ask them to open their eyes and make eye contact.

Wait for 10 seconds.

Say aloud indicating one side: Now tell yourself, who is in front of you, what parts of yourself you are.

Say aloud indicating the other side: Now tell yourself, who is in front of you, what parts of yourself you are.

Ask partners to hold hands and stare at each other.

Wait for 10 seconds.

Say aloud: You are seeing yourself in the mirror which means whatever you do your reflection follow you. When I say so you are going to explore your body in terms of positioning, posture, and locomotion. The interesting part is — both of you are in charge, so go slow and without sounds negotiate what you two as a single person are going to do next. If you lost yourself, just catch up. This is an exercise of listening to the person in front of you, and also communicate with them without disrupt the flow. The most important part: *keep eye contact*. **Start.**

Give several minutes at least 5 for them to explore.

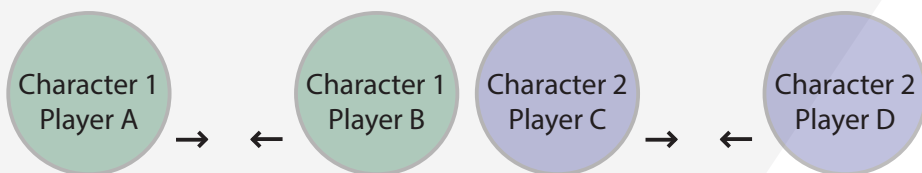
Phone Call

10 minutes

During this act both characters are going to call each other to arrange the appointment. Keep in mind that the calling is something important and characters should talk about it, which is a way to set up the expectations for the meeting. The call should be at least 3 minutes long.

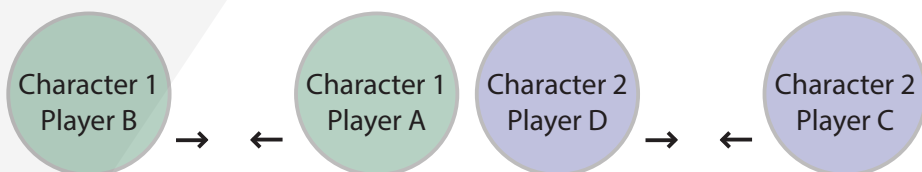
In terms of game two calls are going to happen. One side of a character will call one side of the other character, then the remaining sides will call each other. When one part is talking the other part is mirroring the person who is talking. This part do not intend to be funny, so players can skip to mimic mouth movements, but everything else should be mimicked. Also players who are talking must have their backs to each other.

To be clear look at diagram below:



The arrows indicate the direction to where players are looking. Player B is talking with player C while player A is mirroring player B and player D is mirroring player C.

When the call is over Character 1 (player A and B) will step forward and hug each other and then rotate 180 degrees. Same for character 2 (player C and D). They use the hug as way to turn around. After they hug and turn the configuration will be:



After they switch sides, they will make the remaining call.

Meeting

20 minutes

Now is time for the meetings. Using the analog above, player B will meet player C and player A will meet player D. Two meetings will happen at the same time, and they must be isolated from each other. Although there are two meetings happening, there is only one. Both meetings are the same, but somehow they face different sides of each character. This idea is based on the larp called ***Group Date*** by Sara Williamson.

Confiding

15 minutes

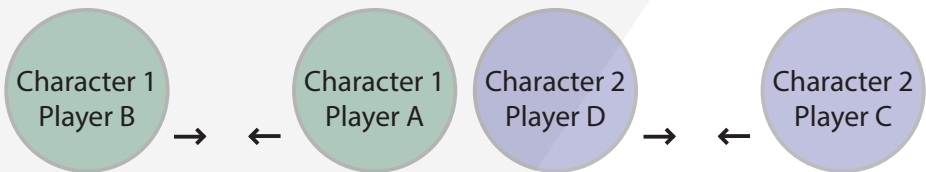
In this partners will talk to each other about what happened during the meeting. So, players A and B (character 1) will talk to each other while players C and D (character 2) do the same. Each group should talk separately. While one player described what happened during the meeting, the listener will mimic the speaker. When the speaker is done, s/he will ask the listener how was the meeting, and then the roles switch: the speaker becomes the listener and mimic while the listener become the speaker. Picture this act as the someone talking aloud in front of the mirror.

When the talking is done, each group should choose one player for a future meeting.

Follow up Call

10 minutes

In this act the chosen player will proceed with another call, and will be positioned themselves just like in the other call:



So in the situation above player A will talk with player D while player C and B mimic their respective partners. Since this is a following up call, some time have past since the last meeting, so the call should be relevant and important since both are excited to meet one more time.

Second Meeting

20 minutes

Different from the other act only the chosen players will meet. The other two players will be called shadows. The shadows will interact with their partners by whisperings things on their ears, which could be suggestion of actions, thought that cross their minds, or even feelings. The shadows, without disturbing the meeting, can talk to each other to decide about things they will say and etc.

Self Acceptance

5 minutes

In the final act we are going to integrate both parts of the characters. Ask partners to face each other.

Say aloud: Repeat after me: I'm you, and you are me.

Ask players to hold hands with their partners.

Say aloud: Now one by one please say to your partner why you need them as part of yourself.

Ask players to hug each other.

Say aloud: Repeat after me: I'm you, and you are me.

Debrief

After the game is over give couple minutes for players catch up their breath and then proceeded with the debrief. Make sure all players have proper time to speak about their experiences and feelings throughout the game. Also, please ask the following questions:

How comfortable were you to establish a connection to your partner?

Did you learn anything about empathy by playing this game? If yes, what did you learn?

What was the most memorable moment for you?

Appendix - Characters

What is my name?

How old am I?

What is our profession?

Do I have family?

What I like to do most and why?

Do I have a partner?

What I like most about my life?

What I'm unhappy about my life?

Appendix - Characters

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Appendix - Introductions

Say aloud: Repeat after me: I'm you, and you are me.

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Ask them to open their eyes and make eye contact.

Wait for 10 seconds.

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Appendix - Self Acceptance

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Ask players to hold hands with their partners.

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Ask players to hug each other.

Say aloud: Repeat after me: I'm you, and you are me.

Cheat Sheet

Intro

2 character role-played by 4 people

The game is about Empathy

Characters - 20 minutes

What kind of meeting?

Players decide which parts they represent

Answer questions — Appendix - Characters

Introductions - 10 minutes

Follow orientations — Appendix - Introduction

Mimic each other for 5 minutes

Phone Call - 10 minutes

Body positioning

Make a call while partners mimic

Switch by hugging

Make the second call while partners mimic

Meeting - 20 minutes

Two meetings at the same time

Confiding - 15 minutes

Partners get together and share their meetings while the other partner mimic

Decide who is going to meet again

Follow up call - 10 minutes

Body positioning

Make a call while partners mimic

Second meeting - 20 minutes

Only one meeting

Shadows whispers

Self Acceptance - 5 minutes

Follow orientation — Appendix - Self Acceptance

Debrief

Discuss and answer three questions