

MAKING UP



HARD to DO

by Jessie Giardino

Introduction

You're in love. You've just had a fight. It's time to make up.

Making Up is Hard to Do is a freeform game for two players. The game takes roughly 60-90 minutes from warm ups to debrief. Play begins just as a lover's quarrel is ending. Players tell a story about how a couple reconciles after an important argument. Speaking is limited to positive or negative statements, with touch used to show underlying meanings and unspoken emotions.

Themes and Inspiration

This is a game about communication in relationships. It explores what is said, what is meant and how those differ. It's also a game about moods/outlooks and how those affect conflict and resolution. The game begins just as a lover's quarrel is wrapping up, it portrays the couple making up and coming to the conclusion of an argument. This is not a game about breaking up, though the players may decide in debrief that the couple does in fact later break up.

This game is similar to a classic improv game sometimes referred to as "Good News, Bad News," or "Fortunately, Unfortunately."

What You Need to Play

- Two humans
- This document
- A pen
- Two pieces of paper
- A five minute timer, cell phone clock app or other method of time alerts
- A space to play in that allows players to hear and touch one another

Safety First!

Every game has the potential to cause emotional or physical discomfort. *Making Up is Hard to Do* requires players to touch one another and may stray into emotional areas that can trigger discomfort. Create a safe play space by using the following tools:

Touch Comfort Level Discussion

Use the following questions to determine each player's touch preference. Allow each player to answer each question fully before moving to the next. If you find it helpful, create a name tag for each player and draw symbols showing which types of touch you are comfortable receiving. *Remember when answering that each player is giving permission for these forms of touch to the other player in the game.*

- Do you prefer to not be touched at all? If either player answers yes, this isn't the game for you.
- Are you comfortable with hand touching such as handshakes, high fives or hand holding?
- Are you comfortable with romantic touching? This might include hugs, caresses or gently pulling one another toward each other. This game is not intended to include sexual touching (such as kissing).
- Are you comfortable with aggressive touching? This may include light grabbing of the arms or legs, lightly pushing someone away or soft taps to the shoulder. This game will not include violence (such as punching).
- Are you comfortable with the other playing standing and remaining close to you?
- Is there any form of touch you do not want? These might include having your hair touched, mentioning areas that are injured or general forms of touch either player does not like.

Emotional Trigger Discussion

Games that dally in emotional territory have the tendency to dredge up past feelings. If players are aware of past traumas, general dislike or otherwise uncomfortable territory, these feelings are best divulged beforehand. By discussing prior to the game any subject matter that might upset them, players create trust between one another.

There is no need to explain the details of a trigger to the other player. Simply bring it up, consider writing it down and placing it in a space where both players can see it during play. Both players will agree to consciously navigate around the topics in question.

Stopping Play Mechanism

The following is a method of freeform game safety referred to as "Hold." Tayler Stokes helped invent this tool along with Jay Sylvano, these two deserve a permanent ladder to Cool Town for all of their hard work.

If a player is uncomfortable with anything in game, the player will say "Hold!" loudly and clasp their hands firmly in front of their body. This signals to the other player to stop what they are doing immediately and pay attention to the player holding. Discuss what's been said or a touch that was uncomfortable, determine if play can continue in a way that everyone agrees is safe and respectful. If either player no longer wishes to continue, end the game and move to debrief. If both players are fine with continuing the one holding will release their hands and play will resume.

Both players will practice using the "Hold" technique before playing.

Preparing for Play

Good job talking about comfort levels regarding touch, emotional triggers and how to stop play. It's now time to define the relationship, argument, motivation and voices in the game. Players will create each of these elements together before beginning the game.

The Relationship

The players will portray characters in a loving, romantic relationship. Answer the following questions:

- How long have these two been together?
- Is this couple exclusively dating one another?
- Do they live together?
- Do they have a family together?

The Argument

Select the cause of the argument the characters within the relationship are currently experiencing. *Choose an argument that is important to the relationship, and one that might arise naturally.*

To get the ball rolling each player may select a statement below and fill in the blanks for either character in the relationship:

- It makes me so _____ (negative emotion) when you _____ (action or inaction).
- We don't _____ (action) together any more, is this a bad sign?
- Stop talking about my _____ (other significant person) that way!
- I can't stand it when you _____ (annoying action), you have got to stop.
- Where is this going? Are we ever going to _____ (significant relationship action)?
- Lately I've felt like you're not into me any more, it doesn't help that you _____ (negative action).

Take the answers provided by each player and merge these together. Tell a little story about this relationship. Why are these two people arguing? Discuss the relationship's history and why this argument is occurring at this point.

Character Choice

With the relationship and argument defined, each player will choose the character they wish to portray in the game. Discuss this between the two players.

The Motivation

Now that each player knows which character they will be playing it's time to make some choices separately.

The game will begin with the characters using a specific emotion as their motivation. Both players will choose this emotion for their characters. Keep the emotion secret from the other player. *Think about the relationship and the argument and choose an appropriate emotion.* Players need not choose entirely negative emotions for their characters, despite the game starting in an argument. Do not choose violence-inducing emotions such as rage or terror; this is not a game about domestic violence.

FOR INSTANCE:

- ♡ *The breadwinner of the couple is angry about the lack of attention currently given by their partner. The breadwinner might feel: over-confident, frustrated, lonely, annoyed or unappreciated.*
- ♡ *One of the newlyweds in the couple is upset about how their partner treats their family members. This newlywed might feel: underwhelmed, sad, heartsick, angry or vexed.*

Characters also need a stake in the argument, this is the preferred outcome. How does each character want the argument to end? What does each character hope to get from their partner? Keep this outcome secret from the other player.

FOR INSTANCE:

- ♡ *Does your character want an apology?*
- ♡ *Does your character want a promise to stop a negative habit?*
- ♡ *Is your character trying to convince their partner it's time to start family planning?*
- ♡ *Did this argument start because your character wasn't getting enough attention from their partner?*

Outcomes may include ultimatums, but recognize that this game includes compromise and empathizing with each other's characters.

Write down the chosen emotions and outcomes and keep both secret.

The Voices

Assign the voice of **Fortunately** to one player and **Unfortunately** to the other player for the start of play. These voices will switch during play, you will not permanently be either. *Use the following voice descriptions to select a starting voice for each player:*

Fortunately: You are a classic optimist and consider yourself lucky. Every statement you speak in game will be positive. This may manifest in game as cheerleading, anticipating the best and finding solutions. You should reflect your positive statements in your gestures, tone and facial expressions.

Unfortunately: You are a classic pessimist and don't believe in luck. Every statement you speak in game will be negative. This may manifest in the game as finding flaws, using sarcasm, creating road blocks or pushing away compliments. You should reflect your negative statements in your gestures, tone and facial expressions.

Warm Ups

Prior to playing the game, players will have discussed a safety mechanism for stopping play, take a moment to reiterate that now.

Touchy Subjects

Be sure to recall the comfortability with touch discussion in set-up. This exercise is designed to make both players comfortable with touch prior to play. It will also help players begin to disassociate words and movements.

- Stand facing one another, arms comfortably extended.
- Hold each other's hands.
- The first player will say, "Go away" and pull the player slightly closer.
- The second player will say, "Leave me alone" and pull the player even closer.
- Continue making negative statements and pulling one another closer until one or both players decide they are too close for comfort (or to continue because they're smooshed together). At this point one or both players should say, "Reverse!"

- Remaining close, the first player should say, "Hold me" and push the other player away.
- The second player will say, "Stay with me," and push the other player away.
- Continue making positive statements and pushing one another away until you can no longer touch. This will conclude the "Touchy Subjects" warm up.

A Day in the Life Of

Using the voices of **Fortunately** and **Unfortunately** chosen for play start, players should begin narrating how a usual day would proceed for the two characters. During this portion of the warm up, players should avoid using the in-game touch mechanic, instead speak only about your individual character and their actions. Narrate the day leading up to the argument. End when both characters are in the same location and the argument is nigh.

CONSIDER:

- Where do these characters first see each other?
- Do they spend most of their day together?
- How does each character interact with the world when separate from the other?
- What setting would each character prefer to have the argument in?

Play

Setting the Argument

Take turns describing how the argument began using third person. **Don't use the voices for this portion and don't use the touch mechanic.** Describe the more heated moments of the argument to one another. Try not to delve too much into dialogue. Tell the story of the argument until it nears cooling down due to either emotional exhaustion and/or conciliation.

Timer

Set a timer for five minutes. When the timer goes off, switch characters. The player portraying Fortunately becomes Unfortunately and vice versa. Reset the timer for 5 more minutes. Repeat this step every time the timer goes off until the conclusion of the game. Do not switch roles in the relationship, keep your motivation and preferred outcome, simply switch the voice you're playing.

Speaking

The characters are together at the beginning of play. **They begin speaking to one another according to the nature of their characters and the tones of their voices: Fortunately and Unfortunately.** The players may walk around the space and gesticulate to punctuate their statements.

When a player makes a statement that creates a fiction, both will accept this statement as fact and add to it as they see fit.

FOR INSTANCE:

♡ *Fortunately: "I love this old house."*

♡ *Unfortunately: "Yeah, but the squirrels have chewed up all the wiring, we're basically one spark away from a massive fire."*

Begin speaking from the emotional position noted in setup.

Use this emotional motivation to start the conciliation. Push toward your preferred outcome chosen in setup, but allow the other player to insinuate their emotion and outcome. Listen to what the other player says, try to understand their position and preferred outcome.

Touching

Only touch the other player when your character feels or means something other than what they say. This might come up if the character you are playing is in conflict with their emotional motivation.

FOR INSTANCE:

♡ *Unfortunately: "Leave me alone, I can't stand you right now,"*
(Unfortunately gently pulls Fortunately closer sighing happily.)

Touch may also be necessary if the outcome is in conflict with the character.

FOR INSTANCE:

♡ *Fortunately: "I would love to have babies with you."* *(Fortunately gently pushes Unfortunately away, making a disgust noise.)*

If desired, add sounds, looks and pantomimes to the touch. This may help convey the hidden emotion or meaning to the other character.

Play continues until the characters have made up and the argument is completely over. It is perfectly ok if either character wishes to give up the argument or switches their desired outcome. It is expected that the character's emotion has changed over the course of play.

Play Concludes

Make sure to confirm how the argument has concluded, noting any compromises or decisions made.

Now that the characters have fully made up, each player will decide what emotion their character is feeling. Write this down next to the emotion chosen in setup.

Debrief

Dercling

Free yourself from the bounds of your character and voice: change locations, breathe deeply, change positions, give each other a hug, take a little walk or stretch. Use whatever means you prefer to slip back into yourself. From here on out refer to the fictional characters and not the people playing while discussing in-game events.

Epilogue

Discuss how each player sees their character proceeding from the point when play ended. This is an open discussion between the players; *do not speak from within the role you played.*

CONSIDER:

Do these characters remain in their relationship?

- Has the relationship changed?
- How will the argument affect each character individually?
- How will each character proceed from here?
- Do these characters stay together?

Questions

Answer some, none, or all. Your choice!

- What emotion did you choose for your character during setup? How did it change over the course of the game? What emotion was your character feeling as you finished the game?
- How did the voices of Fortunately or Unfortunately limit you in game?
- How did the other player's character affect your character?
- Was it difficult to make up when the touch mechanic was used?
- Did your opinion on the preferred outcome specified in setup change?
- How did hearing something contradictory to how you were touched feel?
- Did your play feel like relationships you've had in the past, if so how did you pull from those relationships in the game (if at all)?

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Game inspiration: The Ladies Jess

Game text: Jessie Giardino

Game layout: Jefferson Lee

This game was born on a park bench between two Jessies enjoying an evening romp. They decided to try out speaking in only positive and only negative statements. It was fun! Jessie Dettwiler was the other Jessie involved and she deserves chief credit in inspiring this game. She also assisted in playtesting the game and was enthusiastic throughout the process which was not only helpful but delightful.

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Feedback

Did you play *Making Up is Hard to Do* and enjoy it, or hate it, or find it baffling, or just want to chat with the designer about sandwiches? Email madamefeisty@gmail.com.

