

# Where Do We Go From Here?

Welcome to Where Do We Go From Here? — a support group for people who have recently died by suicide. Before you can move on to the afterlife of your choosing, it has been mandated that you participate in this support group session to process the life you have just ended. Your support group session will be made up of a collection of 3-7 other people who are also taking this journey, along with a volunteer facilitator. How you died is not important and will not be the focus of our conversations today. Instead, we are interested in exploring why you could not continue in that life, what you would have changed, and where you hope to go from here. This session will last approximately two hours, at the end of which you will be offered a choice.

## Materials:

One copy of this document in full for facilitator instructions and one copy of each character.

Enough copies of Appendix A : Crisis Support to distribute to each player.

Comfortable seating for players and facilitator. If possible, keep in mind that people have varying physical and sensory needs for comfort. To increase accessibility, I recommend providing a variety of seating options including chairs, large floor pillows, and/or a couch as your space and resources permit. Name tags and markers for character names and pronouns.

A device for playing this song during debrief (<https://zefrank.bandcamp.com/track/chillout>)

This game can also be run over video chat with players in different regions — in this case players are responsible for their own physical comfort but the facilitator must be extra vigilant in checking on players and ensuring that they have the safety information relevant to their locale.

## Facilitator Instructions:

As noted above, this may be a deeply emotionally stressful game for some people. Please keep an eye on your players AND YOURSELF for signs of distress during and after play. Do not skip the safety notes, workshops, or debrief.

### Role

You will be playing the part of the support group facilitator. You are not a trained therapist, just an immortal volunteer who guides the recently deceased through this process. For the comfort of your participants, you have taken a human form for this session.

### Set Up

Cut out character sheets and place them face-up on a table, along with name tags and markers for character names and pronouns. Make sure there are enough places for everyone to comfortably sit for an extended period of

## Safety Note:

This game deals with difficult topics including suicide, terminal illness, abuse, harassment, and general existentialism. Additional triggering themes may come up in game play as players add their own ideas. As such, the following safety rules will be in effect:

**Cut and Brake** - If someone is in immediate danger, be it physical or emotional, players should raise their arms in the air and loudly say 'CUT'. When this happens, all surrounding players should do the same until all play has stopped. If the danger can be resolved to the satisfaction of ALL players (e.g. removing a trip hazard), gameplay may continue. If someone is injured or in crisis, please discontinue play. If nobody is in immediate danger but gameplay is still getting too intense, a player can put their palms out in front of their body and say 'brake'. The player(s) they are interacting with should respond by physically moving back, lowering their voice, and/or shifting away from the current topic.

**Open Door Policy** - Any player can leave the space at any time, without calling cut or break. It is ideal to provide a quiet space outside of the room for players to calm down if needed. Players who use the open door policy are still welcome to join the debrief if they choose but may also leave altogether. If the latter, please check in with the facilitator in a way you are comfortable with so that they know you are safe. Using safety mechanics in larp is not in any way a sign of weakness.

Please respect that we all have different lived experiences and what is not triggering for one person may be extremely stressful for others. THE PLAYERS ARE SO MUCH MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE GAME. Be sure to care for each other. For the facilitator, while you should be available to support your players during and after debrief, you are not their therapist nor should you try to be their savior. I have included a list of various crisis services in the appendices for you to share with your players in case they are in need of more support than you are able to provide following this game.

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### **Workshops:**

Once everyone has arrived and greeted each other/introduced themselves, it is time to get started on the workshops. These are designed to help players get into the mood for the game and develop their characters.

Players should select a character from those available on the table. For a high bleed experience, players may choose a character that is very close to home for them. It is also absolutely valid to choose a character who is unlike the player to provide a mental barrier between the player and these difficult topics. Challenging themes will still come up in play and players should be mindful of that when deciding whether or not to play this game. Give players up to ten minutes to answer the questions on their character sheet.

All of the characters can be played by a person of any gender, please write your character's name and pronouns (which may or may not match the players pronouns) on your name tag and attach it to yourself.

Have the players walk silently around the space as you read the following list of words, roughly 30 seconds between each one. Instruct them to change the way they move their body and face to express the thoughts and emotions that come to mind with each word.

Birth, Joy, Silly, Good, Bored, Tired, Lost, Scared, Angry, Hopeless, Safe

Next, ask the participants to find their seat. If they are comfortable doing so, they may close their eyes for this brief guided meditation and set of instructions. Read the following aloud in a calm, steady voice. I recommend practicing a few times before the larp if you are nervous.

To look at life  
beyond that distant horizon  
is something I love to do-

In the liminal spaces abounding.  
Of your gaze, in which  
I see times past, and  
The promise of future.  
Of that child's laughter  
pulling me along in its wake-  
A delight, sheer joy in innocence,  
Back to a time, when nothing soured.  
In that bolt of lightning  
which rips apart the sky.  
and gives a glimpse, being a window  
To power and beauty, incomparable, of nature!  
In that word on a page  
which in itself opened up  
a thousand possibilities-  
of use, abuse and experience!

Of a friend, or maybe a stranger,  
who takes you places,  
knowingly, unknowingly  
On to that threshold  
you never knew was there.  
Through the ink  
that is the medium  
for the soul to express itself-  
bare and raw, in all its glory.  
But most of all, the Liminal Space  
of finally not being-  
when the eyes close, deeper into the self  
flying above all earthly bonds-  
When I am the Liminal  
for my own soul.

[The Liminal by Usha Pisharody]



## The Support Group

Welcome the characters to the space. You should say something like this:

“Thank you for joining me today in our group, Where Do We Go From Here? As you were told by your greeter, this session is mandatory before you can move on from this liminal space. My name is Zan and while I am not a therapist, I am here to help guide you. Each of you is here because you made the decision to end your life. How you did this is not important and will not be discussed. Instead, we will explore questions around meaning, change, and hope. At the end of our session today, you will be asked to make a choice. My hope is that by that time you will be prepared to move on. There are no wrong answers here and you have all had different experiences. Please be respectful of each other. If at any time you need to leave the space, you may quietly exit through there [gesture toward exit]. You are welcome to come back or not. If you choose not to, please let me know in a way you are comfortable. There is no real consequence to leaving.”

Have the players introduce themselves as their character (name, pronouns, and age). Next, present them with each of these questions, in order. Give enough time between new questions for all of the players to think and discuss their feelings in response before moving on. It's okay if not everyone answers every question and it doesn't have to be done in a circular fashion around the room, but do try to reign in any players who are dominating the discussion so that everyone gets an opportunity to talk if they wish to do so. Depending on the number of players, this should take 45-90 minutes.

1. In a sentence or two, why are you here? What made your life unbearable?
2. Who tried to help you? Is there anything anyone could have done to change your decision?
3. What would you say to a person you loved who was going through what you were? Did you ever say that to yourself?
4. What kinds of things do you hope the living will say about you now?
5. What does 'hope' mean to you?
6. What do/did you believe happens to you after you die?
7. In just a few words, do you regret leaving your life behind?

Once these questions (and any others that are posed by the players or facilitator during the course of the session) have been answered, it is time for each person to make a choice. Read the following aloud:

“Thank you for your participation in today's group. I appreciate that these are difficult questions to work through and you have a lot to think about but unfortunately our time is limited and the time has come for you to make a choice. There are many places you may go from here.

First is paradise, whatever that might mean to you.

Second, torment, and again what that means is up to you.

Third, the void where you simply cease to exist altogether.

Fourth, reincarnation — you do not get decide how or where you return to existence, but your essence moves on to another mortal life.

Finally, re-entry — if you choose this option, you will return to your life having had a near-death experience. Nothing will have changed but you will remember this session as a dream. Where you go from there is in your hands.

You will have five minutes to decide, at which time the session will end and you will move along on your journey.”

Allow the players five minutes to think and discuss this decision. Do not try to answer any questions beyond repeating the options already presented. After five minutes, ask your players to close their eyes if they are comfortable doing so, and begin the debrief.

## Debrief

If possible, dim the lights and play the song Chillout by Ze Frank (available to stream for free here: <https://zefrank.bandcamp.com/track/chillout>). Once the song is complete, read the following aloud:

“Bring yourself back to your physical body. Mentally feel your way down, from the top of your head, down through your face, your neck and shoulders, around your torso, and to the ends of your limbs. Feel your heart beating in your chest, the way breath moves in and out of your lungs. You are alive. You are safe. You are here. Please remove your character name tag as you regain your grounding in your life outside this game.”

This debrief will consist of a series of questions. As in the game, it is not necessary for everyone to verbally respond to every question but do encourage players to participate in a way that gives everyone space to explore and express their feelings in a safe way.

1. Are you okay? Is there anything you need from us in this moment?
2. What was the hardest part of this game for you?
3. Was there anything another player in this game did that helped you?
4. Is there anything in this game that has left you with hurt? Would you like to address that?
5. Is there anything else you need in order to move on?

Please make sure that every player has a physical copy of Appendix A - Crisis Support before they leave. If you are comfortable providing players with your contact information you may also do this.

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### Amani, 46

A year ago you were diagnosed with cancer and told you might have three months to live. You fought hard and sought out every treatment you could find in your many hours of research. You went into remission. But in the end, it wasn't enough. Last week a routine scan lit up like a Christmas tree. There were tumors all over your body. You didn't have any fight left in you. And so now you are here.

Questions to answer:

Did your loved ones know you were going to do this?

Did they support your decision?

If you could give any gift to the person you were closest to, what would it be?

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### Emery, 54

Two years ago you were laid off from your job. Your savings were quickly eaten up and the social safety nets weren't enough to keep you afloat. You had to leave your home and were often hungry, begging for change from strangers who usually ignored you if they weren't outright hateful. After months of being unable to find stable work, it was all too easy to give up. And so now you are here.

Questions to answer:

Did you love your job or was it just a means of paying the bills?

What resources might have made it easier to keep going?

Did you leave behind a message for anyone?

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### Jaden, 22

They were your soulmate. You were so sure and you had planned out the rest of your lives together. But your best friend saw them making out with someone else last night outside a coffee shop. The coffee shop you went to on your first date when you were fifteen. This morning you confronted them and your plan, your whole world was shattered. You panicked. And so now you are here.

Questions to answer:

What was your soulmate's name?

Were you angry or sad or something else when you confronted them?

What part of your plans were you most excited about?

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### Leslie, 61

You remember the day your child took their first steps like it was yesterday. That moment was overshadowed by so many other steps that made you proud as a single parent. Today would have been their 35th birthday but four months ago they were killed in a boating accident. You had no other children. You felt you had nothing left to live for. And so now you are here.

Questions to answer:

What was your child's favourite movie?

How many times did you watch it with them?

What did you do in your life that you were most proud of?

**Petya, 73**

Your spouse of 52 years died suddenly yesterday following an unexpected heart attack. This was devastating for you. After so long together, you didn't know how to live without them. Even imagining doing so was heartbreaking for you. And so now you are here.

Questions to answer:

What was your favourite song to dance to with your spouse?

Did you have a hobby together?

What is something you dreamed about doing with your life as a teenager but didn't because you chose a different path?

**Riley, 28**

You had been best friends since before you could walk and talk. The two of you did everything you could together. They cried on your shoulder when they didn't get into the college they wanted and held your hand through your first tattoo. Last week, they got into a car with a drunk driver and never made it home. They'll never make it home. You were the driver. The guilt and grief were all consuming. And so now you are here.

Questions to answer:

What was your first tattoo?

Did your best friend ever go to college?

Why didn't you go to their funeral?

**Udo, 35**

You spent half of your life struggling with your mental health. In and out of hospitals, dozens of therapists and counselors, too many people to count all telling you that if you just tried harder and focused on being happy you'd be fine. It's all in your head, right? Sure, it was all in your head... but so was your sense of who you were and what you could be, and those were being drowned out by everything else. You felt like you were out of options. And so now you are here.

Questions to answer:

What was the kindest thing someone ever said to you?

What was the cruelest?

Can you describe a time and place where you felt at peace?

**Skylar, 17**

A month ago, you came out as queer and to say it didn't go well would be an understatement. Between your parents rejecting your truth while threatening to send you to conversion therapy and relentless harassment at school, you simply couldn't take it for another moment. And so now you are here.

Questions to answer:

Who was the one person you thought you could really trust?

How did they betray that trust?

What is something from your life you will miss?

**About The Author**

Ashleigh Patterson is a queer larp lover living in Ontario, Canada with their partner, two children, a whole bunch of other people, and probably too many pets. Their favourite games are those that encourage exploring big feelings. Ashleigh also occasionally does stage acting and non-fiction writing projects. You can get in touch with them at [ashleighvmpatterson@gmail.com](mailto:ashleighvmpatterson@gmail.com).

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# Appendix A - Crisis Support

As a human who has struggled with many of the themes in this game for more than half of my life, I recognize that there is a lot of very triggering content here and want you to know that you are not alone. If you are struggling for any reason and are able to do so, please talk with someone you trust. If you can't do that, I have put together this list of resources to help you stay here while you find your footing in life. This is by no means a complete list and I encourage you as players and facilitators to add resources specific to your region and/or culture in the space I have provided below.

## National Hotlines

United States

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (Deaf and Hard of Hearing): 1-800-799-4889

The Trevor Project (for LGBTQIA youth): 1-866-488-7386

The Crisis Text Line: text HOME to 741-741

Canada

Canada Suicide Prevention Service: 1-833-456-4566

International

List of crisis hotlines in Europe: [https://www.iasp.info/resources/Crisis\\_Centres/Europe](https://www.iasp.info/resources/Crisis_Centres/Europe)

List of crisis hotlines around the world: <http://www.suicide.org/international-suicide-hotlines.html>

## Online Resources

Free crisis chat service: <https://www.imalive.org/>

Read this if you are feeling suicidal: <https://metanoia.org/suicide/>

Dealing with an existential crisis: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=--uYWuzsP8s>

Chillout by Ze Frank: <https://zefrank.bandcamp.com/track/chillout>

Local Resources

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(If any of these resources are unavailable or out of date, please get in touch with me at [ashleighvmpatterson@gmail.com](mailto:ashleighvmpatterson@gmail.com) so I can update the document).