

CATHARSIS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Thank you for your help in this important research project! In order to facilitate a successful Catharsis discussion circle, we have prepared this list of Frequently Asked Questions to assist participants with common concerns.

Q: Do I need to make any special preparations before the session?

A: No, you can follow your normal routine. There is no need to avoid food or drink before the session.

Q: Is there any physical discomfort associated with channeling?

A: No. However, as you may be sitting for long periods, we recommend taking breaks to stand and stretch from time to time.

Q: Will I get to pick which entity I am channeling?

A: Yes, with some limitations. Hera is always present in a Catharsis session. If the person channeling her leaves the group or chooses another entity to channel, she will "jump" to another random person; if that person is already channeling, the entity already present will be expelled, either to withdraw or to find another willing channeler.

Q: What if I arrive at the session late?

A: Catharsis sessions are designed to be unstructured and participant-led, so it's fine if you don't arrive at the same time as everyone else. We recommend that before joining in the conversation, you take a few minutes to consider personality of the entity you have decided to channel, and their relation to the others present. Then, just relax and allow them to speak through you.

Q: What if I need to leave early?

A: No problem! Simply relax and wait a moment for the entity you are channeling to separate from you, then quietly leave the circle.

Q: How will the other participants know whether I am channeling, or simply present and listening?

A: You don't have to participate in the discussions if you would prefer to sit and listen quietly. However, you may use a flashlight held in your lap and visible to others (on = channeling, off = speaking as yourself) as an indicator of your status.

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Q: May I participate as myself without channeling an entity?

A: Yes, but you may find it difficult to communicate effectively (see below), and as the goal of Catharsis is to facilitate a therapeutic discussion between channeled entities, we ask that you keep unchanneled conversation time to a minimum.

Q: Will there be any conflict between myself and the entity I am channeling?

A: The entity cannot harm you in any way. Please keep in mind that you are a modern 21st-century person whose viewpoint, identity and gender may be very different than that of the ancient entity you are channeling. As a result, there may be some confusion and disorientation from the personality of the entity you are hosting.

Q: What will be discussed during the Catharsis session?

A: All of the entities channeled in a Catharsis session are aspects of mortal or divine women from classical Greek mythology who were lovers of Zeus, and as a result, who were often placed into conflict with one another. Catharsis allows them to air their grievances and discuss their experiences in a safe, constructive setting. The entity you are channeling may, through you, consider questions such as:

- How did I feel about my interactions with Zeus when they happened? Did I think of them as consensual, inappropriate, wanted, unwanted, flattering, dangerous, or something else?
- Are my feelings the same now, or have they changed?
- What do I think about the other women who have had relationships with Zeus, and is that different from the way I thought about them at the time?
- If I had a child with Zeus, what is my relationship with that child now?

You may also have opinions about these entities' situation given your vastly different perspective. If you are not channeling you may also choose to participate in the discussion as yourself, but please be mindful of the gap in perspective between modern 21st century people and ancient mythological entities.

Q: Are these "entities" we are channeling really the divine essences of long-ago goddesses and mythological figures, or is this some kind of weird induced psychodrama?

A: Unfortunately, we cannot answer questions about the 'objective' nature of Catharsis, as doing so might affect the reliability of the outcome.

Q: Will parking be validated?

A: Yes. Please present your parking slip to the receptionist when you leave. You will have to pay for parking at the cashier's window rather than the automated kiosk.

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AVAILABLE ENTITIES

Hera – the most well-known and dominant wife of Zeus; the Queen of Heaven. She was often the agent of destruction of Zeus' other lovers, and of mortals who gave her offense. Hera always appears during a Catharsis session. Please keep in mind that if the person channelling her leaves the circle, she will "jump" to another person. Anyone may volunteer. If no one steps up, Hera will choose the first available person who is not already channelling. If no such person is available, she will move to the person to 'her' right and expel the entity currently hosted.

Danaë – a princess of Argos. Her father, prophesied to die at the hands of her son, imprisoned her in an effort to thwart the prophecy. Zeus appeared to her in the form of "golden rain"; their son grew up to become the hero Perseus. Zeus quietly protected her during her lifetime, and she does not appear to have caught Hera's attention.

Echo – an *oread* (mountain nymph) who never had a romantic or sexual relationship with Zeus; instead he ordered her to distract Hera with conversation while he engaged in trysts. When Hera discovered this, she cursed Echo's speech so that she could only repeat the most recently spoken words of another person.

Europa – a Phoenician princess and later queen of Crete. Zeus disguised himself as a tame white bull to lure Europa into climbing on his back. When she did so, he carried her off to the island of Crete, then revealed his true form. Their son, King Minos, became the first king of Crete and is perhaps best remembered for his association with the Labyrinth and the Minotaur.

Io – a priestess of Hera who Zeus fell in love with; an ancestor of Hercules. Zeus disguised her by turning her into a cow, a deception that Hera saw through, leading to Io being thrown back and forth between the two of them as they tried respectively to hide and to find Io. She wandered the world as a cow until Zeus eventually restored her to human form.

Leda – an Aetolian woman who married Tyndareus, a king of Sparta. Zeus famously "appeared to her" in the form of a swan, and is believed to have been the father of her daughter Helen.

Leto – a goddess who was impregnated by Zeus with the twins Artemis and Apollo. Hera, in her jealousy, tried to bar Leto from finding a place to give birth or to have assistance from the goddess of childbirth.

Mnemosyne – a daughter of Titans, who predated the ancient gods. She and Zeus were lovers long before he married Hera. Their children were the nine Muses.

Semele – a young Phoenician woman who had a long-term affair with Zeus. Hera, disguised, tricked her into demanding that he appear to her in his full divine form. Zeus, after begging her to reconsider, reluctantly did so, and the force of his lightning-garbed presence incinerated her. Their son (rescued and eventually birthed from Zeus' thigh) was Dionysus.

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LIBRETTO AND CREDITS

It's always bothered me that the classical myths and classical poems about the god Zeus rarely spare a thought for the women he pursued – with and without their consent – and that they and their children, not Zeus himself, suffered the consequences of his wife Hera's jealous rages. I wondered what it would be like for them to have a group therapy session without Zeus there to cause problems; and how their feelings and their decisions, set in an ancient world that was hardly egalitarian, might contrast with our modern view of their stories. A group discussion session in which the women spoke through modern-day human volunteers who agreed to a sort of benign spirit possession (or, if you prefer, alteration of consciousness in order to access a shared memetic consciousness), allowing one person to consider their stories from multiple points of view.

Flashlights are entirely optional but are helpful to provide a visual signal of whether a player is “possessed” or is participating in the discussion on their own.

The low-key nature of the ‘possession’ means that players can easily join and leave the game, or to step out for a while if they need a break from play.

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