

OFFLINE — 41

Required materials

- Yourself
- A Discord account, and an understanding of Discord's basic functionality
- A device with the capability to run Discord, internet connectivity, and a microphone
- A well-lit, physical space in which you are alone and able to speak out loud

Personnel and time requirements

A game for one player. About five minutes are required for setup. Minimum play time of approximately fifteen minutes. Player-determined upper limit.

Safety

OFFLINE — 41 loosely engages with themes of loneliness, regret, and lost emotional connections. Other than those themes, the player is in complete control of what topics are touched upon during play. The player may decide to postpone or discontinue the game at any time for any reason. While finishing the game in one uninterrupted sitting is strongly recommended, the intended play experience should not take precedence over one's well-being.

Setup

The player will set up a Discord server in which they are the only member. The player creates one text channel and one audio channel if they are not generated automatically when creating the server. Keep the default server name or use a generic placeholder server name until prompted to alter it later. Immersion may be improved by setting Discord to "do not disturb" or otherwise hiding notifications from other Discord servers and users.

Situation

The player is the moderator of a Discord server— the server in which the player currently lingers. The server has petered out into inactivity with a list of perpetually offline account statuses. The player is the only member online. It is ambiguously late at night, and the player opens their server and takes stock of its stagnant text channel and silent voice channel.

While the server's text channel is empty in reality, treat it in-fiction as if it contains a long backlog of old messages from other members. Similarly, treat the member sidebar as if it is full of offline accounts.

Recall:

- How long has the server been inactive?
- How long was the server running before activity dwindled?
- How active was the player as a server member outside of moderation duties?
- What was the server made for?

Discord servers may be created for any number of reasons. If inspiration is needed, consider:

- a space to coordinate hangouts between school friends
- a space for a fandom to discuss the source work and share fanworks
- a space to anonymously vent about having, and supporting others with, a shared health condition
- a space to find teammates for an online multiplayer video game
- a space for professional networking

Once the reason for the creation of the server has been determined, enter the server's settings menu and give it an appropriate name.

Admin Duties

Enter your newly-created Discord server and send out a greeting in the text channel. If you are gutsy enough, use an @everyone or @here ping. Wait for a response for a few moments. While waiting, feel free to browse other apps and websites or leave your device to partake in another activity. If at all possible, do not open other Discord servers or interact with other people during this time. Return to the server after an appropriate amount of time has passed.

In the text channel, type out why you're messaging the server. In your time zone, it is past midnight. What reason could you have to haunt a dead server in the wee hours of the morning? Whether you actually send this message is up to you.

If no one responds, move on to the voice channel regardless of whether you sent the previous message.

Join the voice channel and speak aloud into your microphone. Talk about yourself and take as long as you like. Maybe you'd like to reintroduce yourself to an audience of one. Maybe you'd like to read some writing you've been working on lately out loud. Maybe you'd like to talk about some family drama you're dealing with. Feel free to ramble or tell secrets you'd never tell anyone. It's alright—no one is listening.

If you'd like, you may also talk about some, all, or none of the following topics. Perhaps you have something else to say entirely. That's okay.

- What were you hoping would happen when you messaged this dead server?
- Have you tried to revive this server before? How did it go?
- How do you currently feel about the reason you originally started this server?

If no one responds, return to the text channel in which you previously greeted the server.

Address certain members of the server directly. Type out and send messages in which you call them by username, or even their real name if you know it. Air out thoughts that you never had the chance to impart while the server was active.

Did you have a best friend? A crush? A hated nuisance who never broke the rules enough to be banned? A stand-in parental figure? A person you never talked to but wanted to know better? Talk about it. You may confront someone about an insult you never forgave. You may confess a love you feel ashamed about. Express an opinion that would have made you a server pariah. Send a picture of yourself in which you felt confident. Send an mp3 of a song you used to listen to on the way to school. Send a link to a website you frequented in your teenage years. Send anything you'd like within the bounds of the server's functionality. Get it all out. Take all the time you need.

If no one responds, re-enter the voice chat.

Do not say anything, but keep your mic unmuted.

If no one responds, leave the voice chat.

Don't look away. Wait for a reply.

If no one responds, delete the server.

Author's Notes

I've spent a lot of time in my life taking part in internet communities that slowly die out, be it from users moving on to other interests, getting busy with other obligations, or sometimes —thankfully, relatively rarely— quite literally dying. Very often, I find myself wondering why I keep immersing myself in ephemeral online spaces knowing that they'll likely fall into disuse within a year or two. I am, as of now, in no less than sixteen dead Discord servers that have not seen a single message sent in a year or more. Users I once knew as family, friends, or at least amicable acquaintances haven't logged on in months at best. I can't bring myself to leave dead servers, but I can't bring myself to look in them either.

What do you do when you can't let go of something, but don't know how to confront it head on?

I suppose you make a game about it.