giving and taking
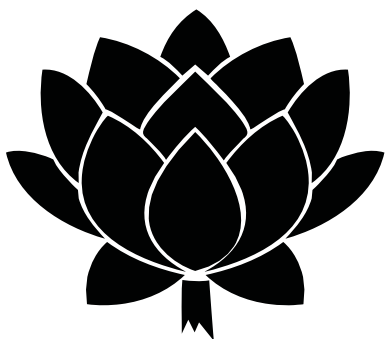
A game for two, three or four players.

What is needed:
- A copy of the game.
- Space to act out scenes, some tables and chairs.
- Simple props if desired.
- Pencils, paper.

Players and Roles

Two Player Game

With two players, one person plays the role of one character, and the other plays different people in that character's life.

Three or Four Player Game

As with the two player game, one player will play a single character throughout. The others have options:

- One person takes the role of all other characters and the remaining players guide the two playing characters.
- All the other players alternate between playing characters in the different scenes.

Any player not playing a character in a scene gives direction and guides the two players in the roles.

About the Game

Three scenes from a person's life. Times when the irritations and problems someone else is experiencing bumps into the placidity of another person's day. Opportunities for compassion.

You'll play out these moments in three scenes. Each scene involves the root character--the stable figure in the game--and another person in their life. Before playing you choose who that other character is, what is going wrong for them, and some way they rub the root character wrong.

The situations are simple, they may be brief moments of passing importance, or have broader reaching impact. The main thing is simply to see how the characters interact.

Each scene is played out multiple times. Giving a different spin or emphasis on each tme which makes up a "take". Play at least three takes for each scene, and stop after a time that feels right.

Each scene ends with the root character showing love for the other.

Example:

Charles works at a bank in the suburbs. His job is stable right now, but his company just got bought out, so he is working late every night to help complete the conversion. He lives alone, with two cats, and loves to get Chinese food take-out and watch monster movies on Saturdays.

Scene 1: Georgette, Charles's mother comes over to ask him to help her take her car to the garage again. Georgette is missing her husband.

Scene 2: Darren, Charles' coworker is leaving work early to go on a date. He asks Charles to finish his contracts. Darren is afraid of losing his job.

Scene 3: Charles comes out to his car to find someone stealing his radio. Lucy, the thief, is on methadone.

Characters

One player creates a character to play. This is the root character.

They answer the following questions:
1) Is the character female or male? Or another category?
2) Do they live in a city or in the country? Or somewhere else?
3) Do they have a job? What is it?
4) Do they live alone? Or with others?
5) What is one other thing a friend would know about them? For example: are they patient? Do they love animals?

Give the root character a name.

There will be three other characters. For each you chose a role that the character plays in the root character's life such as sibling, parent, stranger, employer etc. The nature of the relationship between the root character and the other is different for each. The nature is described below for each:

The FIRST is someone the root character knows well and cares about.

Choose a role from the following list.

Is this character:
   o Their Mom or Dad
   o Their lover, partner or spouse
   o A brother or sister
   o A friend
   o A coworker
   o Someone else?

Who chooses? The person playing the other character should choose a role, and confirm it with the root character's player. All the players can confer about the choice if desired and if done in a timely way.

The SECOND is someone the root character knows, but not well. Use the same process as for the first other character.

Is this character:

- o A neighbor
- o A coworker
- o A classmate
- o An acquaintance from town
- o A store clerk
- o Someone else?

The THIRD is someone who the character feels bad about, or is angry at, or is afraid of or for whom they hold another strong negative feeling.

Use the same process as before. Talk about why the root character feels the way they do about them.

Is this character:
- o A stranger
- o A lover
- o A coworker
- o An authority
- o A relative
- o Someone else?

Write down the characters, give them each names. Or just remember.

Playing the Game:

The game has three scenes. In each scene, the root character interacts with one of these three people in their life. The scenes with each character are played out in the same order in which the other characters were created.

There are always just two characters in each scene.

In each scene, there is a difficulty of some sort the other character is dealing with and there is a conflict between the two characters.

Each scene ends when, after conflict, the root character shows love.

Each scene is played out more than once. Each time it is played out is one TAKE.

Have at least three takes for each scene. Events may differ, take to take.

The scenes may not or may not be completed in each take. Repeat the scene until play feels right, and the players are resolved with the situation.

Do not skip the conflict. Let there be discomfort.

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Situations for Scenes:

Choose the situations before starting play.

Each situation has two parts:
1) the CONFLICT between the characters
2) the DIFFICULTY the other character is experiencing

The player of the root character chooses what the conflict is between the two characters. The other players can help them think of something.

The player of the other character, or the other players all together, pick a difficulty that the other character is experiencing.

The difficulty should be something that relates to or explains how that character acts in the scene.

Examples:
First Scene:
• Their mom or dad – criticizing their spouse, newly retired
• Their lover, partner or spouse – coming home late from work again, afraid of losing their job
• A brother or sister – asking for a favor, in debt
• A Friend – forgetting a lunch date, relationship in jeopardy
• A coworker – acting annoying, panic attacks

Second Scene:
• A neighbor – hitting your car, losing their sight
• A coworker – getting your position, home in foreclosure
• A classmate – letting you down on group work, working full time and going to school
• An acquaintance from town – arguing about politics or religion, part of a threatened minority
• A store clerk – making you pay for something broken, store threatened with bankruptcy

Example Situations for the Third Scene:
• A stranger — robbing, lack of opportunities
• A lover — leaving you, alienated
• A coworker — firing you, company in jeopardy
• An authority — harassing you or others, trying to avert violence
• A relative — admitting they hurt someone you love, they were abused

Choose situations that you can relate to and that feel real.
Let yourself react to the events, and play as if it was happening to you.
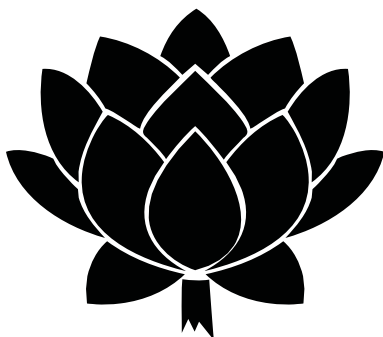
Let the intensity build.

Think about:
How does this situation affect each of the characters?
Can they help each other?
Can the other respond to love?
Can the root character give love?
What does love look like in this situation?

See also: *tonglen*

http://www.shambhala.org/teachers/pema/tonglen1.php

Between Scenes and Takes:

Between each take, make a suggestion or two on how to deepen the scene.

You may ask one of these questions or another to brainstorm:
        What part felt the strongest?
        What is a different way to start this?
        How else might the characters react?
        What were you afraid of doing?

Make all discussion brief. Begin the next take right away.

Between each scene:
Check in to make sure all are doing well. If some are not, you may take a break or even end the game early.
Take a short break.
Re-arrange the set if needed.

Guiding:

Players who do not take a role in a Scene, Guide those who do. Their job is to help the others in their play.

Guides will:
Give suggestions between takes to help those with roles begin again promptly.
Encourage them to let them know they are doing well.
React to what is played out.

Guides may:
Whisper suggestions to a player during a take.
Make things happen in the environment around the characters.
Call for the end of a take if play stalls.
Support taking a break or ending the game if issues arise.

Root Character

Name:

Job:

Description:

First Other Character
Name: Role:
Situation:
Conflict
Difficulty

Second Other Character
Name: Role:
Situation:
Conflict
Difficulty

Third Other Character
Name: Role:
Situation:
Conflict
Difficulty

written for ben lehman's contest: games about love

inspired by the buddhist practice of *tonglen*