Friends Help You Pack

A scene-based live roleplaying game by Andrea Humez

Packing your life into boxes. . .so many boxes. . . As you prepare to close the door on one chapter of your life and move on to the next, you're filled with memories of the past and dreams of the future. It's a moment of hope and fear, sorrow and joy, loss and regret and the opportunity to start over—or sometimes, if you're lucky, to heal the damage of the past. Thank goodness your friends will always rally around to help you pack, no matter what else happens in your lives.

Friends Help You Pack is a scene-based live-roleplaying game with workshop-developed characters focused on themes of transition between life phases, and how friendship evolves and endures over time. Over the course of their lives, six friends gather whenever one of them needs help packing to move, despite the strains and conflicts that come up as their relationships evolve.

Number of players: 4-6, plus a facilitator
Running time: 5 hours

- With fewer than 6 players, subtract 40 mins from run time for each player subtracted, and remove the 10-min break.
- To fit this game into a 4-hour con slot, run with 5 players, remove the 10-min break, and cut 5 mins from the Welcome and Wrap-Up sections. Scenes may also be shortened by a few minutes if time is tight.

Playstyle: improvisational, scene-based, "yes, and…" / "no, but…"

Physical Requirements

- The game needs one facilitator; an assistant may be useful for keeping time etc.
- This game requires pretty strict timekeeping to get through all the scenes in the time allotted, so facilitator should make sure to have a way to time the segments efficiently (for example, timers pre-set to several different intervals).
- The play space should be large enough for 6 people to be able to spread out far enough that simultaneous pairwise conversations are feasible, yet small enough that players can conduct a group conversation while spread out. About the size of 3-4 rooms of an apartment / 20" x 20." There should be no actual walls or dividers, but the floor could be marked with tape/string/etc. to indicate different "rooms" in the fictional world.
- The space should also include an out-of-game area with table to lay out materials and a place for the facilitator to sit so they can observe the action without being in the players' way during the scenes.

- If possible, there should be some seating in the play space.
- Ideally, this LARP would use cardboard boxes as physical props, but it can be run without them if necessary. Another option is use 8x11 pieces of paper to represent boxes. The physicality of the game can be enhanced with additional props such as packing tape roles and bubble wrap/paper/other packing materials. It is best not to actually use tape or damage props, to avoid waste and allow the props to be reused.

Physical Accessibility

- This game requires reading and writing small amounts during workshops & play, in ways that do not lend themselves easily to Braille readers.
- This game involves locating item cards in the physical space, which may be difficult for blind or low-vision players.
- This game ideally involves moving around a physical space and bending/stooping/kneeling; however, characters/players can remain seated as necessary.
- Possible accommodations for blind, low-vision or less-mobile players include:
    - Sighted players making a habit of clearly reading/describing objects they are interacting with;
    - Players who are able to locate and pick up Object cards making a habit of bringing objects they "find" to players who can't participate in "finding" themselves;
    - Sighted players and/or facilitator helping blind/low-vision players with creation of Object cards;
    - (If players sign up in advance) getting written materials to players in advance and making sure they are in a format that everyone can read
    - Remember to ask players who need accommodations what would make it easier for them to participate!
- This game does not involve low lighting, lots of noise, or lighting or sound effects (unless the facilitator chooses to use scene-change audio cues).

Structure of Play

This game is divided into 6 scenes, representing 6 stages in the lives of the characters. In each scene, one of the characters is packing their belongings to move and the other characters have gathered at their home to help them pack.

The person who is preparing to move is the "spotlight" character in the scene. Each character will be the "spotlight" character in one scene. The scene should focus somewhat more on the "spotlight" character than on the others (and the game structure encourages this to happen naturally). However, the overall narrative is about the whole group, and in each scene, the non-"spotlight" characters should also be interacting with each other and playing on what's going on in their own lives at that moment in time.

Before each scene is a workshop in which the players follow some prompts to create the story of what has happened to their characters in the time that has elapsed since the previous scene.

Content Warnings

Difficult life transitions potentially including sexual orientation/gender identity, ending relationships, pregnancy/parenting, financial issues, illness, death, and death of loved ones. The Life Event cards give an idea of possible topics; however, much of the content of game will be player-generated. Players will have significant control over which topics are included in game and how they are addressed for their own character.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to….

- The Make a Scene festival (http://makeascenemn.org/) for offering a venue for the development and debut of this LARP
- Jan-Willem Maessen for structure brainstorming
- Playtesters: Jan-Willem Maessen, Kevin Martin, Rosalind Martin, Alison Joy Schafer, Matt Weber
- Beta-reader: Katherine Shane
- Rei England's *Born This Way* (https://huggyrei.itch.io/born-this-way), which inspired various structural elements of this LARP

Game Materials:

- Friends Help You Pack Game Document.pdf (this document)
- FHYP Character Sheets.pdf
- FHYP Life Event Cards.pdf
- FHYP Life Stage Cards.pdf
- FHYP Object Cards.pdf

Roadmap & Timing

Activity	Format	Summary	Duration
Welcome/ Player Briefing		Includes a little time at beginning of slot for people to arrive and settle in Intro to game, safety rules, and logistics Content lines & veils	15 mins
Opening workshop			[Total 45 mins]
	Solo	Pick Life Stage Pick Character/Group Role	5 mins
	Full Group	Group defines details about the group	5 mins
	Solo	Flesh out character history, create personal Object	10 mins
	In pairs	Object/relationship pair 1	10 mins
	In pairs	Object/relationship pair 2	10 mins
	Full Group	Group share/workshop & set the scene	5 mins
Scene 1: First Adult Home *In 4-player game remove Scene 1 and Workshop 2, using Workshop 1 prompts plus Scene 2 life stage/events*	**Characters are in their early 20s** **Themes:** Figuring out friendship & group dynamics First steps of adulting Joys and troubles of the present moment are the most important thing in the world	Spotlight character: All their objects are in the room and in play Everyone else: give or receive 1 object from their relationship partner	20 mins

Activity	Format	Summary	Duration
Workshop 2 *In 4-player game remove Scene 1 and workshop 2, using Scene 2 life stage/events in the opening workshop*			[Total 20 mins]
	Solo	Pick Life Event Flesh out character history, create personal Object	5 mins
	In pairs	Object/relationship 3	10 mins
	Full group	Group share/workshop & set the scene	5 mins
Scene 2: On the Road to Somewhere	**Characters are in their late 20s** **Themes:** Strains and changes in friendship as people's needs and expectations change (or don't)? Transitioning into adult life with new priorities and responsibilities Planning for the future and/or realizing that things won't stay the same forever	Spotlight character: All their objects are in the room and in play Everyone else: give or receive 1 object from their relationship partner	20 mins
Workshop 3			[Total 20 mins]
	Solo	Pick Life Event Flesh out character history, create personal Object	5 mins
	In pairs	Object/relationship 4	10 mins
	Full group	Group share/workshop & set the scene	5 mins

Activity	Format	Summary	Duration
Scene 3: Complications	**Characters are in their late 30s** **Themes:** Keeping up old friendships or drifting apart as lives get full of other things Fully in the swing of adult life, shifting priorities, busy handling responsibilities, activities, and social networks Accomplishments, disappointments, ambitions and fears of failure	Spotlight character: All their objects are in the room and in play Everyone else: give or receive 1 object from their relationship partner	20 mins
Break *Can be omitted if the game is running with 4 or 5 players*			10 mins
Workshop 4			[Total 20 mins]
	Solo	Pick Life Event Flesh out character history, create personal Object	5 mins
	In pairs	Object/relationship 5	10 mins
	Full group	Group share/workshop & set the scene	5 mins

Activity	Format	Summary	Duration
Scene 4: Doors Close, Doors Open	**Characters are in their early 50s** **Themes:** Supporting friends in times of trouble, re-connecting with old friends or wondering what you ever had in common Middle age, being a senior instead of a junior in various contexts, succeeding in your chosen path or having it fall apart or realizing it's no longer what you want Troubles, losses, starting over, realizing that things don't stay the same forever (in good and bad ways)	Spotlight character: All their objects are in the room and in play Everyone else: give or receive 1 object from their relationship partner	20 mins
Workshop 5 *In 4- or 5-player game remove Workshop 5 and Scene 5 (Wait, How Did We Get Old?)*			[Total 20 mins]
	Solo	Pick Life Event Flesh out character history, create personal Object	5 mins
	In pairs	Object/relationship 6	10 mins
	Full group	Group share/workshop & set the scene	5 mins

Activity	Format	Summary	Duration
Scene 5: Wait, How Did We Get Old? *In 4- or 5-player game remove Workshop 5 and Scene 5 (Wait, How Did We Get Old?)*	**Characters are in their early mid-60s** **Themes:** Old friends who have shared experiences and knowledge of each other that no one else does, who may or may not have much in common any more Approaching retirement or life after retirement, life contracting or finding a renaissance Contentment, boredom, regret, loss, or nostalgia; what next? is this all there is?	Spotlight character: all their objects are in the room to give away or decide what to do with Everyone else: optionally, give an object to another character	20 mins
Workshop 6			[Total 20 mins]
	Solo	Pick Life Event Flesh out character history, create personal Object	5 mins
	In pairs	Object/relationship 7	10 mins
	Full group	Group share/workshop & set the scene	5 mins

Activity	Format	Summary	Duration
Scene 6: One Last Move	**Characters are in their late 70s** **Themes:** The endurance of lifelong friendship, mutual support among friends Not being able to live as you did any longer (for example, loss of ability to live self-sufficiently, activities, physical or mental abilities), needing more support from family/those you live with than you are able to provide to them Reflecting on the past, anticipating the end, grieving, loss of independence, contentment, joy, needing help and asking for it (or not)	all their objects are in the room to give away or decide what to do with Everyone else: optionally, give an object to another character	20 mins
Wrapup/debrief			10 mins
			[Total 5 hours for 6-player game]

Rules

Setting

The setting of this game is deliberately vague, to keep the focus on what it is like to be at various ages & stages of one's life journey, rather than what it is like to do that in a specific time and place. Players will define some details about geographical location. Temporally, the game is set in a vague present/always-now – this is so that players don't need to worry about playing specific historical eras or inventing a speculative future as they progress through 50-60 years of in-world time. Don't worry too much about details like whether the characters had cellphones in their childhood, or whether all the players are being consistent about these things.

Playstyle: "yes, and…" / "no, but…", spotlight, and steering

This game uses an improvisational style of roleplay/collaborative storytelling. Players will make up most of the details about their characters as they go along. Most of the time, you should use a "yes, and…" approach, meaning that if someone makes up a detail, you incorporate that into your play and build on it if you can.

However, if another player proposes something that would not be fun for you or invalidates things you have already made up about your own character, do not feel obliged to accept it. This is where "No, but…" comes in. You have the options of negotiating for something different that both of you can accept. Such negotiations can occur either out-of-character, or without interrupting play[1].

Example (workshop / out of character negotiation):

Player A: "Our characters are close because we go to the same church." Player B: "I'd rather not do that because I really don't want my character to be religious. What if our characters belong to the same square-dancing club instead?"

Example (during play, negotiating while staying in character):

Player A: "This soccer ball reminds me of that time we got drunk and played soccer on the dorm roof." Player B: "I remember you and the rest of our friends got drunk; I was the only sober person and I had a heck of a time keeping the rest of you from breaking your necks." Player A: "That's right, I forgot, you never drank much back then, did you? But we dragged you along to those parties anyway." Player B: "Yes, I remember that."

[1] For one perspective on going beyond "yes, and…" see https://nordiclarp.org/2021/07/26/in-defence-of-selfishness-and-the-beauty-of-a-no/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=in-defence-of-selfishness-and-the-beauty-of-a-no

Because there are no pre-written plots, goals, or events scheduled to take place during a scene, it is especially important for players to support each other's play and to make sure that everyone is participating and having a good time. If you see another player left out of the action, find a way to interact with them. If you have just spent a lot of time as the focus of attention, find a way to give someone else a turn. If you need help to have a better time in the game, ask your fellow players.

A useful technique for this style of game is "steering," that is, choosing to have your character react or do things based on what you think would make for the most enjoyable play or the most interesting story, rather than simply going with your first instinct or what would be in the character's best interests.

Player Safety

Take care of yourself and your fellow players! If you need to leave game either temporarily or permanently, you are free to do so. (If you can, let the facilitator know that you're leaving.)

Different communities use different systems for ensuring player physical and emotional safety and consent. Pick one or more that work for your group.

For example: Hand signal and or verbal cue to check whether another player is okay, or to signal that you yourself are okay even though your character is not, without breaking the scene.

- Show the O/OK hand signal to ask how someone is doing, respond with thumb up/sideways/down. If you get something other than a thumbs-up, pause play to figure out what the other player needs. Thumb signals can also be used pre-emptively to signal your own state to others.
- Verbal signals include "cut" (cut the action now, something's wrong), "brake" or "largo" (keep playing but back off on the intensity).
- "Look-down" (hand shading eyes) to signal that player is leaving the scene for an out-of-game-reason, and other players should behave as though nothing noteworthy happened on the character level.

Players should not touch each other without prior consent. A system for indicating blanket consent for certain kinds of touch may be used. However, players always have the right to withdraw consent, either generally or for a specific instance. Touch-consent systems include:

- Players signal their general level of comfort with physical touch with a sticker or other mark on their name badge. For example, red sticker = no touch, yellow sticker = "office touch" (handshakes and the like), green sticker = "huggy touch."
- The group negotiates, either openly or via anonymous note to the facilitator, a baseline level of touch that is permitted.
- In addition to baseline agreements, individual players may negotiate for specific levels of permissible touch with other individuals.

Do not assume that because you saw person A touch person B in a particular way that it is okay for you to do the same without establishing consent.

No matter what safety/consent systems are used, it is always okay to drop out of character to talk about something that is making you uncomfortable or to step away from play if you need to.

"Lines and veils" will be used to let players specify content they want to exclude from game (see instructions for the Welcome and Briefing portion of the game, p. 16).

Real-Life Objects (Respecting the Play Space)

This game lends itself to incorporating real-life objects into play (for example, treating a book on the coffee table as if it belonged to the character who is packing). If you are playing this game in someone's home or a space that contains items other than chairs and tables, find out from the host beforehand whether and how it is okay to handle real-life objects. When in doubt, don't use other people's stuff as props.

Character Sheets

Characters are developed by the players based on a short initial character concepts and workshops throughout game. Character Sheets contain a character concept and prompts that correspond to each of the workshops. They are a template for players to record the information they make up about their characters for reference, if they want to.

Name Badges

Players should fill write on their name badges: Character name, character pronouns, character concept title (for example, "The Philosopher"), and player name (if space allows)

Scene Structure, Life Stages & Scene/Character Numbers

Each scene represents a different stage of the characters' lives. In each scene, one of the characters is packing their belongings to move to a new home; this person is the "spotlight" character." Each character will be spotlighted in one of the scenes.

Life Stage cards determine which scene (stage of life) is the character's "spotlight" scene. These cards are numbered; the scenes will be played in numerical order. This number of a player's "spotlight" scene is also the "character number" used to identify them when assigning partners in relationship workshops.

In a 4- or 5-player game, some of the scenes are omitted. The Life Stage/character numbers do not change; so, in a 5-player game, the scenes and characters are numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 6.

Life Events

In each between-scenes workshops, players will choose one from an assortment of possible Live Events. This represents something significant that happened to their character in the time that has passed between scenes.

In addition to the Life Event, players can make up any details of their character's story that they want, which can include other Life Events from the list.

Object Cards

Each player will have a set of cards representing objects that have emotional significance to their character. New Objects will be defined in each workshop. Once a character has an Object, they keep it for the rest of game, unless they decide to give it to another character or to permanently get rid of it. This means your character will accumulate possessions over the course of their life!

An Object Card shows the following information (filled in by players): a description (for example, "a snowglobe"), which characters it is significant to (initially, the characters linked to it when it is created, but others may be added in later workshops), and a BRIEF description of why it is significant (for example, "Sarah gave it to Tony as a graduation present"). The character/significance information is for the players and may or may not be known to all the characters. In general, assume you don't know the significance of an object unless your character has been told it during a scene.

PLAY TIP: when writing on Object Cards, make handwriting as small and neat as possible. Other players will have to read the card and may need to add additional information in later workshops.

In a given scene, all of the "spotlight" character's Objects will be in play (representing some of the belongings being packed). In scenes 1-4, each non-"spotlight" character will bring 0-2 of their Objects into the scene (as decided in the relationship workshops). All other Objects are out of play in that scene (they're at the characters' homes). In scenes 5-6, non-"spotlight" characters have the option to bring multiple Objects into the scene.

Objects in play in a particular scene can be picked up, moved, given to other characters, etc. Any character may decide to destroy or permanently get rid of an object in their possession during a scene or between scenes. Do not steal another character's objects unless you have negotiated permission to do so with the other player.

PLAY TIP: because it is nigh-impossible to read the text of an Object card unless you're holding it holding it, it is helpful for players to let each other know what object they're handling/discussing. This will make it easier for characters to join interactions about objects without having to all huddle together. If a character asks what an object is, either describe

them out of character what they see (for example, “my character is holding a football”) or give useful information in-character (for example, “it’s a photo of me and Chris in 6th grade.”).

The purpose of Objects is to serve as prompts for interesting play and to help players make sure that everyone gets to participate meaningfully as a scene. Use them accordingly.

Relationship Workshops

Before each scene, players develop pairwise relationships between their characters. Over the course of the game, each character will be paired once with each other character (the exact sequence is shown in the “Character Pairings” list for the appropriate number of players, pp. 26-28 of the game materials). In workshops 5 & 6, players can freely choose their partners.

Ending Scenes

Each scene is allotted 20 minutes. The facilitator will keep time and announce when the scene should end. Optionally, they can also give a 2-minute warning, or cue “time to wrap up the scene” with music or some other external cue.

If players feel the scene has reached a natural end before the 20 minutes are up, they can use a pre-determined cue to suggest scene end; for example, “let’s take a group selfie” or “it’s time to go to dinner.” If another player has something they still need to resolve before ending the scene, they can ask for a little time to get that done, before the group proceeds to scene end.

Running the Game

Materials

Things to Print

- Blank Object Cards (13 per player plus some spares) – print DOUBLE SIDED from Object Cards.pdf
- A set of 6 Character Sheets – print (double or single sided) from Character Sheets.pdf
- Relationship Cards (a set of 3) – with Life Event Cards
- Life Event Cards – print SINGLE SIDED from Life Event Cards.pdf
- Life Stage Cards -- print DOUBLE SIDED from Life Stage Cards.pdf
- A set of Rules for each participant (unless people are using electronic copies) – pp. 10-14 of this document
- One or more copies of the Generic Object Ideas list – p. 29 of this document
- Any reference materials you want to have available for facilitator and/or players to read (for example, "Character Concepts," "Roadmap and Timing," "Object Card Example," "Character Pairings for the Relationship Workshops")

Other materials to Bring

- Pens/pencils and scratch paper
- Name tags or badge holders & blank badges
- Optional: chart paper, white board, or some other method of recording reference information in a way that players can easily see it; appropriate pens to write on this with
- Optional: Empty cardboard boxes (or sheets of paper to represent boxes)
- Optional: Other packing props like empty tape dispensers, packing paper, etc. [Note: preferably done in such a way that nothing gets used up/wasted, for example, don't actually use tape.]
- Optional: snacks/drinks

Setup

Before game start, set up the play space and workshop space.

Mark the boundaries of the play space (if necessary) and set boxes and/or other props for the first scene. You may want to designate part of the space as the "porch" or other place where characters will ultimately be staging packed boxes.

If you plan to record information on a whiteboard etc., set that up in the workshop space.

Set up a table for printed materials, pens, nametags, snacks, etc.

Lay out the 6 Life Stage cards face-up where players can see them. If you are recording reference information in a larger format (for example, whiteboard), write the Life Stages there.

Lay out all the Life Event cards on a table so players can easily see them. Cards marked with scene numbers 2-6 go face down, the rest face up.

Welcome and Briefing (15 mins)

Introduction

Participants arrive/gather. Distribute printed materials to players if they haven't been given out in advance. Participants introduce themselves. Go over any logistical information about the event and/or the play space. Give a brief introduction to the game (scenario, scene-based style, etc.)

Go over the rules of the game (see Rules section above).

Safety & Physical Contact

Go over the Safety rules in the Rules document.

Lines and Veils

As a group, make a list of topics to avoid in game. Players can declare a topic completely off-limits (these are "lines," as in drawing a hard line), or they can declare that it should be "veiled" (meaning it's okay to mention briefly/general, but a veil should be drawn over the details). It's best to have players list topics anonymously; for example, by writing them on pieces of paper and giving them to the facilitator, who compiles and announces the list. Post this list where players can see it for reference during play.

If players sign up for the game in advance, the facilitator can ask them to submit lines and veils before game day and compile a list of their responses. However, it's a good idea to give players a chance to specify additional lines and veils at start of game.

The facilitator removes any Live Event cards whose topics are on the "lines" list.

Romance and Sex

As a group, decide whether you want to allow romantic and/or sexual relationships among your characters. If anyone objects to including romantic and/or sexual relationships among characters, they are not allowed in game. Some methods of polling the group anonymously include: everyone closes their eyes and shows thumbs up/down/sideways; everyone writes their vote on a piece of paper. If romantic and/or sexual relationships are allowed, the group

should also agree on the degree of explicit talk about sex, and the degree of physical displays of affection between characters, that they are comfortable with.

Roadmap Orientation

Facilitator explains the game structure, roadmap and timing to the players.

The group decides on a stock phrase to use to propose an early scene-end (for example, “let’s take a group selfie” or “it’s time to go to dinner”).

Workshop 1 (Pre-game, 45 mins total)

TIP FOR FACILITATORS: to help players budget their time, give a warning halfway through the time allotted for each solo/pair workshop segment, and tell people to start wrapping up 1-2 minutes before the end of the time.

Assign Character Concepts & Life Stages (5 mins)

Character Concepts give a brief description of each character’s personality and the role they play in the group social dynamic when the narrative starts. Distribute Character Sheets randomly to players. If anyone got a character they really don’t want, they may negotiate a swap with another player.

Distribute Life Stage cards to players using the same process. Note that in the first two scenes (Life Stages 1 & 2), the reason the “spotlight” character is moving is pre-defined, as specified on the cards. In later scenes, the reason for moving will be decided by the player during the pre-scene workshop, based on a Life Event card.

If white board/poster paper/etc., the facilitator may write and post a reference list of character number, corresponding scene title, and character name (when names have been chosen).

Each player takes some blank Object Cards to be used later.

Player #1 (the “spotlight character for scene 1) reads to the group the text on the front and back of their Life Stage card.

Define Group Background Details (5 mins): The only pre-defined details about the group of characters are that they have been friends for (at least) a few years and are moving into a shared home at the beginning of the story. In Scene 1, the friends have gathered in the “spotlight” character’s current home (for example, parents’ home, college dorm), to help them pack to move into the new apartment.

Each player answers one of the following questions to make up a detail about the group's shared history.

- How did we meet/how do we know each other? (for example, college, grew up in the same neighborhood)
- Why did we become close friends? (what do we have in common?)
- What do we like to do together?
- Where is the apartment we're moving into?
- A good detail about the apartment?
- A bad detail about the apartment?

In the spirit of "yes and…" / "no, but…", players should accept and build on each other's contributions, with the option to offer an amendment or counter-suggestion to another player's contribution if necessary. Strive for a balance between getting through workshops quickly and co-creating a story that everyone can enjoy.

Fleshing Out Character Details (10 mins)

Working individually, each player fills in some biographical details in their Character Sheet Template. Don't worry if you don't have time to answer all the prompts; they're just there to help you create your character. You will probably find yourself making up more background details as play progresses.

Each player fills in one of their blank Object Cards (description, your character name, and BRIEF explanation of significance), creating an object that represents something meaningful about their character's past or present.

Use the last minute or two of this time to bring the group back together and have each player introduce their character. They should read the text of the character concept as written on their sheet, and give their character's name, pronouns, and whatever other information they want to be common knowledge. They should NOT read everything they wrote in response to the prompts, and there won't be time to go into detail. That's okay!

Define Pairwise Relationships (10 mins total)

Players are paired off according to the "Character Pairings" list for the appropriate number of players (pp. 26-28). This first relationship will be Supportive; that is, the characters have a positive, mutually supporting relationship. (Examples: best friends, share a hobby, confidantes about secrets/problems.)

Together, partners define what kind of relationship their characters have with each other. They create an Object that represents the relationship in some way. (for example, something one

character gave the other, something they made together, a souvenir from something they did together).

On the Object Card, record a description, the two character names, and a brief explanation of the object's significance (remember to leave room for more notes to be added in later workshops!).

One player keeps the Object. Their character will bring it into the scene to give to the other character. In the case of the "spotlight" character and their partner, the "spotlight" character keeps the Object, which can either represent something the other character gave them in the past, or something they intend to give to the other character during the scene. If you create an Object that is too big for the characters to carry to each other's homes (for example, a sofa), the characters can talk about the Object during the scene and agree in the scene to exchange it later.

Switch to the second set of pairings and repeat this process. This second relationship will involve Conflict of some kind. (Examples: A is intimidated by B; A and B never agree on anything; rivals in a hobby or academic context; exes with baggage.)

Remember that you may create romantic and/or sexual relationships between characters only if the group has decided to allow this content in game.

NOTE: in a 5-player game, one player will be partnerless each time a relationship workshop happens. That person can use the extra time to flesh out information about their individual character. In a 4-player game, only do one round of relationship workshopping in this first workshop. The odd person out may optionally create an additional personal object.

Group Share/Workshop & Setting the Scene (5 mins)

While players are workshopping relationships, the facilitator sets up the "home" by placing boxes and packing materials (if any) around the play space, if they are not pre-set.

At the end of the relationship workshops, the "spotlight" character distributes their hand of cards throughout the play space, or gives them to the facilitator to do so.

During this time, players may briefly define extra details with people who were not one of their relationship partners and/or with the group as a whole. There won't be time to do much!

The "spotlight" character should make sure to share what the group knows about why that character is moving.

All players position themselves in the play space as though they have recently arrived and just settled down to the task of packing.

Playing the Scene (20 mins)

During the scene, characters socialize as they pack boxes. You are free to move through the play space, and to have individual or group conversations as you like, as people do in real life.

The "spotlight" character is the focal character in the scene—after all, you're all in their home to help them move—and the Objects will foster play that centers them. However, do not feel obliged to focus everything on the "spotlight" character; all of the characters have relationships with each other and news to share.

Objects

Scenes 1-4

All of the "spotlight" character's Objects will be in the room and therefore in play during the scene. For all other characters, the only objects from their hands that are in play during this scene are the ones defined in the preceding workshop as destined for one character to give another.

Each object in the room should be "found" by some character during the scene (that is, while packing). The "spotlight" character is responsible for making sure all of the Objects get brought into play in some way by the end of the scene. (But don't worry if time runs out before all Objects have been used.) Note that each scene will have more cards in the room than the previous scene, as characters accumulate possessions.

Any character may "find" one of the Objects in the room and use it as a prompt to guide the story. (For example, "Oh, look, here's the snow globe I brought back from Switzerland for you." "You know, I'm still mad that you went on that trip without me. . .").

Some characters will have an Object to give to someone else in the room, as defined in the workshop. (If the Object is too large to plausibly bring to a friend's moving day, for example, a sofa, the characters can promise in-scene to make the exchange later, and the players can hand off the Object Card after the scene.) Use these Objects as a way to foster play among non-"spotlight" characters.

Additionally, each non-spotlight character may (if the player wants) bring and/or refer to the personal Object they created in the workshop before this scene. By default, these are not given away, though a character may choose to do so if it makes sense in the scene.

PLAY TIP: Try to pace the introduction of Objects gradually over the 20 minutes of scene. This will help players to make as much use as they want of each prompt.

Scenes 5-6

In the last two scenes, when the characters are older, the focus of the story shifts from looking towards the future to remembering the past. (In 4- or 5-player games, this only applies to the final scene.)

The "spotlight" character must try to give away as many of the Objects in the room as possible to other characters. They may also decide to get rid of any particular Object (for example, throw it away, send it to the thrift shop). Don't worry if you run out of time with some Objects left undecided.

Non-spotlight characters may choose to give one of their own Objects to any other character in the scene (it doesn't have to be the person you did the relationship workshop with). They may also bring their newly-created personal Object, as in the earlier scenes.

Ending the scene

The facilitator will keep time and announce the end of the scene. At that point, quickly wrap up what you're doing in a sentence or two, and stop the action.

Restrictions/Not Stealing the Spotlight

The structure of scenes and the movement of objects are meant to encourage a balance between giving focus to the spotlight character and exploring relationships among non-spotlight characters. A few restrictions to prevent focus being pulled too far from the spotlight character:

- Avoid setting up a situation where another character is moving out of the same home the spotlight character is moving into.
- Similarly, avoid having the spotlight character moving into or out of the home of another character (except in Scene 2, where it's pre-defined).
- In Scene 2 (On the Road to Somewhere), by definition, the spotlight character is moving out of the home where the other characters are still living. Although it would be plausible to have other characters' possessions in the shared space, only the spotlight character's objects should be placed in the space. Other characters should only bring the objects designated as gifts in the Relationship Workshop.
- In Scenes 1-4, non-spotlight characters should only bring a single item each into the scene. An exception to this rule is if you want to have your character display wearable objects (for example, jewelry).

Keep a player-eye out for whether the scene's focus has shifted too far from the spotlight character, and for whether they (or anyone else) are getting left out of the action. Share the fun!

Between-Scenes Workshop (20 mins total)

Workshop happens after each of Scenes 1-5.

Facilitator reveals new Life Event cards.

The player of the "spotlight" character for the upcoming scene reads to the group the text on the front and back of their Life Stage card (including pre-defined scenario if any).

For Scene 3 (Complications), the group should quickly decide whether the characters who were living together at the end of Scene 2 are still living together at the beginning of Scene 3.

Tip for facilitators: to help players budget their time, give a warning halfway through the time allotted for each workshop, and tell people to start wrapping up 1-2 minutes before the end of the time.

Choose Life Events and Flesh Out Individual Character Details (5 mins)

From the face-up Life Event cards, each player chooses a Life Event that has happened to their character during the time that has passed since the previous scene. Don't take the card, just record the info on your character sheet. It's okay if multiple players choose the same event.

Don't feel you have to read all of the Life Event cards; it's okay to just pick one that jumps out at you. It's also okay to pick more than one, or to pick a significant life event that's appropriate to the current life stage but isn't represented by a card.

The "spotlight" character's event will be the reason the character is moving.

NOTE: the premise of Scene 2 is that the "spotlight" character is moving out of the shared apartment and is the first roommate to move out. This is in addition to whatever the player decides based on their life event.

Players individually decide some details of their event and what they've been up to since the last scene. Each player fills in a new Object card to create an object that represents their character's life at this Life Stage (either what's going on now or something that happened in the time since the last scene).

Either during this workshop or at the end of the relationship workshop, players decide how close their character currently is to the group in general (for example: are these still the friends they see most often? have they drifted apart from the group? are they mad at everyone? have they moved away but stayed in touch?).

Define Pairwise Relationships (10 mins)

Workshops 2-4

Players are paired off according to the "Character Pairings" list. Each player will have one workshop with each other player over the course of the game, with the opportunity to choose partners in the final workshop(s).

The facilitator tells randomly distributes the Relationship Change cards to the player pairs: the options are "grown closer," "grown apart," or "stayed stable." Together, partners define the details of how and why their characters' relationship has changed since the previous scene. "Stayed stable" means the relationship has stayed more or less the same since the previous scene; players may need to define what the relationship was previously, if that's not already known.

As in the first workshop, the partners create an Object that represents this stage of their relationship, which one of the characters has acquired since the last scene.

One player keeps the Object. Their character will bring it into the scene to give to the first character. In the case of the "spotlight" character and their partner, the "spotlight" character keeps the Object, which can either represent something the other character gave them in the past, or something they intend to give to the other character during the scene.

The players may choose to create a new Object Card OR use one of their existing filled-in cards (meaning that character A will give one of their old possessions to character B in the scene).

Remember that you may create romantic and/or sexual relationships between characters only if the group has decided to allow this content in game, and that the game structure requires that there is only one "spotlight" character who is packing to move. After Scene 2, no one other than the "spotlight" character should be currently living in the home where the packing is happening.

If you want to have characters live together, make sure to address this requirement. For example, if it's A's spotlight scene, A could be packing to move in with B. Or A could be packing to move out of the house they formerly shared with B, if B has already moved out before the scene takes place. Characters other than the "spotlight" character can be living together at the time of the scene; just remember that they'll need to separate before their own "spotlight" scenes happen.

Note: in a 5-player game, one player will be partnerless in each relationship workshop. That person can use the extra time to flesh out information about their individual character.

Workshops 5-6

In workshops 5 & 6, players may choose their partners based on how the story has gone so far.

By this point in game, everyone has had a chance to workshop relationships with each of the other characters. In the last two workshops, players may freely choose their relationship partners. (If you are playing with 5 players, the "spotlight" character should be the one without a partner.)

The partners decide how their relationship has changed since the previous scene; no prompt cards are used in these last workshops, so that players can be free to steer towards a satisfying resolution. Together, they fill in two Object Cards as in earlier workshops. Each partner keeps one object, rather than designating one to be exchanged during the scene.

Group Share/Workshop & Setting the Scene (5 mins)

While players are workshopping relationships, the facilitator sets up the "home" by placing boxes and packing materials (if any) around the play space.

At the end of the relationship workshops, the "spotlight" character distributes their hand of cards throughout the play space, or gives them to the facilitator to do so.

During this time, players may briefly define extra details with people who were not one of their relationship partners and/or with the group as a whole. There won't be time to do much!

Each player BRIEFLY tells the whole group what some common knowledge about what has been going on with their character, including how closely involved with this group of friends they are currently (for example, "I got married and am now pregnant with my first child," "I've been out of touch with the group, no one's sure why," "I recently quit my job.") The "spotlight" character should make sure to share what the group knows about why that character is moving.

NOTE: In Scene 2, the "spotlight" character is moving out of the shared apartment and is the first of the housemates to move out; they may have additional details about the situation to share. The rest of the group should decide together what is happening with the shared apartment in the short-term (are others staying? Is everyone moving out? have the characters not decided yet?).

All players position themselves in the play space as though they have recently arrived and just settled down to the task of packing.

Post-Game Wrap-Up (10 mins)

After the end of the final scene, gather the group for wrap-up. Give players the option to skip wrap-up if they prefer.

Tell players: This game does not have an official ending or epilogue. After wrap-up, players should feel free to share their headcanons; however, not all players enjoy doing this, so please make sure the person you're talking to is on board first.

Go around the circle with each person saying, "I was [character name], now I am [player name]"

This can be combined with a short de-role-ing exercise such as one of the following:

- Each player takes a turn to say one thing about their character they would like to keep with them in their real life, and one thing about their character they are glad to leave behind.
- Each player describes one way in which the person next to them made the game better.
- Each player describes a cool moment in game they had with the person next to them.
- Either of the above can also be done with everyone else in the group saying a thing to the player whose turn it is

Instead, or in addition, wrap-up can include some free chat about the experience. With 4-6 players, a group conversation should be manageable, but the facilitator should be prepared to do some facilitation as necessary.

If possible, schedule the game so that players will have time to hang out and chat after the official wrap-up ends, if they are so inclined.

Character Pairings for the Relationship Workshops

6 PLAYERS

Relationship Workshop Pairs		
	Player #	Player #
workshop 1a	1	5
	2	4
	3	6
Workshop 1b	1	3
	2	6
	4	5
workshop 2	1	2
	3	5
	4	6
workshop 3	1	4
	2	3
	5	6
workshop 4	1	6
	3	4
	5	2
Workshop 5	Free choice	
workshop 6	Free choice	

5 PLAYERS

Remove workshop 5 & scene 5. (This means there is no character #5!)

Because there is an odd number of players, one player will have no partner in each relationship workshop. That person can use the extra workshop time to make up further details of what their character has been up to during the time jump.

Relationship Workshop Pairs		
	Player #	Player #
workshop 1a	1	6
	2	4
	3	
Workshop 1b	1	3
	2	6
	4	
workshop 2	1	
	2	3
	4	6
workshop 3	1	2
	3	4
	6	
workshop 4	1	4
	3	6
	2	
workshop 6	Free choice	

4 PLAYERS

Remove scene 1 & workshop 2. (This means there is no character #2 or #5!)

Run the first workshop with the prompts from the 6-player version, with the context that the characters will already be living together when the game begins. Only do one round of relationship pairings in the initial workshop, instead of two. Run scene 2 as in the 6-player version.

Remove workshop 5 & scene 5.

Relationship Workshop Pairs		
workshop 1 (scene 2)		
	2	4
	3	6
workshop 3 (scene 3)	2	6
	3	4
workshop 4 (scene 4)	2	3
	4	6
workshop 6 (scene 6)	Free choice	

Generic Object Ideas

If you're having trouble coming up with ideas for Object cards, try one of these:

- A photograph
- A book
- A tool
- A home appliance
- A piece of jewelry
- A piece of clothing
- A toy
- A note/letter/piece of writing
- An empty container
- A piece of art
- An electronic device
- A cup/mug
- A piece of sports equipment
- A game/game piece

CHARACTER CONCEPTS (for quick reference)

The Social Glue

- Extraverted people-person, has lots of friends and loves collecting people and introducing them to each other; this group of friends are their intimate circle. Doesn't always understand why people they love don't love each other. Whoever they're interacting with at the moment is the most important person in the world to them, but they are easily distracted by the next person to come along.
- The friend you invite first to all your social events, and who is guaranteed to be the one person you know in a room full of strangers.
- Scene 1: The one who invited everyone to live in an apartment together.

Everyone's Little Sib

- Maybe they're literally younger than everyone else, or maybe they just bring out everyone's protective and mentoring instincts (for example, because they are less mature, (sub)cultural newcomer, vulnerable in some way). Curious, enthusiastic about learning new things, and uninhibited about asking questions, including the ones everyone else is too tactful or too scared
- to ask. Wants to belong to this group and is unsure of whether they do.
- The friend you keep a protective eye on and introduce to your favorite groups/activities/media.
- Scene 1: Volunteered to take the least desirable bedroom in the new shared apartment.

The Organizer

- The 'responsible adult' in any group, even if they're not actually older than anyone else. Takes responsibility for planning and organizing whatever's going on and does it well. Gets stressed out when there is no plan or their friends are doing risky things. Usually too level-headed and reasonable to get caught up in interpersonal drama. Often perceived as a serious person who maybe ought to lighten up sometimes.
- The friend you rely on to get things done.
- Scene 1: The one who organized the logistics of finding an apartment and moving everyone into the new place. Brought the packing materials.

The Philosopher

- Intellectual, with a deep/broad knowledge about topics that interest them. Always up for a debate, likes to push people to express and justify their opinions, to question their assumptions, and to live up to their own principles. Is not usually trying to start a fight and is surprised when they end up in one or people get angry/upset with them. Frustrated by hypocrisy. Respects people whose opinions are different from theirs, as long as they can make a consistent argument for them.

- The friend you go to for help wrestling with an ethical dilemma, or for help confronting jerks.
- Scene 1: Has been initiating discussions about household rules & expectations, and how people want to set up the space.

The Hedgehog

- The prickly introvert who turns out to be cool once you get to know them. Awkward with strangers, large groups, and most people, comfortable and happy among close friends who understand and appreciate them. Keen observer who and puts in the effort to know/understand their friends deeply. Non-judgmental. Intensely loyal to their friends.
- The friend you call at 3 in the morning when you're in trouble.
- Scene 1: Has been quietly scrounging for stuff the shared apartment needs that no one in the group already owns.

The Superstar

- The person who is good at everything they do and seems to accomplish twice as much as anyone else in the same amount of time. People admire and envy them; it's hard to actually dislike them because they're also good at courtesy and making friends. Always busy, overcommitted but managing to keep the balls in the air, they have trouble spending enough time with any single person to get close.
- The friend whose shows/games/rallies/awards ceremonies you attend with your mutual friends and take them out to celebrate afterwards.
- Scene 1: The one who already has an actual paying job. Their name is on the lease and/or they're legally acting as financial security for the group so that the landlord will rent to them.

Workshop Prompts Cheat Sheet

Life Stages

1. First Adult Home (early 20s) – spotlight character is moving into a shared apartment with all the other characters
2. On the Road to Somewhere (late 20s) – spotlight character is moving out of the shared apartment, the first person to do so
3. Complications (late 30s)
4. Doors Closing, Doors Opening (early 50s)
5. Wait, How Did We Get Old? (mid 60s)
6. One Last Move (late 70s)

Initial Character Roles

- The Social Glue
- Everyone's Little Sib
- The Organizer
- The Philosopher
- The Hedgehog
- 6. The Superstar

Relationship Prompts

First workshop

- Support (first set of pairs)
- Conflict (second set of pairs)

All other workshops (randomly distributed among the pairs)

- Grew closer
- Grew farther apart
- Stayed stable

OBJECT CARDS – EXAMPLE

OBJECT (FRONT)	OBJECT (BACK)
Description: *High school fencing trophy with Heather's name on it* Characters: *Heather* *Jody* *Chris*	Significance: *When Heather was depressed, Jody reminded her of love of fencing* *Heather loaned trophy to Chris to use in a play, Chris never gave it back*