Life Review

A live-action role-playing game by Davide De Alexandris

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Before you play: sensitive themes

A note to help you choose whether and how to take part.

Life Review deals with emotionally intense themes. The game includes memories connected with loss and death, bereavement, illness and the end of life; guilt and regret about missed opportunities or not having been there for someone; family conflict, anger, misunderstanding and reconciliation. The narrative frame evokes a near-death experience and includes sound effects associated with cardiac arrest and the heartbeat returning.

Things to keep in mind

- You do not need to draw on your personal history: the memories and emotions you portray belong to the characters.
- This is neither a medical simulation nor a therapeutic intervention. It is a role-playing experience inspired by accounts of near-death experiences.
- You may decline to answer, say “Pass”, take a break or stop participating at any time, without explaining why. The other players are asked to respect your choice and not press you.

Before you begin, take a moment to make sure everyone feels comfortable with these themes and sound effects. If anything feels wrong, stop and agree together on how to continue.

The wellbeing of the group comes before the scene.

During a near-death experience, five ages of the same person meet in a space beyond time.

Childhood, Adolescence, Adulthood, Maturity and Old Age revisit their memories and discuss the choices they made and the emotions they experienced.

It is a panoramic review of a life, a journey through regrets, new awareness and reconciliation.

One life, five consciousnesses, one question: who do we want to be when we return?

What is a LARP? In other words: “Let’s pretend…”

A LARP is a live-action role-playing game. For a while, we pretend to be someone else and try to see the world through their eyes.

Remember playing “let’s pretend” as children? The principle is exactly the same.

Today, each of you will portray a different age in the life of the same person. You will have different memories, emotions and ways of seeing things.

You do not have to act well; there is no audience to impress. Just try to be that person for the time we spend together.

What if I get it wrong? Do what your character would do

The first thing to know is that there are no right or wrong answers here.

If you do not know what to say, simply ask yourself: what would my character say? How would they react to what is happening?

You may feel angry, confused, understanding, even contradictory. You may change your mind or stay silent.

You do not have to make the best decision, only the one that feels most natural for the character you are playing.

Above all, remember: what your character thinks or says does not necessarily represent what you think.

Safety: the word “Pass”

This game may touch on delicate emotions and subjects. That is why we have a very simple rule: you may say “Pass” at any time.

If someone asks you a question you do not want to answer, or you find yourself in a situation you would rather not portray, simply say “Pass”.

You do not have to explain or justify yourself. Let someone else take the turn and the game will continue normally, without comments or pressure.

You may also take a break or leave the game if you need to.

The important thing is that everyone feels free to take part within their own limits. We are here to share an experience, not to test anyone.

Text in bold is to be read aloud to the players.

Let's begin the journey

> **Today we are going to imagine what might happen if different parts of the same person could talk to one another during an extraordinary experience.**
>
> **What you are about to experience is a dialogue between the different ages of one person, each with its own memories, emotions and awareness. In turn, you will speak and tell the others about the event that belongs to you. This will open a**

conversation: each part of the personality may share its thoughts, if it wishes, about what happened and the emotions it brought up.

Remember something important: each person's experience also belongs to all the others. These are not five different lives, but one life, lived and understood through different ways of seeing the world.

Childhood, for example, may recognize something of itself in the choices made by Adulthood, just as Old Age may understand a pain that Adolescence could not yet explain.

This also applies to memories from an age that, for some of you, still lies in the future. In the place where you are now, time no longer flows as we know it: past, present and future exist at the same time. Every experience, even one that has not happened yet, already belongs to that same consciousness.

There is no set order. Speak when you feel ready, listen to the others and respond in keeping with the character you have been assigned.

You are one person, but each age has lived life through different eyes. Each carries part of the story, and now, for the first time, all these parts can meet and talk.

At the end of the journey, you will decide together what kind of person you want to be when you return. Make a promise to yourselves, carry it into the world and live it.

I will now give you a few minutes to read your character sheet and imagine what may have happened to your character.

At a certain point, after 80 minutes, you will hear the sound of a heart beating again. [Play the heartbeat sound.] This will signal that your journey is about to end. You will have ten more minutes to talk before returning to your body and becoming one person again. You will need to decide what kind of person to become and what to do with the rest of the life you have been given.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN, play the flatline sound. When it ends, read the following:

Close your eyes for a moment, if you wish.

Imagine that you are suspended between two breaths.

Your body is still, but your consciousness is moving elsewhere, weightless, as if you had just drifted away from yourself.

You are not dying. You are experiencing an extraordinary moment in which everything seems clearer, more intense, greater than anything you have ever known.

Some people call it a near-death experience.

At this moment, time is no longer a line. It is like a circle that contains everything. There is no longer a before and an after.

Everything you are, everything you have been and everything you will be exists at the same time: the child you were, the adolescent searching for a place in the world, the adult who made choices, the mature person who learned their consequences, and the older person who can finally look back.

They are all here, in the same moment.

In accounts from people who have had a near-death experience, time seems to lose its direction. Some say they saw their whole life at once, sometimes even events that had not happened yet.

That is what we will try to imagine today.

Although this experience takes place in a single instant in the body's life, all your ages are aware of it. Here, past, present and future are no longer separate.

Every memory, choice and emotion belongs to all of you, even though each of you lived it, or will live it, through a different way of seeing the world.

Now imagine these five ages meeting in this space beyond time. Five voices, five different ways of looking at life, but one consciousness.

Each brings a memory, a fragment of their story. Together, you will try to understand it, see it through different eyes and perhaps give it a new meaning.

This is not a test. There is no judgment, no winner and no loser. There are only moments in a life asking to be understood.

Listen to the part you will portray as you would listen to a forgotten memory: with curiosity, respect and gentleness.

What you are about to experience is a portrayal of a panoramic life review, an experience described by some people who have had an NDE.

It does not matter whether you speak a lot, a little or choose silence. Every word, every emotion and every silence will be part of this consciousness's journey.

And remember: you are not here to change what happened, but perhaps to understand what may still be.

When you are ready, you may open your eyes. The journey can begin.

From this point, the LARP lasts 90 minutes. At minute 80, play the heartbeat sound. At minute 90, read the following:

You feel a force slowly drawing you back, towards your body, as if it were time for you to return.

Now look at one another. Thank each other, even if only with a glance.

You have shared memories, emotions, fears and choices. You have looked at the same life through different eyes and perhaps understood something that you could not have seen alone.

Perhaps you did not manage to say everything. Perhaps questions remain unanswered, words you wished you could say, things you wished you could understand. That is all right. Not everything has to have an answer.

What matters is that, for a moment, you were able to look at one another, listen and recognize yourselves as parts of the same existence.

Now close your eyes, if you wish. Imagine the force calling you back to the suffering body of the person you are part of.

Time slowly begins to flow again. The past becomes the past once more; the future becomes something you do not yet know.

It is time to come together again, to become One.

But you are not quite the same as before. Each of you carries a new awareness, something understood about your past, present and future. All of it now belongs to one consciousness again.

People may not believe you when you tell this story. That does not matter. What matters is that you know you did not return simply to tell it.

"It is not about remembering what you saw beyond. It is about becoming what you saw."

You may open your eyes. And thank you for making this journey together.

Debriefing

You may read the text below and invite the players to share freely if they wish. If you are not comfortable facilitating this kind of debrief, the questions below can help players reflect on the emotions that came up during the game. A debrief is strongly recommended; it is part of the experience.

The game is over. We can now let go of our characters and return to being ourselves. What you experienced belongs to an imaginary story, but the emotions a game can bring up may be very real.

If anyone would like to share something, this is the time. You do not have to speak or share anything personal. Everyone may share only what they choose.

Open the conversation

Would anyone like to share something?

Give the answers space. Do not rush or try to fill every silence.

Revisit the experience

What struck you most about the experience?

Was there a sentence, gesture or moment that stayed with you?

Return to the character

What did your character feel when they understood they would become part of one person again?

Do you think meeting the other ages changed how your character sees their life?

A final reflection

During the game, you viewed one life from five different perspectives. Did you notice how the meaning of a memory can change when seen through different eyes?

If you could take one thing with you from this journey, what would it be?