

I Love You, but...

A game about abusive relationships between romantic couples

DESIGNERS

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SUMMARY

'I love you, but...' is a theatrical role-playing performance game about abusive relationships between romantic couples. The game requires at least three participants- two players will play as the couple in a toxic relationship and the remaining participants will play as the spectators. In this toxic relationship, one player will play as the abuser and the other will play as the victim.

The designated couple will both receive a card with a story objective and lines for them to read off as a base of inspiration if needed.

After both players expand upon the story based around this card they will tear the card apart and scatter the fragments all over the room.

IDEOLOGY

We want to raise awareness of how toxic relationships can manifest themselves through actions, behaviors, tactics, and conversations. In playing this game we hope to provide participants with the ability to recognize patterns of abuse and methods to safely leave a relationship that is already toxic.

MATERIALS

- o A quiet small and enclosed space
- o One table & Two chairs

- o The 'X Cup'
- o Two Dices
- o Table Cloth (Can be Customized)
- o Two 'Identity Cards'
- o Ten 'Phrase Cards' Each for the Abuser and the Victim
- o Two 'Paths to Safety Cards'
- o A Cute Large Stuffed Animal

Rules

SETUP

- **It is strongly recommended to watch our short and clear video guide to learn how to play this game([video guide link](#)). Participants can also follow the rules below.*
- Participants must be aware of the verbal and written content warning about the game they are about to play.
- Make sure the playing area has the content warnings in an immediately visible location and the participants have read through and understand the message.
- Inside the room, the table is placed in the middle covered by the table cloth. Two chairs are placed on either side of the table to ensure that the players are sitting directly in front of each other.
- Both the abuser and victim card decks are placed on opposite ends of the table where the chairs are located.
- The 'X Cup' is placed on the middle of the table.
- Place the two 'Paths to Safety Cards' inside the 'X Cup'.
- The cute stuffed animal is under the table hidden by the table cloth.

PLAYING SAFETY AND ETIQUETTE

This is a serious game about a heavy topic. If you choose to participate, please be respectful and do not laugh or joke while the game is in session.

- If at any point the player is uncomfortable with a certain topic or they no longer want to participate in the game they are free to do so using the 'X Cup'.
- To stop the game completely the player(s) simply place their dice inside the 'X Cup'. To skip a specific topic or card the player(s) places them inside the 'X Cup' and draws new cards.
- If you are a spectator, please remember that you are an outsider to this relationship, and please remain silent unless players are asking for help.
- No photography or video recording during the game.

GAMEPLAY

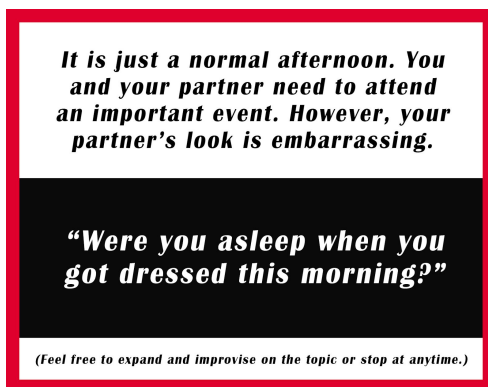
The participants must be made fully aware of the nature of the game and understand that they can stop the game or skip any topics that make them uncomfortable at any time.

- Two players who are playing as the couple enters the room.
- The spectators also enter the room. The total number is dependent on the size of the room. If the space is too small, then the spectators will observe from outside the room. The spectators can choose to stand close to the players or leave some space to the player.
- The two players will decide amongst themselves who will play the abuser and who will play the victim. They will then sit in their role designated chairs.
- Both players will pick up the first card from their own deck (the 'Identity Card'), read through it, and tear it up when done.
- During Each Turn:
 - Players pick the top card('Phrase Card') from their card deck and read through the scenario. They will then discuss this scenario together. Below the scenario are example sentences that their character might say. Players can use these examples to expand or improvise the topic at hand if needed. However, if they are uncomfortable they can skip it completely by placing the card in the 'X Cup'
 - The Abuser is the one who always starts and ends the conversation.
 - Try to maintain as much eye contact as you feel comfortable with as you talk.

- o When the Abuser chooses to end the conversation, both players roll their dice.
 - Whoever gets the higher number obtains both cards. That player then tears them up and scatters the pieces around the room.
 - If the dice lands on a tie, then it is time to ask for advice from a friend. If it is an odd number, then the abuser chooses a volunteer from the spectator group; if it is an even number, then the victim chooses a volunteer.

The volunteer will approach the couple. Both the abuser and the victim must explain the situation to them in two to three sentences. Once the spectator hears both sides of the story they are free to choose which player they support that turn.

The supported player will obtain both cards and destroy them and scatter the pieces around the room.



The 'Phrase Cards'

DEBRIEF

When all the phrases cards are destroyed, the game enters the Debrief phase. At this point, they have finished their role-playing, and it is time to take a rest. There is a cute large stuffed animal under the table that they can cuddle with to ease any remaining tensions. If participants feel comfortable about it- they can chat with each other about their experiences playing this game and any other topics that arose during the play session. Then, the players can take the 'Paths to Safety Cards' from the 'X Cup' with them, and the game ends here.

If you want to discuss this game or related issues, feel free to reach out to us. (Mengqi Gao, mg6409@nyu.edu; Yamiao Liu, yl7118@nyu.edu)

IMAGES

