

# *Euthymia*



*Why would you want to be human?*

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*An entrant for Game Chef 2006.  
Time restriction: 10 sessions, each 1 hour long.  
Ingredients: Committee, Emotion, Glass*

*Euthymia:*

*A state of psychological normality; neither happy or sad. May be induced with medication.*

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# *Introduction*

Euthymia is a game set in a dystopian future, eerily similar to the world today.

To play, you need:

- A bottle of drink to share. This should be a special drink that everyone likes. It should have a utopian feel: perhaps a bottle of good wine or cream liqueur. You will drink one bottle every session (see below).
- An identical glass for each player.
- A clock or watch. A ticking egg-timer or a clock with a countdown function is ideal.
- A pack of cards.
- One copy of the character sheet, at the back of this booklet, for each player.
- Pens.

Euthymia is played in ten sessions, each lasting one hour. These sessions are referred to as hours: the first hour, the second hour and so on. Despite this description, the sessions do not run back-to-back and are likely to be spread over several evenings.

# *The first hour*

In the first hour, the group will design the state of Euthymia together. Throughout the hour, share the drink between you. You should time the hour with the clock.

In particular, you must decide:

- What is the Ideal Citizen of Euthymia like?
- What is the state of Euthymia like?
- Who are the characters that the group will play?
- What are the Aspects of these characters and how strong are they?
- Who is the Committee Member?

## *The Ideal Citizen*

The group must start by describing the people of Euthymia. In particular, the group will describe an Ideal Citizen.

On the character sheet are a diamond, a spade, a club and a heart. Each represents a different aspect of the Ideal Citizen:

- The **Diamond** represents how the Ideal Citizen **feels**
- The **Spade** represents how the Ideal Citizen **speaks**
- The **Club** represents what the Ideal Citizen **believes**
- The **Heart** represents how the Ideal Citizen **loves**

Next to the Diamond, write "Feels euthymic". This is how the Ideal Citizen feels: stable, tranquil, neither happy nor sad, with no strong feelings at all.

Now, choose a social group in the real world that has strong expectations about behaviour. For example: the Catholic Church; Hedonistic clubgoers; Socialists. Then:

- Next to the **Spade**, write down how that group expects you to **speak**.
- Next to the **Club**, write down what that group expects you to **believe**.
- Next to the **Heart**, write down how that group expects you to **love**.

Feel free to exaggerate the feelings of the group or change them so they are more interesting. Here are some examples:

|  |   | <i>(Catholic Church)</i>               | <i>(Hedonistic clubgoers)</i>                              |
|--|---|--|--|
| <i>(How the Ideal Citizen feels)</i>     | ♦ | Feels euthymic                         | Feels euthymic   |
| <i>(How the Ideal Citizen speaks)</i>    | ♠ | Speaks with proper reverence to God    | Speaks casually and flirtatiously                          |
| <i>(What the Ideal Citizen believes)</i> | ♣ | Believes God is the ultimate authority | Believes that the only thing that matters is to enjoy life |
| <i>(How the Ideal Citizen loves)</i>     | ♥ | Has sex only within marriage           | Has only anonymous sex                                     |

You have just described how the Ideal Citizen of Euthymia feels, how they speak, what they believe and how they love.

## *Building Euthymia*

Having described the citizens of Euthymia, what is the rest of the state like?

Euthymia is a tranquil society. Its citizens are medicated to keep their mood stable: neither happy nor sad, never aggressive, never passionate. In Euthymia, extreme emotion is a crime.

Because the citizens feel nothing, their behaviour is perfect: they speak as they should speak, believe what they are told and love as they should love.

Euthymia is run by The Committee. The Committee oversees everything through a vast network of cameras, microphones and satellites. Any abnormal behaviours are monitored and eradicated.

Now you, the group, must fill in the details of Euthymia. Together, answer the following questions:

- What does Euthymia look like, as you walk about?
- How do the citizens spend their day?
- How do the Committee talk to the citizens?
- Why do the Committee fear extreme emotion so much? What extremes of emotion have they seen?
- What was there before Euthymia?

## *The characters*

Finally, the group must decide which characters they will play. Like the Ideal Citizen, each character has four aspects: a Feel Aspect, a Speak Aspect, a Believe Aspect and a Love Aspect.

For each Aspect of the Ideal Citizen, each player must choose something that clearly contrasts with or opposes that aspect. In this way, the player creates the four Aspects of their character. They describe how the character *is tempted to be* and may later become. Here is an example:

|                         |   | <i>The Ideal Citizen</i>                  | <i>Character</i>            |
|-------------------------|---|---|-----------------------------|
| <i>(Feel Aspect)</i>    | ♦ | Feels euthymic                            | Feels angry                 |
| <i>(Speak Aspect)</i>   | ♠ | Speaks with proper<br>reverence to God    | Speaks blasphemously        |
| <i>(Believe Aspect)</i> | ♣ | Believes God is the ultimate<br>authority | Believes God does not exist |
| <i>(Love Aspect)</i>    | ♥ | Has sex only within<br>marriage           | Has anonymous sex           |

And so this character is tempted to feel angry, to speak blasphemously, to believe that God does not exist and to have anonymous sex.

Different players must have different characters. Here is another example:

|                         |   | <i>The Ideal Citizen</i>                  | <i>Character</i>                             |
|-------------------------|---|---|--|
| <i>(Feel Aspect)</i>    | ♦ | Feels euthymic                            | Feels lonely                                 |
| <i>(Speak Aspect)</i>   | ♠ | Speaks with proper<br>reverence to God    | Speaks of science and reason                 |
| <i>(Believe Aspect)</i> | ♣ | Believes God is the ultimate<br>authority | Believes Reason is the<br>ultimate authority |
| <i>(Love Aspect)</i>    | ♥ | Has sex only within<br>marriage           | Loves only men                               |

Finally, somewhere on your character sheet, write your character's name.

# *The Strength of your Aspects*

Each Aspect of your character has a Strength, measured from 0 to 10. This Strength describes how present that Aspect is in your character, as follows:

- Zero: The aspect is not present at all. In respect of this aspect of themselves, your character is an Ideal Citizen.

For example, a score of zero in *loving only men* means your character never thinks of loving a man.

- Three: Your character acts like an Ideal Citizen but is tempted by this aspect of themselves.

A score of three in *loving only men* means your character is haunted by thoughts of loving men and is tempted to try it.

- Five: Your character is actively living this aspect of themselves and it tortures them to do so.

A score of five in *loving only men* might mean your character is having anonymous sex with men and crying himself to sleep afterwards.

- Seven: Your character embodies this aspect of themselves completely and happily.

For example, a score of seven in *loving only men* might mean your character is having anonymous sex with men and enjoying it.

- Eight or Nine: Your character is losing control of this aspect of themselves.

For example, a score of nine in *loving only men* might mean your character was dangerously obsessed with a lover.

- Ten: Your character has lost control of this aspect of themselves. They are about to die: either because they kill themselves or the Committee kills them.

A score of ten in *loving only men* could mean your character was naked and screaming beneath their loved one's window.

To clarify, here are examples of how a Feel Aspect, Speak Aspect, Believe Aspect and Love Aspect might vary with their Strengths:

| <i>Aspect</i>                      | <i>Strength</i>                     |  |   |   |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|---|---|
|                                    | 3                                   | 5  | 7   | 10  |
| <i>Feels angry</i>                 | Often feels anger and bottles it up | Is full of anger, which he tries to bottle up, but it bursts out in fits of rage | Knows he is angry and is happy to express his anger | Rages and screams against the Committee, who kill him   |
| <i>Speaks blasphemously</i>        | Wants to blaspheme                  | Occasionally blasphemes and feels abandoned by God afterwards                    | Blasphemes regularly and happily                    | Blasphemes loudly and publicly and the Committee are forced to kill him                                     |
| <i>Believes God does not exist</i> | Doubts God's existence              | Is growing to realise that there is no God but hates the thought                 | Is happy in his atheism                             | Tries to persuade others at every opportunity that there is no God. The Committee are forced to kill him.   |
| <i>Has anonymous sex</i>           | Is tempted by sex with strangers    | Occasionally has sex with strangers and feels dirty afterwards                   | Regularly and joyfully has sex with strangers       | Thinks about nothing else but sex with strangers. Either the Committee, or one of the strangers, kills him. |

Divide fifteen points between the Strengths of your character's Aspects. No Strength may be greater than six and no Strength may be greater than the Strength of the Feel Aspect. Mark these starting Strengths on your character sheet.

Throughout the game, the Strengths of other Aspects may *never* exceed the Strength of your Feel Aspect. Everything stems from emotion: until you feel differently, you will never act differently.

As the Strength of your Aspects changes throughout the game, you must play those Aspects more strongly or weakly. In particular, if the Strength of one of your Aspects goes above seven, you must play your character as losing control of that Aspect of themselves.



# *The Committee Member*

One of the characters is a fraud. He is a member of the Committee, sent to spy on the others.

Take one black card from the pack and a number of red cards, so that the total number of cards is equal to the number of players. Shuffle them and give each player a card randomly.

The player who receives the black card plays the Committee Member. He must not identify himself. His character is a sham: he is an Ideal Citizen and fakes the aspects of his character to fool the other characters.

Each player should then pass his card to another player, ensuring that every player is given a card. The character of the player who receives the black card knows who the Committee Member is. The player should decide how his character knows this information. The player should not reveal this information immediately, but may do so at any point in the following hours.

The first hour is now over.

# *The second to ninth hours*

At the beginning of the hour, start the clock.

## *Who starts?*

First, shuffle the deck, and deal a hand of six cards to each player.

Then all the players, at the same time, should reveal one card. Whoever shows the highest ranked card (with Aces low) takes the first turn. All cards revealed are discarded.

If multiple players show cards of equal rank, and those are the highest cards, these players must all reveal another card from their hand. Again, the player who shows the highest ranked card takes the first turn; again all cards revealed are discarded; and if cards with equal rank are revealed again, then this process repeats.

Players should keep the remaining cards in their hands. They will be used later.

## *Taking a turn*

Whoever is taking the turn is called the Active Player.

That player takes the bottle. Throughout the turn, they may refill anyone's glass except their own.

During that turn, the Active Player's character is central: the group is telling that character's story. The Active Player plays that character.

The character's objective is to regain his humanity, but not lose control of it. So, at the start of the game, the Active Player should tell how the character, while going about his daily life, is tempted to act on his Aspects. Later, the character will begin to act on his Aspects. Still later, the character may lose control of his Aspects or be crushed by the Committee.

The other players support the Active Player by reacting to him: describing the environment and playing other characters. If it seems natural that their own characters would be in the scene, they play their own characters.

This carries on until someone ends the turn.

## *Ending the turn*

A turn ends when a Conflict is launched. There are two players who may launch a Conflict: the Active Player and whichever of the remaining players has the most drink in his glass.

Whoever launches the Conflict signals this by taking the bottle and placing it in the centre of the table. Thereafter, no glasses may be filled until the Conflict is resolved, at which point the next turn will begin.

The Conflict may be launched in three ways.

Firstly, the Active Player may launch a Conflict by attempting something, related to one of his Aspects, that an Ideal Citizen would not do.

He does this by declaring **“I want to...”** or **“I need to...”**:

- **“I want to kill the guard”**
- **“I want to make love to you”**
- **“I want to throw my food away”**

This launches a Conflict to determine whether his character succeeds.

Secondly, the player who has the most drink in their glass may launch a Conflict in which they tempt the Active Player’s character by one of his Aspects.

They do this by declaring **“You must be tempted to...”**:

- **“You must be tempted to kill that guard”**
- **“You must be tempted to make love to her”**
- **“You must be tempted to throw your food away”**

This launches a Conflict to determine whether his character succumbs.

Thirdly, the player who has the most drink in their glass may launch a Conflict on behalf of the Committee. The Committee will attempt to force the Active Player’s character back into the ways of an Ideal Citizen.

They do this by declaring **“The Committee demands...”**:

- **“The Committee demands you surrender to the guard”**
- **“The Committee demands you never see her again”**

This launches a Conflict to determine whether the character submits.

It is understood that whenever the Committee demands that a character consume something, they are attempting to administer medication.

- **“The Committee demands you eat your food”**

Challenges involving medication are challenges to the Feel Aspect of the Active Character.

## *The Conflict*

First, the player who launches the Conflict indicates which of the Active Player’s Aspects is involved. They do this by tapping the Active Player’s character sheet. This Aspect will be associated with a suit: diamond, spade, club or heart.

Then, the player who has the most drink in their glass plays a card of that suit. If that player has no card of that suit, they may play any card in their hand. Aces are always low (their value is 1).

If the card played is a Jack, Queen or King, play passes to the player whose glass contains the next largest amount of drink. That player also may play any card of the appropriate suit or, if they have none, any card in their hand. If they also play a Jack, Queen or King, play passes to the player with the third largest amount of drink, and so on. Play never passes to the Active Player.

The rank of the last card played is compared to the Strength of the Aspect being used. If the card rank is equal or lower than the Strength, the character has won and has achieved what he set out to do. If it is higher, the character has failed.

All cards played are discarded.

## *Changing the Strength of the Aspect*

Some conflicts will make an Aspect of the character stronger or weaker. This works as follows.

If any Jacks, Queen or Kings were played, the Strength of the Aspect used will change. Whether it goes up or down is determined as follows:

| <i>How the challenge was issued</i> | <i>If the Active Player wins</i> | <i>If the Active Player loses</i> |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>I want to... or I need to...</b> | Strength increases               | Strength decreases                |
| <b>You must be tempted to...</b>    | Strength increases               | Strength decreases                |
| <b>The Committee demands...</b>     | Strength decreases               | Strength increases                |

The Strength of the appropriate Aspect is increased or decreased by the number of Jacks, Queens or Kings played.

However, no Strength may exceed the Strength of the Feel Aspect. Hence:

- If the Strength of another Aspect would increase above the Strength of the Feel Aspect, that Strength stays at its present level instead.
- If the Strength of the Feel Aspect decreases then, if necessary, the other Strengths are decreased so that they do not exceed the Strength of the Feel Aspect.

In addition, the Strength of an Aspect never drops below zero.

Finally, if the Strength of any Aspect reaches ten, the character dies immediately. The Active Player must describe how the character dies: probably by suicide or because the Committee murders him.

The player with the *emptiest* glass – but not the previous Active Player - then begins the next turn.

## *Dying*

If a character dies, his player takes no more turns in the remainder of the hour. He should prepare a new character to play in the next hour.

If his old character was the Committee Member, then the new character is also a Committee Member.

## *More cards*

If a player spends a full turn narrating how the Committee subdues and humiliates his character, he may discard the cards he holds – if any – and will be dealt a new hand of six cards.

The player with most drink in his glass is *obliged* to end this turn by launching a Conflict with the words “**The Committee demands...**”.

## *Becoming an Ideal Citizen*

If the Strengths of all a character's Aspects reach zero, the character becomes an Ideal Citizen.

The player may, if he wishes, continue playing the character as an Ideal Citizen. Ideal Citizens are supporting characters and take no turns.

If at any point the player wants to abandon the Ideal Citizen character, they may do so. They should prepare a new character for the next hour.

## *As the end of the hour approaches*

Towards the end of the hour, each player should take one final turn.

To symbolize the start of the final turn, the Active Player should divide any drink remaining in the bottle between the other players and himself. Over the course of the final turn, he should finish his glass and, when the conflict is reached, place it empty in the middle of the table. After this final turn, each of the other players in turn must take a final turn, also draining their glasses and placing them in the middle.

In the final turn, each Active Player should guide their character towards a cliffhanger, where the character either gets what he has fought for this hour or is crushed while trying.

In the Conflict of the final turn, the Strength of the Aspect used will always change. Whether it increases or decreases depends on how the Conflict was launched, as above. It changes by one *plus* the number of Jacks, Queens and Kings played.

If, as a result of this, the Strength of another Aspect increases above the Strength of the Feel Aspect, *the Strength of the Feel Aspect is increased to compensate.*

## *The ninth hour*

The ninth hour is the last time the characters may act freely. Whatever they have been fighting for - whatever is their ultimate goal - should be clear by now. This hour is their last chance to fight for it. Their Final turns should be the climax of their stories.

The Committee Member takes the last Final turn of the ninth hour. This Final turn has no Conflict. In this Final turn, he reveals his true identity.

# *The final hour*

In the final hour, the Committee Member confronts the other characters with the ridiculousness of their actions. They want to be human, but they would be happier as Ideal Citizens. If they gave into their Aspects, they would destroy themselves.

Throughout the final hour, the Committee Member controls the bottle, and may fill his own glass or those of the other players, as he chooses. No-one else may touch the bottle.

The story in the final hour starts with all the characters arriving, or being brought, to the same location.

Players take turns as usual, except for the player of the Committee Member, who takes no turns.

In this final hour, the Committee Member has the full resources of the Committee behind him. His character may arrange for almost anything to happen to the other characters – torture, restraint, bribery – providing the other characters remain able to think and speak freely.

In addition, if the Committee Member uses all his cards, he is dealt a new hand of six cards.

It is likely that the Committee Member will make one of three arguments:

- That the other characters cannot cope with being human
- That the other characters would be happier as Ideal Citizens
- That one particular character will be spared if he turns against the others

and it is likely that this hour will consist of the characters talking more than acting (although that need not be the case).

Every conflict in this final hour changes the Strength of the Aspect being used. As in a final turn, it changes by one *plus* the number of Jacks, Queens and Kings played. Whether it increases or decreases depends on how the Conflict was launched.

Again, if, as a result of this, the Strength of another Aspect increases above the Strength of the Feel Aspect, the Strength of the Feel Aspect is increased to compensate.

The Committee Member is likely to use this in one of two ways:

- Either to drive the Strengths of the Aspects towards ten, making the characters lose control of their Aspects.
- Or to drive the Strengths of the Aspects towards zero, making the characters into Ideal Citizens.

Towards the end of the final hour, the player of the Committee Member should take his final turn of the game, describing the end of his character's story. The players of the other characters then take their final turns.

There is no conflict at the end of these final turns of the game. Instead, each player should tell the end of their characters' stories. Do they escape Euthymia? Do they stay and suppress their desires? Do they live or die? The end of the story is up to the player.



# *Some clarifications*

## *On drinking*

- Players may be tactical about when they drink and whose glass they fill.
- When a player empties their glass, they must wait to be filled. The exception is if that player is the Committee Member and it is the final hour.
- Players may refuse to fill the glasses of other players who do not act as they wish. This is expected of the Committee Member in the final hour.
- The reason the Active Player is not allowed to fill his own glass is to encourage him to keep his turn short.
- Ideally, the group will consume exactly one bottle in each session. However, some groups may prefer to leave the bottle unfinished or to open another. In this case, the Final turn of each hour should be symbolized by filling everyone's glasses, then resealing or recorking the bottle.
- If there is doubt about whose glass is most full or empty, the player holding the bottle (or, during a Conflict, the Active Player) should resolve the issue by pouring drink into one of the glasses.

## *On conflicts*

- In a conflict, players are free to play any card of the appropriate suit or, if they have none of the appropriate suit, any card in their hand. This may mean they choose directly between defeating the Active Player or letting him succeed. That choice is up to them.
- It is possible that, in a conflict, all players except the Active Player play a Jack, Queen or King. If this happens, the last card played is a Jack, Queen or King and it is compared against the Strength of the Aspect being used. It will always exceed the Strength and the character will lose. That last card played is included in calculating how the Strength of the Aspect changes.

- For the pedantic: the phrase “the player with the most drink in his glass” *never* refers to the Active Player.

## *On the Committee Member*

- The Committee Member is at a disadvantage in that one other character knows his true identity. If accused of being the Committee Member, he should deny the fact. He may find it useful to accuse other characters of being the Committee Member. He may find it useful to suggest that anyone who says he is a Committee Member is themselves a Committee Member.
- If the identity of the Committee Member becomes an open secret, the group should change the Committee Member. They do this by dealing cards, as at the start of the game. One player will be the new Committee Member and one player will know the Committee Member’s identity. In terms of the story, the new Committee Member has always been the Committee Member. Any characters who suspected the old Committee Member were, of course, mistaken.
- On reflection, players will realise that the Committee Member has the power to launch every Conflict in the Final hour. This power should be abused.

## *On the Strength of Aspects*

- If the Strength of any Aspect becomes zero, it will never rise above zero.
- Probability suggests that, over the course of the game, the Strengths of most Aspects will be driven towards zero. However, those Aspects which rise in Strength will continue rising. This is as it should be.
- For the Speak and Love Aspects: as their Strength goes from 0 to 10, the character acts on the Aspect more, and becomes happier with their actions, until eventually the actions destroy them.
- For the Feel and Believe Aspects: as their Strength goes from 0 to 10, the character feels or believes more strongly, and becomes happier with the feeling or belief, until in some way the feeling or belief destroys them.

## *On the style of the game*

- This game is intended for a group of friends, sharing a bottle of wine, sitting around a table after dinner. It is not a hard drinking game unless, of course, you want it to be.

# *Afterword*

This game has been strongly influenced by better games. Some of these are:

- “Paranoia”, by Greg Costikyan, Dan Gelber and Eric Goldberg, is a major influence on the setting. The updated version, Paranoia XP, by Allen Varney, has also been a large influence, particularly since it contains a Straight style of play, which is close to the style of this game.
- “Werewolf”, a game sometimes credited to Dimitry Davidoff, is the source of inspiration for the Committee Member as part of the team.
- “Shooting the Moon”, by Emily Care Boss, is the source of inspiration for using antitheses.
- “Breaking the Ice”, also by Emily Care Boss, has an alternative card mechanic which uses Jacks, Queens and Kings. I’ve stolen and adapted this mechanic.
- The concept of “Key Phrases” from “Polaris”, by Ben Lehman, is adapted for the Conflicts.
- The original and best drinking RPG is Fred Wolke’s “Redneck”. I also recommend Joshua Bishop-Roby’s “The Ancient and Venerable Art of Tippling”.

The main literary influences are George Orwell’s “Nineteen Eighty-Four” and Aldous Huxley’s “Brave New World”. The films “Gattaca” and “Brazil” are also strong influences.

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*The Ideal Citizen*

# *Euthymia*

*Me*



*1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10*



*1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10*



*1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10*



*1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10*