Bad Day!

A roleplay game for 3–4 players and 1 game master

Ages: 16 and up.

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Well, we all know, it happens… Sometimes we just have bad days when nothing seems to work, and everyone seems to be angry with you — or is it you who's angry with everyone? Well, the good news is that you can always try to transform a bad day into a good one! Choose your 'magic helper' — depending on the situation, it might be a fox, an ostrich, a dog, an owl or even… a dragon! Ready? Let's go!

In this roleplay game suitable for training as well as home setting, you will try to manage day-to-day conflict situations and learn several strategies to resolve conflicts with your beloved ones — and thus make your relationships with them stronger. Only those who use an appropriate strategy in each situation will get the points required to win the game.
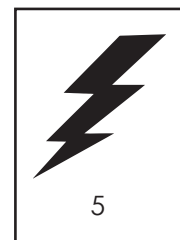
Game components
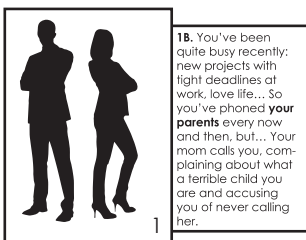
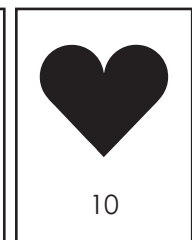**9 pairs of situation cards**
(for players A and B)
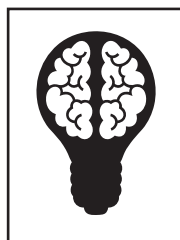
16 insight cards

8 gift cards

136 resource cards
(energy, relationships)

10 sets of strategy cards
(fox, owl, ostrich, dragon, dog)

4 sets of priority cards

Not so important relationship, important issue
Not so important relationship, trivial issue
Important relationship, important issue
Important relationship, trivial issue
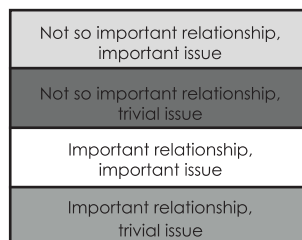
1 rulebook
(including master's manual)

1 scoring scheme

Printable materials

The rulebook, the scoring scheme and the cards are available via the link: http://bit.ly/badday20.

You will need a die or a device to access https://rolladie.net/ or a similar resource.

Before the game

Before the game you have to print out the materials and cut out the cards. The situation cards should be printed out with their cover on the other side of the page or glued together with the cover.

Before the game, the game master should read the master's manual carefully and familiarise him/herself with the recommended resources in order to facilitate the game properly and safely.

Game setup

At the beginning of the game, each player receives a name card, 4 different priority cards, 2 gift cards and 2 sets of strategy cards (5 different strategy cards in each). Situation cards A and B form two draw piles, respectively, that are placed on the table face down. The resource cards are placed on the table face up.

Playing the game

The game consists of four rounds. Each player role plays one round as player A (the main player) and one round as player B (a partner). A round consists of the following phases:

I. Preparation: choose the main player, a parner, read situation card and set priority.

II. Roleplay and observation: introduce players, guess a strategy they used.

III. Discussion and scoring: game master explains what strategy has been used; the players receive their points.

Then, the next round is played following the same rules.

Preparation

1. Choosing the main player

The main player (the one who has a bad day) for the turn is determined by a dice roll (use your own dice or visit https://rolladie.net/) among the players who have not had their bad day yet: each player rolls the dice and the one with the lowest score becomes the main player for the turn.

2. Choosing a partner

After this, a partner for the conflict situation is determined following the same procedure as the main player among the players who have not played a partner yet.

3. Drawing the situation cards

At the beginning of the turn, the main player draws a card from pile A and reads it silently. The partner finds a card from pile B that has the same number on it as the main player's card. He/she reads it silently.

4. Defining the priorities

Then both of them evaluate how important the situation and the relationship described in the card are for them, choose the priority card that describes the situation the best and place it on the table face down.

Roleplay and observation

5. Introduction and roleplay
The main player and his/her partner introduce themselves (the names and relationships between them) and then roleplay the situation.

6. Observation and strategy evaluation
The other players and the game master observe the role play and choose the strategy cards describing the strategies of the conflicting parties and place them on the table face down.

Discussion and scoring

7. Strategy discussion
The strategy cards are then turned face up. The game master also turns his/her strategy cards face up and explains which strategies were actually used.

8. Scoring: Insights, resources, gifts
If a player has chosen the same strategy card for one of the conflicting parties as the game master, then he/she gets one insight point. The main player and the partner then turn their priority cards face up and get their resources (energy and relationships cards) as described in the scoring scheme. The game master's opinion determines what strategy will be used in the scoring process (even if the players claim they tried to use a different strategy).

Besides, each of the players NOT participating in this round can give one of their gift cards to one (or both) of the players participating in the round and explain his/her choice. The gifts could be given for good acting, active listening etc. Each gift gives one bonus point to the player receiving it.

The players take/return resource cards from/to the pile according to their score.

A mini-debriefing might be conducted after each round depending on the group's needs.

End of the game: Determining the winner and debriefing

The game ends when all the players have roleplayed one conflict as the main player and one conflict as a partner. At the end of the game, all points (resources, insights and gifts) are added up. The player with the highest score becomes the winner.

After the winner is defined, the game master conducts a debriefing.

Game master's manual

The game master's role

The aim of the game is for the participants to learn strategies that are used for conflict resolution and management and to learn to choose an appropriate strategy depending on the situation.

The role of the game master is to facilitate players during the game and ensure safety (i.a. psychological) during the roleplay.

Before the game, the game master tells the participants about the goal of the game and briefly describes the strategies and the process. The game master should make every effort to remain calm and objective and remember that his role is to facilitate and inform, and not to judge.

NB: During the roleplay phase the game master may want to **encourage the players to act the conflict out till the resolution.** If this does not happen, it may be considered as evidence that the avoidance strategy has been used. The game master also keeps track of time, observes group/roleplay dynamics and facilitates the group depending on their needs. The game master may adjust the rules depending on the needs of the group: for example, show the scoring table towards the end of the game. At the end of the game, the game master conducts a debriefing to help the players make valuable conclusions and get insights from the game that they can apply in their day-to-day life.

Getting familiarised with the conflict strategies

In the game, we use animals ('magic helpers') as metaphors for conflict resolution strategies. Overall, there are five behavioural strategies in a conflict: avoiding (we mark it as an ostrich), accommodating (a dog), compromising (a fox), competing (a dragon), collaborating (an owl). The game master should master all the five strategies descriptions and become an expert in identifying them.
More information about the strategies could be found in the following sources:

1. About the interpretation of Conflict Mode Inventory
https://web.mit.edu/collaboration/mainsite/modules/module1/1.11.5.html

2. About your own conflict management style https://www.waldenu.edu/news-and-events/walden-news/2017/0530-whats-your-conflict-management-style

3. About the appropriate use of various conflict management styles
https://courses.lumenlearning.com/wm-organizationalbehavior/chapter/conflict-management-styles/

In addition, we recommend the following online course:

Conflict Transformation: www.coursera.org/learn/conflict-transformation/home/welcome

The game master should familiarise him/herself with the sources prior to the game in order to successfully facilitate it.

Debriefing

Debriefing is a vital part of the game facilitated by a game master. During this phase the players answer some questions to draw valuable conclusions from the game and/or get an insight. After the winner is announced, the game master conducts a debriefing including the following points: the situations, the players' behavior and its extrapolation to real life. The following questions might be used during the debriefing:

Emotions

How do you feel?

What were your feelings during the process?

What situation(s) provoked the strongest emotion(s)?

Observation

What happened?

Why did you react so? Why did your partner react so?

Why did you choose to react in such a way?

What strategy did you primarily use?/What was your main strategy? Why?

How did it help you win the game/prevent you from winning?

Conclusion

How do you usually react to conflicts in real life? How could it work better?

What strategies do you usually use in real life? What new strategies did you learn while playing the game? Which of them would you like to try out in real life?

What aspects of your game experience would you like to bring into your life? What strategies would you use in real life and in what situations?

What is your main takeaway?

Modifications

The participants can also suggest their situations. In this case, they will need to create their own A and B cards for the conflicting parties. The game master might need to adjust the scoring scheme in this case. Send your version to baddayconflictgame@gmail.com to have it added to the official version!

Acknowledgements