

WRESTLING EMBRACE (20-30 mins)

These exercises are from *wrestling embrace* an artwork-tool (some refer to them as “games”) used in arts-based care circles and peer-support groups with fellow queer and disabled folks. Recently this work has been offered in public-facing workshops and conceptual social spaces, including, *Give & Take Care* at Downtown Art Theatre and other locations (2019, 2020), *Here to Lounge* organized by Shannon Finnegan at Nook Gallery (2020), *Boundary Objects* at University of Massachusetts (2020), and TITLE TBD, curated by Meghana Karnik, a show which was suspended indefinitely, weeks before its April opening at Cleveland Institute of Art.

What follows are some other props and rules used in the activity, and what they mean:

The exercises:

Each partner selects an exercise. Each exercise starts with imagining a distance to negotiate between two bodies. You may sit, stand, or situate your body in any way that feels comfortable. Decide who goes first and begin acting out what the exercise says. Only share the exercise with your partner if the exercise says to share it. Otherwise it is up to you.

The bell:

I recommend using a bell (or bell recording on your computer or smartphone) to denote when the exercise has started or ended. If a bell is used—that is a safe-word for STOP. We use safe-words to signal if something is no longer comfortable. At that moment, everyone must stop and resume only if the air is cleared. You may also decide with your partner a nonverbal cue for STOP instead of using a bell or sound.

Time keepers:

Use an external marker of time such as a timer, stopwatch, clock, or hourglass. Start the exercise with a defined, measurable amount of time. Sometimes the exercise will denote a time other times you should select one with your partner. When the time runs out, so does the exercise.

Consent culture:

Always ask for consent before engaging with another bodymind. You may do this verbally or with an invented non-verbal symbol. No always means NO. None of these exercises are prompt for inappropriate or unwarranted sexual behavior and/or power based dynamics. If you are playing with others in the room, please prioritize each other’s safety by not watching or recording them in an intimate moment. The space is confidential and not a spectacle.

Participants are welcome to observe others playing with permission. This permission can be taken away at any moment, for any reason.

Choose one of these exercises per player:

a.

[imagine close contact in silence]

Share these directions with your partner and follow these actions together. Sit facing each other, back-to-back, or side-to-side. Imagine holding each other's hands or brushing against each other's shoulders or mid-back. You may choose to rest your eyes. Maintain this position for 5 minutes. Stay with each other in silence. Don't speak. Feel free to fidget or stim. Breathe at an ease that works for you.

b.

[imagine holding a close distance]

Read to your partner something that is meaningful to you at this moment. This could be something that you personally wrote or read, or you may return to a text that you found earlier in the day. If you do not have the resource easily accessible, recall what you remember out loud.

c.

[imagine holding a distance no less than two feet]

Think about doing something that you know will indefinitely humiliate your partner. Before you do that thing, do the exact opposite.

d.

[imagine keeping a distance of no more than one foot]

Be still. Don't force stillness if you cannot resist sudden jerks and movements. Follow the subtle movements and gestures of your partner. Carefully scrutinize every inch of their body from head to toe. If you are not in physical space together this may involve positioning a video camera in a way that the whole body can be sensed. This may involve imagining that person's body from memory and jotting down descriptive notes. Keep this up for at least five minutes. Let your mind wander naturally before returning to your partner. If you need to ground through the sense of their breath or your own, do so.