

Reconsolidation

By Keith Stetson and Clarissa Baut Stetson
keithstetson@yahoo.com

Written for Game Chef 2013

Reconsolidation is a collaborative storytelling card game about navigating the twisting corridors of memory to free a patient from the burden of a repressed traumatic memory. Each player plays a bit of the patient's mind and tries to use pleasant memories to unlock the elements of the core repressed memory. Then and only then may they help the patient confront the traumatic memory and re-frame it so as to better see its beneficial effects.

RECONSOLIDATION

Once a memory is formed, we assume that it will stay the same. This, in fact, is why we trust our recollections. They feel like indelible portraits of the past.

None of this is true. In the past decade, scientists have come to realize that our memories are not inert packets of data and they don't remain constant. Even though every memory feels like an honest representation, that sense of authenticity is the biggest lie of all.

Jonah Lehrer

MATERIALS

[One deck of thirty-two picture cards](#), created using selected icons at game-icons.net

Five to eight token advancement cards (described later)

A few dozen tokens, ideally transparent such as clear gaming stones (could also use pennies in a pinch)

One to four friends

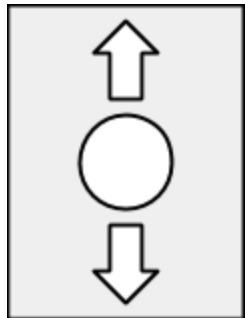
A table and chairs

TYPES OF CARDS



Picture cards:

These cards have various black and white icons on them. You will use them to inspire your memories.

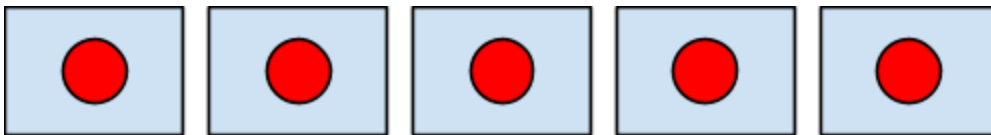


Token advancement cards:

These cards have a circle on them with two arrows, one extending upward and one extending downward. They will cause corruption tokens to spread out to new cards.

SETUP

Put five cards face down in the center of the table. Place a token on each of the four cards.



Deal 5 cards to each player.

Shuffle in the token advancement cards. Five token advancement cards makes for an easy game - eight makes for a nearly impossible game.

GAME PLAY

A player will usually do one of three things on their turn

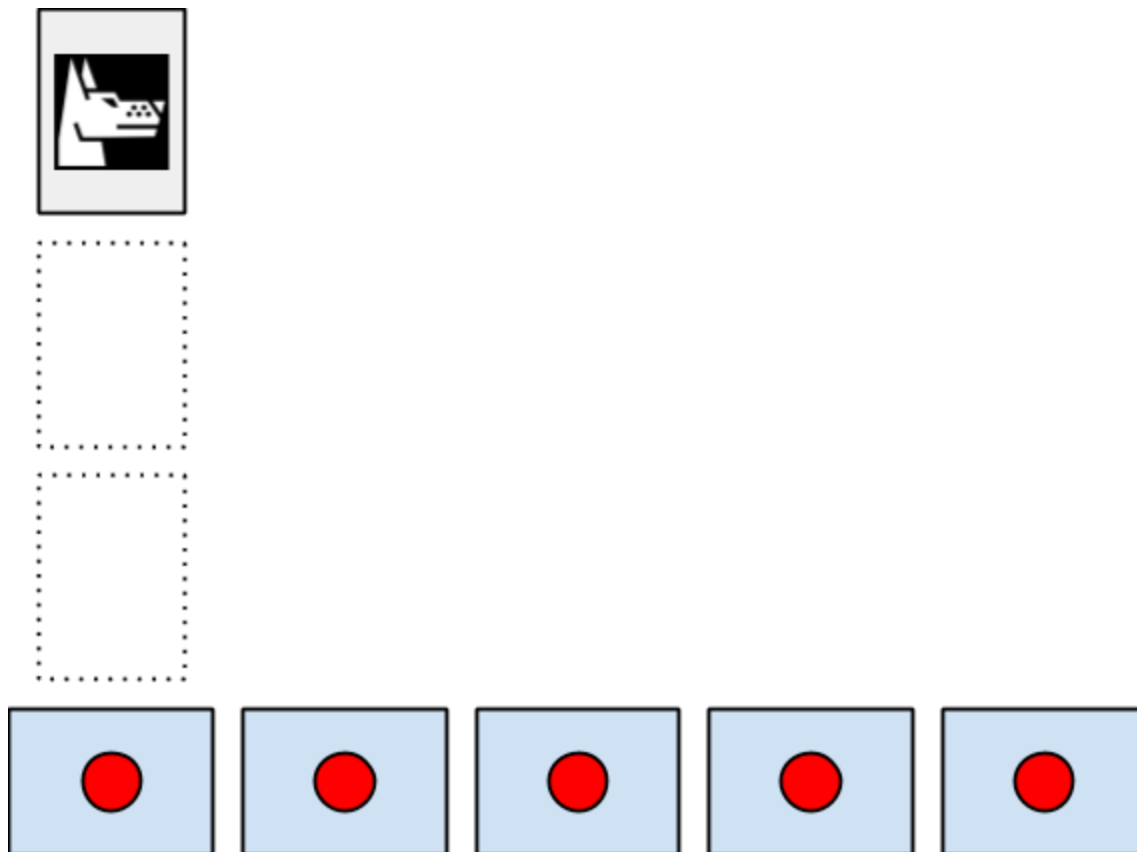
- 1) start a new thread
- 2) continue an already started thread
- 3) finish a thread by turning over a core element and giving it meaning

If a memory becomes corrupted (explained later), a fourth possibility opens up

- 4) re-tell an existing memory in a negative light

1) Starting a new thread

Select a card from your hand of five and place it face up on the table. The card you place down should be perpendicular to the core memory and some distance away from it (one to four spots away). The farther away from the core memory you place your card, the less likely it is to become corrupted (see Corruption), but the more cards will have to be used to connect it to the core memory.



(Card placed three spots away from the core memory)

As you place your card down, use the picture on it to help you create part of a memory. When interpreting the picture, keep in mind the previously generated memories and try to tie into them. Every memory the players create belongs to the

same patient.

Remember that the picture on the card is just a jumping off point and need not be taken literally. A picture of a chain could symbolize connections, bondage, or simply a bicycle chain.

Player one puts the chain card down and says "I remember my friend Alexander - he insisted on being called Xander - he convinced me that the mall wasn't too far away from my house to ride my bike to. Of course, halfway there, the chain on my bike broke."

The player draws a card. If it is a token advancement card, the tokens advance. Play then passes clockwise to the next player.

2) Continuing a thread

Works just like starting a thread, except you aren't putting down the first card of a thread. Build upon what the previous player said while putting down your card.

Player one puts the dog card down and says "Even though Xander wasn't a particularly good friend by any measure of that quality, he was extremely loyal. He could have ridden off to the mall and gotten me a new bike chain - that almost certainly would have been a better plan - but he got off his bike and insisted upon walking his bike just like I had to walk mine, all the way to the damn mall."

The player draws a card. If it is a token advancement card, the tokens advance. Play then passes clockwise to the next player.

3) Finishing a thread

Once a memory thread has reached the core memory, the next player will turn over the adjacent core memory card, keeping a token on top. The player will interpret that card and finish telling the memory thread. The basic meaning of the core card should be remembered by the group to be used again when the entire core traumatic memory has been revealed.

This memory thread has been completed and the element of the core memory that closes it can be accessed. However, the memory thread is now also at risk of being corrupted, should the tokens spread to each of its cards.

The player does not draw a card. Play passes clockwise to the next player.

4) Retell an existing memory in a negative light

If an entire memory thread has tokens on it, that thread is corrupted and needs to be retold in a negative light. Continuing around in a clockwise fashion, each player will re-frame the elements of the thought in a more negative way.

Player four points to the chain card and says “I remember Alexander - Xander he insisted on being called - he decided I was his friend. I thought he was a worthless bully. He thought smacking me on the back of the head was an appropriate way to say hello. But it was easier to be ‘friends,’ right? Well, he goaded me into trying to ride my bike to the mall with him and halfway there my chain broke. He just laughed and laughed and I knew he had weakened it on purpose.”

Corrupted threads cannot be used to access an element of the core traumatic memory. That element must be accessed from a new thread.

The player does not draw a card. Play passes clockwise to the next player.

CORRUPTION

Whenever a player draws a token advancement card, any card touching a card with a token on it now receives a token as well. If this advancement means that an entire memory thread now has tokens on it, that thread is corrupted.

When a strand of memory is corrupted, the players revisit it. Each card's meaning stays as close to its original meaning as possible, but this time the overall tone of the memory is negative.

A corrupted strand of memory cannot be used to access an element of the core memory. You must build another strand of memory to it, using the other side of the table. If both strands of memory heading for the core memory are corrupted, the game is lost. The core memory cannot be recovered and it will continue to plague the patient.

END GAME

Once every element of the core traumatic memory has been revealed and is accessible via a non-corrupted thread, the end game begins. Continuing clockwise, the next player chooses one side of the core memory to start with and begins telling the traumatic memory, sticking as closely as possible to the original meaning of the card. If the card originally signified the patient finding another side of himself, it might now signifying finding a dark side to someone else, or being ostracized for having a different side to himself. Play continues clockwise until all five elements have been described.

Once all elements have been described, the players begin to draw forth the positive consequences of the elements. Continuing clockwise, each player places a new card on top of any core memory card (and its token) and says how that element positively influenced their life.

Player three takes the anvil card out of their hand and places it down on top of the fetus card which represented being ostracized for having shown another side of the patient's personality. "It was really hard at the time, being singled out for what I was, but looking back I can see now that dealing with such adversity was part of what gave me the strength to do some of the amazing things I've done. I don't think I would be where I am without all the awful things people did to me when I was younger."

Play continues clockwise until all five elements have positive consequences tied to them.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE

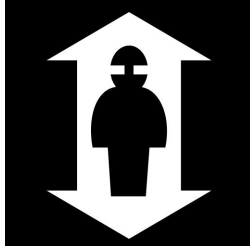
Success:

- Uncover the core traumatic memory and evoke the positive aspects of it.

Failure:

- Fail to access the core traumatic memory.
- Fail of evoke the positive aspects of the core traumatic memory.
- Allow the core traumatic memory to corrupt the other memory threads.

THEME / INTERPRETATION



...provided the theme of delving down into the depths of memory and (hopefully) coming back up



...provided the idea of thoughts that are frozen in place in our heads



...provided the idea of corruption spreading



...provided the idea of holding things up to scrutiny

FEEDBACK

For feedback or questions, please contact keithstetson@yahoo.com