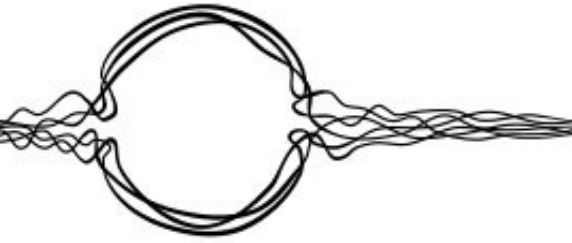


# PSYCHEBALL



## PSYCHEBALL

*PSYCHIC BATTLESPOUT IN CYBERSPACE...*

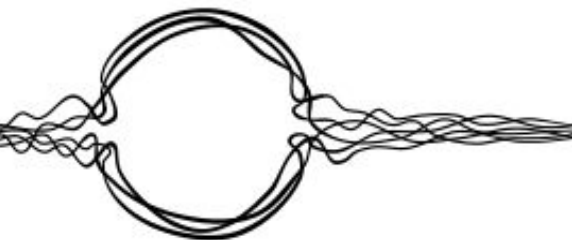
Connected to your deck via brainjack, attuned to the CyberSpace realm via subjective transform sequencers and running the latest neurotransmission sensitivity software, your mind and your Avatar are one in the Arena. Every thought is a weapon, every memory is a grenade, every defense mechanism is a shield.

Outside the Arena, Psycheball players deliberately undermine their own lives. The best players have the most personal problems and emotional struggles to deal with. The turmoil of their life provides mental fuel for their powers in the Arena. To succeed at the game, players sabotage their relationships and hurt those they love, or are hurt by them instead.

With the MeatPuppet of your physical body forgotten in some remote room, its input diminished by hard drugs and soft restraints, the virtual body of your Avatar and impressions of the Arena fill your senses. The lights dim. A spotlight hits you. Around the Arena, other spots reveal the Avatars of your opponents. The buzzer sounds. Remember your training. Aim for your opponents' subconscious, and guard your mind from attack. The whole network is watching.



# PSYCHEBALL



## WHAT YOU WILL NEED

3+ players.

Paper and something to write with.

Tokens to represent your characters.

A four sided die, a six sided die, an eight sided die, a ten sided die and a twelve sided die.

A deck of cards with 4 suits numbered 1-13 (ace 1 to king 13 in a standard deck) split into four decks, one for each suit.

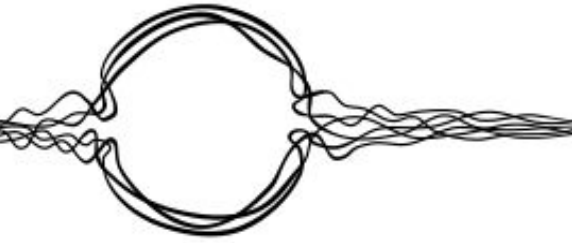
These four decks are called the Emotion Decks.

Suits represent Rage, Joy, Grief and Fear.

<b>SUIT</b>	<b>EMOTION</b>	<b>TRIGGER</b>
SPADES	ANGER	VIOLATION
DIAMONDS	FEAR	THREAT
HEARTS	JOY	SATISFACTION
CLUBS	SADNESS	LOSS



# PSYCHEBALL



## GAME STRUCTURE

League > Season > Match > Round > Action

- The game centers around a league.
  - A league contains at least one season.
  - A season has stakes for which players are competing.
    - A season contains a number of matches equal to the number of players in the league.
    - Before each match there is one downtime scene for each player.
      - During a match there is at least one round
      - A round starts with ball placement and tactic selection.
        - Players take four actions, two at a time, in turn order.
      - The ball die is rolled and tactics revealed.
      - The effects of successful tactics are calculated.
      - Players are knocked out.
      - If any team is out of players the match ends.

## GETTING STARTED

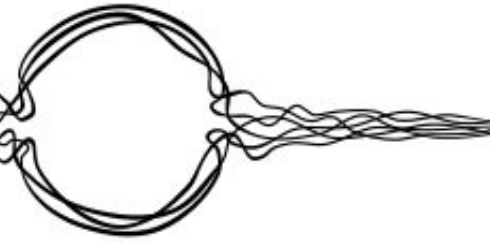
### League Setting

Psycheball can be played by professional cyber athletes in huge virtual stadiums watched by thousands of viewers as the roar of the chat flies past in a torrent or it can be played in back rooms in shady districts with jury-rigged gamedecks linking up players desperate to win themselves out of dire situations.

When you first start playing the first thing you will need to is decide as a group what the setting for your league is and what the stakes are. Are you schoolkids in little-league trying to impress your parents, prison inmates playing to pass the time or washed up former pros attempting to recapture the glory of days gone by? Is this league continuing or does it only exist for a single season?



# PSYCHEBALL



## Character Creation

To create a Psycheball Character find a token of some kind to represent them and then write the answers to the following questions on a piece of paper.

What is your character's name?

What does your character look like in the real world?

What does your character's virtual self-representation look like?

Which of the four emotions is their specialty?

What memory powers this specialty?

When players virtually enter the arena of your character's mind what kind of space is it?

What kind of game gets played in that environment?

What is the relationship between your character and the character of the player to your left?

Where do they usually see each other in the real world?

What is the relationship between your character and the character of the player to your right?

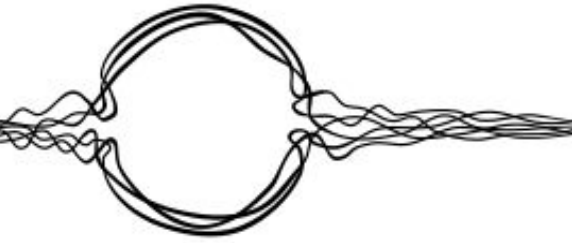
What person or thing is shared or mutually important to both of them?

Why can't your character afford to miss this Psycheball season?

If you're struggling with any of these questions maybe select some quick easy traits from the suggestions lists in the Errata at the end.



# PSYCHEBALL



## SEASONS

A Psycheball league has at least one season. A season has a set of players that compete in all matches and a number of matches equal to the number of players where each player hosts one match. The first host is the one whose real-world player last won a game or sporting match and the position then moves around the table one place in a clockwise direction each match. A season can usually be played through in a sitting over several hours.

At the start of each season all players draw four cards face down, one from each Emotion Deck and mark down their starting League Rank which is equal to the number of players in the game.

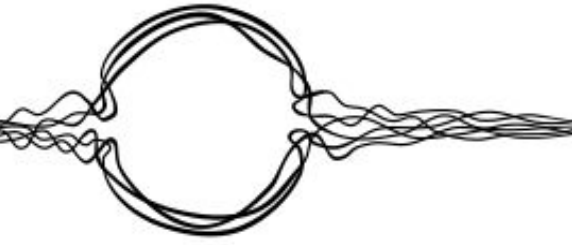
Players then all star in one downtime scene each before the first match. In that downtime scene they will pick up one extra card from an emotion deck so at the start of the first match all players should have five emotion cards in their hand.

The game alternates between downtime which contains scenes and matches which contain rounds.

Once each player has hosted a match the player with the highest league rank is declared the winner of the season and their character receives whatever awards were decided for the season during setup. It is then usually a good idea to play out a downtime scene for each character as an epilogue.



# PSYCHEBALL



## DOWNTIME SCENES

At the start of a season and in the time between Psycheball matches characters go about their lives. During this phase of the game the players may, in any order they wish, each star in a Scene.

When you star in a scene you may choose to set the circumstances of that scene and let the other players choose the outcome or you may choose to let the other players choose the circumstances so that you may choose the outcome.

From that decision either you or the other players set the circumstances of the scene including when and where it is, who is there and what they are doing. If you won your most recent Psycheball match the circumstances must start with the words "Things are looking up" and if you lost they must start with "Things aren't going well". If you haven't played a game yet this season the circumstances have no limitations other than general credibility.

You then roleplay and narrate the scene as your character with the help of the other players playing the roles of other characters and chipping in with ideas and descriptions to help keep the scene moving.

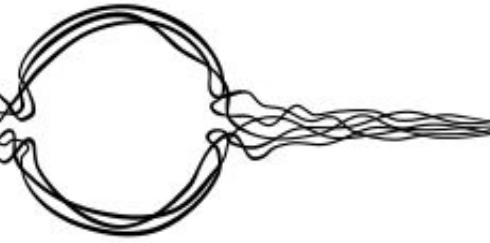
Once one of the players that is choosing the outcome of the scene (either yourself or the other players based on that first decision) have a good idea of where they see the scene going and how it should resolve they place their character token next to one of the four emotion decks. You then continue to play out that scene steering it towards a conclusion where your character experiences Loss, Satisfaction, a Threat or a Violation of their morals or boundaries as indicated by the selected emotion deck.

Once you have concluded the scene you draw one card face down from the selected emotion deck and add it to your hand. If that emotion is your specialty draw two, take one and shuffle the other back in.

Go around the table doing scenes for each player. Remember that your character might appear in another character's scene or that you might be needed to play a random side character that is a part of the star character's life. When you're a part of the other person's scene work with them to quickly and dramatically reach the resolution once it has been decided.



# PSYCHEBALL



Once every character has starred in a scene it is time for a Psycheball match.

## THE MATCH

A Psycheball match is hosted over the net in one character's mind. The host character is initially that of the player who last won a game or sporting match and then rotates around the table in a clockwise direction. A match is played between two evenly numbered teams. If there are an even number of players the host chooses which players will be on their team in the match. If there are an odd number the host sits out and the players to their left make up one team and the players to their right make up the other.

The host is responsible for describing the environment and game and assisting the players in dramatically describing their actions. This is especially important in odd numbered games where the host sits out.

### **Match Setup**

The host arranges a board of six squares in any arrangement they like such that each square shares at least one side with one other square.

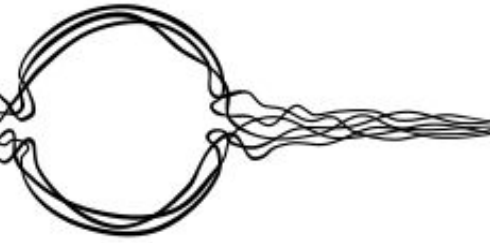
Players in turn then place their tokens in squares as they like.

Turn order during matches always begins with the player left of the host and moves around the table in a clockwise direction.

After players have placed their tokens the first round begins.



# PSYCHEBALL



## The Round

At the start of each round the host places a four sided die called the ball in one of the squares, an empty one if possible.

All players then choose one of their emotion cards and places it face down on the table as a tactic. The tactic's energy is the numerical value of the card and it's emotion is the emotion of the card's suit.

Players take turns performing two of the following actions until each player has performed four actions:

- Take the ball from the square you are in or a player in that square
- Move to an adjacent square, carrying the ball with you if you have it
- Pass the ball you are carrying to another player in any square
- Charge up the ball while holding it
- Do nothing

If you charge up the ball you replace it's die with a die with two more sides than the current one. A twelve sided ball cannot be charged up any further.

Once all players have performed four actions they all reveal their tactics cards.

The round's Exhaustion Limit is then determined by rolling the ball.

If tactic's energy is equal to or higher than the Exhaustion Limit the player successfully deploys their tactic.

When a player deploys a tactic they describes what it looks like, where they summon the emotional energy from (such as downtime scenes) and what it does mechanically:

**Anger:** *You strike out in a rage, attacking in all directions. Subtract your tactics' value from the tactics of all characters in adjacent squares.*

**Fear:** *You throw up defenses around you, protecting yourself and those near you. Prevent characters in your square from being knocked out of the match.*

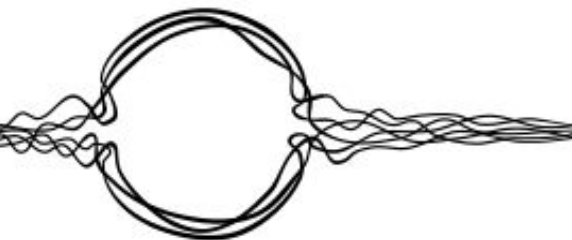
**Joy:** *Energy bursts forth from you boosting the confidence of those around you. Add your tactics' value to the tactics of all other characters in your square.*

**Sadness:** *You fold inward, sucking the energy from a space, making it unusable. The effects of tactics of other characters in your square are nullified.*





# PSYCHEBALL



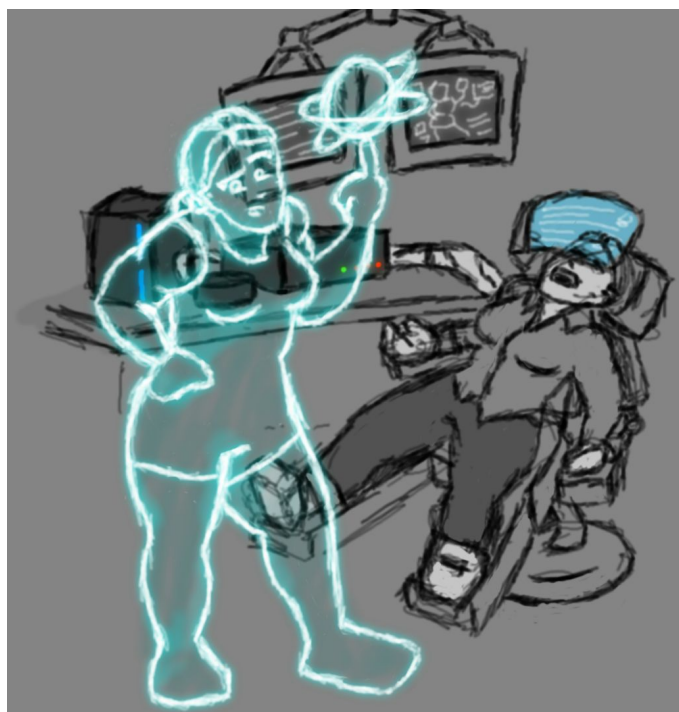
After the effects of tactics have been resolved any players whose tactics card value is less than the number rolled on the die are knocked out of the match.

All successful tactics are considered emotionally resolved and their cards are shuffled into their emotion decks.

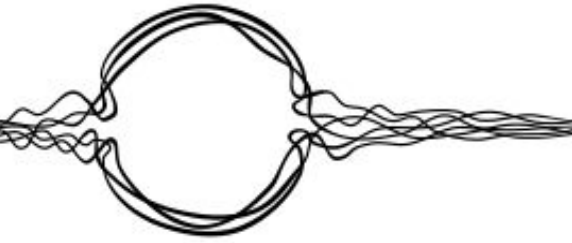
If both team still have at least one player that has not been knocked out another round begins. Otherwise the team with players still in the game is the winner. If both sides have no more players in play then they are all considered losers.

## Match Results

Each of the players on the winning team, if any, increase their league rank by one. All players on losing teams decrease their league rank by one. It's then time to head back to downtime scenes. If this is the last game in the season then calculate the season victors and do some downtime scenes as epilogues for your characters.



# PSYCHEBALL



## Errata

### **Mind Games**

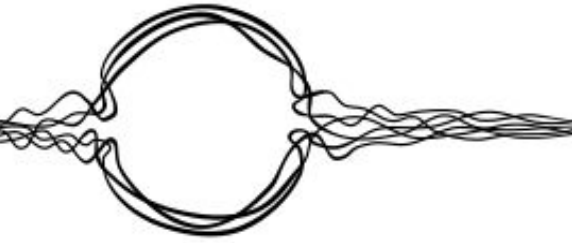
It is important to note that Psycheball is a game played inside the host's mind and that this often means that the topology, setting and metaphor of a match can change from host to host. While one host may be a traditionalist, matches played in their mind being hypercoloured dodgeball matches on a neon grid, another may shape their space to be a luxurious edwardian smoking room in which participants play cards while partaking in brandy and cigars, the passing, charging and rolling of the ball representing a wager pot. A third host may place the players in their mind in a jousting match where they must lean out of supercars and attempt to hit each other with explosive lances in an effort to hold onto a spot at the top of a hill. All of these and more are perfectly acceptable play spaces as long as the players are capable of working together in teams to try and take control and deploy their tactics to knock one another out. The only thing which cannot be changed in this way by the host is the appearance of the players. If your digital self representation is a wireframe samurai, a pair of cartoon maracas with googly eyes or a naked version of your real self, you look like that in all these settings.

### **Dead Characters**

While Psycheball as a digital activity is quite safe there is nothing to stop your character from dying during their downtime. If this happens they are digitally recreated from their social media profiles by valkyrie algorithms and become ghost players. During downtime ghost players can still have scenes but they are always either flashbacks or the online interactions of the character's digital facsimile. The facsimile cannot ever learn or change in its downtime and never gains or loses emotion cards even if they are earned or resolved. They also cannot charge a Psycheball. Digital recreation is an endless man made purgatory but in they eyes of many it is still somehow favourable to death. Insurance policies with those who own the valkyrie algorithms are, however, expensive. It is not uncommon for people who find themselves in the red with these companies and facing digital oblivion to seek out a prize pool payday.



# PSYCHEBALL



## Ideas and Suggestions

### Leagues

International Champion Sponsored League, Prison Recreation Time League, Country Club Social League, Wartime Civilian League, Digital Addicts Escaping The Real World, The "In Too Deep With Fat Tony" Club, School Kids Little League, Dystopian Robot Future

### Stakes

Fun, Reputation, Money, Digital Preservation Insurance, Fame, Rations Cards, The Right To Live, The Fate Of Loved Ones, Nostalgia

### Names

Alex, Reagan, Willy, Maria, Keshet, Beverly, Caelan, Iovita, Kyou, Sang, Ora, Enitan, Christin, Eric, 'Manda, Toby, Gordon, Esther, Michail, Ashton, Roman, Olive, Christopher, Evangeline

Roberts, Lopez, Scott, Hernandez, Walker, McDade, Chang, Patterson, Jones, Allison, Wheeler, Casey, Hopkins, Love, Tate, Strickland, Peters, Lambert, Bennet, Perez, Wu

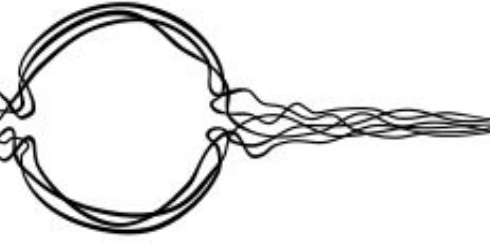
Breaker, Beekeep, Nightchild, Tiptoe, Hardhead, Shooter, Silence, The Wall, Buttercup, Backup, Hopeful, Laser, Dracula, Ninja, Chopper, License, Strawman, Killer, Robocop, Ping

### Appearances

Dirty, Short, Logo-Wearing, Trenchcoated, Businesslike, Lean, Built, Four-Eyed, Cyberware Enhanced, Shady, Pleasant, Doughy, Towering, Toothy, Balding, Dangerous, Middle Class, Bloodied, Extravagant, Neon, Young, Weary, Mirror Shades, Insomniac, Hungry, Twitching



# PSYCHEBALL



## **Avatars**

Shadowy, Suit, Robot, Ninja, Wireframe, Gothic, Inanimate, Trenchcoat Hero, Scantly Clad, Neon, Noir, Cartoon Character, Monstrous, Armoured, Historical, Nude, Angelic, Muted

## **Emotional Memories**

Breakup, Birth of a Child, Graduation Day, The Carnival, The Day The Robots Took Over, Helping Out On The Farm, Being Enlisted, That One Good Day With Your Dad, Boarding A Bounty, Long Trips On The Open Road, 14 Years In Prison, Basic Training, Sweet Revenge

## **Host Spaces**

The Grid, A Medieval Tournament, The Superbowl, An Infinite White Void, A Battlefield, A Beach, A Star Destroyer, Deep Underground, A Smoky Club, A Pirate Ship, Circuit Boards, A Basement, Outer Space, A Giant's Garden, A Smoking Lounge, A Maze Of Wireframe Cubes

## **Host Games**

Dodgeball, Poker, King Of The Hill, Jousting, Soccer, Fencing, Polo, Auto-Racing, Mixed Martial Arts, Speed Painting, Equestrian, Mah-Jong, Tug-O-War, Pin The Tail On The Donkey

## **Relationships**

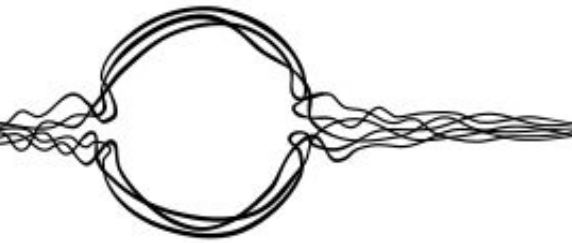
Family, Rivals, Best Friends, Secret Lovers, Mentor and Student, Star and Backer, Loan Shark and Debtor, Twins, Revolutionary And Authority Spy, Criminal and Victim's Kin

## **Places**

Classroom, Pizza Parlour, The Pits, Moonbase Ceti-5, Your Parent's House, A Bar, The Bilge, The Yard, Cell 191, The Copy Room, Street Corner, The Department Of Human Resources



# PSYCHEBALL



## **People and Things**

A Briefcase Full Of Cash, A Troubled Friend, A Chip Full Of Sensitive Data, A Contested Pet, An Ancient Blade, Eight Days, A Moon, A Chest Of Gold, An Explosion, The Last Of His Kind, A Promised Bullet, The Deeds To A House, An Orphan, The Fastest Car In Town, An Oath

