

Group Therapy Intervention Session Script

Facilitator: Angelina Jones

Session Theme: Challenging Unhelpful Thoughts

Session Number: 4 of 8

Length: 30 minutes

Group Type: Closed CBT Therapy Group

Location: Signal Centers Counseling Room B

Target Population:

This group is composed of **college-aged young adults (ages 18–24) diagnosed with Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)**. Most are first-generation college students managing high academic expectations, emerging adulthood transitions, identity formation, and social anxiety. Common presenting issues include fear of failure, fear of judgment, perfectionism, and difficulties regulating anxious automatic thoughts. Some participants also present with mild depressive symptoms or histories of invalidating family environments. The group was intentionally selected to be **closed** to foster deep trust and skill-building across an 8-week CBT-based curriculum.

Group and Individual Goals:

Group Goals:

- Increase awareness of automatic thoughts and cognitive distortions by 80% as measured by client self-report.
- Increase clients' use of Socratic questioning techniques outside of sessions at least 2 times per week.
- Build group cohesion to support risk-taking with thought-challenging exercises.

Individual Goals:

- **Ava (Emily):** Identify and reframe at least one self-critical automatic thought each week.
- **Marcus (Franz):** Reduce perfectionistic thinking patterns by challenging at least two "all or nothing" beliefs.

- **Jasmine (Brooke):** Build confidence identifying evidence that contradicts negative self-beliefs.
- **Luis (Adam) :** Practice cognitive restructuring after noticing catastrophic thoughts related to academic performance.

Stage of Group Development:

At session 4, the group is in the **early Working Stage**. Trust has begun forming, members are starting to take interpersonal risks, but they still look primarily to the facilitator for direction. Some anxiety about vulnerability remains, but therapeutic momentum is building.

Rationale for Closed Group:

A closed group allows for consistent participation and deep trust necessary for CBT skills to be practiced openly. Given the sensitivity of GAD and perfectionism themes, predictability is essential. A closed format prevents destabilization that would occur with fluctuating membership. Research shows that closed groups allow greater cohesion, better CBT skill uptake, and stronger symptom reduction for anxiety disorders (Ledley, Marx, & Heimberg, 2010).

References Supporting CBT for Anxiety:

1. Hofmann, S. G., Asnaani, A., Vonk, I. J., Sawyer, A. T., & Fang, A. (2012). The Efficacy of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: A Review of Meta-analyses. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 36(5), 427–440. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3584580/>
2. Ledley, D. R., Marx, B. P., & Heimberg, R. G. (2010). *Making Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy Work: Clinical Process for New Practitioners*. Guilford Press.
3. Padesky, C. A., & Mooney, K. A. (2012). Strengths-Based Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy: A Four-Step Model to Build Resilience. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 19(4), 283–290. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/cpp.1795>

Session Script

Angelina:

"Welcome back, everyone. Let's start with a grounding breath. Inhale slowly through your nose... hold... and exhale through your mouth. Feel your feet on the floor, your seat supported beneath you."

"I want to thank you all again for the courage it takes to show up here each week. Before we jump in, let's review our group agreements:

- Speak from your own experience.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Pass if anything feels overwhelming.
- Lean into honesty — even if it's messy."

"Today, we're focusing on *catching* the anxious thoughts that often race through without us noticing. We'll practice slowing them down and challenging them together."

"Let's begin with a quick check-in: What is one anxious thought you noticed this week?"

(Behavioral descriptions as clients check-in)

- **Ava** (fidgeting with sleeves, hesitant eye contact): "I kept thinking I sounded stupid when I talked in class."
- **Marcus** : "If I don't get an A, I've failed."
- **Jasmine** (soft voice,): "I don't think anyone really wants me around."
- **Luis**: "If I make one mistake, my future is over."

Angelina (nodding, validating):

"Thank you all. Even noticing those thoughts is a huge step. Let's work together today to look closer at them, and see if they're telling the whole truth."

Psychoeducation Review

Angelina (holding up CBT Triangle Visual):

"In CBT, we use this triangle to understand anxiety: thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are connected. An anxious thought fuels anxious feelings and actions like avoidance."

"In GAD, these thoughts often happen so fast we don't even realize they're distorted."

Today, we'll practice Socratic Questioning, a method to gently, but firmly, ask ourselves:

- Is this thought 100% true?
- What's the evidence for and against it?
- Is there another way to view this situation?"

"We'll be detectives, examining rather than just reacting."

Dyad Warm-Up (Modified for Full Group on Zoom)

Angelina:

"Instead of pairing off, we're going to stay right here together. Each of you can share one anxious thought you noticed this week.

I'll help guide us through the Socratic questions as a group."

"You can unmute yourself when you're ready, or type your thought in the chat if that feels easier."

Angelina:

"Let's start with anyone who feels ready to share."

Ava:

"I kept thinking I sounded stupid when I talked in class."

Angelina:

"Thank you for sharing that, Ava. Let's practice slowing it down. What's the first thing you usually notice when that thought comes up — a feeling, or a physical reaction?"

Ava:

"My heart starts racing."

Angelina:

"That's helpful to notice. Now when your heart races, what exact words pop into your mind?"

Ava:

"Everyone thinks I'm dumb."

Angelina:

"Thank you for naming that. Let's walk through this together. What's the evidence that thought might be true?"

Ava:

"Sometimes I stumble over my words."

Angelina:

"And what's some evidence it might not be completely true?"

Ava:

"I've had classmates ask me to study with them before."

Angelina:

"Exactly. That connection matters. If you heard a friend say this about themselves, what would you tell them?"

Ava: "That they are smart and capable and can do anything they put their mind to"

Angelina: "That is wonderful Ava, when we talk about ourselves, let's keep that kind thought process in mind"

Angelina:

"Marcus, would you be willing to share the anxious thought you mentioned earlier?"

Marcus:

"Yeah. I said if I don't get an A, I've failed."

Angelina:

"Let's take it slow. When you have that thought, what's the feeling that hits you first?"

Marcus:

"I get tense. Like my chest tightens."

Angelina:

"And when you feel that tension, what exact words go through your head?"

Marcus:

"I'm a failure."

Angelina:

"Thank you for being honest about that. What's the evidence that missing an A makes you a failure?"

Marcus:

"I guess... just pressure. Expectations from family."

Angelina:

"And is there any evidence that challenges that?"

Marcus:

"I still got an internship even though I didn't have all A's."

Angelina:

"Exactly. If your future success doesn't actually depend on perfection, what might be a more balanced way to talk to yourself?"

Marcus:

"That effort matters more than one grade."

Angelina:

"Beautiful reframe. How does that feel to say?"

Marcus:

"Relieving. Like maybe I don't have to be perfect all the time."

Angelina:

"You don't. None of us do."

Angelina:

"Can anyone else relate to what Marcus shared?"

Angelina:

Luis:

"Definitely. I feel like one mistake will ruin everything."

Luis:

"Thank you for sharing Luis, those thoughts can be crippling at times. When use Socratic Questioning to stop this thought process, we can learn to treat ourselves with more kindness as well as remembering everyone struggles."

Angelina:

"Let's hold onto that — noticing that others feel it too."

Main Intervention: Jasmine's Thought

"Jasmine, if you're comfortable, would you like to walk through yours next?"

Jasmine:

"Okay. I said I don't think anyone really wants me around."

Angelina:

"Thank you for trusting us with that. When that thought comes up, what's the first thing you feel?"

Jasmine:

"My stomach drops. I feel really small."

Angelina:

"And when you feel small, what words run through your mind?"

Jasmine:

"I'm invisible. Nobody cares."

Angelina:

"That's a painful thought to sit with. Let's gently examine it. What's the evidence that supports that thought?"

Jasmine:

Angelina:

"My parents haven't really talked to me since I came out."

"And what's even a small piece of evidence that challenges it?"

Jasmine:

"My roommate brought me dinner last night without me asking."

Angelina:

"Exactly. Connection, even small, is still connection. If someone else shared what you just shared, how would you respond to them?"

Jasmine:

"I'd say that some people care, even if it doesn't feel like it all the time."

Angelina:

"Could you say that to yourself?"

Jasmine:

"I can try."

Angelina:

"Trying is all we ask. Trying opens the door."

Angelina:

"Who else felt something when Jasmine shared that?"

Ava:

"It made me realize I jump to conclusions too about how people feel about me."

Marcus:

"Same. I assume rejection before it happens."

Angelina:

"That's important insight. Anxiety often makes us predict the worst."

Ava:

"I'd tell them stumbling doesn't mean they're dumb."

Angelina:

"Would it be fair to say the same thing to yourself?"

Ava:

"Maybe... I can try."

Angelina:

"That's all we ask, just to start noticing and challenging gently."

Angelina:

"Who else noticed something when Ava shared that?"

Marcus:

"I think the same thing about myself all the time."

Jasmine:

"Me too. I always assume the worst."

Angelina:

"Notice that common thread. Anxiety tricks us into believing we're the only ones struggling, but you're not alone."

Main Intervention: Luis's Thought

Angelina:

"Luis, would you like to walk through yours?"

Luis:

"Yeah. I said if I make one mistake, my future is over."

Angelina:

"Thank you for bringing that. When you notice that thought, what's the feeling or sensation that hits first?"

Luis:

"My stomach knots up. I feel like I can't breathe right."

Angelina:

"And when those feelings hit, what exact thought flashes through your mind?"

Luis:

"I'm going to ruin everything."

Angelina:

"Let's slow that down. What's the evidence supporting the idea that one mistake ruins everything?"

Luis:

"My parents always made it seem that way. Like one bad grade would wreck my life."

Angelina:

"And what's the evidence that challenges that belief?"

Luis:

"I bombed a quiz once and still passed the class."

Angelina:

"That's powerful. What's a more balanced way you could talk to yourself in those moments?"

Luis:

"That mistakes happen and don't erase all my hard work."

Angelina:

"Exactly. Mistakes are part of growth. They're not the end."

Angelina:

"Does anyone want to share what came up for them hearing Luis work through that?"

Marcus:

"I realized I carry that same fear, that one wrong move ruins everything."

Jasmine:

"Yeah. It's exhausting living like every tiny thing decides your worth."

Angelina:

"Notice that you're not alone in these patterns. Part of healing is recognizing that these thoughts aren't unique to just you, they're learned, and they can be unlearned too."

Group Processing

Angelina:

"I want to open it up now. After hearing everyone's thought work, what stood out to you?"

Ava:

"That my thoughts aren't always facts. I treat them like they are."

Luis:

"I didn't realize how much pressure I carry until I said it out loud."

Marcus:

"I felt lighter when we challenged the thought. Like it lost some power."

Jasmine:

"I feel less alone. Like maybe I'm not the only one struggling quietly."

Angelina:

"Those are powerful realizations. Anxiety grows when it stays hidden. Speaking it out loud, even if it's messy, starts to shrink it."

Angelina:

"Noticing automatic thoughts is hard. Challenging them is even harder. But each of you took that risk today. And every time you practice it, you're teaching your brain a new pathway."

Closing Reflection

Angelina:

"As we wrap up for today, I'd like everyone to think about one thing you're taking away from this session."

"You can unmute and share, or if you prefer, you can type it into the chat."

Ava:

"I realized I need to slow down my thoughts instead of letting them control me."

Marcus:

"I don't have to earn my worth by being perfect."

Jasmine:

"Even small signs of care from people matter."

Luis:

"Mistakes don't erase who I am."

Angelina:

"These are powerful insights. Please hold onto them this week."

Angelina:

"Remember, we're not trying to eliminate all anxious thoughts overnight. We're building awareness. We're practicing new ways of responding. And every time you challenge a thought, even once, you are making progress."

Homework Assignment

Angelina:

"For next week, I'm inviting you to practice noticing one automatic anxious thought each day."

"You don't have to catch or fix all of them — just *notice* one. Write it down if you can:

- What was the situation?
- What was the thought?
- Was there another possible way to view it?"

"You can keep it simple. Even just jotting it in the notes app on your phone is fine."

Angelina:

"If you want, you can also come up with a short phrase — something you can tell yourself when anxiety flares up. Like: 'Thoughts are not facts' or 'I'm doing my best.' You can even put it on a sticky note or on your phone background."

Ava:

"I like that idea. I'll try to come up with something."

Luis:

"Yeah. Maybe it'll help me slow down before I spiral."

Angelina:

"Exactly. Small steps build big changes."

Next Week Preview

Angelina:

"Next session, we'll be shifting our focus slightly. We'll still work on thoughts, but we'll also start exploring behaviors — especially avoidance behaviors that anxiety fuels."

"We'll talk about how anxiety often tricks us into avoiding things that could actually build confidence."

Marcus:

"That sounds hard."

Angelina:

"It can feel uncomfortable at first, but just like today, we'll go slow and work through it together."

Jasmine:

"As long as it's not like... huge challenges right away?"

Angelina:

"(smiling) Definitely not. Small steps. Always at your own pace."

Final Closing

Angelina:

"Before we end, let's take one final grounding breath together."

"Feet flat on the floor. Hands relaxed.

Inhale — breathing in self-compassion.

Exhale — letting go of self-judgment."

(Pause for group breathing.)

Angelina:

"Thank you all again for showing up for yourselves and for each other. Your courage, honesty, and willingness to try new things is what makes this group work."

"I'm looking forward to seeing you all next week."

"Take care of yourselves — you're doing more than you know."

(End Session.)