

Facilitator: Jacy

Group Member 1: Tye - Newly single woman, extensive dating history, anxious about being alone. Very flirtatious and often throws herself at men for attention.

Group Member 2: Bree - College student who struggles with anxiety about being good enough. Often feels that her work is not good enough, her grades are not high enough, and people don't enjoy being around her. Avoids conflict.

Group Member 3: Mia - College student who has social anxiety and often avoids social interactions that could cause anxiety or other unpleasant emotions.

Group Member 4: Lori - Young single mother with two children, often feels anxious that something will happen to her children and that she will be alone or that something will happen to her and she will leave her children without a mother, which often leads to her avoiding certain activities.

Group Therapy Final Script

Jacy: Good evening everyone I am glad that you all could make it today. This is the 4th session out of an 8 session series. As you all know the purpose of this group is to help you guys with your anxiety. Today we will be focusing on the topic of changing avoidant behaviors. At this point in our sessions you all seem to be getting comfortable enough with each other for us to begin incorporating exercises that require you to be a little vulnerable with one another and because of that I am going to mention confidentiality again. I know that we already went over confidentiality individually when you all signed up for group therapy and as a group during the very first session. I think that now more than ever we need to revisit the topic of confidentiality due to the sensitive topics that we intend to cover within these remaining sessions. With that being said this is a safe environment whatever is said in this group stays in the group but as you all know I am a mandated reporter and a duty to warn so if anyone threatens to harm themselves, or others I am required by law to report that information but aside from that what is said between us stays between us. In a group like this one it is especially vital that everyone take confidentiality seriously and refrain from sharing any of the information shared outside of this room. If everyone agrees I need verbal confirmation before we are able to proceed. So now we

are going to go around the room so each person can give verbal consent like we did during the first session. Lori we will start with you and go around.

Lori: I agree

Tye: I agree

Bree: Agreed

Mia: I agree

Jacy: Great. Just to remind you again, my role here is to guide the conversation and support you in your journey. Before we get started, I'd like to briefly go over the rules that we established during the first session. They are posted on the board in front of the room. We have been adding to these rules as we move along. so does anyone have a rule that they feel may need to be added to the list of rules at this time. (pause) Well if no one does we will move along to the first exercise which is called the rose, the thorn and the bud exercise. This exercise will give us a chance to check in with each of you about your week.

Underneath your seats each of you has a folder with words of encouragement on them because we can not forget that the things we say to ourselves matters so this is a gentle encouragement to be kind to yourselves. There is also a pen and an exercise sheet with instructions.

The purpose of this exercise is to reflect on your week, highlight what worked well for you, what did not work well, and what you can do to improve.

The "Rose" of this process is a way to showcase the good things that are going on. Hopefully not all things are bad. The "Thorn" is the bad parts or negative things that have not gone so well for you. It's important to be authentic and recognize that not everything is perfect, and it is critical to discuss what needs improvement. The "Bud" of this is where you surface ideas and potential improvements that you can incorporate into future weeks.

So for the next three-five minutes I want you to write down your rose, thorn, and bud from this past week. Once everyone is done we will go around the circle and share.

- 4 minute time gap for exercise -

Jacy: Alright, it looks like everyone is wrapping up so we will begin sharing now. Let's start with Bree. Bree once you are done sharing I want you to pick the next person to share and we will go from there.

Bree: Well let's see a rose for this week was that I scored a B+ on my chemistry exam. I did not think that I was going to pass it so I was excited for a second when I found out I did pass.

Jacy: That is great

Mia: Yeah, I know that last week you shared how anxious you were about that exam.

Bree: Well, My thorn for the week was not making an A+ on my chemistry exam. After I received my score I found out that some of my classmates actually had perfect scores on this exam which could only mean that the only reason why I passed is because it was an easy exam. This only confirms what I already know, that I don't measure up. My bud of the week is I just need to do better.

Lori: Bree just because you did not get a perfect score does not mean that you don't measure up. You just need to remember to be kind to yourself when those negative thoughts creep in, you just have to replace them with something positive.

Bree: Nodded her head

Jacy: Thank you Lori, would anyone else like to offer Bree words of encouragement?

Jacy: alright Bree, who do you pick to share next?

Bree: Um, Tye

Tye: Well a rose for me this week was that I met a guy on tinder and we went out this weekend. The thorn was that the date did not go so well. Everything was fine so I invited him to come up to my apartment. I thought we were vibing and he wanted something real. But the next morning he was gone without so much as a goodbye. The bud for this week is I have another date setup for tomorrow night with Roaul who I also met on tinder.

Lori: shakes her head

Jacy: Lori, I see you shaking your head. Do you have something that you would like to share with Tye?

Lori: Not really

Tye: Then why are you shaking your head like that

Lori: Because it is baffling to me that you come in here week after week telling the same story. I went on a date. I slept with him and he never called me again. That's the same story over and over. I don't get why you do the same thing over and over and expect a different result. If I was a guy I would sleep with you on the first date and never call you either because you are not the type of woman that a man needs to take home to meet his mother.

Mia: Whoa, Lori that was too much.

Lori: Well it's true

Mia: Lori, we don't tear each other down in this group.

Lori: Is that what I'm doing though? All I am doing is speaking facts.

Jacy: Lori, I noticed that you became uncharacteristically vocal when it came to Tye. What are you thinking right now?

Lori: It is women like her that break up happy homes. My family was ripped apart by a woman like Tye who was willing to do anything to gain a man's attention. Now look, here I am left to take care of two children by myself.

Tye: You can't blame me because your husband didn't love you enough to stick around.

Jacy: Tye how does it make you feel when Lori compares you to women that get romantically involved with married men.

Tye: It's frustrating because no one understands me. Yeah I like to have fun, what's the big deal. But I would never get romantically involved with a married man. My father did that to my mother and it almost killed her. She could never get over the humiliation that he caused her by traipsing around town with the town harlot. To top it off he married her and me and my siblings saw less and less of him with each passing day until eventually we stopped seeing him at all even though we lived in the same town. You don't know how it feels to see your father at a grocery store with his new wife and stepkids and he does not even acknowledge your presence. At this point all I want is to feel love even if I know it isn't real love. So I am nothing like the woman that broke up your family. I am sorry that it happened but I am nothing like her.

Mia: Wow Tye! I did not know that you had gone through that. I have family members whose parents dealt with infidelity some of them were able to overcome but some weren't. Thanks for trusting us enough to share that I know that must have been difficult for you.

Jacy: The further that we progress in this group we see that we are more alike than we are different. We can relate to one another on some level due to life experiences. Lori, How do you feel about what Tye just shared with the group?

Lori: I feel like I misjudged her. Tye I am so sorry for attacking you the way that I did. You did not deserve it.

Tye: Thanks for saying that

Jacy: Does anyone else have anything that they would like to say before Mia and Lori share what they wrote for the rose, thorn and bud exercise?

Group: No one speaks up

Jacy: Okay Tye, who do you select to go next?

Tye: Mia

Mia: Do you mind if I go last? I am a little nervous to share

Bree: You don't have to be nervous

Tye: Yea, Mia we are all here for you

Mia: I know but I can't help it

Lori: It's fine Mia I can go then you can go after me.

Mia: Okay thanks Lori.

Lori: My rose for the week was, getting to spend time with my kids. Just being around them makes my heart happy. The thorn for this week I guess would be my children wanting to join the soccer team. They have been begging and pleading with me to consider but soccer takes a lot of work. They will be traveling to compete against other teams and I do not know that they will be safe during those trips so in good conscience I have to say no. It pains me to see them sad but I have to do what I have to do to protect them from danger. A bud for this week I am planning a surprise party for the kids in hopes that it will lift their spirits back up.

Bree: Soccer is so fun and a good way for them to learn discipline. Maybe do a little research on the benefits and talk to the coaches and some of the other parents before you make your final decision.

Tye: Yea, that's a good idea

Mia: Yea

Lori: I am not comfortable with it. But since I am trying to work on being open to trying new things when it comes to parenting, So I guess I can make a few calls. I make no promises. And the first sign of danger, I'm taking my kids and that's it.

Jacy: That's progress. We even need to count the small victories.

Lori: I guess so

Jacy: Alright Mia are you ready?

Mia: Yea I guess so. My rose for the week is one of my best friends came to visit me for the week. I have a hard time meeting new people so I tend to have really close bonds with the people I grew up with. The thorn for this week is after my friend went back home. My roommate decided to throw a party in our apartment and it was really loud, people were smoking and drinking while I was trying to do my homework. It was really disrespectful and annoying. I packed my things and went to Starbucks until they closed. I wanted to tell her that she needed to make everyone leave because I pay the bills in the apartment just like she does so I should not be made to feel uncomfortable in my living environment. But I decided to not say anything because I try to avoid confrontation.

Tye: Maybe now since the party is over you can approach her in a non confrontational manner and tell her how the party made you feel.

Mia: Yea maybe but at this point it does not matter because I have already applied to move. That is my bud for the week. It looks like I will be able to move without penalty.

Lori: That sounds like a plus but you want to be careful about running from problems whenever they arise instead of facing them head on and addressing them. Because if you keep doing that you will be running for the rest of your life. And you don't want that.

Mia: Nods head in acknowledgement.

Jacy: Thank you all for sharing.

- Pause -

Mia: Bree, you've been more quiet than usual today and you seem uncomfortable. I'm wondering what's going on?

Bree: Oh nothing, I'm fine.

Mia: Oh okay

Tye: Hold on. We aren't seriously going to just leave it there are we? Bree, obviously everything is not fine. Your body language is very closed off and you are distant from this conversation. I feel like this happens every time we have a real conversation. You clam up and it's like you aren't even part of the group. What's the point of coming to group therapy if you aren't going to be a part of the conversation?

Mia: I feel like that is a bit extreme Tye. She said she was fine. Maybe you are just reading into it too much.

Tye: Am I? Does this not happen every time we have a real conversation?

Lori: Tye has a point. Bree does tend to just slip away from the conversation or just try to sweep things under the rug. I'm not sure I've ever heard how Bree really feels about things and...

Jacy: Lori, I'd like to pause and give Bree a chance to respond.

Bree: (pause) I just don't like arguments

Tye: Who says we are arguing? We are just having a real conversation.

Bree: I don't know, I guess it just feels like arguing to me and I don't want people to think of me differently.

Tye: Differently as in we might actually get to know you a little bit?

Mia: Tye, I'm not sure constantly attacking her is the best way to get to know her.

Tye: I'm just trying to get through to her and understand where she is coming from.

Jacy: Bree can you help us understand your comment about not wanting people to think of you differently?

Bree: I guess I feel like if I get involved with the arguments, it will change how people think of me because I might make someone upset and then they might not want to be around me anymore.

Lori: How does it make you feel when someone is upset at you?

Bree: Anxious. My heart starts racing and I get all sweaty. (pause) I feel like I'm not good enough and I failed.

Mia: (pause) I can relate to that. I get the same feeling when I have to be around people I don't really know. My palms get sweaty and I feel light headed.

Tye: I'm sorry if you felt that I was attacking you or upset with you. I didn't see it that way. I was just frustrated. I do really want to get to know you better Bree and I hope you can start to feel comfortable sharing with us.

Jacy: Tye, can you help us understand that a little better and where your frustration is coming from?

Tye: I guess I was just feeling frustrated because Bree has been quieter today than usual. It made me upset because for some reason I kept thinking of my date this past weekend every time I looked at her. The guy left without saying goodbye and I guess I was taking my frustration out on Bree because of how she sometimes mentally leaves conversations without talking to us about how she is feeling.

Lori: That's deep.

Bree: I can see where you were coming from Tye and I'm sure from your perspective it does look like I am not engaged. This sort of thing just makes me really uncomfortable.

Mia: I was super uncomfortable the first couple sessions as well. I get it. But we all do want to get to know you better and we can't do that unless you let us in.

Lori: Mia, you sure got comfortable quickly trying to be the dominant one.

Mia: What do you mean?

Lori: Like earlier when you tried to tell me that I was tearing Tye down, or when you told Tye that she was constantly attacking Bree.

Mia: I'm literally trying to hold this group together and nobody appreciates that. This is why I don't go out and interact with people. When I'm at home by myself things like this don't happen.

Tye: I don't necessarily think that Mia is trying to be dominant. I think she cares deeply and is just trying to help all of us see things in a different way.

Bree: I agree with Tye, I think she is just trying to help us see a different perspective at times. Sort of like a reality check.

Mia: I don't know. Maybe I'll just drop out of the group.

Bree: Please don't leave me alone with them.

Tye: Excuse me? Is there something you want to share with the group about how you feel about Lori and I?

Bree: I'm sorry that came out wrong, I just meant that I appreciate Mia and would hate for her to leave.

Lori: We would all miss you Mia - even if sometimes we give you a hard time

Mia: Thanks guys

Jacy: Bree, I noticed your body language changed. What is going through your head right now?

Bree: I'm embarrassed by who I am that I'm not like others. It is as if I'm an actor. I pretend, pretend that I am like other people.

Jacy: Are you referring to what happened earlier in the session Bree?

Bree: It concerns feelings in general, I dismiss them. I know that I do. I let them come when I am alone. I never show them to other people, even if there's an issue like the conflict that occurred earlier. I just hide and that's why I can be so quiet during sessions sometimes.

Mia: I never knew that you felt that way Bree, why have you never said anything before? You know that we would support you no matter what.

Jacy: As mentioned throughout our past sessions the purpose of our group is to help you all to learn and build skills in order to emotionally regulate and more specifically manage anxiety.

Bree in the information you've shared you've identified something about yourself, you're becoming more self aware and that is wonderful progress. It's important to allow yourself to feel what you feel and the first part of that is acknowledging that you have these unbalanced patterns of thinking and behaving.

Lori: Yeah, you should talk about it more often in group with us Bree. I'm sorry if you felt attacked earlier.

Tye: Yeah I'm really sorry about that Bree. It certainly wasn't my intention and I didn't understand what you were going through.

Bree: It's okay guys I don't expect you to know what I'm going through if I don't communicate with you.

Jacy: This is a perfect transition into our activity for the evening. First we're going to have a small discussion about NUTS and ANTS. NUTS stands for Negative Unconscious Thoughts and ANTS stands for Automatic Negative Thoughts. NUTS and ANTS are usually the foundation of

our negative, unhelpful, unbalanced and harmful beliefs that you have about yourselves such as thinking that you're not good enough. Now I want you each to talk to the person to your left and take a few minutes to discuss some of the negative unconscious thoughts you may have and the automatic negative thoughts you have and write at least five of those down each, then once we come together after about 3-5 minutes your partner will read your ANTS and NUTS. Does anyone have any questions?

Mia: Nope.

Bree: No.

Lori: I'm good.

Tye: I understand.

Jacy: Okay, you all may begin.

-gives group 4 minutes to complete task-

Jacy: Okay everyone, have you each had a discussion with your partner about NUTS and ANTS and written down 5 each?

Mia: Yes

Bree: Yep I've got all 5.

Lori: Yeah 5 here too.

Tye: Yep.

Jacy: Okay I would like Mia to start since she is sitting closest to me and I would like you each to go around in a circle reading your partner's ANTS and NUTS that they wrote down.

Mai: Bree wrote "I'm always going to be lonely and my entire life has been an example of that" "Everyone thinks I'm helpless" "Everything is always my fault" "I always make a fool out of

myself” “I’m a failure” - Bree, you’re not any of these things, especially not a failure, or helpless!

Bree: Thanks Mia, I often feel like they’re true though.

Jacy: Thank you Mia, now Bree I would like you to reflect on what you just heard and what you wrote down. Is there any evidence for or against these ANTS and NUTS thoughts?

Bree: We’ll one time my brother told me that I would never amount to anything in life and that I’m stupid, but that’s the only think I can think of.

Jacy: Is there anything you can think of that challenges these thoughts and the evidence you shared?

Bree: Well, my mother has always told me how independent I am and how proud she is of me and all my academic success. My boyfriend and friends also tell me that I’m a really strong and intelligent person.

Jacy: So considering the evidence do you think these thoughts are true or false?

Bree: I think that they’re exactly what you told us they are, negative, unhelpful thoughts and that there’s actually a lot more evidence that they are false rather than true. I feel like I just allow my thoughts to control how I feel a lot of the time.

Jacy: That’s a great point Bree. We’ve been talking about how the foundation for a lot of our sessions is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and how our thoughts influence our emotions that then influence our behavior. Do you think there are any ways you can reframe your negative thoughts to reflect the evidence better?

Bree: Well I can start telling myself that even though I make mistakes, I’m not perfect and no one is and to be more grateful for my accomplishments and the people I have in my life who care about me and support me, like all of you guys.

Lori: I completely agree with Bree. I need to start thinking more like that too because I strive to be perfect when that's not achievable and if I was I would be missing out on a lot.

Jacy: Thank you for sharing Lori and we will discuss that once we get to your ANTS and NUTS. Now Bree I would like you to share Mia's ANTS and NUTS

Bree: Okay, this is gonna be hard, but Mia wrote "I don't deserve to be loved" "I feel like there's something wrong with me, like i'm not normal" "Im socially awkward" "Everyone thinks i'm weird" Mai! Is that really how you feel about yourself?

Mia: Well like you said before about your brother, my brother has always told me there's something wrong with me, that i'm so weird and I can't socialize with people right.

Bree: What does "right" even look like? You do great in group with us, does anyone here think Mia is weird or socially awkward?

Tye: No, Mia you always do such a great job communicating.

Lori: Yeah, I don't know what your brother would ever say that to you.

Mia: I mean I do have a hard time socializing, I get really anxious and I often skip things because I'm too anxious to go. I've even thought of skipping group when I'm having bad days.

Jacy: Great discussion. Now Mia can you think of anything that challenges how you feel about yourself and these ANTS and NUTS?

Mia: Well everyone here in the group has always had wonderful things to say about my social skills and even my friends at school have never made negative comments. My friends in class always tell me I'm so funny and I always know exactly what to say to cheer them up.

Jacy: Okay, so based on the discussion and the evidence you provided, do you think your ANTS and NUTS are true or false?

Mia: I feel like my ANTS are false, but I do feel like I have a lot of work to do when it comes to managing my anxiety. I should replace these thoughts by telling myself that I am loved and think about all the people who love me and that I may get anxious and behave accordingly, but that doesn't mean I'm awkward or that there's something wrong with me and I'm still learning how to manage my anxiety.

Jacy: That's a great point Mia. The purpose of our group is to help each of you learn the proper knowledge and skills to manage and cope with your anxiety and you're still learning. This is only the 4th session and each of you have already made progress.

Tye: Wow, I never really thought of it that way. I've been pushing myself to be so much better, but not giving myself the time to learn how to be better.

Lori: It really is a process.

Tye: Lori you can go ahead and read what I wrote. I'm ready to talk about what I've been going through.

Lori: Okay, "I'll never make anyone happy, I can't even make myself happy" "I'm can't even be alone for 5 minutes without feeling anxious" "I'm just an object to people" "No one will ever love me for who I am" "I'm ashamed of myself" Tye I'm so sorry you feel this way.

Tye: it's okay, I mean honestly a lot of it's true, so don't feel bad it's just how it is.

Lori: What makes you say that Tye?

Tye: Men have always treated me like an object and I allow them to because I'm scared and anxious to be alone. I'm single again because of this and I really feel like no guy is going to accept me for who I am, especially if they knew about my history.

Lori: That's not true, the right person will love you for who you are, even all the parts you don't like about yourself. True love is about someone expecting you and all your flaws.

Tye: Thanks Lori I really appreciate that. If I think about it more there have been a lot of people in my life who have loved me for who I am, like my family and friends and they have always told me how happy I make them and how much I add to their lives.

Lori: Exactly, see not everything you think is true.

Jacy: That's a great point Lori. Often these ANTS and NUTS lead to feelings of distress like anxiety and since many of them are automatic and unconscious many are unaware of the impact they have on their well-being and how harmful they can be. Tye do you feel like your thoughts are true or false?

Tye: After the conversation I had with Lori I really think they are untrue and after what you said I think they truly are just harmful and useful thoughts. Something I need to start saying instead is that I truly am a good person, but that I make mistakes and that mistakes have no limit, but one thing I can do is learn from my mistakes and learn how to better manage my anxiety.

Jacy: Exactly, that is the whole purpose of this group is to teach each of the the proper skills and knowledge to manage and cope with anxiety and a lot of times the first step is acknowledging the negative thought patterns you each have and gaining a better awareness of when they occur and how to reframe them to be balanced and healthy.

Tye: Alright, I'm ready to read what Lori wrote now. Lori said "I'm not good enough" "My kids would be better off without me" "I'm a horrible mother" "No one loves me, that's why their dad left" "It's so pathetic how scared I am all the time" Lori! Do you believe what you wrote down?

Lori: Yeah for the most part I wholeheartedly believe what I wrote down.

Tye: Okay, but what makes you feel that way exactly?

Lori: I honestly don't know. I just feel so anxious all the time and it impacts my life, it impacts my kids and it even impacted my love life.

Jacy: Okay Lori let's talk about that a little more, what evidence do you have that supports your claims?

Lori: My husband left. I guess that's about it.

Tye: What about your kids and did your husband explain why he left?

Lori: He said I was psychotic, he said that I was controlling his life and the kid's lives.

Tye: Did he share why?

Lori: Nope, he packed up all his things and left. Me and the kids never saw him again after that.

Tye: Do you feel like what he said is true?

Lori: Well now that we've talked about it more I really don't. I feed the kids, I dress them, I bathe them and I take them to school. They have everything and always have.

Tye: So that makes you a horrible mother?

Lori: No! Oh I see what you mean. Wow I never thought of it that way. I can't believe I let him make me believe that I was a horrible mother all these years.

Jacy: That was a great discussion Tye and Lori. Lori do you feel like there are ways you can rephrase your ANTS and NUTS?

Lori: Yeah! I can tell myself I'm a good mother because I provide for my children and go out of my way to care for them fully. I can tell myself the relationship wasn't healthy and that I'm still working on accepting that and managing my anxiety.

Jacy: Well done everyone. Conversations about ANTS and NUTS can be overwhelming so I would like to check in with each of you starting with Bree. Please tell me how you are feeling and rate that emotion on a ten point scale. For example if I was feeling anxious I would say 10 if I am feeling the most anxious I've ever felt and I'd say 1 if I'm barely anxious at all.

Bree: I'm feeling calm and I'd say on the ten point scale at a 7 so pretty calm.

Mia: I'm feeling better than I did at the beginning of the session. I actually felt really anxious, but now I feel happy and I'd say I'm at like a 7 too.

Lori: I actually felt the same way as Mia. I feel better, but I would say that I'm still anxious, but pretty low on the scale, like a 3 or a 4.

Tye: Yeah I really relate to that Lori. I was really anxious at the beginning and I'd say I'm still anxious, but I'm at like a 3 now and I would say I was at like a 7 when we first started group today.

Jacy: Thank you all for sharing each of you did such a good job participating today and sharing things that I know are painful and difficult to share but you had a lot of things in common and I think that if you continue to participate like you are that change will come naturally as you continue to learn and practice these skills. I hope that each of you have gained something from our discussion today.

Bree: I really learned a lot about myself and everyone else here in the group. I feel a lot more connected with all of you and we really do share a lot in common.

Tye: Bree is right. I feel so much better after today and I feel a change within myself already.

Mia: I relate to that Tye! I feel like I'm starting to really see myself for the first time and connect with you all better as well.

Lori: Yeah this session has been life changing for me today. I'm gonna go home and give my kids the biggest hug ever and I'm gonna download a dating app, three years has been long enough!

Tye: Way to go Lori!

Mia: Yes!

Jacy: Again I just want to applaud you all for coming and for participating, for really using the information and applying it. We will meet again next week like we do each week on Sunday at 6:00pm. If anyone is not able to come let me know ahead of time, otherwise I will see you then.

Bree: Thank you!

Mia: Have a good night everyone!

Lori: Thank you so much, goodnight.

Tye: Night!