

**BETTER**  
a postdiluvian play

**Draft 10**  
3.15.19

### **SETTING**

An inpatient rehab clinic in the woods of Connecticut

### **TIME**

The immediate present

### **CHARACTERS**

Amanda, early 20s, a patient

Marielle, 30s, a nurse

Jane, 60s, a doctor

Carver, early 20s, a patient

### **NOTES**

The original production was designed for an audience of 16, plus two plants who modeled behavior and steered the conversation as necessary (and indicated in the text below).

Sound and light became useful tools to inject theatricality into the piece at times. Throughout the play, faint knocking noises like pipes banging could be heard faintly throughout. These noises became noticeably pronounced and distorted in Scenes VI and VII. Likewise, practical lighting was used throughout the show until Scene VII, at which point it became dim and theatrical.

## **i. PRE-SHOW.**

A waiting room. Leather furniture. Magazines with ripped covers. Art projects on display. Inspirational posters. And maybe a little video screen with information about the clinic.

The audience slowly trickles in and checks in. They're given an intake form<sup>1</sup> and a nametag. With their nametag, the audience member is sorted in to the PATIENT group or the VOLUNTEER STAFF MEMBER group (the audience is divided evenly into these groups).

And this is all part of the play, even if they don't realize it until, one by one, they're called away by name.

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<sup>1</sup> A sample Intake Form is included in the Appendix at the end of the script.

## ii. INTAKE.

A doctor takes the audience member into a small-ish room inside the clinic. They sit, facing each other:

### DOCTOR

Welcome. Thank you for coming today. This is a play. And *this* is part of the show. My name is [ACTOR'S NAME], and I am playing [CHARACTER]. The play you're going to see is set in a center for substance use treatment. And it's an immersive piece. So, you're part of the world we're creating.

If at any point you become uncomfortable, you can find anyone holding one of these clipboards, and they'll help escort you out. If someone asks you to share something and you'd prefer not to, you can simply say "Pass." Are you comfortable with all of that?

Audience members answers. If yes, the doctor discusses the audience member's answers on their intaking form, maybe highlighting one or two answers and asking them about any questions they left unanswered. This should be a casual conversation, to integrate the audience member into the world of the play and get them thinking about themselves.

Once the doctor has finished going over the audience member's intake form:

### DOCTOR

Thank you. Now, for the purposes of [TONIGHT/TODAY], you will be in the [PATIENT/VOLUNTEER STAFF MEMBER] group in the center and that's all you need to know. We've asked you these questions to [HELP SHAPE YOUR EXPERIENCE/HELP YOU UNDERSTAND THE EXPERIENCE THE PATIENTS WILL BE GOING THROUGH]. Lastly, would you be okay if during the show someone shared some of your answers anonymously out loud to the group?

The audience member answers.

With that, the doctor thanks the patient and escorts them into the main room.

### **iii. MAIN ROOM.**

The main room looks like the waiting room and the intake room. All clearly of the same world. It's a big space, with linoleum floors and fluorescent lights and the ever-growing whiff of mildew. The room is also littered with boxes, that look hastily assembled and stacked.

There are some chairs and some tables in the room – probably four or five chairs to a table. The tables are circular, plasticky. The chairs are cheap fake wood and very uncomfortable. There are newspapers and old magazines on the tables.

There are other people in the room. Many are strangers, probably. Others are people the audience members know—whether they're friends, or friends of friends, or the person they came to the show with. Everyone's wearing nametags, so it's oddly formal. And they're unsure of what to say to one another probably. Do they say, "Hi?" Do they talk about the fact that they're in a play? Or is that against the rules?

Eventually, once all the audience is gathered, someone new comes into the room:

## I. TALKING CIRCLE 1

It's JANE. She stands in the center of the room and clears her throat.

JANE

Hi. Hello, everyone. And welcome. To the New Beginnings Clinic. We're glad you're here—well, not glad, obviously, given the circumstances. But grateful that you have made a decision to change your lives and that you have come here to do it.

We welcome each of you with open arms and an open mind. We hope this will become a place of healing, a place of learning, and a place of love for each of you.

Now: Before we start, I'd like to take a moment to apologize for our appearance. And the... smell. We had a bit of flooding in here last week and, well, everything had to be boxed up temporarily. But we'll be back to normal soon!

We have some new faces today, and so for those of you who have been here for some time already: I apologize that you'll have to sit through this spiel again. But:

Over the coming weeks you'll see that we practice a number of techniques here. A number of different ways of helping you. This is not a one-size-fits-all place.

During your stay here, you'll participate in talking circles. Motivational interviewing. CBT. And DBT. There may be some methodologies you respond to. There may be others you find a waste of time. That's all right. All we ask is that you keep your goal in mind. At all times.

Now: I'd like to start by circling up. Can everyone just- Can we circle up?

The audience gets in a big circle.

JANE

That's good. That's better. Oh, I don't think I've said: I'm Jane. And, let's everyone go around in a circle and introduce ourselves. Just say our names.

They do.

JANE

Great. I'd love to start our day off with a little talking circle. Is everyone all right with that?

Hopefully, the audience says yes.

JANE

Before we dive in, I want to ask each of you a question: What is the first emotion you felt upon waking up this morning? Just one word, the first word that comes to mind, and, if you don't know, you can simply say, "Pass." What is the first emotion you felt when you woke up this morning? Me, for instance, I felt [BLANK].

JANE gestures to the person to her right to answer. This should be a PLANT who responds with an emotion. Then, the conversation continues around the circle.

JANE

Thank you for sharing that. I think, and hope, we'll improve on some of those. Now, as I said earlier, we'd love to keep your goal in mind. Would anyone like to share what brings them here today? What behaviors they're trying to change?

JANE waits for the audience's response. If no one volunteers an answer, she begins to read through some of the answers people gave during their intake.

JANE

Thank you. Now, to start our talking circle, we're going to give you each a piece of paper with your role for this conversation. Our goal is to allow you all to take ownership in these circles.

JANE signals MARIELLE to hand out various laminated pieces of paper to everyone. The roles offered comprise Time Keeper, Rule Enforcer, Closer, and Participant.<sup>2</sup>

JANE

I'll serve as leader for this one to kick us off.

JANE reads off the leader card. As the rules are being read, AMANDA slips into the room and pulls up a chair. She is acknowledged with a head nod from JANE and a wave from MARIELLE.

JANE

(reading off the Leader card)

"Consider the quotation: 'To progress is always to begin again.' Do you agree or disagree with this idea?" Who has a response to that they'd like to share? Hm?

If no one responds immediately, or after no more than two people have responded:

JANE

Maybe someone who's been here for a while can kick us off? Carver?

CARVER shifts in his chair.

CARVER

Um. I don't really buy that. To be honest. I don't think that's really true.

AMANDA

Why not?

JANE

Amanda.

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<sup>2</sup> Roles are included in the Appendix at the end of the script.

MARIELLE

No / cross-talk, hon.

AMANDA

Cross-talk. Right. Sorry.

MARIELLE

Go ahead, Carver.

CARVER

Anywayz... I don't really buy that. Because. Well. Like in my case, I do bad stuff. I get in dangerous situations. I hurt people. But it's always the same. Doesn't even matter if I start over. Nothing sticks to me. I'm like – what do you call those pans? That things don't stick to? I'm a don't stick to pan.

But- Maybe this isn't relevant. But. I read this article recently. About this guy who ate a slug? And then it killed him ten years later? And it's like: What if I ate my slug? Already ('Cause I've eaten my fair share of slugs metaphorically speaking). And it's just in there? Waiting to kill me?

Then, even if I did a bunch of work to, like, become a better person? To grow. And mature. And heal. The slug would kill me anyways. What's the point of any of this?

So yeah, I'm Carver, and I'm an alcoholic. And a drug addict. And a / gambling addict. I'd probably be addicted to sex too. If anyone would have sex with me.

JANE

Okay, thank you / Carver.

AMANDA snorts.

JANE

Do you want to say something?

AMANDA shakes her head.

JANE

Are you sure?

MARIELLE

You can talk now if you want to, sweetie.

AMANDA

I just think that's b.s. is / all

JANE

Amanda

Whoa there

MARIELLE

I think that's a completely nihilistic/

AMANDA  
(to CARVER)

Well, I am / a nihilist so good call on that

CARVER

A completely / nihilistic and defeatist viewpoint to have

AMANDA

Amanda!

JANE

Which I'm entitled to... / Given what I've been through-

CARVER

You have to respect Carver's share, hun

MARIELLE

Even if it's / moronic?

AMANDA

Yeah, you have to respect my fucking / share

CARVER

Language, / Carver!

MARIELLE

That's enough, Amanda! You have to behave.

JANE

I haven't- I didn't- !

AMANDA

AMANDA storms out.

MARIELLE

Amanda!

MARIELLE runs after AMANDA.

JANE

Let her go, Marielle.

JANE goes after MARIELLE, with a quick:

JANE

I'll be right back. Stay put.

And the audience is left alone.

But maybe they overhear a conversation from outside:

*JANE*

*I told you not / to*

*MARIELLE*

*She'll get better I promise*

*JANE*

*I can't risk it. Not again. I can't risk upending / this entire*

*MARIELLE*

*It won't be like last time*

*JANE*

*This entire place for her. Okay.*

*MARIELLE*

*I promise. I'll talk to her.*

JANE reenters.

JANE

Okay. Now. "To progress is to begin again."

She looks at the rest of the circle and waits for a moment. Before anyone can speak:

JANE

Or why don't we end the talking circle here. Let's take a break.

If they don't want to take a break, the talking circle resumes, and someone is assigned to set a timer for five minutes. But in all likelihood, the audience will want to take a break. In which case:

JANE

All right. A break then. Now, for those of you who are new, this is your home for the next few weeks, so there's a few things...

MARIELLE slips back into the room.

JANE

Ah. Marielle. Can we get everyone set up?

## II. BREAK 1

JANE excuses herself, and MARIELLE comes to the group. She lets everyone know they'll need to do some setting up and personalizing of this space that they've moved into temporarily due to the flooding.

Over the course of the break:

The audience is broken up into pairs of one PATIENT and one VOLUNTEER (by a list generated check-in) and assigned various tasks:

Perhaps one pair takes a Polaroid picture of each patient and each volunteer and then pastes them on the wall.

Perhaps another two pairs set up the tea and coffee station, which includes being given a list of names and printing everyone's name out and putting it on a mug. People are told that they can help themselves – at any time!

Perhaps another pair makes a birthday chart, listing everyone's birthdays received at intake.

Perhaps another pair makes a "Where We're From" map, using everyone's birth location received at intake.

Perhaps another pair writes the schedule for the day on the whiteboard.

Perhaps another pair hangs up motivational posters around the space.

Finally, perhaps another pair is asked to break down boxes and clean up the room.

Throughout, CARVER plays music. Something classical.

Perhaps when people are done with their tasks, they sit back in the circle where they work on crafting their progress charts.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Suggested lines for this break and a sample progress chart are in the Appendix.

### III. MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

As the audience is settled in their chairs working on their progress charts, and CARVER blares the music, AMANDA slips back into the room. She heads to the music and turns it off. MARIELLE perks up.

All done unpacking? MARIELLE

Yup. AMANDA

Well that's good. I love that feeling. Putting my stuff in drawers... MARIELLE

Wasn't that much stuff. AMANDA

Still, it makes it feel like home. Having your socks in the sock drawer. And your shirts in / the shirt drawer. MARIELLE

Yeah, this place feels exactly like home. Linoleum floors. The smell of mildew. Child proof doors. AMANDA

We try. MARIELLE

I know. AMANDA

Then- MARIELLE

What? AMANDA

Trust us, Amanda. MARIELLE

I have. Before. AMANDA

Beat. AMANDA notices the coffee station.

Can I? AMANDA

MARIELLE

Of course!

AMANDA goes to make a cup of tea. MARIELLE eventually follows her.

MARIELLE

So! You're unpacked!

AMANDA

As discussed.

MARIELLE

Okay!

AMANDA coughs and sniffles.

MARIELLE

Are you okay?

AMANDA

Cold.

MARIELLE

Tissue?

AMANDA

I need some, like, cold medicine.

MARIELLE hesitates. AMANDA rolls her eyes.

AMANDA

I'm not going to turn it into meth.

MARIELLE pulls out a first aid kit and gets AMANDA some Robitussin.

AMANDA's tea is done. She takes a sip. She lets out a little laugh.

MARIELLE

What?

AMANDA

It's actually... kinda starting to look home-y in here.

MARIELLE

You like it?

AMANDA

Have you ever heard of the Rat Park study?

The rappark...?

MARIELLE

Rat Park. The Rat Park study.

AMANDA

Can't say I have. Why?

MARIELLE

It's nothing.

AMANDA

Beat.

Okay, well:

MARIELLE

MARIELLE glances at her watch and calls the group to order:

Hey everyone! Can we all get back into our circle? It's time for Motivational Interviewing.

MARIELLE

Once the group is close to settled in the circle of chairs:

Now, we'll be doing this in pairs later, so I'm going to model an example for all of you to start. And I'll need a volunteer for this.

MARIELLE

She sidles up to AMANDA.

Would you like to be my volunteer?

MARIELLE

AMANDA glares at MARIELLE.

Be my model for the group? Pretty please?

MARIELLE

Sure. Not my first time at the rehab rodeo.

AMANDA

MARIELLE laughs. AMANDA glares at her.

That was funny! What? You can make jokes, but I can't laugh?

MARIELLE

AMANDA glares some more.

MARIELLE  
(imitating a man's voice)

Smile, sweetheart. Don't have such a bad attitude.

No response from AMANDA.

MARIELLE  
Okay that wasn't that funny...

AMANDA  
No.

MARIELLE  
Come on! Turn that frown upside down!

AMANDA  
It's not easy for me, the way it is for you.

MARIELLE  
This isn't easy / for me.

AMANDA  
I can't just flip a switch.

MARIELLE  
I don't do that. This takes work. This takes... imagination.

AMANDA  
Imagination of what?

MARIELLE  
A life I want to lead. A person / I want to be.

AMANDA  
I know what my life looks like.

MARIELLE has settled into her chair by now, and the interview begins in earnest.

MARIELLE  
But if you didn't- If you were slightly less certain, what would you want from it? What would you want for yourself?

AMANDA  
I want—to be happy.

MARIELLE  
And what does happy look like?

AMANDA

I want: to wake up in the morning and not have the first thought that pops into my head be: “Fuck. Another day of this.”

MARIELLE

And what do you want instead of that?

AMANDA

I want: to see a way forward. It’s not that I want to be pain-free. I know life is not pain-free. But I want less of it. That’s all. I just want less pain.

MARIELLE

Less pain. That’s good.

AMANDA

And I want the pain I do have to be real. To be necessary. Because I am in so much pain, so much of the time that when something terrible happens – something actually terrible – I just go: “Okay. Of course.” Like, “Just add that to the pile. To the list.” And I want, when things are bad, to feel it for real.

MARIELLE

I want that for you too. What else do you want?

AMANDA

A house. I guess.

MARIELLE

That’s lovely. What kind of house?

AMANDA

I don’t know... it has four walls.

MARIELLE

Keep going.

AMANDA

With, um, a porch. That has a swing on it. Like an old-timey swing. And a kitchen that has tin cups. And a garbage disposal. I want mismatched furniture that I’ve had forever, faded by the sun. I want woods. A forest out back. / Like here.

MARIELLE

What kind of trees are out there?

AMANDA

Oaks.

MARIELLE

Beautiful. / And-

AMANDA

But not, um, not the ones you're thinking of.

MARIELLE

Oh?

AMANDA

Not white oaks. Like northern red oaks. Pure ones. Ones that have been alive for centuries. That were here before me. And will be here after me. After all of us. And they keep growing. Ever upward. Towards the sky. Towards heaven. Towards perfection. That's what I want.

MARIELLE

You'll have that. Someday.

AMANDA

I won't. But I want the pain of knowing that I won't to not suffocate me in the night. I want to believe that maybe I can still have those trees. And tin cups. In my future.

MARIELLE

You want hope.

JANE is in the room, and MARIELLE and AMANDA finally notice her presence.

AMANDA

Yes.

MARIELLE

I- we can give you that. If you'll let us try.

AMANDA

Thank you.

MARIELLE

Is that all?

AMANDA nods.

AMANDA

Um, thanks for listening.

AMANDA turns to the audience.

AMANDA

Thank you all, for listening too.

She turns back to MARIELLE.

And MARIELLE turns to the audience.

## MARIELLE

That was very generous of you all, to listen like that. To let Amanda share. We practice something called motivational interviewing here, where we ask questions of our residents. And not just any questions, not questions that have just one-word answers or “yes or no” questions, but open-ended questions. Questions that require lengthy answers. And as people answer, we reflect back what they say to show we’re listening and provide affirmations to keep them going. But most important are the questions.

We have some time: Let’s get into pairs and practice it. Practice asking each other questions for a bit.

MARIELLE instructs the VOLUNTEERS to get into pairs with a PATIENT and ask them questions. Perhaps she suggests the VOLUNTEERS start it off by asking the PATIENTS one of three questions:

1. What is something you’re good at?
2. What is the behavior you came here to change?
3. Who would you turn to for help?

As they do this, JANE goes up to CARVER and has a quick whispered chat with him and leaves.

MARIELLE watches the interview sessions go on for about five minutes, at which point JANE, who has been watching, asks the VOLUNTEER STAFF MEMBERS to come into the hall with them. MARIELLE has the PATIENTS pair up on their own and continue practicing asking questions, and they staff leave the room.

#### IV. GROUP MEETINGS<sup>4</sup>

In the hallway, MARIELLE and the rest of the staff circle up around JANE.

JANE

Thanks, everyone. How are you all feeling?

She waits for the audience's response.

JANE

Great. The goal of this little... meeting is just to get an update on how you all are doing. How our patients are doing. Anything you've learned about them. Or yourselves.

She waits for the audience's response again and uses whatever they say to lead into:

JANE

Which brings up a great point: I want to remind everyone that we have to be careful how we interact with the patients.

MARIELLE

Amanda was opening up to me.

JANE

I know. You did good work.

MARIELLE

Oh. Thank / you.

JANE

But I just want to remind everyone that this – treatment – is the easy part for them. We need to make sure we're setting them up for success outside and not letting them become too dependent on us, as individuals.

MARIELLE

I don't think that's what was happening.

JANE

Good. And I've asked Carver to talk to Amanda as well.

MARIELLE

Oh. You what?

JANE

I want them to resolve their issue from earlier.

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<sup>4</sup> SCENES IV and V happen concurrently in different parts of the space.

MARIELLE

I'm not sure I would even call it that.

JANE

They fought. In public. In front / of the group.

MARIELLE

She was just acting out at whoever was close to her.

JANE

I don't-

MARIELLE

I just worry – sorry, I didn't mean to cut you off – but I'm nervous that making it a 'thing' could exacerbate something that wasn't an issue into being one.

JANE

Marielle. I'm glad Amanda has you. And your support. But we have to keep a balance here. We can't do our work if there is... interpersonal strife.

MARIELLE

Sorry.

Beat.

MARIELLE

But no: Sorry, he's a sweetheart, but Carver can be a bit much. And Amanda / is in such

JANE

*Amanda* can be a bit much herself.

MARIELLE

But she's in such a delicate space / that I-

JANE

Marielle.

MARIELLE

I just don't want her overwhelmed is all.

JANE

I understand.

MARIELLE

She wants to get help. She's present and curious and-

Pause.

JANE

What?

MARIELLE

Have you ever heard of the Rat Park study?

JANE

Yes.

MARIELLE

What is it?

JANE

It's an old- it's a *discredited* study that- Why?

MARIELLE

Amanda asked me if I knew what it was.

JANE

It's an old study from the late '70s I believe that looked at drug addiction and posited some admittedly intriguing ideas but-

MARIELLE

Yes?

JANE looks out at the volunteers.

JANE

Do any of you know about this? Have any of you studied it?

Waits for an audience response. If no one knows.

JANE

Well, just to fill you all in. Basically, what we know about how addiction works comes from studies that were done in the '60s and '70s. Scientists did experiments on rats, where they put rats in isolated cages and gave them the option of drinking regular water and water laced with morphine. Nearly all the rats chose the morphine water—often to the point of overdosing.

These studies seemed to show that addiction had some biological, some chemical component. It suggested that drugs were inherently addictive, which was in direct contrast to how people thought about addiction up until then. Previously, addiction was seen as a moral failing.

But then with the Rat Park study: in, I believe, 1978, a doctor named Bruce Alexander did his own study where he isolated rats in cages and gave them the option of regular water and morphine water. Again, the rats chose the drugs. But, before those rats had a chance to overdose, Dr. Alexander took them out of their isolated cages and put them into a larger cage, a park, that had been designed to be a rat heaven: They had toys, games, plenty of food and, of course, other rats to socialize with.

And what Dr. Alexander found was that the rats, though once again given the option of regular water or drug-laced water, now drank regular water. It seemed that with an enriched environment, and not only an enriched environment but strong social bonds, those rats were cured of their addiction.

One interpretation might be that animals have an innate desire to bond, and when those bonds cannot be made with other individuals or with a community, those bonds get made with something else, like:

She turns to the audience for the correct answer. [If none of them supply it:

MARIELLE

Like morphine-laced water.]

JANE

Right. So, Dr. Alexander's argument was that drug addiction is less a neurological problem than a sociological one. A return to what was believed in the Victorian Era. And his study has become very popular lately. People are digging it all up again-

MARIELLE

But?

JANE looks back out at the audience.

JANE

Well, can any of you think of some possible flaws in this study?

Depending on responses, JANE makes sure all of the following points are hit:

JANE

For one thing, rats are simple. They're not like us. We're far more complex, and how could you even create a paradise that satisfies every single person? Moreover, there were numerous problems with how Dr. Alexander designed and executed his study. It has proved nearly impossible to replicate his findings. And most of all, his conclusions dismiss the simple fact that addiction *does in fact* have a neurological component.

MARIELLE

Still / it worked once-

JANE

But it's very popular because it provides a simple answer, a simple remedy.

MARIELLE

That all we need is each other.

JANE

Can you imagine anything more...?

She can't find the word waves her hand in the air dismissively.

JANE

All right. If no one else has anything else to add, why don't we all head back inside?

And, if no one has anything else to add, that's exactly what they do.

## V. AT THE SAME TIME

Back in the main room, the patients resume motivational interviewing. After a few minutes, CARVER stands and walks around the room, abandoning his partner. Perhaps he passes by other groups and checks in, sarcastically asking them how it's going or giving advice. After a while:

CARVER

Geez, you guys are still doing this? No one cares.

As if to prove his point, CARVER turns towards the staff member in the corner of the room, who is filling out paperwork with headphones in. He shouts to her.

CARVER

Hey.

No response.

CARVER  
(a little louder)

Hey!

No response.

CARVER  
(even louder)

HEY.

The receptionist takes her earphones out.

CARVER

Never mind.

CARVER turns to the group, hopefully having captivated their attention.

CARVER

See? We're all on our own, gang. And what shall we do...

CARVER takes out a pack of cigarettes and pops one in his mouth. He offers the open pack to the person across from him. Then:

You're smoking in here? AMANDA

No. But I like to pretend. CARVER

Pretty cool, dude. AMANDA

What's your problem with me? CARVER

AMANDA rolls her eyes.

What you've got nothing to say now? CARVER

Excuse me? AMANDA

You had no problem giving me shit in the talking circle, but now you want to follow the rules? CARVER

Fuck off. AMANDA

Uh oh. Language, Amanda. CARVER

I don't want to get in trouble, okay? I just want to— AMANDA

Do what they say? CARVER

Yeah. AMANDA

'Cause then you'll get all better, right? CARVER

Worth a shot. AMANDA

CARVER directs the following lines to the rest of the patients. It's his "Attica!" moment.

CARVER

Places like this are just a fucking cottage industry designed to brainwash us into thinking we actually have some control over our actions and behavior. But it's all fucking chemical. Someday there's going to be a pill we take that will just stop us from getting addicted.

AMANDA

Oh, like methadone?

CARVER

No, like this scientist who figured out he can inject this substance into rats' brains and it turns off their ability to get addicted. Just shuts it off. That's the solution. That's the future.

AMANDA

Then why are you even here?

CARVER

Parents.

AMANDA

Ah.

CARVER

Found my stash. Did the whole intervention thing.

AMANDA

Sorry to hear that.

CARVER

I was doing fine, is the thing. Wasn't like failing school. So I don't exactly need any of this. It's my first time.

AMANDA

Shit.

CARVER

What?

AMANDA

I left all my ribbons at home.

CARVER

Cut the fucking act. You don't believe in this shit any more than I do.

AMANDA hesitates.

CARVER

You don't!

AMANDA

Have you heard of the Rat Park study?

CARVER looks to the other patients. AMANDA does too.

AMANDA

Have any of you?

They probably haven't.

AMANDA

Well, basically this doctor in like the '70s did this study where he found that all these rats would get addicted to drugs when he put them in what was basically solitary confinement. Like majorly addicted. He put them in these cages and he offered them regular water and morphine water and these rats became like full on morphine addicts. Like 19<sup>th</sup> century syphilitic courtesan morphine addicts.

But then, he took those rats and put them into this large cage with others rats and all this stuff - like everything they could possibly want *including their morphine* - and those original rats totally lost interest in the drugs. They just wanted to... hang out with each other. And be present in that.

CARVER

Were these Buddhist rats?

AMANDA

Shut up.

He laughs.

CARVER

Feisty.

She laughs too.

AMANDA

The point is that these rats had been completely addicted to morphine and they were cured *like that* and they didn't need to go to therapy or get their brains fixed to stop being addicts. All they needed was... like shit to do, and well, other people around them. To be their friend. And bond with them.

CARVER

Well shit.

AMANDA

Right??

CARVER

Told you this was all a scam.

AMANDA

And so all this talk about changing our brains should be about changing our-

CARVER

(somewhat mockingly)

Hearts?

AMANDA

I mean, yeah. Kinda? *That's* what this place should be.

CARVER

Then maybe that's why they left us alone.

AMANDA

?

CARVER

Maybe they purposefully leave us all this time alone together-

AMANDA

Why?

CARVER

So that we can *bond*.

AMANDA

Oh no, they only care about progress charts and fixing our maladaptive thoughts here.

CARVER

In that case if anyone would like to bond some more, I'm gonna go outside and smoke this for real.

He looks out at the group.

CARVER

'Manda? Care to join?

AMANDA shakes her head.

CARVER

Aww, still following the rules?

AMANDA

Nope, just not going anywhere with you.

CARVER

What's your damage?

AMANDA

I'm not getting into any more trouble today.

CARVER

And I'm trouble.

AMANDA

You're not *not* trouble.

CARVER

And here I thought we were actually starting to get along, but...

(to the rest of the group)

She's turned over a new leaf.

AMANDA

I'm trying.

CARVER

Enjoy it while it lasts.

AMANDA

Dick.

CARVER

Can I ask you something I don't understand? About all of this?

AMANDA looks around the room.

AMANDA

Sure.

CARVER

Who are you hurting? Really?

AMANDA

What?

CARVER

When you use. Who are you hurting?

AMANDA

Myself.

CARVER

No, you only think this is a problem because someone told you it was one. Like, what's your thing? Hypothetically. Heroin? Alcohol? Benzos?

AMANDA's head snaps towards him and then quickly turns away.

CARVER

Okay, so let's say benzos. Hypothetically. You're not going to OD and die. But you are going to feel better.

AMANDA

*Feel* better, not be better.

CARVER

Well, if you've found something that makes you feel better – *hypothetically* – why not take it? Isn't that, like, the point of advancements in science?

AMANDA

Because it's bad for me...

CARVER

If they were so bad, why would doctors prescribe them?

AMANDA

You sound like a reddit thread.

CARVER

Now, I've never gotten it – the one substance thing – I'm a bit more catholic in my tastes-

AMANDA

Garbagehead.

CARVER

But you're crazy *not* to want to be on anything these days.

AMANDA

Somehow, I think I'll be okay.

CARVER

Well, just keep in mind that no one knows what they're talking about and everyone's trying to make money, and I bet your parents, like mine, shelled out a not insignificant amount for you to hang out here / for a month.

AMANDA

Enjoy your cigarette, okay?

CARVER

You know, I think I'm right about the leaving us alone to bond thing.

AMANDA

Yeah, I feel very close to you right now.

CARVER

I in fact have been purposefully set on a mission to bond with you. In this moment. By Jane.

Why? AMANDA

She thinks I'd be a good influence. CARVER

Is she mad about this morning? AMANDA

I think she doesn't trust you. CARVER

And she trusts you? AMANDA

CARVER raises an eyebrow.

Look at me. I can get away with anything. CARVER

Marielle trusts me... AMANDA

Well, back to our little hypothetical. If you ever feel like violating that trust. Any of you? You know where I am. CARVER

MARIELLE, JANE and the VOLUNTEERS enter the room.

## VI. CBT

The audience stops what they're doing and turns to JANE who has just entered.

JANE

Hi everyone. Thanks for your patience. Now, if you can all just circle up. We're going to start with our next session.

Once the audience is seated in their circle again:

JANE

Now, for our newcomers, how many of you know what CBT is?

She looks around the room for a hand count.

JANE

Does anyone want to explain what CBT is to the rest of the group?

If no one does, JANE goes on (or, if someone does, JANE compliments their explanation and just expands on it or reiterates it).

JANE

Well: it stands for Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. And it's a way of helping you identify the thoughts you have that lead to certain emotions that lead to certain behaviors. And once those thoughts, and their consequences, are identified they can be better understood – and hopefully replaced. Does that make sense?

Now, each of us has automatic thoughts. Things that pop into our head as we go about our day and react to our environment. And often, these thoughts don't make us feel anything, right? If we step outside and see it's raining, we might think "I should get an umbrella."

But sometimes these automatic thoughts can be hot. By that, we mean they are thoughts that lead to an emotional response. So, for instance, your automatic thought "It's raining, I should have brought an umbrella" might lead to the feeling of anger at yourself for being a failure for always doing this sort of thing, which can then lead to a behavior that comforts you, like using. Can we see why that might become a dangerous line of thinking?

CARVER

No. Sounds like you should have brought an umbrella.

JANE

Okay, then who has an example of a thought of their own that triggers an unwanted behavior or emotion that they'd like to share with the group?

JANE scans the room as AMANDA's hand shoots up in the air. She looks to the audience for an answer. If no one offers one, she pulls out a sheet with their answers to question six from the intake. JANE reads off some of their answers, before finally:

JANE

Okay, Amanda. What was a situation that led to a thought that produced a negative feeling for you?

AMANDA

One negative feeling I had was when I found myself walking down 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave with no pants on trying to find a Dunkin' Donuts to buy an iced coffee.

A pause.

JANE

Okay. And what was the thought that prompted that behavior?

AMANDA

Dunno. I don't remember doing it.

JANE

Perhaps you can think of an example that you do have some memory of?

AMANDA

Well. When I woke up in the hospital, after being found, pantsless on 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave, and I remembered who I was, I would say that I felt a feeling of anger at myself for using. So the situation was: ending up in the hospital. The thought was, "Fuck. Again." And the feeling was anger. And I felt angry because I remembered leaving here the last time and being promised / that things would-

JANE

You weren't promised anything.

AMANDA

Being told how well I'd done and that I was able to be on my own.

JANE

We can't guarantee anything. But we can equip you with tools / and strategies

AMANDA

That don't work!

MARIELLE

But you came back, Amanda. So, there is something we can offer you.

AMANDA

I've been doing research.

MARIELLE

Right! You mentioned-

AMANDA

I've been reading about treatments and therapies, and I think this is all a load / of bullshit.

JANE

Amanda, your health is our primary goal, but I think we should move on for the sake of the group.

MARIELLE

Do you want to talk about the study you mentioned to me?

JANE

Marielle.

MARIELLE

That is - right? - that is what you're...

AMANDA

Yes.

JANE

I appreciate your enthusiasm for the subject. I'm not discounting it. But-

AMANDA

All those rats needed / to get better was... each other!

JANE

Amanda, you are not / the only person here.

AMANDA

They didn't need any of this, / CBT or motivational interviewing-

JANE

Okay, Amanda. Thank you for sharing. Now, who has a different example of an automatic thought they'd like to work through?

AMANDA

or talking circles or twelve steps or sponsors or psychotherapy or / pills or detox plans or

JANE

So what do you propose we do instead here?

AMANDA

Enrich our environment!

JANE

And how do we do that?

AMANDA

I'm not the professional.

MARIELLE

Amanda, I'd just like to say- Can I say- Please. I'd like to reflect back that I appreciate your optimism, Amanda. And I appreciate the optimism of the Rat Park study. I don't want us to dismiss it because it's easy.

JANE

That study is appealing, and I understand why, but it's... not helpful.

AMANDA

Why?

JANE

(singles out one of the VOLUNTEERS)

Can you explain to Amanda why it's not helpful?

She waits. [If the audience member doesn't provide this answer, JANE does:

JANE

The problem with that study is simply: we are not rats. Rats do not feel any of the things that drive you to use.]

AMANDA

Such as?

JANE

You tell me.

MARIELLE

Jane.

AMANDA

Shame.

JANE

Yes.

AMANDA

Anger.

JANE

Good.

AMANDA

Disappointment. Fear. Anxiety. Worthlessness.

JANE

Rats do not do drugs out of a feeling of worthlessness, they do it because the drugs block dopamine from being removed from their synapses, leaving an overabundance of dopamine in their brains. They do it because it feels good. You do it because-

AMANDA

It feels good.

JANE

But you are also capable of understanding intellectually the harm that drug use does to you-

AMANDA

Hasn't stopped me before.

JANE

Which is why we are trying to reinforce those thoughts. One advantage you have over rats is that you are capable of understanding when you abuse your benzodiazepines, like Xanax, what is happening in your brain. And I know that's not enough for you to stop taking them, but it's a start. Because from there, we can add new behaviors, new ways of thinking. We're not going to take away your addiction, but all change is a process of addition not subtraction.

AMANDA

If it's a disease, it should be curable with medicine; but if it isn't that, if it isn't just *biological* there's another way to fix it and so why are you just dismissing my ideas?

JANE

Because it isn't a real solution, Amanda.

MARIELLE

This isn't a one-size-fits-all place. You've said it yourself, and so maybe there is something in the Rat Park, maybe there is / something in the idea of community.

AMANDA

Thank you!

JANE

But your idea is tautological, Amanda: if I'm happy, I'll be happy. Of course, that's true. But I need to give you tools to deal with the reality of the fact that there are times you won't be happy.

AMANDA

That sounds like giving up to me. That sounds like saying happiness is unattainable.

JANE

As a permanent state, yes, happiness is unattainable.

AMANDA

Why?

JANE

Why?

CARVER

Because society is fucked- / screwed up.

MARIELLE

Language, Carver.

CARVER

If happiness were a permanently attainable state, don't you think we would have reached it by now?

JANE

Okay, Carver. That's... who has a more *delicate* way of putting it?

If someone starts talking, AMANDA cuts them off. Or she just jumps in:

AMANDA

So, you're saying I'll never get better?

JANE

No. You? You can get better. But you can't count on the world to do so with you.

AMANDA

I think we should aspire to more is all. I think if we expect more from the world, the world will give it to us.

CARVER

All societies end in destruction.

MARIELLE

Carver, maybe now's not the / best time-

CARVER

We're in an inevitable state of decline, constantly.

AMANDA

What do you / mean?

MARIELLE

I don't think / this is helping.

CARVER

Human history is the story of some dominant force coming to power and thinking they've got it all figured out and then going tits up and someone else coming along and trying to figure shit out again right? Until they think *they*'ve gotten it figured out perfectly.

And any moment of relative peace or happiness is just... remission. It's not a cure. Because some awful, destructive person or power will come back again—or always can.

JANE

Okay Carver, that's a bit extreme.

CARVER

Extreme? Nazis are back!

MARIELLE

A blip

CARVER

A relapse

JANE

Carver!

CARVER

Nazis are *back*, Jane.

JANE

Let's leave politics / out of this.

AMANDA

I wasn't talking about politics. I'm talking about-

MARIELLE

Go on, dear.

AMANDA

Me. How to get better.

JANE

And we're giving you strategies.

AMANDA

They're not working.

MARIELLE

You have to be hopeful.

AMANDA

No, I need a solution. I don't think that's too much to ask for.

JANE

There isn't one.

AMANDA  
So you want me to just keep coming back and coming back and / coming back

MARIELLE  
Of course not!

AMANDA  
You get paid if I do, don't you?

JANE  
Amanda.

AMANDA  
I mean who funds this place?

JANE  
That's irrelevant-

AMANDA  
That is *never* irrelevant

MARIELLE  
We get some state funding, some grants, and / of course, yes, the patients

JANE  
Marielle, don't / encourage her-

AMANDA  
You take our money and don't even know anything / about how-

JANE  
We know a lot.

AMANDA  
Bullshit.

JANE  
Okay. That's enough.

AMANDA  
Just admit your incompetence.

AMANDA stands.

MARIELLE  
Amanda, don't go.

CARVER

*Deep* incompetence.

MARIELLE

(turns to an audience member near AMANDA)

Please, ask her to stay.

JANE

Amanda, you are only making this situation more toxic.

AMANDA

Admit it, to all of us.

MARIELLE

Sweetie, we're just trying to help.

AMANDA

Admit that you don't have any more of an idea than the rest / of us of how to get better.

JANE

Okay. You're not just endangering *your* health; you're putting everyone in this room in jeopardy right now with this kind of talk.

CARVER

I feel fine!

AMANDA

Oh, fuck off.

MARIELLE

Language, / hon

CARVER

I was helping you!

AMANDA

You drugged-out narcissist.

MARIELLE

Amanda, just ignore / him.

JANE

I have to ask you to excuse yourself, Amanda. And this is no longer – it's no longer an option. Please. Leave.

AMANDA

Are you joking?

JANE

Enough! That is enough. Out.

AMANDA storms out.

MARIELLE

Jane.

JANE

Everyone, let's just- let's take a few minutes.

MARIELLE goes to follow AMANDA.

JANE

No, I'd like Carver to. And apologize.

CARVER exits after AMANDA.

JANE

(to MARIELLE)

Continue with the session. I'll be back in a few minutes.

## VII. BREAK 2

MARIELLE sits in her chair and stares at the group.

MARIELLE

Um, no. Let's- let's take a break actually. Let's *enrich this environment* a little.

MARIELLE leaps from her chair and begins assigning people in groups of three and four to do various tasks, seemingly at random.

She sends one group to stack all the chairs to the side of the room and replace them with cushions and bean bags from the closet.

She sends another group to the closet to put out rugs on the floor.

She sends another group to find string lights to hang them up around the space.

She sends another group to clean up the empty cups and put out cookies.

Perhaps another group can put up curtains or other fabrics. Perhaps another group can cover the fluorescent lights in gels and fabrics to soften them. Perhaps another group puts tablecloths over the tables so they're not so plasticky. Perhaps another group puts out board games and activities in a corner of the room.

Another group plays music, from a playlist of songs generated by the audience's answers to the question asked at intake: "What is a song you listen to in order to feel better?"

By the end, the room, or at least a part of it, has been completely transformed into a cozy, intimate, and attractive environment.

Once the room is set up, MARIELLE gathers the group into a circle and plays a group bonding game with them.<sup>5</sup> After a few minutes of play, AMANDA enters and sits, noticeably far away from the group.

MARIELLE

Hey Amanda.

AMANDA

Hey.

MARIELLE

Feeling better?

AMANDA

Mhmm.

---

<sup>5</sup> Suggested lines for this break are in the Appendix.

You talked to Carver? MARIELLE

Yup. AMANDA

And everything's...? Okay? MARIELLE

Yup. All okay. AMANDA

Okay, good. MARIELLE

MARIELLE continues the game with the group. After another round, she notices AMANDA is standing, leaning on a table, seeming to sway.

Amanda? MARIELLE

The one and only. AMANDA

What are you doing over there? MARIELLE

Just. Hanging out. AMANDA

Oh yeah? MARIELLE

Yeah. AMANDA

MARIELLE begins a slow, careful approach towards AMANDA>

Do you- Hey Amanda? Do you wanna come sit over here? And play with us? MARIELLE

I'm all right  
I like to stand AMANDA

You sure, sweetie? MARIELLE

AMANDA  
Yeah  
I like the way the linoleum feels.  
I like the way it sounds  
Linoleum  
Lin-o-le-um

MARIELLE  
Are you okay?

AMANDA  
Of course.

MARIELLE  
That's great.

AMANDA  
Do I not seem okay?

MARIELLE  
You just – look – a little different.

AMANDA  
I'm just happy.

MARIELLE  
Oh.

AMANDA  
Like you wanted.

MARIELLE steps towards her.

AMANDA  
That's probably why I look different to you  
Because I'm happy

MARIELLE  
And why are you happy?

AMANDA  
I think this all is working...

MARIELLE  
Right. Hey, [PLANT]?

AMANDA  
How are you? Are you happy?

Oh. You know... I try. MARIELLE

Right. AMANDA

Hey sweetie, why don't you come and sit by me for a little bit? [PLAAAANT]? MARIELLE

I told you. I like to stand. AMANDA

[Plant], can you / find Jane for me? MARIELLE

I like / the linoleum. AMANDA

Okay sure. PLANT

“Okay sure.” AMANDA

Amanda! MARIELLE

AMANDA looks at MARIELLE as if startled to discover she's in the room.

Sweetie. Don't back away from me. MARIELLE

I'm not. AMANDA

You moved when I stepped towards you MARIELLE

Where did [PLANT] go? AMANDA

Amanda MARIELLE

Yeah? AMANDA

Are you there? MARIELLE

Where else would I be? AMANDA

Beat.  
Everyone's staring at us  
Watching us /  
Why do you suppose they're doing that. AMANDA

Leave everyone alone, hon. Just come sit / by me. MARIELLE

I want to go outside  
I want to go to the forest  
To the woods  
Can we do that? AMANDA

Later / [PLAAAAANT]?! MARIELLE

Now  
I want to / now AMANDA

Mandy, I'm gonna have Jane talk with you / okay MARIELLE

No I like it just the two of us AMANDA

I know but I'm nervous MARIELLE

Why? AMANDA

Jane! Jaaaane!  
I just want to make sure you're okay MARIELLE

AMANDA leans on another table, seeming to lose balance.

MARIELLE

How's that linoleum, sweetie. Still feel good?

AMANDA

It feels smooth  
And soft somehow  
Like skin

MARIELLE

That's great, Amanda.

JANE enters and moves swiftly towards MARIELLE. Over the following lines,  
AMANDA makes her way to whatever sound system is in the room and starts putting on  
music, flipping through the songs.

AMANDA

Hello.

JANE

What's going on?

MARIELLE

Amanda / is

JANE

Is she?

MARIELLE

I think / so.

The PLANT reenters.

PLANT

I couldn't find her anywhere. Oh-

MARIELLE

Yeah / she's-

JANE

How long?

MARIELLE

I think- / I don't know.

AMANDA has found a song she likes and has started dancing.

JANE

Amanda

MARIELLE  
Amanda can you please come / over here

CARVER enters.

CARVER  
Woah party / in the rec room

JANE  
What did she take?

MARIELLE  
I'm not / sure

MARIELLE's attention snaps to CARVER.

CARVER  
Carver?

CARVER  
Huh?

MARIELLE  
Carver, did you give her-

JANE  
Who said / he-

CARVER  
A couple bars of Xanax. / I don't know what else she has though-

MARIELLE  
What do you mean / what else?

CARVER  
She's just-

MARIELLE  
Oh god.

JANE  
What?

AMANDA  
"Oh god" "oh god" "oh god"

MARIELLE  
I gave her some cough medicine earlier. Some Robitussin.

Okay. / That's okay.

JANE

Holy crap.

CARVER

Carver go / back to your room.

JANE

What the fuck? / Why?

CARVER

Everyone, / actually. Everyone let's head outside.

JANE

Language, Carver!

AMANDA

Amanda!

MARIELLE

I'm not going anywhere.

CARVER

AMANDA stumbles around the room, perhaps accidentally knocking over one of the displays the audience put up in Break 1.

Marielle!

JANE

MARIELLE goes towards AMANDA.

Amanda, honey, let's go lie down.

MARIELLE

AMANDA moves away from MARIELLE.

Or we can go for a walk in the woods. Like you wanted. We can look at the oaks.

MARIELLE

MARIELLE has placed a hand on AMANDA's shoulder.

Why are you touching me?

AMANDA

I want to-

MARIELLE

AMANDA

Who are you?

During this, JANE is herding the audience away from MARIELLE and AMANDA and ushering them towards the door.

AMANDA

What's going on?

MARIELLE tries to take AMANDA by the arm.

AMANDA

Don't touch me-

MARIELLE

Amanda!

AMANDA

I feel sick.

MARIELLE

Let's go to the bathroom then.

AMANDA

Don't- I'm going to/  
Be sick  
Get sick  
I feel

MARIELLE

Just to the bathroom.

AMANDA cups her hands to her mouth like she's going to throw up. MARIELLE embraces her.

AMANDA

I said don't!  
I said don't touch me  
Please don't  
Touch me  
Don'ttouchme  
Don'ttouchme don't touch me

Over the above lines, AMANDA stumbles around the room, accidentally knocking things over. MARIELLE tries to catch up to her. The music is still blaring. AMANDA knocks something on the wall, and the power – lights and music – cuts out.

And flashlights turn on. JANE is wielding one of them.

JANE

Okay! Everyone! Outside! Marielle?

MARIELLE

I've got Amanda. It's okay.

JANE

I'll take her. Marielle, get everyone outside and make sure we're all accounted for.

JANE hands MARIELLE her flashlight. MARIELLE finds a door and opens it. She ushers the audience, patients and volunteers alike, into the hallway.

## VIII. HEADCOUNT.

In the hallway, in darkness, but with a few flashlights, MARIELLE gathers the audience.

MARIELLE

Everyone! Let's stay calm. Is everyone okay?

Without waiting for a response, her flashlight moves around the lobby looking for something. Eventually she finds it at the check-in desk, and the lights switch back on.

MARIELLE

Can we just do a quick check-in? A quick headcount? To make sure everyone is here and okay?

MARIELLE leads everyone into one of the smaller rooms where they did the initial intake. At some point she begins reading off the names of everyone who came to the show and makes sure they are all accounted for using the clipboard she picked up from the check-in desk.

However, as she's doing this, people (CARVER and the plants) prove difficult, shuffling around and talking over her. At some point, MARIELLE snaps:

MARIELLE

For goodness' sake, can all of you please just stand still and stop talking for one goddamn minute. Fuck!

Quiet. MARIELLE finishes her headcount. Once that's done and everyone is confirmed to be present, MARIELLE peeks into the room.

MARIELLE

Okay- I think we can- why don't you all go back inside now.

MARIELLE opens the door and the audience filters back into the main room.

## IX. TALKING CIRCLE 2 (or NEW BEGINNINGS)

The audience enters the main room again. The lights are back on. The music has stopped. And the room is restored to exactly how it was at the top of the show: the work the audience had done decorating it has been removed.

MARIELLE, CARVER, and AMANDA are nowhere to be seen.

But JANE is still there.

JANE

Hi. Hello, everyone. And welcome to the New Beginnings Clinic. We're glad you're here. We welcome each of you with open arms and an open mind. We hope this will be a place of healing, a place of learning, and a place of love for each of you.

And, I would also like to apologize for... recent events – for the disruption. These things do happen from time to time, and we have to learn how to live with them. But I know that may have been upsetting for some of you.

I'd like to remind you all also that none of you are bad people. None of you. We're all in recovery from something, but we are also all more than the worst thing we've ever done.

She takes a deep breath and looks to the audience.

JANE

I'd like to start by circling up. Can everyone just- Can we circle up?

The audience gets in a big circle.

JANE

That's good. That's better. I'd love to start our day off with a little talking circle. I'm going to pass out your roles again.

JANE passes out laminated pieces of paper to everyone in the circle, the same ones at the top. As the rules are being read, AMANDA slips into the room and pulls up a chair. She is acknowledged with a head nod from JANE and a wave from MARIELLE

AMANDA

Hi.

JANE

Hello.

AMANDA

Is it all right if I- can I sit?

A long pause.

Finally, JANE turns to one of the audience members.

JANE

Can you get Amanda a chair?

As AMANDA is getting seated: The talking circle resumes, leading whoever has been assigned to be leader to announce that they will be having a conversation in response to the quotation: "To progress is always to begin again."<sup>3</sup>

People are invited to weigh in on this idea, and the conversation begins, with JANE noticeably silent. A few minutes in:

AMANDA

Where's Marielle?

JANE

Amanda, please no interruptions.

AMANDA

I'm just curious.

JANE

She's been transferred to one of the other houses.

AMANDA

Oh.

JANE asks whoever AMANDA interrupted to resume, and the talk continues for a few more minutes.

AMANDA

Why did- sorry, but why did Marielle change houses?

JANE

She- she asked to. As a condition of your staying in the program. Which she wanted for you. But she just felt-

AMANDA nods.

AMANDA

Sorry for interrupting.

The group conversation continues for another few minutes, when quietly at first and then louder: the sound of AMANDA crying.

JANE

Amanda?

AMANDA

I want to get better. I do. I do.

AMANDA is almost indecipherable between tears.

JANE

I want that for you too. I do. I'm here to help.

AMANDA

I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry.

JANE

She didn't want to leave. But sometimes it hurts.

AMANDA

I know.

JANE

The closeness.

AMANDA

I'm so sorry.

JANE

The connections.

AMANDA

I'm sorry.

JANE goes to AMANDA and kneels in front of her. AMANDA's apologies and JANE's comforting overlap for a bit as everyone watches on. Then:

JANE

Do you need a moment? Outside?

AMANDA nods and goes to leave. As she reaches the door, JANE stops her:

JANE

Do you want me to come with you?

AMANDA nods, and JANE goes to her to take her out of the room. When she reaches the door:

JANE

You all can keep talking. Until the timer goes off.

And then JANE and AMANDA exit, leaving the audience alone. Once the timer goes off, the closer opens their envelope which instructs them to turn to the audience and say:

Thank you. That was better.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

END



## APPENDIX

**NEW BEGINNINGS CLINIC – INTAKE FORM**

**Please answer as many of the following questions as you're comfortable with (as yourself):**

<p><b>Name:</b> _____ <b>Sex:</b> ____</p> <p><b>Birthdate:</b> ____ / ____ / _____ <b>Location of birth:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Please list any allergies below:</b></p>
<p><b>What is something you're good at?</b></p> <p><b>What is a behavior of yours that you'd like to change?</b></p> <p><b>What is a thought that triggers that behavior?</b></p>
<p><b>What is a song you listen to in order to feel better?</b></p> <p><b>What does happiness look like for you?</b></p> <p><b>Who would you turn to for help?</b></p>

**FOR STAFF USE ONLY:**                      P                      V                      \_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_ No

ROLE:

Leader

YOUR TASK:

To welcome everyone, explain the rules, and steer the conversation. Please read the entire page of instructions before beginning.

Welcome everyone with a few words. It could go something like this:

“Hello and welcome to today’s conversation. As a group, we are not allied with any sect, politics, or organization. We do not wish to engage in any controversy and neither endorse nor oppose any causes. Our primary purpose here is to share our beliefs, to expand our minds, and to grow together.”

Then ask all members to announce their roles.

You should also make sure to let people know they don’t have to raise their hands and that everyone is welcome and encouraged to participate in the discussion.

Then ask the Rule Enforcer to explain the rules.

Then ask the Time Keeper to start the timer.

Then begin the conversation. This is the topic of the discussion today:

Consider the quotation: “To progress is always to begin again.” Do you agree or disagree with this idea?

You are also encouraged to participate throughout the discussion.

YOUR ROLE:

Rule Enforcer

YOUR TASK:

Lay out the following rules to the group, once the leader asks you to:

1. No crosstalk (e.g. talking over someone, interrupting)
2. No ad hominem attacks (i.e. personal attacks)
3. Be conscious of how much you speak; make room for other voices in the conversation.
4. No speaking for more than one minute at a time.
5. The conversation will last at most fifteen minutes, no longer.

If anyone violates the rules, you can feel empowered to reprimand and/or punish them as you see fit.

You are also encouraged to participate throughout the discussion.

YOUR ROLE:

Time Keeper

YOUR TASK:

Once the leader asks you to do so, set a timer to make sure the conversation lasts no more than fifteen minutes. You should also track people's time to make sure no one talks for more than a minute each. If someone goes over a minute, kindly ask them to finish their thought and let the next person speak.

You are also encouraged to participate throughout the discussion.

YOUR ROLE:

Participant

YOUR TASK:

Throughout the discussion, argue either that you agree or disagree with the quotation—whichever side compels you more.

YOUR ROLE:

Closer

YOUR TASK:

When time is up, give the conversation a moment to end. Then, thank everyone for participating simply by saying “Thank you. That was better.”

You are also encouraged to participate throughout the discussion, before you close it out.

## BREAK 1 INSTRUCTIONS

Hi everyone, as Jane mentioned we had some flooding, so we had to move into this space temporarily. We're going to do some tasks now to set things up for us. You'll notice you have a colored dot on your nametag. If you can find the other person in the circle with the same colored dot and make eye contact with them while staying seated: that's your partner.

Can I get the blue pair to stand in the circle? You're going to take everyone's pictures and write their names in sharpie and hang them up on that bulletin board over there.

- Blue pair will be plants and know to go last

Now, we're going to take everyone's picture. Everyone on this side of the room, please push your chairs back. And now, with your partner form a line in this direction. Once your picture is taken, stand in this corner and I'll come by and give you your task. If you have any questions or once you finish, go to Maria and she'll help you out.

You two pairs are setting up the kitchen area. You two are setting up the coffee, tea, and food stuff which is in those four boxes underneath that table. And you two will label the mugs. Here's a list of names and there's a label maker in the boxes with the kitchen stuff. If you have any questions or once you finish, go to Maria and she'll help you out.

In that box is a map and sticky labels. Here is a list of where everyone is born. Write people's names on the stickers and place the stickers on the map where they were born. Then tape the map to the wall. There's no wrong way to do it! If you have any questions or once you finish, go to Maria and she'll help you out.

In that box is a calendar. Here is a list of everyone's birthdays. Write people's names on their birth date on the calendar and then tape the calendar to the wall. There's no wrong way to do it! If you have any questions or once you finish, go to Maria and she'll help you out.

In that box, there are some posters. Hang them up around the room wherever you like. There's no wrong way to do it! If you have any questions or once you finish, go to Maria and she'll help you out.

Over there is a whiteboard. Here is the schedule for the day. Write this schedule on the whiteboard as neatly as possible. If you have any questions or once you finish, go to Maria and she'll help you out.

You two are in charge of the progress charts everyone is making today. Here's a sample one. Go to that table and start working on your own progress charts, As people finish their tasks, they'll come to you and you will make sure they have everything they need to make their own charts. If you have any questions or once you finish, go to Maria and she'll help you out.

You're on clean-up duty! Break down any empty boxes. There are also some wipes under the sink if you could wipe down the tables.

## BREAK 2 INSTRUCTIONS

Everyone push your chairs back!

You two, can you grab rugs from the closet and come lay them out here.

Your four, there are string lights in that box—hang them up around on the room on hooks.

You two, clear all the papers and mugs off those tables and lay out the cookies!

You two, push that couch over here.

You four, grab cushions and bean bags from the closet and put them in a circle on the rug.

You two, grab those board games from the box labeled “Games” and bring them over here.