PURPOSE OF GROUP: to identify our fears
              to learn the benefits of leaving our “comfort zone”
              to decrease symptoms of anxiety

MATERIALS NEEDED: pens/pencils for each group member
              piece of paper for each group member

1. -Facilitator opens group by explaining that our “comfort zone” is where we feel safe.
   -It represents familiarity & security
   -It’s where we stay to avoid anxiety & distress
   -The situations & activities inside of our “comfort zone” are the things in our life that are non-threatening & routine

-Ask group members to stand in a circle. Tell them that they are standing inside their “comfort zone”.
   *You will read several scenarios. For each scenario, they must step backwards if this scenario is outside of their “comfort zone”
   *Scenarios: You are going on an interview; You are giving a presentation in front of a large group of people; You have to eat at a restaurant by yourself; You are going on a “blind date”; You are meeting with your boss to request a pay raise; You are waiting in a line & a stranger strikes up a conversation with you

-As group members will likely see, we share common fears. Our fears keep us inside our “comfort zone”.
-We fear the unknown! Our “comfort zone” is comfortable because it represents familiarity
  a. We just don’t know if we can handle the challenges outside of our “comfort zone”, so we tend to stay inside of it

2. Tell group members that they will now participate in an **activity** in which **they will further explore what lies outside of their comfort zone**.
   *Give each group member pens/pencils & a piece of paper. Ask them to draw a circle and label it, “comfort zone”
   *They will then write down some of the things that would be outside of their comfort zone. The more it scares them, the farther away it should be from the circle
   *Allow group members to share when they’re done

2a. After the activity, you can ask group members the following questions:
   -Who could you relate to in this activity?
   -When was the last time you did something that was outside of your comfort zone?

3. -Staying inside our comfort zone **may be good for us in the short-term but it tends to be harmful for us in the long-run**.
   -**Example**: You are considering going on a trip with your closest friends, but you are terrified of flying. You feel fear & anxiety. Your thoughts are racing. You decline to go, and the fear & anxiety disappears. You feel better. However, you miss out on all the fun & adventures you could have experienced, and your bond with your friends weakens

-We must venture outside of our comfort zone once in a while to learn & grow (personally & professionally).
  -You don’t get the things you want in life by staying inside your comfort zone!
  -Sometimes, we must take risks & try new things
  *You can ask group members, “Can you think of a time where you had to leave your comfort zone to achieve a goal?”
Here are some of the benefits of leaving our comfort zone:
- We become more productive
- We challenge ourselves (and you’ll find it easier to face future challenges)
- We discover more opportunities
- We feel empowered
- We become more flexible

*You can ask group members, “What are some other benefits of leaving your comfort zone?”

3a. You can ask group members the following questions:
- Do you like to take risks or do you prefer familiarity & comfort? Why?
- Can you think of something you routinely do because it’s comfortable, even though it may not be the best for you in the long-run?

4.
Facilitator can conclude group by going over ways to overcome your fear of leaving your comfort zone:
- Reframe how you view situations & activities that are anxiety-provoking
  a. Instead of thinking about whether or not things will turn out well, tell yourself that just trying something new means you’ve already won!
  b. Example: If you are not athletic but you agree to join a volleyball team with your friend, don’t worry about how well or poorly you play… be proud of yourself for trying. Besides, you shouldn’t expect to play well if you’ve never done something like this before! Your skills will improve with time
- Challenge your belief that staying inside your comfort zone is better than leaving it
  a. As mentioned earlier, staying inside your comfort zone is quite harmful to you in the long-run
  b. When you are facing an anxiety-provoking situation, ask yourself, “What price will I pay if I avoid this situation?”
  c. Consider how you will change for the better if you accept a challenge
- Take small steps
  a. Example: If you’re trying to overcome your fear of public speaking, first prepare a speech and present it to a small group of people (it can be just people that you know- friends & family). Increase the size of the audience over time
- Make sure you are prepared
  a. When you’re prepared to tackle a challenge, you’re more confident
b. Consider the example from above. You can prepare by practicing the speech in front of a mirror and by asking others to read it & offer feedback

- Break away from some of your routines
  - a. Example: Take a different route to your grocery store
  - Trust yourself. Believe in yourself!

- Before you end group, you can ask group members the following questions:
  - What is one thing you would do if you knew you couldn’t fail?
  - What is one thing you can do this month that would be outside of your comfort zone?