

MEN WHO WORRY TOO MUCH AND HUG TOO LITTLE

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By **Janice Fronczak**

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SYNOPSIS: Two men enter a therapy session complete with “worry wrinkle control tape” to learn how to worry less and hug more, only to find out that they are the only ones who signed up and that their leader, being a control freak, has more issues to work on than they do. An unlikely combination of characters, the leader runs the two men through a series of word association games to rename themselves so that they can become “huggable.” You can’t help but love them all in the end.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(THREE MEN)

JOE..... Group leader, a hugger, smiles a lot, condescending at times. Extremely controlling. Gets angry easily. *(65 lines)*

TED..... A quiet businessman who aims to please and really wants help. *(38 lines)*

BILL..... A rough construction worker, has trouble with his feelings. *(39 lines)*

SETTING

Minimal set: room with five chairs in a slight arc, small table.

TIME: Mid-morning.

PROPS

- Clear or colored tape
- Scissors
- Ruler
- Three brown or gift bags (they should have a gusseted bottom to stand up on table) — one large with large stuffed bear, one medium with medium bear and one small with toucan bird inside
- Clipboard
- Pen
- Three peel-off name tags
- Large clock

SPECIAL PROP: Brightly colored toucan bird with squeaker inside (might have to be made).

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AT RISE:

*JOE enters carrying a large shopping bag full of something we can't see, places it on table. He then pulls out a roll of tape and a pair of scissors. With a ruler, JOE measures his own forehead for the size of tape, then cuts two pieces of tape and puts them on the edge of the table. Places name tags and pens on the table. JOE stands back and checks his work. Looks at the clipboard and crosses two names off of the list. Writes his name on a name tag and puts it on the left side of his jacket. Takes out a clock and double checks it with his watch when he is interrupted by an early bird, TED (carrying a shopping bag one-half the size of JOE's). Harried that he is not perfectly ready, JOE hurriedly places five chairs in a **more exact arc** making sure each chair is exactly the same distance from each other, then turns to TED and says first line.*

JOE: Welcome! Welcome to "Men Who Worry Too Much and Hug Too Little"! (*JOE gives a big bear hug around TED's middle, complete with hugging sounds. TED cowers. Takes TED's arm and drags him to the table.*) Here's your name tag. If you will write your name on it, put it on, we'll all get to know each other.

TED writes his name and puts his name tag on his right side of his jacket. JOE lowers his clipboard to show TED the "right" way to put his name tag on the left side of his jacket - and then carefully, like a kindergarten teacher, takes TED's name tag off and puts in on his left side of his jacket. JOE motions for TED to sit down. They both sit down.

JOE: (*Continued.*) So, Ted, did you bring it?

TED: Yes, I brought it. (*JOE takes TED's bag, puts on table.*)

JOE: Well . . . (*BILL saunters in carrying a smaller shopping bag. Attitude.*) Ah! Welcome! (*JOE rushes over to try and hug BILL but BILL puts his hand up to stop him. JOE, approaches BILL like you would a scared animal and sneaks a less vigorous hug around BILL's middle.*) If you would just put your name on— (*BILL won't take the lead, so like a horse being led to water, JOE waves name tag in front of BILL leading him towards the table.*) —this name tag here. And put it on, we'll get started.

BILL has put his name tag on his right side of his shirt. JOE attempts to move it to the left like his and TED's, but is stared down by BILL. JOE withdraws his hand. BILL sits the farthest away from JOE. All three men are now sitting, two chairs are still empty. JOE checks his tablet. BILL and TED look at each other suspiciously, TED tries to give BILL a smile. TED looks at BILL's name tag and then looks down at his own, like he's already the teacher's pet. Slight smirk.

JOE: *(Continued.)* Well, we had four men, but two cancelled, so let's begin. How is everyone today?

TED: Oh, fine, fine.

BILL reluctantly gives him the 'thumbs up' gesture.

JOE: Well! As you know, this is "Men Who Worry Too Much and Hug Too Little." I applaud both of you *(Stands up and applauds loudly like at an AA meeting.)* for the bravery and the courage that I know it took to get here. Let's just all have a little moment of silence while we all think about the struggles and how hard our lives really are. How miserable life can really be. Let's all concentrate on that. Let's take a pause right now. *(He urges the other two to stand and bow their heads in silence. PAUSE.)* OKAY! Now that we know where we came from, let's see where we're going! *(TED raises his hand.)* Yes, Ted?

TED: Are we going to use those things that you told us to bring?

JOE: Absolutely. Good point, I'm glad you brought that up. Absolutely, but not quite yet, Ted. Jumping the gun there a little, aren't you?

TED: I'm. I'm sorry, I'm just nervous.

JOE: And you worry too much. Can you go ahead and say that out loud?

TED: Do I need to?

JOE: I think you do.

TED: Okay.

JOE: Why don't you tell us your name?

TED: Ted.

JOE: Ted. We're going to do something about our names in a minute, too.

TED: My name is Ted and I worry too much.

JOE: There. Can you say it again? Can you stand up and say it and own that?

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TED stands up.

TED: Okay. My name is Ted and I worry too much.

JOE: And would you like help with that?

TED: Yes, I would. That's why I paid the \$200 for this workshop.

JOE: Let's not talk about money in this workshop. Let's just, not be petty like that, let's not talk about money.

TED: Oh, okay. It's just that money is one of the things I worry about.

JOE: And you're not going to worry anymore.

TED: That's right.

JOE: Ted, first thing I'd like you to do, since you've **owned** your worry is . . . *(Takes TED's hand and brings him up to the table.)* I want you to come with me over to this table. I want you to take some of this tape and tape your forehead. That way, you can't have any more worry wrinkles during this workshop. Ted just stares at the tape, reluctantly. Joe, taking the lead, puts Ted's tape on his forehead and smooths it out. Bill, I'd like you to do the same thing. Bill shoots a dirty look at Ted for being so complacent. Bill doesn't want to do it. Joe, frustrated at this bad student, gets Bill's tape and puts tape onto Bill's forehead. Ted smiles.

BILL: Are you gonna tape your forehead too?

JOE: Me? Me tape my forehead? I'm the leader here. Alright! Alright . . . yes, I will. I'm going to tape my forehead. *(Tapes his own forehead.)* Now, what this represents is that we don't need to worry anymore. We have no more worry wrinkles on our forehead. We all have tape on our worry area. Okay? Does everybody feel better? Good. Proceeding. *(Beat. MORE.)* Let's get to that name issue now. My name is Joe. Does Joe sound huggable? Does Joe sound like a worrier?

TED: Yeah, it does. Like a worrier.

JOE: Well, I did something about it. And that's why I'm leading the workshop. Because I did something about it. First of all I changed my name. Bill, what do you think my name might be?

BILL: Uh, Joo -- seph?

JOE: Good one, but nooo. Ted, do you have any ideas?

TED: I don't know. Uh, Shawn? Did you change your name to Shawn?

JOE: No,

TED: Stanley?

JOE: No.

TED: Rupert?

JOE: Noo!

TED: Bob???

JOE: No, no no, and no!! (*Getting visibly upset, tries to calm himself down.*) I changed my name . . . I'm going to whisper it, okay? I'm going to whisper it, because . . . (*Teary.*) it means a lot to me, so if you'd each come over, I'll whisper it to you.

BILL: I gotta tell you right now I don't feel comfortable with grown men whispering in my ear. I . . . I don't like that.

JOE: Well, could you try? Could this be the workshop where you put down your . . . you know there's another workshop about that. "Men Who Don't Like to be Whispered to," but we're not doing that today. So, why don't you go ahead and participate? Participation is all part of this.

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