

## CAST in order of first line

YVONNE: Challenged Day facilitator

DWAYNE: a rural hick

RHONDA: smart, patient, with a very slightly larger nose than usual

TREVOR: allergic to nuts

SUSAN: also allergic to nuts

PEDRO: the Python

BRENDA: plays the oboe

JASON: jealous boyfriend of Aleesha

ALEESHA: vacant young trollop

TIM: One of Aleesha's other interests

CLAYTON: ... and another ...

JOSH: ... and another ...

CANDACE: gives Aleesha a run for her money

TIFFANY: rich kid, willing to tell anyone else's secrets

BRUCE: bully. Strategic, not stupid.

It is possible to perform this as a radio play or classroom reading with only six performers. The following sets of characters could each be played by a single person:

YVONNE

DWAYNE, JASON, and JOSH

RHONDA, BRENDA, and TIFFANY

TREVOR and CLAYTON

SUSAN, ALEESHA, and CANDACE

PEDRO, TIM, and BRUCE

YVONNE

Hello there, Young People! I'm Yvonne, your Challenged Day facilitator, and I want to welcome each and every one of you to our Challenged Day workshop! Now I know you've hosted a Challenged Day at your school before but, just in case some of you are new, let me answer the question some of you may be asking: "What exactly is Challenged Day?" Well, Challenged Day is where we spend six-and-a-half hours nonstop together in the gym, not slamming each other into little mats and slashing at our shins with sticks like we usually do in a gym, where we're going to share our problems and our deepest emotions without bullying, teasing, or stereotyping each other, and subsequently reverting to alcohol, drugs, and sex to dull the pain.

(Students gasp.)

I know this is new to most of you, which is why it's such a Challenge, but today is the day we're going to kick open the doors between us. Let's end the loneliness, People! Let's end the disgust and revulsion! We're going to create a space of respect, tolerance, and forgiveness here today -- how, you ask? Well, anytime someone shares something really deep, instead of rolling our eyes or sticking our fingers down our throats, we're all going to flash "I love you" in sign language

(shows tall man and ring finger down,  
other fingers up)

to show our support and validation.

(Students groan.)

Oh, come on, Young People, it's going to be a wonderful adventure! You see, Challenged Day is like an emotional amusement park where you get on various roller coaster rides with your peers, and you all love roller coasters, don't you? The thrill of the ride makes up for the fact that you will all be made emotionally nauseous so that you will end up vomiting your psychological bile all over each other -- at which point I, your facilitator, will point to the horrible mess on the floor and say, See? See how much

you have in common? You're all full of emotional sickness but now it's all out, and out in the open, so everybody's all better! Now for our first exercise in trust and sharing! Do you see this blue line on the floor? I want any of you who have ever been, let's say, teased, for any reason whatsoever, to cross this line. Come on, don't be shy, Young People!

(Boy crosses line.)

YVONNE

Good for you! And what's your name?

DWAYNE

Dwayne.

YVONNE

Dwayne! Can you tell us why you were teased?

DWAYNE

'Cuz I cain't read none, I bin in jail, and I got a body part cut off by a combine.

YVONNE

Poor Dwayne! Has anyone else here been teased for the same reasons?

(All but one of his classmates cross the line.)

YVONNE

Oh my god! You're all in eighth grade in America in the 21st century, and you either can't read or you've been in jail?

DWAYNE

Well -- mostly it's the combines, Ma'am. Got blades like food processors, do combines.

YVONNE

Okay. Right. That's good, Young People. Honesty is good. Now, what about you, the girl who didn't cross the line. What's your name?

(Girl doesn't answer.)

YVONNE

Come on, Sweetheart, don't be self-conscious.

(Girl still doesn't answer.)

YVONNE

Now don't be shy. I'm talking to you -- the girl with the glasses and the big nose -- what's your name?

DWAYNE

Her name's Rhonda.

YVONNE

Rhonda, okay. Rhonda, have you ever been teased?

RHONDA

No.

YVONNE

Maybe about your nose?

RHONDA

No.

YVONNE

That's hard to believe, with a nose like a potato. Have you ever been called potato nose?

RHONDA

No.

YVONNE

Have you been bullied about your nose?

RHONDA

No.

YVONNE

Harassed?

RHONDA

No.

YVONNE

Harassed?

RHONDA

No.

YVONNE

Harassed?

(Rhonda purses her lips and walks across the line.)

YVONNE

Wonderful! You see how much we all have in common, Young People! Now, why don't we move onto our next exercise in compassion and understanding by sitting in a circle and saying "If you really knew me you would know that..." and then you tell us an important fact about yourself that we might not know. Get ready to flash those love signs people! The boy on my right, why don't you begin. What's your name?

TREVOR

Trevor.

YVONNE

Trevor! Okay, Trevor. How would you finish the sentence "If you really knew me you would know that...?"

TREVOR

(Pause)

I dunno.

YVONNE

Come on, Trevor, don't be shy. What can you share with us about your inner life? What's really going on in your treasured and holy sanctuary?

TREVOR

Well... I'm allergic to nuts.

YVONNE

Okay! Good response, let's flash our love signs! He's allergic to nuts, People. That's a start. What about you, sitting next to Trevor? What's your name?

SUSAN

Susan.

YVONNE

Right, okay, Susan. We want you to be totally honest about some aspect of your life -- something that's important to you that you want the rest of us to know.

SUSAN

Actually, Trevor stole my answer. I'm allergic to nuts. They make me swell up like a puffer fish.

YVONNE

Okay. Right. That's a good answer, Susan, but is there something even more important to you that you might be able to share with us?

SUSAN

Something more important than being dead in twenty-five seconds if I eat a nut?

YVONNE

No, okay, I see what you mean. All right, let's flash our love signs at Susan to show our support for her and her treasured and holy sanctuary! Okay, so who's sitting next to Susan?

PEDRO

Pedro. But they call me The Python.

YVONNE

The Python, ha, ha. Okay now, Pedro -- what can you share with us about your life? What's unique and special about you that the rest of us don't know?

PEDRO

(Pause)

Nothin'.

YVONNE

Oh, come come, Pedro. Everybody has something unique and special about them! Dwayne can't read, Rhonda has a big nose -- what's unique and special about you?

PEDRO

Well ... I'm allergic to nuts.

YVONNE

Okay, I think that's enough with the nuts today, Young People. I mean that's a good answer, Pedro, but Trevor and Susan have already confessed that. Can you think of anything else to confess? Have you ever been bullied, Pedro? Maybe harassed or stereotyped?

PEDRO

Yeah.

YVONNE

Okay. So, "If we really knew you we would know -- "

PEDRO

-- If you really knew me you would know that I've been bullied. And harassed. And the other thing.

YVONNE

Good, Pedro. That's good! Anything else?

PEDRO

Yeah, maybe.

YVONNE

Okay you're opening up, the honesty's flowing, good for you. This is exciting, people. We're making progress with our feelings, and progress with feelings means progress with thinkings, doesn't it? Okay, what else should we know about you, Pedro?

PEDRO

I once --

YVONNE

Okay, that's good Pedro, but let's get back to the format and stick with it, okay? If you really knew me you would know --

PEDRO

If you really knew me you would know --

YVONNE

Good, Pedro, good for you. What would we know?

PEDRO

You would know that I once killed a guy.

(Pause)

YVONNE

Okay, right. If there's one thing we should know about Pedro, it's that he once "killed a guy". Okay, Pedro, that's funny. Let's get back to honesty, to reality. You're making that up aren't you?

PEDRO

Well, yeah.

YVONNE

Okay, that's good. Now we're getting somewhere. He's just making it up, so let's flash our love signs to show Pedro that we understand how hard it is to tell the truth sometimes. It takes a big man to admit to lying -- let's show our support by giving Pedro a group hug.

(Extended group hug)

YVONNE

Okay, so Pedro -- what's the truth? Really?

PEDRO

I didn't kill a guy.

YVONNE

Good for you!

PEDRO

It was some lady. She was driving me mental!

YVONNE

(Pause)

Okay, well, if there's one thing we should definitely know about Pedro, it's that he once killed someone. Is that really the truth?

(Pedro nods.)

YVONNE

Well, I think that IS important to know. Good for you Pedro!

(Pedro weeps, head in hands)

YVONNE

Okay, I think Pedro's pretty sad now -- is that right, Pedro?

PEDRO

(Still weeping.)

Yeah.



YVONNE

Okay, I think we've got a breakthrough happening here, People. Let it all out Pedro. Wail like a banshee -- that's what this is all about. So tell us, Pedro, why are you feeling the way you're feeling right now?

PEDRO

'Cuz of who I killed.

YVONNE

Okay, that's good. It's because of who he killed, People. And who did you kill, Pedro?

PEDRO

(Sobbing hard)

Our last Challenged Day facilitator!

(Pause. Yvonne, still sitting on her chair, hops away from Pedro.)

PEDRO

It was during a group hug -- that's why they call me The Python, see?

YVONNE

Yes, okay. I think we all understand Pedro a little better, and we see he's not that different from you and me. Who of us here hasn't hugged too hard?

PEDRO

(sobbing)

And I just hugged Rhonda -- her body's under the bleachers.

YVONNE

You see? Pedro's making real progress here today. He confessed that he killed someone --

PEDRO

(still weeping)

-- and I'm allergic to nuts --

YVONNE

-- and he's allergic to nuts, that's right. All right, that's good. Moving on quickly, who do we have beside Pedro?

BRENDA

Brenda.

YVONNE

And Brenda? What should we know about you?

BRENDA

(sobbing hysterically)

OH GOD! I PLAY THE OBOE!

YVONNE

Okay, Brenda. That's a really tough one.

BRENDA

IT SOUNDS LIKE A DUCK! I'M SO EMBARRASSED!

YVONNE

Anyone would be, Honey. Just let it out.

(Brenda weeps psychotically. A couple  
of girls put their arms around her.)

YVONNE

How can we help Brenda, Class?

SUSAN

We could flash our love signs.

DWAYNE

We could put her oboe through a combine.

PEDRO

(still sobbing)

We could give her a hug.

YVONNE

Okay, good suggestions. For now, if you could just  
calm down a little, Brenda

(Brenda turns off the faucet  
immediately)

-- Let's just move on to --

JASON

Jason.

YVONNE

And what non-nut related confession do you want to

make, Jason?

JASON

If there's one thing you should know about me, it's that I plan to slice off the testicles of the bastard who slept with my girlfriend.

YVONNE

Gosh, that's quite a confession, Jason. Do you feel bad about feeling that way?

JASON

No. Why should I feel bad? The prick who slept with my girlfriend should feel bad, not me.

YVONNE

Have you tried forgiveness instead of vengeance as a strategy?

JASON

No, because that would be idiotic. If I forgive the guy, how long will it be before he's back in my girlfriend's pants again?

PEDRO

(still sobbing, but with head raised)

About five minutes.

YVONNE

Thank you, Pedro, I think that's enough from you today. Okay, Jason doesn't see forgiveness as a viable strategy. Let's flash our love signs to show Jason that although we don't support the idea that forgiveness is for losers and milksop pantywaist sissies, we still support him as a person. Okay? Right, so beside Jason we have....

ALEESHA

Aleesha.

YVONNE

Aleesha, that's a pretty name.

(Aleesha giggles)

YVONNE

So, Aleesha, if there's one thing we should know about

you, what would it be?

ALEESHA

Okay, if you really knew me you would know that I DO like nuts...

YVONNE

Okay...

ALEESHA

And, I'm Jason's girlfriend by the way....

YVONNE

Okay...

ALEESHA

And the name of the guy I slept with is --

YVONNE

-- OKAY Aleesha, we don't need to name names here. That's not important, and we don't want to get anyone in trouble, do we? This is a SAFE space -- so let's protect our friends from harm.

ALEESHA

(looks sheepish)

Okay.

YVONNE

Okay, so beside Aleesha we have --

TIM

Tim, and the one thing you should know about me is that I slept with Aleesha.

JASON

(rising)

You bastard!

YVONNE

Okay, now, boys! Boys! This is a safe place, a place without fear of judgment. Let's not judge, all right? Let's just calm down and listen. Okay. So... is anyone else here allergic to nuts? No? Okay, moving on then, who's sitting beside Tim?

CLAYTON

Clayton.

YVONNE

Clayton. Okay, Clayton, what should we know about you?

CLAYTON

I slept with Aleesha too.

(Jason roars.)

YVONNE

No, Jason, no judgment! And next to Clayton is...

JOSH

Josh.

YVONNE

And Josh --

JOSH

I slept with Aleesha as well.

YVONNE

And beside Josh is...

CANDACE

Candace.

YVONNE

And Candace?

CANDACE

I slept with Jason.

(Silence)

CANDACE

And Aleesha.

(More silence)

CANDACE

And, actually, I'm allergic to nuts as well. I should have said earlier, but I was too shy.

YVONNE

Okay, that's quite a confession, Candace.

CANDACE

And also the record number of guys I've slept with on

a Saturday night is 32.

YVONNE

Okay, that's enough information, Candace, and you boys can stop flashing your love signs right this second. Hey! That's not a love sign you're flashing, Mister! Enough of that. Okay, moving on from Candace we have --

TIFFANY

Tiffany.

YVONNE

And what about you, Tiffany? What should we know about you?

TIFFANY

I'm not sure I should say.

YVONNE

Oh, Tiffany, don't be afraid. This is a SAFE environment, remember? Sometimes parents worry that their teenagers might say something inappropriate at Challenged Day, but you can tell us anything!

TIFFANY

Okay, well, if there's one thing you should know about me it's that I'm from a broken home! I just hate my Mom and Dad!

YVONNE

Ooh, that's awful, isn't it Young People? But you see? You can say anything at Challenged Day and it's completely safe! Is there anything else you want to add?

TIFFANY

Can I really say anything?

YVONNE

Of course! It's SAFE, Tiffany!

TIFFANY

Like, can I say that my Dad's really the Walmart Washroom Rapist the cops have been after for years, and that he said if I ever told anybody I'd be dead within minutes?

SUSAN

Hey, just like me, if I eat a nut!

TIFFANY

And that he's with his secretary at the Hilton Hawaii waiting for a cocaine shipment from Colombia?

YVONNE

Of course, Tiffany! It's safe, and we're not here to judge.

TIFFANY

And that my Mom took off with our underage pool boy, but she left all her jewels in the safe in the front hall closet?

YVONNE

Okay...

TIFFANY

And that we never lock the guest room window, the keys for everything are in the butter dish in the fridge, the beer is in the wet bar downstairs, the handguns are in the night tables, and their Visa card number is 4200 7150 4966 8722 expiry date 07/09?

YVONNE

Okay, that's super Tiffany! As I said, all your secrets are safe with us. And beside Tiffany we have...

BRUCE

Bruce.

YVONNE

Okay, Bruce, I notice you have a little notebook you've been writing in.

BRUCE

Yeah. So?

YVONNE

So -- I think it's wonderful that you keep a journal.

BRUCE

I don't.

YVONNE

So what are you writing?

BRUCE

What do you think? I'm the school bully, aren't I? I'm takin' notes to use as ammunition later.

YVONNE

Ah, now that's not really what this is all about, Bruce.

BRUCE

Listen, Lady, I'm a petty criminal, all right? I beats up promiscuous lesbians, illiterate beta males, weaklings who can't even eat a little peanut -- it's what I do, okay? It's what I'm good at. You do what you're good at, you see your self esteem, self worth, and self confidence grow.

YVONNE

But what about the self esteem, self worth, and self confidence of others?

BRUCE

Hey, if they wanna beats me up, I says let 'em try. Hey, Tiffy, I don't wanna bust your Mamma's fingers - so what was the last four digits of her Visa card again?

TIFFANY

8722.

BRUCE

Thanks. Hey, it's too bad I work for your Pop. He's not gonna be real happy with you.

YVONNE

Now, Bruce. I think you're forgetting that this is a SAFE environment.

BRUCE

Right, safe, safe. Where was that again?

TIFFANY

In the front hall closet.



BRUCE

Thanks, Tiff. Maybe I go easy on you later. Maybe I won't kill you quite so bad.

TIFFANY

Thanks, Bruce.

BRUCE

No problem.

YVONNE

Okay, I think there's some healing going on here, People.

(Trevor, hands at neck, making choking noises.)

YVONNE

Trevor, are you okay Honey?

TREVOR

(Turning blue)

I told you ... I'm allergic to nuts ... and you're all ... nuts ...

(School bell rings.)

YVONNE

Okay, I think we've made some super progress here today that was well worth the \$9,000 plus expenses that your parents paid. Cha-ching! Now I'm going to put on the theme music from Rocky, a film about a man who got his self esteem, self worth, and self confidence from beating people up, and he gets paid for it too -- and we're going to spend two minutes hugging as many people as we can! Except for Pedro. Pedro, you sit over there, after you drag Rhonda's corpse out from under the bleachers. And Candace, I said hugging. Let's keep our knickers above our knees, all right Young People? Jason? You stay away from Tim, Clayton, Josh and Candace please. Tiffany, you stay away from Bruce. Actually, everybody better stay away from Bruce. Can somebody help Trevor?