# *Group: How One Therapist and a Circle of Strangers Saved my Life* by Christie Tate

## Synopsis

Christie Tate had just been named the top student in her law school class and finally had her eating disorder under control. Why then was she driving through Chicago fantasizing about her own death? Why was she envisioning putting an end to the isolation and sadness that still plagued her in spite of her achievements?

Enter Dr. Rosen, a therapist who calmly assures her that if she joins one of his psychotherapy groups, he can transform her life. All she has to do is show up and be honest. About everything --- her eating habits, childhood, sexual history, etc. Christie is skeptical, insisting that that she is defective, beyond cure. But Dr. Rosen issues a nine-word prescription that will change everything: “You don’t need a cure, you need a witness.”

So begins her entry into the strange, terrifying and ultimately life-changing world of group therapy. Christie is initially put off by Dr. Rosen’s outlandish directives, but as her defenses break down and she comes to trust Dr. Rosen and to depend on the sessions and the prescribed nightly phone calls with various group members, she begins to understand what it means to connect.

## Discussion questions

1. Christie begins GROUP by detailing the first time she “wished for death.” She spends the rest of chapter one describing the contrasts of her life --- an unwitting outsider might assume she has it all, yet internally she struggles with profound loneliness. Were you surprised to find that Christie could struggle so much with her self-worth given her success?
2. One of Christie’s biggest reservations about participating in Dr. Rosen’s group is the fact that secrets are discouraged. How does this central tenet of Dr. Rosen’s group sessions affect the ways she interacts with her fellow members and how she forms relationships with the other patients?
3. In chapter six, Christie describes how once during a meeting, no one says a single word for the entire 90-minute session. What do you think was Dr. Rosen’s intent with this exercise? Is this kind of silence productive or a waste of time?
4. When Christie leaves an indignant voice mail on Dr. Rosen’s answering machine, he uses the moment to “celebrate” her anger (p. 93). What are the benefits of uplifting feelings that are, in Christie’s words, “ugly, irrational, petty, reckless, spiteful, and spewing” (p. 94)? How does expressing this anger freely affect her relationship with Dr. Rosen and the group?
5. In chapter 28, Christie and Max engage in an intense fight in front of Dr. Rosen and the other group members during a session. At the end of the chapter, they reconcile with a wordless hug. How do these moments of catharsis influence Christie’s feelings about and openness toward relationships?
6. Reflect back on how Christie and her approach to the struggles she faces evolve over the course of the book. In your opinion, what are some key moments that demonstrate to you that group therapy was working for Christie?

*Synopsis/Discussion questions from https://www.readinggroupguides.com/reviews/group-how-one-therapist-and-a-circle-of-strangers-saved-my-life/guide*