

Synopsis: Inside Out

ACT ONE

Five completely diverse, busy women dramatically realize this is their day for group therapy in the opening song *INSIDE OUT*. We meet GRACE (therapist) who invites us “in.” We learn that this is a first session for DENA (a pop singer/actress who’s been off the charts for a while) as she considers whether to join this group.

In Dena’s try-out session, we meet the group regulars: CHLO (a gay single parent dealing with her troubled teenage son), LIZ (a high-powered executive who juggles career and family), MOLLY (a new full-time mother adjusting to her departure from the career-oriented workforce) and SAGE (a New Age flower child), who relies heavily on astrology and Tarot cards, the subject of her duet with Grace in *LET IT GO*.

Still trying to shed her maternity pounds, Molly gives herself an esteem boost as she wishes she were indisputably THIN, supported by all the women in this very female wish. When the session is over, Grace recognizes Dena’s indecision about whether to stay, and does her best to convince Dena in *I CAN SEE YOU HERE*.

In a later session, Molly confesses that she believes her husband finds her unattractive. As Molly is unable to finish her sentence, “If he really loved me, he would...” Grace encourages her to spit out the first thing that comes to mind, and asks the other group members to help. The result, *IF YOU REALLY LOVED ME*, is a collection of deep-seated desires.

Grace is intrigued to discover that Chlo casually invited Dena to her home for a visit, where they encountered Travis, Chlo’s son. Hoping to get to know Dena better, Grace talks Dena into roleplaying Travis, which Dena does far more effectively than anyone could have guessed in *YO, CHLO*. Dena’s depiction of Travis fills Chlo with longing to return to the days when Travis was younger, more manageable, in her reprise of *IF YOU REALLY LOVED ME*.

It’s a new session, and we learn that Liz has been offered a new job, but has not dis-

cussed it with her husband. Liz turns the topic away from herself and encourages Dena to let people know she’s still vibrant and viable. She accuses Dena of not being honest, revealing that she knows Dena does not have the recording contract she told them she has. The discussion turns to finances and a bitter feud between Liz and Dena. Dena wants to leave, but Grace challenges her instead to participate in an exercise: The group talks *BEHIND DENA’S BACK* as if she weren’t there, but she is. Affected by their words, vulnerable and empty, Dena can’t open up because she says there’s *NO ONE INSIDE*.

Dena’s confession triggers each woman to evaluate her own dilemma as Grace suggests they all make a vow to honestly turn the *INSIDE OUT*.

ACT TWO

Even though she’s supposed to leave her work at the office, Grace, human and troubled herself, cares deeply about her patients who are very much a part of her life, as evidenced in *GRACE’S NIGHTMARE*.

In a new session, when Dena confesses she’s broke, the group encourages her to put on a cabaret to renew interest in her singing. Too financially strained and unable to find other work to get her through the next month, she lays deep hopes and fears on the line in *ALL I DO IS SING*. As Dena begins to find core feelings, the others are encouraged to find theirs.

Throughout the play and her history with this group, Chlo flirts shamelessly with these women. Liz accuses her of flirting only where it’s safe and, in Liz’s inimitable style of pushing these women’s buttons, she says yes to one of Chlo’s come-ons. The wise-cracking, usually flippant Chlo is thrown by Liz’s response and by the question of how long it’s been since she’s had a lover. For the first time, she confesses in *NEVER ENOUGH*.

Inspired by her groupmates’ revelations, Sage calmly reveals that when she asked her boyfriend to marry her, he said no, because he’s still married. The group is furi-

ous, but Sage seems barely miffed until she digs down in *I DON’T SAY ANYTHING* and, finally, gets angry. Molly then drops the bombshell that she and her husband have been living apart and that he’s been having an affair. She claims, however, that she’s surprisingly stable, which she proves in her prepared funeral ceremony for her marriage certificate, taking the group with her in the inspirational romp *THE PASSING OF A FRIEND*.

Liz now admits that she never discussed the job offer with her husband for fear he’d divorce her. They have an agreement, and if she breaks it, she may lose him. Stubborn and resistant, Liz fights Grace’s attempt to take her through a process to help her see what she must do, encouraging Liz to see her husband’s viewpoint in *THINGS LOOK DIFFERENT*. When Dena suggests that Liz start her own business at home, the women concur and tantalize Liz with the obvious-but-overlooked solution: *DO IT AT HOME*.

Through everyone’s combined financial and spiritual efforts, Dena returns to the stage. As the women gather in her dressing room pre-show, Dena wonders, in *REACHING UP*, if she still has what it takes. In the eyes of her groupmates, she realizes she won’t know until she tries. Her cabaret act is amazingly strong, and she feels the support of her new friends. They all feel the surge of power that comes when differing individuals find a way to understand each other and are inspired to help one another listen to their hearts.

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