

A small group of people sit on folding chairs in the circle. All eyes are on Mark, the leader of the session.

MARK

Do all of you know why you are here today--why your friends and family insisted you come to this session?

The small group shakes their heads.

MARK

It is because each and every one of you is annoying.

TONY

What?

MARK

To be clear, it's not your whole personality that's unpleasant.

LEAH

That's nice to hear.

MARK

But each of you does something in particular that is aggravating. And today, I am going to make you confront it in the hope that you can recover.

BEN

How are you qualified to train us out of these so-called annoying habits?

MARK

I have a Ph.D. in Irritatology.

BEN

That's a thing?

MARK

My work will speak for itself. Leah, why don't we begin with you.

LEAH

What about me?

MARK

Well, tell me. What did you do last night?

LEAH

I read in bed.

MARK

Tell me in a fuller sentence. "Last night, I ...

LEAH

Last night, I lay in bed and read.

MARK

Right there. That's annoying.

LEAH

What?

MARK

You used the proper past tense of the verb lie. Last night, I lay in bed.

BEN

Yea, that is annoying.

LEAH

It's the correct word! The past tense of lie is lay. Yesterday, I lay in bed. I have lain in bed. Past-perfect tense.

MARK

There you go again.

TONY

I have lain. That's so, so annoying.

LEAH

It's the correct conjugation.

MARK

Yes. But when you use lain in everyday conversation, people want to punch you.

BEN

We do. You sound like an asshole.

LEAH

It's proper English. Look at the dictionary.

MARK

In normal conversation, we say, I laid, I have laid.

TONY

The dictionary needs to move on.

MARK

True. It needs to lie down that lain crap.

LEAH

Lay down. You use lay when you lay something else down.

MARK

There you go. Being annoying again.

BEN

I disagree. You should know that difference.

LEAH

It's a bit embarrassing that you don't know.

BEN

Especially for a Ph.D.

MARK

This isn't about me. Ben, let's move on to you.

BEN

What's wrong with me?

MARK

You have a bike rack on your car.

BEN

So?

MARK

And you've never put a bike on it.

BEN

I may, someday.

MARK

You've had that rack on your car for five years. Not once have put a bike up there. In fact, I don't think in all those years you've ever biked.

TONY

Oh, that's so annoying.

MARK

Yes, Tony, it is. Tell him why.

TONY

Because you don't bike. You just want to seem like the kind of person who bikes. It's sad.

LEAH

You're using the bike rack to prove something to the world. Like, look at me, I'm adventurous. I do things. It's like men who write in personal ads how much they like to travel to third world countries. It's B.S.

TONY

I always hated people with bike racks anyway. They're showing off how they're not depressed and incapacitated like the rest of us are. I don't have the energy to install a bike rack on my car roof, much less put a bike it, much less take the bike down and start biking.

LEAH

Ben's too lazy to do it too. It's a facade.

BEN

One of these days, I'm going to bike.

MARK

No you're not.

TONY

Do me next. Tell me how I'm annoying.

MARK

Tony, let me take a look at the write-up on you. Ooh, there's a lot. Let's save you for next week and devote the whole session.

TONY

Oh come on. Can't I get a preview?

MARK

Okay. Here's something. You carry an umbrella even if there's only a 5% chance of rain.

LEAH

That's annoying.

BEN

Very annoying. Why bother? So it won't drizzle on your hair?

LEAH

What, is your hair so precious?

TONY

Who cares about the umbrella? What's the big deal?

LEAH

I know people like you. You people are always misplacing that umbrella you don't even need. We're leaving a restaurant and suddenly everything has to stop. "Where my umbrella? Where did that umbrella go?"

BEN

Fifteen minutes looking for that umbrella you're not going to use.

MARK

Dominique, let's turn to you.

DOMINIQUE

What's my problem?

MARK

You like to brag that you're against things everyone is against.

DOMINIQUE

Do you have an example?

MARK

Sure. The other week, you said to co-workers, "I am watching the show *The Crown*. But to be clear, I am against monarchy."

DOMINIQUE

I *am* against monarchy.

BEN

Everyone is against monarchy!

LEAH

Seriously. As if we all think monarchy is the best system of government.

DOMINIQUE

I'm glad to hear you're on the right side.

LEAH

You don't have to have some great morals to be against monarchy. You think we believe in the divine right of kings? Oh, you are so annoying.

DOMINIQUE

So you agree they should dissolve the Royal Family in Great Britain?

LEAH

Well, that's not a real monarchy. No one believes in them. They're just for fun. Like astrology.

MARK

Tess, you're in the hot seat.

TESS

Uh oh.

MARK

You're vegan.

TONY

Oh that's annoying.

MARK

Well, that's just the the start. Let me ask you, Tess. Do you like hummus?

TESS

No! I don't like hummus. Why does everyone assume I like hummus? Just because I'm a vegan and wear long flowing skirts, chunky jewelry, hoop earrings and accessorize with scarves doesn't mean I like hummus! Stop assuming I like hummus. I don't.

MARK

That's it, right there. People are sick of you screaming about how you don't like hummus.

TESS

But I don't. And people just think because I dress like Stevie Nicks, they should break out the pita. I'm not even into chick peas.

MARK

Fine! Just say, "No thanks. I don't want hummus" and then eat the babaganoush. Calm down about it.

TESS

I don't like the tahini.

MARK

Shh. Quiet now.

TESS

How many more hummus places are they going to open? Don't you think the world has enough hummus?

MARK

Hey! Enough! Zip. All of you need to take a good look at yourselves and these annoying habits. You must overcome them.

BEN

Fine, Mark. I can concede, I'm annoying. But what about you?

LEAH

Yes, Dr. Mark. Are you so above reproach?

MARK

We're here to talk about you.

TESS

How do you expect us to be open and honest about our irritating issues, when you can't be honest about yours?

MARK

What do you want to know?

TONY

What makes you annoying?

MARK

I don't have the level of problems all of you have, with the umbrella and the lay, lain and the non-biking biker. It's nothing as serious as that.

DOMINIQUE

Tell us.

MARK

Okay. Sometimes I snort when I laugh.

DOMINIQUE

You can do better than that.

MARK

Fine. Occasionally, when I'm driving, I like to drive straight toward a pedestrian and at the last minute swerve away, just to see the look of terror on their face.

LEAH

Oh my God.

MARK

What?

BEN

That's horrible.

MARK

Yea. Granted, it's a little annoying. But it's nothing compared to hummus hysteria.

LEAH

Petrifying pedestrians by almost killing them isn't annoying. It's psychopathic.

MARK

You see, I'm not even annoying.

BEN

You're sick.

MARK

It's good fun. Just because that one old man had a heart attack.

TONY

You're a terrible person.

MARK

Tony, I knew I recognized you. Did I once pretend I was going to run you over? Because I think you scratched my car with your umbrella. It was a sunny day.

DOMINIQUE

I am totally against almost running over pedestrians.

TESS

Everyone is against that, Dominique! Everyone sane.

DOMINIQUE

I'd like to stuff you with hummus.

LEAH

Stop it! I'm getting a migraine. I can't tell you how often I've lain in bed with a ...

BEN

Oh God. No.

TESS

Stop with the lain.



BEN

You all are so annoying. I can't take it. Mark, I may volunteer for you to run me over.

MARK

That's all the time we have for this week. Next week, same time. Anyone need a ride home?

ALL

No!