



Group Facilitation Materials

A free recovery resource from Stepwise Recovery

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STEPWISE RECOVERY

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Ready-to-run session outlines for the Six-Lens Recovery Framework

Running a group session well means holding the space—creating safety, listening hard, and steering gently when needed. These six outlines map onto the Stepwise Six-Lens Framework: one session per lens, each built around the same structure so facilitators and participants know what to expect. Use them as written or adapt them to your setting. The goal is to help people see their recovery from different angles, not to convert anyone to anything. That's what works.

Facilitation Ground Rules

These are the boundaries that make groups safe. Introduce them at the start of your first session and remind people briefly before each one. They're not rules to enforce punitively—they're protection for everyone in the room.

- Confidentiality: What's said here stays here. Not in the pub, not at home, not online. Make it concrete.
- Respect and no judgement: Different beliefs, different paths. You listen even if you disagree.
- One person talks at a time: No crosstalk. Everyone deserves to be heard.
- You can pass: If a question doesn't fit, say 'pass.' No pressure, no explanation needed.
- Not therapy, not diagnosis: We explore recovery through the framework. Crisis work happens elsewhere.
- No cross-talk or over-helping: Keep focus on the framework and group. That's your job.

How to Use These Sessions

Each session follows the same shape so people settle in quickly. Aim for 60 minutes; stretch to 90 if your group works slower and more reflectively. Adapt the timing to your people, not the other way around.

The structure

- Aim (2 min): The lens you're exploring and why it matters.

- Opening Check-In (10 min): Brief, not therapy. 'How are you coming to this today?' Listen, don't fix.
- Discussion Questions (20–25 min): Four or five questions moving from understanding the lens to seeing it in yourself.
- Exercise (10–15 min): Something people do, not just talk about. A writing prompt, pair conversation, or structured sharing.
- Close (5 min): Recap one idea, offer a reflection question for the week, remind people of confidentiality.

Sessions 1–2: Identification and Powerlessness

Session 1: Identification and Denial

Aim: Understanding how denial protects us, and how seeing the truth about our drinking or using is the first move towards something different. **Opening Check-In:** 'As you come to this group today, what's one thing you're aware of about yourself?' **Discussion:** What does denial feel like from the inside? When did someone first suggest you had a problem? What were you protecting yourself from by not seeing it? What shifted that made you willing to look at the truth? How does denial show up for you now? **Exercise (The Denial Map):** Ask people to write three columns: 'What I told myself,' 'What was actually true,' and 'What shifted that.' Five minutes silent; five to ten minutes sharing by choice. Do one yourself as example. **Close:** 'Denial isn't a character flaw; it's a survival tool that kept you going until it didn't. Seeing it clearly isn't about shame—it's about power. You get to choose what's true now.'

Session 2: Powerlessness

Aim: The paradox that admitting what we can't control is where real power begins. **Opening Check-In:** 'What's something this week you couldn't change, no matter how hard you tried?' **Discussion:** What does powerlessness mean to you? (People often confuse it with helplessness—naming the difference helps.) When did you first feel truly powerless over using? What's the difference between powerlessness and surrender? What power do you have even though you're powerless over using? Who or what do you rely on when you hit a limit you can't move? **Exercise (The Two Circles):** Draw two circles: inside one write 'Things I can't control,' in the other 'Things I can.' People fill them in silent, then read theirs aloud. The clarity lands hard. **Close:** 'Admitting you're powerless isn't giving up. It's stopping the fight you were losing and putting your energy where it actually works.'

Sessions 3–4: Turning Point and Spiritual Experience

Session 3: Turning Point / Surrender

Aim: The moment or process that shifted you from 'I can't go on like this' to 'I'm willing to try something else.' **Opening Check-In:** 'What brought you into recovery? In one or two sentences.' You'll hear grief, relief, anger, gratitude—all of it is the turning point. **Discussion:** What was your breaking point? Did surrender happen all at once or bit by bit? What did you have to let go of? What do you surrender to? (Not everyone says Higher Power—that's okay.) How does the turning point show up for you now, in everyday life? **Exercise (Letter to Your Past Self):** People write to themselves at the moment just before the turning point: 'Here's what I need you to know.' Five minutes; no sharing required, but offer the space. Powerful because it holds both struggle and hope. **Close:** 'The turning

point isn't one moment—it's every time you choose differently. You've already done it once; you can do it again.'

Session 4: Spiritual Experience

Aim: Connection, meaning, something bigger than yourself. Not religion—though it can be. But the sense that you're not alone. Opening Check-In: 'What's something or someone that reminds you that you're part of something bigger?' Leave space for 'I don't know yet.' Discussion: What does spiritual mean to you? When have you felt genuinely held or helped by something outside yourself? What gives your recovery meaning or purpose? How do you stay connected when it's hard? Where do you find hope? Exercise (Spiritual Inventory): People list (silently): nature, people, practices, ideas, or experiences that ground them. Nothing has to be traditional. Coffee in the garden is spiritual if it is. They keep the list; it's a map they made. Close: 'You don't have to have figured this out. Spiritual experience is something you live into, not think your way into. Keep noticing.'

Sessions 5–6: Resistance and Passing It On

Session 5: Spiritual Resistance and Ego Defence

Aim: The parts of us that push back—pride, control, self-sufficiency, old beliefs. Seeing them clearly so they don't run the show. Opening Check-In: 'What's one thing about recovery that annoys you or makes you suspicious?' You'll get honesty here, which is the point. Discussion: What does your ego defend? When have you sabotaged yourself just to be right? What part of recovery do you resist most, and why? What's the difference between healthy boundaries and defensive walls? What would it cost you to let some of that defensiveness go? Exercise (The Defence Dialogue): People write a conversation between two parts of themselves: the part that wants recovery and the part that resists. Reading their own dialogue aloud often surprises people—suddenly the resistance becomes visible, negotiable. Close: 'Your ego defended you once. It did good work. Now it sometimes gets in the way. You don't have to kill it; you just have to remember who's actually driving.'

Session 6: Passing It On

Aim: How recovery deepens when you help someone else see what you've seen. Opening Check-In: 'How have you already helped someone else, even in a small way?' Might be in this room; might be outside. Might be accidental. Discussion: What's the difference between helping and enabling? Who helped you early on, and what did they do that mattered? How do you stay in your own recovery while supporting someone else? What can you offer that nobody else can? What's hard about passing things on? Exercise (The Gift List): People name three things they've learned in recovery that they can offer to someone else. Not 'the answer,' but 'my experience.' Writing it down makes it real. Close: 'Passing it on isn't about rescue or preaching. It's about letting someone see, in you, that recovery is possible. You've already done that just by being here.'

Managing Difficult Moments

Groups will have them. Here's how to handle the three most common situations.

Someone dominates

In the moment: 'Thanks for your honesty. I want to make space for everyone. Let's hear from someone who hasn't shared yet.' Warm, not punishing. If they keep going: 'I'm going to gently interrupt—everyone deserves a turn.' After the group: Pull them aside. 'Your story matters. For next week, could you let others land their thoughts first? I want the group balanced.' Most people don't

realise they're doing it.

Someone's in crisis

Pause the group. Don't make a huge scene; just pause. Ask directly: 'Are you safe? Are you thinking about harming yourself?' If yes to suicide or self-harm, move to safeguarding (below). If overwhelmed: 'You don't have to sit through the rest. That's okay.' After crisis: Ring them before the next session. It doesn't have to be you—might be their sponsor or an on-call service. But there's a plan.

Someone discloses abuse or becomes emotionally reactive

Hear them. Don't shut them down. 'Thank you for trusting us.' If abuse disclosure: clarify 'Are you getting support for this?' If yes, that's often enough. If no, you help them find it. If they've disclosed causing harm: listen and don't lecture, but be clear: 'If anyone's in danger, we report that. Are you working with anyone on this?' If someone gets angry: stay calm, don't meet anger with authority. 'I hear you're frustrated. Can you tell me what's triggered that?' Listen. Validate the feeling, not the accusation. If they stay, let the moment settle. If they leave, let them go. Follow up next week.

Safeguarding and Signposting

Your group is not a crisis service or a therapy group. When someone needs more than the group can hold, you know where to point them.

Immediate danger

- Emergency: 999
- NHS 111: non-emergency mental health crisis
- Samaritans: 116 123 (24 hours, any crisis)
- Childline: 0800 1111 (under 19s)

Abuse or safeguarding concern

Child abuse, domestic violence, modern slavery: you must report to your local safeguarding team or local authority. You're likely a mandatory reporter depending on your setting. Tell the person: 'I need to report this because I have a duty to keep people safe. That doesn't mean I don't trust you; it means I'm taking this seriously.'

Ongoing support resources

- Addiction services: contact your local NHS service or council (Google 'addiction support [your town]')
- Mental health: GP referral to talking therapies, or MIND 0300 123 3393
- Domestic abuse: Women's Aid 0808 2000 247
- Peer support: AA, NA, SMART Recovery, HAMS, Refuge Recovery—different approaches

A Final Word on Your Role

You're not here to save anyone. You're here to create space where people can see themselves more clearly—and often, when people see clearly, they change their own minds. That's all the power you need. Trust the framework. It works because it doesn't pretend there's one answer. Trust the group. People are wiser than we give them credit for. Trust yourself. If you're warm, honest, and clear about your limits, people feel it.

If you're stuck in a session, ask: 'What do people think about this?' Silence is sometimes silence, and sometimes it's a gift. Don't rush it. And if you make a mistake—you will—name it: 'I got that wrong. Here's what I meant.' People respect that more than perfection. The group will teach you. Pay attention.

Keep going — you're not alone

This resource is one of a full library of free tools, worksheets and reading at stepwiserecovery.com/resources — take what helps and leave the rest. These tools are designed to sit alongside fellowship programmes, meetings and sponsorship — never to replace them.

The Stepwise Recovery Guides

Substance-specific recovery guides written by people who've recovered — for cocaine, ketamine, families, young people, and children. Free preview chapters, no email required, at stepwiserecovery.com/guides

Our 1-in-10 Pledge

For every ten guides sold, we donate one to someone who can't afford it — through treatment centres and prison recovery programmes.

Need help right now?

Samaritans: 116 123 (free, 24 hours) · FRANK: 0300 123 6600

Narcotics Anonymous UK: 0300 999 1212 · SHOUT: text 85258

Childline (under 19s): 0800 1111 · Nacoda: 0800 358 3456