Breakout 1 — Domestic Violence — Safety First, Shame Never

ROOM RULE — DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SITTING

This sitting is for survivors and people with lived experience of domestic violence only. People who have caused harm do not attend this sitting; accountability work goes to a separate accountability track — staff referral. This sitting is gender-specific. If both members of a pair arrive for the same sitting, the facilitator checks with staff BEFORE group: the survivor sitting goes ahead, the other person is offered the separate accountability track that day, and nothing is disclosed about either person. See the escalation box at the front of this packet and the Facilitator Guide crisis protocol. The facilitator does not ask participants who they are paired with and does not confirm attendance or anything disclosed. The staff check before group happens privately, without naming either person in the room. The gender this sitting serves in a given rotation is set by staff for that rotation and posted with the two daily choices, without disclosing who attends. Anyone who recognizes a partner or former partner in the room may step out at any time, tell staff privately, and return or not as they choose — no questions asked, and nothing disclosed. In a week when this sitting serves the other gender, a survivor is connected to an advocate the same day and is welcomed at the next sitting for their gender. If no advocate is reachable the same day, or the next sitting is more than one week away, staff name the interim contact, the check-in rhythm, and the date of the next sitting to the survivor privately the same day, and record only that the connection was made. This sitting runs as needed: the women's sitting every other week, and the men's sitting on the alternating weeks when there is a need.

Separate accountability track: a person who has caused harm does not attend the survivor sitting. The facilitator refers the person to staff the same day, before group, without disclosing anything about either person. Staff offer a separate accountability sitting on a different day, in a different room, where accountability work happens apart from the survivor group. The facilitator never carries messages, runs joint work, or confirms who attended either sitting. Staff hold the sitting; the facilitator never runs it.

One sentence for the board: Safety comes first, the person who caused harm owns that harm, and no one here has to earn safety by forgiving or reconciling.

Purpose	Help clients understand domestic violence clearly, center survivor safety in every part of the session, introduce safety planning as a personal and practical process led by the survivor, and connect any client who wants help to an advocate — without pressure, exposure, or couples work of any kind.
Who chooses this group	Curriculum groups meet separately for men and for women. Breakout groups are coed unless otherwise specified; the Domestic Violence breakout is gender-specific.

	Placement for participants who do not fit a men/women split follows the participant's stated preference, confirmed with staff for safety and privacy. Nothing about a participant's placement is disclosed to the group. This sitting is for survivors and people with lived experience only. People who have caused harm do not attend this sitting; they go to a separate accountability track by staff referral. This sitting is gender-specific. If both members of a pair arrive for the same sitting, the facilitator checks with staff BEFORE group, the survivor sitting goes ahead, the other person is offered the separate accountability track that day, and nothing is disclosed. No participant is required to disclose anything to belong in this room. The stated preference stands unless a stated safety reason requires a private conversation. Safety and privacy are the only criteria.
Length	60 minutes
Materials	Paper and pens for every client, whiteboard or flip chart and markers, and the topic resources named in this outline

Safety rules for this group — read before you facilitate

- **Safety first.** This group is survivor-safety-centered. If a teaching point and a survivor's safety ever conflict in the room, safety wins.
- **No couples work.** Never run conjoint or couples work in this group — no joint sessions, no mediated conversations, no messages carried between partners, and no exercises that put a survivor and a person who harmed them in the same work.
- **No pressure to forgive or reconcile.** Forgiveness and reconciliation are never presented as conditions of safety, healing, faithfulness, or program standing. A survivor may explore forgiveness in their own time, in their own faith, or not at all in this group. Facilitators do not steer toward it.
- **No required disclosure.** No one is pressed to name a person, describe an incident, or tell a story. General learning is always a complete way to participate.
- Know your lane. State confidentiality and its limits at the start, every time. If a client discloses current danger, tell the Program Director or on-call supervisor the same hour and connect them to staff and an advocate the same day. See the escalation box at the front of this packet. Do not investigate, confront any other person, or attempt rescue yourself. Document the disclosure the same day.

- Same-day pass-on — by category. Read aloud only: “If you tell us you are in danger now, we tell staff the same hour and connect you to an advocate the same day.” See the facilitator card after these safety rules for the by-category detail, kept at the facilitator’s seat.
- **Protect information.** Watch the room. A client may have a partner or former partner in the program. Never confirm or deny who attended, what was said, or what anyone is planning.

Time	Segment	What happens
0–5 min	Welcome and safety rules	Welcome, the safety rules above in plain language, confidentiality and limits, right to pass.
5–30 min	Teaching	What domestic violence is, why leaving is rarely simple, what safety planning is, and Lethality/Danger teaching (information only, 8 minutes within this segment). Cut point: if time runs short, shorten the discussion — never the Lethality/Danger teaching or the practice.
30–45 min	Discussion	Prompts below. General answers only — no one is asked for personal incidents.
45–55 min	Practice — private safety thinking	Clients privately work the safety-planning thinking sheet in this outline. Nothing is collected or read aloud.
55–60 min	Close and resources	Resources offered to everyone (not singled out), same-day staff follow-up for anyone who asks.

FACILITATOR CARD — SAME-DAY PASS-ON — BY CATEGORY (keep at the facilitator’s seat; do not read aloud in full)

Disclosures of current danger go to the Program Director or on-call supervisor the same hour and to an advocate the same day. Disclosures that suggest a child may be unsafe, or any reporting duty that applies, go to the Program Director or on-call supervisor the same day. A participant who asks for advocate help is connected to an advocate and to staff the same day. Nothing disclosed in this group is held by the facilitator alone past the day it is shared. The connection is made privately, outside the group. The facilitator names the connection, does not investigate, and does not keep a list. Give the written note to the Program Director the same day; do not keep your own list.

Read aloud only: “If you tell us you are in danger now, we tell staff the same hour and connect you to an advocate the same day.”

Teaching points

- Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive control by one person over a partner or family member. Coercive control means one person using threats, control of money, isolation, and fear to control another person's daily life. It can be physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, financial, spiritual, or digital — including monitoring a phone, controlling money, isolating a person from family and faith, and using threats about children, housing, or recovery.
- Substance use does not cause domestic violence, and sobriety alone does not end it. The two often travel together and each makes the other more dangerous, which is why safety planning belongs in recovery work.
- Leaving is rarely a single simple step. A survivor may depend on the other person for housing, income, transport, or care of children; may fear retaliation; may still love the person; and may have been told — sometimes in religious language — that leaving is failure. Shame keeps people isolated. Clear, non-judgmental information opens options.
- A safety plan is a personalized, practical plan a survivor builds for their own situation — while living in the situation, while preparing to leave, and after leaving. The survivor leads it, ideally with a trained advocate. This group introduces the thinking; it does not complete anyone's plan in the room.
- Faith language must never be used in this room to excuse harm, demand submission to danger, or rush forgiveness. Accountability for harm belongs to the person who caused it, and to appropriate legal and clinical processes — not to this group.
- **Lethality and danger — information only.** Teach these facts plainly, as information, not as an assessment of anyone in the room. Separation is a high-risk period: danger often rises when a person leaves or plans to leave. Strangulation is a serious danger sign. Access to firearms raises the risk of a killing. Stalking and technology monitoring — location sharing, phone tracking, shared accounts and passwords — can continue after separation and can reveal a survivor's plans. Each fact is paired with the same-day connection below: any participant who recognizes danger in their own situation is connected to an advocate and to staff the same day.
- **No in-group risk assessment.** The facilitator does not assess any participant's risk in group, does not score danger, and does not complete a safety plan for anyone in the room. The facilitator teaches the information, offers the resources to everyone, and connects any participant who asks — or who discloses current danger — to an advocate and to staff the same day.

Discussion prompts

- “What makes it hard for any person — not anyone here specifically — to ask for help when home is not safe?”
- “What does a safe, respectful relationship actually look like day to day? Name ordinary things.”
- “What can friends, family, and community members do that genuinely helps — and what well-meant responses can make things worse?”
- “Where could a person in this county start if they wanted to talk to an advocate, with no commitment to any course of action?”

Practice — private safety-planning thinking (10 minutes, never collected)

Give every participant the same sheet so no one is singled out. Participants write only for themselves and keep or fold away their sheet as they choose. A sheet goes to an advocate only, at the survivor's choice — never to staff for safekeeping. If no advocate is at hand, keep your practice sheet with you, or with a trusted person you choose. Do not leave it in the room, and do not hand it to staff for safekeeping. A basket or bin is in the room for anyone choosing to destroy their sheet here rather than carry it home. A sheet taken home can be found — decide before you leave where it will sleep tonight, and do not carry it anywhere it can be found by the person who harmed you.

- People: one trusted person who knows the situation, and a code word or signal that means “call for help.”
- Place: the safest room in the home, a neighbor or nearby place to go, and how to get there.
- Essentials: medicines, keys, phone charger, important papers or photos of them, and a small bag kept with a trusted person if that is safe.
- Children and dependents: what they should do, where they should go, and what signal they know.
- Technology: passwords, location sharing, and which device is safest for seeking help.
- After leaving: where to stay first, who to tell, and what documents or orders to ask an advocate or attorney about.

Resources — offer to everyone, every time

Read these aloud as information for anyone, for any reason, and keep printed copies where any client can take one without asking:

- **National Domestic Violence Hotline:** Call 1-800-799-7233 or text START to 88788. Advocates offer confidential support and safety planning and can connect callers with local services.
- **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline:** Call or text 988.
- **SAMHSA National Helpline:** Call 1-800-662-4357 for treatment referrals and information.
- **Immediate danger:** Call 911 if it is safe to do so.

Local shelter, advocate, and legal-aid information for the Senath area is posted and handed out from the program's current local resource sheet. Facilitators: use only that current sheet for local names and numbers. If you do not have it in the room, get it from staff before group — do not work from memory.

Facilitator boundaries — Domestic Violence

- Do not counsel a couple together, carry messages, verify one person's story with another, or contact any partner or family member.
- Do not promise that a disclosure stays only with you. Tell the Program Director or on-call supervisor the same hour, and follow any reporting duty that applies. See the escalation box at the front of this packet and the Facilitator Guide crisis protocol.
- Do not document detailed disclosures in a general group note. Route safety concerns to the Program Director or on-call supervisor the same day, and document the same day.

- **Warrior close:** Close in strength, not exposure: “You deserve to be safe. Needing a plan is not weakness — it is wisdom. Warriors protect life, starting with their own.”

Sources & Evidence

Clinical evidence: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Trauma-Informed Care in Behavioral Health Services. Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series 57 (2014) — trauma-informed principles, safety, and avoiding re-traumatization in behavioral health settings.

Recovery-support evidence: National Domestic Violence Hotline — confidential advocacy and personalized safety planning (thehotline.org; 1-800-799-7233; text START to 88788). Safety planning in this outline follows the Hotline's survivor-led model; this group introduces it and refers out for a full plan.

Note: No outcome is promised for any group in this packet.