# Breakout 3 — Life Skills — Building a Life That Holds

*One sentence for the board: Recovery holds when daily life holds — so we build daily life on purpose, one small system at a time.*

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| **Purpose** | Teach and practice the daily systems recovery stands on: time, money, home, work, documents, appointments, and clear communication — in small steps a client can start this week. |
| **Who chooses this group** | Curriculum groups meet separately for men and for women. Breakout groups are coed unless otherwise specified. 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. Any participant. This is the most practical group in the rotation and a good first breakout for a participant new to choosing groups. 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 |

| Time | Segment | What happens |
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| **0–5 min** | Welcome | Ground rules. |
| **5–30 min** | Teaching | The five systems: time, money, home, work and appointments, communication. |
| **30–45 min** | Discussion | Prompts below. |
| **45–55 min** | Practice — this week's system | Each client picks one system and writes the first three steps, with dates. |

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| **55–60 min** | Close | Takeaways. |

## Teaching points

- Time. Keep one calendar — paper is fine — and put everything on it: groups, appointments, work, family, rest. Review tomorrow before bed tonight. A missed appointment is usually a missing system, not a character flaw.
- Money. Know what comes in, what must go out, and in what order: essentials first, obligations second, everything else after. Track spending in writing for two weeks before judging it. Small leaks sink budgets; find them without shame and plug one at a time.
- Home. A living space that is clean, stocked with basics, and paid on time protects recovery. Build simple weekly rhythms — laundry, cleaning, groceries, bills — on set days so nothing piles up into a crisis.
- Work and appointments. Keep documents together in one folder: identification, certificates, program papers, pay records. Prepare the night before. Arrive early. If you will be late or miss, communicate before, not after — that habit alone rebuilds a reputation.
- Communication. Say what you mean, plainly and respectfully: state the facts, state what you need, propose a time or step, and confirm what was agreed. In writing when it matters. Clear communication prevents most of the conflicts that used to end in use.
- Start embarrassingly small. One system, one step, done daily, beats a total life overhaul announced on Monday and abandoned by Thursday. Consistency in small systems is the training ground for everything bigger.

## Discussion prompts

- “Which of the five systems is strongest in your life right now? Which is leaking?”
- “What is one task you keep avoiding that would take less than an hour to start? What makes it heavy?”
- “Who taught you how to handle money and time — and what did they teach you that you want to keep, and what do you want to do differently?”

## Practice — this week's system (10 minutes)

1. Choose one system: time, money, home, work and appointments, or communication.
2. Write the first three steps, each small enough to finish, with the day you will do each one.
3. Name the obstacle most likely to appear and your if–then plan for it: “If ___ happens, then I will ___.”
4. Pair up briefly: read your steps to a partner, who checks only one thing — is each step small and dated?

# Facilitator boundaries — Life Skills

- Teach systems, not personal finance advice. Do not review a client's debts, benefits, taxes, or legal documents in group, and do not recommend specific financial or legal decisions. Refer those to qualified help through program staff.
- **Warrior close:** Close in dignity: “Nobody drifts into a life that holds. It is built — one list, one calendar, one kept appointment at a time. Build today's piece well.”

## Sources & Evidence

**Clinical evidence:** Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. SAMHSA's working definition of recovery and its four major dimensions — health, home, purpose, and community — which frame the life-systems approach in this outline.

**Recovery-support evidence:** Casey Life Skills (Casey Family Programs) — a widely used framework for assessing and building practical life skills, named here as the framework background for the skills domains covered. Recovery-support application in this packet: peer practice, written weekly steps, and accountability in group.

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