Breakout 19 — Identity Reconstruction & Purpose — Rebuilding Identity and Finding Purpose

One sentence for the board: This group does the work of becoming someone new on purpose — setting down the old name addiction gave, and building a life aimed at something worth doing.

Purpose	Teach identity reconstruction and purpose as recovery work: separating the person from the addiction, naming who the person is becoming, and aiming daily life at a purpose worth keeping. This is rebuilding, not the re-authoring of labels from the Labels group and not the service and vocation work of Giving Back — it is the wider work of who a person is and what their life is for.
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 doing the work of becoming someone new in recovery. No participant is asked to share their past, their record, or their story in group. 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
0–5 min	Welcome	Ground rules, confidentiality limits, right to pass. State plainly at the start: no one is asked to share their past or their story.
5–30 min	Teaching	The teaching points below, in order, on the board: the person is not the addiction, identity by conduct, purpose as direction, grief, old chapters, and purpose kept by routine.
30–45 min	Discussion	Prompts below. General answers are always complete answers — no one is asked to share their past, their record, or their story.
45–55 min	Practice — my identity line and my purpose	Clients write one identity line, one purpose, one daily act, and one kept promise. Writing stays with the client.
55–60 min	Close	Takeaways, the counselor path for anyone who needs it restated, and one daily act each client will actually do this week.

Teaching points

- **You are not your addiction.** Addiction handed out a name — addict, failure, lost cause — and the name stuck because it was repeated. This group starts from a separation the whole program stands on: the person is not the problem; the problem is the problem. The name can be set down.
- **Identity is built by conduct, not by announcement.** A new identity is not declared once and finished; it is built by kept promises, day after day — showing up, finishing small steps, treating people steadily. Conduct writes the new name; words alone do not.
- **Purpose is a direction, not a job title.** Purpose is what a day is aimed at: caring for family, learning a trade, keeping a home, helping one other person, making something that lasts. It can be small and still be purpose — what matters is that the day has somewhere to go.

- **Grief belongs in this work.** Rebuilding an identity means grieving what addiction cost — years, relationships, chances — without letting grief become the new name. Grief named honestly, in general terms, is part of the rebuild; grief carried alone becomes a weight that pulls back.
- **The old chapters stay written.** Rebuilding does not pretend the past never happened. The record, the harm, the lost years — they are part of the story, not the whole of it. A person who has done harm owns it through the program's own processes; this group does not rehearse it and does not excuse it.
- **Purpose is kept by routine.** A purpose with no daily shape fades. One daily act aimed at the purpose — a call kept, a skill practiced, an hour given — keeps the direction alive on ordinary days, not only on good ones.

Discussion prompts

- "What name did addiction hand you — and what name are you building instead, in plain words?"
- "What is one kept promise, however small, that already says something true about who you are becoming?"
- "What is your life aimed at right now — not a job title, a direction? What does a day aimed that way look like?"
- "What grief from the old life still needs naming — in general terms — before the rebuild can hold?"

Practice — my identity line and my purpose (10 minutes, your page stays with you)

1. Write one line about who you are becoming, in your own words, in person-first language: "I am a person who…"
2. Write one purpose for this season of your life — a direction, not a job title — in one sentence.
3. Write one daily act that aims at that purpose, small enough to do tomorrow.
4. Write one kept promise from this week that already proves the new line true.
5. Keep your page. It is yours. Nothing written in this practice is collected, copied, or kept by the facilitator or the program.

Facilitator boundaries — Identity Reconstruction & Purpose

- **No life stories in the room.** No participant is asked to tell their history, name their past, or describe harm done or suffered. General learning is always a complete way to participate.
- **No clinical work.** Facilitators teach identity and purpose as recovery education. They do not diagnose, do not counsel any participant's past, and do not run any therapeutic process in group. A client who needs that help is connected to their counselor the same day.
- **No promises about outcomes.** No facilitator promises any participant a particular identity, result, or future. The work is the direction, practiced daily — nothing more is claimed.

- **Warrior close:** Close with the line kept: “You are not the name addiction gave you. You are the kept promises, the daily acts, the direction you walk — one day at a time. That is how warriors hold ground: by becoming, on purpose, the person they mean to be.”

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 purpose as a condition that sustains recovery. This outline applies that framework as group education; it makes no outcome claim.

Recovery-support evidence: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration — peer recovery support and recovery-community frameworks, in which helping others and community participation are core dimensions of recovery support. This outline applies that framework as group education; it makes no outcome claim. No outcome is promised for this group.

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