Session 1: Surrender Is Not Giving Up

Duration: 60 minutes • Recovery education group. Ensure all participants are seated and ready

Materials: Whiteboard; workbooks and pens

Learning objectives — by the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Define surrender in their own words and distinguish it from giving up
- Name one area of life they have been trying to control alone
- State how this program works — rhythm, agreements, and who their people are

Opening (5 minutes)

Newcomer bridge (60 seconds): This is Phase 1 — Foundation. The one idea today is that surrender is turning toward help, not giving up. You are welcome here without earlier sessions; everything you need for today is in this session. Welcome. Everything in this program starts with one honest distinction: giving up and surrendering look alike from the outside and are opposites on the inside. Today we define surrender in plain language, learn how this program runs, and name — out loud, some of us for the first time — what we have been trying to control alone. In Session 1 only, the agreements are read aloud from the posted sheet here; Opening is 5 minutes and Teaching is 18 minutes, keeping the 60-minute total.

Before your first group, a licensed counselor completed your assessment, safety plan, and treatment plan. In your first group, your facilitator confirms the counselor plan is in place, without reading your clinical detail.

Check-in prompt (8 minutes)

Name, craving 0–10, one word for your week — then: “What did it cost you to walk through the door of this program — and what finally made the cost worth paying?” Log every craving score on the roster.

Passing is honored — you may pass any question, prompt, or practice without explanation, step out and rejoin, and choose a partner-only option where one is offered.

Teaching (18 minutes)

Most people arrive at recovery having confused surrender with defeat, because every previous surrender in their life was to the substance, to a circumstance, or to despair. This session reframes it. Giving up says nothing can change and stops moving. Surrender says I cannot do this by my own power, and it moves — toward help, toward honesty, and toward a community that will walk with me. Recovery begins the same way: not with a perfect plan, but with an honest turn.

- **Direction, not perfection** Surrender is measured by which way you are facing and walking, not by how cleaned-up you feel while you walk.
- **Control is the old strategy** Naming the specific things we white-knuckled — other people's choices, the past, withdrawal, reputation — shows where surrender has actual work to do. White-knuckled = held on tight with all our strength.

- **Help is not humiliation** Accepting help from the group, a coach, a sponsor or mentor is the mechanism of this program, not a sign of failure in it.

Sources & Evidence — Facilitator background — do not teach

Motivational interviewing research supports engaging ambivalence through open questions, reflection, and the person's own change talk rather than argument or shame (Miller & Rollnick, 2023). Key sources for this session: Miller & Rollnick (2023); Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2019), TIP 35; Prochaska & DiClemente (1983). Evidence strength: Moderate as facilitation practice guidance; MI trial strength does not transfer to check-in prompts. Spiritual practice: Repentance — correlates with commitment and MI change talk and planning; evidence: Moderate (Miller & Rollnick, 2023). Full citations: Appendix H. The session's Scripture material is in its optional handout (Appendix I), as theological foundation, quoted from the King James Version.

'Evidence strength' grades the correlated mechanism, not the spiritual practice itself

Pause midway through teaching: ask, "What part of that sounds most like your life right now?" Take two or three answers, connect them to the teaching, and continue. Teach in your own words — the bullets are your map, not a script to read aloud.

Discussion questions (10 minutes)

1. What is the difference, in your own life, between giving up and surrendering?
2. What have you been trying to control that is not yours to control?
3. Who is one person whose help you have resisted, and what would accepting it look like this week?
4. What do you most hope being welcomed back — received honestly, just as you are — means for you personally? (Writing-first; passing is honored.)

Skill practice (12 minutes)

In pairs: each person completes the sentence, 'I have been trying to control _____, and surrendering it this week looks like _____.' Partners repeat the plan back word-for-word, then ask one question: 'What will make that hard, and what is your plan for that moment?' Switch. Facilitator circulates and helps anyone whose plan is too large shrink it to something doable in seven days.

Personal application — homework (5 minutes)

Write the surrender sentence from the practice in your workbook. Bring one line about it to the next session. Participants write it in their workbook before leaving. Facilitator: name the homework again at the door as people leave.

Facilitator notes and cautions

Watch for participants who equate surrender with passivity about safety, medication, or legal obligations — surrender never cancels a responsibility; it gives us help carrying it.

Closing (2 minutes)

You walked in carrying what you have been carrying alone. You walk out with a sentence, a plan for the week, and a room that knows your name. Direction, not perfection — face the right way and take the next step. Next session: honesty — naming what is true.

Fidelity check for this session: objectives named at the start ☐ craving scores logged ☐ skill practice completed in full ☐ homework written down by participants ☐ session note filed today ☐