Session 2: Honesty: Naming What Is True

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:

- Explain how denial functions as protection, not simply lying
- Identify one personal pattern of minimizing, blaming, or hiding
- Practice a brief, factual honesty statement about their current situation

Opening (3 minutes)

Newcomer bridge (60 seconds): This is Phase 1 — Foundation. The one idea today is that honesty is a small, specific, factual skill, and denial works by editing. You are welcome here without earlier sessions; everything you need for today is in this session. Honesty in this room is a skill with a size: small, specific, factual. Today we look at how denial actually works — not as lying, but as editing — and we practice telling the truth at a size we can handle.

Check-in prompt (8 minutes)

Name, craving 0–10, one word for your week — then: “When did you last hear yourself minimize something — 'it wasn't that bad,' 'everyone does it' — and what were you protecting in that moment?” 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 (20 minutes)

Denial rarely looks like a flat lie. It looks like editing: leaving out the amount, blaming the circumstance, comparing ourselves to someone worse, or telling the story so we are only ever the victim or only ever the villain. It develops because honesty once cost too much — safety, love, housing, standing. naming that honestly is the beginning of compassion for ourselves. In recovery, honesty is a skill with a size: we tell the truth about today, in specific facts, to safe people, before we attempt the whole story of our lives.

- **Denial protects, then imprisons** The same editing that once helped us survive eventually keeps everyone — including us — from knowing what help is actually needed.
- **Facts before feelings** A factual statement ('I used on Tuesday after the phone call') can be worked with; a verdict ('I'm just a failure') cannot. We practice facts.
- **Safe people, right size** Honesty is owed first to ourselves, our recovery supports, and those directly harmed — paced with a coach or counselor, not broadcast to everyone.

Sources & Evidence — Facilitator background — do not teach

Honesty and safe disclosure are core coping topics in present-focused trauma and addiction work, taught without forced or graphic disclosure (Najavits, 2002). Key sources for this session: Najavits (2002); Koenig (2012). Evidence strength: Moderate; theological foundation for confession itself. Spiritual practice: Confession — correlates with structured self-disclosure and shame reduction; evidence: Moderate (Najavits, 2002; Koenig, 2012). 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. Which form of editing — minimizing, blaming, comparing, omitting — is most familiar to you?
2. What has honesty cost you in the past, and what has hiding cost you?
3. Who are the safe people in your life who can hear a hard fact without using it against you?
4. What is one true sentence about where you are today that you have not said out loud yet?

Skill practice (12 minutes)

In trios, each person shares one factual honesty statement using the frame: 'The fact is _____. What I usually say instead is _____. What I need is _____.' Listeners may only thank the speaker and name one strength they heard. No advice, no fixing. Facilitator models the frame first with a modest, appropriate example.

Personal application — homework (5 minutes)

Keep a honesty log for three days: each evening, write one fact about the day you were tempted to edit, and what you actually said or did. No grading — the log is for you and, if you choose, your coach. Participants write it in their workbook before leaving. Facilitator: name the homework again at the door as people leave.

Facilitator notes and cautions

The goal is paced honesty, not a full life confession in Week 1. If a participant begins disclosing trauma or a major harm in detail, thank them, affirm the courage, gently pause the detail ('I want that story to get the time and care it deserves — let's connect you with your counselor today'), and follow up after group. Never let the room become an audience for a story its teller may regret tomorrow.

Closing (2 minutes)

One true sentence at a time. That is the pace, and it is enough. This week, keep the honesty log — no grading, just data. Next session: hope — for the ones who ran far and the ones who stayed and hardened.

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 ☐