Session 7: A Day That Holds You: Structure, Sleep, and HALT

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

Materials: Daily Anchors worksheet; whiteboard; the Session 7 handout (Daily Anchors & HALT Check)

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

- Explain HALT — Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired — as a daily self-check
- Build a realistic daily schedule with anchors for waking, meals, program, work or service, connection, and sleep
- Identify their two most dangerous unstructured hours

Opening (3 minutes)

Newcomer bridge (60 seconds): This is Phase 1 — Foundation. The one idea today is that a structured day with anchors, and the HALT check, holds recovery. You are welcome here without earlier sessions; everything you need for today is in this session. Remove the substance and the day loses its schedule — and unstructured time is where craving breeds. Today we build a day with load-bearing anchors, learn the HALT check, and find the two hours of your week that need a plan and a person.

Check-in prompt (8 minutes)

Name, craving 0–10, one word for your week — then: “What does your day actually look like right now, hour by hour — and where does it tend to come apart?” 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)

In active addiction, the substance provided the schedule: obtaining, using, recovering, repeat. Removing it leaves a vacuum, and unstructured time is where craving breeds. Stabilization means building a day with load-bearing anchors: a wake time, food at real intervals, program and work commitments, connection with recovery people, and a protected sleep window. Layered on the schedule is HALT — the oldest self-check in recovery. Hungry, Angry, Lonely, and Tired are the four body-and-heart states that most reliably masquerade as 'I need to use.' The discipline is simple: when craving spikes, check HALT first and treat what is actually wrong. Sleep deserves its own emphasis: a sleep-deprived brain craves harder, decides worse, and feels worse — protecting sleep is protecting recovery.

- **Anchors before ambitions** Fix wake time, meals, and bedtime first. A modest schedule kept beats an impressive schedule abandoned by Thursday.
- **HALT before crisis** Most 'sudden' cravings are a HALT state that went unnamed for hours. The check takes twenty seconds; the rescue takes days.
- **Guard the dangerous hours** Every person has them — after dinner, after a shift, Sunday afternoons. Dangerous hours get a plan and a person, in advance.

- **Rest is recovery work** Sleep and planned rest are part of the recovery plan, written down like any other commitment — not a reward for the finished.

Sources & Evidence — Facilitator background — do not teach

Addiction is described in the federal research literature as a complex but treatable condition affecting brain function and behavior, and recovery as a long-term process that often requires continuing care (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2018). Key sources for this session: National Institute on Drug Abuse (2018); Waller et al. (2023), The ASAM Criteria. Evidence strength: Moderate to strong as practice guidance. Spiritual practice: Sabbath and sacred rest — correlates with sleep hygiene, stress recovery, and stimulus control; evidence: Moderate (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 2006). 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 HALT letter catches you most often?
2. What is your current sleep actually like, and what steals it?
3. Which hours of your week are unstructured and risky — and what could fill them that you would genuinely do?
4. What is one anchor you are willing to fix for the next seven days, no exceptions?

Skill practice (12 minutes)

In pairs, participants draft tomorrow's schedule on the Daily Anchors worksheet — wake, three meals, program/work/service blocks, one connection, one rest or enjoyable sober activity, bedtime — then exchange and stress-test each other's day: 'Where will this break? What is the backup?' Each person then names their fixed anchor for the week aloud.

Personal application — homework (5 minutes)

Keep the fixed anchor for seven days and run a HALT check three times a day, logging it in your workbook (time, letter, action taken). Bring the log to Session 8. Participants write it in their workbook before leaving. Facilitator: name the homework again at the door as people leave. The HALT check in this session is an entry in the one running daily log in the workbook, not a second log.

Facilitator notes and cautions

Do not let the schedule become a shame instrument for participants with jobs, court dates, childcare, or medical appointments that fragment their days. Help them anchor what is anchorable. If someone reports severe insomnia, sleep apnea symptoms, or nightmares that

are worsening, refer to their medical provider or counselor through the Program Director — facilitators do not diagnose or recommend sleep medications or supplements.

Closing (2 minutes)

Anchors before ambitions. Keep the one anchor you fixed today for seven days, and run HALT before you call it a crisis. Next session: the crisis and safety plan — written before you need it.

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 ☐