Session 8: My Crisis and Safety Plan: Written Before I Need It

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

Materials: Appendix A handout for every participant; pens; phones permitted for saving contacts Bring the plan the counselor completed with you — the counselor copy will be in the room; the Session 8 handout (My Personal Crisis & Safety Plan) and companion handout (If You're in Crisis).

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

- Review and rehearse the safety plan completed with a licensed counselor before the first group, without the facilitator reading clinical detail.
- Name the plan's six steps in order and rehearse at least one step with a partner.
- Name warning signs, three people to contact, and one professional contact, and tell a hard day from an emergency. One person counts. An empty line gets a dated plan to fill it — an empty line is not a failure.
- Confirm the plan is in place, or name the same-day connection to the counselor if it is not confirmed.

Opening (3 minutes)

Newcomer bridge (60 seconds): This is Phase 1 — Foundation. The one idea today is that the safety plan completed with the counselor before the first group is reviewed and rehearsed here, not built for the first time. You are welcome here without earlier sessions; everything you need for today is in this session. This session reviews and rehearses the safety plan a licensed counselor completed with you before your first group. It does not build the plan for the first time, and the facilitator does not read your clinical detail. You will check that your plan is in place, rehearse the steps, and name what to do on a hard day and in an emergency.

Before your first group, a licensed counselor completed your assessment, safety plan, and treatment plan. This session reviews and rehearses that plan. It does not replace it, and the facilitator does not read your clinical detail.

The governing copy of your plan is the plan completed with your licensed counselor before your first group. The copies in this workbook, in Appendix A, and in the Session 8 handout are working copies for review and rehearsal — keep them current, and change any step only with your counselor.

Completeness check (without reading clinical detail): cover the written content, confirm in your own words that each step is answered, and ask the facilitator to initial the cover check. The facilitator does not read your clinical detail.

Check-in prompt (8 minutes)

Answer in one general sentence only — no detail; detail stays with your counselor. Name, craving 0–10, one word for your week — then: "Think of your last crisis before you came here. In the first hour, what did you actually do — and what do you wish had been within reach?" 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)

A safety plan is a written, personal set of steps a person uses before a crisis, completed with a licensed counselor before the first group. This session is a review and a rehearsal: it checks that the plan is in place, walks the steps in order, and practices what to do on a hard day and in an emergency. It does not replace the counselor's plan, and the facilitator does not read clinical detail. This is an evidence-informed, counselor-owned tool: the counselor owns the clinical content; the group rehearses using it. WRAP preferences supplement, never replace, the counselor safety plan; facilitators never collect a WRAP.

- **The plan was completed with a counselor before the first group. In this session you review it and rehearse it; nobody builds a plan for the first time here.**
- **The six steps, in order: warning signs; things I can do on my own to steady myself; people and places that steady me; people I can ask for help; professionals to contact in a crisis; making the environment safer.**
- **Step 2 reads: "Step 2 — Things I can do on my own to steady myself (volume knobs, grounding, movement):" The plan also carries the line "My reason for living, in my own words:" — the participant's own words, not the facilitator's.**
- **Warning signs, three people, and one professional: name them from your plan, and tell a hard day (use steps 1–3) from an emergency (use steps 5–6, and call or text 988 or 911).**

Sources & Evidence — Facilitator background — do not teach

The Safety Planning Intervention is a brief, written, prioritized plan of coping strategies and supports, completed with a counselor before the first group and reviewed in group (Stanley & Brown, 2012). Key sources for this session: Stanley & Brown (2012); SAMHSA (2022), 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. Evidence strength: Moderate to strong. Spiritual practice: Intercessory prayer — correlates with social-support activation in safety planning; evidence: Moderate (Stanley & Brown, 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.

- Worked example: rehearse one step with a partner — say the step in your own words, and name when you would use it.

Discussion questions (10 minutes)

1. What are your personal warning signs — the thoughts, feelings, or behaviors that tell you a storm is coming?
2. Who steadies you just by being around them, even without talking about the problem?
3. Is there anything in your current environment that should be moved, stored, or handed off to make you safer? What is stopping that from happening today?
4. How will you make sure this plan is findable at 2 a.m.?

Skill practice (12 minutes)

In pairs, review your plan and rehearse one step aloud in your own words; the facilitator initials the cover check only, without reading clinical detail. Save the three people and the professional contact in your phone. Copying the counselor plan into the Workbook form is homework, or a first-group task, done with the counselor copy in hand. If your plan is not confirmed, tell the facilitator in this session; the facilitator connects you to the counselor the same day, and you stay in group. Nobody is asked to build a plan for the first time, and nobody is graded on a plan. Rehearse in general words only — do not read personal content aloud.

Personal application — homework (5 minutes)

Homework: Copy the counselor plan into the Workbook form, with the counselor copy in hand, if you have not already done so, and review your plan once before the next group and confirm the three people know they are on it; change any step only with your counselor. This homework reviews a plan already completed; it does not create one for the first time. Report it honestly — done, partly done, or not done with the obstacle named.

Facilitator notes and cautions

This is the highest-responsibility session in Phase 1. If reviewing the plan surfaces current suicidal thinking, a plan, or intent for any participant, stop your other work with that person and follow the Crisis Protocol immediately — same hour, documented, Program Director notified. Never send a person who has disclosed current intent out of the room to 'work on their plan.' Newcomer catch-up: every newcomer gets crisis contacts and plan review in their first group(s) inside the group, with no waiting for Session 8; if no plan is confirmed, the facilitator connects the person to the counselor the same day and the person stays in group. Cut first if time runs short: the worked example in the fifth teaching bullet. Never cut the review/rehearsal practice.

Closing (2 minutes)

Your plan was reviewed today, not built today. Keep it where you can reach it, and use it on a hard day before the day becomes an emergency. Close by naming one step each person will rehearse this week.

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 ☐