Session 9: Safe Community: Nobody Recovers Alone

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

Materials: Workbook map page; the Session 9 handout (My Support Map); local meeting and community resource list

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

- Map their current relationships into supportive, neutral, and risky
- Explain what makes a recovery relationship safe — honesty, availability, shared direction
- Commit to two specific community connections for the coming week

Opening (3 minutes)

Newcomer bridge (60 seconds): This is Phase 1 — Foundation. The one idea today is that isolation is reversed by building a small, reliable web of safe community. You are welcome here without earlier sessions; everything you need for today is in this session. Isolation is both a symptom and a strategy of addiction. Today we reverse it on purpose: we map the people in your life into supportive, neutral, and risky, we name what makes a recovery relationship safe, and everyone leaves with two specific connections to make this week.

Check-in prompt (8 minutes)

Name, craving 0–10, one word for your week — then: "Who lifted you the last time you fell — and who in your life right now would you actually call at your worst 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)

Isolation is both a symptom and a strategy of addiction: we withdraw to use freely and to hide the cost, until alone becomes the default setting. Reversing it is not 'being social.' It is deliberately building a small, reliable web: a recovery coach or counselor, peers in this program, recovery meetings, family where it is safe, mentors or sponsors where available, and other communities the participant chooses. Safe community has marks — people who tell us the truth, who are actually reachable, who are moving in a healthy direction themselves, and who respect our recovery rather than competing with it. Risky relationships are handled honestly in the map: some need distance, some need boundaries (Week 4), and some are simply not safe at any distance in early recovery. The goal this week is not a crowd. It is two real connections, made on purpose. Pathways note: recovery has more than one doorway. Non-12-step and secular options — including SMART Recovery, LifeRing, Women for Sobriety, and secular meetings — are real choices here, alongside 12-step fellowship. The participant chooses the pathway that fits; the facilitator never ranks one pathway above another. For medication questions, see the Session 4 handout (Medication Support (MAT) Facts), distributed and discussed in Session 4.

- **Build before the fall** Crisis is the worst time to exchange phone numbers. Every plan in this curriculum assumes people already in place.
- **Small and reliable beats large and vague** Three people who answer beat thirty acquaintances who inspire. We build depth first.
- **You are also a lifter** Even in Week 2, participants have something to give — a ride, a check-in text, a seat saved. Being needed is itself protective against relapse.

Sources & Evidence — Facilitator background — do not teach

The Cochrane review found manualized Alcoholics Anonymous / Twelve-Step Facilitation interventions produced higher rates of continuous abstinence than other established treatments for alcohol use disorder (Kelly et al., 2020); peer and community support are core dimensions of recovery (SAMHSA, 2012; White, 2008). Key sources for this session: Kelly, Humphreys, & Ferri (2020); White (2008); Zemore et al. (2018); SAMHSA (2012). Evidence strength: Strong for mutual-help abstinence outcomes; moderate for peer support generally. Spiritual practice: Fellowship / koinonia — correlates with peer recovery support, recovery capital, and group cohesion; evidence: Moderate to strong (Kelly et al., 2020; White, 2008). 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. Who is on your map in each ring — supportive, neutral, risky — and does the map surprise you?
2. What has kept you from accepting community in the past: shame, pride, bad experiences, fear of owing anyone?
3. What makes you feel safe enough to be honest with someone?
4. Which two connections will you make this week, and exactly when?

Skill practice (12 minutes)

Participants draw their three-ring map on the Session 9 handout (My Support Map). Then a structured exchange: in pairs, each person offers one specific, low-cost way they can be a lifter this week (morning text, walk partner, meeting ride) and schedules it. Facilitator collects the two-connection commitments verbally in turn as a closing roll call.

Personal application — homework (5 minutes)

Make your two connections. At least one must happen before the next session. Write who, when, and how it went in your workbook — including if it fell through and what you did instead. Participants write it in their workbook before leaving. Facilitator: name the homework again at the door as people leave.

Facilitator notes and cautions

Never require participants to name risky people aloud if those people are in the program or residence; maps are shared at the level of categories, not names, unless a participant chooses otherwise. If a map reveals an unsafe living or relationship situation (violence, exploitation), connect the participant to the Program Director and appropriate resources the same day — group is not the venue for safety planning around another person.

Closing (2 minutes)

Community is built before the fall, on ordinary days like today. Make your two connections — at least one before the next session. Next phase: the mind — how thoughts drive feelings and actions.

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 ☐



PHASE 2 — HEALING: MIND, HEART, AND PAST

Week 2 — Stabilization (continued)