Session 10: Renewing the Mind: How Thoughts Drive Feelings and Actions

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

Materials: Whiteboard and four-column worksheet; the Session 10 handout (Catch the Thought)

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

- Explain the CBT core link — situation, thought, feeling, behavior — with a recovery example
- Catch one automatic thought from their own week
- Describe 'renewing the mind' as a daily practice, not a one-time event

Opening (3 minutes)

Newcomer bridge (60 seconds): This is Phase 2 — Healing. The one idea today is that between an event and a reaction sits a thought that can be seen and examined. You are welcome here without earlier sessions; everything you need for today is in this session. Between an event and our reaction sits an interpretation — instant, habitual, and usually unexamined. Today we learn to see that middle step: situation, thought, feeling, behavior. Slow the sequence down far enough, and the thought becomes something we can examine instead of obey.

Check-in prompt (8 minutes)

Name, craving 0–10, one word for your week — then: “Describe a recent moment your mood crashed or craving spiked. What ran through your mind in the ten seconds before it turned?” 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)

Cognitive behavioral therapy rests on an observation anyone can test: between an event and our reaction sits an interpretation — often instant, habitual, and unexamined. Two people get the same short text from a family member; one hears rejection and spirals, the other hears a busy day and moves on. The event was identical; the thought did the damage. In addiction, automatic thoughts arrive pre-loaded: 'I can't stand this feeling,' 'one won't matter,' 'they've already given up on me, so why try.' We do not fight these by pretending they are not there. We slow the sequence down — situation, thought, feeling, behavior — until the thought is visible enough to examine. That examination is next session's skill; today is learning to see the middle step we have always skipped.

- **Thoughts are not facts** A thought is a mental event — sometimes accurate, sometimes a habit, sometimes a lie with a familiar voice. Seeing it as a thought is the first freedom.
- **Speed is the problem** Automatic thoughts fire in under a second. Writing the sequence down (next session's record) is how we slow it to a speed we can work with.
- **Small repetitions rewire** Catching one thought a day, honestly, does more than a single dramatic insight. This is a daily discipline, because it works like one.

Sources & Evidence — Facilitator background — do not teach

Cognitive therapy of substance abuse treats thoughts as testable claims and builds the skill of examining evidence for and against them in writing (Beck et al., 1993). Key sources for this session: Beck, Wright, Newman, & Liese (1993); Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (2006), TIP 47. Evidence strength: Strong for CBT-based substance use interventions. Spiritual practice: Scripture meditation and memorization — correlates with cognitive restructuring and rumination replacement; evidence: Moderate (Beck et al., 1993). 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. TIP 47 addresses intensive outpatient treatment, above this education setting; it is background for the CBT skills taught here, not the setting delivered.

'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. Walk the group through an example: what thought sits between 'my call went to voicemail' and three different reactions?
2. Which automatic thought visits you most — about yourself, about others, or about the future?
3. When has a thought turned out to be flatly wrong about someone's intentions toward you?
4. What truth — from your own history and the counsel of safe people — do you most need your mind renewed toward?

Skill practice (12 minutes)

Facilitator works one volunteer example live on the whiteboard in four columns (Situation / Thought / Feeling / Behavior), thinking aloud. Then pairs repeat the exercise with a mild, recent example of their own — low-stakes on purpose; this is reps, not surgery. Each pair reports only the thought they caught, in one sentence.

Personal application — homework (5 minutes)

Catch and write one sequence a day for five days — situation, thought, feeling, behavior — in your workbook. Keep them small and ordinary. We build Thought Records from these 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

Keep examples low-intensity in early practice; a participant who reaches for their worst memory needs the Week 4 pacing and a counselor, not a whiteboard exercise. Also guard against bypassing: 'just think positive' is not the skill — the skill is examining the thought honestly, including grieving what is genuinely sad.

Closing (2 minutes)

Thoughts are not facts — they are mental events, and today you caught them on paper. Catch one sequence a day this week. Next session: we put a thought on trial with the Thought Record.

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 ☐

Week 3 — Shame, Guilt, and Grace