Session 17: Honest Expression: Four Movements

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

Materials: Workbooks (four-movement writing headings on the workbook page); pens; the Session 17 handout (Honest Expression: Four Movements).

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

- Define structured, honest expression of pain as a skill that moves from naming the pain to a chosen next step, without skipping either
- Identify the four movements used in this session — turn toward support, name it plainly, ask for what you need, choose your anchor
- Write a short personal piece using the four movements

Opening (3 minutes)

Newcomer bridge (60 seconds): This is Phase 2 — Healing. The one idea today is that pain can be put into words in four movements — turn toward support, name it plainly, ask for what you need, choose your anchor. You are welcome here without earlier sessions; everything you need for today is in this session. Suppressing pain does not make us strong; it makes us numb, and numb is where addiction lives. Today we practice a structured way to put pain into words in four movements: turn toward support, name it plainly, ask for what you need, choose your anchor.

Check-in prompt (8 minutes)

Name, craving 0–10, one word for your week — then: "What have you been taught — by family, by the street, by experience — about whether it is acceptable to say out loud that you are angry, hurt, or feel forgotten?" 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)

There is a recovery skill nobody expects: a structured way to bring pain to the people and supports who can help — instead of to the substance, the binge, or the explosion. Its four movements are: turn toward support, name it plainly, ask for what you need, choose your anchor. Turn toward: I take the pain to my supports, not away from them — the complaint is spoken inside the relationship, which means support is still the address for pain. Name it: I say what is wrong, specifically and without varnish (without varnish = plainly, no cleaning it up) — how long, why, look at what happened. Ask: I ask for what I actually want — help, relief, presence, a plan. Anchor: I declare, often before I feel it, what has carried me before and what I am choosing to stand on now. Suppressing pain does not make us strong; it makes us numb, and numb is where addiction lives. This work is also communal: this room can carry a person's honest words on the days they cannot finish them alone. In this session, the word "lament" means only this structured honest expression — the four movements above — and no private reflection language is used in the required session.

- **Feelings are data, not orders** 'How long?' is a feeling turned into a sentence. Naming pain precisely is what keeps it from leaking out as rage, relapse, or shutdown.
- **The anchor is a decision rehearsed aloud** The turn — 'I have been carried before, and I am choosing to stand on that' — is not the pain disappearing; it is the speaker choosing their anchor while it still hurts. We practice the turn so it is there at 3 a.m.
- **Honest pain makes room for other people's pain** A person who can name their own pain honestly does not have to fix, flee, or judge someone else's grief — a skill Session 18 and every family relationship ahead will need.

Sources & Evidence — Facilitator background — do not teach

Structured honest expression is taught in this session in four movements — turn toward support, name it plainly, ask for what you need, choose your anchor — with passing honored and the session ending on the closing, never on raw disclosure (SAMHSA, 2014a; Najavits, 2002). Key sources for this session: SAMHSA (2014a), TIP 57; SAMHSA (2014b); Najavits (2002); SAMHSA (2020), TIP 42. Evidence strength: Moderate; strong as a practice framework. Spiritual practice: Lament — correlates with emotional processing and grief work; evidence: Emerging (SAMHSA, 2014a). 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. Informed by Seeking Safety principles; Seeking Safety itself is not 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. Which movement is easiest for you, and which do you skip?
2. When has putting pain into words — yours, or words you heard from someone else — carried you through a night?
3. How is this structured honesty different from both venting and 'staying positive'?

Skill practice (12 minutes)

Guided writing (10 minutes, quiet): participants write their own short piece on the workbook page using the four headings — I am turning toward my supports with this; here is what is wrong; here is what I am asking for; here is what I am choosing to stand on. Facilitator writes alongside the group. Writing 10 minutes, quiet. No whole-room readings in this session; volunteers may read to a partner in the last 2 minutes, or save readings for the Saturday recap. Passing is honored without comment.

Personal application — homework (5 minutes)

This week, read your written piece once a day — out loud if you can. Do not edit it as feelings change; add a dated line instead, and watch whether the anchor movement — what you are

choosing to stand on — gets stronger. Participants write it in their workbook before leaving. Facilitator: name the homework again at the door as people leave.

Facilitator notes and cautions

Honest pain can open grief that exceeds the session. Keep the writing time bounded, end with the group's closing (never end on raw disclosure), and check in individually after group with anyone visibly shaken. Referral to a counselor for ongoing grief work is a success outcome of this session, not a failure of it. Headline level only in this room: name the topic in a few words, not the details. Details belong with a counselor. You may pass at any time without explaining yourself. If anything in this session needs a counselor, your facilitator will connect you warmly the same day — asking is a success, not a failure.

Closing (2 minutes)

Feelings named precisely stop leaking out as rage, relapse, or shutdown. Read your piece once a day this week; add dated lines instead of editing. Next session: grief and loss — and the boundaries that protect both.

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 ☐