Session 23: Making Amends: Preparation Before Contact

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

Materials: Amends worksheet (workbook pages); the Session 23 handout (Making Amends: Preparation Before Contact)

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

- Build a complete amends list sorted into Now, Later, and With-Guidance categories
- Apply the two tests to every entry — is it safe, and could contact cause more harm?
- Draft the structure of one amends: ownership, impact, repair, no excuses

Opening (3 minutes)

Newcomer bridge (60 seconds): This is Phase 3 — Rebuilding. The one idea today is that an amend is preparation before contact, sorted Now, Later, and With Guidance. You are welcome here without earlier sessions; everything you need for today is in this session. An amend is more than an apology: it is owning a specific harm, naming its impact, and making repair where repair is possible. It also does damage when rushed — which is why this whole session is preparation. Nobody makes an amend this week because a curriculum said so. We build the list, test it, and take it to a coach or counselor first.

Check-in prompt (8 minutes)

Name, craving 0–10, one word for your week — then: “What amend have you already attempted in your life that went badly — and what was missing: timing, safety, honesty, or humility?” 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)

An amend is more than an apology: it is owning a specific harm, naming its impact, and making repair where repair is possible — money repaid on a plan, property returned, a record set straight, behavior changed for good. The preparation discipline protects everyone. First, the list: everyone harmed, in writing, sorted honestly. Now: people who are safe, reachable, and likely to be helped by contact. Later: people whose situations need time — theirs or ours — to stabilize. With Guidance: anyone where contact could injure — an ex-partner with a protective order or a new family, a victim of our crime, an employer, anyone we could endanger or destabilize by appearing. Legal and court matters always route through an attorney and the Program Director, never through an improvised amend. Second, the structure: I did X (facts, no excuses, no 'but you'); I understand it cost you Y; here is the repair I am making or offering; I do not expect or demand your forgiveness or a relationship. Then we stop talking and listen.

- **The amend is for the harmed person's benefit** If the contact mainly relieves our guilt while reopening their wound, it fails the test — however sincere it feels. Motive gets examined with a coach before contact, always.

- **Direct where possible, living where not** Some amends cannot be made to the person (death, danger, no contact possible). Living amends — sustained changed behavior, anonymous restitution, service — carry those honestly rather than pretending a conversation happened.
- **Repayment is a plan, not a promise** Stolen or owed money becomes a written schedule we actually keep, coordinated with Week 6's money work. A kept $25-a-month plan repairs more trust than a tearful lump-sum promise that evaporates.
- **No amend buys an outcome** The other person may receive it, refuse it, or never respond. Our part is the honest offering; their response belongs to them.

Sources & Evidence — Facilitator background — do not teach

Amends preparation is taught in this session through the Now/Later/With-Guidance sort and the reviewer check before any contact; forgiveness research is background only and does not test amends preparation (Ho et al., 2024; Worthington, 2006). Key sources for this session: Ho et al. (2024); Worthington (2006). Evidence strength: Moderate as practice guidance for preparation; no amends-outcome claim is made. Spiritual practice: Repentance toward amends — correlates with commitment and planning; evidence: Moderate (Miller & Rollnick, 2023). 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 category surprised you as you sorted — someone you expected to be Now who belongs in Later or With Guidance?
2. What excuse most wants to sneak into your draft ('I was using,' 'you also...,' 'that was the old me')?
3. What repair is actually in your power for your top entry — money, return, record, or changed behavior?
4. Who will review your list before any contact — name them today.

Skill practice (12 minutes)

List-building workshop (quiet writing, 15 minutes): participants build their full list in workbooks, sort it, then apply the two tests to their top Now entry and draft its four-part script. Facilitator and any co-facilitator circulate, checking drafts for excuses, oversharing, and unsafe entries — and flagging With-Guidance items for follow-up. No scripts are performed or shared aloud in full group.

Personal application — homework (5 minutes)

Take your list to your coach, counselor, or sponsor before the next session and review every entry together. Report back only this: reviewed, or appointment set. No amend contacts this week unless your reviewer clears a specific one. Participants write it in their workbook before leaving. Facilitator: name the homework again at the door as people leave.

Facilitator notes and cautions

Facilitators enforce the no-rush rule absolutely, including against participants eager to 'get it over with' and against family pressure reported from outside. Never role-play an amend in group with a participant playing their real victim. If a listed harm involves an unreported crime, a child, or a current participant, the facilitator does not advise — the matter goes to the Program Director the same day under program policy.

Closing (2 minutes)

The amend is for the harmed person's benefit — that is the test every entry has to pass. Take your list to your reviewer before the next session. Next session: living amends — the apology people can verify.

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 ☐