Session 24: Living Amends: The Apology People Can Verify

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

Materials: Living Amend Commitment page; calendars or phones for dates (brief use permitted); the Session 24 handout (Living Amend Commitment)

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

- Define living amends as sustained, verifiable change directed at the pattern that caused harm
- Convert one past harm into a 90-day living-amend commitment with observable evidence
- Explain why consistency over time — not intensity in a moment — rebuilds credibility

Opening (3 minutes)

Newcomer bridge (60 seconds): This is Phase 3 — Rebuilding. The one idea today is that a living amend is sustained, verifiable change in the pattern that caused the harm. You are welcome here without earlier sessions; everything you need for today is in this session. Words are cheap in early recovery; everybody in our lives has heard them. Today we convert one past harm into a living amend: sustained, verifiable change, directed at the pattern that caused the harm, with dates, evidence, and an accountability person attached.

Check-in prompt (8 minutes)

Name, craving 0–10, one word for your week — then: “Whose belief in your change matters most to you — and what evidence, honestly, have they seen so far?” 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)

Many harms cannot be undone by a conversation: the years missed, the trust spent, the money gone, the parent or child or friend who will not take the call. Living amends answer that reality. We identify the pattern that caused the harm — unreliability, dishonesty with money, absence, rage — and we commit to its opposite, in specific behaviors, for a defined season, where the relevant people can observe it without being asked to applaud it. Showed up for ninety consecutive days. Paid on the schedule, early some months. Answered the phone, told the truth fast, stayed calm and stayed put. Trust, like debt, is settled in currency the injured party recognizes — and the currency of broken trust is time plus consistency. This session sets up Week 6's trust ledger directly.

- **A living amend is a behavior with a date range** 'I'll be there more' is a wish. 'I will be at Sunday dinner, sober, phone away, for the next twelve weeks — including the weeks it's awkward' is an amend.
- **Do not announce it as a campaign** Where a conversation is appropriate, state it once, plainly. Then let repetition do the talking. Repeated announcements with thin follow-through are the old life in new vocabulary.

- **Evidence protects us too** Verifiable change gives the participant their own record to stand on in Week 3's shame storms: not feelings about being better — dates, receipts, kept commitments.
- **Some ledgers close quietly** A living amend may never be acknowledged by the person it honors. It still counts — in our own integrity, and in who our children and community watch us become.

Sources & Evidence — Facilitator background — do not teach

Purpose — meaningful daily activity, work, and service — is one of SAMHSA's four dimensions of recovery, and recovery capital research links work, relationships, and community resources to sustained recovery (SAMHSA, 2012; Granfield & Cloud, 1999). Key sources for this session: SAMHSA (2012); Granfield & Cloud (1999); Bandura (1977); Riessman (1965). Evidence strength: Moderate. Spiritual practice: Living amends and service — correlates with behavioral activation and the helper-therapy principle; evidence: Moderate (Riessman, 1965; SAMHSA, 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.

Discussion questions (10 minutes)

1. Which pattern of yours caused the widest harm — and what is its exact opposite behavior?
2. For your chosen amend, what would count as evidence at day 30, 60, and 90?
3. Where are you tempted to announce instead of perform?
4. What support or structure (rides, reminders, accountability person) does this amend need to survive a bad week?

Skill practice (12 minutes)

Participants complete the Living Amend Commitment page: harm pattern, opposite behavior, frequency, season (start/end dates), evidence I will keep, accountability person, and the obstacle most likely to break it plus the counter-plan. Pairs exchange commitments and schedule a weekly two-minute check-in with each other for the season — accountability is assigned in the room, not left to intention.

Personal application — homework (5 minutes)

Begin your living amend this week — day one counts even if nobody sees it but you. Log the evidence daily in your workbook. Bring the log to Session 27. Participants write it in their workbook before leaving. Facilitator: name the homework again at the door as people leave.

The living-amend log in this session is an entry in the one running daily log in the workbook, not a second log.

Facilitator notes and cautions

Guard against amends becoming self-punishment regimens — commitments should be demanding and sustainable; a facilitator who sees a participant designing a punishing schedule (no rest, impossible hours) helps them scale it to something a human can keep for ninety days. Also: living amends never override court orders, no-contact conditions, or program rules, in either direction.

Closing (2 minutes)

Trust is settled in the currency of time plus consistency. Begin this week — day one counts even if nobody sees it yet. Log the evidence daily. Next week: work, money, and trust — a life worth living, built in verifiable steps.

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 ☐