Session 25: Work and Purpose

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

Materials: Work Step worksheet; local workforce and resource list; the Session 25 handout (My Work Step)

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

- Assess where they stand on the work path — not ready, preparing, seeking, employed — without comparison to others in the room
- Name transferable strengths from their whole history, including survival skills reframed honestly
- Set one 14-day work step sized to their stage

Opening (3 minutes)

Newcomer bridge (60 seconds): This is Phase 3 — Rebuilding. The one idea today is that purpose is a job kept and a step sized to the stage you are actually in. You are welcome here without earlier sessions; everything you need for today is in this session. Purpose, in SAMHSA's recovery model, is not a poster word — it is a job kept, a shift shown up for, a household provided for. Unpaid care, seasonal work, volunteer hours, and getting steady first all count as purpose work here. Today, take an honest inventory: where you actually stand on the work path, the transferable strengths your whole history built, and one 14-day step sized to your stage.

Check-in prompt (8 minutes)

Name, craving 0–10, one word for your week — then: "What work — paid, unpaid, or long ago — have you ever done where you lost track of time because you were good at it and it mattered?" 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)

Work in recovery carries three loads at once: income, structure, and identity. It is also where shame speaks loudly — gaps, firings, records, licenses lost. This session refuses both despair and fantasy. We inventory honestly: skills from every chapter count — resourcefulness, reading people, endurance, improvisation under pressure, named honestly — while gaps are named as logistics, not verdicts: documents to replace, a record's real restrictions to learn from legal aid or workforce services, transportation to solve (and this program's transportation service exists partly for exactly this). Stages are respected: some participants stabilize health first, some start with service or volunteer hours in the house or community, some are ready to apply this week.

- **Calling is bigger than a job, and smaller than we fear** It shows up as the next right work in front of us, done well — not only as a destiny we must discover before we may begin.

- **Survival skills translate** Resourcefulness, reading people, endurance, improvisation under pressure — named honestly, these become interview language and real assets, without romanticizing the life that taught them.
- **Structure is relapse prevention** Employed and purposefully occupied hours are hours the old cycle cannot easily claim; idle drift was Week 2's warning, and work is one of its main answers.
- **Setbacks at work are data, not doom** A lost job in recovery is a problem to solve with the care team within 48 hours — the danger is the silent spiral after it, which every plan in this program is built to interrupt.

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: Work as calling — correlates with behavioral activation, purpose, and recovery capital; evidence: Moderate (SAMHSA, 2012; Granfield & Cloud, 1999). 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 stage are you honestly in — and what has kept you from saying so?
2. Name two transferable strengths and the real-life evidence for each.
3. What is the actual logistical barrier in front of you (documents, transport, record, health, schedule) — stated as a problem to solve?
4. What is your 14-day step, and who will you report it to?

Skill practice (12 minutes)

Strengths-and-Step workshop: each participant writes two strengths with evidence lines, names their stage and their barrier, and drafts a 14-day step (examples: obtain ID or documents, one workforce-center visit, two applications, a service commitment of set hours, a skills class enrollment, a conversation with an employer). Pairs review steps for size — completable in 14 days — and for a named report-back person. The third strength, with its evidence line, is homework.

Personal application — homework (5 minutes)

Write the third strength with its evidence line. Complete the 14-day step and report it to your named person, done or honestly not done with the obstacle named. Bring one line about it to Session 28 — this feeds your purpose plan in Week 7. Participants write it in their workbook before leaving. Facilitator: name the homework again at the door as people leave.

Facilitator notes and cautions

Facilitators give no legal advice about records, expungement, custody, or benefits — those questions go to the Program Director for referral to legal aid, workforce, or benefits services. Never let the room rank participants by stage; the person stabilizing their health and the person starting a job are doing the same phase of work at different addresses.

Closing (2 minutes)

Stages are respected here — stabilizing health and starting a job are the same phase of work at different addresses. Complete the step and report it, done or honestly not done. Next session: money — counting the cost before payday counts you.

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 6 — Relapse Prevention