Session 31: A New Identity

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

Materials: Identity Statement worksheet; the Session 31 handout (My Identity Statement)

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

- Write an identity statement in their own words, grounded in who they are now and where they are going
- Distinguish identity (settled), roles (many), and history (real, not erased)
- Practice introducing themselves in recovery settings without leading with addiction or hiding it

Opening (3 minutes)

Newcomer bridge (60 seconds): This is Phase 4 — Living Free. The one idea today is that identity is the deepest layer — a person in recovery in the present tense — while history stays real and roles stay changeable. You are welcome here without earlier sessions; everything you need for today is in this session. We collect labels across a life — from family, from courts and charts, from the street, from our own shame at 3 a.m. Today we sort them: history is real, roles are many and changeable, and identity is the deepest layer — a person in recovery, in the present tense, not a former anything as a first name.

Check-in prompt (8 minutes)

Name, craving 0–10, one word for your week — then: “When someone asks 'so who are you?', what do you usually lead with — and how much of your answer is still written by the worst chapter?” 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)

We collect labels across a life: some given by family, some by courts and charts, some by the street, some by our own shame at 3 a.m. Recovery identity work sorts them. History is real: what happened and what we did belong in the testimony, unedited with your counselor; sized for the setting when shared in a room — Week 3 taught us shame dies in the light. Roles are many and changeable: parent, worker, participant, leader, student. If your roles are thin yet, start with a becoming sentence: 'I am a person in recovery, learning to _____.' A becoming sentence is a full statement. Identity is the deepest layer, and this program settles it in the present tense: a person in recovery, building a new life — not on probation, not a former anything as a first name. Living from that order changes daily decisions: a person living a new identity, with a past acts differently from a person who is their past with occasional good days. Language follows: in this program we say 'person in recovery,' we answer questions about the past honestly at the right depth for the setting, and we let the present tense lead.

- **Identity first, biography second** Introductions, applications, and self-talk all follow the order: who I am and where I am going, then — as needed, at the right depth — where I have been.
- **Honesty scales by setting** A job interview, a church testimony, and a group session get three different depths of the same true story. Discernment about depth is wisdom, not hiding.

Sources & Evidence — Facilitator background — do not teach

Narrative identity research examines how the stories people construct about their lives relate to well-being and agency (McAdams & McLean, 2013). Key sources for this session: McAdams & McLean (2013); Bandura (1977); Kelly et al. (2011). Evidence strength: Moderate. Spiritual practice: Testimony and identity declaration — correlates with narrative identity work; evidence: Moderate (McAdams & McLean, 2013). 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. Share your identity statement if you choose, or with a partner; passing is honored.
2. Which old label is hardest to stop leading with, and who keeps handing it back to you?
3. Where does your history genuinely belong in the story (it warns, it witnesses) — and where has it been sitting in identity's chair?
4. What decision this week would 'a person in recovery with a past' make differently from 'my past with good days'?

Skill practice (12 minutes)

Draft (5 minutes, Workbook page). Model and partner revision (4 minutes): the facilitator models first, reading one identity statement aloud; partners revise for truth and brevity. Deliveries (remaining time; whole-group choosers only, others with partners): participants deliver their own statement standing or seated, to the whole group or with a partner — their choice. Passing is explicit and honored, with no explanation asked. A unison response is used only for whole-group choosers: those who choose the group say the closing line together ('We see it. Welcome to the new.'); partners and passers are not asked to join it. If more than two choose the whole group, deliveries continue in pairs so the session ends on time.

Personal application — homework (5 minutes)

This week, use your identity statement once a day (mirror or a trusted person). In one real setting, practice the ordered introduction — present first, past at the right depth. Log both in

your workbook. Participants write it in their workbook before leaving. Facilitator: name the homework again at the door as people leave.

Facilitator notes and cautions

The identity statement is written in the participant's own recovery language — for example, 'I am a person in recovery, building a life that helps other people.' Facilitators model the diversity honestly. Also correct, gently and every time, identity labels applied to others in the room ('once an addict…') — the group agreement covers the room's language.

Closing (2 minutes)

Identity first, biography second. Use your statement once a day this week, and practice the ordered introduction in one real setting. Next session: strengths, gifts, and service — recovery that gives back.

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 ☐