Session 35: Mentoring and Accountability After Graduation

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

Materials: Accountability Agreement worksheet; Appendix D; the Session 35 handout (Accountability Agreement)

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

- Distinguish the three relationships — mentor/sponsor, accountability partner, friend — and what each is for
- Secure at least one named accountability partner and one mentor-figure (or a dated plan to secure them) before graduation
- Agree the operating rules of their accountability relationship in writing: frequency, questions, chain-spotting permission

Opening (3 minutes)

Newcomer bridge (60 seconds): This is Phase 4 — Living Free. The one idea today is that mentor, accountability partner, and friend are three different relationships, set up in writing. You are welcome here without earlier sessions; everything you need for today is in this session. Graduation does not end accountability; it privatizes it — which is exactly why we set it up in writing while the room can still help. Today we distinguish mentor, accountability partner, and friend, and everyone leaves with the relationships secured or a dated plan to secure them.

Check-in prompt (8 minutes)

Name, craving 0–10, one word for your week — then: “Who in your life right now has actual permission to tell you a hard truth and be thanked for it? If the answer is nobody — what has that cost?” 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)

Three relationships carry a graduate. A mentor or sponsor: further along, carries experience and perspective, the person we consult on the big decisions and the chain's later stages. An accountability partner: nearer our level, in frequent contact, armed with the specific questions and the warning-sign chain (Session 28's permission, renewed here in writing), the person who asks about sleep, meetings, money secrecy, and honesty — weekly at minimum in the first 90 days. A friend: mutual, unburdened by monitoring duties, because not every relationship should be a checkpoint and joy is itself protective. The operating agreement matters more than the titles: scheduled contact (not 'call if you need me' — the chain eats that sentence first), the standard questions written down, the chain-spotting permission restated ('when you read my own chain to me, I will treat it as love, especially when I don't want to'), and what happens when contact lapses — the partner escalates to the mentor or the program's alumni contact rather than drifting politely away. “After Graduation” means after Phase 5 completion, at Session 60 graduation: these relationships are set up now, in Phase 4, for life after Session 60.

- **Permission given in advance is the whole tool** In the chain, we will not grant permission — we will resent the question. Pre-granted permission, in writing, survives our worst week because it was our sober self who signed it.
- **Frequency beats intensity** A ten-minute Tuesday call kept for a year outweighs a monthly three-hour summit. First-90-days cadence is written into Appendix D with dates.
- **Sharpening is mutual or it curdles** One-way monitoring becomes surveillance or parenting. Both partners report; both can be read their chains; the humility is structural.
- **Lapses trigger, not end** Missed calls are chain data (Session 28 stage one behavior). The agreement names the response: second call within 24 hours, mentor notified at the second miss. No silent disappearances — in either direction.

Sources & Evidence — Facilitator background — do not teach

The Cochrane review found manualized Alcoholics Anonymous / Twelve-Step Facilitation interventions produced higher rates of continuous abstinence than other established treatments for alcohol use disorder (Kelly et al., 2020); peer and community support are core dimensions of recovery (SAMHSA, 2012; White, 2008). Key sources for this session: Kelly, Humphreys, & Ferri (2020); White (2008); Zemore et al. (2018); SAMHSA (2012). Evidence strength: Strong for mutual-help abstinence outcomes; moderate for peer support generally. Spiritual practice: Mentoring and accountability — correlates with peer recovery support and recovery capital; evidence: Moderate (White, 2008; 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 of the three relationships do you already have, honestly — and which seat is empty?
2. If your mentor seat is empty: who are the two candidates, and what is your dated ask plan? (Stalling language gets named kindly in this room.)
3. Write your five standard accountability questions — what must your partner always ask you?
4. What is your lapse protocol, in one sentence each for a missed call and a spotted chain sign?

Skill practice (12 minutes)

Agreement Drafting: participants who already have a partner (including pairs formed in this program, where appropriate and approved by the facilitator) draft the one-page Accountability Agreement in workbooks — contacts, schedule, five questions, chain permission, lapse protocol. Those still securing relationships draft the Ask Plan: names, ask dates, and the exact sentence they will use. Facilitator reviews every document for names and dates before closing; 'I'll find someone' is not a completed session objective.

Personal application — homework (5 minutes)

Make the ask(s) or hold the first scheduled accountability call before Phase 4 completion day. Bring confirmation — a name, a schedule — to Session 36's plan review. Participants write it in their workbook before leaving. Facilitator: name the homework again at the door as people leave.

Facilitator notes and cautions

Pairs formed inside the program need facilitator judgment: two participants who used together, share a romantic history, or sit at very different stability levels do not become each other's accountability — safety and honesty both fail there. Suggest alumni or meeting-based partners instead, and involve the Program Director in matching where the program offers it. Mentors are never assigned romantic-interest dynamics; when in doubt, ask the Program Director before endorsing a match.

Closing (2 minutes)

Permission given in advance is the whole tool — your sober self signs it so your worst week cannot revoke it. Make the ask or hold the first call before Phase 4 completion day. Next session: the 90-day plan, audited in this room, and the closing recognition.

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 8 — Service: Giving Back