Session 43: When Giving Becomes a Hiding Place

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

Materials: Whiteboard; workbooks and pens

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

- Identify how service can function as avoidance of their own recovery work
- Audit their service load against meetings, counseling, rest, and family duties
- Adjust one over-full commitment using a clean handoff (Session 42)

Opening (3 minutes)

Newcomer bridge (60 seconds): This is Phase 5 — Giving Back. The one idea today is that service can hide avoidance of your own recovery work; audit the load. You are welcome here without earlier sessions; everything you need for today is in this session. A person can hide in a bar. They can also hide in a food pantry, a church kitchen, and a calendar full of other people's needs — anywhere his own work goes quietly undone. Today we audit the hiding places that look like virtue.

Check-in prompt (8 minutes)

Name, craving 0–10, one word for your week — then: "What is the piece of your own recovery work — a call, a step, an appointment, a conversation — that you most reliably find a reason to postpone?" 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)

Avoidance in recovery rarely announces itself as rebellion; it arrives dressed as usefulness. The warning signs are structural: service hours climbing while meeting attendance falls, a calendar with no white space, rest treated as laziness, and a flash of anger when anyone suggests doing less. The chain is the same one from Session 28 — an apparently irrelevant decision, a high-risk setup, and then the lapse that 'came out of nowhere.' It did not. It came out of an exhausted, unexamined life.

- **Full is not the same as faithful** Measure service by fruit and by order: your own recovery first, household second, post third. A helper who collapses helps no one for long (Session 42).
- **Anger at the audit is data** If the suggestion to rest produces fury, the service is carrying something it was never meant to carry — identity, penance, or a place to hide. Bring it to your mentor, not to your schedule.
- **Shrink it clean; keep it true** Reduce hours, hand off a day, prepare a replacement (Session 42). A smaller post kept honestly beats a heroic one that eats the recovery it was meant to express.

Sources & Evidence — Facilitator background — do not teach

Gorski-style relapse prevention identifies apparently irrelevant decisions and lifestyle imbalance as early stages of the relapse process, and trauma-informed practice treats rest and pacing as safety

issues, not rewards (Gorski & Miller, 1986; SAMHSA, 2014a). Key sources for this session: Gorski & Miller (1986); Marlatt & Gordon (1985); SAMHSA (2014a), TIP 57. Evidence strength: Moderate. Spiritual practice: Sabbath and sacred rest — correlates with lifestyle balance and relapse prevention; evidence: Moderate (Gorski & Miller, 1986). 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. Where has 'being needed' let you skip being known — by a sponsor, a counselor, this room?
2. What would a real day of rest look like in your current week, and what resists it?
3. Which commitment on your calendar would you choose last, if you had to choose? What does that tell you?

Skill practice (12 minutes)

The load audit (solo grid, then pairs): draw your week in blocks — recovery work, household, post and service, work or job search, rest. Total the service block honestly. Mark anything your service has displaced in the last month. Pairs review each other's grids for the displaced item and help draft one clean reduction: fewer hours, a handed-off day, or a season's end date.

Personal application — homework (5 minutes)

Make the one reduction you drafted — have the conversation, give the notice, prepare the replacement. Write the new, smaller commitment in your workbook before the next session. Participants write it in their workbook before leaving. Facilitator: name the homework again at the door as people leave.

Facilitator notes and cautions

Do not let this session be used as a weapon in the room — no participant audits another's motives aloud. Facilitators model the audit on their own schedule first if the room turns defensive. Suspected relapse risk hiding under over-service goes to the care team, not to group speculation.

Closing (2 minutes)

Shrink it clean; keep it true. Rest is part of the plan.

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 ☐