## Session 51: Leading the Room: Facilitation Basics for Peer Leaders

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

**Materials: Whiteboard; timer; workbooks and pens; the Session 51 handout (Leading the Room: Open, Hold, Close)**

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

- Open a group segment using the program's pattern: purpose, agreements, check-in
- Keep one voice at a time and draw out a quiet member without putting them on the spot
- Close a segment on time with a one-sentence summary and a bridge

**Opening (3 minutes)**

**Newcomer bridge (60 seconds): This is Phase 5 — Giving Back. The one idea today is that leading a room is open, hold, and close — structure, not talking. You are welcome here without earlier sessions; everything you need for today is in this session. Someday the chair at the front of the room may be yours — a check-in to run, a house meeting to keep from becoming a brawl, a reading group to hold steady. Today we learn what that chair actually requires: less talking than you think, and more structure than you expect.**

**Check-in prompt (8 minutes)**

**Name, craving 0–10, one word for your week — then: "Think of the best-led room you have ever sat in, anywhere. What did the person up front actually do — minute by minute?" 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)**

**A peer leader's authority is borrowed and brief: it belongs to the agreements, not to the leader's personality. The craft has three moves. Open: state the purpose in one sentence, name the agreements that matter tonight, start on time. Hold: one voice at a time, cross-talk redirected kindly, quieter voices invited with a door they can decline — 'James, anything from your side of the room?' — and war stories stopped at the first graphic detail, per the agreements. Close: one sentence that names what the room did, and a bridge to what comes next.**

- **The agreements lead; you enforce** A peer leader never rules by opinion. Every intervention points at an agreement the room already made: 'Hold on — one voice at a time; that's our agreement.' The rule carries the weight so the relationship does not have to.
- **Invite; never corner** Draw out the quiet with doors, not spotlights: a question to the whole side of the room, a written minute before sharing, permission to pass that is actually honored. Cornered people do not open; they comply or they leave.
- **End on time, land the plane** A segment that runs over steals from everything after it. Watch the clock, summarize in one sentence, and name the next thing. Ending well is a form of respect the room can feel.

Sources & Evidence — Facilitator background — do not teach

Group literature describes cohesion, structure, and clear norms as conditions of effective groups, and peer-led formats are a recognized component of mutual-help and recovery community practice (Yalom & Leszcz, 2020; Zemore et al., 2018; White, 2008). Key sources for this session: Yalom & Leszcz (2020); Zemore et al. (2018); White (2008). Evidence strength: Moderate. Spiritual practice: Fellowship / koinonia community — correlates with group cohesion and shared norms; evidence: Moderate (Yalom & Leszcz, 2020). 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 move is your natural strength — opening, holding, or closing — and which will you have to build?
2. A member starts a graphic war story. Give the exact sentence you would use to stop it without shaming them.
3. What do you do with the member who talks every time — and with your own liking for their talking?

**Skill practice (12 minutes)**

**One volunteer leads a single ten-minute mock group using the open–hold–close structure; the facilitator and the room give feedback with the observation–impact–request pattern. A second full mock is not run in this session. An observer role and a pass are available; no one is required to lead.**

**Personal application — homework (5 minutes)**

**Write your opening script in your workbook — purpose sentence, the two agreements you would name, your first check-in question — and your closing summary sentence. Bring both to the next session; you may be called on to use them. Participants write it in their workbook before leaving. Facilitator: name the homework again at the door as people leave.**

**Facilitator notes and cautions**

**Peer facilitation in this phase is supervised practice. A peer leader never runs a required curriculum session solo, never handles a disclosure alone, and hands any crisis straight to staff under the protocol — the chair does not change the escalation rules. Cut first if time runs short: the extended debrief after the mock. Never cut skill practice.**

**Closing (2 minutes)**

**The chair is a service post with a clock. Open clean, hold the agreements, land on time. Next session: the leader's own recovery — staying grounded while you help.**

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 ☐