Session 52: The Helper's Own Recovery: Staying Grounded While You Help

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

Materials: Whiteboard; Appendix C (Warning-Sign Chain) for every participant; workbooks and pens; the Session 52 handout (The Helper's Charter)

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

- Run their own warning-sign chain (Session 28) on helper-specific triggers
- State their non-negotiables as a helper: supervision, their own meetings and plan, one person who can tell them no
- Write a helper's self-check they will run weekly

Opening (3 minutes)

Newcomer bridge (60 seconds): This is Phase 5 — Giving Back. The one idea today is that the helper's chain still applies; supervision and non-negotiables guard the helper. You are welcome here without earlier sessions; everything you need for today is in this session. The most dangerous sentence in helping is 'I'm fine — I'm helping.' Today the chain gets personal for the people who now carry others: your warning signs, your non-negotiables, and the person with permission to sit you down.

Check-in prompt (8 minutes)

Name, craving 0–10, one word for your week — then: "Since you started helping others, what part of your own recovery has quietly gotten thinner — sleep, meetings, honesty, rest?" 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)

Helpers relapse in a recognizable order: first the helper's own disciplines thin out — meetings skipped to cover for others, check-ins performed instead of answered, rest postponed for a season that never ends. Then comes the special chain Session 43 named: hiding inside usefulness. The guardrails are structural, not motivational: supervision you actually attend, a plan that still has your name on it, and one named person licensed by you, in advance, to say 'you are doing too much' and be obeyed.

- **Your chain is still your chain** Run Session 28's chain on helper triggers: praise, being needed, a mentee's crisis, a compliment from staff. The stages are identical; only the costumes are better.
- **Supervision is not a report; it is a guardrail** A helper meets their supervisor or mentor on schedule whether or not there is a problem to report. The meeting that only happens in crisis is not supervision; it is an ambulance.
- **Someone must be able to tell you no** Name the person today, out loud, in this room. Their assignment: watch your load and your light, and speak when either dims. Your assignment: obey first, argue later.

Sources & Evidence — Facilitator background — do not teach

Relapse prevention research applies the same warning-sign and lifestyle-balance logic to people in helping roles, and self-efficacy research links honest mastery feedback — including supervision — to sustained behavior change (Gorski & Miller, 1986; Marlatt & Gordon, 1985; Bandura, 1977). Key sources for this session: Gorski & Miller (1986); Marlatt & Gordon (1985); Bandura (1977). Evidence strength: Moderate. Spiritual practice: Daily examen / evening inventory — correlates with self-monitoring and warning-sign awareness for the helper; 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. Which of your disciplines thinned first when you began helping — and who noticed before you did?
2. What praise or usefulness has become hard for you to imagine living without?
3. Who is your named person? Say the name aloud. Have you actually given them the assignment?

Skill practice (12 minutes)

Helper's chain and charter (solo, then pairs): using Appendix C, each person maps their warning-sign chain with helper-specific triggers and marks the earliest interruption point. Then each writes a helper's charter in the workbook: my supervision rhythm, my non-negotiable disciplines, my named person, my weekly self-check day. Partners exchange charters and witness them with a signature and the date.

Personal application — homework (5 minutes)

Hold the first supervision or mentor conversation under your charter this week — even if it is fifteen minutes. Report at the next check-in: the day it happened and one thing it surfaced. Participants write it in their workbook before leaving. Facilitator: name the homework again at the door as people leave.

Facilitator notes and cautions

Facilitators watch for the participant who performs this session flawlessly — helpers are professional-grade maskers. Any helper whose own craving scores are rising across sessions gets a supportive, private check-in from the Program Director, not a public one.

Closing (2 minutes)

You cannot give from a dry well, and you cannot fool the chain. Keep your own name in your own plan. Next block: purpose and vocation — the work your freedom is for.

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 ☐

Block 3 — Purpose & Vocation (Sessions 53–60)