Session 53: Purpose After Survival: What This Life Is For Now

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

Materials: Whiteboard; workbooks and pens; the Session 53 handout (My Compass Sentence)

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

- Write a working purpose statement in one sentence: who they serve, with what, toward what end
- Distinguish purpose from a job title, a role, and a feeling
- Name one purpose-bearing activity already in their week and one that is missing

Opening (3 minutes)

Newcomer bridge (60 seconds): This is Phase 5 — Giving Back. The one idea today is that survival was the job; now the question is what this life is for. You are welcome here without earlier sessions; everything you need for today is in this session. Survival is a full-time job, and for a long time it was yours. It is a poor master for a whole life, though. Today we ask the question survival never had time for: what is this life for, now that it is yours again?

Check-in prompt (8 minutes)

Name, craving 0–10, one word for your week — then: "When you were a kid, what did you think your life would be about? Say it plainly — no laughing it off." 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)

Purpose in this curriculum is not a mystery to be awaited; it is a direction to be walked. SAMHSA names Purpose — meaningful daily activity, work, and service — as one of the four dimensions a recovery is built on, and Sessions 25 and 32 explored calling and gifts. This block does the adult work: a purpose stated in one sentence, tested against the calendar, and expressed in vocation — the work, paid or unpaid, that a life is actually spent on.

- **Purpose is a direction, not a destination** A purpose statement is a compass sentence, not a five-year plan: 'I am a person who steadies younger people in early recovery while I build a trade with my hands.' It can be carried into any job, town, or season — and revised as you grow.
- **Purpose survives job loss; a title does not** Anchor identity in the direction and you can lose a job without losing yourself. Anchor it in the title and the first layoff becomes an identity crisis with relapse risk attached (Sessions 31, 58).
- **The calendar tells the truth** Purpose is audited in hours, not intentions. Lay the compass sentence beside last week's actual schedule: where do they agree, and where is the sentence still only a wish?

Sources & Evidence — Facilitator background — do not teach

Purpose — meaningful daily activity, work, and service — is one of SAMHSA's four dimensions of recovery, and recovery capital research links meaningful roles and community resources to sustained recovery (SAMHSA, 2012; Granfield & Cloud, 1999). Key sources for this session: SAMHSA (2012); Granfield & Cloud (1999); Bandura (1977). Evidence strength: Moderate. Spiritual practice: Service and helping others — correlates with purpose, meaningful activity, and behavioral activation; evidence: Moderate (SAMHSA, 2012; 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. Read your compass sentence aloud. What word in it costs you the most to say?
2. Where does last week's calendar agree with your sentence — and where does it argue?
3. What did addiction promise your life would be about? What is the honest difference now?

Skill practice (12 minutes)

Compass sentence workshop (solo, then trios): each person drafts a purpose sentence from three ingredients — who benefits, what I actually do, toward what end — then work in trios to cut every word that is decoration. Test each sentence against the calendar: name one hour last week that matched it, and one hour next week that will. Write the final sentence on the workbook's first page.

Personal application — homework (5 minutes)

Live one deliberate hour this week inside your compass sentence — scheduled, not accidental. Write two lines: the hour, and what it felt like to be on-purpose on purpose. Participants write it in their workbook before leaving. Facilitator: name the homework again at the door as people leave.

Facilitator notes and cautions

Purpose talk can crush the participant who hears only grand callings. Facilitators keep the scale honest: a purpose can be as quiet as raising a grandchild well and keeping a small crew of men honest. Never rank purposes in the room.

Closing (2 minutes)

You were not kept alive by accident, and you do not have to guess what the life is for — you get to aim it. Write the sentence; walk the sentence. Next session: work itself — the dignity, the difficulty, and the honest way in.

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 ☐