Session 18: Grief, Loss, and Letting Go with Boundaries

Phase 2 — Healing: Mind, Heart, and Past (Weeks 2–4) · Week 4 — Pain, Trauma, and Lament

Date: _____ My craving today (0–10): _____ One word for my week: _____

Handout for this session: the Session 18 handout (Losses, Honors, and One Boundary) — in the Handouts Packet.

What we're learning

Recovery holds many losses: people who died, years that will not come back, custody, work, health — and even the substance and the life around it, which for a while felt like a friend. Grief that is never named does not disappear. It leaks out as anger, numbness, or relapse. This session names our losses, finds honest ways to honor them, and practices grief-protecting boundaries — kind, clear sentences that protect our healing without cutting people off in anger.

- Mourning the substance is honest, not disloyal We can grieve what it gave us (relief, belonging, quiet) while refusing what it took. Both truths in one sentence is emotional adulthood, and it ends the secret romance that fuels relapse.
- Waves, not stages Expect grief to ambush ordinary days. A wave is not a setback and not a sign of weak recovery; it is love and loss doing what they do. Plan for anniversaries the way we plan for triggers.
- Presence over explanations In our own and others' grief, presence beats explanations. This community practices showing up, bringing food, and sitting with people in their grief — not explaining away their pain.
- Boundaries protect the mourner Saying no to a place, a toast, or a conversation is not rejection of the people; it is how the grieving person stays alive to love them longer.

Headline level only in this room: name the topic in a few words, not the details. Details belong with a counselor. You may pass at any time without explaining yourself. If anything in this session needs a counselor, your facilitator will connect you warmly the same day — asking is a success, not a failure.

Goals for this session

☐ I can name the losses carried into recovery — people, years, health, roles, and the substance itself

☐ I can describe grief as a non-linear process with no program deadline

☐ I can set one boundary that protects my grief and recovery in a specific relationship or setting

Check-in

What loss sits underneath your recovery that nobody has ever really asked you about?

Discussion — write your answers

Write what you would say out loud — and more, if it comes. There is no right-length answer; there is only an honest one.

1. Which loss is loudest right now — and which one have you never named until today?

2. Have you ever felt guilty for grieving the using life? What does this session do with that guilt?

3. What dates, places, or songs carry your waves — and who knows about them?

4. What boundary would your grief set this month if it could speak?

Session 18 — Skill Practice

Participants write a Losses and Honors list in their workbook: each loss named in one line, beside one way they will honor it in recovery (a visit, a letter not sent, a donation of time, a quiet practice of remembrance, an anniversary plan). Then each person drafts one grief-protecting boundary as a complete, kind sentence they could actually say: 'I love you and I want to be there. I'll come for dinner and leave before the drinking starts, and here's my ride plan.' Pairs rehearse the sentence aloud.

One grief-protecting boundary, as a complete, kind sentence I could actually say:

My takeaway

The one thing from this session I most need to remember — in my own words:

Homework — this week's application

- ☐ Have one honoring act this week, however small, and write about the wave if it came. Tell one safe person your boundary sentence before you need to use it.

Space to do the homework and note how it went:

An optional Scripture handout for this session is available from your facilitator on request.

Phase 2 Check-In

Phase 2 — Healing: Mind, Heart, and Past (Weeks 2–4)

You looked at the hard things and did not run. That is not small. That is the fight, fought honestly.

Do not grade the fight. Report it honestly — where you held, where you got hit, and what you need for the next round. Honest is how warriors do an after-action review.

Where I was when this phase began:

Where I am now:

The fight in this phase — where I held, and where I got hit:

What I still need:

My phase progress — honest self-check

Phase completion in this program means: I attended at least 8 of this phase's 9 sessions (or made them up with my facilitator), my phase product is complete, and I can state the phase's core skill in my own words. Sessions and homework from before a participant entered do not count as outstanding. The phase count runs from the sessions you attend after entry: attend at least 8 of 9 sessions in Phases 1–4, or at least 22 of 24 in Phase 5, counting attended sessions plus facilitator-assigned makeups (attending the session in a later rotation or completing the facilitator-assigned equivalent), with any remaining gap carried in a completion plan set with the Program Director — never exclusion.

- ☐ Session 10: Renewing the Mind: How Thoughts Drive Feelings and Actions — attended ☐ / made up ☐
- ☐ Session 11: The Thought Record: Putting a Thought on Trial — attended ☐ / made up ☐
- ☐ Session 12: Lies I Believe: About Myself, About Support, About Recovery — attended ☐ / made up ☐
- ☐ Session 13: Guilt Says I Did Bad. Shame Says I Am Bad. — attended ☐ / made up ☐
- ☐ Session 14: Receiving Forgiveness: Letting the Verdict Land — attended ☐ / made up ☐
- ☐ Session 15: Self-Compassion Is a Skill, Not a Surrender — attended ☐ / made up ☐
- ☐ Session 16: Pain and Use: Understanding the Connection Safely — attended ☐ / made up ☐
- ☐ Session 17: Honest Expression: Four Movements — attended ☐ / made up ☐
- ☐ Session 18: Grief, Loss, and Letting Go with Boundaries — attended ☐ / made up ☐
- ☐ Phase product complete: At least three completed Thought Records (Sessions 11–12)

The core skill of this phase, in my own words:

Program wording: catching a thought, putting it on trial with a Thought Record, and writing a balanced thought. Now say it your way:

One thing I am grateful for at the end of this phase:

One thing I am asking for help with in the next phase:

Phase 3 — Rebuilding: Relationships and Life (Weeks 4–6)

Warriors rebuild what the war broke. Not all at once, and not by pretending it never happened. One honest repair at a time.

