Session 19: Family Systems: The Roles We Played

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

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

Handout for this session: the Session 19 handout (My Family Map) — in the Handouts Packet.

What we're learning

Families organize around addiction the way a body works around an injury: other parts carry extra load until the extra load feels normal. We played roles — the one who shields, the one who over-achieves, the one who gets blamed, the one who disappears, the one who jokes it away. Those roles and rules made sense once. In recovery we can see them clearly, keep what is good, and step out of what harms — one pattern at a time, starting with the ones we can actually influence.

- Roles are adaptations, not identities A role learned to survive a system can be retired when the system changes — including by us, one response at a time.
- The three don'ts run the old house Don't talk, don't trust, don't feel kept addiction safe. This program runs the opposite rules on purpose.
- Change invites counter-change When we stop over-functioning, others may escalate, guilt-trip, or test the old role. Expecting it — and having support for it — keeps us from caving or exploding.
- Children are members, not messengers Whatever the family work ahead, children are never couriers, spies, or judges between adults. Naming that here protects people who are not in the room.

Goals for this session

- ☐ I can describe how a family adapts around addiction — roles, rules, and unspoken agreements
- ☐ I can identify the role I played and one role I refuse to resume
- ☐ I can name one family pattern I can influence and one I cannot control

Check-in

Growing up or in your using years, who handled the crises in your family — and who pretended nothing was wrong?

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 role fits you best — and who taught it to you?

2. Which of the three don'ts was strongest in your house?

3. How has your recovery already changed a family pattern, for better or for friction?

4. What is one old-role invitation you can already see coming (a call, a holiday, a favor) — and what is your new response?

Session 19 — Skill Practice

Facilitator draws a simple genogram-style map on the whiteboard with a fictional family and labels roles and rules. Participants then sketch their own family map in workbooks — names, roles, rules — at headline level. In pairs, each person shares one pattern they can influence and one they are releasing to the other adults involved.

One pattern from my family map that I can influence:

One pattern I am releasing to the other adults involved:

Sketch your family map here — names, the role each person played, and the family rules (said or unsaid). Headlines only.

My takeaway

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

Homework — this week's application

☐ This week, notice one moment the old role invites you back. Do not play it. Write what happened, what you did instead, and how it felt an hour later.

Space to do the homework and note how it went:

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