Session 21: Communication That Repairs Instead of Repeats

PHASE 3 — REBUILDING: RELATIONSHIPS AND LIFE (WEEKS 4–6) · WEEK 5 — RELATIONSHIPS REBUILT

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

Handout for this session: the Session 21 handout (I-Statement & Repair) — in the Handouts Packet.

What we're learning

In addiction, most talks ran on attack, defend, withdraw, or manipulate — fast ways to end discomfort that guarantee the same fight next week. Repair works differently. First, listen to reflect: repeat back what you heard until the speaker says, "that's it." Then speak from your own side: an I-statement about what you felt and saw, plus one specific request. Today we practice speaker and listener in pairs, on a small, real topic, with a timer and clear turns.

- Reflecting is not agreeing You can prove you heard someone — fully — while still disagreeing. Most fights are two people who have not yet been heard trying to be heard louder.
- Criticism vs. complaint A complaint names a behavior and a need; criticism names a character. We convert every criticism into a complaint before it leaves our mouths.
- Flooding is a body signal Racing heart, tunnel thinking, voice rising — past that point, no good words exist. A timed, promised return ('twenty minutes, and I will come back') is a skill, not stonewalling.
- Repair early, repair often Couples and families that last are not conflict-free; they are repair-rich. One genuine attempt, accepted, can save an entire evening.

Goals for this session

☐ I can use the speaker–listener structure: one talks, one reflects, then switch

☐ I can state a complaint as an I-statement with a specific request instead of a character attack

☐ I can demonstrate a repair attempt — a pause, softening, or return — during a tense exchange

Check-in

Think of your last real argument. Who talked most, who listened most — and how did it end: repair, retreat, or explosion?

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 old-menu move is yours — attack, defend, withdraw, or maneuver?

2. What does flooding feel like in your body, and how much warning do you get?

3. Who in your life is easiest to really hear? What do they do that helps?

4. What repair sentence could you actually say, in your own voice, mid-fight?

Session 21 — Skill Practice

Main practice (20 minutes, extends into discussion time by design): pairs run two rounds of speaker–listener on a real but moderate topic ('something small that irritates you at home'). Speaker gets three minutes with an I-statement and one specific request; listener only reflects and asks 'is there more?' Then switch. Facilitator times strictly and debriefs: what changed when you were actually heard?

Before a hard talk, write it here — My I-statement (I felt … when … because …):

My one specific request:

My takeaway

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

Homework — this week's application

☐ Use speaker–listener once this week on something small. Before any hard conversation, write your I-statement and your request in your workbook. Log how the conversation ended: repair, retreat, or explosion — data, not grades.

My log for the week:

Day / date	What happened — what I did	Notes

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