Session 28: The Warning-Sign Chain: Relapse Starts Long Before Use

Phase 4 — Living Free: Prevention and Purpose (Weeks 6–8) · Week 6 — Relapse Prevention

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

Handouts for this session: the Session 28 handout (Relapse Warning Signs) and the shared Sessions 28 & 30 handout (My Warning-Sign Chain & Return Plan) — in the Handouts Packet.

What we're learning

Return to use does not start at the moment of use. It starts much earlier, as a chain: we drift (sleep goes, meetings slip), we set up and deny ("I'm fine, it's handled"), problems stack up, then a high-risk moment arrives and craving takes the decision. This session builds your personal Warning-Sign Chain in five stages — 1. Drift; 2. Setup / denial; 3. High-risk situation; 4. Craving / decision point; 5. Use — with your own signs in your own words, and an interruption for each stage before Use: an action plus a person. For stage 5, Use, your Return Card (Session 30) is the plan.

- Earliest is cheapest Interrupting at drift costs a phone call and an honest sentence. Interrupting at the dealer's door costs everything we have built. The whole skill is moving our honesty earlier.
- Denial wears recovery language 'I'm just focusing on work,' 'I don't need meetings this week,' 'I've got this' — the chain speaks fluent program. Our people learn our dialect and call it out; that is their job, given in advance.
- Signs are personal and physical Sleep collapse, skipped meals, isolation, irritability, romantic pursuit, money secrecy — each person's first two signs are specific enough that a roommate could spot them. Vague chains protect nobody.
- The chain is a document, not a insight Appendix C gets completed, shared with coach and accountability people, and revised after every scare. An unshared chain is a secret, and secrets are the chain's favorite habitat.

Goals for this session

☐ I can construct my personal warning-sign chain (Appendix C) across five stages — 1. Drift; 2. Setup / denial; 3. High-risk situation; 4. Craving / decision point; 5. Use

☐ I can name my two earliest, most reliable signs

☐ I can attach an interruption action and a person to each of the first four stages

Check-in

Look back at your last return to use. If we rewound two weeks before it, what had already started changing — sleep, meetings, honesty, mood, people?

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. What are your two earliest signs — the ones present two weeks out?

2. Which recovery-dialect denial sentence is yours?

3. At the crisis-building stage, what kind of problem do you characteristically refuse to ask for help with — money, conflict, legal, loneliness?

4. Who, by name, has your permission to read your chain back to you when you are in it?

Session 28 — Skill Practice

Full workshop: participants complete Appendix C stage by stage with facilitator coaching, then exchange chains in accountability pairs — each partner writes, on the other's chain, the sentence they will actually say when they spot stage one ('Your sleep's gone and you skipped Tuesday. I'm reading your own chain to you — call Coach now, or I will sit with you while you do.'). Facilitators collect names of who holds each chain before closing.

Complete your Warning-Sign Chain in the table below — your signs in your own words, and an interruption (action + person) for each stage. Then give a copy to your coach and one more person this week.

Stage	My signs (in my own words)	My interruption — action + person
1. Drift		
2. Setup / denial		
3. High-risk situation		
4. Craving / decision point		
5. Use	Return Card governs — see Session 30	

My two earliest signs: 1) _____ 2) _____

My takeaway

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

Homework — this week's application

☐ This week, give a copy of your chain (or walk it through aloud) to your coach and one more person on it. Post your two earliest signs where you will see them daily. Log one daily drift-check (green / yellow / red) in your workbook.

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.