Session 30: After a Slip: Return, Don't Run — the First 24 Hours

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: _____

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

What we're learning

A slip (a single return to use) most often becomes a full relapse because of what happens next: shame says, “I've blown it all,” and that lie gives permission to keep using. The Return Plan breaks that sequence in the first 24 hours. Hour one: get safe and stop. Then tell — call your named people and the program. Return the same day. Review your chain with your coach within 24 hours. Today you will write your Return Card in your own handwriting, so the steps are already decided before you ever need them. Emergency: 911. Crisis: call or text 988.

- Run toward, not away Every instinct after a slip says hide, finish the run, start again Monday. The protocol reverses each one: the call, the return, and the review all happen while shame is still arguing. Speed is mercy here.
- The community's side of the agreement This program receives returners without contempt and without pretending nothing happened — consequences and compassion in the same conversation, the discipline from Session 13 practiced from the receiving side.
- Review the chain, not the person's worth The debrief asks where the chain started and which interruption failed — mechanical, fixable questions — and never 'what is wrong with you.'
- Some returns need a higher level of care A slip can reveal that more support is needed — medical evaluation, detox, a different setting. Recommending it is the care team's job, and accepting it is recovery, not exile.

Goals for this session

☐ I can state the first-24-hours protocol in order: safety, tell, return, review

☐ I can explain why the hours after a slip are the highest-leverage moment in the entire relapse process

☐ I can write my personal Return Card with names and numbers

Check-in

What did you do in the first day after past slips — and which part of that day did the most damage: the use itself, or what you did next?

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. Why does shame argue so convincingly in the first hours — and whose voice from your life does it borrow?

2. Walk the protocol: which step would be hardest for you — safety, tell, return, or review — and what support makes it doable?

3. What do you need this community to actually do when someone returns, so that returning is possible?

4. What lie will your mind tell at hour two, and what is your pre-written answer on your Return Card?

Session 30 — Skill Practice

Return Card completion (Appendix C reverse or workbook card): in their own handwriting — 'If I slip: 1) I will get safe by ____. 2) I will call ____, then ____, then the program at ____. 3) I will return to ____ the same day. 4) I will review my chain with ____ within 24 hours.' Cards are photographed into participants' phones in the room. The facilitator then leads a two-minute visualization of walking back through the program's door and being received — rehearsing the return while calm.

Write your Return Card below, in your own handwriting. Then give the details to your two named people this week.

MY RETURN CARD — If I slip:

1) I will get safe by: _____

2) I will call: _____, then _____, then the program at _____.

3) I will return to _____ the same day.

4) I will review my chain with _____ within 24 hours.

Emergency: 911 · Crisis: call or text 988 (Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, 24 hours)

My takeaway

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

Homework — this week's application

☐ Give your Return Card details to your two named people this week and confirm they understand their role. Read the card once aloud to your accountability partner — saying the words in peacetime makes them sayable in war.

Space to do the homework and note how it went:

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