Session 33: Telling Your Story Safely: Testimony Without Harm

PHASE 4 — LIVING FREE: PREVENTION AND PURPOSE (WEEKS 6–8) · WEEK 7 — NEW IDENTITY AND PURPOSE

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

Handout for this session: the Session 33 handout (My Story: Three Minutes, Safely) — in the Handouts Packet.

What we're learning

A safe story is built, not improvised. It has three parts: what it was like (brief and honest, with no using scenes — details can trigger listeners and glorify the old life), what happened (the turn: the people, the help, the program, the moment surrender became direction), and what it is like now (the living evidence, including what is still hard). Three minutes, ending on hope. Today we practice in groups of three: one delivery, with kind, specific feedback.

- The turn is the story Listeners in the pit do not need our pit described better — they need the ladder located. The 'what happened' section always names reachable help: this program, these practices, these people.
- Present tense carries the weight A story that is 80 percent using and 20 percent rescue argues for the using life. We invert the old ratio on purpose: roughly a fifth before, a fifth the turn, and the rest now.
- Unfinished is credible 'And here is what is still hard, and what I do about it' makes a story believable to exactly the people who discount polished ones. Perfection is the least persuasive genre in recovery.
- Consent travels with the story Participants decide where their story is told and recorded. The program never records, posts, or publishes a participant's story without written consent, and a 'no' costs the person nothing.

Goals for this session

☐ I can structure my story in three movements — what it was like, what happened, what it is like now — with time weights favoring the present

☐ I can apply the safety rules: no graphic use detail, no naming-and-shaming others, no telling another person's story

☐ I can deliver a three-minute version and receive structured feedback

Check-in

Whose story — heard in a meeting, a group, or a kitchen — most changed what you believed was possible for you? What made it land?

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. Time your story: which movement currently eats the minutes — and what will you cut to fix the ratio?

2. What detail do you habitually include that this session says to drop? Why do you think you keep it?

3. Who is the specific audience your three-minute version is built for?

4. What 'still hard, still working' line belongs in your ending?

My Story — written version

Three parts, about three minutes spoken. Keep the first part brief, with no using scenes. End on hope.

What it was like:

What happened — the turn:

What it is like now:

Session 33 — Skill Practice

Story workshop (12 minutes): the facilitator delivers a model story first, at exactly three minutes. Then one participant delivers a three-minute story and receives feedback in a fixed order — one thing that landed, one place the ratio slipped, one line worth keeping word-for-word. Three deliveries do not fit in 12 minutes, so this segment runs a model, one delivery, and feedback only; the other deliveries are cut from this segment and move to partner practice or homework. Volunteers may offer a full-group delivery; no one is required to.

Outline your three-minute story: What it was like (brief, no using scenes) / What happened (the turn) / What it is like now. A full story page follows the discussion questions.

My takeaway

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

Homework — this week's application

☐ Deliver your story once this week to a real (safe) audience of one or more — coach, support contact, family member who asked — and write three lines on how it went. The written version goes into your workbook behind your 90-day plan.

Space to do the homework and note how it went:

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