Session 50: Hard Conversations: Feedback Without Shame

Phase 5 — Giving Back: Service, Leadership & Purpose · Block 2 — Mentoring & Leadership

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

What we're learning

Feedback fails in two directions: silence that watches a peer walk toward the edge, and shame that pushes them closer to it. The MI-informed spirit — partnership, acceptance, compassion — scales down to a peer pattern anyone can run: a specific observation, the honest impact, one clear request. Before the conversation, the helper does their own work first: a Thought Record (Appendix B, Session 11) on the story they are telling themselves, because feedback delivered from an unexamined story is usually an accusation wearing a lanyard.

- Observation, not biography 'You have missed three mornings this week' can be discussed. 'You are getting lazy, like before' cannot — it argues about who they are instead of what happened. Stay on the film, not the review.
- Impact, owned 'When the chairs were not set, I felt alone with the room' — an I-statement (Session 21) names a real cost without assigning a motive. Impact persuades; motive-reading provokes.
- One request, actually askable End with a single, doable ask and a real question mark: 'Will you take the chairs back tomorrow, and tell me tonight if you cannot?' Then stop talking. Their answer is the conversation.

Goals for this session

☐ I can deliver one piece of feedback using the observation–impact–request pattern

☐ I can examine my own thoughts first with a Thought Record (Appendix B) when a conversation feels hot

☐ I can receive feedback in the room without defense or counter-charge for two full minutes

Check-in

What is the most useful hard thing anyone has ever said to you in recovery? Who said it, and how did they say it?

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 part of the pattern is hardest for you — seeing clearly, owning impact, or asking plainly?

2. Tell about feedback you received that was true and still harmful. Which element was missing?

3. What thought about a specific person do you need to put on trial (Appendix B) before your next hard conversation?

4. What is the one request you will make in your next hard conversation, in one askable sentence?

Session 50 — Skill Practice

Feedback rounds (in pairs, then reversed): each partner delivers two minutes of real feedback on a low-stakes topic agreed in advance — a house job, a session habit — using the pattern. The receiver's assignment is harder: listen, reflect the request back word for word, and answer only the request. Each partner then rates the delivery: observation clean? impact owned? one ask?

My Thought Record on the story I am carrying about the person I need to talk with:

My feedback in the pattern — observation, impact, one askable request:

My takeaway

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

Homework — this week's application

- ☐ Complete one Thought Record (Appendix B) on the story you are carrying about a person you need to talk with. If the record clears, schedule the conversation this week; if it does not, bring the record to your accountability partner instead.

Space to do the homework and note how it went:

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