

FORGE FACILITATOR GUIDE

Introduction to FORGE

What Is Your Legacy?

Orientation and twelve sessions, for every man in a FORGE dorm

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How Introduction to FORGE Works

Why This Class Exists

FORGE is the mentor certification class: 36 weeks, three sessions a week, for the men who will become peer mentors. Not every man in a FORGE dorm is in FORGE. But every man in the dorm lives in the culture FORGE is trying to build, and every man can learn what FORGE's first phase teaches: how to know yourself.

Introduction to FORGE is that class, and every man who moves into a FORGE dorm takes it. It is **not** a mentor class. Nobody here is being trained to lead other men. The sessions are about the man himself: learning about yourself, learning to be a man of your word, having integrity and understanding what that means, having a purpose in life, and creating your legacy.

One question runs through all twelve sessions: **What is your legacy?** Not someday, after release. Now. What are you leaving behind in this dorm, in your family, in the men around you? Service over self, building others up instead of tearing them down: that's what a legacy is made of, and every man at the table is building one whether he means to or not.

Who It's For

- **Every man who moves into a FORGE dorm.** It is required, as a condition of living in the dorm.
- **Begin within 3 months** of moving in.
- **Complete all 12 sessions within 6 months** of moving in.
- Men already in FORGE do not need it: FORGE Phase 1 covers the same ground, more deeply.

What happens to a man who does not complete in time is the facility's decision, not the facilitators'.

Format

- **12 sessions**, one a week, **75 to 90 minutes** each
- **Open entry**: a man joins at the next session after his orientation and finishes when he has done all 12, in whatever order the cycle brings them
- Chairs in a circle, one talking piece
- Each man has his **Introduction to FORGE book** and a pen or pencil
- Sessions are named by number, never by a day of the week: different dorms meet on different days

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The Twelve Sessions

The sessions come from FORGE, mostly from Phase 1 (Know Yourself), chosen and arranged in three parts around the legacy question.

#	Part	Session	From FORGE
1	Know Yourself	Thinking Controls Behavior	Session 4 (Week 2)
2	Know Yourself	Thinking Errors	Session 5 (Week 2)
3	Know Yourself	The Anger Beneath the Anger	Session 9 (Week 3), with a short primer from Session 7
4	Know Yourself	Coping and Safety	Session 12 (Week 4)
5	A Man of Your Word	Personal Accountability	Session 19 (Week 7)
6	A Man of Your Word	Integrity Under Pressure	Session 20 (Week 7)
7	A Man of Your Word	Making Amends and Moving Forward	Session 21 (Week 7)
8	A Man of Your Word	Empathy Development	Session 22 (Week 8)
9	Purpose and Legacy	Service Over Self	Session 3 (Week 1)
10	Purpose and Legacy	Finding Purpose	Session 29 (Week 10)
11	Purpose and Legacy	The Stakeholder Identity	Session 30 (Week 10)
12	Purpose and Legacy	What Is Your Legacy?	New, drawing on Session 103 (Week 35)

FORGE Sessions 1 and 2 (why FORGE exists, the Code of Conduct, the agreements) are covered in the Orientation. Communication, conflict resolution, mediation and problem-solving are left to FORGE itself: they are skills for leading others, and this class is about the man himself.

Every Session Follows the Same Shape

Part	90-minute class	75-minute class
Opening Words	2 min	2 min
Opening Circle, with a welcome for anyone new	8 min	6 min

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Part	90-minute class	75-minute class
Teach	35 min	30 min
Practice	25 min	20 min
Debrief	12 min	9 min
Legacy Close	8 min	8 min

Each session's plan is written for 90 minutes. For 75, take the time out of the circle rounds (fewer answers, or a quick round instead of a full one), the debrief, and the optional class video. Never cut the practice exercise or the Legacy Close.

Class videos. FORGE has a class video for many of these sessions on the Sessions page of forgementors.org. Show one only if the room has time and the means; it is optional. A video never replaces the session, and it never counts as attending.

Open Entry

Men move into the dorm one at a time, so the class never waits for a group to fill. The twelve sessions run as a cycle, one a week. A man joins at the next session after his orientation, wherever the cycle is, and goes round until he has done all twelve. Because of that:

- **Every session stands on its own.** No session depends on the one before it. When a session uses a tool from another session, it teaches the tool again in a minute or two.
- **Every Opening Circle starts with new men.** Welcome them by name, pair each with a man who has been coming, and say in two minutes what the class is and what the legacy question is.
- **Homework is for the coming week**, whatever session a man attends next.
- **Keep a record for every man**: the date he moved in, the date he started, each session he has completed, and the date he finished. The sign-in sheet at every session feeds it.

Orientation

Before his first session, every new man has an Orientation with a mentor: why FORGE exists, how the dorm's Code of Conduct and the class agreements work, how the class runs, his deadlines, his book, and the legacy question. It takes about 30 minutes. It can be one-on-one, or held on a make-up day so a new man meets other men from the start. See the Orientation section of this guide.

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Make-up Days

A man who misses a session makes it up live, with other men in the room. Never by watching a video alone. Sharing experiences with other men is a real bonding experience, and watching a video of the class does nothing for that.

- **The facility sets a designated make-up day**, suggested once every four weeks.
- **A make-up day runs one full session**: the one most men on the make-up list need. Men who have already done that session are welcome to sit in; their experience makes it better for everyone.
- **A man can also catch a missed session** the next time the cycle comes round to it, if that still falls inside his six months.
- **Keep a make-up list**: who missed which session, and his deadline. Give it to your staff sponsor every month, with the names of men who are close to a deadline.

Who Leads It

- **FORGE mentors facilitate**, two to a session where possible: one leads, one keeps time, handles sign-in and watches the room. FORGE Phase 3 participants can facilitate it as part of their field work, with a certified mentor leading.
- **A staff sponsor** (the chief counselor or whoever the facility names) owns the requirement: the deadlines, the make-up day, and what happens when a man doesn't complete.
- This guide is written for a facilitator who has never taught these sessions. The boxes marked *Facilitator* are what to say. Use your own words once you know where it's going.

This Is Not a Mentor Class

The FORGE sessions these come from were written for men training to be mentors. These versions are not. When you teach them:

- Keep it about **the man in front of you**: his thinking, his word, his purpose, his legacy.
- Don't teach men how to coach, counsel or correct other men. That is FORGE's job.
- "Building others" here means how a man treats the people around him, not running a group.
- If a man shows the makings of a mentor, tell him about FORGE after class.

The Opening Words

Every session starts with the group saying these words together, out loud. They are FORGE's elevator speech, with the last line written for every man in the dorm. The words are printed inside the front of each man's book.

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> **FORGE: Facilitating Opportunities for Reentry, Growth and Empowerment.**
>
> **We're building a new prison experience, where men lead by example, support one another, and prepare to make a positive impact, both inside these walls and beyond them. Our goal is simple: to turn time served into time that serves others.**
>
> **Our purpose: to know ourselves, keep our word, and leave a legacy of service.**

The Legacy Question

Every session ends the same way. The facilitator asks: **"What does today have to do with your legacy?"** Each man writes one line on the **My Legacy** page at the front of his book, next to that session's number. Some men will say theirs out loud.

By his twelfth session, a man has twelve lines. They are the raw material of his legacy statement, which he writes in Session 12 or, if he takes Session 12 earlier in the cycle, on the day he completes.

The day a man completes, the Legacy Close is his. He reads his legacy statement to the circle, the group gives him his certificate, and every man who wants to says one thing he has seen in him. It takes five minutes and it is often the most important five minutes of the class. If two men complete on the same day, give each his own moment.

Agreements and Limits of Confidentiality

The class uses the agreements the dorm uses, the same way FORGE does. The ones that matter most at this table:

- What's said in the circle stays in the circle, with the safety exceptions below
- One voice at a time, and you can always pass
- Respect, even when you disagree
- No case talk, and no names of people who aren't here
- Call people in, not out: talk about the behavior, not the man

Read the limits of confidentiality at Orientation, and in the Opening Circle whenever a new man is there:

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"What's shared in this circle stays in this circle. It doesn't become gossip in the dorm, and it doesn't get used against anybody. But I'll be honest about the limits. If someone shares something that involves an immediate safety risk, a weapon, a plan to hurt someone, a plan to hurt himself, or someone being abused, I have an obligation to act on it. I won't ignore a safety issue. Outside of that, what you share here is yours."*

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The Participant Book

Each man gets an **Introduction to FORGE** book to keep: the opening words, the My Legacy page, and for each session the big idea, the key points, any tool it teaches, the homework, and the worksheets the homework uses. It's his. Never collect it or read it without asking. A man who doesn't read or write well can work his pages out loud with a partner who writes for him; that counts the same.

Completion

- A man completes Introduction to FORGE when he has attended **all 12 sessions**, make-ups included, **within 6 months** of moving in.
- He gets his certificate at the Legacy Close of his twelfth session (see The Legacy Question above).
- The facilitators give the staff sponsor the names and completion dates, to be recorded in the man's file (SCRIBE).
- Completing it is a good first step before applying to FORGE. A man who goes on to FORGE will meet these sessions again in Phase 1, deeper and with more practice.

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Orientation

Facilitator Notes for Orientation

Every man who moves into a FORGE dorm has an Orientation before his first session. It covers what FORGE Sessions 1 and 2 cover for FORGE participants: why FORGE exists, the standards everybody lives by, and how the circle works. It also tells him how this class runs, what his deadlines are, and the one question the whole class asks: **what is your legacy?**

It takes about 30 minutes. Do it one-on-one, or with two or three new men together, or on a make-up day, so a new man sits with other men from the start. Do it within his first two weeks in the dorm if you can. A man who starts early has room for a missed session; a man who waits until his third month has none.

Remember he just moved. He may be wary, tired, testing you, or glad to be somewhere new. Don't sell. Be straight with him, and let the dorm show him the rest.

What to Watch For

"Do I have to?" Yes. It's a condition of living in the dorm, and the staff sponsor decides what happens if a man doesn't complete. Say it plainly, once, and then talk about why it's worth his time.

Reading and writing. Find out gently whether he reads and writes comfortably. If not, tell him his book can be worked out loud with a partner, and pair him with someone who'll help.

Safety. A man who just arrived may be under pressure, in debt, or afraid. If he hints at it, don't dig. Tell him who to talk to, and let your staff sponsor know that day.

Preparing for Orientation

- His Introduction to FORGE book, with his name written in it.
- The dorm's Code of Conduct (FORGE's Code of Conduct, if the dorm uses it) and the class agreements.
- His record: move-in date, the date he must start by (3 months), and the date he must finish by (6 months).
- The time and number of the next session, and the next make-up day.
- A man who has been coming to the class, to pair him with.

Orientation Overview

Purpose: Welcome a new man into the dorm and the class: why FORGE exists, the standards, how the class runs, his deadlines, his book, and the legacy question, so he walks into his first session knowing what it is.

From FORGE: Session 1: Welcome to FORGE and Session 2: Building the Container (Week 1), condensed.

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Materials:

- His book, with his name in it
- The Code of Conduct and the class agreements
- His record with his dates filled in

Orientation Checklist

- ☐ Welcomed by name; asked how he's settling in
- ☐ Why FORGE exists: the stakeholder idea
- ☐ What Introduction to FORGE is, and that it is not a mentor class
- ☐ His deadlines: start within 3 months, finish all 12 within 6 months; make-ups live only
- ☐ Code of Conduct and the class agreements; limits of confidentiality read
- ☐ His book: opening words, My Legacy page, session pages
- ☐ The legacy question explained; his first line written
- ☐ Next session and a partner named
- ☐ Record updated with his Orientation date

Orientation Plan

Welcome (3 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Welcome to the dorm. I'm [name]. I'm in FORGE, and I help run a class every man here takes. How are you settling in?"*

Listen. Answer any practical question you can. If you can't, tell him who can.

Why FORGE Exists (7 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Let me tell you why this dorm is different, and why FORGE exists.*
>
> *You know what it's like in a lot of places. Fights, stabbings, extortion, intimidation, most of it never reported. Staff come to work wondering if today's the day. They want to go home to their families. We want to go home to ours, whenever that day comes.*

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> *Here's what most people won't say out loud: what it's like inside a dorm is shaped more by us, by how the men act, than by anything the administration does. How conflicts get handled. Whether a new man gets tested or gets helped. That's on us. Every day.*
>
> *FORGE is built on one idea: **we are stakeholders in this system.** Not victims of it. Not passengers in it. Stakeholders. This dorm is partly ours, so making it better is partly our job too."*

Ask: "What do you think about that?" Let him answer. Skepticism is fine. Don't argue.

> *"You don't have to believe it today. Live here a while and decide."*

What This Class Is (5 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Every man in this dorm takes a class called Introduction to FORGE. Twelve sessions, one a week, an hour and a quarter to an hour and a half. You start at the next session, wherever the cycle is, and you go round until you've done all twelve.*
>
> *It's not a class about becoming a mentor. FORGE itself does that, and you can apply later if you want. This class is about you. Three parts: **knowing yourself**, how your thinking and your anger work; **being a man of your word**, accountability, integrity, making things right; and **purpose and legacy**, what your life is for and what you're leaving behind.*
>
> *We sit in a circle. We pass a talking piece. You can always pass. Nobody's going to put you on the spot."*

Your Deadlines (3 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Two dates you need to know. You have to **start within 3 months** of moving in, and you have to **finish all twelve sessions within 6 months** of moving in. Your dates are [start by] and [finish by].*
>
> *If you miss a session, you make it up **in person, on a make-up day**, with other men in the room. Watching a video doesn't count. The point of this class is the men in the circle with you. The next make-up day is [date].*
>
> *Finishing is a condition of living in this dorm. Staff decide what happens if a man doesn't. Start early and you'll have room for a bad week."*

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The Code of Conduct and Our Agreements (7 minutes)

Go through the dorm's Code of Conduct briefly. Stop on peace and safety:

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"This part is not a gray area. No weapons. No violence, threats, bullying, intimidation or gang business. That's the standard in this dorm, and nobody gets a pass on it.*
>
> *And self-defense? Nobody's asking you to let yourself get hurt. What this dorm asks is that you don't go looking for trouble, you don't escalate, and you don't carry. If you're in real danger, tell somebody, and we'll work on it."*

Then the class agreements:

> *"In the class circle we keep a few agreements. What's said in the circle stays in the circle. One voice at a time, and you can always pass. Respect, even when you disagree. No case talk, and no names of people who aren't there. Talk about the behavior, not the man."*

Read the limits of confidentiality (How Introduction to FORGE Works) word for word.

Your Book and the Legacy Question (4 minutes)

Hand him his book and show him: the opening words inside the front, the My Legacy page, a session's pages, and the worksheets.

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Every session starts with the opening words. Read them with me once."*

Read the opening words together.

> *"And every session ends with one question: **what is your legacy?** Not someday. Now. What are you leaving behind in this dorm, in your family, in the younger men who watch you? After each session you write one line about it on this page. By the time you finish, you've got twelve lines, and you turn them into your legacy statement. The day you finish, you read it to the circle and the group hands you your certificate.*
>
> *Let's start it now. On the first line, write one sentence: **why does it matter what you leave behind?**"*

Give him a minute. If he doesn't want to write yet, that's fine.

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Next Steps (1 minute)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Your first session is [number and time]. [Name] has been coming for a while; sit with him, he'll help you find your way. Any questions?"*

After Orientation: write his Orientation date in his record, with his start-by and finish-by dates. Tell his partner. If anything he said needs a follow-up, especially about safety, tell your staff sponsor today.

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Session 1: Thinking Controls Behavior

Facilitator Notes for Session 1

This is the idea everything else in the class stands on: **your thinking controls your behavior.** Between every situation and every reaction there is a thought, usually fast and automatic, and that thought, not the situation, drives what a man feels and does. FORGE calls it the single most important thing in the program. Men will push back: "He disrespected me, so I got mad. What's thinking got to do with it?" Let them push. The two-men example and their own thinking reports usually win the argument for you. Keep it about each man's own life. The point is not to teach him to analyze other people; it's for him to catch his own thoughts before they cost him.

What to Watch For

"My thought was right." Sometimes the other man really was disrespecting him. Don't argue about whether the thought was true. Ask whether it was helpful: did it lead where he wanted to go?

Men who can't write much. Thinking reports can be talked through with a partner who writes, or told out loud to you. The thinking is what counts, not the handwriting.

Private pain on the page. A thinking report can bring up something heavy. Never read one without permission, and check on any man who goes quiet.

Preparing for This Session

- Write the cycle on the board: **SITUATION → THOUGHT → FEELING → ACTION → CONSEQUENCE**.
- Have blank thinking reports ready (the Thinking Report page in the book, plus spares).
- Have the sign-in sheet and the list of men who are new this week.
- Optional: the FORGE class video for Session 4, if there is time and a way to show it.

Session 1 Overview

Purpose: Teach the idea the whole class is built on: thinking drives feelings and actions. Help each man see his own automatic thoughts, and give him the thinking report as a tool to slow them down.

Part: Know Yourself

From FORGE: Session 4: Thinking Controls Behavior (Week 2).

Materials:

- Talking piece
- Board or paper with the Think-Feel-Act cycle

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- Thinking Report pages and spares
- Sign-in sheet
- Each man's Introduction to FORGE book

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, the men will be able to:

1. Explain the Think-Feel-Act cycle in their own words
2. Spot the automatic thought in a situation
3. Describe how the same situation can turn out differently depending on the thought
4. Fill in a thinking report: Situation, Thought, Feeling, Action, Consequence
5. Name at least one automatic thought pattern of their own

Session 1 Checklist

- ☐ Opening words said together
- ☐ New men welcomed by name and paired; limits of confidentiality read if anyone is new
- ☐ Check-in round completed
- ☐ Think-Feel-Act cycle taught with the board
- ☐ Same situation, two men, two outcomes taught
- ☐ Automatic thoughts explained
- ☐ Thinking report introduced and a sample walked through
- ☐ Each man wrote at least one thinking report
- ☐ Debrief held
- ☐ Legacy Close: closing round, legacy line written, homework given
- ☐ Sign-in sheet complete; any man completing today recognized

Session Plan

Opening Words (2 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Before anything else, the opening words. Everybody, together, out loud. If you're new, they're inside the front of your book."*

Say the opening words together.

Opening Circle (8 minutes)

Set up: Chairs in a circle. Talking piece ready.

If anyone is new: welcome each new man by name and pair him with a man who has been coming. Then:

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Quick word for the new men. This is Introduction to FORGE. Twelve sessions, one a week, and you can start anywhere in the cycle. It's not a class about becoming a mentor. It's about you: knowing yourself, being a man of your word, and what you're leaving behind. Every session ends with one question: what is your legacy?"*

Read the limits of confidentiality (from How Introduction to FORGE Works) if anyone is new.

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Check-in round. Two things:* ***how are you doing today, and one thing you tried from last session?*** *If you're new, just tell us how you're doing. You can pass."*

Send the talking piece around. Go first yourself, briefly, to model it.

Facilitator note: Don't lecture a man who didn't try anything. Just note it. Awareness first.

Teach: The Think-Feel-Act Cycle (35 minutes)

Part 1: The Big Idea (10 min)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Here's the single most important thing in all of FORGE. I'm not exaggerating. If you get nothing else from this class, get this:*
>
> ***Your thinking controls your behavior.***
>
> *Not the situation. Not the other person. Not what happened to you. Your thinking.*
>
> *Most of us walk around believing situations cause our reactions. Someone disrespects me, so I get angry. Someone takes my stuff, so I fight. My girl stops writing, so I shut down. It feels automatic, like the situation pulls the reaction out of you.*
>
> *But here's the truth: between every situation and every reaction, there's a thought. You might not notice it. It might happen in a split second. But it's there. And that thought, not the situation, is what drives what you feel and what you do.*
>
> *This is called the* ***Think-Feel-Act cycle.****"*

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Point to the board:

> *"A chain with five links: **SITUATION, THOUGHT, FEELING, ACTION, CONSEQUENCE.***
>
> *Something happens. You have a thought about it, usually automatic, usually fast. That thought creates a feeling. The feeling drives an action. The action brings a consequence. Every time."*

The Think-Feel-Act Cycle



Something happens. You have a thought about it, usually automatic, usually fast. That thought creates a feeling. The feeling drives an action. The action creates a consequence. Every time.

Same situation, two different outcomes. You pass a group of guys in the dorm. One of them says something and the group laughs. You didn't hear what was said.

	THOUGHT	FEELING	ACTION	CONSEQUENCE
Man A	"They're laughing at me. I need to check that right now."	Anger. Adrenaline. Face gets hot.	Walks up: "You got something to say? Say it to my face."	Confrontation. Maybe a fight. Maybe a write-up.
Man B	"Somebody said something funny. Has nothing to do with me."	Nothing. Keeps it moving.	Walks past. Nods. Goes about his day.	Nothing. Peace.

The Think-Feel-Act Cycle as it looks on the board, with the two men from Part 2.

Part 2: The Same Situation, Two Different Outcomes (13 min)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Let me prove it. Same situation, two different men, two completely different outcomes.*
>
> ***Situation:** You're walking through the dorm. You pass a group of guys. One of them says something and the group laughs. You didn't hear what was said.*
>
> ***Man A thinks:** 'They're laughing at me. They're disrespecting me. I need to check that right now.'*
> ***Man A feels:** Anger. Adrenaline. Face gets hot.*
> ***Man A does:** Walks up to the group. 'You got something to say? Say it to my face.'*
> ***Consequence:** Confrontation. Maybe a fight. Maybe a write-up. Maybe worse.*

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> ***Man B thinks:*** *'Somebody said something funny. Has nothing to do with me.'*
> ***Man B feels:*** *Nothing much. Keeps it moving.*
> ***Man B does:*** *Walks past. Nods. Goes about his day.*
> ***Consequence:*** *Nothing. Peace.*
>
> *Same situation. Same group of guys. Same laughter. What was different?"*

Pause. Let someone answer. They should say "the thought" or "what he was thinking."

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"The thought. That's it. Man A's thought created anger, which created a confrontation. Man B's thought created calm, which created peace.*
>
> *Now the hard question:* ***how many times have you been Man A?*** *How many times has a thought you never even looked at pushed you into something that cost you? A fight. A disciplinary report. A relationship. Years added to your time.*
>
> *Every one of those started with a thought."*

Part 3: Automatic Thoughts (12 min)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"This is hard to change because most of our thinking is automatic. You don't choose these thoughts. They show up on their own, fast, loud and convincing. They feel like facts.*
>
> *'He's disrespecting me.' That doesn't feel like a thought. It feels like reality. But it's an interpretation. A story your brain is telling about what happened. And your brain might be wrong.*
>
> *Automatic thoughts come from your history. If you grew up where disrespect could get you hurt, your brain learned to scan for it all the time. If people close to you betrayed you, your brain learned to assume the worst. If you were powerless as a kid, your brain learned that aggression was the only way to be safe.*
>
> *Those thoughts made sense at some point. They were survival strategies. But most of them aren't serving you any more. They're running the show, and they're running you into walls.*
>
> *So the first step is simple:* ***slow down enough to see the thought before it takes over.*** *You can't change what you can't see."*

Practice: Thinking Reports (25 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Here's a tool you can use for the rest of your life. It's called a* ***thinking report.*** *Five columns. Simple. And it's one of the most powerful things you can do to understand your own behavior. It's on the Thinking Report page in your book."*

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Walk through the five columns:

> *"**Situation:** what happened? Just the facts, no interpretation. **Thought:** what went through your mind? **Feeling:** what did you feel? Name it. **Action:** what did you do? **Consequence:** what happened as a result?*
>
> *Here's one filled in.*
>
> ***Situation:** Another man cut in front of me in the chow line.*
> ***Thought:** 'He thinks I'm soft. If I let this go, everyone will see.'*
> ***Feeling:** Anger. Embarrassment.*
> ***Action:** I confronted him. Got loud. Told him to get to the back.*
> ***Consequence:** He got loud back. A CO came over. We both almost got written up. I was worked up the rest of the day.*
>
> *The situation was small. But the thought, 'He thinks I'm soft,' made it about respect and reputation. If the thought had been 'He's just impatient, not worth my energy,' the whole chain changes."*

Exercise (15 min):

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Your turn. Write a thinking report from your own life. Pick a situation from the past week or month where you had a strong reaction. It doesn't have to be a fight: getting frustrated, shutting down, snapping at someone, stewing all day.*
>
> *Be specific. Don't write what you think you should have thought. Write what actually went through your mind. The point is honesty, not perfection. If you finish, start a second one."*

Circulate. Help anyone who's stuck:

- "What's a recent time you got angry or frustrated?"
- "What was the very first thing that went through your mind?"
- "What emotion was that? Give it a name."
- "What did you do next? What happened after that?"

Pair new men with the man next to them if writing is hard; they can talk it through and write together.

Don't read anyone's thinking report without permission. These are personal.

Debrief (12 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"I'm not going to ask you to read your reports out loud. That's your business. But let's talk about what it was like. **What was hard about it? What did you notice?**"*

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Take answers around the circle. Common ones, and what to say:

"I didn't realize I was thinking anything. It just happened."

> *"That's exactly the point. The thought was so fast you didn't catch it. That's what automatic means. The thinking report slows it down enough to see it. The more you do it, the faster you'll catch it in real time."*

"My thought wasn't wrong. The guy really was disrespecting me."

> *"Maybe he was. Here's the question: did your thought lead to the best outcome for you? We're not asking whether a thought is true or false. We're asking whether it's helpful."*

"So you're telling us not to react to anything."

> *"No. Reacting is human. The goal isn't to become a robot. The goal is to choose your reaction instead of having it chosen for you."*

Legacy Close (8 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
> *"Closing round. One sentence: **what's one automatic thought you've realized is running the show?** Just the pattern, not the details. 'I always assume people are trying to play me.' 'I jump to the worst case.' Pass if you need to."*

Talking piece goes around.

> *"Now the question we end with every time: **what does today have to do with your legacy?** Think about it. Every thought you let run you leaves something behind: a fight, a broken promise, a man who's scared of you. Every thought you catch leaves something else. Open your book to My Legacy and write one line next to Session 1."*

Give two minutes to write. Ask one or two men to read their line if they're willing.

> *"Homework for the coming week:*
>
> 1. ***Write three more thinking reports** about times you had a strong reaction. There are pages for them in your book.*
> 2. ***Notice your automatic thoughts as they happen.** Don't try to change them yet. Just say to yourself, 'There it is again.'*
>
> *Next session: the thinking errors, the eight most common ways our thoughts trick us. You'll recognize yourself in at least half of them."*

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If a man completes today: give him the Legacy Close moment (How Introduction to FORGE Works, The Legacy Question) before the homework.

After the session: complete the sign-in sheet and each man's record. Add any man who missed his expected session to the make-up list. Check on anyone who went quiet or wrote something heavy.

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Session 2: Thinking Errors

Facilitator Notes for Session 2

Between every situation and every reaction there is a thought. This session shows the men that those thoughts are not random: they fall into patterns, and the patterns have names. Once a man can name his own go-to errors, he can catch them before they drive the action. Expect men to spot the errors in everybody but themselves. Keep asking: which ones are yours?

What to Watch For

Pointing at other people. "That's my bunkie, he's minimizing all day." Laugh with it, then turn it back: "Where does it show up in you?"

Victim stance and real harm. Some men here were truly hurt, or treated unjustly. Don't argue with that. The line this session draws is between "I was harmed, and I need to heal" and "Everything is everyone else's fault."

New men without thinking reports. A man in his first session has none yet. He writes one in the practice first. Pair him with a man who has done it before.

Preparing for This Session

- Write the eight thinking errors on the board with their short versions, and in a corner the cycle: **SITUATION → THOUGHT → FEELING → ACTION → CONSEQUENCE**.
- Have the 8 Thinking Errors page and blank Thinking Report pages ready (the pages in the book, plus spares).
- Have the sign-in sheet and the list of men who are new this week.
- Optional: the FORGE class video for Session 5, if there is time and a way to show it.

Session 2 Overview

Purpose: Name the eight thinking errors, the habits of thought that bend the facts and push a man toward harm, and help each man find the two or three he falls into most.

Part: Know Yourself

From FORGE: Session 5: Thinking Errors (Week 2).

Materials:

- Talking piece
- Board or paper with the eight thinking errors and the Think-Feel-Act cycle
- The 8 Thinking Errors page and Thinking Report pages, plus spares

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- Sign-in sheet
- Each man's Introduction to FORGE book

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, the men will be able to:

1. Name and define all 8 thinking errors
2. Spot thinking errors in example situations
3. Find at least two thinking errors in their own thinking reports
4. Explain how thinking errors bend the facts and drive harmful behavior
5. Begin catching thinking errors in real time

Session 2 Checklist

- ☐ Opening words said together
- ☐ New men welcomed by name and paired; limits of confidentiality read if anyone is new
- ☐ Check-in round completed
- ☐ Think-Feel-Act cycle reviewed in two minutes
- ☐ All 8 thinking errors taught with definitions and dorm examples
- ☐ Each man looked for thinking errors in his own thinking reports (new men wrote one first)
- ☐ Share-out on the errors men found
- ☐ Debrief: the most common and the most dangerous thinking errors
- ☐ Legacy Close: closing round, legacy line written, homework given
- ☐ Sign-in sheet complete; any man completing today recognized

Session Plan

Opening Words (2 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
> *"Before anything else, the opening words. Everybody, together, out loud. If you're new, they're inside the front of your book."*

Say the opening words together.

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Opening Circle (8 minutes)

Set up: Chairs in a circle. Talking piece ready.

If anyone is new: welcome each new man by name and pair him with a man who has been coming. Then:

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Quick word for the new men. This is Introduction to FORGE. Twelve sessions, one a week, and you can start anywhere in the cycle. It's not a class about becoming a mentor. It's about you: knowing yourself, being a man of your word, and what you're leaving behind. Every session ends with one question: what is your legacy?"*

Read the limits of confidentiality (from How Introduction to FORGE Works) if anyone is new.

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Check-in round.* ***How are you doing today, and did you do your homework this week?*** *If you did, tell us what it was like, not the content. If you didn't, be straight about it. If you're new, just tell us how you're doing. You can pass."*

Send the talking piece around. Go first yourself, briefly, to model it.

Facilitator note: If most of the group skipped the homework, say it once: this class doesn't work without the work between sessions. That's where the change happens. No judgment, but no excuses either.

Teach: The 8 Thinking Errors (35 minutes)

Part 1: The Cycle in Two Minutes (3 min)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"For anyone new, here's the idea this whole class stands on.* ***Your thinking controls your behavior.*** *Between every situation and every reaction there's a thought, usually fast and automatic. The thought creates a feeling, the feeling drives an action, and the action brings a consequence."*

Point to the board: SITUATION, THOUGHT, FEELING, ACTION, CONSEQUENCE.

> *"A group laughs as you walk past. Think 'They're laughing at me,' and you walk up ready to fight. Think 'Has nothing to do with me,' and you keep your peace. Same situation, different thought, different ending.*
>
> *Today we get more specific. Automatic thoughts aren't random. They follow patterns. And those patterns have names."*

Part 2: The Eight Errors (28 min)

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> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Every one of us has thinking errors. Not some of us. All of us. These aren't signs of being stupid or crazy. They're habits, patterns your mind falls into, usually without you knowing it. We name them so you can catch them. You can't fix what you can't see.*
>
> *There are eight. As I go through them, be honest with yourself about which ones you recognize. I guarantee you'll find three or four that feel like they were written about you."*

Point to the 8 Thinking Errors page in the book. Go through each one:

Thinking Error #1: Closed Thinking

> *"Closed thinking is: 'I'm right. I don't want to hear it. My mind is made up.' It's refusing to consider another side, another possibility, another way of looking at something.*
>
> ***What it sounds like:** 'That's just the way I am.' 'Nobody's going to change my mind.' 'I already know what happened. I don't need to hear their side.'*
>
> ***In the dorm:** A guy decides his bunkmate is stealing from him. He's certain. He won't listen to any explanation, or consider that he might be wrong.*
>
> *Closed thinking is dangerous because it shuts down learning. If you're always right, you never grow."*

Thinking Error #2: Victim Stance

> *"Victim stance is: 'It's not my fault. This was done to me. I had no choice.' It's seeing yourself as always acted upon, never the actor.*
>
> ***What it sounds like:** 'I'm locked up because the system is rigged.' 'She made me do it.' 'If I'd had a different upbringing, I wouldn't be here.'*
>
> ***In the dorm:** A guy gets into a fight and says, 'He started it. I didn't have a choice.' You always have a choice. You might not like your options, but the choice is always there.*
>
> *Now, let me be real. Some of you have been genuine victims of terrible things. Abuse, neglect, violence, injustice. That's real. Victim stance isn't about denying what happened to you. It's about staying stuck there, using your past as a reason to never take responsibility for your present.*
>
> *The difference: 'I was harmed, and I need to heal' is honest. 'Everything is everyone else's fault' is a thinking error."*

Thinking Error #3: Lack of Empathy

> *"Lack of empathy is: 'I don't care how they feel. That's their problem.' It's not considering what your actions do to other people.*
>
> ***What it sounds like:** 'He shouldn't have been in the way.' 'That's not my problem.' 'She'll get over it.'*
>
> ***In the dorm:** A guy plays his music loud at midnight. Someone asks him to turn it down. He says, 'Deal with it.' He's not thinking about the 30 other men trying to sleep. He's only thinking about himself.*

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> *Lack of empathy isn't always cruelty. Sometimes it's just not thinking about others at all, living in a bubble where only your needs exist."*

Thinking Error #4: Minimizing

> *"Minimizing is: 'It's not that serious.' It's shrinking the harm you've done, or what your choices did to people.*
>
> ***What it sounds like:*** *'I only pushed him.' 'It was just a little weed.' 'Nobody got hurt, so what's the big deal?'*
>
> ***In the dorm:*** *A guy borrows something without asking and says, 'Relax, I was going to give it back.' He took something that wasn't his. The impact on the other man is real, whatever he meant.*
>
> *Minimizing is one of the most common thinking errors in here. It's the one that lets you sleep at night after doing something you know was wrong."*

Thinking Error #5: Power Thrust

> *"Power thrust is: 'I'll make them do it. I'll force the outcome I want.' It's using intimidation, threats, aggression or manipulation to control people or situations.*
>
> ***What it sounds like:*** *'If he doesn't back off, I'll handle it.' 'I need to show these people who's in charge.' 'Nobody's going to punk me.'*
>
> ***In the dorm:*** *A guy doesn't like how someone looked at him, so he gets in his face. He's not solving a problem. He's asserting dominance.*
>
> *Power thrust feels like strength. It's the opposite. Real strength is being able to hold power and choose not to use it destructively. Anybody can intimidate. Not everybody can lead."*

Thinking Error #6: Entitlement

> *"Entitlement is: 'I deserve this. I shouldn't have to wait, work or earn it.' It's believing the rules don't apply to you, or that you're owed something special.*
>
> ***What it sounds like:*** *'I shouldn't have to clean. That's beneath me.' 'I've been here longer, so I get first pick.' 'I deserve better than this.'*
>
> ***In the dorm:*** *A guy takes the best seat in the common area and won't move for anyone because he's been in the dorm the longest. He thinks his time gives him special privileges.*
>
> *Entitlement is the enemy of service. You can't serve others and feel entitled at the same time."*

Thinking Error #7: Cognitive Indolence

> *"Big words, simple idea: mental laziness. 'I don't want to think about it. I'll deal with it later.' It's refusing to do the hard work of thinking things through.*
>
> ***What it sounds like:*** *'Whatever, I'll figure it out.' 'I don't want to think about that right now.' 'It'll work out somehow.'*

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> ***In the dorm:*** *A guy knows he needs to deal with a problem with someone but keeps putting it off. 'I'll talk to him tomorrow.' Tomorrow becomes next week. Next week the problem explodes.*
>
> *Cognitive indolence is how small problems become big ones. Comfort now, and you pay for it later."*

Thinking Error #8: Discontinuity

> *"Discontinuity is: 'I meant to, but...' It's good intentions without follow-through. The gap between what you say and what you do.*
>
> ***What it sounds like:*** *'I was going to apologize, but then I got busy.' 'I know I said I'd be there, but something came up.' 'I planned to do my homework, but I forgot.'*
>
> ***In the dorm:*** *A guy promises his kid on the phone that he's going to be different, that he's changing. Then he goes back to the dorm and acts exactly the same. He meant it when he said it. But meaning it isn't enough.*
>
> *Good intentions without follow-through don't help anyone."*

Part 3: All Eight Together (4 min)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"So there they are. Closed thinking. Victim stance. Lack of empathy. Minimizing. Power thrust. Entitlement. Cognitive indolence. Discontinuity. Eight patterns that bend reality and drive harmful behavior.*
>
> *These aren't rare. These aren't disorders. They're everyday habits that every man in this room, me included, falls into. The difference between a man who keeps making the same mistakes and a man who grows is this:* ***the man who grows learns to catch the error before it drives the action.*** *That's what you're learning to do."*

Practice: Finding the Errors in Your Own Thinking (25 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Now we find them in your own thinking. If you've written thinking reports, pull them out.*
>
> *If you're new, or you don't have one with you, write one first, on the Thinking Report page in your book. Five columns.* ***Situation:*** *what happened, just the facts.* ***Thought:*** *what went through your mind.* ***Feeling:*** *name it.* ***Action:*** *what you did.* ***Consequence:*** *what happened as a result. Pick a time in the past month when you had a strong reaction, and write what actually went through your mind.*
>
> *Then everybody does the same thing:* ***go through each report and find which thinking errors were in your thinking.*** *Use the 8 Thinking Errors page. Write the name of the error next to the Thought column. Most situations have more than one. Don't stop at the first one. Look deeper."*

Exercise (13 min). A man writing a fresh report takes the first six or seven minutes for it.

Circulate. Help anyone who's stuck:

- "Read me the thought you wrote down. Now look at the list. Which one does that sound like?"

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- "Could there be a second error hiding in there?"
- "Is there any minimizing happening? Any victim stance?"

Pair new men with the man next to them if writing is hard; they can talk it through and write together.

Share-out (9 min):

> **Facilitator:**
> *"Who's willing to share? Not the details of your situation, just the thinking errors you found. Which ones showed up for you?"*

Take six to eight men. Likely patterns: power thrust and closed thinking travel together; victim stance and lack of empathy show up side by side; minimizing shows up in almost everyone's reports.

> **Facilitator (after sharing):**
> *"Notice anything? Almost everyone found the same three or four errors showing up again and again. That's because thinking errors are habits. You have go-to errors, the ones you fall back on under stress. Knowing them is like knowing your weak spots. It's the first step to defending against them."*

Debrief (12 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
> *"Let me ask the room: **which thinking error do you think is the most common in here? Not just in you. Across the whole dorm, the whole compound.**"*

Take four or five answers, with their reasons.

> **Facilitator:**
> *"Now a harder question: **which thinking error is the most dangerous?**"*

Let them talk. There's no single right answer, but guide toward this:

> *"They're all dangerous in different ways. But I'll tell you which combination does the most damage: **power thrust plus lack of empathy.** When a man believes force is the answer AND doesn't consider what it does to other people, that's where violence comes from.*
>
> *And here's the one that keeps men locked up the longest. Not in here: in their heads. **Victim stance.** As long as everything is someone else's fault, you never have to change. You stay stuck. You stay the same man who got here.*
>
> *The moment you say, 'My thinking led me here, and my thinking can lead me somewhere different,' that's the moment everything changes."*

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Legacy Close (8 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Closing round. **Name your top two thinking errors, the ones you fall into most often.** Be honest. This isn't confession. It's awareness. Pass if you need to."*

Talking piece goes around.

> *"Now the question we end with every time: **what does today have to do with your legacy?** Every one of those errors leaves something behind. Discontinuity leaves a kid who stopped believing what you tell him on the phone. Power thrust leaves men who are scared of you. Victim stance leaves you the same man who got here. A man who catches his errors leaves something else. Open your book to My Legacy and write one line next to Session 2."*

Give two minutes to write. Ask one or two men to read their line if they're willing.

> *"Homework for the coming week:*
>
> 1. ***Catch yourself in three thinking errors** before the next session. They'll happen; they happen every day. When you notice one, write down the situation, the thought, and which error it was.*
> 2. ***Learn all eight thinking errors by name.** Review the 8 Thinking Errors page in your book.*
>
> *You've spent your whole life running on autopilot. This week, take the wheel.*
>
> *Next session: the anger beneath the anger. What your anger is covering, and what changes when you can name it."*

If a man completes today: give him the Legacy Close moment (How Introduction to FORGE Works, The Legacy Question) before the homework.

After the session: complete the sign-in sheet and each man's record. Add any man who missed his expected session to the make-up list. Check on anyone who went quiet or wrote something heavy.

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Session 3: The Anger Beneath the Anger

Facilitator Notes for Session 3

This session goes somewhere most men have never gone in a room with other men: underneath their anger. A short primer on emotions opens it, so a man who has never heard that anger is a secondary emotion can follow. Then it shows how pain that never gets dealt with turns into aggression, names the four feelings men most often turn into anger, and gives each man private time to write about his own. No one is forced to share. Make the room safe enough that someone might, and receive whatever comes without fixing it.

What to Watch For

Men who get emotional. That's expected. If a man needs to step outside for a minute, let him. If he's struggling, catch his eye and give a small nod: I see you, you're okay. Check on him after.

Analyzing a man's share. Don't interpret or play therapist: never "It sounds like you have unresolved trauma with your father." Say thank you and receive it. The group does the same: no advice, no comments.

A man in real distress. If a man talks about hurting himself or someone else, follow the limits of confidentiality and get him help the same day. No man leaves this session in visible distress without someone acknowledging it.

Preparing for This Session

- Write on the board: **Process it · Numb it · Convert it**, and below it **Shame · Rejection · Powerlessness · Grief**.
- Have the Emotion Wheel Reference, Beneath My Anger and Emotion Tracking Log pages ready (in the book, plus spares).
- Practice 4-4-4 breathing so you can lead it calmly.
- Have the sign-in sheet and the list of men who are new this week.
- Optional: the FORGE class video for Session 9, if there is time and a way to show it.

Session 3 Overview

Purpose: Help each man see that his anger usually covers something more painful, name the feelings his anger protects, and write privately about one time it happened, so that pain stops running him from the dark.

Part: Know Yourself

From FORGE: Session 9: The Anger Beneath the Anger (Week 3), with a short primer from Session 7: Understanding Emotions.

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Materials:

- Talking piece
- Board or paper with the three options and the four feelings
- Emotion Wheel Reference, Beneath My Anger and Emotion Tracking Log pages, plus spares
- Sign-in sheet
- Each man's Introduction to FORGE book

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, the men will be able to:

1. Explain why anger is called a secondary emotion
2. Name at least 2 emotions their own anger usually covers
3. Describe how unprocessed pain becomes aggression
4. Complete a "Beneath My Anger" writing exercise
5. Recognize the link between past experiences and present reactions

Session 3 Checklist

- ☐ Opening words said together
- ☐ New men welcomed by name and paired; limits of confidentiality read if anyone is new
- ☐ Check-in round completed (an emotion you've been carrying)
- ☐ Primer: the emotion wheel and anger as a secondary emotion
- ☐ Pain into aggression, the four emotions anger covers, and the phone call taught
- ☐ "Beneath My Anger" writing completed
- ☐ Voluntary sharing, with the group witnessing
- ☐ Recognize, regulate, understand; 4-4-4 breathing practiced together
- ☐ Legacy Close: closing round, legacy line written, homework given
- ☐ Safety check: no man left in visible distress without acknowledgment
- ☐ Sign-in sheet complete; any man completing today recognized

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Session Plan

Opening Words (2 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Before anything else, the opening words. Everybody, together, out loud. If you're new, they're inside the front of your book."*

Say the opening words together.

Opening Circle (8 minutes)

Set up: Chairs in a circle. Talking piece ready.

If anyone is new: welcome each new man by name and pair him with a man who has been coming. Then:

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Quick word for the new men. This is Introduction to FORGE. Twelve sessions, one a week, and you can start anywhere in the cycle. It's not a class about becoming a mentor. It's about you: knowing yourself, being a man of your word, and what you're leaving behind. Every session ends with one question: what is your legacy?"*

Read the limits of confidentiality (from How Introduction to FORGE Works) if anyone is new.

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Check-in round. Today's check-in is different.* ***What emotion have you been carrying this week that you haven't told anyone about?*** *Keep it brief. You don't have to explain why. Just name it. You can pass.*
>
> *This room is safe. What's said here stays here."*

Send the talking piece around. Go first and model it. Not a dramatic disclosure, just honest: "I've been carrying some worry this week about whether I'm doing right by this group."

Facilitator note: This check-in is more vulnerable on purpose. It sets the tone. If a man passes, let him. Then tell the room: **no one will be forced to share anything today.** The writing is private; sharing is an invitation, not a requirement.

Teach: What Anger Covers (33 minutes)

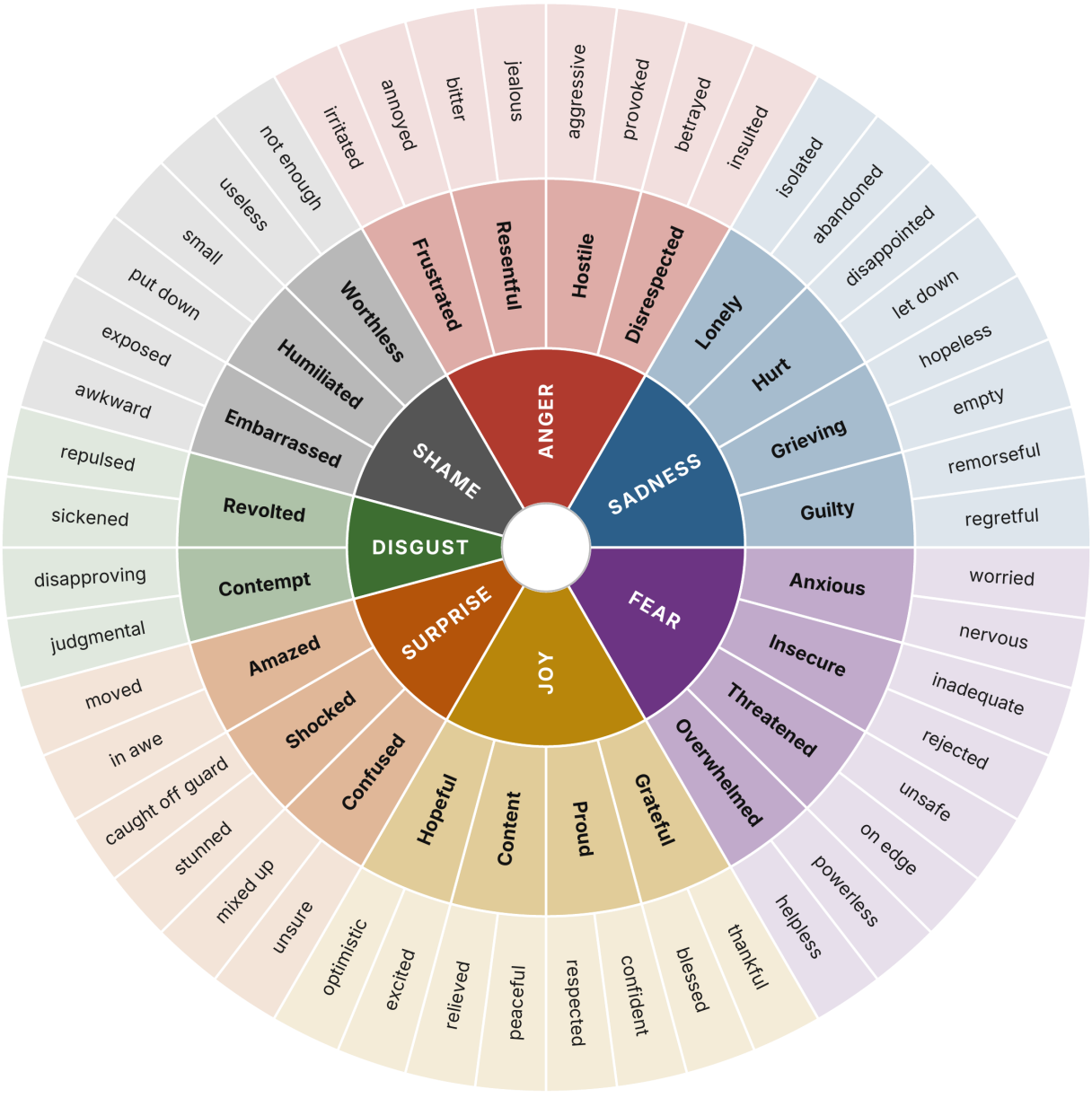
Primer: Anger Is the Bodyguard (4 min)

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Facilitator:

"Quick start. How many emotions can you name, right now? Most men come up with four to six: happy, sad, angry, scared, maybe stressed. But if 'angry' is the only word you have, angry is all you'll ever feel, and angry is all you'll ever act on."

Point to the Emotion Wheel Reference page in the book.



The emotion wheel the men get: the primary emotions in the center, more specific words radiating out.

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"The big emotions sit in the center: anger, sadness, fear, joy, surprise, disgust. Around each are more exact words. 'I feel disrespected and hurt' gives you two things to work with, and they need different responses.

Now the most important thing about anger: ***anger is almost always a secondary emotion.*** *Something comes before it, faster and more vulnerable, and anger covers it up. Anger is the bodyguard. The real emotion, the one that actually hurts, is standing behind it. 'I'm scared' becomes 'I'm pissed off.' 'That wounded me' becomes 'I'll wound them back.'*

In here, which emotion is acceptable to show? Anger. Which ones will get you tested? Fear. Shame. Hurt. Sadness. So men learn to convert everything into anger. The cost: you never deal with what's really going on. You're treating the bodyguard instead of the person it's protecting.

Your body often knows first: clenched jaw, tight fists, heat in your face. That's not weakness. It's data. Today we go behind the bodyguard."

Part 1: How Unprocessed Pain Becomes Aggression (9 min)

Facilitator:

"When something painful happens to us, real pain, deep pain, we have three options:

Option 1: Process it. *Feel it. Name it. Talk about it. Grieve it. Let it move through you. This is the healthy option. It's also the hardest, and in most places, especially this one, the least available.*

Option 2: Numb it. *Push it down. Ignore it. Self-medicate with drugs, alcohol, sex, gambling, sleep, food, whatever works. This doesn't make the pain go away. It just stores it. The bill comes due later. Always.*

Option 3: Convert it. *Turn it into something that feels less vulnerable. Sadness into anger. Fear into aggression. Shame into hostility. Grief into rage. This is what most men do. Not because they're weak: because they were never taught another way.*

Here's the problem with Options 2 and 3: ***the pain doesn't go away.*** *It goes underground, and from underground it runs your life. Every overreaction, every explosion over something small, every time you went from zero to a hundred over nothing: that wasn't about the thing that just happened. That was stored pain looking for an exit.*

Think about a pressure cooker. Heat in, lid sealed, more heat. Eventually it blows, and it destroys things that had nothing to do with what was cooking inside. That's what unprocessed pain does: it explodes at the wrong person, at the wrong time, over the wrong thing."

Part 2: The Emotions Anger Covers (12 min)

Facilitator:

"Let's name them. These are the emotions men most often convert to anger. As I go through each one, check in with yourself honestly. You don't have to tell anyone. Just notice what hits."

*"**Shame.** Shame says: 'I am bad. Not I did something bad: I AM bad. Something is wrong with me.'*

Shame attacks who you are, not what you did. Because it's so painful, anger becomes the shield. 'I'm not ashamed. I'm furious at you for making me feel this way.'

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In here, shame is everywhere: about being locked up, about what you did to get here, about your family seeing you in this uniform. Most men in here carry more shame than they'll ever admit, and most of it comes out as anger."

*"**Rejection.** Rejection says: 'I'm not wanted. I'm not good enough. I've been abandoned.'*

When your girl stops writing. When your kids stop visiting. When the parole board says no. What you feel first is rejection, a gut-level feeling of being thrown away.

But what comes out? Anger. 'I don't need her anyway.' 'They'll see.' The anger feels stronger than the rejection. So you wear the anger like armor."

*"**Powerlessness.** Powerlessness says: 'I have no control. Nothing I do matters. I'm trapped.'*

In here, you feel powerless every day. You don't choose when to eat, when to sleep, when to see the sun. Decisions about your life are made by people who don't know your name.

And what does powerlessness become? Aggression. Because aggression creates an illusion of power. 'I can't control my sentence, but I can control what happens in this dorm.' It's fake power. It doesn't change your situation. It usually makes it worse."

*"**Grief.** Grief says: 'I've lost something I can never get back.'*

Lost years. Lost relationships. Lost childhoods, yours or your children's. Lost freedom. Lost people, people who died while you were in here and you couldn't even say goodbye.

Grief is the emotion men are least equipped to handle, because it requires you to sit still and feel pain. You can't punch grief. You can't outrun it. You just have to feel it. For most men that's unbearable, so grief becomes anger. At the system. At God. At everyone, because anger at least gives you something to do with the pain."

Pause. Let the room sit in silence for 10 to 15 seconds.

Facilitator:

"I'm not telling you this to make you feel bad. I'm telling you because until you name what's really going on, you're fighting the wrong battle. You're punching the bodyguard when the person you need to talk to is standing behind him.

Naming the real emotion doesn't make you weak. It makes you honest. And honesty is the first step to healing."

Part 3: What This Looks Like in Daily Life (8 min)

Facilitator:

"Here's how it plays out on an ordinary day.

A man calls home. His daughter answers, but she sounds distant. She says she has to go: her stepdad is taking her to the movies. He hangs up.

***What he feels first (the real emotion):** Grief. Fear. 'I'm losing my daughter. Someone else is raising her. I'm missing everything.'*

***What he shows (the converted emotion):** Anger. He punches his locker. He snaps at his bunkmate. He's hostile the rest of the day. If anyone says the wrong thing, he's ready to go.*

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> ***What everyone sees:*** *An angry man looking for trouble.*
>
> ***What's actually there:*** *A heartbroken father who doesn't know how to carry the pain.*
>
> *Now, if he could name it, if he could say even to himself, 'I'm grieving. I'm scared of losing my daughter. This hurts,' what changes? Maybe he writes about it. Maybe he talks to someone he trusts. Maybe he just sits with it instead of converting it. The pain doesn't disappear. But it doesn't explode on innocent people either.*
>
> *Both men hurt. One destroys things. The other endures it with dignity."*

Practice: Beneath My Anger (27 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Here's today's exercise. It's the Beneath My Anger page in your book, and it's private unless you choose to share.*
>
> *Write about a specific time you were angry. Really angry. A time your anger led to something you regret, or a time the anger felt bigger than the situation deserved. Use these five prompts:*
>
> 1. ***What happened?*** *Describe the situation.*
> 2. ***What did you show?*** *What did your anger look like on the outside? What did you do?*
> 3. ***What was underneath?*** *Peel back the anger. Was it shame? Rejection? Powerlessness? Grief? Fear? Hurt? Name it.*
> 4. ***Where did that deeper emotion come from?*** *Is this the first time you've felt it, or does it connect to something older: your childhood, your family, your history?*
> 5. ***If you could go back*** *with what you know now, what would you do differently? Not just the action. What would you let yourself feel?*
>
> *Take your time. Write honestly. Nobody reads this but you. You have 16 minutes."*

Sit quietly during the writing. Don't hover. If someone looks stuck, walk by and say quietly: "Just start with what happened. The rest will come." A man who doesn't write well can talk it through quietly with his partner.

Voluntary sharing (8 min):

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Thank you for doing that work. That wasn't easy. The floor is open for anyone willing to share: just the emotion you found underneath, or the whole story. If someone shares, the group's only job is to listen. No advice, no comments. Just witnessing."*

Allow sharing. One man or five, whatever happens is right. After each share: "Thank you. That took courage."

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> **Facilitator (after sharing):**
>
> *"What you just heard, and what you just wrote, is the kind of honesty that changes men. You don't have to solve any of this today. You just have to know it's there. Because once you know it's there, it stops controlling you from the dark."*

Debrief (12 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Let me pull this together. Three steps:*
>
> 1. ***Recognize** the emotion: the wheel, your body's signals.*
> 2. ***Regulate** the emotion: bring it down before it takes over.*
> 3. ***Understand** the emotion: what's beneath the anger.*
>
> *That's emotional literacy. You read yourself like a dashboard. When the engine light comes on, you don't smash the dashboard. You check the engine.*
>
> *Two tools for the regulate step. Nobody has to know you're using them. **4-4-4 breathing,** for when your body is climbing: in through your nose for 4 seconds, hold for 4, out through your mouth for 4. Three rounds take about 36 seconds. **5-4-3-2-1 grounding,** for when your mind is racing: name 5 things you can see, 4 you can touch, 3 you can hear, 2 you can smell, 1 you can taste. By 1, you're back in the room. Let's breathe together. Feet on the floor."*

Lead three rounds: "In, 2, 3, 4. Hold, 2, 3, 4. Out, 2, 3, 4." Then: "Notice anything? Even a small shift?"

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"A question for the group: **what's different about a man who has this awareness and a man who doesn't? How does it change how he moves through the world, and especially through this place?**"*

Take three or four answers. Guide toward this:

> *"The man who knows what he feels, and what's underneath it, doesn't get hijacked. He doesn't destroy relationships. He doesn't lose years of his life to a split second of rage.*
>
> *And you'll start to see it in the men around you. A man raging in the dorm isn't just angry. A man shutting down completely isn't just tired. You don't have to fix him. But you can stop taking his anger personally, and treat him like a man in pain instead of a man looking for trouble."*

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Legacy Close (8 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Closing round: **name one emotion you usually convert to anger, and say it out loud.** Just the emotion. 'I convert fear to anger.' 'I convert shame to anger.' Saying it out loud in front of other men is an act of courage. Pass if you need to."*

Talking piece goes around. Go first yourself.

> *"Thank you. What just happened in this room doesn't happen in very many places. You named the thing. That's the beginning.*
>
> *Now the question we end with every time: **what does today have to do with your legacy?** Pain that comes out as anger lands on somebody: the bunkmate who said the wrong thing, the kid on the other end of the phone. A man who can name what's underneath still hurts, but he doesn't leave wreckage behind him. Open your book to My Legacy and write one line next to Session 3."*

Give two minutes to write. Ask one or two men to read their line if they're willing.

> *"Homework for the coming week:*
>
> 1. ***Keep an emotion tracking log,** on the page in your book. Three times a day, write the time, what's happening, what you feel (use the wheel), where you feel it in your body, and how strong, 1 to 10. By the next session, have at least 5 days of entries. Look for patterns: times, situations or people that bring up the same emotions.*
> 2. ***Use 4-4-4 breathing or 5-4-3-2-1 grounding at least once a day.** Write down the result on the notes pages in your book.*
> 3. ***Write a second Beneath My Anger entry** about a different situation, using the same five prompts.*
> 4. ***Sit with this question:** 'What is one thing that happened to me that I've never fully let myself feel about?' You don't have to write about it yet.*
>
> *Naming what's underneath the anger isn't weakness. It's the strongest thing you'll ever do.*
>
> *Next session: coping and safety. What you do with pain, and your own plan for the hard days."*

If a man completes today: give him the Legacy Close moment (How Introduction to FORGE Works, The Legacy Question) before the homework.

After the session: complete the sign-in sheet and each man's record. Add any man who missed his expected session to the make-up list. Check on anyone who went quiet or wrote something heavy.

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Session 4: Coping and Safety

Facilitator Notes for Session 4

In FORGE this session closes the week on trauma. This class leaves the trauma teaching out on purpose: it is too heavy for a required class a man can walk into on his first day. What stays is the practical part. Everybody copes with pain; what matters is whether his way creates bigger problems. Each man leaves with a Safe Coping Card and a clear idea of when to get more help than a class can give. Don't open up anyone's history today. If a man starts telling what happened to him, thank him and bring it back to what he does with it now.

What to Watch For

Self-harm. If a man says he is hurting himself, or you see signs of it, follow the limits of confidentiality. Talk with him privately after the session and get him to mental health the same day. Not for punishment: for help.

"Self-care is soft." Some men will laugh at the word. Part 2 is written for that: self-care in here is water, chow and sleep, not a spa day.

Men pulled into their past. Making the card can stir things up. Keep it practical: what you'll do, who you'll talk to. Check on any man who goes quiet.

Preparing for This Session

- Know the help available here and how to reach it: mental health staff, the counselor, the chaplain, and what a man does after hours. You'll say it plainly in Part 3.
- Write two columns on the board: **SAFE** and **UNSAFE**.
- Have the Safe vs. Unsafe Coping Strategies and Safe Coping Card pages ready (in the book, plus spares), and small cards or slips of paper for a pocket copy.
- Practice 4-4-4 breathing and 5-4-3-2-1 grounding so you can lead them.
- Have the sign-in sheet and the list of men who are new this week.
- Optional: the FORGE class video for Session 12, if there is time and a way to show it. Watch it first: it was made for FORGE's trauma week.

Session 4 Overview

Purpose: Help each man tell safe coping from unsafe coping, build his own Safe Coping Card, and know when what he is carrying calls for more help than this class can give.

Part: Know Yourself

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From FORGE: Session 12: Coping and Safety (Week 4). The trauma teaching of FORGE Sessions 10 and 11 is left out on purpose.

Materials:

- Talking piece
- Board or paper with SAFE and UNSAFE columns
- Safe vs. Unsafe Coping Strategies and Safe Coping Card pages, plus spares
- Small cards or slips of paper
- Sign-in sheet
- Each man's Introduction to FORGE book

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, the men will be able to:

1. Tell the difference between safe and unsafe coping
2. Create a personal Safe Coping Card with 5 parts
3. Explain what this class is and isn't: it can help a man understand himself, it does not treat what he carries
4. Name the times he, or a man who confides in him, should always get professional help
5. Describe a personal safety plan for hard emotions and situations

Session 4 Checklist

- ☐ Opening words said together
- ☐ New men welcomed by name and paired; limits of confidentiality read if anyone is new
- ☐ Check-in round completed (grateful and struggling)
- ☐ Safe and unsafe coping taught with examples; breathing practiced together
- ☐ Self-care in here discussed realistically
- ☐ "Not therapy" line drawn; when to get help listed, and where to get it here
- ☐ When to use what: the tools put together
- ☐ Each man made his Safe Coping Card and a pocket copy
- ☐ Debrief: share-out and what gets in the way
- ☐ Legacy Close: closing round, legacy line written, homework given
- ☐ Safety check: no man left in visible distress
- ☐ Sign-in sheet complete; any man completing today recognized

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Session Plan

Opening Words (2 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Before anything else, the opening words. Everybody, together, out loud. If you're new, they're inside the front of your book."*

Say the opening words together.

Opening Circle (8 minutes)

Set up: Chairs in a circle. Talking piece ready.

If anyone is new: welcome each new man by name and pair him with a man who has been coming. Then:

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Quick word for the new men. This is Introduction to FORGE. Twelve sessions, one a week, and you can start anywhere in the cycle. It's not a class about becoming a mentor. It's about you: knowing yourself, being a man of your word, and what you're leaving behind. Every session ends with one question: what is your legacy?"*

Read the limits of confidentiality (from How Introduction to FORGE Works) if anyone is new.

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Check-in round.* ***One thing you're grateful for today and one thing you're struggling with.*** *Both. You can pass."*

Send the talking piece around. Go first yourself, briefly, to model it.

Facilitator note: Gratitude paired with honesty. It grounds the room before a session about pain, and keeps it honest.

Teach: Safe and Unsafe Coping (35 minutes)

Part 1: Everybody Copes (15 min)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Most men in here have been through hard things, before prison and since. We're not going to dig into what happened to you today. Today is practical. Pain is real, and everybody does something with it.* ***What do you do with it?*** *How do you cope, in a healthy way, in a place that doesn't exactly make it easy?*

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> *The question isn't whether you cope. Everybody does. It's how.* ***Safe coping helps you manage the pain without creating more problems. Unsafe coping manages the pain in the short term but creates bigger problems in the long term.***
>
> *Unsafe first, because I want you to recognize what you might already be doing."*

Write each one under UNSAFE as you go.

> *"**Substance use.** Drugs, alcohol, pruno, whatever's available. It numbs the pain for a while. It also leads to addiction, health problems, disciplinary action and more time.*
>
> ***Violence.** Letting the pressure out on someone. It feels like release in the moment. It leads to harm, to others and to yourself.*
>
> ***Isolation and shutdown.** Not eating. Sleeping all day. It feels like protection. It leads to depression and missed chances.*
>
> ***Risk-taking.** Gambling, debt, breaking rules for the thrill. It distracts you from the pain. It creates new problems on top of the old ones.*
>
> ***Manipulation and control.** Trying to control everyone and everything around you to manage your own anxiety. It gives you an illusion of safety. It destroys relationships and trust.*
>
> ***Self-harm.** Hurting yourself to manage pain that feels like too much. If this is something you're doing, I need you to tell me. Not for punishment, for help. This is beyond what this class can address, and there are people who can help.*
>
> *Here's the thing about unsafe coping: **it works.** In the short term. That's why people keep doing it. The substance takes the edge off. The fight releases the pressure. They work until the consequences hit. And the consequences always hit."*

Now the SAFE column:

> *"**Physical activity.** Push-ups. Walking the yard. Any movement. Exercise burns off stress hormones, cortisol and adrenaline, naturally.*
>
> ***Breathing and grounding.** Two tools you can use anywhere, and nobody has to know. **4-4-4 breathing,** for when your body is climbing: in through your nose for 4 seconds, hold for 4, out through your mouth for 4. Three rounds take about 36 seconds. **5-4-3-2-1 grounding,** for when your mind is racing or replaying something: name 5 things you can see, 4 you can touch, 3 you can hear, 2 you can smell, 1 you can taste. By 1, you're back in the room. Let's do the breathing together right now."*

Lead three rounds: "In, 2, 3, 4. Hold, 2, 3, 4. Out, 2, 3, 4." Then go on:

> *"**Journaling.** Writing about what you feel. Getting it out of your head and onto paper. The notes pages in your book are there for it.*
>
> ***Talking to someone you trust.** Not everyone. Not randomly. One person who can listen without judging.*

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Prayer or meditation. *Whatever your spiritual practice is. Many men in here find their footing through faith. That's real. Use it.*

Creative expression. *Drawing, writing, poetry, music. Creating something is the opposite of destroying something.*

Routine and structure. *Wake up at the same time. Exercise at the same time. Write at the same time. Structure creates safety for a brain that's used to chaos.*

Helping someone else. *Service over self isn't just a FORGE principle. It's a coping strategy. When you're focused on helping someone, you're not spiraling in your own pain, and you're doing something that matters.*

Naming the emotion. *Just saying 'I'm feeling grief right now' or 'This is shame' turns the volume down. Putting a name on the feeling takes some of its power away.*

Look at both lists. The safe list is available to every man in this room, right now, today. You don't need permission. You don't need a program. You don't need staff approval. ***The question isn't whether you have options. The question is whether you'll use them.****"*

Part 2: Self-Care in Here (7 min)

Facilitator:

"'Self-care' gets thrown around a lot, and in here it can sound ridiculous. 'Take a bubble bath.' 'Light some candles.' That's not your reality. Self-care in here is harder and more basic:

- *Drinking enough water instead of just coffee and Kool-Aid*
- *Eating at chow even when you don't feel like it*
- *Getting outside when yard is open, even for 10 minutes*
- *Sleeping at night instead of staying up until 3 AM*
- *Keeping yourself clean, not because someone told you to, but because it's an act of self-respect*
- *Reading something that feeds your mind instead of numbing it*
- *Doing your homework for this class, because working on yourself is self-care*
- *Saying 'I'm not okay' to one person instead of pretending you're fine*

None of this is glamorous. All of it matters. The man who takes care of himself is better able to take care of the people around him. You can't pour from an empty cup, even in here."

Part 3: This Class Is Not Therapy (8 min)

Facilitator:

"I need to draw a very clear line. ***This class is trauma-aware. It is not therapy.*** *FORGE works the same way.*

Trauma-aware means: *we know most men in here have been through hard things, and that those things affect thinking, emotions and behavior. We don't force anyone to tell their story. We don't re-open old wounds for the sake of it. We respond to people with awareness instead of punishment.*

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> ***It does NOT mean:*** *we diagnose anyone, treat PTSD or any other condition, ask you to relive your worst experiences, or act as counselors, psychologists or social workers.*
>
> *The line is this:* ***this class can help you understand yourself. It doesn't treat what you're carrying.*** *If what you're carrying is bigger than understanding can handle, if you're having nightmares, flashbacks, thoughts of ending your life, or problems that get in the way of your day, you need professional support. And there is no weakness in that.*
>
> *Here are the times you always get help, for yourself or for a man who tells you:*
>
> - *Someone talks about hurting himself or ending his life*
> - *Someone talks about hurting someone else*
> - *Someone is having flashbacks or losing touch with where he is*
> - *Someone is in a mental health crisis that's beyond a bad day*
> - *Someone tells you about ongoing abuse, including sexual abuse in the facility*
>
> *If it's you, tell someone: me, a FORGE mentor, the counselor, mental health, the chaplain. If it's a man who told you, don't keep it secret and don't try to fix it yourself. Stay with him. Keep him safe. Get help. That's enough."*

Say where help is here: who to see for mental health, the counselor, the chaplain, how to reach them, and what to do after hours.

Part 4: When to Use What (5 min)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Let me put the tools together.*
>
> ***When you notice a thinking error:*** *challenge the thought. Is it accurate? Is it helpful? Is there another way to see this? Then replace it.*
>
> ***When you're escalating:*** *4-4-4 breathing or grounding.*
>
> ***When you need to make a decision under pressure:*** *STOP.* ***Stop:*** *pause and take one breath.* ***Think:*** *what am I thinking, and is there a thinking error in it?* ***Options:*** *at least two ways to respond.* ***Plan:*** *pick the one that leads to the best outcome in an hour, a day, a week, not the one that feels best right now.*
>
> ***When anger is covering something deeper:*** *name what's underneath. Write about it. Talk to someone.*
>
> ***When an old reaction fires, bigger than the moment:*** *recognize it. Pause. Remind yourself: 'I'm not in danger right now. I have a choice.'*
>
> ***When the pain is too much to carry alone:*** *use safe coping. Talk to someone you trust. Reach out for professional help if you need it.*
>
> *These tools are yours. Use them."*

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Practice: Your Safe Coping Card (25 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Here's today's exercise: your **Safe Coping Card**, on the page in your book. It's your personal safety plan, small enough to keep in your pocket. Five things:*
>
> ***1. My top 2 thinking errors,** the ones I fall into most. If you don't know them yet, they're on the 8 Thinking Errors page: closed thinking, victim stance, lack of empathy, minimizing, power thrust, entitlement, cognitive indolence, discontinuity. Pick the two that sound most like you.*
>
> ***2. My main trauma response: fight, flight, freeze or fawn.** Big words for something simple. When something feels like danger, your body moves before your mind does, and most men have a default. Fight: you get loud, get in his face. Flight: you walk off, get away. Freeze: you go blank, shut down. Fawn: you go along, give in, keep everybody happy so it'll stop. Know your default.*
>
> ***3. My body's early warning signal.** What does your body do when you start climbing? Jaw tightens? Chest gets hot? Stomach drops? Write down YOUR signal.*
>
> ***4. My 3 go-to safe coping strategies.** From the list, or your own. Things you will actually do, in here, now. Not what sounds good: what's practical.*
>
> ***5. My person.** One person you can talk to when things get heavy, someone who will listen without judging. A man in this class, a FORGE mentor, the chaplain, anyone. Write his name.*
>
> *When you feel yourself climbing, you pull this out. You look at it. You use it."*

Making the card (15 min). Circulate. Help anyone who's stuck:

- "What's something you did this week that actually helped?"
- "Who in this room do you trust enough to talk to when things get hard?"
- "What's the first thing your body does when you start escalating? That's your signal."

Pair new men with the man next to them if writing is hard.

Pocket copy (4 min): each man copies his card onto a small card or slip of paper to carry.

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Keep this card. It might look simple. It is simple. That's the point. In the middle of a crisis, simple is what works. You're not going to pull out a textbook. You're going to pull out this card, and it's going to remind you who you are and what you know."*

Debrief (12 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Let's go around the room. **Share one thing from your card, any section.** Just one thing."*

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Talking piece goes around.

> **Facilitator (after the round):**
> *"Look at the safe list one more time. Every one of those is in your control today. So **what gets in the way?** Why do we reach for the unsafe ones?"*

Take a few answers. Common ones, and what to say:

"The unsafe stuff works faster."

> *"It does. That's why people keep doing it. It works until the consequences hit, and the consequences always hit."*

"Talking to somebody in here makes you look weak."

> *"Not everybody. Not randomly. One person. Saying 'I'm not okay' to one man you trust isn't weakness. Pretending you're fine until you blow is."*

"Push-ups don't fix anything."

> *"They don't fix the problem. They burn off the stress so you can think straight about the problem. None of this is glamorous. All of it matters."*

Legacy Close (8 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
> *"Closing round. Complete this sentence: '**One thing I'm taking from today that I will carry with me is...**' Pass if you need to."*

Talking piece goes around. Go last yourself.

> *"Now the question we end with every time: **what does today have to do with your legacy?** Unsafe coping always leaves something behind: debt, a write-up, a family that can't trust you, a man you hurt because the pressure had to go somewhere. How you handle pain is part of what you leave. Open your book to My Legacy and write one line next to Session 4."*

Give two minutes to write. Ask one or two men to read their line if they're willing.

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> *"Homework for the coming week:*
>
> 1. ***Carry your Safe Coping Card.*** *Use it at least once before the next session. Write what happened on the notes pages in your book.*
> 2. ***Try one new safe coping strategy,*** *one you've never tried. Push yourself a little outside your comfort zone. Write down the result on the notes pages in your book.*
> 3. ***Keep up your emotion tracking log and thinking reports.*** *If they aren't habits yet, recommit. New to them? The pages are in your book: a thinking report is situation, thought, feeling, action, consequence; the log is what you feel, three times a day.*
> 4. ***Write a reflection, at least half a page:*** *'What I understand now about myself that I didn't understand a month ago.'*
>
> *Take care of each other. Service over self.*
>
> *Next session: personal accountability. Owning your choices, with no 'but.'"*

If a man completes today: give him the Legacy Close moment (How Introduction to FORGE Works, The Legacy Question) before the homework.

After the session: complete the sign-in sheet and each man's record. Add any man who missed his expected session to the make-up list. Check on anyone who went quiet, and follow up the same day on anything that needs help beyond this class.

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Session 5: Personal Accountability

Facilitator Notes for Session 5

The foundation of a man's word is accountability: honestly owning the harm his choices caused and committing to be different. Most men have heard "take responsibility" for years as a demand. Here it is something else: putting down the weight of a lie. The spectrum gives every man an honest place to stand, and the line between guilt and shame keeps the work from turning into self-punishment. Expect the room to go quiet during the writing. That's the work happening.

What to Watch For

Shame spirals. A man who says "What's the point, I'm garbage" has hit the shame wall. Don't argue with him. Name it: that's shame, not accountability. Check on him after.

Legal worries. Some men have open cases or appeals. Nobody has to write about the crime that brought him here; any harm he knows he caused will do. The statement is private, and the no-case-talk agreement holds.

Men who can't write much. A man can say his statement quietly to his partner, who writes it for him. It counts the same.

Preparing for This Session

- Draw the accountability spectrum on the board: **1 Denial · 2 Minimization · 3 Blame-shifting · 4 Partial ownership · 5 Full accountability**.
- Write underneath: **Guilt: "I did something bad." Shame: "I am bad."**
- Have the Accountability Spectrum and My Accountability Statement pages ready (in the book, plus spares).
- Have the sign-in sheet and the list of men who are new this week.
- Optional: the FORGE class video for Session 19, if there is time and a way to show it.

Session 5 Overview

Purpose: Help each man understand what accountability is and isn't, see honestly where he stands on the accountability spectrum, and write a statement that owns one harm he caused, with no excuses and no "but."

Part: A Man of Your Word

From FORGE: Session 19: Personal Accountability (Week 7).

Materials:

- Talking piece

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- Board or paper with the accountability spectrum and the guilt and shame lines
- Accountability Spectrum and My Accountability Statement pages, plus spares
- Sign-in sheet
- Each man's Introduction to FORGE book

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, the men will be able to:

1. Define personal accountability and tell it apart from self-punishment
2. Name the 5 levels of the accountability spectrum
3. Honestly assess where they stand on the spectrum
4. Explain the difference between guilt and shame and why it matters
5. Write an accountability statement about a past harm, without excuses or minimizing

Session 5 Checklist

- ☐ Opening words said together
- ☐ New men welcomed by name and paired; limits of confidentiality read if anyone is new
- ☐ Check-in round completed (accountability, 1 to 10)
- ☐ What accountability is and isn't taught
- ☐ Accountability spectrum taught, each level with examples
- ☐ Each man privately placed himself on the spectrum
- ☐ Guilt and shame taught, with the practical test
- ☐ Accountability statement written (12 minutes)
- ☐ Optional sharing, with the group witnessing
- ☐ Debrief held
- ☐ Legacy Close: closing round, legacy line written, homework given
- ☐ Sign-in sheet complete; any man completing today recognized

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Session Plan

Opening Words (2 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Before anything else, the opening words. Everybody, together, out loud. If you're new, they're inside the front of your book."*

Say the opening words together.

Opening Circle (8 minutes)

Set up: Chairs in a circle. Talking piece ready.

If anyone is new: welcome each new man by name and pair him with a man who has been coming. Then:

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Quick word for the new men. This is Introduction to FORGE. Twelve sessions, one a week, and you can start anywhere in the cycle. It's not a class about becoming a mentor. It's about you: knowing yourself, being a man of your word, and what you're leaving behind. Every session ends with one question: what is your legacy?"*

Read the limits of confidentiality (from How Introduction to FORGE Works) if anyone is new.

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Check-in round. Be honest:* ***on a scale of 1 to 10, how accountable are you, really, for the choices that brought you to this place?*** *Don't give me the answer you think I want. Give me the honest number. You can pass."*

Send the talking piece around. Don't comment on individual answers. Just listen and note where people are.

> **Facilitator (after the round):**
>
> *"Thank you. Some of you said high numbers. Some said lower ones. The honest answer is the right answer. Wherever you are is where we start. Today is about character, and the foundation of character is accountability."*

Teach: The Accountability Spectrum (35 minutes)

Part 1: What Accountability Is and Isn't (10 min)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Let me start with what accountability is NOT, because most of us have a twisted relationship with it.*

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> ***Accountability is NOT self-punishment.*** *It's not beating yourself up. It's not 'I'm a terrible person and I deserve everything bad that happens to me.' That's shame wearing a costume. It doesn't help anyone, not you, not the people you've harmed.*
>
> ***Accountability is NOT a performance.*** *It's not saying 'I take full responsibility' in front of a parole board because that's what they want to hear, while privately thinking you got a raw deal. Words without belief are just noise.*
>
> ***Accountability is NOT an exchange.*** *'I admitted what I did, so now I should get something for it.' That's a transaction. Real accountability doesn't come with a receipt.*
>
> ***Accountability is NOT selective.*** *'I take responsibility for the assault, but the stuff that led up to it wasn't my fault.' Accountability means owning your part. ALL of your part. Not just the pieces you're comfortable with."*

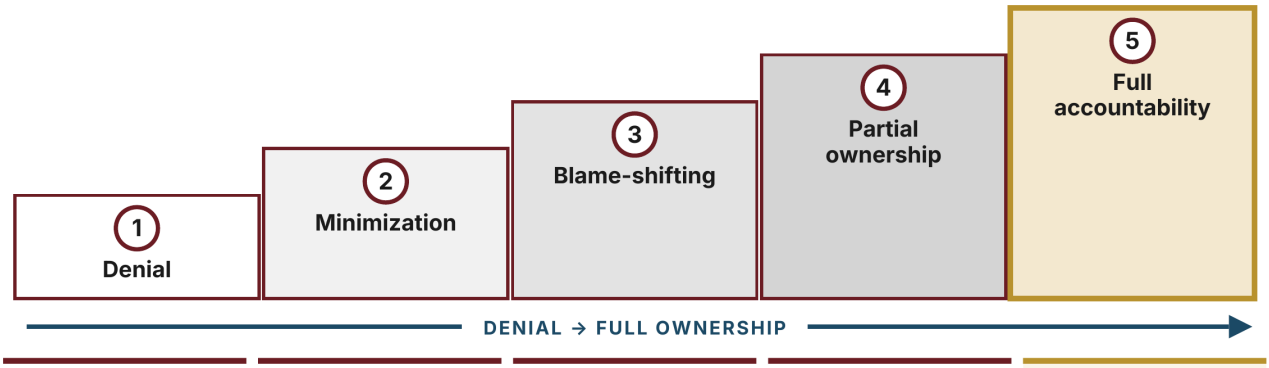
Pause.

> *"So what IS accountability?*
>
> ***Accountability is the honest acknowledgment that your choices created harm, to yourself, to others and to your community, combined with a real commitment to behave differently.***
>
> *Two parts. Some men never get past the first. Some admit the harm but never change. Both pieces matter.*
>
> *Here's the part nobody tells you:* ***accountability is liberation.*** *I know that sounds wrong. How can owning the worst things you've done make you feel free? Because as long as you're denying, minimizing or blaming, you're carrying the weight of a lie. The lie takes energy to keep up. It bends how you see yourself and the world. When you finally put it down, when you say 'I did that, it caused real harm, and I'm choosing a different path,' the weight lifts. Not the consequences. The weight.*
>
> *You'll still be here. Your time doesn't change. But YOU change. And that changes everything else."*

Part 2: The Accountability Spectrum (15 min)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Accountability isn't a switch you flip from off to on. It's a spectrum, and most men move along it over time. Five levels."*

Point to the spectrum on the board:



1 · DENIAL
"I didn't do it." "It wasn't me." "The system set me up."
You can't change something you won't admit exists.

2 · MINIMIZATION
"It wasn't that serious." "Nobody really got hurt." "It was just..."
"Just" is a verbal eraser. The people who were harmed don't experience it as small.

3 · BLAME-SHIFTING
"He started it." "She made me do it." "I had no choice."
He didn't reach inside your brain and move your fist. You decided.

4 · PARTIAL OWNERSHIP
"I messed up, but..." "I take responsibility for my part, but he..."
Every word after "but" erases what came before it. Where most people get stuck.

5 · FULL ACCOUNTABILITY
"I did this. It caused this harm. There is no excuse. I am committed to being different."
No "but." No conditions. Your background explains how you got there. It doesn't excuse what you did.

The accountability spectrum: five levels, from denial to full accountability.

Level 1: DENIAL

"'I didn't do it.' 'It wasn't me.' 'They've got the wrong guy.'

Denial is refusing to admit the event happened, or that you were involved. Some denial is legal strategy: you were told not to admit anything. But when denial becomes what you believe inside, when you've convinced yourself you didn't do what you did, that's a problem. You can't change something you won't admit exists.

In the dorm it sounds like: 'I shouldn't even be in here.' 'The system set me up.' 'My lawyer screwed me.' Sometimes those things are partly true. The system IS broken. Lawyers DO fail. But if that's your entire story, with no room for 'and I also made choices that put me here,' you're in denial."

Level 2: MINIMIZATION

"'It wasn't that serious.' 'Nobody really got hurt.' 'It was just...'

Minimization admits something happened but shrinks it. 'I just sold a little weed.' 'We just got into a fight.' 'She was fine afterward.' When it comes to accountability, the word 'just' is the biggest red flag in the English language. It's a verbal eraser.

Minimization protects your pride. If the harm was small, you're not really a man who did something terrible, just a man who made a small mistake. The problem is, the people who were harmed don't experience it as small."

Level 3: BLAME-SHIFTING

"'He started it.' 'She made me do it.' 'I had no choice.' 'If he hadn't done X, I wouldn't have done Y.'

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> *Blame-shifting admits the event and even the harm, but puts the cause on someone else. 'He disrespected me, so I had to...' No. He disrespected you. That's a fact. What you did in response was your choice. He didn't reach inside your brain and move your fist. You decided. Owning the decision is the hardest part, because the moment you own it, you can't hide behind the other man anymore.*
>
> *In here, blame-shifting is a survival strategy. If everything is someone else's fault, you don't have to face yourself. But you also can't change."*
>
> ***Level 4: PARTIAL OWNERSHIP***
>
> *"'I messed up, but...' 'I take responsibility for my part, but he...'*
>
> *Partial ownership is progress. The man admits his role. But the 'but' takes some of it back. Every word after 'but' erases what came before it. 'I'm sorry, but you made me angry.' That's not an apology. That's an accusation in disguise.*
>
> *This is where most people get stuck. It's comfortable. You've admitted enough to feel good about yourself without fully facing what you did. It looks like accountability. Underneath, it's still protecting your pride."*
>
> ***Level 5: FULL ACCOUNTABILITY***
>
> *"'I did this. It caused this harm. There is no excuse. I am committed to being different.'*
>
> *No 'but.' No conditions. No qualifiers. It doesn't mean the other person was an angel, or that the system is fair, or that your circumstances didn't matter. It means you own YOUR CHOICES within those circumstances.*
>
> *'I grew up in violence, I was addicted, I had no support, AND I chose to rob that man. Both things are true. My background explains how I got there. It doesn't excuse what I did. I caused harm. I own that.'*
>
> *Full accountability is the hardest thing this class will ask of you. It's also what changes a man most. The men who reach Level 5, who can say it, mean it and live it, are the men whose word means something. They've faced themselves completely, and they're still standing."*

Pause. Let it sink in.

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Be honest with yourself right now. Where are you on this spectrum? Not where you want to be. Not where you think you should be. Where you actually are. Write the number, 1 through 5, on the Accountability Spectrum page in your book. Nobody has to share. This is between you and the page."*

One minute of silence while the men write.

> *"Wherever you are is where you start. There's no judgment in this room for being at a 2 or a 3. There's only judgment if you stay there and pretend it's a 5. Growth means movement. Not perfection."*

Part 3: Guilt and Shame (10 min)

Facilitator:

"There's a reason men get stuck on the spectrum, and it has a name: shame. Understanding this difference might be the most important thing you learn today.

Guilt says: 'I did something bad.' Shame says: 'I am bad.'

They look similar. They feel similar. But they lead to opposite places.

***Guilt** is about behavior. The focus is on the action, and the action is separate from who you are. An action can be owned, repaired and changed. Guilt is painful, and it should be. But guilt moves you to change, because it says, 'I did something that doesn't line up with who I want to be, and I can do differently.'*

***Shame** is about identity. The harm isn't something you did; it's who you are. And if you're a bad person, there's nothing to fix, because you can't fix what you ARE. Shame doesn't move you to change. It moves you to hide, to numb out, to self-destruct, or to do more harm. A man drowning in shame doesn't think, 'I should do better.' He thinks, 'I'm worthless, so it doesn't matter what I do.'*

A lot of us have been soaking in shame for years. Maybe since childhood. Messages from parents, schools, the system: 'You're no good. You'll never change. You're a lost cause.' Some of us took those messages in so deep we can't separate what we DID from who we ARE.

This class asks you to make that separation. Not to let yourself off the hook. The opposite. When you separate your actions from your identity, you can hold yourself accountable for the actions without destroying yourself in the process. You can say 'I did terrible things' AND 'I am a human being capable of change.' Both are true. Holding both at the same time is the foundation of real accountability."

"Here's a practical test. When this work makes you feel determined, 'I need to be different,' that's guilt doing its job. When it makes you feel worthless, 'What's the point, I'm garbage,' that's shame taking over. If you hit the shame wall, say something: to a man in this class, to me, on the notes pages in your book. Don't sit in it alone. Shame thrives in isolation. It dies in the light."

Practice: The Accountability Statement (25 minutes)

Facilitator:

"Here's the exercise. You're going to write an accountability statement, on the My Accountability Statement page in your book. Not about everything. About one specific harm you caused.

It can be the crime that brought you here. It can be something you did to a family member. It can be something you did to someone in here. Pick a harm you know you're responsible for.

The rules:

1. ***Name what you did.** Specifically. Not 'I made some bad choices.' What did you actually do?*
2. ***Name the harm it caused.** Who was affected? How?*
3. ***No excuses. No qualifiers. No 'but.'** Your circumstances are real, but this isn't the place for them. This is about ownership.*
4. ***No shame spiraling.** Not 'I'm a terrible person.' Just 'I did this, and this is what it caused.'*

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> 5. ***End with commitment.*** *What are you committed to doing differently?*
>
> *The format: 'I [specific action]. This caused [specific harm to specific people]. I take full responsibility for this choice. I am committed to [specific change].'*
>
> *You have 12 minutes. It's private. You won't be asked to share unless you choose to. Write honestly."*

Twelve minutes of silent writing. Sit quietly. Don't pace the room.

Optional sharing (8 min):

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"If anyone is willing to share his statement with the group, the floor is open. This takes courage, and there's no pressure. If someone shares, here's how we respond: we listen. No judgment. No commentary. No 'it's okay.' It's not okay; that's the point. We just witness."*

If someone shares, the group listens in silence. After he finishes: "Thank you. What you just did, standing in the truth without hiding, is the hardest thing we do in here. The group sees you."

If no one shares, that's fine: "This work is yours. You don't owe it to anyone. But share it with someone you trust before you finish this class. Accountability that stays inside your head is half-finished. It becomes real when it leaves your mouth."

Debrief (12 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"I'm not going to ask what you wrote. But let's talk about what it was like.* ***What was hard about writing it? Where did the 'but' try to sneak in?****"*

Take answers around the circle. Common ones, and what to say:

"I kept wanting to explain why."

> *"Your circumstances are real. They explain how you got there. They don't excuse what you did. Both things are true. Write the explanation somewhere else if you need to, just not in this statement."*

"I wrote it and I feel like garbage."

> *"That's the shame wall. Guilt says, 'I did something bad.' Shame says, 'I am bad.' Hold on to both truths: you did harm, and you're a human being capable of change. And don't sit in it alone. Talk to me after."*

"What's the point? It doesn't change my time."

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> *"It doesn't. You'll still be here. But YOU change. You put down the weight of the lie. And that changes everything else."*

Legacy Close (8 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
> *"Closing round.* ***What is one area of your life where you're still at Level 2 or 3 on the spectrum, still minimizing or blame-shifting?*** *Be honest. If you're not sure, say so. Pass if you need to."*

Talking piece goes around.

> *"Now the question we end with every time:* ***what does today have to do with your legacy?*** *Nobody trusts the word of a man who can't say 'I did that.' Every 'but' you drop, every 'just' you stop saying, makes your word worth a little more to the people who have to depend on it. That's what a man of his word leaves behind. Open your book to My Legacy and write one line next to Session 5."*

Give two minutes to write. Ask one or two men to read their line if they're willing.

> *"Homework for the coming week:*
>
> 1. ***Identify one area of your life where you're still in denial or minimization.*** *Write about it on the notes pages in your book. Don't try to fix it yet. Just see it clearly.*
> 2. ***Re-read your accountability statement.*** *Does it hold up? Is there a 'but' hiding in it? If so, rewrite it without the qualifier.*
>
> *Next session: integrity under pressure. What it means to live in line with the man you say you want to be. It's going to push you. That's the point."*

If a man completes today: give him the Legacy Close moment (How Introduction to FORGE Works, The Legacy Question) before the homework.

After the session: complete the sign-in sheet and each man's record. Add any man who missed his expected session to the make-up list. Check on anyone who went quiet or wrote something heavy.

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Session 6: Integrity Under Pressure

Facilitator Notes for Session 6

Integrity is the heart of being a man of your word: your values, your words and your actions lining up, even when it costs you. This session defines it, gives the men four tests they can run on any decision, and then puts the tests to work on four dilemmas with no clean answers. The dilemmas are where the session comes alive. Let men disagree. The point isn't to land on the right answer; it's for each man to hear his own reasoning out loud and test it.

What to Watch For

The code about telling. The Witness and The Favor bring up snitching. Don't preach, and don't settle it for them. Ask what the four tests say, and what each choice costs.

Easy answers. If a group says "I'd just say no," push: what does no cost you? Who do you lose? The pressure is the cost.

Real situations. A man may be living one of these dilemmas right now. Keep the circle hypothetical, no names and no case talk, and talk with him privately after if he needs it.

Preparing for This Session

- Write on the board: **VALUES · WORDS · ACTIONS**, and below it the 4 tests: **Mirror · Public · Child · Legacy**.
- Have the 4 Tests of Integrity page ready (in the book, plus spares), and the four scenarios, one copy per group, or be ready to read them aloud.
- Plan the groups: three to five men each. In a small room, use two or three scenarios.
- Have the sign-in sheet and the list of men who are new this week.
- Optional: the FORGE class video for Session 20, if there is time and a way to show it.

Session 6 Overview

Purpose: Define integrity as values, words and actions that match, teach four tests a man can run on any hard choice, and practice them on dilemmas where doing right costs something.

Part: A Man of Your Word

From FORGE: Session 20: Integrity Under Pressure (Week 7).

Materials:

- Talking piece

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- Board or paper with values, words, actions and the 4 tests
- The 4 Tests of Integrity page, plus spares
- The four dilemma scenarios
- Sign-in sheet
- Each man's Introduction to FORGE book

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, the men will be able to:

1. Define integrity as the alignment of values, words and actions
2. Apply the 4 tests of integrity to their own decisions
3. Explain how pressure reveals character instead of creating it
4. Work through an ethical dilemma and explain their reasoning
5. Name specific places where their integrity is tested in daily life

Session 6 Checklist

- ☐ Opening words said together
- ☐ New men welcomed by name and paired; limits of confidentiality read if anyone is new
- ☐ Check-in round completed (a promise kept or not)
- ☐ Integrity defined: values, words, actions
- ☐ "Pressure reveals character" taught
- ☐ The 4 tests taught: mirror, public, child, legacy
- ☐ Dilemmas discussed in small groups (8 minutes)
- ☐ Groups presented, with the full room pushing back
- ☐ Debrief held
- ☐ Legacy Close: closing round, legacy line written, homework given
- ☐ Sign-in sheet complete; any man completing today recognized

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Session Plan

Opening Words (2 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Before anything else, the opening words. Everybody, together, out loud. If you're new, they're inside the front of your book."*

Say the opening words together.

Opening Circle (8 minutes)

Set up: Chairs in a circle. Talking piece ready.

If anyone is new: welcome each new man by name and pair him with a man who has been coming. Then:

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Quick word for the new men. This is Introduction to FORGE. Twelve sessions, one a week, and you can start anywhere in the cycle. It's not a class about becoming a mentor. It's about you: knowing yourself, being a man of your word, and what you're leaving behind. Every session ends with one question: what is your legacy?"*

Read the limits of confidentiality (from How Introduction to FORGE Works) if anyone is new.

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Check-in round.* ***How are you doing today, and what's one thing you said you'd do this week that you actually did, or didn't?*** *Be straight. You can pass."*

Send the talking piece around. Go first yourself, briefly, to model it.

> **Facilitator (after the round):**
>
> *"Thank you. Owning what you've done is looking backward. Today is about looking forward: who you're choosing to be. The word for that is integrity."*

Teach: The 4 Tests of Integrity (30 minutes)

Part 1: Defining Integrity (12 min)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Integrity is one of those words people throw around without ever defining it. So let's define it.*

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Integrity is the alignment between your values, your words and your actions.

Three things. They have to match.

Your values are what you say matters to you. Respect. Honesty. Family. Service. Your words are what you tell people you'll do. Your promises. Your commitments. Your actions are what you actually do. Every day. When nobody's watching.

When those three line up, when what you value, what you say and what you do are the same thing, that's integrity.

When they don't, when you say you value honesty but lie when it's convenient, when you promise to show up but don't, when you talk about respect but disrespect people when you're angry, that gap is where trust dies.

Integrity is not about being perfect. It's about being consistent. The man who admits he messed up and works to repair it has more integrity than the man who never makes a mistake because he never takes a risk.

And in here, integrity is tested constantly. Every day you face moments where the easy path and the right path are different. Every day you have chances to cut corners, to go along with something you know is wrong, to stay silent when you should speak up. The pressure in here is relentless. And pressure doesn't build character. It reveals it."

Facilitator:

"Let me say that again, because it matters: ***pressure doesn't build character. It reveals character.*** *The man you are under pressure, when you're scared, when you're angry, when no one is watching, that's who you really are. Everything else is a performance.*

FORGE isn't interested in your performance. We're interested in who you are when it costs you something to do the right thing."

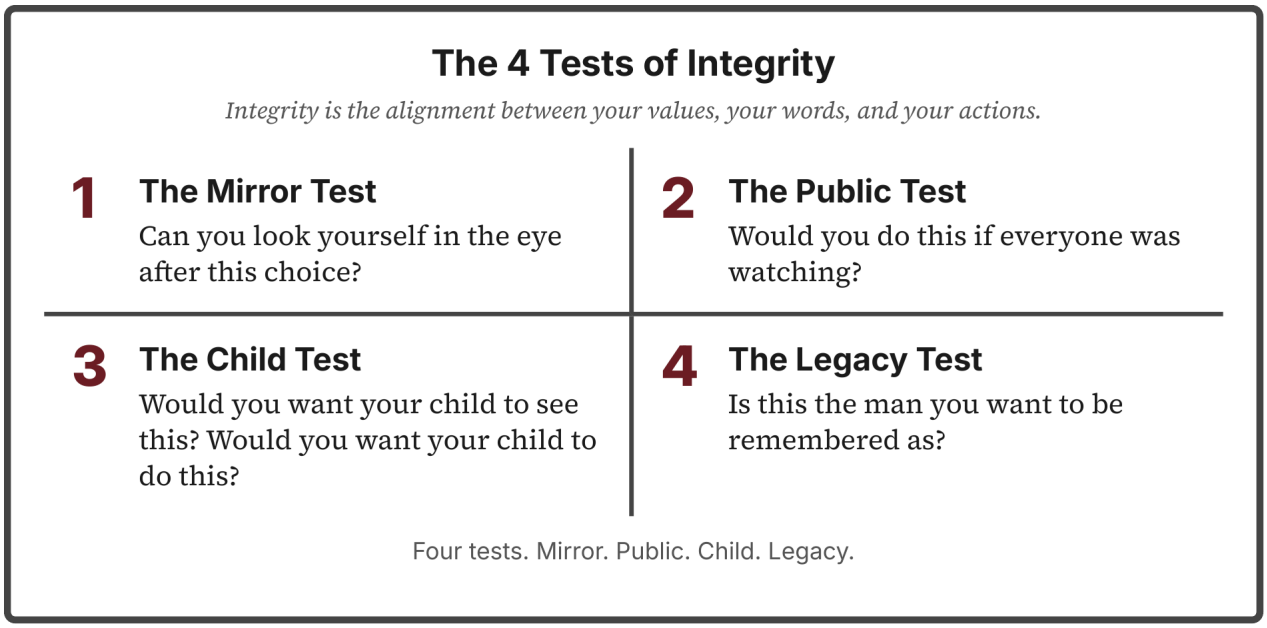
Part 2: The 4 Tests (18 min)

Facilitator:

"I'm going to give you four questions, four tests. When you're facing a decision and you're not sure the choice you're about to make has integrity, run it through these four. If it fails even one, reconsider."

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Point to the 4 tests on the board:



The 4 Tests of Integrity, as written on the board or displayed.

TEST 1: THE MIRROR TEST

"Can you look yourself in the eye after this choice?

Tonight, lying in your bunk, will you be able to live with what you did? Not what other people think about it. What YOU think about it, deep down.

This test cuts through social pressure. It doesn't matter if everyone in the dorm thinks it was the right move. If you can't look yourself in the eye, your conscience is telling you something.

Some of you have spent years avoiding the mirror. Not literally: avoiding honest self-reflection, because what you'd see is painful. The mirror test asks you to look anyway."

TEST 2: THE PUBLIC TEST

"Would you do this if everyone was watching?

If this decision was shown on a screen in front of the whole compound, staff, inmates, everyone, would you still make it? If your behavior would change with an audience, that tells you something about the behavior.

This test catches the stuff we do in the dark, the things we justify when we think no one is looking. Someone is always watching. And even when they're not, you're watching yourself."

TEST 3: THE CHILD TEST

"Would you want your child to see this? Would you want your child to do this?

This is the one that hits hardest. Many of you have children. Some of you have children who still look up to you despite everything. If your son or daughter could see every choice you make, not just the ones you tell them about in letters and phone calls, but every choice, would you be the example you want to set?

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> *If you don't have children, picture a young person who looks up to you. A nephew. A younger brother. A young man in this dorm who watches what you do. Is this the behavior you'd want him to copy?"*
>
> ***TEST 4: THE LEGACY TEST***
>
> *"Is this the man you want to be remembered as?*
>
> *Someday, in here or out there, people will describe who you were. Your family will tell stories about you. The men in this dorm will remember you. What do you want them to say?*
>
> *'He talked a good game but never followed through.' 'He was strong on the outside but made excuses when it counted.' Or: 'He changed. He did the hard work. He became someone worth respecting.'*
>
> *The legacy test isn't about ego or reputation. It's about purpose. Every decision you make is building or destroying the man you're becoming. The legacy test asks you to zoom out and see the bigger picture."*

Pause.

> *"Four tests. Mirror. Public. Child. Legacy. None of them are about what other people think of you. All of them are about who you actually are. Keep them in your pocket. When you face a hard choice, and you will, today, tomorrow, every day, run the tests."*

Practice: Dilemmas Under Pressure (30 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Now we use the tests. I'm going to give you four ethical dilemmas, situations with no easy answer. The point isn't to find the 'right' answer. The point is to sharpen your reasoning, test your values, and hear how other men think through hard choices.*
>
> *Each group gets one scenario. You have 8 minutes to talk it through:*
>
> 1. *What would you do?*
> 2. *Run it through the 4 tests.*
> 3. *What's at stake?*
> 4. *Is there a choice that has integrity even if it has a cost?*
>
> *Then each group presents to the room. Other groups can push back, ask questions, challenge."*

Form the groups (three to five men; mix new men in with men who have been coming) and hand out or read the scenarios.

Scenario 1: The Favor

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> *"Your best friend in here asks you to hold something for him overnight. He says it's personal items he doesn't want taken in a shakedown he heard is coming. You trust him. He's never lied to you. But you don't know exactly what's in the bag, and you didn't look.*
>
> *Do you hold it? What if it turns out to be contraband? What if refusing damages a friendship that matters to you?"*

Scenario 2: The Witness

> *"You see a man from your dorm, a man who sits in this class with you, take food from another man's commissary. The man it belongs to doesn't know who did it. The one who took it sees you watching and says, 'Don't say anything, man. He owes me anyway.'*
>
> *What do you do? Do you confront him? Do you tell the man it belongs to? Do you take it to a FORGE mentor? Do you stay quiet?"*

Scenario 3: The Test

> *"A group of men you're cool with invites you into something that isn't violent but breaks the rules: maybe a gambling ring, maybe a hustle. They say it's harmless and everyone does it. If you say no, they'll question your loyalty and maybe cut you out. These are men who have your back.*
>
> *Do you join in? How do you decline without making enemies? Can you keep your integrity and keep the relationship?"*

Scenario 4: The Truth

> *"You're up for something that could help your case: a transfer, a job assignment, a recommendation. In the interview, you're asked about an incident from your past. You were involved, but it was never documented. No one would know if you lied. Telling the truth might cost you the opportunity.*
>
> *Do you lie? Is the opportunity worth your integrity? What happens inside you if you lie and get what you want?"*

Groups talk (8 minutes). Circulate, listen, and ask questions that take them deeper.

Group presentations (20 minutes, about 5 per group): each group gives the dilemma, its reasoning, what the 4 tests showed, and its conclusion. After each one, open it to the room for two or three minutes.

Debrief (12 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Notice something: these dilemmas don't have clean answers. In real life, integrity often costs you something: a friendship, an opportunity, comfort, belonging. That's why it's called integrity UNDER PRESSURE. The pressure is the cost. The question is whether you're willing to pay it.*

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> *Nobody in this room is going to get it right every time. But here's the difference between a man who has integrity and a man who doesn't: the man with integrity makes the hard choice more often than not. And when he fails, he admits it, learns from it, and recommits. That's accountability: owning it, with no 'but,' and doing better."*
>
> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Two questions for the room.* ***Which dilemma was hardest for you, and why? And where does your integrity get tested in here, day to day?****"*

Take answers around the circle. Common ones, and what to say:

"In here, you can't afford integrity."

> *"Pressure doesn't build character. It reveals it. The man you are when it costs you is the man you are. Everything else is a performance."*

"I'd fail those tests every day."

> *"Integrity isn't perfection. It's consistency. The man who admits he messed up and works to repair it has more integrity than the man who never takes a risk."*

"There's no right answer."

> *"Exactly. That's why you need the tests. When there's no clean answer, the four questions tell you which choice you can live with."*

Legacy Close (8 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Closing round.* ***Which of the 4 tests hits you hardest, and why?*** *Pass if you need to."*

Talking piece goes around.

> *"Now the question we end with every time:* ***what does today have to do with your legacy?*** *One of the four tests is that question. Is this the man you want to be remembered as? Every time your words and your actions match, especially when it costs you, you add something to what the men in this dorm and your family will say about you. Open your book to My Legacy and write one line next to Session 6."*

Give two minutes to write. Ask one or two men to read their line if they're willing.

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> *"Homework for the coming week:*
>
> 1. ***Write about the ethical dilemma that was hardest for you** on the notes pages in your book. Walk through your thinking. Where did you get stuck? What did the tests reveal?*
> 2. ***Notice one moment where your integrity is tested** before the next session. It can be small. Write about what you did and whether it passed the tests.*
>
> *The fact that this work is hard is the evidence that you're doing it right.*
>
> *Next session: making amends and moving forward. The people your choices have touched, and what you can still do about it."*

If a man completes today: give him the Legacy Close moment (How Introduction to FORGE Works, The Legacy Question) before the homework.

After the session: complete the sign-in sheet and each man's record. Add any man who missed his expected session to the make-up list. Check on anyone who went quiet, or who may be living one of today's dilemmas.

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Session 7: Making Amends and Moving Forward

Facilitator Notes for Session 7

A man of his word keeps it, and when he has broken it, he does what he can to repair it. This is the heaviest session in the class: the men look at the full reach of the harm they caused, at people they may not have let themselves think about in years, and begin an impact awareness letter nobody else will ever read. It is not punishment and not about making anyone feel bad. Accountability can't be forced. Each man starts where he is.

What to Watch For

Withdrawal or anger. A man who goes quiet may be flooding inside; check on him alone afterward. Anger often covers pain: "I can see this is stirring something up. Do you want to talk, or do you need some space?"

Shame spiral. "I'm a monster." "What's the point." Step in: "You're going from 'I did something harmful' to 'I am bad.' Those are different. Come back to the specific action and stay there. You're not a monster. You're a human being who did monstrous things. The difference matters."

Long and life sentences. "Living amends doesn't require release. The man who looks out for a younger man in here, who prevents a fight, who teaches someone to read, who helps keep a dorm peaceful: that man is making amends every single day. Your impact isn't measured by your address. It's measured by your actions."

A new man, or a man who won't write. Don't force it. A new man can write as much or as little as he's ready for. To a man who refuses: "Is the exercise unfair, or does it ask you to face something you've been avoiding? When you're ready, the letter will be here."

The letter stays private. Part 1 asks what he did, in plain words. Nothing from the letter is read aloud, which keeps the no-case-talk agreement.

Preparing for This Session

- Write the three questions of restorative accountability and the five parts of the letter on the board.
- Have extra paper (some men will need more than the Impact Awareness Letter page), water and tissues.
- Have the sign-in sheet and the list of men who are new this week.
- Optional: the FORGE class video for Session 21, if there is time and a way to show it.

Session 7 Overview

Purpose: Teach that keeping your word includes repairing it when you broke it. Help each man see the full ripple of the harm he caused, know an apology from real amends, and begin his impact awareness letter.

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Part: A Man of Your Word

From FORGE: Session 21: Making Amends and Moving Forward (Week 7).

Materials:

- Talking piece
- Board or paper with the three questions and the five parts of the letter
- Impact Awareness Letter pages and extra paper
- Water and tissues
- Sign-in sheet
- Each man's Introduction to FORGE book

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, the men will be able to:

1. Explain restorative accountability and how it differs from punishment
2. Map the ripple effect of harm: primary victims, secondary victims, their own family, the community
3. Tell the difference between an apology and real amends
4. Begin an impact awareness letter
5. Explain how repairing harm connects to purpose and to moving forward

Session 7 Checklist

- ☐ Opening words said together
- ☐ New men welcomed by name and paired; limits of confidentiality read if anyone is new
- ☐ One-word check-in completed
- ☐ Restorative accountability and its three questions taught
- ☐ Ripple effect taught; emotional responses watched and supported
- ☐ Apology vs. amends, and living amends, taught
- ☐ Impact awareness letter explained and begun (20 minutes of writing); no forced sharing
- ☐ Debrief held
- ☐ Legacy Close: closing round, legacy line written, homework given
- ☐ Sign-in sheet complete; any man completing today recognized

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Session Plan

Opening Words (2 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Before anything else, the opening words. Everybody, together, out loud. If you're new, they're inside the front of your book."*

Say the opening words together.

Opening Circle (8 minutes)

Set up: Chairs in a circle. Talking piece ready.

If anyone is new: welcome each new man by name and pair him with a man who has been coming. Then:

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Quick word for the new men. This is Introduction to FORGE: twelve sessions, one a week, and you can start anywhere in the cycle. It's not a class about becoming a mentor. It's about you: knowing yourself, being a man of your word, and what you're leaving behind. Today is a heavy one to start on. Write what you're ready to write; nobody will ever ask you to read it."*

Read the limits of confidentiality (from How Introduction to FORGE Works) if anyone is new.

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Check-in. **How are you feeling coming into today? One word.**"*

Send the talking piece. Keep it brief. Note who seems heavy, withdrawn or agitated.

> **Facilitator (after the round):**
>
> *"I'm going to be straight with you. Today is one of the hardest sessions in this class. We're going to look at the impact of your choices on other people, people you may not have let yourself think about in a long time. This is not punishment. It's not about making you feel bad. It's about becoming the kind of man who can face the full truth of his life and still choose to move forward. That's the difference between regret that destroys you and accountability that transforms you.*
>
> *If someone shares something painful today, our job is to witness. Not to fix, not to comfort him with cliches, not to judge. Just to witness. And it stays in this room."*

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Teach: Repairing Your Word (33 minutes)

Part 1: Restorative Accountability (10 min)

Facilitator:

"Being a man of your word means you keep it. But every man in this room has broken his word somewhere: to somebody he hurt, to his family, to himself. So here's the part nobody talks about. A man of his word also repairs it when he broke it. That's what amends are.

Most of you have known only one kind of accountability your whole lives: punitive accountability. You break a rule, you go to the hole. You commit a crime, you go to prison. The focus is on the offender and the punishment. The person who was harmed? Often an afterthought.

Restorative accountability asks three questions punishment never asks:

1. ***Who was harmed?*** *Not 'what rule was broken,' but who actually suffered?*
2. ***What do they need?*** *Not 'what does the offender deserve,' but what does the harmed person need to heal?*
3. ***Whose obligation is it to meet those needs?*** *And how can the person who caused the harm help that healing?*

It doesn't replace consequences. You're still here. Your sentence is still real. But it adds what punishment alone never provides: understanding. When you truly understand the harm you caused, when you feel it and don't just know it, something shifts. Accountability stops being something done TO you and becomes something you carry WITH you. It becomes purpose.

The men I've seen really go through this, not perform it, come out different. Not lighter. Not absolved. Different. They carry the weight of what they've done like a responsibility, not a death sentence. They say: 'I caused this harm. I can't undo it. But I can spend the rest of my life making sure it means something, that I became someone better because of what I now understand.'"

Part 2: The Ripple Effect (15 min)

Facilitator:

"Throw a stone into water and it doesn't just make a splash. It makes ripples that spread wider and wider, into water that was perfectly still before the stone hit. Your choices work the same way. The harm ripples out."

Primary Victims *"The people directly harmed by your actions. The person you robbed. The person you assaulted. The person you sold drugs to. The person you cheated. The person you abused.*

These are the faces most of us try not to see, because seeing them means feeling the full weight of what we did. But they're real people. They had a life before you entered it. They have a life after, shaped by what you did."

Secondary Victims *"The people connected to them. Their family. Their children. Their parents. Their friends.*

The woman you robbed has a daughter who saw her come home shaking. That daughter is now afraid of strangers. The man you assaulted has a wife who no longer feels safe. A brother who wants revenge. A mother who cries. They carry harm they didn't choose and didn't cause."

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Your Own Family *"The ripple that hits closest to home. Your children growing up without a father. Your mother aging while you're gone. Your partner holding everything together alone. Your brothers and sisters carrying your name into rooms where it's been tainted.*

Your family didn't commit your crime. But they're serving time too. In some ways harder time, because they're out there, answering questions, making excuses, explaining to your kids where Daddy is."

Community Impact *"The neighborhood that got a little less safe because of what you and people like you did. The store that closed after too many robberies. The park kids don't play in anymore. The fear that keeps people locked in at night. The distrust between neighbors. The tax dollars spent on your prosecution, your incarceration, your supervision.*

None of this is said to crush you. It's said because it's true. And you cannot become a man of integrity without facing the truth, all of it."

Pause. The room will be heavy. Let it be heavy.

Facilitator:

"Take a breath. If you're feeling something right now, sadness, shame, anger, numbness, that's normal. Don't shove it down. Let it be there.

Know the difference. Guilt says, 'I did something harmful.' Shame says, 'I am worthless.' The ripple effect can push you toward shame if you let it. Don't let it. You did cause harm. You are also here, doing the hardest work of your life. Both things are true."

Part 3: Amends vs. Apology (8 min)

Facilitator:

*"An **apology** is words. 'I'm sorry.' It has its place. But an apology alone, without change, is just a sound. How many times have you said 'I'm sorry' and done the same thing again? How many times has someone said it to you and you knew it meant nothing?*

***Making amends** is action. It's living differently: showing through your behavior, over time, that you understand the harm and you're committed to a different path.*

For some of you, direct amends, talking to the person you harmed, apologizing face to face, making restitution, may never be possible. The person may not want to hear from you. They may have passed away. You may never leave this place. That doesn't let you off the hook. It changes the form of amends, not the obligation.

***Living amends** means you can't undo the harm, but you can make sure the rest of your life stands in contrast to it. Every act of service. Every conflict you de-escalate. Every young man you help turn away from the path you took. Every day you choose integrity under pressure. Not because it erases the past. It doesn't. Because it means the past doesn't get the last word."*

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Practice: The Impact Awareness Letter (27 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"This is the heart of today. You're going to begin an impact awareness letter. It is not sent. It's not for a parole board. It's not for the person you harmed. It's for you, so you can fully see the ripple of your actions. It's on the Impact Awareness Letter page in your book."*

Point to the board, or read the five parts aloud:

> ***Part 1: What I Did.*** *The action, the harm, in clear, specific terms. No minimizing. No legal language. Plain truth. "I [did this] to [this person]."*
>
> ***Part 2: The Impact on My Primary Victim(s).*** *Write to them, not to send, but as an exercise in empathy. What did your actions do to their life? Their safety? Their trust? Their body? Their mind? What did they lose? If you don't know the details, imagine them honestly. Don't make it better than it was.*
>
> ***Part 3: The Ripple: Who Else Was Affected?*** *Their family, their community, your family, your community. Name each one and describe the impact.*
>
> ***Part 4: What I Understand Now That I Didn't Then.*** *What do you see now that you couldn't or wouldn't see then?*
>
> ***Part 5: Who I Am Becoming.*** *Not who you wish you were. Who you are actively working to become. What does living amends look like for you?*
>
> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"You have 20 minutes to begin. You will NOT finish today; you'll finish it this coming week. But start now, while the truth is close to the surface.*
>
> *This will be emotional. Some of you may cry, get angry, or go numb. All of that is okay. If you need to stop and breathe, do that. If you need to step away from the circle for a minute, do that. If you need to talk to me or a man you trust afterward, do that.*
>
> *What you should NOT do is write something performative. Don't write what you think I want to read, or a version that makes you look better than you were. The only person this letter needs to be honest with is you. Start writing."*

20 minutes of silent writing. Sit quietly in the circle. If a man is struggling, a glass of water or a quiet word is enough. Don't interrupt unless someone is in distress. A man who doesn't write well can quietly tell you or his partner and have it written down.

Debrief (12 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Stop writing. Take a breath. Look up. What you just did, whatever you got on paper, takes more courage than most people show in a lifetime. This is the work that changes men.*

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> *Nobody is going to ask you to share it. Keep it somewhere private. In six months, read it again and see how much you've grown.*
>
> *But let's talk about what it was like. **What was hard about it? What surprised you?**"*

Take answers around the circle, about the writing, not what's in the letter. Common ones, and what to say:

"I've already been held accountable. I'm in prison."

> *"Prison is the state's response to your actions. Accountability is YOUR response. Plenty of people serve 20 years and never become accountable. They just become bitter. Prison doesn't make accountability happen. You do."*

"The person I hurt isn't innocent either."

> *"Maybe not. But your accountability isn't conditional on their perfection. You're owning YOUR choices, not theirs. Make it conditional, 'I'll be accountable when they are,' and you've handed your growth to someone else."*

"I don't even know what happened to the person I hurt."

> *"The letter is for you, not them. You know what you did. You can imagine the impact honestly. If that's uncomfortable, good. That discomfort is empathy developing."*

Legacy Close (8 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Closing round. Take a moment before you speak. **Complete this sentence: 'Today I learned that accountability means...**'"*

Talking piece goes around. Give people time. This round will be deeper than usual.

> *"Most human beings never sit with the full weight of the harm they've caused. You did today. That doesn't make you good. It makes you courageous, and courage is what everything else is built on.*
>
> *Now the question we end with every time: **what does today have to do with your legacy?** You can't undo what you did. But every day you have left can stand against the harm or repeat it. The past only gets the last word if you hand it over. Open your book to My Legacy and write one line next to Session 7."*

Give two minutes to write. Ask one or two men to read their line if they're willing.

> *"Homework for the coming week:*
>
> 1. ***Finish your impact awareness letter.** All five parts. Take your time. Be thorough. Be honest.*

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> 2. ***On the notes pages in your book, answer this:*** *'What is one thing I can do this week, one specific act, that represents living amends?'*
> 3. ***Read ahead in your book, the Session 8 pages on empathy.*** *You turn from looking inward to looking outward.*
>
> *Next session: Empathy Development, seeing how your actions land on the people around you. This was a hard one. You showed up for it. That matters."*

If a man completes today: give him the Legacy Close moment (How Introduction to FORGE Works, The Legacy Question) before the homework.

After the session: complete the sign-in sheet and each man's record. Add any man who missed his expected session to the make-up list. Check in, alone and soon, with any man who was hit hard today. Don't let a man sit in pain alone for a week.

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Session 8: Empathy Development

Facilitator Notes for Session 8

This session turns the lens outward, from what a man knows about himself to how his actions land on other people. A man can't fully own a harm until he sees it through the eyes of the person he harmed, and he can't live well with the men around him if he only ever sees his own side. FORGE teaches three kinds of empathy, then has the men look at one situation through four sets of eyes. Hold one idea through all of it: empathy is not a personality trait a man is born with or without. It's a skill. For many men it was trained out of them by survival, and it can be rebuilt. Keep it about each man and the people in his own life.

What to Watch For

Empathy resistance. Some men will push back, especially on writing from the view of someone they've harmed. That usually means it's hitting exactly where it needs to. Don't force it, but don't let them skip it: "I hear you. Try. Even two sentences. You might surprise yourself."

Talking a good game. A man may give a great answer about seeing the other side, then dismiss another man's comment five minutes later. Don't call it out in the circle. Note it, and if it matters, talk with him alone.

Old pain. Some men struggle to write from the view of someone they harmed because they were badly harmed themselves and haven't yet separated their own pain from the pain they caused. Don't push too hard in one session. It's a muscle that develops over time.

Preparing for This Session

- Write the three kinds of empathy on the board, and the four viewpoints with the three questions: What is this person thinking? Feeling? What does he need?
- Write the four scenarios on cards, or use the Perspective-Taking page in the book.
- Have the sign-in sheet and the list of men who are new this week.
- Optional: the FORGE class video for Session 22, if there is time and a way to show it.

Session 8 Overview

Purpose: Teach that empathy is a skill a man can rebuild, in three kinds: understanding, feeling, and being moved to help. Help each man practice seeing one situation through four sets of eyes, and start to see how his own actions land on other people.

Part: A Man of Your Word

From FORGE: Session 22: Empathy Development (Week 8).

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Materials:

- Talking piece
- Board or paper with the three kinds of empathy and the four viewpoints
- Four scenario cards, or the Perspective-Taking page in the book
- Sign-in sheet
- Each man's Introduction to FORGE book

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, the men will be able to:

1. Define cognitive, emotional and compassionate empathy and tell them apart
2. Explain why empathy is a skill that can be developed, not a fixed personality trait
3. Look at a single situation from at least four different viewpoints
4. Name how a lack of empathy has contributed to harm in their own lives
5. Practice perspective-taking on purpose

Session 8 Checklist

- ☐ Opening words said together
- ☐ New men welcomed by name and paired; limits of confidentiality read if anyone is new
- ☐ Check-in round completed
- ☐ Why accountability needs empathy explained
- ☐ Three kinds of empathy taught: cognitive, emotional, compassionate
- ☐ Reflection on where a lack of empathy cost them, and where empathy saved them
- ☐ Four Viewpoints exercise done in small groups and presented
- ☐ Debrief held: which viewpoint was hardest
- ☐ Legacy Close: closing round, legacy line written, homework given
- ☐ Sign-in sheet complete; any man completing today recognized

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Session Plan

Opening Words (2 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Before anything else, the opening words. Everybody, together, out loud. If you're new, they're inside the front of your book."*

Say the opening words together.

Opening Circle (8 minutes)

Set up: Chairs in a circle. Talking piece ready.

If anyone is new: welcome each new man by name and pair him with a man who has been coming. Then:

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Quick word for the new men. This is Introduction to FORGE: twelve sessions, one a week, and you can start anywhere in the cycle. It's not a class about becoming a mentor. It's about you: knowing yourself, being a man of your word, and what you're leaving behind. Today is about how what you do lands on the people around you."*

Read the limits of confidentiality (from How Introduction to FORGE Works) if anyone is new.

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Check-in round. Two things:* ***how are you doing today, honestly? And what's one interaction you had this week where you tried to see something from the other person's point of view?*** *If you can't think of one, say that. That's useful information too."*

Send the talking piece around. Go first yourself, briefly. Note who engages and who struggles to name a moment: that tells you where each man is with this material.

Teach: Three Kinds of Empathy (28 minutes)

Part 1: Why Empathy (4 min)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Being a man of your word means owning what you did. But you can't fully own the harm you've caused until you can see it through the eyes of the people you harmed. Accountability needs empathy. That's today: learning to see through someone else's eyes. Not as a soft skill. As a survival skill. As the thing that separates a man who just does his time from a man who changes how he moves through the world.*

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> *So let's start with a question. What does empathy mean? Not the dictionary definition. What does it mean to you?"*

Let three or four men answer. You'll likely hear "putting yourself in someone else's shoes" or "feeling what they feel." Build on whatever they offer.

Part 2: Three Kinds (16 min)

> **Facilitator:**
> *"Most people think empathy is one thing. It's actually three different skills, and they work at different levels."*

Cognitive empathy: understanding what someone thinks.

> *"Cognitive empathy is understanding what's going on in someone else's head. Not agreeing with him. Understanding him. Seeing the logic of his position even when you think he's wrong.*
>
> *Example: your bunkmate is angry because he got written up for something he says he didn't do. You don't have to agree the write-up was wrong. Cognitive empathy means you can understand WHY he's angry: he feels falsely accused, powerless, disrespected. You get the logic of his reaction even if you'd have handled it differently.*
>
> *This is the empathy that makes you a better problem-solver and a better man to live with. You can't settle anything with a man if you don't understand what he actually thinks."*

Emotional empathy: feeling what someone feels.

> *"Emotional empathy goes deeper. It's when you actually feel something of what the other person is feeling. When a man tells you he just found out his mother died and your chest gets tight, that's emotional empathy.*
>
> *This one is tricky. Too little and you come across as cold, mechanical. People don't trust someone who understands their pain but clearly doesn't feel any of it. Too much and you drown in other people's emotions. You can't help a man if you're falling apart right next to him.*
>
> *The goal isn't to shut it off or turn it all the way up. The goal is awareness: knowing when you're feeling someone else's emotions, and staying grounded while you do."*

Compassionate empathy: being moved to help.

> *"The third level is where understanding and feeling lead to action. You see someone struggling. You understand what he's going through. You feel something about it. And then you do something. Not out of pity, not to look good, but because you recognize his humanity and you choose to respond.*
>
> *This is Service Over Self in action. Compassionate empathy is the engine of everything FORGE is building.*
>
> *Here's the key point: **empathy is not a personality trait.** You're not born with it or without it. It's a skill, and like any skill it grows with practice. Some of you had empathy trained out of you, by your environment, by trauma, by survival. That doesn't mean it's gone. It means it needs rebuilding."*

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Pause. Let it land.

Part 3: Where It Cost You, Where It Saved You (8 min)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Let me ask you something directly. Where has a lack of empathy cost you? Don't answer out loud yet. Just think about a time you couldn't see what someone else was going through, or didn't care, and it led to a bad outcome. For you or for them."*

Silent reflection (1 minute).

> *"Now: where has empathy, even a small amount of it, saved you? A moment when you paused, saw the other person as a human being, and it changed what you did next?"*

Open discussion (5 min). Let three or four men share. Don't push; these can be heavy.

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Most of the harm in this world, most of the harm in this building, happens because someone stopped seeing another person as fully human for a moment. He became an obstacle. A target. A means to an end. Empathy is what prevents that. It's the thing that says, 'This person in front of me has a story, has people who love him, has fears and hopes, just like me.'*
>
> *That doesn't mean you become a pushover. It means you deal with people as people. That's the standard."*

Practice: Four Viewpoints (32 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Now we stretch. Each group gets one situation. Your job is to get inside the heads of four different people in it and answer three questions for each one:*
>
> 1. *What is this person thinking?*
> 2. *What is this person feeling?*
> 3. *What does this person need?*
>
> *The four people are: the person who caused the harm, the person who was harmed, a bystander who saw it, and a family member of someone involved. This is not about right and wrong. It's about seeing the whole picture. It's on the Perspective-Taking page in your book."*

The four scenarios:

Scenario 1: A man steals another man's commissary items while he's at a visit. When the victim confronts him, the thief denies it. Witnesses saw it happen but say nothing.

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Scenario 2: A newer man accidentally disrespects someone with status in the dorm: sits in his chair, changes the channel without asking. The man with status responds by threatening him loudly in front of everyone.

Scenario 3: A man who has been in FORGE for three months gets into a heated argument with a CO and curses at him in front of the dorm. He gets written up and sent to the hole for 10 days.

Scenario 4: A man finds out through a letter that his wife is leaving him. He goes quiet for three days: stops eating, stops talking to anyone. His bunkmate tells other guys to leave him alone because "he just needs space."

Process:

1. Break into four groups and give each group one scenario. (3 min) With fewer than eight men, use two groups and two scenarios.
2. Each group talks it through and writes down thinking, feeling and needs for all four viewpoints. (15 min) Pair new men with men who have been coming.
3. Each group reads its scenario and presents all four viewpoints to the full circle. (12 min, about 3 per group)

Circulate during the group work. Push groups to go deeper:

- "You said the bystander is thinking 'it's not my business.' What else? What's underneath that?"
- "You've got the victim's anger. What's under the anger? What's he really feeling?"
- "What about the family member who hears about this on the phone? What does that conversation sound like?"

Debrief (12 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"**Which viewpoint was hardest to get into? Why?**"*

Let several men answer. Common answers: the person who caused the harm (because nobody wants to relate to him) or the family member (because it's painful to think about the ripple).

> *"**Did seeing the situation from all four angles change how you'd respond to it? How?***
>
> *Here's the thing about seeing every side: it doesn't mean everyone is right. In some of those scenarios, someone clearly did wrong. But understanding WHY he did it, what he was thinking and feeling, is what lets you respond instead of just react.*
>
> *A man who can see all four sides of a conflict can find his way through it. A man who can only see his own side is a man who will keep making the same mistakes."*

If these come up:

"Empathy is weakness."

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> *"Tell me about a time someone understood what you were going through, really understood it. How did that feel? Did it make him weak? Empathy isn't agreement and it isn't submission. It's intelligence. You can understand someone completely and still hold a firm line."*

"I already know how to read people."

> *"True. A lot of us got very good at reading people to survive. The difference: you've been reading people to protect yourself. Now you're learning to read people to help them. Same skill, different purpose."*

Legacy Close (8 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Closing round. Complete this sentence: '**The person in my life I most need to understand better is ___, and one thing I've never considered about their perspective is ___.**' You don't have to name the person. Just the relationship: 'my son,' 'my cellmate,' 'my victim.'"*

Talking piece goes around. Go last yourself.

> *"Now the question we end with every time: **what does today have to do with your legacy?** Every man in this dorm, every person in your family, carries around how you treated them. Your legacy isn't what you meant. It's how it landed on them. Open your book to My Legacy and write one line next to Session 8."*

Give two minutes to write. Ask one or two men to read their line if they're willing.

> *"Homework for the coming week, on the notes pages in your book:*
>
> 1. ***Write half a page from the perspective of someone you've harmed,** anyone, any time in your life. Not your view of what happened; theirs. What were they thinking? What were they feeling? What did they need that they didn't get from you? It will be uncomfortable. That's how you know it's working.*
>
> *Next session: Service Over Self, the principle FORGE is built on."*

If a man completes today: give him the Legacy Close moment (How Introduction to FORGE Works, The Legacy Question) before the homework.

After the session: complete the sign-in sheet and each man's record. Add any man who missed his expected session to the make-up list. Check on anyone who went quiet, or who seemed shaken by the scenarios or the closing round.

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Session 9: Service Over Self

Facilitator Notes for Session 9

Service Over Self is the principle FORGE is built on, and this session is where a man finds out what it means for him: **"I choose to use my time, my energy, and my influence for something bigger than my own comfort."** It is not a call to run groups or fix anybody. It's about how a man treats the men around him, every day, in small ways nobody has to see: building them up instead of tearing them down. That is what a legacy is made of. And service isn't a sacrifice. Men who practice it say it's what finally made them feel free. Not free as in released. Free as in unburdened.

What to Watch For

"This sounds soft." Some men will worry that service makes them look weak, or that people will take advantage of them. Take it head on (the Debrief has the words). Service is not submission: nobody gives up his safety or his dignity.

Skeptics. Some men will be skeptical. That's healthy. Don't try to convert anyone in one session. Give them space; the service challenge does its own work.

Service as image. A man may want credit for what he does. The rule is no credit. Don't call anyone out; let the teaching on "service is not performing" do the work.

Preparing for This Session

- Write on the board: **Service Over Self: I choose to use my time, my energy, and my influence for something bigger than my own comfort.**
- Have paper for the group lists and a place to capture the room's list of acts of service.
- Have the sign-in sheet and the list of men who are new this week.
- Optional: the FORGE class video for Session 3, if there is time and a way to show it.

Session 9 Overview

Purpose: Teach Service Over Self, the principle FORGE is built on: what service is, what it is not, and why it sets a man free. Help each man find specific acts of service in his own dorm and commit to the kind of man he is becoming.

Part: Purpose and Legacy

From FORGE: Session 3: Service Over Self (Week 1).

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Materials:

- Talking piece
- Board or paper with the Service Over Self sentence
- Paper and pens for the small groups
- Sign-in sheet
- Each man's Introduction to FORGE book

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, the men will be able to:

1. Explain "Service Over Self" in their own words, with an example from their own life
2. Tell service apart from submission, from performing, and from control
3. Describe what building other men up and tearing them down look like in a dorm
4. Name specific acts of service available to them in their dorm every day
5. Commit to three acts of service in the coming week

Session 9 Checklist

- ☐ Opening words said together
- ☐ New men welcomed by name and paired; limits of confidentiality read if anyone is new
- ☐ Check-in round completed
- ☐ What service is not: submission, performing, control
- ☐ What service is, and "free as in unburdened"
- ☐ One man showing another; building others up vs. tearing them down
- ☐ Small groups listed 10 specific acts of service; room list captured
- ☐ Service challenge given (3 acts before the next session)
- ☐ Debrief held
- ☐ Legacy Close: commitment round, legacy line written, homework given
- ☐ Sign-in sheet complete; any man completing today recognized

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Session Plan

Opening Words (2 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Before anything else, the opening words. Everybody, together, out loud. If you're new, they're inside the front of your book."*

Say the opening words together.

Opening Circle (8 minutes)

Set up: Chairs in a circle. Talking piece ready.

If anyone is new: welcome each new man by name and pair him with a man who has been coming. Then:

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Quick word for the new men. This is Introduction to FORGE: twelve sessions, one a week, and you can start anywhere in the cycle. It's not a class about becoming a mentor. It's about you: knowing yourself, being a man of your word, and what you're leaving behind. Today is the principle everything in FORGE stands on: Service Over Self."*

Read the limits of confidentiality (from How Introduction to FORGE Works) if anyone is new.

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Check-in round. Two things:* ***how are you doing today, honestly? And when's a time somebody did something for you that he didn't have to do?*** *You can pass."*

Send the talking piece around. Go first yourself, briefly, to model it.

Teach: What Service Is (35 minutes)

Part 1: What Service Over Self Is Not (8 min)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"FORGE is built on a principle:* ***Service Over Self.*** *It's on the wall. It's in the words we just said together. But what does it actually mean? Let me start with what it doesn't mean.*
>
> ***Service is not submission.*** *It doesn't mean letting people walk over you. It doesn't mean being a doormat. It doesn't mean saying yes to everything. It doesn't mean sacrificing your safety or your dignity.*

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> ***Service is not performing.*** *It's not doing things so people think you're a good person. It's not looking for credit. If you're only helping when someone's watching, that's image management, not service.*
>
> ***Service is not control.*** *It's not 'I know what's best for you.' It's not fixing people. It's not telling everyone what to do because you took a class."*

Part 2: What Service Over Self Is (12 min)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Service is a daily decision to make things better for the people around you, even when it costs you something. Especially when it costs you something.*
>
> *Service is the guy who cleans the common area even though it's not his turn. Not because he's told to, but because it needs doing.*
>
> *Service is the man who sits down with the new arrival who's scared and confused and says, 'Let me show you how things work here.'*
>
> *Service is the man who stays calm when another man is testing him, because he knows that man isn't the enemy; that man's pain is the enemy.*
>
> *Service is the man who speaks up early, before a conflict turns into violence, even though it would be easier to mind his own business.*
>
> *Service Over Self means:* ***I choose to use my time, my energy, and my influence for something bigger than my own comfort.****"*

Point to the board. Then ask:

> *"Who's somebody you've known, inside or out, who lived like that? What did he do?"*

Take two or three answers.

Part 3: Free as in Unburdened (5 min)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Here's the deeper truth: service isn't a sacrifice. The men who practice it, in here and in every program FORGE studied, will tell you the same thing: serving others is what finally made them feel free. Not free as in released. Free as in unburdened. Free from the selfishness that got most of us here in the first place."*

Pause. Let it sit. Ask: "What would 'unburdened' feel like for you?" Take one or two answers.

Part 4: One Man Showing Another (10 min)

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> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"FORGE isn't the first to find this. In Texas, a program called PEP has every man turn around and teach what he just learned to the men coming in behind him. They call it servant leadership: you learn something, then you serve by passing it on. At San Quentin in California, a program called GRIP and in San Francisco one called RSVP found the same thing: the men who've been there longest look out for the men who just arrived. No certification. No titles. Just men who've changed their behavior showing men who haven't that it's possible.*
>
> *They all came to what FORGE is built on:* ***the most powerful force for change in a prison is not staff, not programs, not policies. It's one man who's changed his life showing another man that he can change his.***
>
> *Notice what that doesn't take. Not a title, not a class, not a group to run. It takes a man living it where other men can see. Every man in this dorm is showing the men around him something, every day. The question is what.*
>
> *So let's get honest about this dorm.* ***What does tearing a man down look like in here?*** *No names. Just what it looks like."*

Take answers. You'll hear things like gossip, clowning a man in front of everybody, testing the new man, pulling a man back into old ways when he's trying to change, "jokes" that aren't jokes.

> *"**And what does building a man up look like?**"*

Take answers. Showing the new man how things work, telling a man straight when he's doing well, sharing what you have, leaving a man's business alone, standing with him when he's trying to change.

> *"Both lists are choices somebody in this dorm makes every day. Tearing down is free and it's easy. Building up costs you something. That's why it's service."*

Practice: Service in Our Dorm (25 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Let's get practical. Service Over Self sounds great as a philosophy. But what does it look like on an ordinary afternoon in your dorm?*
>
> *Break into groups of three or four. Each group:* ***What are 10 specific acts of service you can do this week in your dorm?*** *Be concrete. Not 'be a good person,' that's too vague. Specific actions somebody could see."*

Small groups brainstorm (10 min). Circulate and push for specifics: "What would that look like at chow? At count? When the new man walks in?"

Share out (9 min): each group reports its top five. Capture the room's list on the board.

Examples that should come up:

- Help someone who's struggling to read a legal document
- Clean a common area without being asked

- Cool down a situation instead of watching it blow up
- Sit with someone who's having a bad day and just listen
- Help a new arrival get his bearings
- Tutor someone working on his GED
- Share a book or something you have
- Check on someone who's been quiet or withdrawn
- Help someone write a letter home
- Help settle a small dispute before it grows

> **Facilitator (6 min):**
>
> *"Look at this list. None of these require permission. None require a program. None require staff approval. Every one of them is available to you right now. Today. The question is: will you do them?*
>
> *So here's an assignment, and it's not a written one. Between now and the next session, do **3 deliberate acts of service** in your dorm. Anything from this list, or something of your own. The only rules:*
>
> 1. *It has to be for someone else's benefit, not yours.*
> 2. *You don't ask for credit or recognition.*
> 3. *Afterward, write about it on the notes pages in your book: what you did, how it felt, how the other man responded.*
>
> *This is where FORGE stops being a class and starts being a way of life."*

Debrief (12 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> ***"Which act on that list would be hardest for you? Why? And what gets in the way of service in here?"***

Take answers around the circle. Common ones, and what to say:

"If I start helping people, they'll take advantage of me. They'll think I'm soft."

> *"Remember the first thing we said: service is not submission. You don't give up your safety or your dignity. And there's nothing soft about choosing restraint when everyone expects you to react. There's nothing soft about sitting with a man in crisis when it would be easier to walk away. What's soft is doing nothing and pretending that's strength."*

"What do I get out of it?"

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> *"Fair question. Honest answer: you don't get time cut. You don't get extra privileges. What you get is a way of living that changes how you handle every situation for the rest of your life, in here and out there. And you get to be someone who matters to other people in a way that actually helps them. Ask a man who does it. He'll tell you about the unburdened part."*

"Nobody did anything for me."

> *"That may be true, and it's a real loss. Here's the thing: you can be the man you needed. That's how the cycle breaks."*

Legacy Close (8 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
> *"We close today with a commitment, out loud, to this circle. Complete this sentence: '**The kind of man I'm committed to becoming through FORGE is...**' Take a moment to think about it."*

A moment of silence. Then the talking piece goes around. Each man completes the sentence. He can pass.

> *"Now the question we end with every time: **what does today have to do with your legacy?** Your legacy isn't built someday. It's built out of what you do for the men around you this week: who you built up, who you tore down, what you left better than you found it. Open your book to My Legacy and write one line next to Session 9."*

Give two minutes to write. Ask one or two men to read their line if they're willing.

> *"Homework for the coming week:*
>
> 1. ***Write your commitment on the notes pages in your book:*** *how you finished 'The kind of man I'm committed to becoming through FORGE is...' On the hard days, read it.*
> 2. ***Do 3 deliberate acts of service in your dorm*** *before the next session. For someone else's benefit, not yours. Don't ask for credit. Write about each one on the notes pages: what you did, how it felt, how the other man responded.*
> 3. ***Learn the opening words by heart.***
> 4. ***Read ahead in your book, the Session 10 pages on finding purpose.***
>
> *Next session: Finding Purpose, the why that keeps you going when it gets hard."*

If a man completes today: give him the Legacy Close moment (How Introduction to FORGE Works, The Legacy Question) before the homework.

After the session: complete the sign-in sheet and each man's record. Add any man who missed his expected session to the make-up list. Check on anyone who went quiet.

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Session 10: Finding Purpose

Facilitator Notes for Session 10

This session asks the question every man has to answer for himself: **why does my life matter?** Tools show a man how to change. Purpose is the why that keeps him on the path on the night he's exhausted, somebody is pushing his buttons and the old way is calling. FORGE draws a line between goals and purpose, tells the story of Viktor Frankl, and has each man write a letter to himself from the man he'll be five years from now. Do more than lead it: write your own letter alongside the men.

What to Watch For

Men who may never go home. Many men in the room have very long sentences, and some can't be paroled. Never promise parole, release or a date. A goal like parole can be taken out of a man's hands; purpose can't. That is why this session matters most for the man with the longest sentence in the room. If his future self is still inside, that is a real letter: where is he, who is he, what does he stand for? It's fine to say: "Be ready. Laws and policies do change. But your purpose doesn't wait on a release date."

Emotional depth. The letter can break things open for a man who has kept his growth in his head. Be ready for tears, silence, a man who can't finish. That's not failure. It's the work.

"I don't have a purpose." Many men have never been asked. Don't push for a polished answer; "I'm still finding it" is honest. "Maybe you don't have the words for it yet. But you're here. You show up. Something is driving that. Let's figure out what it is."

"Frankl was in a concentration camp. That's different." "It is different. I'm not comparing your situation to his. But the principle is the same: when you can't control your circumstances, you can still control your response to them. That's not a comparison of suffering. It's a human truth."

Preparing for This Session

- Write the six letter prompts on the board, or be ready to read them aloud twice.
- Have the Letter From My Future Self page in the book ready, with extra paper.
- Write your own letter, before the session or alongside the men.
- Have the sign-in sheet and the list of men who are new this week.
- Optional: the FORGE class video for Session 29, if there is time and a way to show it.

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Session 10 Overview

Purpose: Help each man find his why: the difference between goals and purpose, Viktor Frankl's lesson that no one can take away the freedom to choose what your suffering means, and a letter from the man he is becoming.

Part: Purpose and Legacy

From FORGE: Session 29: Finding Purpose (Week 10).

Materials:

- Talking piece
- Board or paper with the six letter prompts
- Letter From My Future Self pages and extra paper
- Sign-in sheet
- Each man's Introduction to FORGE book

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, the men will be able to:

1. Define purpose and explain how it differs from goals
2. Explain how purpose protects a man against destructive choices
3. Describe Viktor Frankl's core insight about meaning and suffering
4. Write a letter from their future self about who they are becoming and why it matters
5. Name at least one source of purpose in their life right now

Session 10 Checklist

- ☐ Opening words said together
- ☐ New men welcomed by name and paired; limits of confidentiality read if anyone is new
- ☐ Check-in round completed
- ☐ The how and the why: tools vs. purpose
- ☐ Goals vs. purpose taught and discussed
- ☐ Viktor Frankl presented; choosing your attitude discussed
- ☐ Purpose as protection explained
- ☐ Letter from My Future Self written (20 minutes of writing)
- ☐ Voluntary sharing handled with care; debrief held
- ☐ Legacy Close: closing round, legacy line written, homework given
- ☐ Sign-in sheet complete; any man completing today recognized

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Session Plan

Opening Words (2 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Before anything else, the opening words. Everybody, together, out loud. If you're new, they're inside the front of your book."*

Say the opening words together.

Opening Circle (8 minutes)

Set up: Chairs in a circle. Talking piece ready.

If anyone is new: welcome each new man by name and pair him with a man who has been coming. Then:

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Quick word for the new men. This is Introduction to FORGE: twelve sessions, one a week, and you can start anywhere in the cycle. It's not a class about becoming a mentor. It's about you: knowing yourself, being a man of your word, and what you're leaving behind. Today is about your why: the reason your life matters."*

Read the limits of confidentiality (from How Introduction to FORGE Works) if anyone is new.

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Check-in round. Two things:* ***how are you doing today? And what's one thing that keeps you going in here, even a small one?*** *You can pass."*

Send the talking piece around. Go first yourself, briefly. Listen for depth; acknowledge an honest answer.

Teach: The Why (35 minutes)

Part 1: The How and the Why (4 min)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Think about this. You can believe you're capable of change. You can have all the tools: catching your thinking, calming yourself down, owning what you did. But on an ordinary night when you're exhausted and frustrated and someone is pushing your buttons and the old way is calling, what keeps you on the new path?*
>
> *It's not tools. It's not knowledge. It's not even discipline. Discipline runs out.*

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> *What keeps you on the path is purpose. A reason bigger than the moment. A 'why' that outweighs the cost of doing the hard thing. Today we start looking for that why."*

Part 2: Goals vs. Purpose (11 min)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Here's a distinction most people miss. Goals and purpose are not the same thing.*
>
> ***Goals** are specific, measurable things you want to achieve. 'I want to get my GED.' 'I want to make parole.' 'I want to get a job when I get out.' 'I want to reconnect with my kids.' Goals are important. They give you direction and milestones.*
>
> *But goals have a problem: you can achieve them and still feel empty. You get the GED. Then what? You get the job. Then what? If all you have is goals, you're always chasing the next one without ever feeling like you've arrived.*
>
> ***Purpose** is different. Purpose isn't something you achieve. It's something you live. It's the ongoing reason behind everything you do. It's the answer to the question: **why does my life matter?***
>
> *Goals are destinations. Purpose is the direction.*
>
> *Example. Goal: 'I want to be a good father.' You can measure that. But what's the purpose underneath it? Maybe: 'I exist to break the cycle, to give my children what I didn't get, so they don't end up where I am.' That's not a goal you check off. That's a reason you live by. Every day. In every decision.*
>
> *Purpose is what gets you up on the mornings when your goals feel out of reach. It's what keeps you on the path when nobody's watching and nobody would blame you for quitting. And a goal can be taken out of your hands. Purpose can't. Nobody can take your why."*

Discussion (4 min):

> *"Has anyone ever reached a goal and then felt lost afterward? Or felt like it wasn't enough? What was that like?"*

Let two or three men share. Naming it shows the difference between goals and purpose.

Part 3: Viktor Frankl and Meaning in Suffering (13 min)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"I want to tell you about a man named Viktor Frankl. He was an Austrian psychiatrist, a doctor of the mind. In 1944 he was sent to Auschwitz, a Nazi concentration camp. His wife was killed. His parents were killed. His brother was killed. He lost everything.*
>
> *He spent three years in the camps. Starving. Beaten. Watching people die every day.*
>
> *After the war he wrote a book called* **Man's Search for Meaning.** *In it he described something he saw in the camps: the people who survived weren't always the strongest or the healthiest. They were the ones who had a reason to live. Some had work they needed to finish. Some had a person they needed to see again. Some had a God they refused to stop serving. The reason didn't matter as much as having one.*

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> *Frankl put it in words he borrowed from the philosopher Nietzsche: '**Those who have a WHY to live can bear almost any HOW.**'*
>
> *Read that again in your mind. Those who have a why to live can bear almost any how.*
>
> *He said the last human freedom, the one no one can take from you, not even in a concentration camp, is the freedom to choose your attitude. The freedom to choose what your suffering means.*
>
> *Frankl didn't say suffering is good. He said suffering comes to everyone, and when it comes, you have a choice: let it destroy you, or let it show you what matters most."*

Pause. Let it sit.

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"I'm not comparing this place to a concentration camp. But the principle applies. You're in a place you didn't choose. You face conditions you can't fully control. You've lost things: time, relationships, opportunities, freedom. That loss is real.*
>
> *But you still have the freedom Frankl talked about. The freedom to choose what this time means. You can let this be the thing that defined you. Or you can let it be the thing that refined you: the fire that burned away what didn't serve you and showed what does.*
>
> *That choice is purpose. It's deciding that your suffering has a direction. That you're not just doing time. You're using time."*

Discussion (5 min):

> *"Frankl said the last freedom is the freedom to choose your attitude. Do you believe that? Is it possible to choose your attitude in here, with everything you're dealing with? Be honest. If you think it's easier said than done, say that."*

Let three or four men answer. Don't argue with skeptics. Acknowledge the difficulty:

> *"It IS easier said than done. Frankl knew that better than anybody. But he said it was possible. And the fact that you're sitting in this circle doing this work says part of you already believes it."*

Part 4: Purpose Protects You (7 min)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Let me make this concrete. Research shows that people who have a sense of purpose, a reason for living beyond their own comfort, are significantly less likely to reoffend, less likely to use substances, less likely to engage in violence, and more likely to keep healthy relationships after release.*

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> *Purpose protects you. Not like a shield that blocks everything. Like an anchor that holds you in place when the current is pulling.*
>
> *When you know WHY you're staying on the path, the temptations don't disappear, but they lose their power. The old crew is still out there. The substances are still around. The shortcuts are still tempting. But when you have a purpose, 'I'm alive so I can raise my daughter differently than I was raised,' or 'I'm here to prove a man from where I'm from can become something,' or 'I exist to help other men find what I found,' that purpose becomes the filter for every decision.*
>
> ***'Does this serve my purpose, or does it undermine it?'** That's the question purpose gives you. And with that question, decisions get clearer."*

Practice: Letter from My Future Self (27 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Men in programs across the country call this one of the most meaningful things they've ever done. It's on the Letter From My Future Self page in your book.*
>
> *Close your eyes for a moment. Take a breath. Now imagine yourself five years from now. Where are you? What does your life look like? Some of you will picture him at home. Some of you will picture him still in here. Either way he's real. Not what you hope happens to you: who have you become? What kind of man are you? What are your relationships like? What do you do with your days? What do you stand for?*
>
> *See that man clearly. Feel what it would be like to be him.*
>
> *Now that man is going to write a letter to you, the you sitting in this chair right now. He's going to tell you what he sees in you. What to hold onto and what to let go of. What matters and what doesn't. Why the work you're doing right now is worth it."*

Read the prompts aloud twice, or point to the board:

> *"Start the letter with 'Dear [your name]...' Your future self should answer:*
>
> 1. *Where are you now, five years later? What does your life look like?*
> 2. *What did you have to let go of to get here?*
> 3. *What did you have to hold onto?*
> 4. *What do you wish you could tell your present self about the hard days?*
> 5. *What is your purpose, the reason you kept going?*
> 6. *What are you most proud of about the man you've become?*
>
> *Write at least a full page. Take your time. Be honest. Be specific. Don't write what sounds good. Write what's true."*

Individual writing (20 min). The room should be quiet. Don't circulate much: sit down and write your own letter. If a man looks stuck, quietly: "Just start writing. Don't edit. Let the words come." Or: "What does that future man want to say to you right now?" A man who doesn't write well can tell his partner, who writes it for him.

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> **Facilitator (after 20 minutes):**
>
> *"Stop there, even if you're not finished. Keep this letter in your book. When the hard days come, and they will, read it. Let that man remind you why you're doing this."*

Debrief (10 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"This letter is yours. You don't have to share it. But if anyone wants to read his, or part of it, this is a safe place to do that."*

Voluntary sharing (6 min). Never force it. If two or three men read, that's powerful. If nobody does, that's fine; the value is in the writing. After each reading, the group answers with silence or a brief acknowledgment. No commentary, no critique, no "you should add..." Just witnessing.

> *"**What was that like? What came up for you as you wrote?**"*

Let three or four men talk about the writing, not the content unless they choose.

> *"For most people, this does something unexpected. It makes the future feel real. It makes the man you're becoming feel possible: not far off and theoretical, but concrete. You just heard his voice. You just read his words. He exists inside you already. The work you're doing is giving him room to come out."*

Legacy Close (8 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Closing round. **In one sentence, what is your purpose, the reason that keeps you going? If you don't know yet, say 'I'm still finding it.' That's honest, and that's enough.**"*

Talking piece goes around. Go last yourself.

> *"Now the question we end with every time: **what does today have to do with your legacy?** Purpose is what you live for. Legacy is what it leaves behind. A man who knows his why leaves something different in this dorm and in his family than a man who's just getting through the day. Open your book to My Legacy and write one line next to Session 10."*

Give two minutes to write. Ask one or two men to read their line if they're willing.

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> *"Homework for the coming week:*
>
> 1. ***Re-read your letter from your future self, then write a letter back.*** *The you sitting here today writes to the man you're becoming. Tell him what you commit to, what you're afraid of, and what you need from him.*
> 2. ***Keep the letter in your book.*** *When the hard days come, read it.*
>
> *Next session: The Stakeholder Identity, from 'it's their system' to 'what part is mine.'"*

If a man completes today: give him the Legacy Close moment (How Introduction to FORGE Works, The Legacy Question) before the homework.

After the session: complete the sign-in sheet and each man's record. Add any man who missed his expected session to the make-up list. Check on anyone who went quiet, couldn't write, or seemed shaken by the letter.

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Session 11: The Stakeholder Identity

Facilitator Notes for Session 11

This session moves a man from "it's their system" to "what part is mine." FORGE starts with one sentence: **"We are stakeholders in this system."** A stakeholder says, "What happens here is partly my responsibility. And I'm going to act like it." Keep it about each man: his own responsibility, his own corner of the dorm, and the dorm he leaves behind. It is not about leading, policing or mentoring other men. A stakeholder is not the police and not a hero. He is a man doing his part where he lives. Write your own commitment alongside the men.

What to Watch For

Commitments that sound good on paper. This exercise invites impressive-sounding promises nobody means to keep. Push for specific and real: "Is that something you'll actually do every day? Or does it just sound good?"

"That's a lot to put on me." Some men are barely holding their own situation together. Be clear: a man is responsible for what he can influence, not for everything.

Small growth. In the closing round, some men will feel they haven't changed enough, or won't want to claim growth out loud. Normalize it: "Growth isn't always dramatic. Sometimes it's a man who used to blow up in 2 seconds now taking 10 seconds to breathe. That's growth. Name the small shifts. They add up."

Preparing for This Session

- Write on the board: **STAKEHOLDER: "What happens here is partly my responsibility. And I'm going to act like it."**
- Under it, the five marks of a good commitment: specific, observable, consistent, connected to your skills, honest.
- Have the My Stakeholder Commitment page in the book ready, with spares.
- Have the sign-in sheet and the list of men who are new this week.
- Optional: the FORGE class video for Session 30, if there is time and a way to show it.

Session 11 Overview

Purpose: Move each man from "it's their system" to "what part is mine." Teach what a stakeholder is and what he actually controls, and have each man write five specific actions he will take in his own dorm, read aloud to the circle as his witnesses.

Part: Purpose and Legacy

From FORGE: Session 30: The Stakeholder Identity (Week 10).

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Materials:

- Talking piece
- Board or paper with the stakeholder sentence and the five marks of a good commitment
- My Stakeholder Commitment pages and spares
- Sign-in sheet
- Each man's Introduction to FORGE book

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, the men will be able to:

1. Explain the stakeholder idea in their own words
2. Tell the difference between a stakeholder, a passenger, a victim and a bystander
3. Name what they do and don't control in their dorm
4. Connect the work they do on themselves to the dorm they live in
5. Write a specific, honest stakeholder commitment of five actions

Session 11 Checklist

- ☐ Opening words said together
- ☐ New men welcomed by name and paired; limits of confidentiality read if anyone is new
- ☐ Check-in round completed (one thing about the dorm a man would change)
- ☐ "We are stakeholders" introduced; stakeholder vs. passenger, victim, bystander
- ☐ What you control and what you don't
- ☐ What changes when a man takes on the stakeholder identity
- ☐ Personal work connected to the dorm
- ☐ Each man wrote five commitments and read them to the circle
- ☐ Debrief held, back to the check-in: what part is mine?
- ☐ Legacy Close: closing round, legacy line written, homework given
- ☐ Sign-in sheet complete; any man completing today recognized

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Session Plan

Opening Words (2 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Before anything else, the opening words. Everybody, together, out loud. If you're new, they're inside the front of your book."*

Say the opening words together.

Opening Circle (8 minutes)

Set up: Chairs in a circle. Talking piece ready.

If anyone is new: welcome each new man by name and pair him with a man who has been coming. Then:

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Quick word for the new men. This is Introduction to FORGE: twelve sessions, one a week, and you can start anywhere in the cycle. It's not a class about becoming a mentor. It's about you: knowing yourself, being a man of your word, and what you're leaving behind. Today is about the place you live and what part of it is yours."*

Read the limits of confidentiality (from How Introduction to FORGE Works) if anyone is new.

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Check-in round. Two things:* ***how are you doing today? And if you could change one thing about this dorm, what would it be?*** *A thing, not a person. No names. You can pass."*

Send the talking piece around. Go first yourself, briefly. Jot the answers on the board or keep them in mind: you come back to them in the Debrief.

Teach: From Passenger to Stakeholder (35 minutes)

Part 1: "We Are Stakeholders" (5 min)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Before any of the tools, FORGE starts with one sentence:* ***'We are stakeholders in this system.'*** *Some men nod. Some look skeptical. And FORGE says: you won't believe it because somebody told you to. You'll believe it because you live it.*

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Most of this class is about you. Your thinking, your anger, your word, your purpose. Knowing yourself. Today is about what that man does with the place he lives. It's the move from 'I' to 'we.' From 'it's their system' to 'what part is mine.'"

Part 2: What a Stakeholder Is (7 min)

Facilitator:

*"A stakeholder is someone who has a stake, an investment, in how things go. Not just for himself. For everyone. A stakeholder isn't a passenger, riding along and hoping things turn out okay. A stakeholder isn't a victim, blaming the system and waiting for someone else to fix it. A stakeholder is someone who says: '**What happens here is partly my responsibility. And I'm going to act like it.**'*

In a prison, the default identity is the opposite. The default is: I'm here against my will. This place is designed to hold me. I have no power. I have no influence. Nothing I do matters. My only job is to survive, do my time, and get out.

That mindset is understandable. And it's a trap. Because when you believe you have no power, you give up the power you actually have. And you have more than you think."

Part 3: What You Actually Control (8 min)

Facilitator:

"Let's be clear about what you DON'T control. You don't control the sentence. You don't control the policies. You don't control the COs. You don't control who you live with.

But here's what you DO control:

- *How you respond to every situation you face*
- *How you treat the people around you*
- *What standards you hold yourself to*
- *Whether a conflict you're in gets resolved or escalates*
- *Whether a new arrival gets tested or gets helped*
- *Whether your dorm is a place people dread or a place people can breathe*
- *Whether the culture in your space is one of fear or one of respect*
- *Whether the man sleeping ten feet from you feels safe tonight*

That's not nothing. That's enormous. And when 10 or 15 men in a dorm all decide to be stakeholders, they change the whole reality of that space. Not because they have authority. Because they have intention."

Ask: "Which one on that list do you already do? Which one is hardest?" Take two or three answers.

Part 4: What Changes (10 min)

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Facilitator:

"Here's what shifts when you go from passenger to stakeholder.

Bystander mentality dies. *You stop watching things happen and saying 'that's not my problem.' If it's happening in your space, it IS your problem. Not because you're the police. Because you're a stakeholder.*

Excuses lose their power. *'The system is broken' might be true. But a stakeholder doesn't use that as a reason to do nothing. He says: 'The system is broken, AND I'm going to improve my corner of it.'*

Accountability becomes natural. *Taking responsibility isn't a burden. It's who you are. You own your behavior because you know your behavior shapes the place you live.*

Service becomes purposeful. *Service Over Self isn't a nice idea any more. You serve because the community you're invested in needs it.*

Your actions gain meaning. *The way you handle a disagreement. The way you talk to a new arrival. The way you respond to disrespect. None of it is small, because all of it shapes the culture you live in.*

You stop waiting to be saved. *Nobody is coming to fix this place. The administration isn't going to solve the culture problem. Programs come and go. The only people who can change the culture of a dorm are the people who live there. That's you."*

Pause.

"I know some of you are thinking: 'That's a lot to put on me. I'm trying to survive my own situation. You're telling me I'm responsible for the whole dorm?'

No. You're not responsible for everything. You're responsible for what you can influence, and your influence is bigger than you think. You can catch a thought before it runs you. You can own what you did without a 'but.' You can see a situation through another man's eyes. Those are tools. And with tools comes responsibility: not to fix everything, but to use what you have. That's what a stakeholder does."

Part 5: Every Bit of Work on Yourself Has a Dorm Side (5 min)

Facilitator:

"Everything you work on in yourself shows up in the place you live.

Your thinking. *Catch your own thinking error before it turns into an argument, and that's one less fight in the dorm.*

Your anger. *Your calm becomes contagious. When the dorm is heated, you can be the one who brings the temperature down, not by ignoring the emotion, but by showing how to handle it.*

What's under the behavior. *You see the man who's reacting way too big and understand something is underneath it. Instead of matching his energy, you respond to the person, not the reaction.*

Your word. *You hold yourself to a higher standard, and the men around you notice.*

Empathy. *You see people others miss. The man struggling quietly. The new arrival who's terrified.*

Purpose. *You believe change is possible, for yourself and for the men in your dorm, and your purpose gives you the staying power when it's hard and thankless.*

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> *You do the work on yourself. Then you live it where you are. That's the FORGE model."*

Practice: My Stakeholder Commitment (25 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"So what does being a stakeholder look like for you? Not a definition. A commitment. On the My Stakeholder Commitment page in your book, write five specific actions you will take as a stakeholder in your dorm, starting now. Look at the board. Each one should be:*
>
> - ***Specific:*** *not 'be a good person.' What will you actually DO?*
> - ***Observable:*** *someone else could see you doing it*
> - ***Consistent:*** *something you'll do regularly, not once*
> - ***Connected to your skills:*** *use what you've learned in this class*
> - ***Honest:*** *don't write what sounds impressive. Write what you'll actually do.*
>
> *Some examples to get you thinking, but your commitments should be yours, not mine:*
>
> - *'I will check in with at least one man in my dorm every day, someone who seems to be having a hard time.'*
> - *'I will welcome every new arrival personally and show him how the dorm works.'*
> - *'When I'm angry, I'll use my tools instead of reacting, so others can see it's possible.'*
> - *'I will refuse to take part in gossip, and I'll redirect conversations that tear other people down.'*
> - *'I will keep my area and the common areas clean without being asked, because the place reflects the culture.'*
> - *'I will really listen to at least one man every day, not just hear him.'"*

Individual writing (10 min). Write your own commitment alongside the men. Pair a new man, or a man who doesn't write well, with a partner who can write for him.

Circle share (10 min):

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"This is important enough to say out loud. Read your five commitments to the circle. When you read them to these men, they become real. These men become your witnesses. If the circle is big, read the one that matters most to you."*

Send the talking piece. No commentary between readers. Just listening and witnessing.

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Debrief (12 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"You just heard [number] commitments from [number] men. If every one of them is lived out, not perfectly, but consistently, think about what that changes. Think about what this dorm looks like. That's the stakeholder model. Not one man saving the world. A community of men, each doing his part, each choosing to serve. That's FORGE.*
>
> *Now go back to the check-in. You each named something you'd change about this dorm.* ***What part of it is yours?*** *Not the whole thing. Your part."*

Take answers around the circle. Push gently for real and specific: "What would that look like tomorrow?" "Is that something you'll actually do?"

If these come up:

"The stakeholder thing sounds nice, but the system doesn't care about us."

> *"You might be right that the system doesn't care about you the way it should. But being a stakeholder isn't about the system caring about you. It's about you deciding to have influence whether anyone gives you permission or not. The system may not change because you decide to be a stakeholder. But your dorm will. The men around you will. Your family will. And you will. That's enough to start."*

"I'm not trying to be the dorm police."

> *"Good. A stakeholder isn't the police. He doesn't run anybody. He does his own part, where he lives, every day, and it shows."*

Legacy Close (8 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Closing round. Take a moment first.* ***What's different about you now, even something small? And what's the reason you're going to keep going?*** *If you're new, tell us one thing you want to be different."*

Talking piece goes around. Go last yourself.

> *"Now the question we end with every time:* ***what does today have to do with your legacy?*** *A stakeholder's legacy is the dorm he leaves behind: the men who felt safe because he was there, the new man who got helped instead of tested. Every man moves on from a dorm someday. What this one is like when you do is partly yours. Open your book to My Legacy and write one line next to Session 11."*

Give two minutes to write. Ask one or two men to read their line if they're willing.

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> *"Homework, starting now:*
>
> 1. ***Start living your stakeholder commitment every day for the next two weeks, and write about it every day on the notes pages in your book,*** *even if it's just three sentences: What did I do today as a stakeholder? What was hard? What impact did it have?*
>
> *Next session: What Is Your Legacy? The question this whole class has been asking."*

If a man completes today: give him the Legacy Close moment (How Introduction to FORGE Works, The Legacy Question) before the homework.

After the session: complete the sign-in sheet and each man's record. Add any man who missed his expected session to the make-up list. Check on anyone who went quiet.

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Session 12: What Is Your Legacy?

Facilitator Notes for Session 12

Every session in this class ends with the same question. This one is built around it. **What is your legacy?** Most men hear "legacy" and think of something big and far away: money left to kids, a name on a building, something for after you're gone. This session brings it close. A legacy is what's left in people after they've been around you. Every man at this table is leaving one right now, in this dorm, in his family, in the younger men who watch him, whether he means to or not. The question is whether he's choosing it.

The session draws on FORGE Session 103, where certified mentors look at the culture they've built and the ripple effect of their work. Here it is for every man, not just mentors. The heart of it is the practice: each man writes his own legacy statement. For a man near the end of his twelve sessions, it pulls together the lines on his My Legacy page. For a man who takes this session early in his cycle, it's a first draft he'll finish on the day he completes.

Two cautions. First, some men carry a legacy they're ashamed of: a crime, a family they hurt, children who don't know them. Don't let the session turn into a verdict on the past. Legacy is about what a man builds from here. Second, keep it free of release talk. A man with a long sentence can build a legacy as real as anyone's, and he often sees it sooner, because the men around him are watching every day.

What to Watch For

"**My legacy is already ruined.**" Don't argue and don't rush to comfort. Say what's true: "What you did is part of your story. It's not the end of it. Your legacy is still being written, starting with how you treat the man next to you today."

Big, empty statements. "My legacy will be that I changed the world." Ask: "What would somebody see you do on a normal day that shows it?"

Grief. Talk about children, parents who died while a man was inside, or family who stopped writing can hit hard. Let men pass. Check in after class with anyone who went quiet.

Thoughts of hurting himself. If a man says anything that sounds like he doesn't see a future at all, or wants to hurt himself, the limits of confidentiality apply: talk with him after class and go to your staff sponsor that day, or to staff right away if he's in danger now.

Preparing for This Session

- Write on the board: **A legacy is what's left in people after they've been around you.**
- Under it, write the four parts of a legacy from this class: **Know yourself · Keep your word · See others · Serve.**
- Check the record: which men are near the end of their twelve sessions, and which are new. Plan to pair new men with men who have done several sessions.

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- Have the My Legacy Statement page ready in every book, and spare paper.
- If a man completes today, have his certificate ready and signed.

Session 12 Overview

Purpose: Bring the question that ends every session to the center: help each man see that he is leaving a legacy right now, and write his own legacy statement about what he chooses to build.

Part: Purpose and Legacy

From FORGE: New for this class, drawing on Session 103: Your Legacy (Week 35), the culture men build and the ripple effect.

Materials:

- Talking piece
- Board or paper with the definition and the four parts of a legacy
- Each man's book, open to My Legacy and the My Legacy Statement page
- Sign-in sheet
- Certificates for any man completing today

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, the men will be able to:

1. Say what a legacy is in their own words, and why every man is leaving one now
2. Describe the ripple effect: how one man's choices reach people he will never meet
3. Name the four parts of a legacy from this class: know yourself, keep your word, see others, serve
4. Write a legacy statement of three to five sentences, with one thing they will do every day to build it
5. Name one action this week that matches what they wrote

Session 12 Checklist

- ☐ Opening words said together
- ☐ New men welcomed and paired; limits of confidentiality read if anyone is new
- ☐ Check-in round completed: someone who left a legacy in your life
- ☐ "A legacy is what's left in people" taught
- ☐ The culture of a dorm and the ripple effect taught
- ☐ The four parts of a legacy taught
- ☐ Each man wrote a legacy statement or a first draft

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- ☐ Volunteers read their statements
- ☐ Debrief held
- ☐ Legacy Close: legacy line written, homework given; completions recognized
- ☐ Sign-in sheet and records complete

Session Plan

Opening Words (2 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"The opening words. Everybody, together, out loud."*

Say the opening words together. Point out the last line today: *to know ourselves, keep our word, and leave a legacy of service.* "That last part is today's whole session."

Opening Circle (8 minutes)

If anyone is new: welcome each new man by name and pair him with a man who has done several sessions. Give the quick word for new men, and read the limits of confidentiality.

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Check-in round. One sentence: **who left a legacy in your life?** Good or bad. A grandmother, a coach, a father who wasn't there, an older man on the block. Just who, and one thing they left in you. You can pass."*

Send the talking piece around. Go first yourself.

Facilitator note: Notice how many men name someone who left something hard. That's worth saying out loud later: "A lot of us were handed a legacy we didn't choose. Today is about the one we do."

Teach: What a Legacy Is (30 minutes)

Part 1: Everybody Leaves One (10 min)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Every session in this class ends with the same question: what is your legacy? Today we take it on head first.*
>
> *When most people hear 'legacy,' they think of something big. Money left to your kids. Your name on something. Something for after you're gone. That's not what we mean.*
>
> *Look at the board.* ***A legacy is what's left in people after they've been around you.***

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> *Think about the names you just said. Some of those people have been gone for years, and they're still in this room, because of what they left in you. That's legacy. And here's the part nobody likes to hear:* ***you're leaving one too, right now.*** *In this dorm. In your family. In every younger man who watches how you carry yourself. Whether you mean to or not.*
>
> *When you transfer, or go home, what will men in this dorm say about you? 'He kept his word.' 'He'd help anybody.' 'Stay away from him.' Something will get said. That's your legacy, and you're writing it every day."*

Ask the room: "What do you want them to say?" Take two or three quick answers. Don't discuss yet.

Part 2: The Culture You Build, and the Ripple Effect (9 min)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Every dorm has a culture. Most of the time nobody chooses it. It just happens, and it gets set by whoever is loudest, most aggressive or most connected. You know what that looks like: tension, intimidation, silence, survival mode.*
>
> *But culture is just what a lot of men do every day, added up. Every time a man walks away from a fight he could have started, that's culture. Every time a man helps a new arrival instead of testing him, that's culture. Every time a man keeps his word when it would be easy not to, that's culture. Every man in this dorm adds to it, one way or the other.*
>
> *And it goes further than you can see. Throw a stone in water and the ripples go out way past where it landed. Say a man in this dorm changes how he handles his anger. His bunkmate doesn't have to live on edge. His kids visit a father who's calm instead of explosive. The officer on his unit has one less thing to worry about. And years from now he'll meet a man who's struggling, and he'll know what to say.*
>
> *Somewhere down the line, somebody you'll never meet will make a better decision because of something you did in here. You won't know about it. You won't get credit. But it'll happen. That's legacy too.*
>
> *In a place built to make you feel worthless, don't let anybody tell you your time here can't mean something."*

Pause. Let it sit.

Part 3: What a Legacy Is Made Of (11 min)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"So how do you build one on purpose? Everything in this class comes down to four things. They're on the board. Some of you have had these sessions already; some of you haven't yet. Here's the short version of each.*
>
> ***Know yourself.*** *Your thinking controls your behavior. Between what happens and what you do, there's a thought. Catch the thought, and you choose what you leave behind instead of your worst moment choosing for you.*
>
> ***Keep your word.*** *Accountability means owning what you did, with no 'but.' Integrity means your values, your words and your actions line up, even when nobody's watching. And when you break your word, you repair it. A man whose word is good is a man people build around.*
>
> ***See others.*** *Empathy is seeing how what you do lands on the people around you. You can't leave something good in people you never really looked at.*

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> ***Serve.*** *Service over self. Find a purpose bigger than getting through the day, and see yourself as a stakeholder: this dorm is partly yours, so part of making it better is yours too. Building others up instead of tearing them down. Know yourself. Keep your word. See others. Serve. Do those every day, and your legacy takes care of itself."*

Ask: "Which of the four is hardest for you? Don't answer out loud. Just know." Then move to the practice.

Practice: Writing My Legacy Statement (30 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Now you write yours. Open your book to My Legacy. If you've been coming a while, you've got a line there for every session you've done. Read them over. If you're new, that page is mostly empty, and that's fine; you'll write a first draft today and finish it the day you complete.*
>
> *Turn to the My Legacy Statement page. Answer three questions first:*
>
> 1. ***When I leave this dorm, what do I want the men here to say about me?***
> 2. ***What do I want my family to say about me?*** *If family isn't part of your life right now, pick anybody who matters to you.*
> 3. ***What is one thing I will do every day to build it?***
>
> *Then write your statement. Three to five sentences. Start it with '**My legacy will be...**' Make it yours. Make it something a man could see you living out on a normal day."*

Give 20 minutes to write. Circulate. Help men who are stuck:

- "What do you want your kids to know about you?"
- "What's something you already do that you'd want to be remembered for?"
- "Which of the four on the board do you want people to see in you?"
- "What would you do every day if you were already that man?"

Pair new men with experienced men if writing is hard; they can talk it through and write together.

Then read (8 min):

> *"Who's willing to read his statement? The whole thing, or just the first sentence."*

Thank each man by name. No comments, no advice. If a statement is big and vague, don't correct it in front of the group; help him make it concrete after class.

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Debrief (12 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Let's talk about what that was like. **What was hard about writing it? What surprised you?**"*

Take answers around the circle. Common ones, and what to say:

"It's hard to think about legacy when you've done what I've done."

> *"That's honest. What you did is part of your story. It's not the last chapter. The men who know they did harm are often the ones who build the strongest legacy, because they know what's at stake."*

"I don't know if I can live up to it."

> *"Good. If you could already live up to it, it wouldn't be worth writing. You don't have to be that man today. You just have to do the one thing you wrote, today."*

"Nobody in here cares what I leave behind."

> *"Somebody's watching. A younger man. Your bunkmate. Your kids, if they visit. You'd be surprised who's paying attention."*

Legacy Close (8 minutes)

> **Facilitator:**
>
> *"Closing round. **Say the one thing you'll do every day to build your legacy.** Just that one line."*

Talking piece goes around.

> *"And the question we end with, which today is the whole point: **what does today have to do with your legacy?** Write one line on your My Legacy page next to Session 12.*
>
> *Homework for the coming week:*
>
> 1. ***Do the one thing you wrote**, every day this week. Keep a mark in your book for each day you did it.*
> 2. ***Tell one person what your legacy is going to be.** A man in this dorm, a family member on a call or in a letter. Saying it out loud to somebody makes it real.*
>
> *Next session the cycle starts again with Session 1: Thinking Controls Behavior, where it all begins."*

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If a man completes today: this is the best day for it. Give him the Legacy Close moment (How Introduction to FORGE Works, The Legacy Question): he reads his legacy statement, the group gives him his certificate, and men say one thing they've seen in him.

After the session: complete the sign-in sheet and each man's record. Add any man who missed his expected session to the make-up list. Check on anyone who went quiet, talked about grief, or sounded like he sees no future.

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