



PHASE 1 — FOUNDATION

Week 1 of 36

Orientation and Community Building

Sessions 1–3

Tuesday • Wednesday • Thursday

FORGE — Facilitating Opportunities for Reentry, Growth & Empowerment

Dooly State Prison

FORGE Curriculum

Phase 1: Foundation — "Know Yourself"

Week 1: Orientation and Community Building

Week 1 Overview

Purpose: Establish the foundation — who we are, why we're here, how we'll work together, and what we're building. By the end of this week, every participant should understand FORGE's mission, have committed to the Code of Conduct, and have experienced their first circle process.

Sessions This Week: - Session 1 (Tuesday): Welcome to FORGE - Session 2 (Thursday): Building the Container - Session 3 (Saturday): Service Over Self

Materials Needed: - FORGE Handbooks (1 per participant) - Participant Commitment forms (1 per participant) - Pens/pencils (1 per participant) - Journals/notebooks (1 per participant — these will be used throughout the program) - Talking piece for circle process (any meaningful object — a book, a stone, something the group selects) - Easel paper or whiteboard (if available) — otherwise verbal works fine

SESSION 1: Welcome to FORGE

Day: Tuesday **Duration:** 2 hours **Facilitator(s):** Program Lead + Senior Mentor (if available)

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Explain FORGE's mission and purpose in their own words 2. Recite the FORGE elevator speech 3. Describe the stakeholder model and what it means for them personally 4. Understand the 9-month program structure and what's expected 5. Sign the Participant Commitment with full understanding

Session Plan

Opening (10 minutes)

Facilitator arrives early. Set up the room so that chairs are in a circle — no tables between people if possible. This is intentional. FORGE runs on connection, and connection starts with being able to see each other.

Welcome (5 min)

Facilitator:

"Welcome. Every one of you made a choice to be here today. That choice already separates you from the majority. Most men in this facility will serve their time and leave exactly the same as they came in — or worse. You're here because something in you said, 'I want something different.'

My name is [name]. I'm going to be straight with you from the start: this program is not easy. It's not a check-the-box program. You won't get through this by just showing up and sitting quietly. FORGE is going to ask you to look at yourself honestly, to change how you think, to learn skills most people never learn, and eventually to take responsibility for helping other men do the same thing.

But here's what you get: over the next 9 months, you'll become someone who can walk into any room — any dorm, any situation — and make it better. Not through muscle. Not through reputation. Through skill, composure, and service. That's what a FORGE mentor is.

Let's start by going around the circle. Just your name and one sentence — why are you here today?"

Go-around (5 min) - Each person: name + one sentence on why they're here - Facilitator goes first to model vulnerability and brevity - No crosstalk — just listen

The FORGE Story (15 minutes)

Purpose: Connect participants to the "why" behind FORGE — not just the program description, but the human reality that created it.

Facilitator:

"Let me tell you why FORGE exists.

In the last 6 years, violence inside Georgia's prisons has skyrocketed. Not just the murders you hear about on the news. Stabbings, fights, extortion, intimidation — most of which never even get reported. You know this. You live it.

Staff know it too. COs come to work wondering if today's the day something goes sideways. They want to go home to their families at the end of their shift. We want to go home to ours — whenever that day comes.

Here's the truth that most people won't say out loud: the conditions inside this facility are shaped more by us — by inmate behavior and inmate culture — than by anything the administration does. How conflicts get handled, whether violence is encouraged or discouraged, whether someone new gets tested or gets helped — that's on us. Every day.

*FORGE was built on one idea: **we are stakeholders in this system.** Not victims of it. Not passengers in it.*

Stakeholders. That means we have a responsibility — not just to ourselves, but to everyone living in this space.

FORGE exists to train men who can change the culture of a dorm. Not by force. By example. By skill. By service."

Pause. Let it sit.

Facilitator:

"I want to hear from you. When I say 'we are stakeholders in this system' — what does that stir up? Agreement? Skepticism? Questions? Be honest."

Open discussion (5 min) — Let 3-4 people respond. Don't argue or correct. Just acknowledge.

Facilitator (closing this section):

"Whatever you're feeling about that right now is fine. Skepticism is welcome here. By the end of this program, you won't believe it because I told you to — you'll believe it because you'll have lived it."

Program Overview (20 minutes)

Purpose: Give participants a clear map of the 9-month journey so they know what they're committing to.

Facilitator:

"Let me walk you through exactly what this program looks like. No surprises."

Explain the three phases:

Phase 1: Foundation — 'Know Yourself' (Weeks 1-12)

"The first 12 weeks are about you. Before you can mentor anyone else, you have to do your own work. We'll cover how your thinking drives your behavior, how to understand and manage your emotions, how to resolve conflict without making it worse, how to communicate in a way that actually works, and how to take accountability without drowning in shame.

This is the hardest phase for most people — not because the material is complicated, but because it requires honesty. You'll keep a journal. You'll write thinking reports. You'll do exercises that make you uncomfortable. If you're willing to be honest with yourself, you'll grow faster in these 12 weeks than most people do in years."

Phase 2: Development — 'Build Others' (Weeks 13-24)

"Phase 2 is where you learn to be a mentor. You'll learn how to teach, how to facilitate a group, how to listen in a way that actually helps someone, and how to handle the hardest situations you'll face in a dorm — through simulation training.

Simulation training is one of the things that makes FORGE different. We don't just talk about what to do when a conflict breaks out or someone has a weapon or a mentee tells you he's thinking about hurting himself. We practice it. In real time. With coaching. So when it happens for real, you've already done it."

Phase 3: Practicum — 'Lead and Serve' (Weeks 25-36)

"Phase 3 is where you do it for real. You'll be assigned mentees. You'll facilitate sessions. You'll run community circles. First with supervision, then on your own. By the end of Phase 3, if you've met all the requirements, you'll be certified as a FORGE Mentor."

Explain the schedule:

"We meet three times a week — Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. Each session is 2 hours. That's 6 hours a week for 36 weeks. Attendance is mandatory — you need to be at 85% of sessions minimum to stay in the program. If you're late by more than 5 minutes, that counts as an absence. This isn't to be rigid for the sake of being rigid. It's because the man sitting next to you is counting on you to be here. When you don't show up, you're not just missing a class — you're breaking trust with your cohort."

Questions (5 min) — Answer practical questions about schedule, expectations, etc.

The Elevator Speech (15 minutes)

Purpose: Give every participant the words to explain FORGE to anyone — a CO, a dorm mate, a family member, a skeptic.

Facilitator:

"Every FORGE participant needs to be able to explain what this program is in 30 seconds. Not because it's a test — because people will ask you. COs will ask. Other inmates will ask. Some will be curious. Some will be mocking. Either way, you need to own it."

Read the elevator speech together:

"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 build mentors who create a culture of peace, responsibility, and service — modeling the change we want to see in every community."

Practice:

Facilitator:

"Now — pair up. Face each other. One of you is going to deliver the elevator speech from memory. The other one is going to pretend to be a skeptical dorm mate who just asked, 'What's this FORGE thing you keep going to?' Don't just recite the words — deliver them like you mean it. Then switch."

Pairs practice (5 min) — Facilitator walks the room, listens, coaches.

Debrief (3 min):

"How did that feel? For most of you, that's the first time you've stood behind something and said it out loud to another person. That discomfort? That's growth. By next week, I want every one of you to be able to deliver that speech without looking at the page."

Homework: Memorize the elevator speech. Practice it at least 3 times before Thursday.

The Code of Conduct and Participant Commitment (20 minutes)

Purpose: Establish the non-negotiable standards — not as rules imposed from above, but as agreements the group makes together.

Facilitator:

"Open your handbooks to the Code of Conduct. I'm going to read through each section. As I read, I want you to think about one question: Is there anything here you can't commit to? Because if you sign this, it's not symbolic. It means something."

Read each section aloud — Integrity & Accountability, Leadership & Service, Learning & Growth, Peace & Safety, Community & Conduct, Mindset & Mission.

Pause after Peace & Safety:

Facilitator:

"I want to be very clear about this section. Weapons are not tolerated. Period. Anyone found with a weapon will be removed from the program immediately, without exception. This isn't a gray area. This isn't a three-strikes situation. One strike.

Violence, threats, bullying, intimidation, gang language — none of it has a place here. If you can't commit to that, this isn't the right program for you. There's no judgment in that — but there's no flexibility either."

Open it up:

"Questions? Concerns? Anything you need to discuss before you sign?"

Allow genuine discussion. If someone raises a real concern (e.g., "What if I need to defend myself?"), address it honestly:

"Self-defense is a human right. No one's asking you to let yourself be hurt. What FORGE asks is that you don't go looking for trouble, you don't escalate, and you don't carry weapons. If you're in a situation where your safety is at real risk, we'll work with you on that. That's what this community is for."

Signing (5 min): - Distribute Participant Commitment forms - Participants sign - Facilitator or Senior Mentor signs as witness - Collect forms — these go in each participant's program file

Closing Exercise (10 minutes)

Facilitator:

"We're going to close every session with a go-around. Today's question is simple:

Name one thing you want to be different about yourself in 9 months.

Not what you want to happen to you — what you want to be different about who you are. One sentence."

Go-around. Facilitator goes last.

Facilitator (after everyone has shared):

"I heard [briefly reference 2-3 themes — e.g., 'patience,' 'being a better father,' 'controlling my temper']. Hold onto what you just said. Write it down tonight. In 9 months, we'll come back to it.

Before Thursday — memorize the elevator speech, and think about this: What does it mean to you to be a stakeholder? Journal at least half a page on that.

See you Thursday."

Session 1 Checklist

- Room set up in circle before participants arrive
- Handbooks distributed
- Journals/notebooks distributed
- Go-around: introductions completed
- FORGE story delivered
- Stakeholder discussion held
- Three phases explained
- Schedule and attendance expectations clear
- Elevator speech read, practiced in pairs
- Code of Conduct read and discussed
- Participant Commitments signed and collected
- Closing go-around completed
- Homework assigned (memorize elevator speech + journal on stakeholder question)

SESSION 2: Building the Container

Day: Thursday **Duration:** 2 hours **Facilitator(s):** Program Lead + Senior Mentor (if available)

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Participate in a circle process using a talking piece 2. Articulate the group agreements they've co-created 3. Explain why trust is the foundation of the program 4. Begin using their journal as a reflective tool

Session Plan

Opening Circle (15 minutes)

Purpose: Introduce the circle process that will be used throughout FORGE.

Set up: Chairs in circle. Place talking piece in the center.

Facilitator:

"Today we're going to learn a practice that's been used for thousands of years — in tribal councils, in communities, in peacemaking traditions around the world. It's called a circle process, and it's going to be a core part of how FORGE works.

*The rules are simple: 1. **Only the person holding the talking piece speaks.** Everyone else listens. 2. **Speak from the heart.** Say what's true for you, not what you think people want to hear. 3. **Listen from the heart.** When someone is speaking, your only job is to hear them. 4. **Say just enough.** Don't give a speech. Say what needs to be said and pass the piece. 5. **Trust the process.** Circles feel strange at first. That's normal. Give it a chance.*

This [holding up the talking piece] is our talking piece. When you're holding it, the room belongs to you. When you're not, your job is to listen — not plan your response, not judge, not check out. Listen."

First circle round:

*"Let's try it. The question for this round: **What's one thing on your mind today — something you're carrying that you'd be willing to share?***

It can be big or small. 'I didn't sleep well.' 'I'm worried about my daughter.' 'I'm not sure I belong here.' Whatever is true. You can also say 'I pass' — no one is forced to speak."

Send the talking piece around the circle. Facilitator receives it last.

Facilitator (after the round):

"Thank you. What you just did — sharing something real with a group of men you don't fully trust yet — takes courage. That's the muscle we're going to build."

Co-Creating Group Agreements (30 minutes)

Purpose: The group creates its own rules of engagement. This is the "normative culture" principle — when people create the standards, they own the standards.

Facilitator:

"Every program has rules. The Code of Conduct gives us the non-negotiables. But there's another layer — the agreements we make with each other about how we show up in this room. Those can't come from me. They have to come from you.

I want us to build a set of group agreements together. These are the promises we make to each other about how we'll treat each other in this space. Think about what you need from the people in this circle in order to do the hard work this program is going to ask of you.

*I'll start with a question: **What do you need from this group in order to feel safe enough to be honest?**"*

Facilitation process:

1. Open the floor. As participants offer ideas, write them down (on paper, whiteboard, or have a participant write them).
2. After each suggestion, ask: "Does everyone agree to this?"
3. Allow discussion if someone disagrees — work toward consensus.
4. Common agreements that usually emerge:
5. What's said in the circle stays in the circle (with safety exceptions)
6. No side conversations when someone is speaking
7. No phones/distractions during sessions
8. Respect — even when you disagree
9. Be on time

10. No judgment — people are here to grow, not be perfect
11. Call people in, not out (address behavior, not character)
12. If you have a problem with someone, bring it up — don't let it fester
13. Everyone participates — no spectators

Important facilitation note: If the group doesn't naturally bring up confidentiality, raise it:

Facilitator:

*"I want to address confidentiality directly. In this program, people are going to share things they might not share anywhere else. For that to work, there has to be a commitment: **what's shared in this room stays in this room.***

But I need to 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 themselves — I have an obligation to act on that. I won't ignore a safety issue. Outside of that, what you share here is yours. It doesn't become gossip in the dorm. It doesn't get used against you. That's the deal.

Can everyone commit to that?"

Finalize the agreements. Read them back to the group.

"These are YOUR agreements. I didn't write them — you did. That means you own them. When someone breaks one, it's not me policing you — it's the group holding each other to what we promised."

Trust-Building Exercise: "Two Truths and a Question" (25 minutes)

Purpose: Begin building real connection between cohort members. This is a modified version of "two truths and a lie" designed for a corrections environment where trust is especially fragile.

Facilitator:

"We're going to do an exercise to start getting to know each other beyond the surface. It's called Two Truths and a Question. Here's how it works:

Each person shares two true things about themselves — things the group probably doesn't know. Then you ask the group a question — something you genuinely want to know from them. It can be serious or light. The group doesn't have to answer right away — it's just putting the question out there.

I'll go first."

Facilitator models:

"Two truths: [personal, authentic examples — e.g., 'I was terrified of public speaking until I was 30' and 'I learned more from my failures than my successes']. My question to the group: What's one thing you're good at that most people don't know about?"

Go around the circle. Each person shares. No crosstalk during sharing. After each person, the group can briefly respond to the question if they want.

Debrief (5 min):

Facilitator:

"What did you notice? What surprised you? What did you learn about someone that you didn't expect?"

Allow 3-4 responses.

"This is how trust gets built — not all at once, but one honest moment at a time. Over the next 9 months, you're going to know these men better than almost anyone else in your life. That's the power of a cohort."

Introduction to Journaling (15 minutes)

Purpose: Establish the journaling practice that will run throughout the entire program.

Facilitator:

"Every FORGE participant keeps a journal. This isn't for me to read — it's yours. I'll never ask to see it unless you choose to share something from it. But I will ask you to write in it regularly, because the research is clear: people who write about their experiences process them better, learn faster, and change more than people who just think about them.

Your journal is going to be your private space to be completely honest. In here, you don't have to perform. You don't have to be tough. You don't have to have it figured out. You just have to be real.

Some of you haven't written anything beyond a letter in years. That's fine. There's no grade. There's no minimum length. A journal entry can be three sentences. The only requirement is honesty."

Journaling types you'll use in FORGE:

"Throughout the program, I'll ask you to journal in different ways:

1. **Free writing** — whatever's on your mind. Stream of consciousness.
2. **Prompted writing** — I'll give you a specific question to respond to.
3. **Thinking reports** — you'll learn these next week. They're a structured way of analyzing your own thinking.
4. **Reflections** — after exercises and simulations, you'll write about what you experienced and what you learned.

Tonight, I want you to do your first journal entry."

First journal prompt:

Facilitator (write this where everyone can see it, or read it twice slowly):

"Tonight's prompt: **What does it mean to you to be a stakeholder in this system? Do you believe it? Why or why not?**

Write at least half a page. Be honest — if you think it's BS, write that. If it resonates, write why. This is for you."

Closing Circle (10 minutes)

Talking piece round:

Facilitator:

"Closing round. One sentence: **What's one word that describes how you're feeling right now about being part of FORGE?**"

Send the talking piece around.

Facilitator (closing):

"Before Saturday, I need two things from you: 1. Memorize the elevator speech. Be ready to deliver it without looking at the page. 2. Complete your journal entry on the stakeholder question.

Saturday we're going to dig into the principle that holds this entire program together: *Service Over Self*. See you then."

Session 2 Checklist

- [] Room in circle formation
- [] Talking piece selected and placed

- Opening circle completed
- Group agreements co-created and documented
- Confidentiality discussed with limits clearly stated
- Trust-building exercise completed
- Journaling practice introduced
- Journals distributed (if not done in Session 1)
- First journal prompt given
- Closing circle completed
- Homework assigned (elevator speech memorization + journal entry)

SESSION 3: Service Over Self

Day: Saturday **Duration:** 2 hours **Facilitator(s):** Program Lead + Senior Mentor (if available)

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Explain "Service Over Self" in their own words with personal examples 2. Deliver the FORGE elevator speech from memory 3. Distinguish between service and submission, leadership and control 4. Identify concrete acts of service available to them in their daily environment 5. Commit to a 1-week service challenge

Session Plan

Opening Circle (10 minutes)

Facilitator:

*"Check-in round. Two things: **How are you doing today — honestly? And did you write your journal entry?**"*

Send the talking piece. Note who completed the journal entry and who didn't — not punitively, just to track engagement.

Elevator Speech Check (10 minutes)

Facilitator:

"Before we get into today's topic — elevator speech time. I need three volunteers to stand up and deliver it from memory. No handbook."

Call on 3 volunteers (or assign if no one volunteers).

Each person stands and delivers the elevator speech. After each: - Group gives brief feedback: Was it clear? Confident? Believable? - Facilitator coaches: "Slow down." "Look people in the eye." "Say it like you mean it — because you do."

"By next Tuesday, every single person in this room should be able to deliver that speech cold. Practice it tonight. Practice it tomorrow. Say it to yourself in the mirror. Say it to your bunkmate. Own it."

What Is Service? (25 minutes)

Facilitator:

*"FORGE is built on a principle: **Service Over Self**. It's on the wall. It's in the handbook. You've heard it three times already. But what does it actually mean?"*

Let me start with what it doesn't mean."

What Service Over Self is NOT:

"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.

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 went through a program."

What Service Over Self IS:

"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 mentor who stays calm when a mentee is testing every boundary — because he knows the mentee isn't the enemy; the mentee's pain is the enemy.

Service is the leader who addresses a conflict early — before it becomes 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."***

Pause.

"Here's the deeper truth: service isn't a sacrifice. The men who practice it — in this facility and in every successful program we 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."

Learning from Other Programs (15 minutes)

Facilitator:

"FORGE isn't the first program to discover this. Let me tell you about three others."

PEP — Prison Entrepreneurship Program (Texas):

"In Texas, there's a program called PEP. It takes men in prison and puts them through a 4-month mini-MBA — business plans, financial models, pitch competitions in front of real CEOs and venture capitalists. Sounds impressive, right? But here's the part that matters:

During the program, every participant has to turn around and teach the lessons they just learned to the next class coming in behind them. They call it 'servant leadership.' You learn, then you serve by teaching. 90% of PEP's staff today are graduates of the program. They went from inmates to mentors to employees — because they learned to serve first."

GRIP — Guiding Rage Into Power (California):

"At San Quentin in California, there's a year-long program called GRIP. It has a 0.5% recidivism rate — that means of 421 graduates who've been released, only 2 went back to prison. The California average is 42%.

You know what drives GRIP? The same thing we're talking about. Experienced participants co-facilitate classes. They mentor newer participants. They set the standards for the group — not the outside facilitators. The participants own the culture. Sound familiar? That's the stakeholder model."

RSVP — Resolve to Stop the Violence (San Francisco):

"In San Francisco, there's a program called RSVP that reduced violent rearrests by 80%. Eighty percent. The men live together in a dedicated housing unit. They do 50 hours a week of programming. And the men who've been in the longest? They mentor the men who just arrived.

No formal certification. No titles. Just men who've changed their behavior showing men who haven't that it's possible. Peer accountability. Service. Culture."

Facilitator:

*"These programs work because they figured out the same thing 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.***

That's what you're training to become."

Group Exercise: Service in Our Environment (20 minutes)

Facilitator:

"Let's get practical. Service Over Self sounds great as a philosophy. But what does it look like on a Tuesday afternoon in your dorm?"

*I want to break into groups of 3-4. Each group is going to brainstorm: **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, observable actions."*

Small groups brainstorm (8 min). Facilitator circulates, pushes for specificity.

Share out (8 min): Each group reports their top 5. Facilitator captures the list.

Common examples that should emerge: - Help someone who's struggling to read a legal document - Clean a common area without being asked - De-escalate 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 oriented - Tutor someone working on their GED - Share a book or resource - Check on someone who's been quiet/withdrawn - Help someone write a letter home - Mediate a minor dispute before it grows

Facilitator:

"Look at this list. None of these require permission. None require a program. None require staff approval. Every single one of these is available to you right now. Today. The question is: will you do them?"

The Service Challenge (10 minutes)

Facilitator:

"Here's your first real FORGE assignment — and it's not a written one.

*Between now and next Tuesday, I want each of you to perform **3 deliberate acts of service** in your dorm. They can be anything from the list we just made, or something you come up with on 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. You write about it in your journal — what you did, how it felt, how the other person responded*

This is where FORGE stops being a class and starts being a way of life."

Closing Exercise: Personal Commitment (15 minutes)

Facilitator:

"We're going to close today with something more than a check-out. I want each of you to make a personal commitment — out loud, to this group.

*Complete this sentence: '**The kind of man I'm committed to becoming through FORGE is...**'*

Take a minute to think about it. Then we'll go around."

One minute of silence for reflection.

Talking piece goes around. Each person completes the sentence.

Facilitator (closing):

"Write down what you just said. Put it in the front of your journal. On the hard days — and there will be hard days — read it. Remind yourself why you're here.

Homework for Tuesday: 1. Complete your 3 acts of service and journal about each one 2. Make sure you can deliver the elevator speech from memory — I'm going to call on people randomly 3. Read the 'Attitude & Mindset' section in your handbook

Week 2, we start getting into the real work — how your thinking controls your behavior. It's going to challenge you. That's the point.

Service Over Self. See you Tuesday."

Session 3 Checklist

- Opening circle completed
- Elevator speech check (3 people delivered from memory)
- Service Over Self — defined what it is and isn't
- Three program examples shared (PEP, GRIP, RSVP)
- Small group brainstorm on acts of service (10+ specific actions)
- Service challenge assigned (3 acts before Tuesday)
- Personal commitment exercise completed
- Homework assigned (service journal + elevator speech + handbook reading)

FACILITATOR NOTES FOR WEEK 1

What to Watch For

Engagement levels: Who's leaning in? Who's checked out? Who's performing vs. being genuine? Don't call anyone out in Week 1 — just observe. You'll address engagement issues individually as trust builds.

Group dynamics forming: Who gravitates toward whom? Are cliques forming already? Is anyone being excluded? Are there natural leaders emerging? Note these — they'll matter as the program progresses.

Resistance: Some participants will be skeptical. That's healthy. Don't try to convert skeptics in Week 1. Give them space. The program will do its own work over time. The most resistant participants often become the strongest mentors.

Emotional responses: The FORGE story and stakeholder discussion may hit some people hard. Be aware of who gets quiet, who looks away, who seems activated. Check in with them individually after the session if needed.

Common Week 1 Challenges

"**This sounds soft.**" Some men will worry that FORGE makes them look weak. Address this directly if it comes up: "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 this?**" Fair question. Be honest: "You don't get time cut. You don't get extra privileges. What you get is skills that will change 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."

"**I don't trust these guys.**" Correct response: "You shouldn't. Not yet. Trust isn't a starting point — it's earned over time. All I'm asking is that you stay open to the possibility that it can be built."

Preparation for Week 2

- Review the Thinking for a Change (T4C) curriculum materials, especially Lessons 1-3
- Prepare blank thinking report templates (enough for each participant + extras)
- Review Session 4-6 lesson plans

- Have examples of completed thinking reports ready to share as models