



PHASE 1 — FOUNDATION

Week 9 of 36

Problem Solving and Decision Making

Sessions 25–27

Tuesday • Wednesday • Thursday

FORGE — Facilitating Opportunities for Reentry, Growth & Empowerment

Dooly State Prison

FORGE Curriculum

Phase 1: Foundation — "Know Yourself"

Week 9: Problem Solving and Decision Making

Week 9 Overview

Purpose: Give participants a structured, repeatable method for solving problems and making decisions — especially under pressure. Most of the worst decisions in a person's life happen in a few seconds: someone reacts instead of thinking, acts on impulse instead of evaluating consequences, and lives with the fallout for years. This week teaches participants to slow down, think clearly, and choose intentionally. These are not abstract skills — they are the skills that prevent the next fight, the next write-up, the next regret.

Sessions This Week: - Session 25 (Tuesday): Problem-Solving Framework - Session 26 (Wednesday): Decision Making Under Pressure - Session 27 (Thursday): Consequential Thinking

Materials Needed: - Journals/notebooks (ongoing) - Pens/pencils - Talking piece for circle process - Easel paper or whiteboard (if available) — especially useful for Session 27 ripple effect mapping - Problem-solving worksheet (6-step model template — can be hand-drawn if no copies available) - Scenario cards for Session 26 pressure decision exercises (prepare 5-6 scenarios — see Session 26)

SESSION 25: Problem-Solving Framework

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. Name and explain all 6 steps of the FORGE problem-solving model 2. Identify common problem-solving traps (impulsivity, tunnel vision, either/or thinking) 3. Apply the 6-step model to a realistic problem 4. Distinguish between reacting to a problem and solving a problem 5. Generate at least 3 options for any given problem before choosing one

Session Plan

Opening Circle (10 minutes)

Facilitator:

"Check-in round. How are you doing today? And how did the relationship homework go — did you do something intentional to strengthen a pro-social relationship this week? Tell us what you did, or tell us you didn't get to it."

Send the talking piece. Acknowledge efforts. If someone strengthened a relationship through service or honesty, highlight it as exactly what FORGE builds toward.

Review and Reflection (10 minutes)

Facilitator:

"Last week was about other people — empathy, reading the room, relationships. This week is about your brain. Specifically, about how you solve problems and make decisions.

Let me start with a question. Think about the worst decision you've ever made — you don't have to share what it was. Just think about it. Now: how much time elapsed between the problem appearing and you acting on it? Seconds? Minutes? Hours?

For most of us, the worst decisions happened fast. Somebody said something. Somebody did something. An opportunity appeared. And we acted before we thought. The problem wasn't that we didn't know better — it's that we didn't slow down long enough to access what we knew.

This week is about building a system for slowing down. Not so you become paralyzed or passive. So you become deliberate. The most effective men in any environment — in here, out there, anywhere — are the ones who solve problems instead of creating new ones."

Instruction: The 6-Step Problem-Solving Model (30 minutes)

Facilitator:

"We're going to learn a model. Six steps. Simple to understand, hard to do when you're under pressure. But the more you practice it when things are calm, the more available it becomes when things are hot."

Step 1: Stop and Think — Don't React

"Before you do anything, you stop. You create a gap between the problem and your response. We talked about this in Week 2 with the STOP technique. This is the same principle.

Your body will want to react immediately. Adrenaline kicks in. Your thinking narrows. Your emotions start driving. Step 1 is interrupting that process. Take a breath. Feel your feet on the floor. Give yourself 10 seconds.

Ten seconds doesn't sound like much. But most of the worst decisions in this building were made in less than ten seconds. If you can create that gap, you've already changed the outcome."

Step 2: Define the Problem Clearly

"Most people skip this step. They think they know what the problem is, so they jump straight to solving it. But half the time, they're solving the wrong problem.

Example: You're angry because your cellmate keeps leaving the cell a mess. That feels like the problem — 'he's a slob.' But is that really the problem? Maybe the real problem is that you feel disrespected. Maybe the real problem is that you've asked three times and he ignores you, which means the issue is communication. Maybe the real problem is that you have zero personal space and the mess makes you feel out of control.

Defining the problem means asking: what's actually happening here? What's the real issue, not just the surface issue? If you solve the wrong problem, the real problem stays."

Step 3: Gather Information

"Before you act, get the facts. Not assumptions. Not what somebody told you about what somebody else said. Facts.

In here, information travels fast and gets distorted faster. By the time a story gets to you, it's gone through three people and picked up details that never happened. Step 3 says: before you make a decision, verify what's actually true.

Ask questions. Talk to the people directly involved. Don't rely on secondhand information. This step alone prevents more unnecessary conflicts than any other."

Step 4: Generate Options — At Least 3

"This is where most people get stuck. They see a problem and they see one solution — or at most, two. 'I can fight or I can walk away.' 'I can confront him or I can let it go.' Either/or.

The rule in this model is: generate at least 3 options before you choose one. Why three? Because when you force yourself to come up with a third option, you usually break out of the either/or trap and find something more creative.

Let's try it right now. Problem: someone in the dorm owes you a favor and they've been ducking you for two weeks. Option 1? [Let participants suggest — usually confrontation.] Option 2? [Usually avoidance or letting it go.] Option 3? [Push for something creative — talk to them directly in a calm setting, bring it up in a group, accept the loss and adjust the relationship, etc.]

See how option 3 opens up the thinking? That's the point. More options means better decisions."

Step 5: Evaluate Consequences of Each Option

"For every option you generate, run it forward. Ask: if I do this, what happens next? And then what? And then what?"

Not just what happens to you — what happens to everyone affected. What happens immediately? What happens tomorrow? What happens next month?"

This is where you apply everything we learned about empathy and perspective-taking. You're not just asking 'what's best for me right now.' You're asking 'what's the full picture of consequences for every option?'

Some options look good in the short term and terrible in the long term. Some options feel uncomfortable now but lead somewhere better. Step 5 is about seeing the full chain before you commit."

Step 6: Choose, Act, and Review

"Once you've generated options and evaluated consequences, you choose. Not perfectly — there's no perfect choice. But deliberately. You pick the option that leads to the best outcome for the most people over the longest time.

Then you act. Not halfway. Not with one foot out the door. You commit to the choice and you execute it.

And then — this is the part people forget — you review. Did it work? What happened? What would you do differently next time? Every decision is data. You learn from it and you refine your process."

Pause.

Facilitator:

"Six steps. Let me say them one more time:

- 1. Stop and think — don't react.*
- 2. Define the problem clearly.*
- 3. Gather information.*
- 4. Generate options — at least 3.*
- 5. Evaluate consequences of each option.*
- 6. Choose, act, and review.*

Now let's talk about what gets in the way."

Common problem-solving traps:

"Impulsivity. Acting before thinking. This is the biggest one. Your nervous system is wired to act fast in threatening situations — that's survival. But most problems you face are not life-or-death. They feel urgent, but they're not. Impulsivity treats every problem like a crisis.

Tunnel vision. Seeing only one solution. 'There's only one way to handle this.' There's never only one way. If you believe there's only one way, you haven't thought hard enough.

Either/or thinking. 'I can fight or I can be disrespected.' 'I can snitch or I can stay quiet.' False choices. Almost every either/or has a third, fourth, or fifth option that you haven't considered.

Emotional reasoning. 'I feel disrespected, therefore I've BEEN disrespected.' Feelings are real, but they're not always accurate interpretations of reality. You learned this in Week 2 — your feelings follow your thoughts. If your thoughts are distorted, your feelings will mislead you.

Pride. Choosing the option that protects your image instead of the option that actually solves the problem. Pride is the most expensive thing in this building. It costs people their freedom, their safety, and their future."

Practice Exercise: Apply the 6-Step Model (30 minutes)

Facilitator:

"Time to use this. I want you to apply the 6-step model to a real problem — something you're actually dealing with right now. It doesn't have to be dramatic. It can be a conflict with someone, a decision you're facing, a situation you've been avoiding. Pick something real.

In your journal, work through all 6 steps. Write it out."

Individual work (12 min). Facilitator circulates and coaches: - "You jumped to Step 6 — go back. What are your other options?" - "You listed two options. What's a third?" - "You evaluated the consequences for yourself. What about the other person?" - "Is that the real problem, or is that the surface problem?"

Small group share (10 min): Groups of 3. Each person shares their problem and their 6-step analysis. Group members can suggest options or consequences the person missed.

Full group debrief (8 min):

Facilitator:

"What was the hardest step? Where did you get stuck?"

Common answers: Step 2 (defining the real problem) and Step 4 (generating more than two options).

"Those two steps are where the model earns its value. If you can define the real problem and generate multiple options, you've already elevated your decision-making above 90% of people. Most people react to the surface problem with the first solution that comes to mind. You're learning to go deeper and wider.

Here's the key: you don't need 20 minutes to do this in real life. Once you've practiced it enough, you can run through these steps in 60 seconds. Stop, define, gather, generate, evaluate, choose. It becomes mental muscle memory. But you have to practice it slowly before you can do it fast."

Closing Circle (10 minutes)

Facilitator:

"Closing round. What's one problem in your life right now that you've been handling with impulsivity or avoidance — and what would Step 1 (stop and think) look like for that problem?"

Send the talking piece.

Facilitator (closing):

"Homework for tomorrow: Take the problem you worked on today and go deeper. Write out all the consequences for each option you generated — short-term and long-term, for you and for everyone else involved. Bring it tomorrow — we're going to build on this.

Tomorrow we talk about what happens when you have to make decisions under pressure — when your body and your environment are both screaming at you to react. See you Wednesday."

Session 25 Checklist

- Room set up in circle
- Opening circle completed with relationship homework check
- Connection made between Weeks 7-8 material and problem-solving
- 6-step problem-solving model taught (all steps with examples)
- Common traps covered (impulsivity, tunnel vision, either/or, emotional reasoning, pride)
- Individual practice exercise completed (real problem, 6 steps)
- Small group sharing and feedback
- Full group debrief on hardest steps
- Closing circle completed
- Homework assigned (expand consequence evaluation for each option)



SESSION 26: Decision Making Under Pressure

Day: Wednesday **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 how stress narrows decision-making capacity (tunnel vision effect) 2. Define and practice "pre-deciding" — making decisions before the pressure hits 3. Write at least 5 personal rules for high-pressure situations 4. Apply the 10-10-10 rule to a pressure decision 5. Recognize the difference between urgency and importance

Session Plan

Opening Circle (10 minutes)

Facilitator:

"Check-in. How are you today? And did you expand on your consequence evaluation from yesterday? If you did, what surprised you about the consequences you hadn't originally considered?"

Send the talking piece. Listen for evidence that participants are beginning to think more broadly about consequences.

Review and Reflection (10 minutes)

Facilitator:

"Yesterday you learned a 6-step model for solving problems. Clean, logical, step-by-step. Here's the challenge: life doesn't always give you time to pull out a worksheet and work through six steps.

Sometimes the problem hits you fast. Someone gets in your face. A situation escalates. You hear something that makes your blood boil. You have to decide in seconds — not minutes, not hours.

And here's what the science says: when you're under stress, your brain literally functions differently. Your prefrontal cortex — the part of your brain that does rational thinking, planning, evaluating options — it goes quiet. Your amygdala — the part that handles fear, anger, threat detection — it takes over. Your body floods with adrenaline and cortisol. Your heart rate spikes. Your vision narrows. Your hearing changes. You stop thinking and start reacting.

This is tunnel vision. And in tunnel vision, you don't see options. You see one path — usually the most aggressive or most familiar one. Fight. Flex. Shut down. Run. Whatever your default is, that's where your body takes you.

Today is about beating tunnel vision. Not by being superhuman. By being prepared."

Instruction: Pre-Deciding (20 minutes)

Facilitator:

"The single most powerful strategy for making good decisions under pressure is making the decision before the pressure hits. We call this pre-deciding.

Think about it this way: a firefighter doesn't decide how to respond to a fire while the building is burning. They trained for it. They ran scenarios. They decided in advance: if this happens, I do this. When the fire hits, they don't think — they execute a decision they already made.

You can do the same thing. You already know most of the situations you're going to face in here. They're not surprises. Someone disrespects you. Someone takes your property. Someone tests your boundaries. Someone tries to pull you into drama. A CO pushes your buttons. These situations happen over and over. And if you wait until they happen to decide how to respond, you'll respond with emotion instead of intention.

Pre-deciding means sitting down when you're calm — like right now — and making clear decisions about how you will handle specific situations. So that when the moment comes, the decision is already made. You just have to execute."

Example:

"Let me give you an example. Situation: someone calls you out in front of people. Disrespects you publicly. In the old way, you react — you match their energy, you escalate, you protect your reputation. That reaction feels automatic, but it's actually a decision — you just made it so fast you didn't notice.

Pre-deciding means: right now, sitting here, you decide: 'If someone disrespects me publicly, I will not respond in the moment. I will take a breath, look them in the eye, and say nothing. I will address it later, privately, when I'm calm.' That's a pre-decision.

Is that easy to execute in the moment? No. But it's a lot easier than trying to think of the right response while your adrenaline is spiking and everyone's watching. The decision is already made. You just have to follow through."

Instruction: Personal Rules (15 minutes)

Facilitator:

"Pre-deciding works best when you turn your decisions into personal rules. Personal rules are non-negotiable commitments to yourself about how you will and won't behave — regardless of the situation.

They start with 'I will always...' or 'I will never...'

The power of a personal rule is that it removes the decision from the moment. You don't have to weigh pros and cons when you're heated. The rule is already set.

Let me give you some examples — these aren't prescriptions, they're examples of what personal rules look like:

- *'I will never put my hands on someone unless I'm defending myself from physical attack.'*
- *'I will always walk away from a situation before I say something I can't take back.'*
- *'I will never make a major decision when I'm angry — I will wait 24 hours.'*
- *'I will always ask myself: is this worth my freedom?'*
- *'I will never carry a weapon.'*
- *'I will always treat a new arrival the way I wish I'd been treated.'*
- *'I will never participate in a group punishment or gang-up.'*

Notice something about these rules? They're clear. There's no gray area. There's no 'unless' or 'except when.' The simplicity is the point. In a pressure moment, you need clarity — not nuance."

Discussion (5 min):

"What personal rules do you already have — whether you've stated them or not? Things you've decided you will or won't do? Some of you already operate by personal rules even if you've never written them down."

Let 3-4 people share. Validate and build on what they offer.

Instruction: The 10-10-10 Rule (10 minutes)

Facilitator:

"Here's another tool for pressure decisions. It's called the 10-10-10 rule. It's simple but it works.

When you're facing a decision — especially one where your emotions are pushing you toward something fast — ask three questions:

How will I feel about this decision in 10 minutes? How will I feel about it in 10 months? How will I feel about it in 10 years?

Most impulsive decisions feel great in 10 minutes and terrible in 10 months. Punching someone who disrespected you? Feels like justice in 10 minutes. In 10 months, you're dealing with a write-up, lost privileges, maybe time added to your sentence. In 10 years, you're explaining to your kids why you made a choice that kept you away from them longer.

The reverse is also true. Walking away from a confrontation feels terrible in 10 minutes — your pride is stinging, people saw you back down. In 10 months, nobody remembers. In 10 years, it was the best decision you ever made.

The 10-10-10 rule forces you to zoom out. It takes you out of the heat of the moment and makes you look at the full timeline. And almost always, the right decision is the one that looks best at 10 months and 10 years — not 10 minutes."

Quick practice (5 min):

"Think of a time you made a decision that felt right in 10 minutes but looked terrible at 10 months. Turn to the person next to you and share it. What would the 10-10-10 rule have changed?"

Let pairs discuss briefly. No full-group share needed — the point is personal reflection.

Practice Exercise: Pressure Decision Scenarios (30 minutes)

Purpose: Practice applying pre-deciding, personal rules, and the 10-10-10 rule to realistic pressure situations.

Facilitator:

"I'm going to give you scenarios. These are situations where the pressure is on and you have to decide fast. For each one, I want you to work in pairs and answer three things:

- 1. What personal rule would apply here?*
- 2. What does the 10-10-10 rule say?*
- 3. What's the pre-decided response — what would a man who's done this work say or do?"*

Scenario 1: You're in the chow hall. Someone bumps into you hard and doesn't say anything — just keeps walking. Two guys at your table are watching you, waiting to see what you do.

Scenario 2: Your cellmate has been borrowing your stuff without asking. You've told him twice. You come back to your cell and he's using your commissary items again. You're already having a bad day — you just got denied for a program transfer.

Scenario 3: A guy you used to run with from the streets is in your dorm. He's telling people you're "soft" now because of FORGE. Some guys are starting to look at you differently. He approaches you and says, "What happened to you, man? You used to be about it."

Scenario 4: You overhear two guys planning to jump someone in the dorm tonight. They don't know you heard. You know the person they're targeting. What do you do?

Scenario 5: A CO is having a bad day and takes it out on you — shakes down your cell, throws your stuff around, makes comments. Other inmates are watching. Someone says, "You just gonna let him do that?"

Process: 1. Read each scenario aloud. (1 min) 2. Pairs discuss and apply the tools. (4 min per scenario) 3. Brief full-group share after each scenario — what did people decide? (2 min per scenario)

Facilitator coaches throughout: - Push back when someone's response is still reactive: "That's a reaction. What's the pre-decided response?" - Challenge when pride is driving the decision: "Is this about solving the problem or protecting your image?" - Affirm when someone chooses the harder, better path: "That takes more strength than the alternative. And you know it."

Debrief (5 min):

Facilitator:

"Which scenario was hardest? Why?"

I'll tell you which ones are hardest for most people: the ones with an audience. When people are watching, the pressure to perform goes up. Your personal rules get tested by social pressure. That's why the rules have to be non-negotiable — because the moment you make them situational, they stop working.

A personal rule that only applies when no one is watching isn't a rule. It's a preference."

Writing Exercise: Your 5 Personal Rules (10 minutes)

Facilitator:

"Before we close, I want you to write down your personal rules. At least 5. These are the decisions you're making right now about who you will be under pressure.

'I will always...' or 'I will never...'

Write them in the front of your journal — same place you put your personal commitment from Week 1. These are your non-negotiables. When the pressure hits, these are what you fall back on."

Individual writing (7 min). Facilitator is quiet. Let them think.

Optional share (3 min): "Anyone want to read one of their rules to the group? Not required."

Let 2-3 people share if willing.

Closing Circle (5 minutes)

Facilitator:

"Closing round. One sentence: What's the personal rule that you need the most — the one that, if you could consistently follow it, would change your life?"

Send the talking piece.

Facilitator (closing):

"Homework: keep your 5 personal rules visible. Read them every morning this week. When a pressure moment comes — and it will — notice whether you follow them or not. Journal about it. No judgment — just observation.

Tomorrow we go deeper on consequences. Not just 'what happens to me' but 'what happens to everyone.' Ripple effect mapping. Playing the tape forward. See you Thursday."

Session 26 Checklist

- Room set up in circle
- Opening circle completed with homework check
- Stress and tunnel vision science explained
- Pre-deciding concept taught with examples
- Personal rules concept taught with examples

- [] 10-10-10 rule taught with quick practice
- [] Pressure decision scenarios completed (5 scenarios, pairs)
- [] Full group debrief — audience pressure discussion
- [] 5 personal rules written in journals
- [] Closing circle completed
- [] Homework assigned (read rules daily, journal on pressure moments)

SESSION 27: Consequential Thinking

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. Distinguish between short-term and long-term consequences 2. Identify consequences beyond themselves (ripple effect) — to family, community, other people 3. Practice "playing the tape forward" — tracing the full chain of consequences from a single decision 4. Take a past bad decision and map every consequence that flowed from it 5. Apply the 6-step problem-solving model with full consequence analysis to rewrite a past decision

Session Plan

Opening Circle (10 minutes)

Facilitator:

"Check-in. How are you today? Did you use your personal rules this week yet? What happened?"

Send the talking piece. Listen for real stories of application — or honest acknowledgment that the moment came and they couldn't hold the rule. Both are valuable.

Review and Reflection (10 minutes)

Facilitator:

"Tuesday we learned a system for solving problems. Yesterday we learned how to pre-decide so you don't freeze or react under pressure. Today we go to the hardest part: looking at the full picture of consequences.

Here's what I mean by that. Most of the time, when we make a decision, we think about one consequence — the immediate one. 'If I do this, this happens.' And usually we're only thinking about what happens to us.

But decisions don't work that way. Every decision sends out ripples. Like throwing a rock into water — the impact doesn't stop at the point of contact. It spreads. And the people standing on the shoreline — your mother, your children, your cellmate, the man you harmed, the CO who has to deal with the aftermath, the community that's affected — they all feel the ripples.

Today is about learning to see the full ripple pattern before you throw the rock."

Instruction: Short-Term vs. Long-Term Consequences (15 minutes)

Facilitator:

"Let me give you a framework for thinking about consequences. Every decision has four categories of consequences:

Short-term positive: *What feels good or benefits me right now? **Short-term negative:** What costs me right now?*

Long-term positive: *What benefits me or others over time? **Long-term negative:** What costs me or others over time?*

Most bad decisions have strong short-term positives and devastating long-term negatives. That's the trap. The payoff is now. The price is later."

Example:

"Let's take a common situation. Someone disrespects you in front of people. You get in their face, escalate, maybe it turns physical. Let's map the consequences:

Short-term positive: *You feel powerful. Your reputation is protected. People know not to cross you. The immediate sting of disrespect goes away.*

Short-term negative: *Maybe you get hurt. Maybe you hurt someone. Adrenaline crash. Possible lockdown.*

Long-term positive: *...hard to find one, isn't there? Maybe some people give you more space going forward. But that's fear, not respect.*

Long-term negative: *Write-up. Possible charges. Time added to your sentence. Relationship with FORGE damaged. Your mother gets a phone call that you're in the hole again. Your child asks 'why isn't Daddy calling?' The man you hurt has consequences too — medical, emotional, family. The dorm climate gets worse for everyone. Now let's map the alternative. Someone disrespects you. You pause, take a breath, walk away, and address it later privately.*

Short-term positive: *You maintained control. You didn't give someone else power over your behavior.*

Short-term negative: *It stings. Your pride takes a hit. Some people might see it as weakness.*

Long-term positive: *No write-up. No added time. Your relationship with FORGE stays intact. You addressed it your way, on your terms. People who matter — your family, your cohort — see a man with discipline. The dorm is safer because you didn't escalate. Your track record stays clean.*

Long-term negative: *Minimal. Maybe you have to address the disrespect again if the person persists. But you've got tools for that."*

"See the difference? When you zoom out, the 'tough' choice and the 'weak' choice look completely different. The choice that feels powerful in the moment is usually the one that costs the most over time."

Instruction: Ripple Effect Mapping (15 minutes)

Facilitator:

"Now let's make this concrete. I want to teach you a technique called ripple effect mapping. It's visual. It forces you to trace every consequence from a single decision.

Here's how it works."

On the board or easel paper (if available), draw a circle in the center with the decision in it. Then draw outward rings like ripples in water.

"In the center: the decision. First ring: what happens immediately — to you and to the other person directly involved. Second ring: what happens to the people close to you — family, cellmate, FORGE cohort. Third ring: what happens to the broader community — the dorm, the facility, your neighborhood back home.

Let's do one together."

Group exercise: Map the ripple effect of a specific decision.

"Decision: A FORGE participant gets into a fight in the dorm. Let's map every ripple."

Walk the group through brainstorming consequences in each ring. Write them down where everyone can see.

Ring 1 — Immediate: - He gets hurt or hurts someone - He gets written up - He gets sent to the hole - The other person has consequences - Witnesses are affected — stress, fear, having to choose sides

Ring 2 — Close relationships: - His family hears about it — worry, disappointment - His cellmate may be affected by the shakedown - His FORGE cohort loses a member — trust is damaged - His mentor questions whether the program is working - His children lose phone calls, visits

Ring 3 — Community: - Dorm climate deteriorates — everyone is on edge - COs tighten restrictions — everyone pays - Other potential FORGE participants see this and think the program doesn't work - Facility statistics go up — reinforces the narrative that "these men can't change" - Victim's family is affected

Facilitator:

"One decision. Look how far the ripples go. And I didn't even get into what happens if charges are filed, if time is added, if the other person has permanent injuries.

This is what we mean by consequential thinking. It's not about guilt-tripping yourself. It's about seeing clearly.

When you can see the full ripple pattern, the decision becomes obvious. The hard part isn't knowing what to do — it's caring enough about the ripples to choose differently."

Practice Exercise: Playing the Tape Forward and Rewriting the Decision (35 minutes)

Part 1: Playing the Tape Forward (15 min)

Facilitator:

"Playing the tape forward means mentally walking through the entire chain of consequences before you act. You start with the decision and you keep asking: 'And then what? And then what? And then what?'

Here's your exercise. In your journal, I want you to take a past bad decision — a real one from your life.

Something with real consequences. And I want you to map it. What actually happened as a result of that decision?

Not just to you — to everyone.

Start with the decision. Then write every consequence that flowed from it — immediate, days later, weeks later, months later, years later. Every person affected. Every ripple.

This is going to be hard. It should be. This is accountability work — connecting your choices to their full impact."

Individual writing (12 min). Facilitator circulates quietly. If someone is struggling: - "You don't have to go to the darkest moment. Pick something you can sit with." - "Don't just list what happened to you. Who else was in the blast radius?" - "Keep asking: and then what happened? Follow the chain."

Brief pair share (3 min): "Turn to the person next to you. Share what you're comfortable sharing. What did you see when you mapped the full consequence chain?"

Part 2: Rewriting the Decision (15 min)

Facilitator:

"Now — take that same situation and go back to the moment before the decision. Apply the 6-step model. Rewrite what happened.

Step 1: Stop and think. What would pausing have looked like? Step 2: Define the real problem. What was actually going on? Step 3: Gather information. What did you not know or not consider? Step 4: Generate options. What were at least three things you could have done instead? Step 5: Evaluate consequences. Map the ripple effect of each option. Step 6: Choose. Which option leads to the best outcome over time, for the most people?

Write the new version. Not to torture yourself about the past — but to train your brain for the future. Every time you practice this thinking, you're building the neural pathways that will be available to you next time."

Individual writing (12 min). Facilitator circulates and coaches.

Full group debrief (5 min):

Facilitator:

"I'm not going to ask you to share the details. But I want to hear: what was different about the rewritten version? What changed when you applied the model?"

Let 3-4 people respond.

"Most of you will say the same thing: the rewritten version isn't perfect, but it's dramatically better. Fewer people hurt. Fewer ripples. More options you never saw in the moment. That's the power of this framework.

And here's the thing — you can't go back and change the past. But you can use the past to train for the future. Every bad decision is data if you're willing to learn from it."

Closing Circle (10 minutes)

Facilitator:

"Closing round. This has been a heavy week — problem-solving, pressure decisions, consequences. Here's your closing question:

Complete this sentence: 'The decision I'm most proud of in my life is __, because __.'

We've spent a lot of time on bad decisions. Let's end with a good one. You've all made at least one decision you're proud of. Maybe being in this room is one of them."

Send the talking piece. Facilitator goes last.

Facilitator (closing):

"Homework for this weekend — one assignment:

Use the 6-step model for one real decision this week. *It doesn't have to be a crisis. It can be something simple — how to handle a disagreement, whether to approach someone about a problem, how to spend your time. The point is practice. Run the six steps. Write it up in your journal. What was the problem? What options did you generate? What consequences did you evaluate? What did you choose? What happened?*

Next week is Week 10 — the final week of new content before integration and review. We're talking about mindset and purpose. Growth mindset — how to keep growing when things are hard. Purpose — finding the reason that makes all of this work matter. And the stakeholder identity — who you're becoming and what that means for everyone around you.

The work is building. You can feel it. You're not the same men who walked in here 8 weeks ago. The question now is: what are you going to do with what you're building?

See you Tuesday."

Session 27 Checklist

- Room set up in circle
- Opening circle completed with personal rules homework check
- Short-term vs. long-term consequences framework taught
- Four categories of consequences explained with example
- Ripple effect mapping demonstrated (group exercise on board)
- Playing the tape forward concept taught
- Individual exercise: map consequences of a past bad decision
- Individual exercise: rewrite the decision using 6-step model
- Full group debrief on rewritten decisions

- [] Closing circle completed (decision you're proud of)
- [] Homework assigned (use 6-step model for one real decision this week)



FACILITATOR NOTES FOR WEEK 9

What to Watch For

Problem-solving avoidance: Some participants will resist the exercises because they require confronting past decisions honestly. This isn't laziness — it's often shame or pain. Don't let them off the hook, but be aware of what's underneath the resistance. A quiet "I know this is hard. Stay with it." goes further than pushing.

Intellectualizing vs. doing: Watch for participants who understand the 6-step model perfectly on paper but can't apply it to their own life. They'll analyze hypothetical scenarios brilliantly and freeze when asked to work with their own problems. Push gently: "I don't need a textbook answer. I need your answer."

Peer pressure in scenarios: During the pressure decision scenarios, watch for participants who give the "right" answer in the group but whose body language or side comments suggest they wouldn't actually do it. Don't call this out publicly — note it and address it individually. "I noticed you said you'd walk away, but you didn't look like you believed it. What's the real answer?"

Emotional responses to consequence mapping: The ripple effect exercise, especially mapping real past decisions, can surface deep regret, grief, and guilt. This is appropriate — the exercise is designed to build accountability. But watch for anyone who seems overwhelmed. Check in privately after the session: "That was heavy material. How are you sitting with it?"

Growth since Week 1: By Week 9, you should be seeing visible changes in how participants engage. More honest sharing. More willingness to be uncomfortable. More thoughtful responses. Name this growth when you see it — not as flattery, but as observation: "I notice you responded to that differently than you would have in Week 2. That's real progress."

Common Week 9 Challenges

"This is common sense." Response: "If it were common sense, you wouldn't be here. Common sense is common knowledge — it's not common practice. The gap between knowing what to do and doing it is exactly what this model addresses."

"I don't have time for six steps when someone's in my face." Response: "You're right — you don't. That's why we're practicing now, when things are calm. And that's why we talked about pre-deciding. The six steps aren't for the heat of the moment — they're for building the thinking patterns that kick in automatically. A fighter doesn't think about each punch in the ring — but they trained every one of them in the gym."

"Playing the tape forward just makes me feel guilty." Response: "Guilt and regret are natural when you see the full picture. But that's not the point of the exercise. The point is training your brain to see consequences BEFORE the decision, not after. You can't change the past. You can change the future. That's where the six-step model earns its value."

"Some situations don't have good options." Honest response: "That's true. Sometimes every option has a cost. The model doesn't promise a perfect outcome — it promises a better one. And 'better' might mean 'least damage' instead of 'no damage.' That's still worth it."

Preparation for Week 10

- Review Carol Dweck's growth mindset framework — know the key distinctions between fixed and growth mindset
- Re-read Viktor Frankl's core ideas from *Man's Search for Meaning* — be ready to present them authentically and connect them to participants' experience
- Review FORGE's stakeholder model from the handbook and Week 1 materials
- Prepare "letter from my future self" exercise instructions (Session 29)
- Prepare stakeholder commitment template (Session 30)
- This is the last week of new content before integration — bring energy. The participants need to feel the arc coming together