



PHASE 2 — DEVELOPMENT

Week 22 of 36

# Life Skills Facilitation

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Sessions 64–66

Tuesday • Wednesday • Thursday

FORGE — Facilitating Opportunities for Reentry, Growth & Empowerment

*Dooly State Prison*

# FORGE Curriculum

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## **Phase 2: Development — "Build Others"**

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# Week 22: Life Skills Facilitation

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## Week 22 Overview

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**Purpose:** Develop participants' ability to teach practical life skills content — financial literacy, reentry preparation, health and wellness — with a focus not just on knowing the material, but on facilitating it effectively. By the end of this week, every participant will have delivered a mini-lesson, created a reentry planning tool, and practiced leading sensitive group discussions.

**Sessions This Week:** - Session 64 (Tuesday): Financial Literacy — Teaching Others - Session 65 (Wednesday): Reentry Preparation - Session 66 (Thursday): Health, Wellness, and Relationships

**Materials Needed:** - Blank paper and pens/pencils (enough for all participants) - Journals/notebooks - Talking piece - Financial Literacy Reference Sheet (prepared by facilitator — see Session 64 notes) - Reentry Checklist Template worksheet (blank — see Session 65) - Mini-Lesson Feedback Forms (1 per participant per presenter — simple form with 3 fields: "What worked," "What to improve," "One thing I learned") - Timer or watch visible to presenters - Easel paper or whiteboard (if available)

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# SESSION 64: Financial Literacy — Teaching Others

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

## Learning Objectives

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By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Explain core financial literacy concepts: budgeting, banking, debt traps, and saving 2. Deliver a 15-minute mini-lesson on a financial topic to a group 3. Evaluate and provide constructive feedback on peer teaching 4. Adapt financial concepts for an audience with limited financial experience

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## Session Plan

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### Opening Circle (10 minutes)

**Facilitator:**

*"Check-in round. Two things: **How are you showing up today? And what's one thing about money that you wish someone had taught you earlier in life?"***

Send the talking piece around. Listen for themes — most men in this room had little or no financial education before incarceration. That reality is the foundation of today's session.

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## Frame: Why Financial Literacy Matters for Mentors (10 minutes)

### Facilitator:

*"Today we're going to talk about money. Not because FORGE is a finance program — it's not. But because when you're a mentor, people are going to come to you with money problems. Men getting ready for release who have no idea how to open a bank account. Men who've never made a budget in their life. Men who are going to walk out of here and straight into a payday loan trap because nobody ever showed them another way.*

*Here's the thing: you don't need to be a financial advisor. You need to know enough to teach the basics and point people in the right direction. Today is about two things — learning the content, and learning how to teach it.*

*By the end of today, every one of you is going to deliver a 15-minute mini-lesson on a financial topic. You're going to teach your cohort something real and practical. This is what mentoring looks like — taking a skill and passing it on."*

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## Financial Literacy Content Overview (25 minutes)

**Purpose:** Ensure everyone has a baseline understanding of the four core topics before they prepare to teach.

### Facilitator:

*"Let me walk through the four areas. Listen for the one that connects with you most — that's the one you're going to teach."*

### 1. Budgeting (5 min)

*"A budget is a plan for your money. That's all it is. Income minus expenses. Most people don't budget — and most people are broke. The two things are connected.*

*The simplest budget is the 50/30/20 rule: 50% of your income goes to needs — rent, food, transportation. 30% goes to wants — things you enjoy but could live without. 20% goes to savings and debt repayment. On the inside, this might look different — but the principle is the same. You have resources. You have choices about how to use them. A budget is making those choices on purpose instead of by accident.*

*When you're teaching budgeting, the key is making it real. Don't talk in abstractions. Use actual numbers. 'If you make \$2,000 a month after taxes, here's what 50/30/20 looks like.' Make people do the math with their own numbers."*

### 2. Banking (5 min)

*"Most men leaving prison don't have a bank account. Some have never had one. Without a bank account, you're paying fees to cash checks, you can't save safely, and you're carrying cash — which makes you a target.*

*The basics: checking accounts vs. savings accounts. How to open an account — what ID you need, what to expect. Direct deposit. Debit cards vs. credit cards. Online banking.*

*The biggest barrier for our population is distrust. Some men don't trust banks. Some have had accounts closed or garnished. Some don't have the ID required to open one. When you're teaching this, acknowledge the barriers honestly. Don't pretend it's simple. But show them it's possible and worth doing."*

### **3. Debt Traps (5 min)**

*"This is the one that can destroy a man's reentry faster than almost anything. Payday loans. Rent-to-own. Buy-here-pay-here car lots. High-interest credit cards. These businesses are predatory — they're designed to keep you in debt.*

*A payday loan might charge 400% annual interest. That means you borrow \$500 and end up paying back \$2,000. This is legal. And it's targeted at people who don't have other options — which is exactly who walks out of prison. When you teach this, don't just say 'avoid payday loans.' Explain why. Show the math. Show what happens when someone takes one loan, can't pay it back, takes another to cover the first, and six months later owes \$5,000 on a \$500 loan. Make it vivid. Make it real."*

### **4. Saving (5 min)**

*"Saving feels impossible when you have nothing. But it starts with the mindset that your future self matters. Even \$20 a month is \$240 a year. That's a security deposit. That's three months of a phone bill. That's the difference between stable and desperate.*

*The concepts: pay yourself first — save before you spend, not after. Emergency fund — 3 months of expenses is the goal, but start with \$500. The difference between saving and investing. Why compound interest is the most powerful force in personal finance.*

*When you teach saving, start with the small wins. Don't tell someone with nothing to save \$10,000. Tell them to save \$5 this week. Make it achievable. Build the habit first, then build the amount."*

### **Discussion (5 min):**

*"Questions on any of the four areas? What connected with you? What did you not know before today?"*

Allow 3-4 responses.

## Mini-Lesson Preparation (15 minutes)

### Facilitator:

*"Here's the assignment. Each of you is going to pick one of these four topics — budgeting, banking, debt traps, or saving. You've got 15 minutes right now to prepare a 15-minute mini-lesson. You're teaching your cohort.*

*Your lesson needs three things: 1. **A hook** — something that grabs attention in the first 30 seconds. A question, a surprising fact, a personal story. 2. **The content** — teach the key concepts clearly. Use examples. Use real numbers. 3. **An activity or question** — get the group doing something or thinking about something, not just listening.*

*You can use notes, but don't read a script. Teach like you're talking to someone who needs this information to survive out there — because someday, that's exactly what you'll be doing."*

**Assign topics:** Divide participants evenly across the four topics. If participants have preferences, honor them when possible. Aim for 3-4 presenters per topic area across the cohort. Not everyone will present today — select 4-5 to present now and the rest will present at the start of Session 65.

**Preparation time (15 min):** Participants work individually or in pairs if they share the same topic. Facilitator circulates, answers questions, coaches on structure.

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## Mini-Lesson Deliveries — Round 1 (40 minutes)

**Format for each presenter:** - 15 minutes to deliver the lesson - 5 minutes for peer feedback (written feedback forms + 2-3 verbal comments) - Facilitator gives 1 coaching point after each lesson

### Facilitator (before first presenter):

*"When you're watching, I want you doing two things at once. First, learn — actually absorb what they're teaching. Second, observe — how are they teaching it? What's working? What would you do differently? Fill out your feedback forms. Be specific and be honest. 'Good job' doesn't help anyone grow. 'Your opening question hooked me because it made me think about my own situation' — that's useful feedback."*

**Run 4-5 presenters.** Keep time strictly — a mentor who can't manage time can't manage a session.

**After each presenter, ask the group:** - "What was the strongest moment in that lesson?" - "What's one thing that could make it even better?"

**Facilitator provides one specific coaching point** — e.g., "You explained compound interest clearly, but you lost the group when you moved too fast through the math. Slow down at the hard parts."

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## Debrief and Closing (10 minutes)

### Facilitator:

*"What did you learn today — not just about money, but about teaching? What's harder than you expected? What came naturally?"*

Allow 4-5 responses.

*"Here's what I noticed: every single one of you knows more about financial survival than you think. You've lived it. You've made mistakes with money. You've seen what happens when people don't have it. That experience is your greatest teaching tool. Don't hide from it — use it.*

*Tomorrow we're covering reentry preparation. If you didn't present today, you'll open tomorrow's session with your mini-lesson. Come prepared."*

**Homework:** - If you haven't presented yet, finalize your 15-minute mini-lesson for tomorrow - Journal reflection: "What financial mistake have I made that I could teach someone else to avoid? How would I teach that lesson?"

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## Session 64 Checklist

- Room set up in circle
  - Opening circle completed
  - Financial literacy frame delivered — why this matters for mentors
  - Four content areas covered: budgeting, banking, debt traps, saving
  - Topics assigned to participants
  - 15-minute preparation time provided
  - 4-5 mini-lessons delivered with feedback
  - Feedback forms collected for each presenter
  - Debrief completed
  - Homework assigned (remaining presenters prepare; journal reflection)
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# SESSION 65: Reentry Preparation

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

## Learning Objectives

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By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Identify the five critical areas of reentry preparation: housing, identification documents, employment, healthcare, and family reconnection 2. Describe common misconceptions about "going home" and how to address them as mentors 3. Create a comprehensive reentry checklist template usable with future mentees 4. Facilitate a reentry planning conversation using open-ended questions

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## Session Plan

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### Opening: Remaining Mini-Lessons (20 minutes)

**Purpose:** Participants who didn't present in Session 64 deliver their financial literacy mini-lessons now.

**Facilitator:**

*"Before we get into today's topic, we've got [number] more mini-lessons to hear. Same format — 15 minutes, feedback forms, one coaching point from me. Let's go."*

**Run remaining presenters.** Same feedback process as Session 64.

**Facilitator (after final presenter):**

*"Good. Every one of you has now stood up and taught something to this group. That's not a small thing. You're building the muscle. Let's move on."*

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## Frame: The Reentry Reality (15 minutes)

### Facilitator:

*"Here's a number that should bother every one of us: within 3 years of release, more than two-thirds of people released from state prisons are rearrested. Two-thirds. And the biggest factors aren't criminal thinking or bad character. They're practical: no housing, no ID, no job, no healthcare, no support system.*

*Men walk out of here with a bus ticket and maybe \$50. They don't have a driver's license. They don't have a birth certificate. They might not have anywhere to sleep that night. And we wonder why they end up back inside.*

*As a FORGE mentor, you're going to work with men who are approaching release. Some will be terrified. Some will be overconfident — convinced everything will just work out. Both need your help. The terrified ones need a plan. The overconfident ones need a reality check — delivered with respect, not condescension.*

*Today we're going to learn the five critical areas of reentry preparation, and you're going to build a tool — a reentry checklist template — that you can actually use with mentees."*

### Pause.

*"Before we get into the specifics — a question for the room. **What's the biggest misconception people have about going home?**"*

**Open discussion (5 min).** Let 4-5 people respond. Common answers: "Everything will go back to normal." "My family is just waiting for me." "I'll get a job right away." "I know how the world works." Validate each response.

*"Every one of those is something you'll hear from a mentee. And your job isn't to crush their hope. Your job is to help them build a realistic plan so that hope has a foundation."*

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## The Five Critical Areas (35 minutes)

**Purpose:** Walk through each reentry area in detail. For each area, cover: what needs to happen, common barriers, what a mentor can do, and key questions to ask a mentee.

### Facilitator:

*"Open your journals. I want you taking notes on this — you're building a knowledge base you'll use with real mentees."*

### 1. Housing (7 min)

*"Housing is the foundation. Without stable housing, nothing else works. But here's the reality: most men leaving prison don't have housing lined up. Family may not be an option. Shelters are full. Affordable housing has waitlists measured in months or years. And many landlords won't rent to someone with a felony.*

*What a mentor needs to know: - Start planning housing 6 months before release, minimum - Transitional housing programs exist — know the ones in your area - Halfway houses, sober living houses, reentry programs with housing components - Family housing is not always safe or stable — just because someone offers doesn't mean it's the right choice - The first 72 hours after release are the most dangerous. Where someone sleeps that first night matters.*

*Questions to ask a mentee: 'Where will you stay your first night out? Your first week? Your first month? If that falls through, what's your backup? Have you applied to transitional housing yet?'"*

## **2. Identification Documents (7 min)**

*"You cannot do anything in this country without ID. You can't open a bank account. You can't apply for a job. You can't get housing. You can't access benefits. And most men in prison don't have current ID.*

*What a mentor needs to know: - At minimum, a person needs: state ID or driver's license, Social Security card, and birth certificate - Many states allow you to start the ID process before release — Georgia included - Know the process: what forms to fill out, what offices to contact, what it costs - Help mentees gather what they need while still inside — don't wait until release day - Certified birth certificates can be ordered by mail from the state vital records office - Social Security cards can be replaced through SSA — the process can begin before release*

*Questions to ask a mentee: 'Do you have a valid state ID? A Social Security card? A birth certificate? If not, let's start the process now — not the week before you leave.'"*

## **3. Employment (7 min)**

*"Employment is how someone rebuilds their life. But a felony conviction closes doors. That's the reality. It doesn't close all doors — but the ones that are open require more effort to find.*

*What a mentor needs to know: - 'Ban the box' laws — what they do and don't do - Second-chance employers — companies that hire people with records - Trade skills and certifications that can be started inside - How to address a criminal record in an interview — honestly, briefly, forward-looking - Temp agencies as a bridge to stable employment - The importance of realistic expectations — you might not get your dream job on day one, and that's okay*

*Questions to ask a mentee: 'What skills do you have? What kind of work are you willing to do? Have you practiced talking about your record? Do you have a resume?'"*

## **4. Healthcare (7 min)**

*"Healthcare is the one most people forget about until they need it. Many men inside have chronic conditions — physical and mental — that need ongoing treatment. And many have never had health insurance as an adult.*

*What a mentor needs to know: - Medicaid expansion — in some states, people leaving prison qualify for Medicaid immediately - Prescription medication: ensure a mentee has a 30-day supply upon release and knows how to get refills - Mental health: if someone is on psych medication, a gap in medication can be dangerous - Substance use treatment: if a mentee has a substance use history, have a plan for treatment or support (NA/AA meetings, outpatient programs) - Community health centers provide care on a sliding fee scale regardless of ability to pay*

*Questions to ask a mentee: 'Are you on any medication? Do you have a plan for continuing it? Do you have a mental health provider lined up? Do you know where the nearest community health center is?'"*

## **5. Family Reconnection (7 min)**

*"This is the one that breaks people's hearts. Men inside build up an image of what going home will be like. The reunion. The hugs. Everyone happy to see them. And sometimes that happens. But often it doesn't — or it does for a day, and then reality sets in.*

*Families have changed while you were gone. Kids grew up without you. Partners moved on — or stayed but built resentment. Parents aged. Siblings have their own problems. Walking back into a family is not picking up where you left off — it's starting over.*

*What a mentor needs to know: - Set realistic expectations — love doesn't erase hurt - Trust has to be rebuilt, not demanded - Children may be angry, distant, or confused — that's normal - Parenting after absence is its own skill set - Some family relationships may not be salvageable — and that has to be okay - Domestic violence history: some men should not return to the same household*

*Questions to ask a mentee: 'Who are you going home to? Have you been in contact? What do they expect from you? What do you expect from them? What if it doesn't go the way you're imagining?'"*

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## **Exercise: Building the Reentry Checklist Template (30 minutes)**

### **Facilitator:**

*"Now we're going to build a tool. I want you to work in groups of 3-4 and create a reentry checklist template — a document that a FORGE mentor can sit down with a mentee and work through together, item by item. Think of it as a roadmap for the 6 months before release.*

*Your checklist should cover all five areas. For each area, include: - Specific action items (not vague — 'Apply for state ID' not 'Get your documents together') - A timeline — when should each item be started? - Resources or contacts where applicable - A space for notes or status tracking*

*You've got 20 minutes. Then each group presents their checklist and we'll combine the best elements into one master template."*

**Groups work (20 min).** Facilitator circulates, ensures checklists are specific and practical.

**Share out (10 min):** Each group presents their checklist. Facilitator identifies the strongest elements from each.

**Facilitator:**

*"Here's what we're going to do. I'm going to compile the best elements from all your checklists into one master reentry checklist template. Every one of you will get a copy. This becomes a standard FORGE tool — something you use with every mentee who's approaching release.*

*You built this. Not me. That's the FORGE model — the people closest to the problem create the solution."*

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## Closing Circle (10 minutes)

**Facilitator:**

*"Closing round. If you were being released in 60 days, what's the one thing on today's list you'd be most worried about?"*

Send the talking piece. Listen for patterns — they reveal what this group needs.

**Facilitator (closing):**

*"What you're feeling about those questions? Your future mentees will feel the same thing — times ten. They won't have had 22 weeks of FORGE training. That's why you matter.*

*Tomorrow we're covering health, wellness, and relationships — and how to facilitate conversations about topics that make people uncomfortable. Come ready to be uncomfortable.*

*Homework: Review your reentry checklist and add anything you think is missing. Journal reflection: 'What's one conversation about reentry that I need to have — with myself, my family, or someone I care about?'"*

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## Session 65 Checklist

- Room set up in circle
- Remaining financial literacy mini-lessons delivered with feedback
- Reentry reality frame delivered
- Misconceptions discussion completed
- All five critical areas covered: housing, ID documents, employment, healthcare, family
- Reentry checklist exercise completed in groups
- Group checklists presented and best elements identified

- [ ] Plan for master template communicated
- [ ] Closing circle completed
- [ ] Homework assigned (refine checklist; journal reflection on personal reentry conversation)

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# SESSION 66: Health, Wellness, and Relationships

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

## Learning Objectives

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By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Identify core topics in physical health, mental health, and relationships relevant to incarcerated and reentering populations 2. Facilitate a group discussion on a sensitive topic — maintaining safety, dignity, and participation 3. Navigate conversations about substance use, family breakdown, loss, and parenting with empathy and appropriate boundaries 4. Recognize when a health or wellness conversation crosses into territory that requires professional referral

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## Session Plan

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### Opening Circle (10 minutes)

**Facilitator:**

*"Check-in round. What's one thing you do — right now, in here — to take care of your physical or mental health?"*

Send the talking piece. This opens the door to the day's content and normalizes self-care language.

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## Frame: Why This Session Is Different (10 minutes)

### Facilitator:

"Today's session is different from the last two. Financial literacy and reentry planning are practical — they're about information and action steps. Today we're getting into territory that's personal: physical health, mental health, relationships, parenting.

These are the topics that make people shut down. A man will sit in a circle and talk about budgeting all day. Ask him about his relationship with his kids and the walls go up. Ask him about his mental health and he changes the subject. Ask him about substance use and he'll either lie or leave.

As a mentor, you're going to have to facilitate conversations about all of these things. Not as a therapist — that's not your role. But as someone who can hold space for hard truths, ask the right questions, and keep the room safe enough for people to be honest.

Today is about two things: the content itself, and the skill of facilitating sensitive topics."

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## Content Block 1: Physical Health (10 minutes)

### Facilitator:

"Let's start with the straightforward one — physical health. Incarceration takes a toll on the body. Limited nutrition, limited exercise options, stress, poor sleep, lack of medical care. Many men leave prison in worse physical shape than they entered.

Key topics a mentor should be able to discuss: - **Nutrition on a budget** — healthy eating when money is tight. This matters on the inside and on the outside. - **Exercise as regulation** — physical activity isn't just about fitness. It regulates mood, reduces anxiety, improves sleep. This is a tool, not a luxury. - **Chronic conditions** — diabetes, hypertension, hepatitis C, HIV. Know the basics. Know how to connect people with care. Don't diagnose — that's not your job. But don't ignore symptoms either. - **Sleep** — sleep deprivation is epidemic in prison. It affects thinking, mood, impulse control. Good sleep hygiene is a real skill.

The mentor's role: normalize talking about health. Model it yourself. 'I've been sleeping badly this week and I notice it's making me short-tempered.' That kind of honesty gives others permission."

## Content Block 2: Mental Health (15 minutes)

### Facilitator:

*"Now the harder one. Mental health.*

*Here's the truth: a huge percentage of men in this facility are dealing with depression, anxiety, PTSD, or other mental health challenges. Most will never say the words. The stigma is enormous — especially in this environment, where showing vulnerability is seen as weakness.*

*Your job as a mentor is not to be a therapist. I'm going to say that again: **you are not a therapist.** You don't diagnose. You don't treat. You don't prescribe.*

*What you do: - **Normalize** — 'A lot of men in here deal with depression. It doesn't make you weak. It makes you human.' - **Listen** — when someone opens up about how they're feeling, your job is to hear them, not fix them. - **Ask directly** — if you're worried about someone, ask. 'I've noticed you've been withdrawing. Are you okay? Are you having thoughts of hurting yourself?' Asking the question doesn't plant the idea — that's a myth. It opens the door. - **Know your limits** — if someone is in crisis, suicidal, or showing signs of severe mental illness, your job is to stay with them and get help. Not handle it yourself. - **Reduce stigma** — every time you talk openly about mental health, you make it safer for someone else to do the same."*

### Pause.

*"Let me address substance use directly. Many men in this facility have substance use histories. Addiction is a chronic condition — not a moral failure. When you're mentoring someone with a substance use history, especially someone approaching release, the conversation about relapse prevention is critical. 'What's your plan for staying clean? What are your triggers? Who's in your support network? What will you do in the first 48 hours if you feel the pull?'*

*You don't have to have a substance use history to have this conversation. You just have to be willing to ask the questions without judgment."*

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## Content Block 3: Relationships and Parenting (15 minutes)

### Facilitator:

*"Relationships. This is where most of the pain lives.*

*Men in prison carry relationship damage — with partners, with children, with parents, with siblings, with friends. Some of that damage existed before incarceration. Some of it was caused by incarceration. Most of it is both.*

*Key topics for mentors:"*

### Romantic relationships:

*"Some men will be going home to partners. Some will be going home to no one. Both situations are hard. The man going home to a partner needs to understand: you're not the same person you were. She's not the same person she was. The relationship has to be rebuilt, not resumed. And rebuilding requires humility, patience, and honest conversation — skills you've been learning in FORGE.*

*The man going home to no one may carry shame, loneliness, or desperation — all of which can lead to unhealthy relationship choices. Recognizing healthy vs. unhealthy relationship patterns is a life skill, not a luxury."*

### **Parenting:**

*"This one cuts deep. Many men in here are fathers. And many of their children are growing up without them. That's a wound — for the child and for the father.*

*A mentor doesn't tell a man how to be a father. A mentor asks: 'What kind of father do you want to be? What's standing in the way? What can you start doing now — from in here — to build that relationship?'*

*Some practical realities: maintaining contact from prison is hard and expensive. Some men have lost custody. Some children don't want contact. These are painful truths, and a mentor has to be able to sit in that pain with someone without trying to make it go away."*

### **Loss and grief:**

*"Men in prison lose people. Parents die. Grandparents die. Friends die. Children grow up and become strangers. And there's no space to grieve properly. No funeral to attend. No family to hold. The grief gets stuffed down and it comes out as anger, withdrawal, or recklessness.*

*As a mentor, sometimes the most important thing you do is simply say: 'I know you lost your mother last month. I'm sorry. How are you doing with that — honestly?' And then listen."*

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## **Skill Practice: Facilitating a Sensitive Topic Discussion (30 minutes)**

### **Facilitator:**

*"Now the practical part. You've heard the content. But content isn't the hard part — facilitation is. How do you lead a group discussion about mental health without it feeling like a therapy session? How do you talk about parenting with a room full of men who are ashamed of being absent fathers? How do you bring up substance use without someone shutting down?*

*Here are five rules for facilitating sensitive topics:"*

**Write these where the group can see them (or read them twice):**

*"1. **Set the container.** Before you get into the topic, remind the group of the agreements. Confidentiality. No judgment. Speak from your own experience. You can pass.*

- 1. **Go first.** Share something real from your own experience — appropriate to your role, but honest. When the facilitator is vulnerable, the group gets permission to be vulnerable.*
- 2. **Use questions, not lectures.** 'What's been your experience with...' opens space. 'Let me tell you about...' closes it.*
- 3. **Watch the room.** If someone goes quiet, check in. If someone gets emotional, hold space — don't rush past it. If the energy shifts, name it: 'I notice it got quiet. That probably means we touched something real.'*
- 4. **Know when to stop.** If someone starts disclosing active trauma or crisis, that's not a group discussion anymore. That's a private conversation and possibly a referral. You can say: 'Thank you for trusting us with that. I want to make sure you get the support you need — can we talk after the session?'"*

### **Exercise:**

*"We're going to practice. I need 3 volunteers. Each volunteer is going to facilitate a 10-minute group discussion on one of these topics: - 'What does it mean to be a good father from behind bars?' - 'How do you take care of your mental health in this environment?' - 'What scares you most about going home?'*

*The rest of the group participates authentically — don't role-play. Be real. But observe the facilitator: Are they following the five rules? What's working? What's not?"*

**Run 3 practice discussions (10 min each).** After each: - Facilitator asks the group: "What did [name] do well? What's one thing to adjust?" - Give the volunteer facilitator one specific coaching point.

### **Facilitator (after all three):**

*"Notice something? Every one of those conversations got real fast. That's what happens when you create safety and ask honest questions. You didn't need a curriculum binder or a projector. You needed courage, a good question, and the skill to hold the space. That's what FORGE mentors do."*

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## **Closing Circle (10 minutes)**

### **Facilitator:**

*"This week you taught financial literacy, built a reentry tool, and facilitated conversations about some of the hardest topics in the human experience. That's not a small week.*

*Closing round: **What's one thing from this week that changed how you think about what it means to be a mentor?"***

Send the talking piece.

**Facilitator (closing):**

*"Next week is Week 23. It's assessment week. Tuesday and Thursday you'll do your graded simulations — the ones that count toward your Phase 2 gate requirement. Wednesday you'll co-facilitate a 45-minute session with a partner.*

*This is where everything you've learned since Week 13 gets tested. Not to trip you up — to show you what you're capable of. Prepare the way you've trained: review your simulation notes, review your de-escalation steps, review your boundaries. Trust the work you've done.*

*Homework: 1. Journal reflection: 'Of the three sensitive topics we discussed today — mental health, relationships, or parenting — which one is hardest for me personally? Why? And what do I need to work on to be able to hold space for someone else in that area?' 2. Review the simulation scoring rubric in your handbook — know the 6 criteria and what 'competent' looks like for each one 3. Review your co-facilitation notes from Weeks 14-15 — you'll be co-facilitating with a partner on Wednesday*

*You've earned this moment. Now go show what you've built. Service Over Self. See you Tuesday."*

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## Session 66 Checklist

- Room set up in circle
- Opening circle completed
- Frame for facilitating sensitive topics delivered
- Physical health content covered
- Mental health content covered (including substance use)
- Relationships and parenting content covered (including loss/grief)
- Five rules for facilitating sensitive topics presented
- 3 volunteer facilitation practice rounds completed with feedback
- Closing circle completed
- Homework assigned (journal reflection on hardest personal topic; review simulation rubric; review co-facilitation notes)

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# FACILITATOR NOTES FOR WEEK 22

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## What to Watch For

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**Teaching confidence:** Some participants will surprise you — men who are quiet in discussion come alive when they have something to teach. Note who finds their voice this week. These are often your strongest future mentors.

**Content gaps:** Pay attention to which financial and reentry topics participants struggle with. These gaps reveal what additional training might be needed before Phase 3.

**Emotional activation during Session 66:** The relationships and parenting conversation will hit close to home for nearly everyone. Watch for men who shut down, leave the room, or become unusually quiet. Check in individually after the session.

**Facilitator readiness signals:** During the sensitive topic facilitation practice, notice who naturally creates safety and who inadvertently shuts people down. The ones who struggle aren't failing — they're learning. Give them specific, actionable feedback.

## Common Week 22 Challenges

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"**I don't know enough about money to teach it.**" Reframe: "You know more than someone who's never thought about it. You don't need to be an expert — you need to be one step ahead and willing to be honest about what you don't know."

"**I can't talk about my kids.**" Don't force it. "You can pass. But know that when you're a mentor, someone is going to need you to sit with them in that exact pain. Starting to face it now — even a little — prepares you for that."

"**This reentry stuff doesn't apply to me — I've got years left.**" Correct response: "It applies to the men you'll mentor. And when it's your turn, you'll be the most prepared person in the room."

## Preparation for Week 23

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- Pull simulation scenarios from the scenario bank — select 5 for graded assessments (3 for Session 67, 2 for Session 69). Mix categories: at minimum 1 from Category A (dorm conflicts), 1 from Category B (mentor challenges), and 1 from Category C (safety situations)

- Prepare scoring rubric sheets — one per participant per simulation (6 criteria, 1-4 scale)
- Assign co-facilitation pairs for Session 68 — pair complementary strengths where possible (e.g., a strong communicator with someone who excels at structure)
- Prepare teaching demonstration assignment for Session 69 — each participant should know their assigned Phase 1 topic
- Review all participant progress to date — note any concerns that need to be addressed before assessment
- Ensure the master reentry checklist template is compiled from Session 65 group work and copies are ready for distribution