They Still Don’t Trust Me



Session 03

Recovery Has to Survive Tuesday. A 60-minute adult group education session about family trust, responsibility, repair, and boundaries.

The work today

Name one specific impact, distinguish your action from another person’s decision, and practice a response that respects both people’s limits.

Progress is progress

A kept commitment can matter before anybody praises it. You can acknowledge harm without making your whole identity a punishment.

Before you lead

Audience and scope

Adults 18+, approximately 4-10 participants, with a facilitator competent in group work and the setting’s safeguarding procedures. Original education, not a validated treatment protocol, family therapy, legal advice, or mediation.

Prepare outside the hour

Print participant pages 1-8. Prepare slides, pens, a clock, and current local support contacts. Know the setting’s procedures for private support and urgent concerns. Orient new participants beforehand and explain actual privacy limits. Group confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Participation and access

Read prompts aloud. Offer a scribe with consent, quiet work, fiction, drawing, observation, or passing. No one has to name relatives, describe substance use, prove recovery, send a message, or contact anyone. Do not pair people who have an active conflict.

The 60-minute run sheet

00-05 / Welcome / slides 1-2

Participant page 1. Explain choices and offer a brief optional check-in.

05-13 / Jordan and Avery / slides 3-4

Participant page 2. Read the fictional scenario and the completed response.

13-23 / Sorting and modeling / slides 5-6

Work through the three statements on participant page 3. Discuss actions, requests, and decisions that belong to someone else.

23-38 / Individual work / slides 7-8

Participant pages 4-5, about seven minutes each, plus one minute to choose the example or personal situation.

38-50 / Practice / slides 9-10

Participant page 6, pair or solo. Page 7 offers an unsent-message alternative within the same time.

50-57 / After the conversation / slide 11

Revisit page 5 and add a support person, activity, and next check-in.

57-60 / Close / slide 12

Offer page 8 follow-up and one voluntary takeaway. No promises of reconciliation.

Opening words

Suggested script

You can be doing things differently and still hear, I am not ready. That can hurt. Today we are making room for responsibility, for another person’s choice, and for your own limits. Nobody in this room can award you someone else’s trust.

Group agreements

No deciding whether a relative should forgive, no diagnosing people who are absent, no comparing recovery time, and no demanding proof. Ask before offering suggestions. Participants can use Jordan throughout.

Quick check-in

Ask: What would help you work with this topic today: listening, writing, fiction, or a pass? Avoid a round of family histories that consumes the activity time.

Jordan and Avery

Original fictional scenario

After several broken promises during past substance use, Jordan wants their sister Avery to lend them her car. Avery says, I am not ready to lend it. Jordan hears, Nothing I do will ever count. Jordan wants to argue, list everything they have changed, or stop speaking to Avery. There is no immediate danger in this fictional example.

Questions for the group

What did Avery actually say? What did Jordan add to that meaning? What belongs to Avery to decide? What useful choice does Jordan still have?

Facilitator stance

Avery can decline the loan. Jordan can feel disappointed and seek another transport option. An apology should not become a demand for access to Avery’s property. We cannot determine the full relationship from a short story.

Three statements to sort

1 / I will ask about another ride

Jordan can choose to make this request. The other person decides whether to help. A useful plan includes a fallback.

2 / Avery needs to lend it if she respects my progress

This asks Jordan’s progress to determine Avery’s decision. Avery keeps the choice. Help Jordan rewrite it as a request that can receive a no.

3 / I can discuss a specific concern, and I will pause if we start insulting each other

This combines willingness to take responsibility with an action Jordan can take. A pause is not a threat or a way to erase an obligation. Revisit only if safe and mutually workable.

Debrief

A boundary describes your limit and action. A request leaves room for an answer. Neither guarantees trust, forgiveness, access, or contact. These are original educational distinctions, not a scoring tool.

A repair that names the impact

Four useful parts

Name a specific action. Acknowledge its impact. Offer a realistic action where appropriate. Leave the other person’s decision with them. Use ordinary words and avoid a promise you cannot keep.

Completed example

I said I would return your car by six, and I returned it late without calling. That disrupted your plans. I understand why you are not lending it today. I will arrange another ride.

What remains unfinished

This response does not settle every past incident or require Avery to forgive. If repair includes money or property, make an accurate, feasible proposal with appropriate support. Avoid vague promises such as I will make everything right.

Family support and limits

SAMHSA describes support as one part of recovery and encourages family members to care for themselves and communicate limits. This session uses those broad principles. It does not establish a timetable for trust. Sources are listed in the package.

Lead the individual pages

Page 4 / One specific repair

Choose a situation where reflection is safe, or use Jordan. Ask about the action and impact before drafting a response. Do not demand blame, a confession, or agreement with an accusation.

Page 5 / A limit and a plan

Name what you can offer, what you cannot promise, and one practical next step. Include what to do if the person says no or does not respond.

When accounts differ

Offer: We remember that differently. I can talk about the specific action I am responsible for. Do not litigate facts in the group or use this script to dismiss a child’s or another person’s report of harm.

Facilitator prompts

Would a smaller commitment be more honest? Does the request allow a no? Would sending this create a safety problem? Writing privately can be the whole activity.

Practice without a verdict

12-minute sequence

Two minutes to choose pair or solo work. Three minutes each role. Two minutes to revise. Two minutes to reflect. Use fictional names. Page 7 is an alternative, not extra work.

Speaker role

Practice one specific repair or request. The listener uses a neutral response such as I hear you, and I am not ready to decide. The speaker may answer: I understand. I will make another plan.

Listener role

Comment only on clarity: What action did you hear? What decision remained with the other person? Avoid acting out a hostile relative, interrogating, role-playing abuse, or offering forgiveness on someone else’s behalf.

Solo option

Write the script, read quietly, and circle words that promise too much or pressure the listener. Revise once. No performance or disclosure is required.

An unsent message

Alternative within the practice block

Participant page 7: write or draw a message that names an impact and a realistic action while leaving the decision open. Nobody has to send, read aloud, or show the page.

Example

I missed the dinner after saying I would come, and you waited. I am sorry. If you want to make another plan, I can offer Saturday afternoon. I understand if you do not want to.

What to leave out

Remove bargaining, demands for reassurance, and promises of permanent change. Never use this activity to contact someone who has requested no contact or where contact may be unsafe or restricted.

Reflection

What can this message honestly offer? What answer might be hard to hear? What support would help afterward? An unsent draft can still help you think.

Safety and family differences

Threats, control, or violence

Do not coach confrontation, couples practice, or renewed contact in unsafe relationships. Offer private specialist support and follow safeguarding and emergency procedures. A difficult feeling alone does not tell us whether a situation is safe.

Children and dependents

An adult remains responsible for caregiving and safety. Do not ask a child to manage adult feelings, keep secrets, validate recovery, or grant forgiveness. Parenting arrangements and restrictions need appropriate professional guidance beyond this group.

Boundaries and obligations

A pause does not cancel responsibilities, custody requirements, court orders, or treatment arrangements. Do not advise stopping prescribed care or changing formal monitoring. Seek appropriate guidance for legal or clinical questions.

Estrangement and grief

Some relationships remain distant or end. Do not frame reconciliation as the measure of recovery. Offer support for grief, loneliness, and practical needs without promising contact or trust.

Close and prepare the pilot

Closing words

What is one action you can take without controlling the answer? You can pass. Progress can be following through, correcting a promise, or choosing a safer conversation. Progress is progress. Mile or a Millimeter.

Optional feedback

Was the distinction between a request and someone else’s decision clear? Could you identify one realistic action? What felt unrealistic or uncomfortable? Check timing and access. Do not gather sensitive family stories for marketing.

Sources and authorship

Broad background: SAMHSA, About Recovery; Taking Care of Yourself. See Sources-and-Review.md for URLs and scope. Reviewed October 28, 2026. No SAMHSA affiliation or endorsement. Original scenarios and learning sequence by Belle Morey / Progress is Progress LLC.

Release status

Author-review pilot. Obtain appropriate content and facilitation review and test timing in a suitable setting before commercial release. No clinical effectiveness claim. www.progresscounselingprograms.com.