The Yes That Costs You



Session 05

Recovery Has to Survive Tuesday. A 60-minute adult group education session about requests, limits, responsibilities, and protecting time that supports recovery.

The work today

Check what a request would displace. Choose a pause, smaller offer or decline. Practice words that fit the situation and a plan for afterward.

Progress is progress

You can be generous and have a calendar. Checking before you answer can be a useful step, even when the conversation feels uncomfortable.

Before you lead

Audience and scope

Adults 18+, approximately 4-10 participants. Facilitators need group skills, competence appropriate to their role, and access to safeguarding and emergency procedures. Original education, not a validated treatment, legal guidance, workplace consultation or family mediation.

Prepare outside the hour

Print participant pages 1-8. Prepare slides, pens, a clock and current local supports. Orient new members beforehand. Explain actual privacy limits; group confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Access and choice

Use fiction, writing, drawing, listening or passing. Read prompts aloud and offer a scribe with consent. Nobody must reveal appointments, diagnoses, work details, substance history or contacts. Do not require a real refusal, message, phone call, or confrontation.

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 / Sam’s request / slides 3-4

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

13-23 / Before I Answer / slides 5-6

Participant page 3. Model the cost check and compare a pause, smaller offer and decline.

23-38 / Individual work / slides 7-8

Pages 4-5. One minute to choose fiction or a safe example, then about seven minutes per page.

38-50 / Practice / slides 9-10

Page 6 pair or solo rehearsal. Page 7 offers an unsent-draft alternative in the same block.

50-57 / After the answer / slide 11

Revisit page 5. Add follow-through, support and a response if the request returns.

57-60 / Close / slide 12

Offer optional page 8 follow-up and a voluntary takeaway.

Opening words

Suggested script

Sometimes the yes leaves your mouth before you have checked what it will cost. You want to help. You want people to see they can count on you. Your appointment, meal, rest, or time with your kids can get squeezed out. Today we are practicing the check before the answer.

Group agreements

No labeling someone selfish, weak, or bad at boundaries. No diagnosing absent relatives or telling people to quit a job or cut someone off. Ask before suggesting. People can use Sam throughout.

Check-in

Ask: Which would be useful today: taking a pause, making a smaller offer, or saying something clearly? Passing is welcome. Keep family and workplace histories out of the opening round.

Sam’s Tuesday

Original fictional scenario

At 4:30 on Tuesday, Sam’s cousin asks for help moving furniture from six to nine that evening. Sam has a planned recovery-support appointment at seven and needs time to eat and travel. The move is a favor, not an emergency or an existing caregiving duty. Sam wants to be useful and starts typing, Sure. Then Sam notices what saying yes would replace.

Discussion questions

What exactly is being asked? What would Sam’s yes replace? Is this a new favor, an existing commitment, or a safety need? What can Sam offer without pretending to have more time?

Facilitator stance

Sam can decline this optional favor. Other situations have different stakes. Do not use the example to tell someone to abandon a dependent, ignore an emergency, violate an agreement, or risk a job without considering consequences and appropriate support.

Before I Answer

Check the request

How much time, travel, effort or money would this take? What is the actual deadline? What information is missing? A request described as quick may still need checking.

Check what it displaces

What would have to move or disappear? Include care, transport, meals, work, dependents, rest and existing commitments. The group does not decide which person’s appointment or need is worthy.

Check the honest offer

Can I agree as asked? Do I need time to check? Is a smaller offer actually possible, or would that create a second problem? A decline does not require inventing an excuse.

Background and scope

SAMHSA describes recovery as personal and supported by multiple pathways. Its family self-care guidance supports communicating limits and what help someone can offer. This original activity applies broad ideas; it does not guarantee a safe or agreeable response.

Three responses that can fit

A pause

I need to check my schedule. I will answer by five. Choose a realistic time and follow through. A pause is useful only when you still need information or time to decide.

A smaller offer

I cannot help tonight. I can help for thirty minutes tomorrow afternoon. Offer this only if it fits and could actually help. The other person can decline the alternative.

A clear decline

I cannot help with the move tonight. Sam can keep the appointment private. There is no requirement to disclose recovery or defend it to the group or the cousin.

Completed example

Sam declines tonight, keeps the appointment, and offers tomorrow only if feasible. If the cousin says, But I need you tonight, Sam can answer, I hear you. Tonight still will not work. No guarantee the cousin will be pleased.

When you already said yes

An honest correction

I said yes before checking. I cannot do tonight. I am sorry for the late change. I can help for thirty minutes tomorrow if that would be useful. The alternative is optional and must be realistic.

Responsibility remains

Correct the answer promptly and acknowledge the disruption. If someone depends on agreed care or safety arrangements, arrange a safe handoff rather than simply leaving. Formal commitments may need appropriate guidance.

Keep the scope clear

Changing an optional favor differs from changing employment duties, parenting obligations, court requirements or clinical arrangements. This group does not determine legal rights or advise changing prescribed treatment.

Reflection

What could Sam say sooner next time? A corrected answer can be progress while the inconvenience still needs acknowledgment.

Lead the pages and practice

23-38 / Pages 4-5

Page 4 checks the request and what it displaces. Page 5 drafts the answer, a manageable response to repeat asking, and a plan for follow-through. Use fiction or a low-stakes safe example.

38-50 / Page 6 rehearsal

Two minutes to choose pair or solo. Three minutes each role. Two minutes to revise. Two minutes to reflect. Listener uses one neutral follow-up: Would a different time work? Avoid hostile pressure or acting out an unsafe person.

Listener questions

Is the answer clear? Is the alternative honest? Is a deadline promised? What responsibility remains? Offer observations, not a verdict about the speaker’s real relationship.

Solo option

Write the answer, read quietly and remove any promise that does not fit. No phone, message, disclosure or performance is required.

Creative alternative: the unsent answer

Same practice block

Participant page 7 replaces page 6. Draft or sketch a request arriving, a pause to check, and an answer. It can be a fictional text exchange. Nobody has to send, show or read it.

Example sequence

Request: Can you help tonight? Pause: I need to check; I will answer by five. Answer: I cannot help tonight. If the answer is already known, skip the pause and give it clearly.

Reflection

Does the draft say what is available? Did an apology turn into an offer you cannot keep? What would you do if the person asks again?

Privacy

Keep appointment details private if preferred. A short explanation is an option, not a test of honesty or recovery commitment.

When the stakes are higher

Threats, control or violence

Do not coach direct refusal or confrontation when it could increase danger. Offer private specialist support, consider safer planning with qualified help, and follow safeguarding and emergency procedures. Passing or using fiction is always available.

Work, housing and money

A person may face real consequences for declining. Avoid promises about protection, leave, accommodations or employment rights. Help them identify what needs checking and an appropriate support or advice source.

Children and dependents

Caregiving and safety responsibilities continue. Explore a realistic handoff or shared plan. Do not ask children to protect adult recovery, keep secrets, or accept unsafe care arrangements.

After a difficult answer

A person may feel guilt, relief, anger or uncertainty. The feeling alone does not prove the answer was right or wrong. Review the facts and responsibilities with appropriate support. Follow an existing care plan or seek help if distress or urges become harder to manage.

Close and prepare the pilot

Closing words

What will you check before your next answer? You can pass. An honest yes, a smaller offer, a pause, or a decline can all take practice. Progress is progress. Mile or a Millimeter.

Feedback

Was the cost check clear? Could you find an answer that fit? Did the examples account for real consequences and responsibilities? Check access and timing. Do not gather private work or recovery stories for marketing.

Sources and authorship

SAMHSA: Taking Care of Yourself; About Recovery. See Sources-and-Review.md for links and scope. Reviewed October 28, 2026. Original activities and scripts by Belle Morey / Progress is Progress LLC. No agency endorsement.

Release status

Author-review pilot. Obtain appropriate content and facilitation review, verify local support arrangements and pilot timing and usefulness before sale. No clinical effectiveness or relationship outcome claim. www.progresscounselingprograms.com.