

How does sponsorship help the sponsor?

The communication and mutual sharing that occurs helps both the sponsor and the sponsee. The sponsor's own understanding of the program will be deepened. It is not unusual for the sponsor to be focused back to the basic principles of the program and to working the Steps and communicating with their own sponsor.

How many people can a sponsor work with?

Only you can answer this question. Different people have different amounts of time and energy to apply to the program. However, caution needs to be exercised to avoid becoming over-committed. Because sponsorship is a special relationship between two recovering people, there is a limit to the number of people with which this type of relationship can be maintained. Excessive sponsorship can sometimes lead to grandiosity, restrict your ability to work your own program, and threaten your serenity.

What do I do if a person I sponsor doesn't want help?

Not much. Offer your willingness to help when it is desired. It is futile to force unwanted advice and help onto another. Sometimes a sponsor experiences the anger of the sponsee. If they stay close to the program and their own sponsor, they can usually deal with this anger without damage to themselves or the relationship.

How can I stop sponsoring someone?

Simply by taking the responsibility of stating that you no longer can sponsor that person. It is important to say why and to offer to be in contact if possible. If it is an issue affecting the sponsor's program and serenity, he should seek the counsel of other program members and of his own sponsor before dealing with the newcomer. Many times a sponsor releases a sponsee to allow that person to move on in recovery with a different sponsor who is more attuned to what is going on in the sponsee's life.

Some suggested “do's” of sponsorship

- Present an example of how the program is working in your life.
- Encourage meeting attendance.
- Introduce the newcomer to others in the program.
- Help the newcomer to understand the Twelve Step literature.
- Urge the newcomer to take an active role in his or her recovery.
- Share your experience, strength, and hope.

Some suggested “dont's” of sponsorship

- Avoid being judgmental.
- Avoid imposing your personal views.
- Refrain from taking another's inventory.
- Don't make decisions for the newcomer.
- Don't pretend to know all the answers.

Above all, remember that the key to the program is fellowship. You are being given a treasured opportunity to participate in your own recovery and in that of another at the same time. Give away freely those things that were given freely to you.

About Sponsorship



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What is Sponsorship?

Sponsorship is one recovering person talking to another recovering person. Through sharing, both individuals enrich their lives. The sponsor and the sponsee meet as equals, attend meetings regularly together, discuss recovery issues, work the Steps, and work the program. For the newcomer, a sponsor is a special person with whom they can discuss problems, ask questions, and through whom they can gain an understanding of recovery through the Twelve Step programs.

Is a sponsor required?

No. Sponsorship is an important, valuable aid in recovery, but it is not required. Is it important to have a sponsor? Yes. A relationship with a sponsor is an important tool in recovery. It is often the beginning of the development of an ability to trust others and communicate effectively. Having frequent, close contact with another member of the program provides an opportunity to deal with issues in private that one might not be willing to raise in front of the group.

How does one get a sponsor?

The usual way is to ask a person to sponsor you who has some of the personal and recovery attributes that you admire. It helps if the potential sponsor has been clean and sober long enough to have worked the Steps of recovery. In order to select a sponsor, it is best to attend as many meetings as possible to widen your exposure to recovering persons. There are no specific rules for choosing a sponsor, but an individual who is living life successfully and happily might be worth considering.

How can I overcome shyness, procrastination, or the fear of imposing myself on another in selecting a sponsor?

Getting a sponsor is not like getting married; there is no long-term commitment. One can ask a person to be an interim sponsor, that is a temporary sponsor, and see how the relationship develops. It is important to get beyond our fears of asking other people for help. It is indeed an honor for a person to be asked to be a sponsor. We are not burdening others with our problems and fears of

doing so should not be used as an excuse to avoid making a commitment.

Should a sponsor be of the same sex or gender?

The gender of a sponsor you select to guide you through the 12 Steps is at your discretion. We suggest avoiding sponsorship relationships that may lead to problematic attachments, including romantic and/or sexual relationships, which could detract from the primary purpose of recovery.

What if I want to change sponsor?

Then do so. If you feel a different person can better enhance your recovery, then it is good form to gently let your current sponsor know that you want to utilize the particular experience of another person and that you will be changing sponsors. This is frequently done in Twelve Step programs and many “longtimers” have had several different sponsors.

How often should I contact my sponsor?

This is up to you and your sponsor. Many sponsors ask newcomers to call them daily for the first month or two. If your sponsor is away or can't be reached it is wise to call other members of the program. It is a good idea to call several people regularly in any case.

Must I do anything a sponsor asks or agree with whatever a sponsor says?

No. If clarification is needed or disagreements emerge, then they should be discussed openly between the parties involved. Your recovery is your responsibility. You would be wise to heed your sponsor or get another sponsor with whom you can work. There is no rank in the program and the relationship between you and your sponsor is one of trust and shared experiences.

On Being a Sponsor:

If we agree to be someone's sponsor it doesn't mean we take responsibility for that person or for their sobriety and recovery. It is a two-way relationship based upon mutual respect and the principles of the program.

Who can be a sponsor?

Any member of the MA program or another Twelve Step program who is recovering from chemical dependency can be a sponsor.

When should I consider myself ready to sponsor another?

Whenever you feel ready to share what you have. Usually, it helps to have enough sobriety so that you have worked the Steps and have some “experience, strength, and hope” to share. If you possess a willingness to spend time and effort with a person, to be patient, and to share your experience with recovery, then you are probably ready to become a sponsor.

How do I become a sponsor?

Usually, one waits to be asked or simply announces one's availability for such a commitment at a meeting.

Must I sponsor someone if asked?

No. There are no such obligations in Twelve Step programs. If you are not comfortable in sponsoring someone, it is important to politely refuse and to encourage them to ask others. However, most members do sponsor if they are able to, because of the many benefits sponsorship provides.

What is the proper approach to sponsorship?

There is no “proper” approach. Each sponsor is free to work the way their experience dictates. Some sponsors are direct and others are more casual. Some outline the program as they see it, while others allow the newcomer to find their own way, guiding only when asked. Many use their experience with their own sponsors as a starting point on which to build. Each sponsor will be different and some approaches will fail. A sponsor is not responsible for anyone's sobriety but their own.