



Narcotics Anonymous®

IP No. 11

Sponsorship

**NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS
WESTEND AREA HELPLINE
818-787-9706**

Introduction

This pamphlet, based on our collective experiences, answers some of the most commonly asked questions concerning sponsorship. Although this pamphlet offers most of the essential information regarding sponsorship, it is not meant to be comprehensive. Rather, it presents a simple understanding of a vital tool in our program of recovery.

Sponsorship is the heart of the NA way of recovery from addiction—one addict helping another. Sponsorship is also a two-way street, helping both the newcomer and oldtimer alike.

**My gratitude speaks
when I care
and when I share
with others the NA way**

Sponsorship

What is a sponsor?

A sponsor is a recovering addict in the program of Narcotics Anonymous; someone we can trust to share our life experiences with (both good and bad); a person to whom we can go with our problems that may be too personal to share with the group. It is suggested that a sponsor be someone who has practice in working the Twelve Steps and is involved in the program. Primarily, a sponsor is a guide through the Twelve Steps of recovery.

Who needs a sponsor?

It is our experience that most addicts need a sponsor. At times, we all find ourselves on shaky ground, confused, in emotional pain, and in need of a helping hand. Since we rarely trusted others, we attempted to go it alone in life. This became one of our problems. We are people who have never learned how to live. This is where our spon-

sors come in. Our sponsors help by sharing their experience, strength, and hope. To sum it up, anyone who may have the desire to stay clean and begin to recover should have a sponsor.

How do you get a sponsor?

Listening is the key to finding a sponsor. The most obvious place to look for a sponsor is at NA meetings. Talk, share, and listen to members of the program; get plenty of phone numbers and use them. When you find someone with whom you can talk openly and relate, simply ask that person to be your sponsor. Chances are the answer will be "yes." Sometimes the person may be unable to sponsor you. Keep on trying! Remember that when one door closes, another will open. Continue to attend meetings, listen, and soon you will find a sponsor.

What length of clean time should a sponsor have?

The answer to this question varies from person to person. The sponsor may be a member with years of clean time behind him, or may be only a few months in the program. The sponsor's clean time and experience may well depend on the availability of sponsors in your area. The quality of time is more important than the quantity of clean time. Choose someone who has a firm grasp on the twelve suggested steps of recovery of NA, seems reasonably happy, and has the willingness to help other recovering addicts. We call people like this "winners" and it is a good idea to find your sponsor among these recovering addicts.

Should a sponsor be a friend?

Our experience has shown that a good sponsor relationship need not be based on friendships, but trust is vital. When looking for sponsors, we considered their experi-

ences in life, the quality of their clean time, their availability to us, and their willingness to help. As trust deepens, friendship based on mutual respect often follows.

Should my sponsor be a man or woman?

It is strongly suggested that we find a sponsor of the same sex. Experience has shown us that members of the same sex better understand certain issues, such as sexuality, family or identity problems, relationship problems, etc. We are emotionally unstable and it is easy to form emotional bonds with members of the opposite sex. This detracts from our program and could spell disaster, especially for the newcomer.

Should we have more than one sponsor?

We think not! Our experience has shown that it's easier to receive direction from one individual. We find it easier to trust in one person, rather than many.

With one sponsor we can learn to build a relationship based on trust and honesty. Through shared experience, a sponsor is able to reflect on personal growth.

As we grow in the program we learn to be more open and honest with others.

Remember: "Just for today, I will have faith in someone in NA who believes in me and wants to help me in my recovery."

How do we use a sponsor?

Communication is the key to this relationship. When we have questions about any part of our program, we know we can look to our sponsor, but it is our responsibility to get in touch with them during these times. Whether it be by telephone or in person, we share our problems with our sponsor. Good or bad, we try to share our experiences on a daily basis. Day or night, whenever we feel

the need, we contact our sponsor. It is important that we be honest with our sponsor, that we listen with an open mind to suggestions, and that we are willing to try a way other than our own.

Remember, we need never be alone.

How to be a sponsor

It is our experience that the decision to become a sponsor is an important step in our recovery and should not be taken lightly. We believe that, whenever possible, we consult our own sponsor before agreeing to sponsor someone else. In order to arrive at this decision, we might wish to explore our motives. Are we considering sponsorship to look good amongst the fellowship, or to help the addict who still suffers?

Remember that we can only keep what we have by giving it away. Therefore, we may wish to consider the following questions: Am I ready to become a sponsor? Am I willing to share my experience, strength, and hope? Am I willing to make a commitment?

After having decided to become a sponsor, where do we go from here? We feel it is important to realize that our own recovery comes first. We believe that the basic purpose of sponsorship is to help the addict through the Twelve Steps of recovery. It becomes increasingly obvious to us that the best way to do this is by example. Sponsorship is an extension of our own personal program of recovery. One of the most difficult aspects of sponsorship is drawing the line between caring and enabling. We feel it is enabling them when we work their program for them. It doesn't help addicts if their sponsors are overprotective. Sometimes, tough love is essential to an addict's growth. We suggest that you keep in mind that it is our responsibility to carry the message, not the addict. We are not reformers, preachers of the gospel, welfare workers,

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Source: Danny M.

part-time social workers, marriage counselors, money lenders, employment counselors, or parole officers. It is important to remember that we are also suffering addicts.

There may come a time when you are unable to relate to the person you sponsor. At this time you may direct them to someone who may help. We need not feel guilty if someone we sponsor relapses. We are all responsible for our own recovery. There will be times when we won't have the answers. It is our responsibility to seek these answers out with the people we sponsor. We are not God!



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ISBN No. 0-912075-23-6

English

11/96

WSO Catalog Item No. EN-3111