



IN SIGHT

Helping you improve the quality of your personal & professional life.

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AND NOW A WORD ABOUT “SPONSORSHIP”

In the journey of recovery, we frequently hear references to sponsorship. “My sponsor said...” or, “Do you have a sponsor? Better get one soon!” Many people new to recovery are unsure of the role of a sponsor in a program of recovery. Simply put, a sponsor is a mentor in a twelve-step recovery program, an expert guide through the strange and unusual territory we find ourselves traveling. In the legal profession, we understand the importance of mentoring new lawyers, and it is probably no coincidence that the professionals who founded Alcoholics Anonymous incorporated a similar concept in the world of recovery. A sponsor provides continuing support and advice about the challenges of staying sober, and is an invaluable guide to working through the twelve steps of recovery.

Most recovering people say that the experience of “passing on” the message of recovery through having or being a sponsor is one of the most meaningful and profound relationships of sobriety.

HOW TO FIND A SPONSOR

While most newcomers to recovery are urged to find a sponsor, specific instruction in that important process is sometimes lacking. Generally, a sponsor should have a year or more of successful recovery, have worked at least the first five steps, be the same gender as the new person, and have a sponsor themselves. Other considerations might be accessibility (i.e. easily reached by phone, can attend meetings with you) or whether the person’s life experiences (marriage, profession, education) are similar to your own. (While this varies, some lawyers in early recovery find it helpful to have another lawyer as a sponsor.) Go to gender-specific (Men’s or Women’s) meetings, listen to people who have a positive message of recovery, and spend some time talking with them after the meeting. After getting to know them a

bit, ask if they would consider being a temporary sponsor. Discuss what is expected of you, and what you expect from them. If your initial arrangement works well for thirty or sixty days, you may decide to make it permanent.

WHAT A SPONSOR DOES NOT DO

A sponsor may listen to your issues, guide you through the steps and ultimately advise you in the process of sponsoring other people, but a sponsor should not be confused with a therapist, a banker, an employment counselor, clergy, or a housekeeper. All twelve-step recovery programs encourage individuals to seek outside professional help when appropriate, and your sponsor may suggest engaging such experts from time to time. While a sponsor is an important part of your recovery, they can not keep you sober. Ultimately, you are responsible for your own sobriety – the process of not drinking or using, going to meetings, and communicating with your sponsor is up to you. The sponsorship relationship is based on trust. Your sponsor should never take advantage of you or exploit you in any way.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The concept of peer mentoring is central to the OAAP mission and reflected in our slogan, “Lawyers Helping Lawyers.” There are regular twelve-step recovery meetings for lawyers held in the OAAP offices each week. If you are reluctant or unsure about approaching a potential sponsor, talk to one of the OAAP program attorneys. He or she can make a suggestion or introduce you to a temporary sponsor or peer mentor.

If you are a lawyer with long-term recovery and want to be a sponsor, please give the OAAP a call.

The OAAP will be presenting a morning workshop on sponsorship on Saturday, June 9, 2001, from 9 a.m. to noon. Jack C., Esq. of Maryland, will facilitate the sponsorship workshop. Jack C. is now in pri-

vate practice, but his experience includes work as a legislator, district attorney, former Circuit Court Judge, past member of the ABA Board of Governors, and past member of the ABA Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs. He has 19 years of sobriety and is well-versed in sponsorship. A panel of Oregon lawyers who are active in sponsorship will also share their insights and philosophy regarding peer mentoring, providing a great opportunity to hear others discuss the experience of sponsoring and having a sponsor. This workshop is the Saturday morning after our Annual Attorneys Recovery Dinner – so mark your calendars now for the June 8th dinner and the June 9th sponsorship program. For other questions about sponsorship or recovery, call the OAAP at 503-226-1057.

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RESOURCES:

Alcoholics Anonymous, 3rd Edition (aka The Big Book) AA World Services, Inc.

Questions and Answers on Sponsorship (pamphlet) AA World Services, Inc.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, AA World Services, Inc.

Twelve Step Sponsorship: How it Works by Hamilton B., published by Hazelden

A Woman's Way Through the Twelve Steps, by Stephanie Covington, published by Hazelden