**Sponsorship in S-Programs**

A sponsor’s primary purpose is to help the newcomer achieve sobriety, work the steps and learn how to work an SA/SCA/SAA/SLAA program of sobriety.

A Sponsor’s Function/Tasks:

* Teaching the traditions, their importance & how that affects individuals, relationships and the program as a whole
* Teaching how to work the steps and what they mean
* Teaching how the program works and its limitations
* Teaching about the text and the conference approved literature
* Teaching the nature of addiction
* Teaching about triggers and denial
* Support when cravings hit
* Teaching about healthy program boundaries
* Giving a reality check when needed
* Introduction to other program members
* Assistance in integrating into all aspects of recovery (steps, fellowship, meetings, sponsorship, spirituality, & service)
* Guidance in the spiritual principles of the program
* A role model for what sobriety & a strong program look like
* Modeling healthy protective and containment boundaries

*“One study showed that BEING a sponsor increases your chances of long term sobriety.”*

Notes:

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What sponsors do not do:

* Loan money
* Be a therapist
* Provide housing or pay rent
* Be a dumping ground for all problems or expected to solve them
* Be disrespectful or judgmental
* Criticize, shame or blame
* Sign off on all one’s B.S.
* Enable continued acting out
* Play, “Aint it awful,” with one, or join one on their pity potty
* Do grief resolution work (sponsors are not therapists and should not be expected to do this)
* Be available 24/7 (sponsors are human, they usually have jobs, families and their own recovery work)
* Listen for hours to one’s problems (that is a friend, family member or therapist’s role)
* Try to solve all one’s problems (a sponsor’s primary purpose is to help you achieve sobriety, work the steps and learn how to work an SAA/SLAA program)

Notes:

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**Sponsorship in S-Programs**

Character traits to look for in a sponsor:

* Attended daily meetings in early recovery (First 1-2yrs)
* Has established sobriety-at least 3-6 months
* Has worked all 12 Steps or at least is actively finishing steps 6-12.
* Someone who is still attending a lot of meetings (at least 3-4/week)
* Currently doing service work
* Non-judgmental
* Inspires hope
* Positive outlook on life
* Emotional stability

Notes:

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Things to avoid in a sponsor:

* Does not attend meetings regularly
* Has never read any part of the SAA/SLAA text or other conference approved literature
* Never does fellowship activities
* Is not currently sober from bottomlines for at least 3-6 mos.
* Is not sober from other life threatening addictions (alcohol, drugs, etc.)
* Has not defined their bottomlines
* Has no sponsor currently
* Has never done any service work in SAA/SLAA
* Does not emphasize the steps and traditions
* Has a bad attitude about recovery
* Has very strong religious or political views and pushes them on others
* Asks to borrow money or to be paid for their sponsorship time
* Does not meet their own recovery, family, work or financial responsibilities
* Has too many responsibilities or life changes going on (they may not have enough time for you)
* Has a value system that does not match with yours

Think about this:

*Who would I prefer to have as my tax advisor, a bookkeeper with a few weeks’ experience or a CPA that is a former IRS agent? Who would I prefer to have for my Toyota repairs, a Toyota expert or a mechanic who has only worked on a Toyota once? Who would I prefer to have as my defense attorney for a murder trial, my neighbor who went to law school for 1 semester or an attorney who specializes in criminal defense? Why would I pick out a sponsor who doesn’t understand how the program works or only knows a part of the program? Unless of course, I am just auditing the program & I’m not yet truly ready to completely give up my addiction?*

Notes:

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**Sponsorship in S-Programs**

What not to do with a sponsor:

* Sexual or romantic intrigue or activity with your sponsor
* Enmeshment
* Lie to him/her (they can’t help you if they don’t know what’s going on with you)
* Be disrespectful to him/her
* Show 0 gratitude for his/her time and efforts with you
* Curse at them
* Live with them
* Loan him/her money
* Work for or supervise him/her

Silly excuses not to have a sponsor:

* My dog ate my homework
* My mom’s in the hospital
* S/he’s too tough
* I’m scared to ask
* Nobody likes me
* I can’t find one
* I don’t know how
* I don’t have time
* I’m too shy
* I don’t want one
* I don’t like women/men
* I tried, but nobody is available
* The kids in Africa are starving and I need to fly over there & help them
* I’m not ready yet
* I’m special and I don’t need one
* I read the steps and I know how to do it by myself
* I don’t get along with other people

Notes:

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**Sponsorship in S-Programs**

Best reasons to get a sponsor:

* My dog ate my homework
* My mom’s in the hospital
* S/he’s too tough
* I’m scared to ask
* Nobody likes me
* I can’t find one
* I don’t know how
* I don’t have time
* I’m too shy
* I don’t want one
* I don’t like women/men
* I tried, but nobody is available
* The kids in Africa are starving and I need to fly over there & help them
* I’m not ready yet
* I’m special and I don’t need one
* I read the steps and I know how to do it by myself
* I don’t get along with other people

When to get a sponsor:

* Now
* Yesterday
* Last week
* At your first SAA/SLAA meeting
* At your next meeting
* As soon as you get home today
* As soon as you can call someone to ask them
* Today

A Sponsee’s Responsibilities/Tasks:

* Call sponsor regularly (daily to check-in in the beginning)
* Be honest
* Do sponsor’s assignments
* Work the program to the best of his/her ability
* Go to lots of meetings
* Share in meetings
* Take responsibility for one’s own recovery & sobriety
* Not blame sponsor when one relapses

*Sponsorship is probably the most important aspect of a recovery program because it nearly always assures that the newcomer will learn more about the program than they would have without a sponsor and helps to insure introduction to all the other aspects of the program. The first sponsor is rarely the only sponsor. Being able to pick the best sponsor comes with time and exposure to all the aspects of the program. Even though a newcomer will not have all the information above about a potential sponsor, it is important to pick one at the first or second meeting attended. Answers to the questions about the above information will come as the newcomer gets to know the sponsor and other members of the program who may be potential sponsors. If the first sponsor does not fit or work out, choose a new one. BUT, choose a new sponsor before letting the old one go! It could be a lethal mistake to have a gap between sponsors. Old sponsors often make good friends—you don’t have to burn the bridge. Each time we choose a new sponsor, our choices are more informed and educated!*

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