

# Sponsorship in 12 Step Programs

**One of the strongest tools to help people stay on their recovery path is having a sponsor.**

A sponsor can offer guidance and support to a sponsee. The sponsor is not only a person to guide the member through the 12 Step Program, but to also be there to offer support.

Sponsorship is a very important element in 12 Step fellowships. The founding members realised that the thing that was keeping them clean/sober/in recovery was helping other members.

It is important to be able to share certain things with a trusted person one-on-one rather than publicly at a meeting. Sponsorship benefits both parties because working with sponsees keeps the sponsor strong and committed to recovery.

## What is the role of a Sponsor?

- It is the role of a sponsor to guide the sponsee through the 12 Steps.
- To share their experience, strength and hope. Also to provide information regarding the 12 step program.
- Most sponsors will make themselves available by phone in times of emergency (near relapse, emotional distress/crisis). The urge to relapse/act out can come at any time, and having somebody to call can make all the difference.
- In early recovery, the sponsorship relationship may be one of the first meaningful, honest relationships that the sponsee has.
- A sponsor provides honest feedback, guidance and support.

## Hints for Choosing a Sponsor

- Look out for someone who 'has what you want', in that they are living the way you would like to live your life (healthy relationships, social life, solid recovery etc.).
- Someone who has more experience in the program (has more 'time up') than you. This way they will be qualified to offer experience, information and guidance.
- Pay attention to how they LIVE not just how they SHARE. You want to know that your sponsor doesn't just have a strong message from the floor. You want them to be working the 12 steps in their life and living by the principles of the program.
- A sponsor should be secure in their own recovery. It can be detrimental for both parties if a sponsor is struggling in their program.
- It is recommend that people don't choose someone who is the gender of their sexual preference. Sexual attraction will interfere with the relationship.
- The sponsor needs to be somebody who you believe to be trustworthy. Look at their behaviour – do they talk about other people to other people or are they mindful of anonymity?
- If you ask someone and they say 'no', there may be any number of reasons why they can't take you on (they may have several sponsees already, health concerns, time constraints etc.). You could ask who else they might suggest would be a good fit for you.