

SPONSORSHIP

Debtors Anonymous • Conference-Approved Literature

"We have found it essential to our recovery to have a sponsor and to be a sponsor. A sponsor is a recovering debtor who guides us through the Twelve Steps and shares his or her own experience, strength, and recovery.

- Third Tool of Debtors Anonymous

What Is A Sponsor?

For most of us, just asking questions of people at meetings is not enough. We need someone to talk with on a regular basis between meetings, who knows us individually. So we ask someone to be our sponsor and guide us in our recovery. No written materials dictate what a sponsor can and can't do. Each person is free to develop his or her own form of sponsorship and to set limits on his or her own availability. Generally, a sponsor is available on a one-to-one basis to answer questions by sharing his or her own experience, strength and recovery and also by offering suggestions. At times a sponsor acts as a sounding board or is contacted when bookending a difficult task. Most often, it is also our sponsor who guides us through the Twelve Steps of the D.A. program by explaining the program, by identifying or exposing the debting issues in us and by suggesting specific actions appropriate to our particular situation and may, if agreeable to both, serve as a member of our pressure group.

What Do We Expect From Our Sponsor?

A sponsor offers us support in our recovery by being available on the phone or in person to listen to our concerns and to answer our questions. We look to a sponsor for understanding and compassion. The sponsor often provides a contact at meetings and introduces us to other members. At the same time, we understand that our sponsor is not responsible for our recovery. Our sponsor merely provides us with a helping hand as we take steps toward health.

What Do We Not Expect From Our Sponsor?

A sponsor does not bail us out of debt or any other situation, is not a therapist, lawyer, investment advisor or banker. We do not expect our sponsor to abuse us by judging us, or demeaning us because of our problems. At the same time, we do not make unreasonable demands on our sponsor's time, realizing that our sponsor has a life filled with other responsibilities. The sponsee can ask for as much as he or she wishes, while understanding that the sponsor cannot always comply.

In D.A. there is only one authority, a loving God, as we understand God. Therefore we do not expect our sponsor to tell us what we should do, or what we have to do in any given situation. Many of us spent our lives rebelling against such authority. We learned in D.A. to accept a sponsor's experience, strength and hope along with his or her suggestions (as opposed to directives). In our experience it is best for each individual to make his or her own decisions based on the information received from a sponsor or other members of D.A.

Does A Sponsor Have To Be A Member of Our Pressure Relief Group?

Not necessarily. Each individual can decide what works best for him or her. When we decide not to ask our sponsor to sit on our pressure relief group, we usually take a look to see if our motives are unhealthy. Are we trying to hide something? Are we hoping to pit the pressure relief group's suggestions against our sponsor's? We have found that

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our support network in D.A. serves us best when it is harmonious. On the other hand, we may meet a member who offers a unique understanding of our situation and would help us tremendously on a pressure relief group, but is not available as a sponsor. Then we may choose that individual and not our sponsor to serve on our pressure relief group. In a case like this our motive may be a healthy one. And of course, our sponsor may not be available for pressure relief meetings for any number of reasons.

Why Would Someone Want To Sponsor Me?

The Twelfth Step of Debtors Anonymous states, "...we tried to carry this message to compulsive debtors..." Sponsorship is one way to carry the message. We do this because our recovery depends upon and is enhanced by helping new members. A sponsor gives as others have given to him or her in a sponsorship relationship. It is by having a sponsor that we learn to sponsor and therefore learn the benefits of sponsoring.

How Do We Choose A Sponsor?

Choosing a sponsor is an informal process. The basic rule of thumb is: We must ask someone. We usually say that we chose a sponsor because he or she has "something we want." In other words, we admire his or her recovery from compulsive debting and feel comfortable talking with him or her. A sponsor need not have the same circumstances as the sponsee. We have seen as much success with sponsorship between two people who are very much alike as with those who are completely different. A prospective sponsor's commitment to his or her own abstinence might also be an important consideration in choosing a sponsor.

Remember, ours is a spiritual program, and for us, recovery can be found in the Twelve

Steps. A sponsor, in guiding us and helping us work the Twelve Steps, helps us in our spiritual program. We have a slogan "You can't keep it unless you give it away." A sponsor helps his or her own recovery as much, or possibly more than his or her sponsee's recovery by his or her willingness to be of service to another compulsive debtor.

Remember, too, that sponsorship is not a lifelong commitment for either party, and changing or severing the relationship may become necessary for a variety of reasons. As always, we terminate these situations with love, gratitude, and acceptance.

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