

# Sponsorship

extracts from Q and A on sponsorship published by  
[www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org). (The original USA version)

***...Study the bullet points in the pamphlet Q and A, there are 15 things a sponsor is meant to do and 4 bullet points regarding things we are not meant to do....***

... indicates text is not continuous

// pause and discuss

## What is sponsorship....

Alcoholics Anonymous began with sponsorship. When Bill W only a few months sober was stricken with a powerful urge to drink this thought came to him “You need another alcoholic to talk to, you need another alcoholic just as much as he needs you”

...In AA sponsor and sponsored meet as equals, just as Bill and Dr Bob did. Essentially the process of sponsorship is this: An alcoholic who has made some progress in the recovery program shares that experience on a *continuous*, individual basis with another alcoholic who is attempting to attain or maintain sobriety through AA

... We find that we need constant, close support as we begin learning how to live sober. So, we select an AA member with whom we can feel comfortable, someone with whom we can talk freely and **confidentially**.

... Sponsorship is yours for the asking. We urge you **do not delay**. alcoholics recovered in AA want to share what they have learned with other alcoholics.

...Sponsorship responsibility is unwritten and informal, but it is a basic part of the AA approach to recovery from alcoholism through the twelve steps.

## Choosing a sponsor

Sponsorship will assure the newcomer that there is at least one person who understands the situation fully and cares – one person to turn to without embarrassment when doubts,

questions or problems linked to alcoholism arise. Sponsorship gives the newcomer an understanding, sympathetic friend when one is needed most. Sponsorship also provides the bridge enabling the new person to meet other alcoholics – in a home group and in other groups visited.

... Often the new person simply approaches a more experienced member who seems compatible, and asks that member to be a sponsor. Most AAs are happy and grateful to receive such a request. An old AA saying suggests “stick with the winners”. It’s only reasonable to seek a sharing of experience with a member who seems to be using the AA program successfully in everyday life. There are no specific rules, but a good sponsor probably should be a year or more away from the last drink – and should seem to be **enjoying** sobriety.

...Many AAs say they were greatly helped by sponsors totally unlike themselves. Maybe that is because their attention was then focused on the **most important** things that any sponsor and newcomer have in common: alcoholism and recovery in AA.

...If the sponsor’s ideas sound strange or unclear, the newcomer had better speak up and ask questions. Theirs is supposed to be an easy, open relationship, in which both parties talk freely and honestly with each other.

...Sponsorship is the best way we know of introducing a newcomer to the program and helping them continue in AA. When we are unable to contact our sponsor, we can

telephone or text other members, go to a meeting, read AA books and pamphlets etc.//

## **Being a sponsor**

...A sponsor does everything possible, within the limits of personal experience and knowledge, to help the newcomer get sober and stay sober through the AA program.

... Sponsorship strengthens the older member's sobriety. The act of sharing sobriety makes it easier for a member to live without alcohol. By helping others, alcoholics find they help themselves.

... Each approach is sometimes successful and sometimes fails. The sponsor has to decide which to try in a particular case. The experienced sponsor recognises the importance of flexibility in working with newcomers, does not rely on a single approach, and may try a number of different approaches with the same person.

...Some sponsors talk about the program in a more spiritual way than others do. But nearly all call attention to the source of strength to be found in "a Power Greater than ourselves". Again, the sponsor points out, it is up to the newcomer to determine what that AA phrase means. It expresses an idea that people of many faiths – or of no particular faith – can and do accept with complete harmony.

... Many AAs when first asked to sponsor, will have met the newcomer and reviewed this pamphlet in an order to avoid

pitfalls. Most likely the sponsor and newcomer will have discussed their commitments and agreed upon expectations early in the relationship. The sponsor will also have encouraged the newcomer to talk to other AA members with longer-term sobriety.

...Co-founder Dr. Bob said "I spend a great deal of time passing on what I learned to others who want and need it badly. I do it for four reasons."

Sense of duty

It is a pleasure

Because in doing so I am paying my debt to the man. who took time to pass it on to me.

Because every time I do it, I take out a little more insurance for myself against a possible slip."

...Individuals and groups cannot afford to lose sight of the importance of sponsorship, the importance of taking a special interest in a confused alcoholic who wants to stop drinking. Experience shows clearly that the members getting the most out of the AA programme, and the groups doing the best job of carrying the AA message to still suffering alcoholics, are those for whom sponsorship is too important to be left to chance. By these members and groups, sponsorship responsibilities are welcomed and accepted as **opportunities** to enrich personal AA experience and to deepen the satisfaction that comes from working with others.

## Summary taken from 12 Concepts for world service

**Every sponsor is necessarily a leader.** The stakes are huge. A human life and usually the happiness of a whole family hang in the balance. What the sponsor does and says, how well he estimates the reactions of his prospect, how well he times and makes his presentation, how well he handles criticisms, and how well he leads his prospect on by personal spiritual example ... well, these attributes of leadership can make all the difference, often the difference between life and death. We thank God that Alcoholics Anonymous is blessed with so much leadership in all its affairs." //

**Addendum - *Bill W this matter of honesty, extracts from, August 1961 Grapevine***

### **Sharing with another AA**

...Of course, we cannot wholly rely on AA friends to solve all our difficulties. A good AA will never do all our thinking for us. He knows that each final choice must be ours. He will therefore help to eliminate fear, expediency and self-deception, so enabling us to make choices which are loving wise and honest.

The choice of such a friend is an all-important matter. We should look for a person of deep understanding, and then carefully listen to what he has to say. In addition, we must be positive that our prospective AA will hold our communications in the strictest of confidence....

When we consult an AA friend we should not be reluctant to remind him of our need for full privacy. The protective sanctity of this most healing of human relations ought never be violated. Such privileged communications have priceless advantages. We find in them the perfect opportunity to be as honest as we know how to be. We do not think of the possibility of damage to other people, nor need we fear ridicule or condemnation. Here too we have the best possible chance of spotting self-deception.

...Let us therefore continue our several searches for self-deception, great or small. Let us painstakingly temper honesty with prudence and love. Let us never flinch from entire forthrightness whenever this is the requirement.

R. H. SMITH, M. D.

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**R<sub>x</sub>** FOR alcoholics

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ DATE Feb 1937

*Always remember it*

1. Trust God
2. Clean house
3. Help others

NR | 1 | 2 | 3 | INF.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
M. D.



**The kitchen table from Clinton Street where  
Ebby and  
Bill sat in November 1934 for that  
momentous meeting which changed all our  
lives...  
(Currently at Stepping Stones)**