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**Sponsorship – the basics**

*(Sourced from the Celebrate Recovery Advanced Leadership Training Guide, Celebrate Recovery Lesson 7 and the Celebrate Recovery Journey Begins Book 2)*

The road to recovery is not meant to be traveled alone. You will find that you actually need three relationships. Most important is a relationship with Jesus Christ. In addition, you need the relationship of your recovery group or a church family. Last, you need the relationship of a sponsor and/or accountability partner. Identifying a sponsor is especially important before you begin Principles 4 through 6, in which you work on getting right with God, yourself, and others.

**Here are 5 critical questions you need to know the answers to about sponsorship:**

**1. Why do I need a sponsor?**

**2. What are the qualities of a sponsor?**

**3. What does a sponsor do?**

**4. How do I find a sponsor?**

**5. What is the difference between a sponsor and an accountability partner?**

**Why Do I Need a Sponsor and/or an Accountability Partner?**

**There are three reasons why you need a sponsor.**

1. **Having a sponsor or accountability partner is Biblical.**

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17 (NIV)

Two are better off than one, because together they can work more effectively. If one of them falls down, the other can help him up. But if someone is alone ..., there is no one to help him.... Two people can resist an attack that would defeat one person alone." Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (GNT)

1. **Having a sponsor or accountability partner is a key part of your recovery program.**

**Your recovery program has four key elements to success.**

**The first key** is maintaining your honest view of reality as you work each step. Having someone help to keep you honest is a real plus in successfully working the steps.

**The second key** element is making your attendance at your recovery group meetings a priority in your schedule. This doesn't include taking the summer off or not going to a meeting because it's raining outside.. You need to make Celebrate Recovery and other meeting nights that you attend, a priority. A sponsor can encourage you to attend your meetings.

**The third key** element is maintaining your spiritual program with Jesus Christ through prayer, meditation, and study of His Word. Principle 7 focuses more on this but you don't have to wait until you get there to develop your relationship with Christ. Your sponsor, group leader or Church leader can help you answer questions about beginning and growing a relationship with Christ and pray for you and help to keep you centered on God's Word.

**The fourth key** element to a successful program is getting involved in service. Once you have completed Principle 8, you will be able to serve as a sponsor. Until that time, however, there are plenty of other service opportunities to get you started. Talk with your sponsor and group leader about what would be a good fit for you at this time in your recovery.

1. **Having a sponsor is the best guard against relapse**.

By providing feedback to keep you on track, a sponsor can see your old dysfunctional, self-defeating patterns beginning to surface and point them out to you quickly. He or she can confront you with truth and love without placing shame or guilt.

It is better to be criticized by a wise man than to be praised by a fool! Ecclesiastes 7:5 (TLB)

**What Are the Qualities of a Sponsor?**

Though good advice lies deep within a counselor's heart, the wise man will draw it out (Proverbs 20:5 TLB).

**When you are selecting a sponsor look for the following qualities:**

1. Does his walk match his talk? Is he living the eight principles? Be certain that the person that you choose as a sponsor is someone whose life example is worthy of imitation.

2. Does she have a growing relationship with Jesus Christ? Do you see the character of Christ developing in her?

3. Does he express the desire to help others on the road to recovery? There is a difference between helping others and trying to fix others. Be careful to guard the sponsorship relationship from becoming unhealthy and codependent.

4. Does she show compassion, care, and hope but not pity? You don't need someone to feel sorry for you, but you do need someone to be sensitive to your pain.

5. Is he a good listener? Do you sense that he honestly cares about what you have to say?

6. Is she strong enough to confront your denial or procrastination? Does she care enough about you and your recovery to challenge you?

7. Does he offer suggestions? Sometimes we need help in seeing options or alternatives that we are unable to find on our own. A good sponsor can take an objective view and offer suggestions. He should not give orders!

8. Can she share her own current struggles with others? Is she willing to open up and be vulnerable and transparent? I don't know about you, but I don't want a sponsor who says that he has worked the principles. I want a sponsor who is living and working the principles every day!

**What Is the Role of a Sponsor?**

**Here are six things that your sponsor can do:**

**1.** She can be there to discuss issues in detail that are too personal or would take too much time in a meeting. There are some things you do not share in a group setting.

The sponsor can be there to share his or her own experiences and to offer strength and hope.

The sponsor's role is to model Christ's grace, forgiveness, and to give a sense of perspective.

**2.** He is available in times of crisis or potential relapse.

3. She serves as a sounding board by providing an objective point of view. This is especially true in Principle 6. When you are dealing with the sensitive area of making amends and offering forgiveness, you need a good sounding board.

4. He is there to encourage you to work the principles at your own speed. It is not his job to work the principles for you. He can coach your progress, confront you when you're stuck, and slow you down when you're working too fast.

5. Most important, she attempts to model the lifestyle that results from working the eight principles. It's difficult to inspire others to accomplish what you haven't been willing to try yourself. A good sponsor lives the principles.

6. A sponsor can resign or be let go. Sponsorship is not a lifetime position.

**How Do I Find a Sponsor and or an Accountability Partner?**

The responsibility of finding a sponsor is yours, but here are a few final guidelines to help you in your search.

1. First and foremost: Your sponsor MUST be of the same sex as you. NO EXCEPTIONS. I don't think I need to expand this one.

2. Can you relate to this person's story? Does he or she meet the qualities of a good sponsor that we just covered?

3. Stay for the Cross Talk Café after group on Friday nights. Invest some time in fellowship and get to know others in your group.

4. If you ask someone to sponsor you, and that person says no, do not take it as a personal rejection. Remember that their own recovery has to come first. Besides, they may already be sponsoring other people. If they turn you down, it's not personal. If someone turns you down, ask someone else. You can even ask for a "temporary sponsor." Remember, sponsorship is not a lifetime commitment.

5. Most important, ask God to lead you to the sponsor of His choosing. He knows you and everyone in this room. He has someone in mind already for you. All you need to do is ask!

**What is the primary difference between a Sponsor and an Accountability Partner?**

**While the sponsor acts as a sort of recovery "coach," an accountability partner or group is a recovery "team."** You can get with one, two, or three other people and hold each other accountable for certain areas of your recovery or issues such as meeting attendance, journaling, and so forth. These partners may be at the same or at a different level of recovery as you are. The main goal of this relationship is to encourage one another.

**Without exception, everyone needs a sponsor and accountability partner/network to help you navigate your journey in recovery.**