



The Role of a Sponsee

In SAL 12-Step, we have accepted the truth that *we cannot recover in isolation*. Sponsorship is one of the most important tools of our program and our healing. It is up to the sponsee to find a sponsor, reach out to the sponsor, and take accountability for her own recovery.

Roles of a Sponsee:

- To be fully committed to recovery
- Come to understand your own need for recovery & take your focus off the addict
- Committed to working the 12-Steps with your sponsor
- Be respectful of the limitations of a sponsor/human being. A sponsor is not a therapist, a guru, a financial advisor, or God. **Sponsors are here to guide you through the Steps and point you back to God.**
- Be committed to keeping this relationship in the bonds of confidentiality. **(What a sponsor or a sponsee shares is not to be discussed with your spouse.)**
- Be committed to total honesty as you work the Steps and take accountability for your recovery. Pretending or putting up walls of justification will only limit your ability to recover.
- Accepts the concept that spirituality is the foundation of recovery, is becoming willing to let go of self-reliance and explore a healthy dependence on God.
- Although it can be tempting to seek advice as a sponsee, we must always remember that our Higher Power is the only One who can give us the answers we need and the peace we seek.
- Inquire about guidelines for your longer-term relationship, check-ins, and surrender phone calls.
- You may find it helpful to communicate regularly and frequently at the beginning of your sponsorship relationship. Many people find a “30-for-30” practice (where a sponsee will call their sponsor daily for 30 days) helpful to build trust and break the fear of reaching out. Establish clear expectations on when is the best time to make regular contact.

Frequently Asked Questions: Sponsorship

Q: Why do I need a sponsor?

A: Nobody can effectively work the program alone. We cannot recover in isolation.

Q: How do I choose a sponsor?

A: Take some time and turn to your Higher Power for this. Talk to people and notice how you feel when talking to them. Ask someone you feel comfortable with (some groups may have an “available sponsor” list). Perhaps it’s someone whose shares resonate with you. Be aware that there will never be ‘a perfect sponsor’ and it’s not uncommon for people to switch sponsors while working the program.

Q: It’s hard for me to call someone. What if I am bothering my sponsor?

A: A sponsor will have boundaries about her communication with sponsees. She likely won’t answer if she can’t talk. Learning to be vulnerable and reach out is part of the program and will be helpful to your healing. It takes courage to take this Step each time, but a sponsor is a safe person. Try to remember that the call you make is not about your sponsor, it’s about you and your trust in your Higher Power and the program in your life.

Q: What if my relationship with my sponsor is not working?

A: You may want to establish a trial period for the sponsorship relationship. After this time, both parties can decide if they are compatible and want to move forward.

Q: What kinds of things would I call my sponsor about?

- When you need help knowing how to work the SAL 12-Step program.
- When you need someone to listen to or help you through the surrender process.
- When you are in a crisis situation with your emotions and need help seeing things from a recovery perspective.
- When you are triggered and need help knowing how to move through the emotions associated with the trigger.
- When you have questions about your recovery.

Q: My sponsor is basically a stranger. How do I build trust with my sponsor?

A: Be honest and vulnerable with your sponsor and trust will develop quickly. You will see trust grow as your Higher Power guides you through your sponsor. Try what the

sponsor suggests but be aware that your recovery will look different than your sponsor's recovery.

Q: How often is it okay to call my sponsor? Should I have a regular check-in time?

A: This (like most things) will vary and depend on the sponsor. The sponsor will let you know how best to communicate with her. If you feel you would like more contact with your sponsor, work something out that works for both of you.

Q: Is my sponsor the only person I should be talking to?

A: It is suggested that you have a network of support people who are also working recovery. A sponsor will not always be available when you need to talk to someone.

Q: How does a sponsor help me work the Steps?

A: A sponsor will point you to working the Steps and help you be aware of the problem of using her as a crutch for emotional help without working the Steps. The sponsor will help you be accountable for your own recovery goals. She will tell you how she works the Steps and you can use her input for your own work.

For more information on sponsorship please refer to the SAL Recovering Individuals, Healing Families Book, pages 266-281 & 331-336