

Day in OA – Sponsorship Summary

Saturday, April 18, 2015

The topic of the April 18th “Day in OA” was sponsorship. Twenty-nine people attended the Saturday afternoon event. Of those who attended, 3 needed a sponsor, 6 were available sponsors and 3 were not available sponsors but were willing to discuss it with someone or help someone find a sponsor. A wonderful group of folks even drove up from Oakland to attend. The engagement and activity levels were high. The day focused on three areas:

- How to find a sponsor
- Being a sponsee
- Being a sponsor

Two fascinating speakers spoke to the group; one on the topic of finding a sponsor and the other on being a sponsor. Both grounded their shares in the Big Book and what it has to say on the matter.

During the section on finding a sponsor, the group participated in an activity that engaged everyone in a discussion about the following questions:

- **Why have a sponsor?**

- to keep me honest
- to report food (turn it over)
- for kind support
- to talk when I'm really crabby
- for direction & hope
- for companionship
- for strength & experience
- to get clarity on decisions
- because I can't do it alone (& don't have to)
- to help with my food plan
- to learn to be a sponsor
- to talk freely to someone who understands
- to keep me accountable
- to learn how to work the steps (and to emphasize this) and to remind me to DO it
- If I'm a sponsor, I need to have my own sponsor, too
- to keep me connected to the program
- to break the shame & the isolation
- to model recovery
- to show me that this program really works
- to be sane when I'm not
- to interrupt my negative thinking (because I'm crazy)
- because that's what we're told to do
- to help me develop/define my abstinence
- to have someone who accepts me as I am - teaches me to do the same - while encouraging me to be the best person I can be
- to help me to see a different perspective
- reality check - because I want recovery
- because I need one
- because a sponsor is part of success in the program
- it is a tool and a step
- to have someone to pray with
- because there are things not appropriate to share at group level

- **What qualities do you look for in a sponsor?**

- compatible schedules
- good boundaries & willing to discuss them with me up front
- be direct
- good listener
- feeling of connection – similar life view
- specific directions – backed by program literature
- has what I want – abstinence similar to what I seek
- kind but honest
- non-judgmental

- easy to talk to
- compatible (trial period)
- stable (manageable life & emotional stability)
- available
- same gender
- patient
- has a strong program
- accepts that I can have a different higher power
- doesn't therapize me
- open to feedback

- willing to share their experience
- is human (flawed) and is willing to share about that too!!
- has a commitment to abstinence
- will help me make an action plan for my day
- working the steps on their own character defects with their own sponsor
- has time for me
- shares their experience but doesn't tell me what to do
- walks the talk

- **Fears about getting a sponsor**

- rejection
- abandonment
- commitment
- may be unwilling to follow their suggestions
- embarrassment at exposing my "loser" self
- being honest
- needing to fire my sponsor failure
- success
- being too needy
- change
- success, then failing
- hard to ask for help (help me)
- being fired
- having to give up my food
- all the work that might follow
- 12 step program in general

- criticism
- being too intimidated to ask for what I need
- intimacy
- being honest
- being shamed or judged (when reporting bingeing)
- letting my sponsor down
- not meeting expectations
- sponsor asking too much time
- being told what to do
- he/she will be a bully
- he/she will "suck the everlasting life out of me"
- not being good enough
- failing myself
- making my sponsor my HP
- my sponsor disappointing me
- 4th steps

- **Suggestions for how to get a sponsor**

- Call or email people to see if you're compatible first, then ask - and try to meet face to face
- Put on a yellow dot [refers to the dots worn by folks at the Day in OA]
- Got to meetings, retreats, conventions - different meetings in different towns than your normal ones
- Try an online sponsor
- ask people what they think of their sponsor - "How does it work for you? or "What did you look for?" (without going over the line to gossip!)
- be aware when the right person is there
- ask people even if they don't volunteer

- keep asking, don't take it personally if someone says no
- be willing to help someone find a sponsor (one of your sponsees)
- ask someone who they suggest
- ask at meetings for suggestions about how to find a sponsor
- Listen to people at meetings
- make more outreach calls - exposure to more people
- mention in your share at meetings that you are looking for a sponsor
- just ask
- consider a time limited "trial" sponsorship (2 weeks, 3 months)

- ask people out for coffee
 - pray for willingness to reach out for a sponsor or to make a change of sponsor
 - ask HP how to find the sponsor who is right for me even if it's not who I would choose
- express how willing you are
 - be negotiable about time frames
 - accept it might not be a perfect fit right away
 - be open to co-sponsoring
- **What does “look for someone who has what you want” mean?**
 - implies you have listened to them - at meetings or in phone calls or 1:1 meeting
 - someone who is happy, joyous and free
 - someone who has overcome similar issues as you
 - someone who has physical recovery
 - someone who has had a spiritual awakening and is in touch with HP
 - someone who has a sponsor and works the steps
 - someone who can ride the waves of life
 - someone who has a sense of humor
 - someone who is willing to listen as well as share and suggest
 - someone who is available
 - someone who is compatible and similar
 - someone who agrees on how to work program, steps, find abstinence
 - someone who is present
 - decide what you want (and this can change over time)
 - someone who has suffered and found serenity through working the steps
 - not waiting until you find the “perfect” sponsor
 - someone who honors anonymity - trustworthy
 - someone who weathered through many problems and stayed abstinent
 - accept their experience, strength and hope as being all needed to be the right sponsor
 - someone who walks their talk
 - someone who truly understands the program
 - someone who has an abstinence you can relate to

The group was introduced to some new characters during the section on being a sponsee. Ask someone who attended to tell you about “Militant Millie, Ditzzy Deirdre and Twelve Step Tillie.” These were the characters we met in a series of skits about sponsorship.

Informal feedback about the day was positive. Many who attended said they got a lot out of the day. The hope is that, for those who attended, their recovery was positively impacted and the fellowship is strengthened.

Synopsis of Intergroup questionnaire regarding sponsorship.

Members had some great ideas on how Intergroup could promote and support sponsorship at group level in the form of workshops, newsletters and flyers with the meetings themselves providing sponsorship assistance to the individuals looking for sponsors and to the members needing support to sponsor. The majority of respondents did not like the idea of a sponsorship list on the website citing privacy, keeping it current and that part of being a sponsee is reaching out. All questions and responses follow this synopsis.

Additional ideas include:

- Come up with a set of guidelines by county or by individual meeting – when it is ok to sponsor.
- What about drafting a statement to be used at meetings?
- Encourage meetings to use the statement about asking someone who has what you want.
- Help support step work and abstinence - then (new sponsors) will have something to offer

- If a sponsor is too busy to be available to new sponsees, encourage sponsor to suggest/guide/encourage their sponsees to begin sponsoring.
- Perhaps one person for each meeting keeps track of available sponsors. Intergroup forwards to seekers?
- At meeting level ask that all sponsors identify themselves so that newcomers can ask that person whether or not they're sponsoring. If not, help the newcomer find another person.
- Suggestions on how to get one- list of people newcomers can ask questions.
- Make announcement at meetings. If you need a sponsor look for someone who has what you want and ask them how they are achieving it.
- A service position to help people sponsor and receive sponsorship.
- Exploration of expectations for sponsorship be made more clear.
- An IG flyer for sponsors, encouraging them to encourage their sponsees to become sponsors.

Should Intergroup be involved in sponsorship at the member level?

11 responded with 6 unclear on the question, 4 'yes' and 1 'no' – see individual comments below

- No; but at the meeting level, yes. (see “other ideas”)
- ?
- ?
- From the level of promoting sponsorship – workshops, newsletter, emails
- Come up with a set of guidelines by county or by individual meeting – when it is ok to sponsor.
- Yes- what you've done has brought up consciousness and helped.
- I think that would be great, but I'm not sure how that would look. . .
- Huh?
- I don't understand the question
- Not sure what you mean
- ?

Should we maintain a list of potential sponsors on our website? Why or why not?

13 responded with 4 'yes' 3 maybe/unsure and 6 'no' – see individual comments below

- NO - I think that new comers should be given the opportunity to reach out for their own recovery by asking someone
- Yes – It will help newcomers who are looking for a sponsor in particular
- No- Anonymity issues
- If people are willing. I'm not because anyone can access the website, not just members.
- Yes- makes it available to those who can't get to a meeting.
- It can change so quickly – a list might not be helpful- could produce rejection for those seeking a sponsor.
- No- because the list is too liquid (changes too quickly)
- No- because I wouldn't want tons of calls but perhaps we could have a list of folks who could provide 'help' in finding a sponsor or be temporary sponsors.
- No
- Yes- people need help. Some people may have trouble reaching out
- No. Changes too often. Better to put on suggestions of how to find one – go to other meetings, ask others, etc.
- Maybe- but could be scary for people to have our numbers on the website- how could we know if someone likes what we have without meeting them
- YES – not always enough sponsors at meetings.

How can Intergroup support OA members needing sponsors?

10 responded with 3 confused by the question– see individual comments below

- Not sure- what about drafting a statement to be used at meetings? Or encouraging meetings to use the statement about asking someone who has what you want.
- Having this type of workshop is very helpful
- Perhaps one person for each meeting keeps track of available sponsors. Intergroup forwards to seekers.
- At meeting level ask that all sponsors identify themselves so that newcomers can ask that person whether or not they're sponsoring. If not, help the newcomer find another person.
- ?
- Continue to encourage sponsorship. If a sponsor is too busy to be available to new sponsees, encourage sponsor to suggest/guide/encourage their sponsees to begin sponsoring.
- Suggestions on how to get one- list of people newcomers can ask questions of.
- Help support step work and abstinence - then they will have something to offer
- YES – not always enough sponsors at meetings.
- ?

Does your meeting ask sponsors to identify themselves? If yes, how?

14 responded with 11 'yes' and 3 'no' – see individual comments below

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None of themselves • Yes- In the beginning when we introduce ourselves • Yes- Declare abstinence and sponsorship • Yes, during the introductions. • Yes- as they go around the room and introduce themselves • No • No • Yes-mention it when we go around and introduce ourselves. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes-just in the intros if available sponsor or not. • Yes. Pass a list around to sign if you want to and check if you are available to sponsor and if you need a sponsor and want to be contacted. • Yes- in the introductions. • Yes, check off sheet • Yes, verbally and on sign-in sheet • Yes- raise hands |
|---|---|

Does your meeting keep a list of potential sponsors?

13 responded with 1 unknown, 9 'no' and 3 'yes' – see individual comments below

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None • No • No • No • I don't know • Technically yes – on care lists, but attendees don't check the box. • No • No | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No • Yes- Pass a list around to sign if you want to and check if you are available to sponsor and if you need a sponsor and want to be contacted. • No • Yes • No |
|---|---|

Do you have any other ideas?

- Make announcement at meetings. If you need a sponsor look for someone who has what you want and ask them how they are achieving it.
- Sometimes in previous communities a service position helped people sponsor and receive sponsorship.
- How about this? An IG flyer for sponsors, encouraging them to encourage their sponsees to become sponsors.
- Exploration of expectations for sponsorship be made more clear.
- If someone asks you to sponsor them and you can't, (why?) then help them find a sponsor.