



Planning a Sponsorship Workshop

From the *Twelfth-Step-Within Handbook*, pp. 25-28.

In Overeaters Anonymous, we are told that “together we can do what we could never do alone.” Nowhere is this principle more simply and clearly practiced than in the sponsor-sponsee relationship. Yet many of us have found it quite a challenge to find a sponsor to work with. Often we find that in our meetings, when the request is made for all who are available to sponsor to raise their hands, few (or no) hands appear. There may be many reasons for this, but the WSBC Twelfth-Step-Within Committee offers the following Sponsorship Workshop materials as one step towards a solution.

If your region, intergroup or group is planning an event, why not include Sponsorship Workshops as one activity, or even the main theme of the event? We’ve included topics for speakers, discussion ideas, fun and creative activities, even questions for pondering and/or writing for sponsors and sponsees. You may mix and match these ideas to suit your group’s needs. And perhaps members will feel more confident raising their hands to sponsor with the support that such a workshop could give!

Below are some suggested activities for Sponsorship Workshop events.

For a one or two hour session within a MEETING, SHARE-A-THON, RETREAT OR CONVENTION:

- Choose three members to speak on the topic of sponsorship, selecting a specific topic for each speaker (20 minutes each), with remaining time for sharing; and/or
- Divide into equal-sized groups, with an experienced sponsor as leader of each group. The leader can pose questions for discussion; after a set amount of time (30-40 minutes), the whole group gathers to share what came out of the small group discussions.

For a half-day (3+ hour) event:

- Create a panel of three to four speakers to share on different aspects of sponsorship for 15-20 minutes each.
- Use members in a prepared role-play to illustrate various situations encountered in the sponsor-sponsee relationship.
- Break into groups for further discussion.
- Regroup for a question and answer session; have blank index cards available for Ask-It-Basket questions.

For a full-day workshop:

- Opening, introductions
- Ask all present to identify and state whether they have sponsors, and share for one minute on what they hope to find in this event.
- Select a panel of three to four different speakers to share for 15-20 minutes each on different aspects of sponsorship. (1 hour)
- Schedule a Question and Answer Session—questions can be submitted by workshop participants, and/or prepared in advance. Have an experienced sponsor facilitate this session, but allow for answers to be given by a panel of other members so there is a diversity of experience. Leave time for sharing. (1 hour)
- Break up into groups with a set of questions for individual inventory on personal sponsorship issues followed by group discussions in the group. (1 hour)
- Return to general group for sharing, feedback. (1/2 hour)
- Try to match up sponsors/temporary sponsors with sponsees.

Workshop tips:

- Circulate an ASK-IT-BASKET for questions.
- Use dots on name badges, for example:
 - Red = willing to sponsor
 - Blue = not currently available
 - Green = looking for sponsor
- Think of creative ways to match sponsors with sponsees.
- Identify types of sponsors: food sponsor, Step sponsor, program sponsor, temporary sponsor, service sponsor, etc.
- Establish a sponsor bank—this could be a list of those:
 - available to sponsor
 - available to get a newcomer started
 - available to take phone calls
 - available as a “vacation sponsor”

SUGGESTED SPEAKER TOPICS FOR WORKSHOPS

Here are some possible topics—your group will certainly have many more ideas to draw on from your own experience!

- Getting Started—How to Start Being a Sponsor
- My Sponsee, My Friend—Keeping Focus on Recovery
- Sponsoring Members in Relapse
- Breaking Up is Hard to Do: When to Say When
- Food vs. Step Sponsors
- Helping Your Sponsee be a Sponsor
- Sponsoring Members with Special Needs

Guidelines for Workshop Speakers: This, of course, is ultimately the decision of the group planning the workshop, but here are some suggestions:

- Be a sponsor
- Have a sponsor
- Be abstinent—length of abstinence to be defined by your group
- Be actively working the Steps

If your group doesn't have any members qualified to speak, invite outside speakers.

DISCUSSION/QUESTION-AND-ANSWER TOPICS

1. Am I "good enough" to be a sponsor?
2. Are there any definite techniques for sponsoring?
3. Can I have more than one sponsor?
4. Do I have to agree with everything my sponsor tells me?
5. How long do I have to be abstinent to sponsor?
6. How do I know when I'm ready to be a sponsor?
7. How should I choose a sponsor?
8. Is there a right and wrong way to sponsor?
9. If I'm not a newcomer, is it too late to get a sponsor?
10. What if I don't like the sponsor I pick?
11. Are you a sponsor? If yes, why? What do you gain? Whose recovery and program are you responsible for?
12. If not, why not? What do you lose? Whose recovery and program are you responsible for?
13. Do you have a sponsor? If not, why not? Do you sponsor anyone? If not, why not?
14. What do you want in a sponsor?
15. What do you think your sponsor should do for you?
16. What are you willing to do? What are you willing to change?
17. What is the difference between the need to work with a sponsor and developing an unhealthy dependence on the sponsor?
18. Who can sponsor? Is it necessary that I sponsor? When should I become a sponsor?
19. What is a good sponsor?
20. What happens when the sponsor has no answer for the sponsee?
21. What expectations/demands do we have from our sponsor?
22. When do we end the relationship?
23. How do we end the relationship?
24. What do we do if the sponsee has a slip or a relapse?
25. What do we do if the sponsee wants to leave OA?
26. What are the limitations of the sponsor?
27. Are there any time limits to the daily contact or length of time we sponsor?

PERSONAL INVENTORY WORK

Set 1

Sponsor questions

1. My sponsee and I arranged for him/her to call every day at an established time, yet my sponsee hasn't kept the commitment. What should I do?
2. My sponsee keeps asking for help, yet when I give suggestions, my sponsee either gets defensive about why he/she can't do it, or says he/she will and then doesn't. What should I do?
3. My sponsee cannot get more than three days of back-to-back abstinence. What can I do?
4. My sponsee says he/she is abstinent. However, my sponsee is retaining his/her excess weight, sometimes even gaining. What can I do?
5. I can see my sponsee has a lot of unresolved issues to work through, yet when I bring them up, my sponsee denies them. What can I do?
6. My life is in chaos, and I just don't have enough time and energy to diligently work with my sponsee right now. What should I do?
7. I am in relapse. Am I still a good sponsor?
8. My sponsee has stopped calling me; there's been no closure. What can I do?

Sponsee questions

1. My sponsor and I arranged a regular meeting time to call, yet once or twice a week my sponsor is not home and I feel abandoned. What can I do?
2. My sponsor is in relapse and unable to help me get abstinent. What can I do?
3. I feel lost in working the Steps, yet my sponsor only cares about what I eat. What can I do?
4. I am tired of my sponsor's pat answers for everything such as "one day at a time," "let go and let God," etc. I want my sponsor to truly lead me through the problem. What can I do?
5. I've heard that I should pick a sponsor who has what I want. What does that really mean? How do I do that?

Set 2

Questions for members who don't have a sponsor:

1. Why not?
2. What do you think keeps you from getting one?
3. Could you be afraid of something, like being abstinent? Success? Being thin?
4. Are you looking for the easier, softer way?
5. Are you afraid your sponsor will be a member of the "food police"?
6. What do you think are the traits necessary in a "good" sponsor?

Questions for those who do have a sponsor:

1. Why do you have a sponsor?
2. Are you receiving what you want or what you need?
3. Is your sponsor too tough or too gentle with you?

4. Is he/she judgmental?
5. Does your sponsor listen or just give advice?
6. What kind of example does he/she set? How many meetings does your sponsor attend? Is he/she using the tools?

Questions for those who are not currently sponsoring:

1. Why not?
2. Do you have a sponsor?
3. What experience, strength and hope do you have to share?

Some literature you may wish to have available:

- *A Guide for Sponsors* pamphlet
- *Sponsoring Through the Twelve Steps* pamphlet
- The Big Book, chapter 12, "Working with Others"
- *The Twelfth-Step-Within Handbook*

We hope these ideas are valuable to you in planning your Sponsorship Workshop. Thank you for your service in carrying out OA's primary purpose and helping all members fulfill the Responsibility Pledge: "Always to extend the hand and heart of Overeaters Anonymous to all who share my disease; for this I am responsible."