

Sponsorship in Workaholics Anonymous

The Tool of Sponsorship

“We find a Workaholics Anonymous (WA) member who is committed to abstinence from compulsive working to help us work the Steps, Traditions, Tools and Principles. Sponsors offer guidance through the Recovery process on all three levels: physical, emotional, and spiritual. A member may work with more than one sponsor and may change sponsors at will. We become a sponsor as a way of working Step Twelve, carrying the WA message and putting the Principles of the Program into practice. We ask to be sponsored so that we can benefit from the experience of someone who has achieved what we want. WA is a Program of attraction, so we find a sponsor whose recovery inspires us and follow his or her lead. A co-sponsoring arrangement is sometimes the most practical or desirable approach, many workaholics having found or deepened their recovery in this manner.” (*Workaholics Anonymous Book of Recovery*, 2nd ed., 2015, p. 28)

What Is a Sponsor?

A WA sponsor is typically an experienced member of the WA Fellowship who is actively working the Twelve-Step Program of Workaholics Anonymous. A sponsor guides another member in working the Twelve Steps and achieving and maintaining abstinence from compulsive working.

What Is the Role of a Sponsor?

A sponsor is a guide to working the Twelve Steps and using the Tools and Principles of the WA Program. Among other things, the sponsor will assist a person being sponsored (sponsee) to define personal abstinence, bottom lines, top lines and action plans. A sponsor takes a sponsee through the Twelve Steps and helps a sponsee to understand the importance and meaning of the Twelve Traditions in the life of the Fellowship. The sponsor can be a person with whom to share things that may feel too vulnerable to share in meetings.

What Do I Look for In a Sponsor?

The following are points to consider when choosing a sponsor:

- Is the person’s recovery something I would aspire to?
- Is the person actively working the Twelve Steps and using the Tools and Principles?
- Is the person somebody I feel comfortable with and can trust?

- Due to the closeness and connection that can develop between sponsor and sponsee, it is important that there is no risk of sexual attraction in the sponsorship relationship.
- Does the person have the time to sponsor me? (For the potential sponsor to answer this question it is helpful to first be clear about the level of support and contact a sponsee might need.)

How Do I Know If I Am Ready to Become a Sponsor?

If asked to become a sponsor, it is a very good idea for us to practice the “72-hour hold,” in which we take some time to reflect before making a decision. We can use this time to consult with our sponsor, higher power and WA fellows. Some questions we might ask ourselves are:

- Do I have more experience than my potential sponsee? Am I able to help the person start out or continue in their recovery?
- What are the expectations and needs of the potential sponsee? Do I have the time and energy to give the person what they require? Can I practice the Tool of “Substitution,” in which I remove another activity of equal time and energy?
- Do I believe that I need to be a perfect sponsor in order to sponsor at all? Do I have the humility to learn from my sponsees?

We may need to honestly admit that we do not have the capacity to take on a sponsee at this time. This open admission can be a very helpful example of how we work our program. Being able to state clearly the capacity we do have to give lets our fellows know our availability for support and outreach or for a different style of sponsorship (see below).

How Do I Find a Sponsor?

The first way to look for a sponsor is to listen in meetings, and when we hear somebody who has the kind of recovery we would want, we ask that person if they would sponsor us. Sometimes we might not find somebody in our “home Group” (the meeting we primarily attend) who has the availability. We might find someone by looking further afield in WA—other meetings, including virtual meetings (phone and online), conferences, conventions and gatherings.

Styles of Sponsorship

Many of us find co-sponsorship to be helpful. This is an arrangement whereby members with a more or less equal amount of experience sponsor each other. This can work very well when both members have a bit of experience. We can also ask somebody to be our “Recovery buddy” to check in with about our abstinence and action plans.

Some of us join a small group to work the Twelve Steps alongside other members.

Having more than one sponsor could work well when one sponsor cannot meet all our needs. For instance, we might use a WA member to sponsor us with regards to abstinence and service, and share our Step work with someone who might be experienced at working the Steps.

Over time we may feel we have “outgrown” a sponsor, or we may become their sponsor. We never “graduate” from the Program. Continued growth can result from selecting a new sponsor or co-sponsor, working with a sponsee or engaging in a new service position.

However we sponsor or are sponsored, we can find the mutual collaboration and connection to be an enriching and very rewarding part of our recovery.

Help for Workaholics

Workaholics Anonymous is a Fellowship of individuals who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problems and help others to recover from workaholism. Recovering workaholics have found that working a Twelve-Step Program of Recovery can bring complete relief from workaholism, allowing full and productive lives.

Workaholics Anonymous offers face-to-face meetings in many cities around the world. In addition, there are meetings on the telephone, via Skype, Zoom and online every day of the week. You can find a full list of WA meetings at <http://www.workaholics-anonymous.org>.

(© 2019 Workaholics Anonymous World Service Organization, Inc.)