

Sponsorship Discussion Questions

*These are just questions – not recommendations. Although not exhaustive, we hope that these topics and questions provide a good starting framework for a group discussion and individual consideration. We hope to hear **diverse viewpoints and approaches** on each question, and we hope people will explain “**why**” and not just “**how**” they do things, so that we can gain insight and refine our own methods.*

PREPARATION – preparing & getting sponsees

1. How soon do you think people should start sponsoring? How do people prepare to sponsor and learn about sponsorship?
2. How does a person find sponsees? How do you decide whether to sponsor someone who asks you? How do you decide how many people to sponsor?
3. Do you have a standard speech or list of rules at the outset? Do you have a general plan or agenda for the first day, week, month, year? Do you qualify a sponsee in some way, what do you tell them if it's not a good fit?
4. Do you or how do you sponsor people who are still in treatment? What about people who are in a jail, prison, a psychiatric hospital, or other institution?
5. What are some ways to effectively identify and then establish a contact with a newcomer before or after a meeting?

SOBRIETY & FELLOWSHIP – establishing relationships and helping people settle in

1. Do you have a set of basic suggestions, guidelines, or structure for new sponsees (e.g., "Get a phone list", "Find a home group", "Read the first 164", etc.)? Do you involve yourself in what kinds of meetings a sponsee attends or how often?
2. How do you meet with the sponsee, and how often - Restaurants? At home? By phone? Via email? On Zoom? At meetings? Daily? Weekly? At a home group? Within an H&I facility's restrictions?
3. Do you use literature in the early days - Big Book, 12 & 12, Grapevines, pamphlets, Traditions checklist, Guidelines, Box 4-5-9, or other? Do you use outside (non-Conference-approved) material? Any other specific helpful recommendations- not found in our literature- to help in the early days?
4. Do you encourage participation in fellowship social activities (coffee, pizza, etc.) or events such as picnics, dances, and conventions?
5. When and how is it appropriate to give help to a new person? Stay in your home? Give them rides? Lend money? Find jobs?

STEPS & SERVICE – the major early work, more or less “the first year”

1. Do you have a general timetable for getting someone through the Steps, e.g., 1 week, 3 months, 12 months, etc.? Do you have specific goals & objectives? Does the sense of urgency differ depending on the individual circumstance (e.g. chronic slipper, brand new, etc)
2. How do you take someone through the Steps, e.g., discussion, reading, “assignments”? Do you favor a particular approach such as: Big Book method, 12 & 12 method, “Unofficial Guide”, Joe & Charlie, “Back To Basics”, Hazelden guides, other?
3. Do you talk about Traditions and/or Concepts?
4. Do you talk about pamphlets and literature?
5. Do you help them get service commitments?
6. Do you help them get sponsees? Do you help prepare sponsees to sponsor others? If so, how?
7. Do you encourage them to attend roundtable discussions, workshops, district meetings, or assemblies?

LONG-TERM SPONSORSHIP – maintenance work and moving on with life

1. Do you have a general plan for sponsees who are in long-term recovery or the “maintenance Steps”?
2. How often do you meet or talk with sponsees who are well established in recovery? What do you talk about?
3. Do you continue to work actively with sponsees on their defects, inventory, or amends? On their religious or spiritual life? On their efforts to sponsor and do service?
4. Do you encourage sponsees to try other therapies such as other 12 Step programs, counseling, etc.?
5. To what extent are you involved in your sponsee's personal life (e.g., health, finance, romance, family, career) and major life events?
6. Do you socialize with sponsees?
7. What do you do, if anything, when you see a sponsee slipping away from recovery?

Miscellaneous Issues (Any/All)

1. How do you handle people who transfer to you from another sponsor?
2. How do you handle people who are returning from a relapse? How do you deal with chronic relapsers?
3. What do you think about “firing” sponsees? Have you ever been “fired” by a sponsee?
4. Do you practice “service sponsorship”? How?
5. What are some mistakes you've made and what are some of the hardest things about sponsorship? What has worked well for you and what are some of the best things about sponsorship? What wasn't mentioned today that should be brought up?
6. Is there one right way or best way to sponsor?
7. What is the goal of sponsorship?
8. What is your experience communicating with new people and beginning the sponsee-sponsor relationship in virtual meetings?
9. Any thoughts on sponsoring people who:
 - a. are older, wealthier, or more accomplished than you? have been sober longer?
 - b. are gay/straight? are of the opposite sex?
 - c. have a strong personality? you don't have good chemistry with?
 - d. are atheists? are very religious?
 - e. are very young?
 - f. have a family?
 - g. have special needs, health issues, or reading/language challenges?
 - h. are very busy?
10. Are antidepressants or other medications an issue for you in sponsorship? How do you sponsor people who are involved with other 12-step programs or therapies at the same time? How do you deal with people who have other serious mental illnesses?
11. What is your approach when a sponsee solicits help or your advice on an issue you have little to no experience in?
12. Are there any other important or pertinent sponsor-related approaches or topics not mentioned here that you've found effective or important?