

October 6, 2017

Subject: The balanced sponsor/sponsee relationship

Dear Fellow OA Members,

The promise of relief from our disease of compulsive eating may give newcomers the expectation that members who sponsor are speaking for OA as a whole. This puts the newcomer in a position to be vulnerable to recommendations which may not be in their best interest. When we first join the Fellowship, we may not be aware of how the practices of working the Twelve Steps vary with our members. No one member speaks for OA as a whole.

Sometimes we hear “if you want what I have, you will do what I do” from individuals who appear to have the answer we are seeking.

Unfortunately, in some cases the individuals who offer themselves as sponsors may go beyond the boundaries suggested for sponsorship and ask things that are inappropriate in the sponsor/sponsee relationship.

Sponsors are not professionals when they are doing Twelve Step work. They ought to only share or suggest changes that worked for them in their journey. Sponsors should not issue orders or make demands, for example, when it comes to use of medications. Sponsors should not give advice regarding medications or other substances. All members of OA may choose their own plan of eating, their Higher Power, and how they work their program.

In OA we are here to care for our members. If a sponsor becomes controlling or demands that you must behave in a certain way to recover, we suggest that you speak with a fellow member from another group or contact your local intergroup/service board, region chair, or any trustee and discuss the matter. You may change sponsors or go to different meetings to find other ways members use to heal from the disease of compulsive eating.

We individually judge our own abstinence, healthy weight, and food plans. Your sponsor and your OA group are there as helpful guides. Others in OA (sponsors or not) are not medical experts or counselors. Members and sponsors encourage—not judge others on the path of recovery. We are asked to turn our will over to the care of a loving Higher Power. Other human beings help—not hinder that process.

Yours in service,
Board of Trustees