



Planning a Sponsorship Workshop

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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 go up. There may be many reasons for this, but the World Service Business Conference Twelfth Step Within Committee offers the following sponsorship workshop materials as one step toward a solution.

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

Suggest Workshop Activities

For a one- or two-hour session within a meeting, share-a-thon, retreat, or convention:

1. Choose three members to speak on the topic of sponsorship, selecting a specific topic for each speaker (20 minutes each). Use the remaining time for sharing.
2. 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 to 40 minutes), the whole group gathers to share what came out of the small group discussions.

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

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

For a full-day workshop:

1. Opening and introductions
2. Ask all present to identify themselves, state whether they have a sponsor, and share for one minute on what they hope to find at the event.
3. Select a panel of three to four speakers to share for 15 to 20 minutes each on different aspects of sponsorship. (1 hour)
4. Schedule a question and answer session. Questions can be submitted by workshop participants and/or prepared in advance. Have an experienced sponsor facilitate the 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)
5. Break into groups with a set of questions for individual inventory on personal sponsorship issues, followed by discussions within the group. (1 hour)
6. Return to general group for sharing and feedback. (30 minutes)
7. Try to match 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, such as a list of those who are:
 - Available to sponsor
 - Available to get a newcomer started
 - Available to take phone calls
 - Available as a “vacation sponsor”

Suggested Workshop Speaker Topics

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 the 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.

1. Be a sponsor.
2. Have a sponsor.
3. Be abstinent (length of abstinence to be defined by your group).
4. 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 of our sponsor?
22. When do we end the relationship?
23. How do we end the relationship?
24. What do we do if a sponsee has a slip or a relapse?
25. What do we do if a 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 One: 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 she/he can't do it, or says she/he 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?

Set One: Sponsee Questions

1. My sponsor and I arranged a regular time for me to call her/him, 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 Two: Questions for Members Who Don't Have a Sponsor

1. Why not?
2. What do you think keeps you from getting a sponsor?
3. Could you be afraid of something, such as 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?

Set Two: 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 she/he set? How many meetings a week does your sponsor attend? Is she/he using the Tools?

Set Two: Questions for Those Who are Not Currently Sponsoring

7. Why not?
8. Do you have a sponsor?
9. What experience, strength, and hope do you have to share with others?

Literature You May Wish to Have Available

- *A Guide for Sponsors*
- *Sponsoring Through the Twelve Steps*
- Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., chapter 7, “Working with Others”
- *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.

OA Board-Approved

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