



The Sunshiner

Spring Edition 2025

Sponsorship – the key to unlocking the program

When newcomers ask me what they should do, my answer is usually pretty simple: go to meetings and find a sponsor. Sponsorship is THE thing that made a difference to my program. It made me accountable to someone and provided me with a safe, loving person who made me feel less alone. My sponsor provided me with a roadmap on how to 'do' program – that I needed to get to regular meetings, do service, call other members, figure out what my abstinence was. But moreover, my sponsor offered me the solution – the steps – which resulted in a spiritual experience and transformed my life.

I can say quite honestly that my first sponsor saved my life. I was a newcomer who didn't know up from down – other than that I didn't want to be in OA but wanted what you had. In a desperate outreach call, she offered to be my sponsor if I agreed to several conditions, including 'are you willing to go to any lengths?'

I've changed sponsors a few times over my years in program. I have developed a strong network of OA fellows, have enlarged my spiritual life, and now sponsor others. My sponsor continues to be an important pillar in my life. I now have more tools to use should she be unavailable, but she continues to walk with me along this path, reminding me of where the solution is when I stumble into my own self-will.

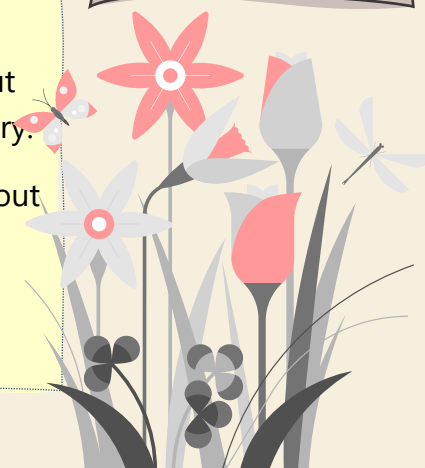
Sponsoring others has been a similar path of growth. It's not always easy, I frequently take missteps, but it is rewarding beyond measure. I sponsor both out of gratitude for what was given to me, but also, to remain grateful of my recovery.

To me, this is a must-have tool in the program, one which is engrained throughout our twelve steps. It is the key to unlocking the Program, the Steps, and the Promises.

Meaghan

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A Grateful Goodbye

My first sponsor, M., passed away last month. He was one of the first people I met in OA, but it was a year before he became my sponsor. He was one of the few men I'd met and one of very few OA members who identified as a sponsor. I wrote down his number, but at the time, he sure didn't seem like someone I envisioned as my sponsor.

When I first came to OA, I needed help, and I was open to the OA message, so I quickly devoted myself to my home group. I was struck "almost abstinent" from day one. (By "almost," I mean slips every once in a while.) I delved into the literature, but I didn't really get to doing the Steps I was reading and hearing so much about. Still, I was happier and more serene in OA, and I think it showed because a couple of people asked me to sponsor them. I got a Sponsorship Kit, shared my experience, and listened. But I didn't have a sponsor—and I started to feel like I really should. I just wasn't meeting any prospects.

After a year, I ran into M. at a meeting, and we spoke afterward. He asked, "Did you get a sponsor yet?" I sheepishly told him, "Not yet." I decided to call him only to ask his advice on getting a sponsor, but Higher Power had other plans. One minute into my phone call with M., he told me to email him every day with my plan of eating, get a Big Book and an OA Twelve and Twelve. He told me to start writing in the Twelve Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous and call him three times a week to discuss my responses. How did I get myself into all this? I wasn't asking him to be my sponsor, but he'd misunderstood! God must have a good sense of humor because I'd gotten a sponsor who loved to use humor.

I was willing to be willing. M. had me go through the Steps in order, one at a time. He listened to my reams of writing, and I listened to him. He had the audacity to question some of my food choices and suggested I see a nutritionist. I didn't want to, but I'm so glad I did. When I got to Step Four, he advised me to set time limits and focus on my glaring character defects. He emphasized taking inventory of my positive attributes, too, and looking at my progress. He taught me to practice the opposite of my character defects, work on my resentments with prayers, and turn decisions over to HP.

It took another year to get to Step Nine, and after another slip, I surrendered what was left of my self-will regarding food and felt the real gift of abstinence begin. As the Big Book says, I'd been "placed in a position of neutrality—safe and protected. . . . That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition" (Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., p. 85). Since then, I've been blessed with over five years of continuous abstinence, one day at a time.

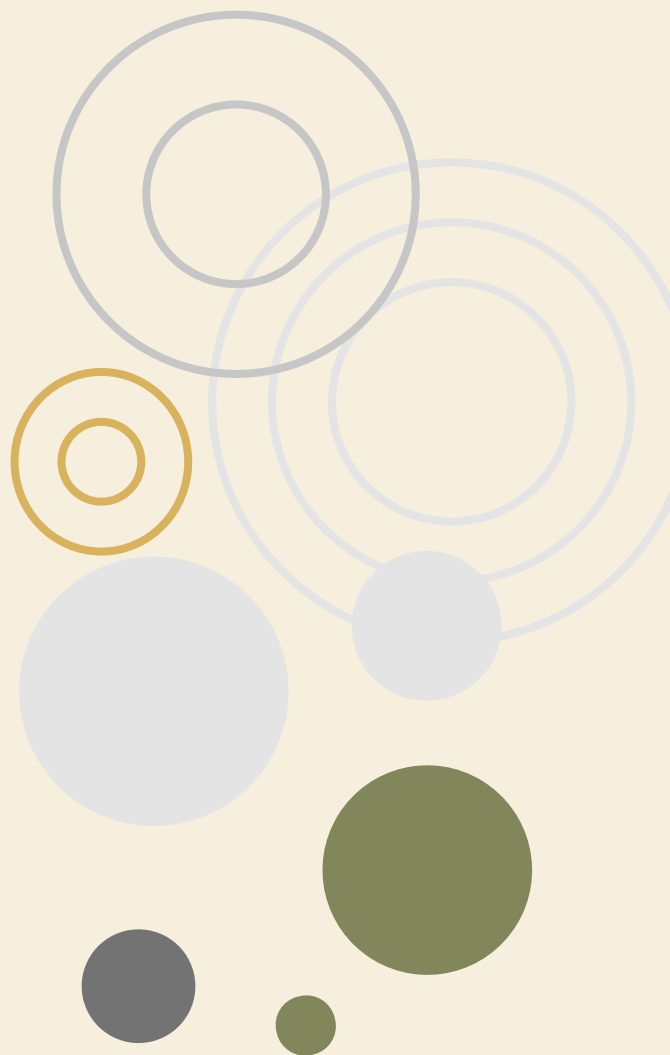
M. encouraged me to live a life of maximum usefulness in service. Today, my favorite Tool is sponsorship, and I learned from the best—not to be perfect, neither better nor less than others, but to do our best "to practice these principles in all our affairs" (Step Twelve). My sponsor and I grew quite close over the years. We went to meetings, workshops, and retreats together. One day, he told me he was going to stop sponsoring me because he had eaten something he had no business eating and needed to focus on his own abstinence and program.

He got abstinent again right away, and he nagged and helped me to find a new sponsor. (Perhaps HP wanted me to learn new and different things from another sponsor.) Soon after, M. began to have major health issues and went to stay at a health facility. He couldn't get to a meeting, so OA members brought a meeting to him. Until his earthly end, M. always stayed connected; he lived in acceptance and gratitude with a sense of humor.

Thank you for letting me share about my beloved sponsor. As it says in the OA Twelve and Twelve, Second Edition, "We gratefully follow in the footsteps of many others who have walked this way before us" (p. 86). I am M.'s grateful sponsee.

— Anonymous

Posted in the Lifeline August 1, 2019



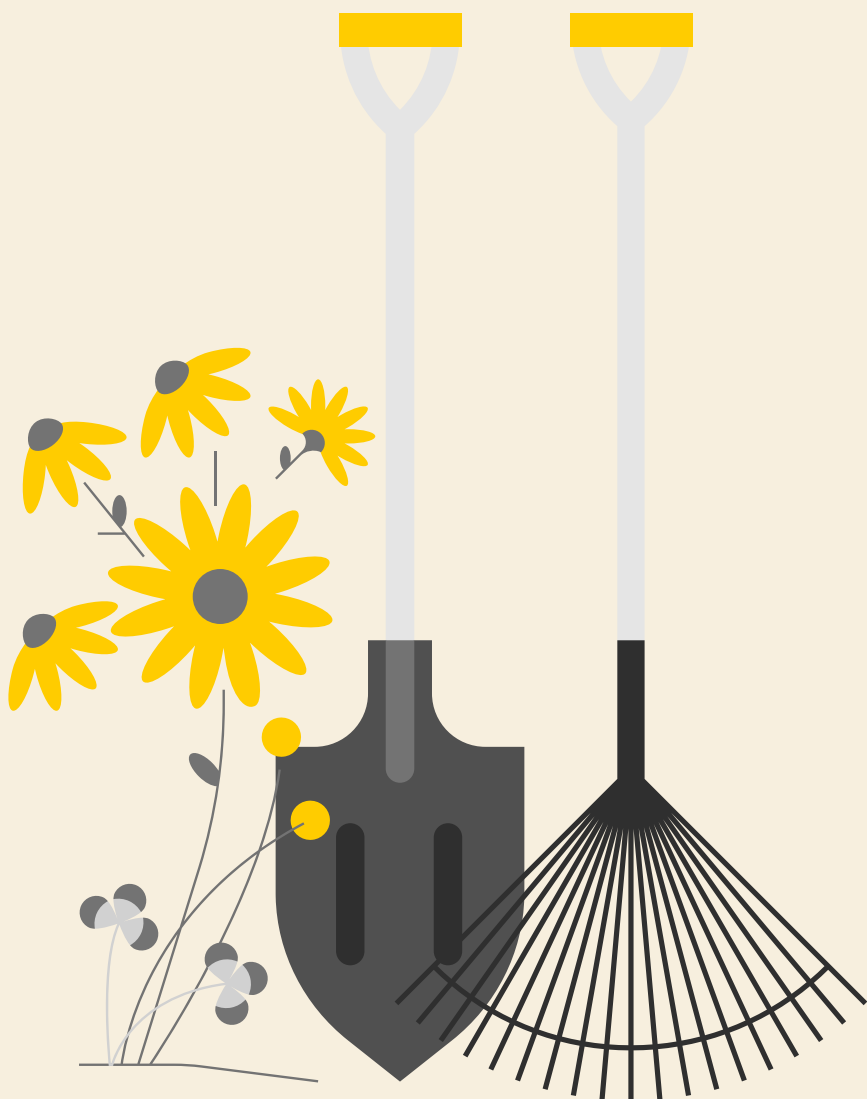


A fare well

Thank you everyone for the opportunity to do service as co-editor of the Sunshiner. This service position was recommended to me because it was flexible and worked around my various life demands, plus, I like writing! I anticipated I'd get to write and would spend some time reviewing submissions from the fellowship. What I didn't anticipate was the joy of doing service with my co-editor. This relationship is one that was borne out of service and has since resulted in many meaningful chats and ad-hoc stepwork sessions.

As I step away from this service position, I would make a few observations:

- Your voice matters. Thank you to those of you who submitted articles, prose, and art. You touched your fellows, in the NCR and beyond:) (and some of your submissions were picked up by other OA publications!)
- Service gives back. Friendships are borne. Stepwork is given. It is 30 mins/1 hour/etc. that we are not eating.
- And when you're submitting to the Sunshiner, you're using two tools at once (literature and service)!
- It takes a group effort. The Sunshiner is stronger when the fellowship contributes. We are self-supporting on many fronts, publications included.
- Meaghan H.



Thank You Notes

My sponsor had me start sponsoring at thirty-days abstinent. I was working Step Three by that point, so I could help newcomers getting started on Step One. My sponsor gave me ten minutes every morning for my first three years of abstinence. Now, I carry on that pattern, offering a daily ten-minute slot to someone newly abstinent and starting on Step One, and I continue daily contact with them for up to three years. Often, those I sponsor start calling less often when they get about three years of abstinence. They are busy themselves giving more time in the mornings to sponsoring others.

I've always set aside an hour each morning for six sponsee calls. Of course, if someone who wants a sponsor hasn't had anyone agree to help them, I will open a seventh slot for them for a week or two until they find someone else. My first sponsor's advice was to never let anyone leave a meeting without a sponsor. That would be like saying, "We know you can't do it on your own, but good luck trying; I'm too busy to help."

"Thank you for being an example of joyful living through abstinence. I have gained so much hope, guidance, and love from you. I feel I have grown a lot this year. Thank you for your honesty and for challenging me to face my fears, be more honest, trust in my HP, and above all, commit daily to my abstinence."

"There are no words that can justly express my profound gratitude to you for your sponsorship these past three years. I feel truly blessed and humbled to have benefited from your experience, strength, and hope. Thank you from my heart for your support and insights."

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Thank You Notes


What are the benefits of sponsoring? Staying abstinent myself is the most obvious. Also, it's amazing to "trudge the Road of Happy Destiny" (Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., p 164) together, as these sentiments from my sponsees attest.

From time to time, I write to my sponsors, past and present, to express my gratitude, knowing I can't work this program on my own. Thank you to everyone who has been my sponsor—for six, seventeen, three, five, three, three, and two years.

By anonymous, Posted on August 1, 2019 (Lifeline)

"I know you don't keep me abstinent and you're not my HP, but I think you're part of the mysterious way God is working in my life, and I'm really grateful. Thank you for your abstinence, honesty, courage, and amazing commitment. It has been such a fantastic support to me in the past eighteen months. Thank you for showing me the path to continue the abstinence I have today. Thank you for being straight and not getting caught up in my self-pity. Thank you for your suggestions when I'm unsure of what to do or how to behave and thank you for leading me back the Big Book for guidance."

"You are so much more than a friend. You've led me, cajoled me, and yes, even pushed me through the life-changing Twelve Steps. Thank you for asking, 'Do you want a sponsor? If you do, call me at 7:30 a.m.' I was scared to ask, scared to try the Steps, yet I knew I wanted what you had. Thank you for three years and eight months of sponsorship. My life has changed because of you, OA, and my HP. Your voice will be in my head and heart to pass on to others."



Walking Through

One of the better moves I made in early recovery was finding a sponsor. I was fortunate. After much trepidation, I found a sponsor who lived and practiced the Steps and made that the focus of our relationship. At that time, the program had food sponsors, Step sponsors, and spiritual sponsors, and over the years, I got help from people in all these areas.

Now, after twenty-five years of being a sponsor myself, I approach sponsoring as “walking someone through the Steps,” which addresses all three aspects of recovery: physical, emotional, and spiritual. My approach has developed to be flexible but focused. When I’m first asked to sponsor, I tell the person I only have two requirements: that they work harder on their Steps than I do and they carry the message forward by sponsoring others in the Steps when they finish. To me, the latter is an important part of their own Twelfth Step and supports the continuation of our program. I remind them that I am not their therapist, banker, cab service, mother, boss, crying towel, or guru; I’m just another person in recovery.

For a lot of us, fear of the unknown is a hindrance to recovery, but this is something a sponsor can help overcome. Having walked the road of recovery myself, I can be a guide who knows some of the common pitfalls. I try to act as a cheerleader to encourage those who are just learning. Occasionally, I will inject some drill sergeant overtones if progress bogs down. (If I have to do this with a sponsee too often, I remind them of their commitment to work harder than I do, and if that fails, I suggest they get another sponsor.) I try to use empathy, patience, tolerance, and love as my guides, but I also maintain my boundaries and manage my time.

I don’t think there is just one way to work the Steps, as long as it is done to the best of a person’s ability. Their work doesn’t have to be perfect; they will have chances to improve its depth with future Step work. My favorite guidance format is to read The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition together, followed by weekly writing assignments and conversations at our weekly meetings. I also use the Step Four guidelines as set out in Chapter 5 of the Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., pp. 64–71) because it is a handy, time-tested outline. By adding a few other writing topics and discussions of issues that arise, we seem to cover things well.

As a sponsor, I have been able to help others and pass on what was freely given to me. With each new sponsee, I get to walk through the Steps again myself, and that has proved to be the key to a happy, spiritual, and satisfying way of life.

Anonymous, Posted on August 1, 2019, Walking Through - Lifeline

