

## Sponsorship

### **Thank you for your desire to give back!**

The Savior asked Peter three times if he loved Him and when his answer was in the affirmative, three times the Savior told him to feed his sheep. We have wrecked our lives and the lives of others with our addiction and selfish desires; sponsorship is a way to build back from the wreckage of the past, a way to find the freedom from selfishness to service. To help our Father to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of His children.

As you sponsor others you have a unique perspective that therapists, bishops, or spouses don't have; you have traveled the journey of the addict and you know what others don't know. Your experience can help others find the way out of lust and fantasy to reality.

### **What is required to be a sponsor?**

From page 73 of the White Book we read:

“Perfection in the sponsor is neither necessary nor possible.”

“There are few absolute requirements a prospective sponsor should have, but a period of comfortable sexual sobriety, including progressive victory over lust, is surely a must.”

Also be ahead of the sponsee in working the steps. Men should sponsor men and women should sponsor women. In the case of same sex attraction one should not sponsor others with same attraction tendencies.

"Wise sponsors know they can't carry the sexaholic, they can only carry the message of their own recovery.”

You're only limited to share what has worked for you. Some sponsees will be ready to do what is needed to leave the addictive life behind; however, others have great intentions but are not ready at this time. Surrender the idea that you are here to change that person; that is not the sponsor's responsibility. We are here to point the way to a new way of life, the way to reality. A person may have many tries before he sees true progress. You may be his first sponsor before years later he finds others that, in accumulation with your help, helps him find his way to happiness.

A little of co-dependent confession: it is true that when you see someone with whom you have worked to finally “get it” and accumulate sobriety and progress; it feels great and rewarding. That through grace the garbage I created was recycle into something useful.

### **Sponsoring Through the Steps**

First thing I do when somebody ask me to sponsor them I ask them to consider for 24hrs two options: First they can have me as a person in the group they can call as support but not as a sponsor. We can talk on a regular basis, get to know each other and maybe in the future to consider me as a sponsor.

The other option is to consider the roll of the sponsor. In that roll I will have certain expectations of them. I will expect that they keep the commitments they have with me and also to follow up on the consequences we both decide would be appropriate for slips or acting out. I make them aware that I can only work with so many individuals at a time and that I want to work with those who are willing to do what has to be done to work the Steps.

I also tell them that this journey will be rewarding; that they will see changes in their lives yet it will be difficult; as in my case, the most difficult thing I've done in my life, but they will never regret having gone through it. If they are married I ask them to consult with their spouses and sometimes with their bishops since they will be involved in the process of recovery.

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I let them know that this is an opportunity for me to also grow by working with them, that their phone calls or contact is not a burden to me but allows me to work my program.

### **Boundaries**

Assuming the individual is willing to become the next Sacrificial Lamb the first thing we talk about is Boundaries. Setting boundaries will make sponsoring easier for you and for them. If your sponsee is struggling with something he doesn't want to sacrifice to get better you both will be fighting a losing battle. Just like an alcoholic should not be working at a bar the sexaholic should create an environment that protects him.

I ask a written list of things and situations that makes him or her vulnerable.

Let's do an example: Computers without filter (or computers in general), Smart Phones, Magazines, TV, Situations at work or school, Traveling for work, Being alone, Gym, Showers, Driving, Dating

Once I have that list we talk on how to protect ourselves by setting boundaries to not use or do or how to manage situations that put us at risk. As you go through these, you and your sponsee need to find ways that are appropriate for your individual situation, I believe that if you seek the Spirit you will be guided with ideas that will help those seeking to change. Some suggestions may be:

Filters on computers with someone else having the password. (K9 is a popular filter and is free)

Allow only a limited number of websites to go to.

We may not be able to have a computer for a while.

Talk to roommates about not leaving computers unlocked.

If roommates are not willing to do this we may have to move and loose our deposit.

**WE DO WHAT IT TAKES TO CREATE BOUNDARIES THAT PROTECT US.**

Get a filter for my smart phone—there is an app for K9 also.

If no filter on smart phone is possible, we get a stupid phone.

TV-- we don't watch programs that will trigger our addiction, we may have to cut off our favorite programs. Of course no R rated stuff but also many PG 13 and NO TV late at night.

Dating. We may abstain for a period of time until the sponsee dates with the purpose to have a healthy relationship and not feed the lust. Married individuals may abstain from sexual relations for a while.

Traveling: don't travel alone if all possible. Take precautions such as looking for a hotel that allows you to not have access to TV in your room.

**SURRENDERING:** We talk a lot of this concept in the program, took me a while to understand it. I would battle every night staying late and watching TV. Because my TV was locked and couldn't watch bad stuff I felt it was ok. Staying late and watching some commercials would make me want to act out then I'd feel horrible but the next night I'd do the same. I had to establish a boundary on that issue and my wife help with that. As a result I didn't have to battle and try to find out if the next night I was going to win or lose the battle, I just surrendered my late TV watching. Though I wanted to relax and watch there was no more battle. It was hard at the beginning for several weeks, but slowly I learned to live without it, and a new habit developed: I started to enjoy reading before I went to bed.

In creating boundaries we surrender those things that make the addiction more powerful. We show God what we are willing to bring to the table, of course our desires are still there, our

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hearts have not changed. The true miracle of change happens when God's grace works in us but we need to bring to Him what we are willing to do.

If the individual wants to get better but is not willing to live with his commitment to set his boundaries we talk to see what he is willing to live with; however, without sobriety we are not going to get better. We also set consequences if the person breaks those boundaries.

### Consequences

The consequences are not necessarily if the person acts out but more specifically if the person doesn't respect the boundaries he has set himself. For example if the person put a filter in the computer and found a way to get around it we try to find a way for that not to happen again. If he finds a way around it again I ask them to give me their computer. They may have to be a semester off school and go without a computer all together. Some may have to change jobs others relationships.

Other crossing of boundaries may have financial consequences, like asking the sponsee if he crosses a certain boundary he'd have to donate a pre-determined amount of money large enough for him so he would reconsider how much his acting out will cost him. The donation can go to good cause you both agree on. Others have imposed running a certain amount of miles or imposing something it would cost the sponsee some sacrifice.

As a sponsor it is important you follow through with the consequences you both agreed on. Someone said the difference between a terrorist and a sponsor is that the terrorist is willing to negotiate. The addict has dodged too many bullets, has succeeded in his secrets, has been enabled by "loving" people. You are the wall that stops the lies of his fantasy. You are not his friend but you love him as a brother, you may become the best friend he ever had. If we ignore the consequences we impose on ourselves then the natural consequences will come: divorce, loss of job, prison, suicide.

Changes begin to happen when the pain of acting out is greater than the pain of staying sober.

It is important that the sponsee can also have his Bishop as a person to report his progress, for a while meeting his Bishop on a regular basis, perhaps once every two weeks. Some suggest having their spouse or parent as a support person, I believe with the spouse they should develop a greater relationship of intimacy, a friendship that perhaps was destroyed from acting out; however, the spouse is not an addict nor a therapist and sometimes it can be very hurtful to share graphic details. Sometimes saying something like "today I am struggling" may be enough.

### Meetings

As how many meetings should a person attend? As in other points in sponsoring, seek the guidance of the Spirit. I think that while the person is working on comfortable sobriety they should attend at least two meetings a week. Some have found it helpful to attend daily meetings for a period of 90 days. Remember also that there are phone meetings and on line. Encourage your sponsee to find a "home meeting" where he can develop relationship with others and eventually participate in leadership.

### First Step Inventory

As soon as possible we invite them to write their first step inventory, usually a chronological history of their sexual past. Not an outline—if he comes back with three by five card or one pager he needs to re-do it.

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He then gives his Inventory to the sponsor in person and we talk about it. For legal reasons we avoid specific dates, names and places. When ready he presents it to a group of others of his choice (3 or 4) who have already given their first step.

### **Daily Contact**

I would also want my sponsee to call every day and give me a report of his day. We don't always have to talk but at least leave me a voice mail with details of his day's progress and struggles. If he is in an emergency situation, I ask him to text me 911 or some other way for me to know that we need to talk right then.

Some sponsors make the daily reporting a must at a certain time of the day, every day, others do this daily calling for a while and when the sponsee gets an amount of comfortable sobriety establish a less periodic calling pattern.

### **Inner Boundaries**

After a while I ask the sponsee to create a new list of boundaries, the boundaries that are harder to detect as triggering the addiction and sometimes more difficult to give up. This happens usually when he is more mature in the program and is willing to understand how the "little things" can have an effect. For example:

Going to the store alone and noticing that he is looking at other people.

The clothes we choose to make us more wanted

Opening emails that don't need to be open.

Driving alone and checking others.

The way we treat those we are attracted to vs. those we are not.

Also understanding feelings when we are more prone to act out. When feeling resentful, bored, angry, hurt. On the other hand, sometimes when I'm feeling great and confident I don't think that walking to the edges of my addiction is going to be dangerous.

I have found that those that really work on these inner boundaries not only find lengthy sobriety but great serenity, peace and a greater understanding of their lives' mission.

### **Dailies**

If you notice a lot of what we talked about has to do with step one, finding out how powerless we are over our habits. The next thing is to establish a daily routine that will create a greater connection with whom will change our hearts.

Read, read, read. I believe the white book, the scriptures, books in the program, listening to inspirational talks.

Prayer and Meditation. Learning to be by ourselves without using some outside noise to keep us connected becomes essential, to listen to the still small voice. We encourage to meditate, to consider the changes that are happening, to accept that we are not perfect and we will sometimes stumble but that we are not the same as who we were before we came into the program. To be kinder and more patient with ourselves yet not being afraid of the changes we are invited to do.

Exercise. Establish a routine you can live with and in time improving it.

Write what is happening in your life. This is not a journal for your posterity but something for your eyes only and in years to come to look at some of the pain you are going through but also see that as the Savior you have also "learned obedience by the things which you suffered"

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### **Step 4 and 5**

As we move in the program we encourage them to write down and give an Inventory of our character defects and strengths. Several people have asked me where we find help on how to do this. When I did mine I was a little lost also. I found that the Step 4 in the LDS manual for the 12-steps was the most helpful.

We find that many of our character defects are at the root of the resentment we hold for others—sometimes replacing the word resentment for “hurt” help us understand that we have been hurt by others and in turn we act against them.

The book “Bonds that makes us Free” by Terry C. Warner gave me a better perspective of where my resentments originated and helped me in writing my 4th step. I will at times encourage to read it before writing the 4th step.

### **Not Forgetting**

After they have a period of comfortable sobriety I ask them to write something I call “The morning after”: Tell me what would happen if after a few months or a year of sobriety you wake up this morning knowing that today is day One. How would you feel, what are the consequences of acting out, who would you have to go talk: spouse, Bishop, sponsor, members of the group, boss? How would those conversations go? Someone said: "It is a lot easier staying sober that getting sober”.

There is the misconception that acting out again means starting all over again. That is not true. GRADUAL PROGRESS IS NOT FAILURE! In his journey the sponsee has learned to be closer to God, to see His hand in recovery and to learn new tools for the day that a lot of these issues can be left behind. Please help them understand to be more patient and gentle with themselves, to find solutions and not blame.

### **Not Ready yet?**

There are times that the person continues to break those boundaries, or doesn't call before they act out or doesn't follow something you both have agreed to do. At that time you may need to tell them that they may not be ready to be sponsored by you at this time.

Your time needs to be spent with those who are willing to move forward in the steps. When you let somebody go, do it in the spirit of love and consideration, remember how it was for you not too long ago. Reminding them that you can be available in the future and that you can continue to be a support person for them.