

A Sponsor's Toolbox

Getting a Newcomer Started and Through Steps 1-3

Relevant Materials

1. Sponsorship in OA. (Includes 30 writing questions for Steps 1-3) **pamphlet**
2. Where Do I Start (includes our 15 Basic Questions) **pamphlet**
3. Temporary Sponsors: Newcomers' First Twelve Days (printout oa.org)
4. A Sponsor's Toolbox and a great deal of other info on **oa.org (search sponsor)**
Examples: Strong Abstinence Checklist; From Slip or Relapse to Recovery; What a Sponsor Does; Relapse Prevention Support Group; Been Slipping and Sliding a 12th Step Within Guide; Slip Inventory; Reflections on Relapse and Recovery; Sponsor Success Online Workshop; Breaking out of Relapse Video.
5. A New Plan of Eating **pamphlet**
6. In OA, Recovery is Possible **pamphlet**
7. A lifetime of Abstinence **pamphlet**
8. Welcome Back **pamphlet**
9. The Tools of Recovery **pamphlet**
10. To the Newcomer: You're not Alone **pamphlet**
11. To the Young Person (download)
12. To the Man **pamphlet**
13. Basic Books: OA 12&12; AA Big Book; AA 12&12
14. OA 12&12 Workbook (questions for all the Steps)
15. OA 12 Step Workshop and Study Guide (questions for all the Steps)
16. OA 12& 12 Traditions Workbook
17. CARDS: Just for Today, Carrying the Message, Think First, Twelve Stepping a Problem, Many Symptoms-One Solution; Recovery Checklist; About OA-Fifteen Questions
18. Sponsor Training Podcasts on oa.org
What is a sponsor; Why should you get a sponsor, and how can you get a sponsor; Why be a sponsor; When can you start sponsoring – when can you start being sponsored; Why be a sponsor – why be a sponsee; What are the sponsorship job descriptions – from sponsor to sponsee and back; How can you break down the barriers for both parties; What are some different sponsor styles; How do you work the 12 steps with a sponsee; Sponsoring through the 12 Steps; How do you work the 12 traditions with a sponsee.
19. Newcomer's Orientation Video on <http://oahelps.org>
20. Developing a Plan of Eating – 3 column exercise (attached) (Don C)
21. 2019 Sponsor Training: <https://archive.org/details/oa-men-sponsorship-workshop> (Don C.)

First Things First: Before doing anything, a new sponsor needs to study the OA pamphlets: *Where do I Start (includes 15 questions), Sponsorship in OA, A Lifetime of Abstinence, In OA, Recovery is Possible.*

Ten Commandments of Being a Sponsor

1. A sponsor's job is to stay abstinent and help others get and stay abstinent.
2. In the beginning, set goals and expectations with your sponsee.
3. Keep your conversation focused on recovery and living in the solution.
4. Share your experience, don't give advice. (ask questions instead)
5. Don't tell sponsees to do something you haven't done or aren't willing to do.
6. Encourage sponsees to seek input from other abstinent OA's with the experience they want or need. Always emphasize widening our safety net.
7. Good sponsors are compassionate, exercise patience, and listen well. (Honesty without kindness is cruelty)
8. Prepare sponsees to start doing service as early in recovery as possible.
9. Never underestimate a sponsee's ability to get well.
10. Carry the message, don't carry the sponsee.

The Ten Commandments of Being a Sponsee

1. Getting abstinent is probably the hardest thing you'll ever do. Be prepared to talk about new ideas, behaviors & attitudes.
2. A good sponsor may be more interested in your welfare than your friendship. Don't take it personally. They have your best interests at heart.
3. When in doubt, try to remember why you asked your sponsor to work with you in the first place.
4. Not taking a suggestion because it's time-consuming or inconvenient is a lousy reason not to get well. It's the resistance to change that hurts.
5. Experience is the best teacher. In the beginning, it comes from someone who's been there. In time, you'll accumulate your own.
6. Being expected to be punctual and consistent is not unreasonable. Discipline and structure are compatible with strong recovery.
7. Trust in traditional solutions to common OA problems.
8. If you're willing to ask the question, be willing to apply the answer.
9. If you can base your relationship with your sponsor on trust & honesty, you will recover.
10. A good sponsor asks hard questions. When you're tempted to get mad at them, consider where you were before you started working with them. What type of results were you getting with your eating, then, and now?

A Sponsee Wish List

Top Characteristics of Effective Sponsors

Developed at a 1999 Workshop, Later Published in Lifeline

- 1. Abstinent**
- 2. Available**
- 3. Committed**
- 4. In recovery**
- 5. Program foundation**
- 6. 12-Step based**
- 7. Focused**
- 8. Good listener**
- 9. Clear expectations**
- 10. Share experience only**
- 11. Humility**
- 12. Honesty**
- 13. Supports and encourages**
- 14. Attitude**
- 15. Know when to let go**

Sponsorship Tips – From oa.org.

As a sponsee, I do these things:

- Am honest with myself, my sponsor, and my Higher Power
- Call my sponsor on time daily
- Cultivate awareness of my Higher Power
- Ask for assistance from other OA members to temporarily sponsor me when my sponsor is unavailable
- Listen to and reflect on my sponsor's feedback
- Practice being a responsible OA member in fellowship with others, by using all the Tools, having a home meeting, doing service, being kind and honest with others, and welcoming newcomers
- Sponsor another member or members as I'm sponsored
- Willingly do Step and Tradition studies to learn
- Celebrate recovery milestones
- Honor anonymity as to the sponsor's identity – if that is requested by the sponsor.

As a sponsor, I do these things:

- Welcome my sponsee's daily calls and emails Listen to my sponsee's food plan and program work daily
- Gently reflect on OA Tools and Spiritual Principles with my sponsee
- Share honestly, and willingly about my experience, learning, stumbles, growth, and gratitude in recovery
- Highlight areas of growth I notice in my sponsee's physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual recovery
- Encourage my sponsee to be open and willing with me and seek assistance from other OA members and trustworthy professionals as needed
- Listen for yellow and red flags in my sponsee's recovery and talk about these openly, honestly, and willingly
- Let go and let God when I can't be helpful to a sponsee
- Celebrate recovery
- Help the sponsee work through the Twelve Steps
- Honor the sponsee's anonymity if that is what the sponsee requests

General Suggestions for New Sponsors from the Literature and Experience

1. Sponsors are guides on how to get abstinent and how to work the Steps.
2. Your experience is your foundation for sponsoring.
3. Live the Steps and use the tools yourself.
4. Explain to a new sponsee what you are going to do; then do it.
5. Explain to a new sponsee what their responsibilities are.
6. Sponsoring people with the same manifestation of the disease often works better.
7. Don't expect success; and don't fear failure.
8. Beware expectations. Don't predict who will make it, and who will not.
9. Focus on program. Keep the time on the phone program oriented.
10. Don't give professional advice. We're not doctors, therapists, clergymen or family counselors.
11. Don't avoid or apologize for the mention of HP when first explaining the program to newcomers.
12. Don't make promises.
13. Don't forget that sometimes the initial abstinence from the numbing and comforting effect of compulsive overeating may mean feeling more pain.
14. Share your struggle if you struggle.
15. Don't be selling – or dictating – instead of sharing your experience up to where you are in the program.
16. Don't sponsor too many people.
17. If you give the program as it is written, you will be giving a gift as well as holding on to your gift from the program.
18. Don't predict who will make it, and who will not.
19. Live in your own program to the best of your ability. You cannot give to others what you do not possess; live in the steps and use the tools.
20. Be honest and open about successes and struggles.
21. Remember the answers are in the literature. You don't have to know all the answers, only where to find them.
22. Your experience is your foundation for sponsoring. Share your experience, but remember, that was your experience, theirs may be different.
23. Listen, accept and support. There is no good or bad recovery. We all do the best we can.

Getting Honest About Your Food and Weight (Don C.)

Without a precise and honest ***plan of eating*** we waste endless hours arguing with ourselves and, ultimately, give in to our own lie that we can have just one bite and stop. Likewise, unless we consider quantity, we may not reach a healthy body weight, which is part of the definition of abstinence in OA.

One way to begin is by looking at everything you consume. Construct a three column list of all the foods you commonly eat. Be very specific. Don't say vegetable – name the specific vegetable and how it's prepared. Don't say protein – name the specific protein such as steak or chicken or fish and how they are commonly prepared. Don't say sugar or candy – say the specific candy bar, ice cream, donut, cake or junk food. Include condiments, table sugar, sugar substitutes, salt. Leave nothing out that you eat or drink.

<u>Column A</u>	<u>Column B</u>	<u>Column C</u>
Foods that you know in your heart of hearts are triggers for you; foods that you often eat too much of; foods that you NEVER have just one of; foods that you consciously or unconsciously turn to when your feelings are particularly unpleasant OR pleasant; foods that call to you. Comfort foods.	Foods that may not be, but sometimes might be a problem.	Foods that clearly are not a problem for you; foods that you can take or leave; clearly not comfort foods; more often than not you don't overeat them.

Food Slip Inventory

1. The food is always the last to go, so inventory it first. Write down exactly what happened as if there was a video camera rolling.
2. Remember that food is the symptom, not the problem. Before we make the decision to eat something that was not on our plan there was emotional distress of some sort. Go back several hours or the previous 24 hours or a few days and come forward.
 - a. What feelings were you experiencing before the slip?
 - b. Were you avoiding facing something?
 - c. What lies did your disease tell you that you decided to believe? How did you decide that it was okay to eat and drink?
3. Was the problem physical, emotional or spiritual?
 - a. Did you decide, for example that some binge food was no longer a binge food?
 - b. Was there a spiritual problem? Was your Higher power anywhere? Did you do your morning reading or prayer?
4. Moving forward, what can you learn from this slip?
 - a. Are there adjustments you need to make to your plan of eating?
 - b. If the situation precipitating the slip happens again, how will you handle it without picking up the food for comfort?
 - c. Are there spiritual actions you may take to strengthen your abstinence or help this situation if it comes up again?

The Decision to Sponsor (pamphlet Sponsorship in OA)

- Sponsor to level of experience.
- Don't need to have completed all 12 Steps.
- Honesty with Self
 - Does my sponsor think I'm ready?
 - Does HP think I'm ready?
 - Do I have the time and attention needed to build a trusting and effective relationship?
 - Is my program strong and stable enough to guide a sponsee?
 - Will working with a sponsee support my own recovery?
 - Are there any personal issues that might hinder an effective relationship with this sponsee?
- A lot of helpful material available.
- Sponsors share their experience, but sponsee needs to find their own path.
- Perhaps the most essential skill is *listening*.

Working the Twelve Steps and Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous
(pamphlet Sponsorship in OA)

- Heart of program. Without them, we are a diet club.
- Steps & Traditions lead to sustained abstinence and recovery.
- Varied approaches. Tailor to meet needs of sponsee.
- Resources for guiding through the Steps:
 - OA 12&12
 - OA 12 Step Workbook
 - OA 12 Workshop and Study Guide
 - OA 12 Traditions Workbook
 - AA 12&12
 - AA Big Book
 - Appendix A: 30 Questions Steps 1-3 for newcomers (this pamphlet)
 - Appendix B. Sponsoring through the Steps (this pamphlet)
- Frequent contact with sponsee.
- Need for honesty and willingness from both.
- Calls, meetings, study literature, discuss program, answer questions.
- Begin with Step 1, go in order, each builds on the previous.
- Reading and writing assignments.
- Sponsee sets pace, sponsor keeps focus on recovery.
- Study Traditions after Steps. About relationships.
- Sponsee's recovery is not due to any magic by the sponsor.
- Recovery comes from sponsees learning to live Steps and Traditions.

Different Styles of Sponsorship (pamphlet Sponsorship in OA)

- Sponsors sponsor in their own way, based on their experience.
- They share their experience, strength and hope.
- Be flexible. What has worked for us may or may not work for everyone.
- Clearly define expectations at beginning:, calls, writing, reading, meetings, etc.
- We are not their HP, don't have all the answers.
- We don't give advice, only share our own experience.
- Take notes and review those notes before talking to sponsee next time to ensure we're not missing something, not repeating ourself needlessly doing what we intended better understand what's tripping sponsee up.
- Special focus sometimes needed: food sponsor, step sponsor, service sponsor.
- No matter the focus, sponsor task is to help sponsee discover a new way of living.
- Use the pronoun "I" when communicating experience to sponsee.
- Ensure sponsee understands this is a "we" program and I do not have all the answers, nor will I always be available. Therefore he needs to talk with others for support.
- Sponsors do not have all the answers.
- Ensure sponsee knows this is a "we" program and he needs to talk with others.
- Sponsee should understand he can take what he wants and leave the rest.
- No one right way. My way may not work for sponsee.
- Be open to referring sponsee to other sponsors.
- Co-sponsoring may be okay when no sponsors are available.
- Sponsor as I like to be sponsored. Treat it as a partnership.
- Live the Steps and utilize the Tools to learn new and more enlightened ways of living.
- Common to all ways are reading, writing, talking, listening.
- Sponsors need to recognize their limitations.
- Key to relationship is honesty, trust, patience, understanding, leading by example, sponsor being vulnerable.

Challenges in Sponsoring (pamphlet Sponsorship in OA)

Anonymity of relationship

- Sponsors and sponsees decide.

Availability

- Sponsor and sponsee need to be available at their meeting times.
- Encourage sponsee to form a support network.

Sponsee Slips or Relapses

- Treat a slip or relapses as a learning experience.
- Be a good listener.
- Sponsor compassion allows release of shame and rebuilding
- Help sponsee explore the thinking that led to the slip or relapse.
- Helpful material on oa.org
 - Food Slip Inventory
 - Been Slipping and Sliding? A Reading and Writing Tool.
 - From Slip or Relapse to Recovery
 - Welcome Back: Suggestions for Members in Relapse and for Those Who Care

Sponsor Slips or Relapses

- Immediately seek help from their own sponsor.
- Share the problem with sponsee.
- What steps are you taking to recommit to recovery?
- Sponsee decides to remain or find another sponsor.
- Sponsor may assist finding new sponsor.

Slow Progress (pamphlet Sponsorship in OA)

- First, sponsor self-assess for issues.
- Are expectations too high?
- Is sponsee being allowed to go at their own pace?
- Remember sponsors are not responsible for sponsee's disease or recovery.
- Sponsors carry the message, not the sponsee.
- A sponsor serves as example and offers encouragement.
- Sponsee effort decreasing: cut back on disciplines, meetings. other tools.
- Has either person been less available recently?
- Has communication become difficult?
- Is the sponsee truly ready to work the Steps?
- Is sponsee too emotionally dependent on the sponsor?
- If either party wants out, speak openly about it and do it.
- Is professional expertise needed while sponsor provides program support?

Ending the Sponsor-Sponsee Relationship (pamphlet Sponsorship in OA)

- Follow up if sponsee stops calling.
- Sponsee withdraw not sponsor's fault.
- Sponsee: I don't have the disease; I don't like the 12-step approach.
- Try to end the relationship with love, acceptance, and honesty.
- OA will be here. Door is always open.
- Sponsors may withdraw if their own program is in jeopardy.
- Sponsor explains, help sponsee find new sponsor.
- Remember that we are each in charge of our own recovery, not others.

Actions Before taking the first bite

Region One Newsletter June 2007

1. Pray. Ask my Higher Power to relieve me of the desire to eat compulsively.
2. Pray for more honesty, open-mindedness, willingness and humility.
3. Thank my Higher Power that I discovered OA. Ask how I can serve OA.
4. Review my plan of eating and follow it.
5. Read OA approved literature.
6. Call someone in OA and ask how he or she is doing.
7. Call a newcomer. Ask how he or she is doing; Ask how I could help.
8. Call my sponsor. Leave a message if he or she isn't there.
9. Call someone I haven't seen at meetings in a while.
10. Listen to a speaker recording.
11. Listen to music.
12. Write someone a letter and tell him or her what I'm grateful for.
13. Write a gratitude list. Share it with someone else in OA.
14. Write a letter to my Higher Power about what is going on. Ask for guidance.
Put the letter in my God Box and let go.
15. Write in my journal. Ask myself, "What's my part in this? Are there any character defects cropping up? Am I entirely ready to let my HP remove these defects? It may be helpful to share this with my sponsor.
16. Do some kind of service.
17. Go to an OA meeting.
18. Walk outside and look at all the nature has created.
19. Do some gentle stretching.
20. Clean something in my house, such as the bathroom or a messy room.
21. Do something I've been putting off for a long time.

For longer-term members struggling to stay abstinent

1. What step principle applies to this situation?
1. Remember, you have a permanent but arrestable disease which means that you cannot deal with food like a normal eater.
2. Are you working 10,11,12 every day?
3. Are you giving service?
4. Are you sponsoring? Do you have a sponsor?
5. What were the key defects you identified in Steps 4-5? Are they gone now?
6. How many of the 9 tools are you working?
7. How many meetings a week do you attend?
8. Have you become complacent about your disease?
9. Do you do a gratitude list every day?
10. Are you suffering from HALT? (Don't get too hungry, angry, lonely, tired.)
11. Are you suffering from depression? What can you do about it?
12. Have you started eating some of the foods you had previously given up?
13. Do you remember that freedom isn't free?
14. Remember that abstinence brings clarity, productivity, creativity, energy and self-respect while compulsive eating brings a muddled brain.

Note: There is a 4 page OA summary entitled *From Slip or Relapse to Recovery* <https://oa.org/documents/from-slip-or-relapse-to-recovery/> that covers many of the things we said here. There is also a tape called Breaking Out of Relapse.