

Sponsorship

I'm not attracted to people that have "heartless" approaches to the activities that we engage in...particularly when they use the Big Book as justification. They're actually contradicting what the book is telling us about what these good people from the 1930's actually did.

I believe that the concept of sponsorship, like most things, has been distorted over the years from its original intent. This is not an indictment of AA, it is merely an honest report of my observations. It's typical of the human condition to distort concepts. Remember when we were children and we played the game where we whispered a story in the ear of the person next to us, then they turned to the person on the other side of them and whispered the story to them, and it continued around the circle. By the time the story got back to you, the story doesn't even resemble the original story. This is the same thing that happens when stories are exchanged word of mouth in organizations like AA. I believe it was a major reason why the Big Book needed to be written...to preserve the message.

Obviously I was not present in the beginning of AA. However, I have noticed that no place in the first 164 pages of the Big Book is the word sponsor mentioned. The closest I've seen it mentioned is when it refers to a prospect or a trusted individual. However, you can gather a handful of people in any AA gathering and ask them what the definition of a sponsor is and I can guarantee that you will not get the same answer from each of them.

I am no different than anyone else along these lines. I have a concept of sponsorship that I believe is most effective for me.. I realize that most people in AA will not, and should not, see things exactly the way I do. They may not have experienced anything similar to what I have experienced. This is expected and understandable. I am not attempting to imply that my concept of sponsorship is better, or worse, than anyone else's concept.

I believe the best advice to give someone for sponsorship is to find someone that is getting the kind of results that you want to get and ask them to help you. Keep in mind that this will only work if that person is treating the same problem that you have. It is my belief that the majority of people in AA today are treating a drinking problem. I am not. I am treating a spiritual malady. If the person you are asking for help is treating a drinking problem, but your problem is a spiritual malady, then if you do what he does, you will not get the same results. You're treating two totally different problems.

The obvious question is "how do I know if I have a drinking problem or a spiritual problem?" This is easy. Stop drinking. If the problem goes away, your problem was the drink. If the problem stays, your problem is not the drink. It is either mental or spiritual. If it's mental, try the spiritual solution first. An untreated spiritual malady often reveals itself in mental conditions. If after you've tried the spiritual solution, the mental problem is still unbearable, seek outside help. We are not doctors, nor should we practicing unlicensed medicine.

In treating a spiritual malady with a spiritual solution, I believe that ultimately there is only one sponsor and that is "God". In other words, our goal should be putting the people that we are attempting to help, into the care of God. We do this most effectively by getting them into helping others as quick as possible...one-on-one. Nothing can replace one-on-one...laying down my life for my brother, being my brother's keeper. No in-depth studies, no group step-work...nothing...only one alcoholic, sharing with another. Not teaching, not preaching, not

controlling, not directing...sharing. Sharing what it used to be like for me, what happened and what I'm like now. I use the Big Book as a reference tool. I don't "take people through the book"...but I always have a book handy...for reference. And I do what the book says to do. But nowhere in the book does it say to sit down, study this and take people through it.

The "sixth sense" that we talk about in the Big Book, I believe, is that sense of "inspiration", spiritual certainty, this is what we are attempting to reveal, and exercise, as THE result of these steps, it's not a result, it is THE desired result. That "spiritual awakening" they mention in the twelfth step as "THE" result of these steps. We're using these tools (the twelve steps) to attain that awakening or awareness so that the "God" within us, inspiration, can guide us and therefore not have to be reliant upon a human being or a human "sponsor". How can we tell people that "no human power can solve our problem" and then allow them to get dependent upon the sponsor?

Part of the human condition is...that occasionally we get cut-off from an awareness of God. Fortunately for us, we don't all get cut-off at the same time. If we did, we would be in trouble. At those times when a person cannot feel the presence of God (lack of awareness of the Power) that person needs someone who is "currently" aware of God to tap into...sort of like an extension cord...a temporary extension cord to the Power. This person can be anyone, non-alcoholic, not sober, sober a short amount of time or sober a substantial amount of time. However, sobriety time does not equate to spiritual awareness. I know people with decades of sobriety that are not feeling this connection. Just like sponsorship has been distorted over time, so has this idea that somehow because you've stayed sober for a period of time that you somehow now have an experience or awareness that is valuable to someone who hasn't been able to stay sober. It's totally illogical and completely ridiculous. Sobriety time is definitely desirable, but it means nothing in the realm of sponsorship or many of the other realms people in AA give it credit for. Let's get honest. A relapse does not wipe out a person's memory. They still have their experience.

If we never get cut-off from God and engage in behaviors that are not the person we want to be, we would not have the necessary tools we need to help our brothers and sisters. We wouldn't have any experience to draw from. More importantly, we wouldn't have any compassion and to carry this message without love is completely ineffective. Those moments of "spiritual blackout" are absolutely essential tools...tools that we will eventually use to increase our effectiveness in helping others. I don't hide my shortcomings or mistakes from the people that are looking to me for sponsorship or guidance. If I did, I'm treating them unfairly because now they're going to believe something is wrong with them when they make mistakes.

When we are new to AA or new to these principles, we need our "human" sponsor more often. Hopefully we have been fortunate enough to get a sponsor who is currently aware of God or consciously connected. This person will help bring the new person from a current awareness of "self" and "fear" (that they don't even realize they're in) to the awareness of a spiritual way of life. This takes varying amounts of time for different people.

The varying factors might include age, environment, degree of desperation, degree of willingness, ability to communicate, etc. This could really be done with anyone who is currently aware of God, regardless of any man-made title put on a relationship such as "sponsor".

There is a “spiritual principle” that—when we practice these principles “consistently”—a fellowship will grow around us. Eventually we have a multitude of people we can trust to use as “temporary extension cords to the Power” and to “nudge” us back in the direction of God. We eventually get dependent upon God through dependence upon helping others...ideally, one-on-one...being my brother’s keeper, laying down my life for my brother.

Therefore, in summary, I believe it is the sponsor’s job to keep the new person close and guide this person until he/she is aware that we’re to get God dependent through helping others and are shown how to do that. At this point, it becomes all of our responsibility to watch out for each other...regardless of titles.

When a sponsor allows a selfish activity to enter into a sponsorship relationship (sex, money, power) the relationship will be compromised, if not destroyed. The new person will most likely, if they truly desire help, find someone else to help them. The experienced sponsor will suffer from his actions in a much more intense fashion and for a long time.