



Addiction Recovery Program

Choosing a Sponsor

Working with a sponsor can enhance your recovery. A sponsor can support you in your growth and determination to overcome the challenges, dependencies, or addictive behaviors you are facing. In your journey of recovery, you are not alone; sponsors are people who may be “willing to ... comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses” (Mosiah 18:9). Please consider working with a sponsor as soon as possible.

WHAT IS A SPONSOR?

A sponsor is someone who has found recovery by working through the 12 steps. They may understand specific challenges related to recovery even when you may not be aware of them. A sponsor is there to help you put your “[life] into perspective and avoid exaggerating or minimizing [your] accountability” (*A Guide to Addiction Recovery and Healing*, 29). A sponsor is not meant to be your best friend or mental health professional. A sponsor’s role is to help you work through the steps of recovery.

FINDING A SPONSOR

In the Church’s Addiction Recovery Program, you are not assigned a specific sponsor. Each member can approach sponsorship in a way that fits his or her individual experience, needs, and personality. Sponsorship is a joint decision by you, the sponsor, and the Lord.

Finding someone to sponsor you may feel daunting, but others can help you. The best way to find a sponsor is to attend recovery meetings. Those with similar challenges often have a greater ability to empathize with your struggle. The following ideas can be helpful in deciding on an appropriate sponsor:

1. Seek spiritual guidance from Heavenly Father through prayer and fasting about who could be a sponsor for you.
2. Consider choosing someone who has spent significant time in recovery and has worked through the 12 steps.
3. Listen as people share their experiences in recovery and consider who you might connect with.
4. Group Leaders and Facilitators can introduce you to appropriate and willing candidates.
5. Ask someone who you feel is qualified.

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6. You should choose a sponsor of the same gender (if not related).
 7. As you begin the process of change, you may be physically, emotionally, and spiritually vulnerable. Be cautious to not develop a dependent relationship with a sponsor.
 8. You can always ask someone to sponsor you on a temporary basis. You can always switch sponsors at any time.

BEING AN EFFECTIVE SPONSOR

Becoming a sponsor is a great act of service as you share your own experience, faith, and hope you have found working through the 12 steps of recovery and healing through the Savior Jesus Christ. Sponsors ask thoughtful questions, point to resources, share practical help on how to work through the steps, and encourage those they sponsor to attend meetings. A sponsor understands that others may play a role in a person's recovery and will not be offended if those they sponsor seek support from others or choose to change sponsors. Below are some principles to be an effective sponsor:

1. **Prioritize God before all else.** Constantly remember God and help those you sponsor rely on Him. Take care to not allow those you sponsor to become too dependent on you. Your responsibility as a sponsor is to encourage others to turn to Heavenly Father and the Savior for guidance and power. Your role is to share your experiences of faith and hope to help the person you support feel loved and supported by God's grace.
2. **Be an active participant in recovery.** A sponsor needs to be in recovery for a substantial amount of time before sponsoring anyone (generally 12 months or longer) and actively engaged in applying and studying the principles of recovery. You may feel added pressure in your own recovery when you begin to sponsor someone else. Be careful not to jeopardize your own recovery by sponsoring someone else. A sponsor practices self-care and asks for help or support when needed.
3. **Be humble.** *A Guide to Addiction Recovery and Healing* explains: "As you serve others, you will maintain humility by focusing on the gospel principles and practices you have learned" (71). It later states that "there is no place in your new life for ego or any sense of superiority" (72). As a sponsor, your role is to use your strengths to offer support and guidance.
4. **Respect the agency of others and exercise patience.** Effective sponsorship comes "by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; [b]y kindness, and pure knowledge" (Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42). Avoid giving advice or trying to fix others in any way. Help others consider principles and practices and then support them as they make their own decisions. Respect their agency and have hope that the Lord will help them as they turn to Him. The person you are helping may not yet be ready to move forward. He or she may repeat unhealthy behaviors or be slow to adopt the principles and practices of sincere change. A sponsor must be patient with others as they journey toward recovery.
5. **Serve selflessly.** Selfless service requires giving without expecting anything in return. A sponsor should have a great capacity for understanding and the willingness to devote time and effort to those they sponsor. Avoid seeking praise, admiration, loyalty, or other emotional rewards from those you sponsor.
6. **Respect your personal commitments.** Becoming a sponsor does not mean those you sponsor should have unlimited access to your time and resources. You can set an example of the importance of healthy boundaries by honoring your other commitments, including those to your family, the Church, your career, and your personal time. Remember the counsel given in Mosiah 4:27: "And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength."

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7. **Be prayerful.** Each time you choose to sponsor someone, seek the Lord's guidance to know which principles or practices will be most helpful for the individual's current needs. Be prayerful as you consider ways to serve, always striving to be led by the Spirit.
 8. **Testify of truth.** You may feel prompted to share experiences to let others know that you can relate. You may also bear testimony of the Savior and of His healing power. The truth that God is a God of miracles is key (see Moroni 7:29). Sharing your testimony of His mercy and His grace may be one of the most important services you can offer.
 9. **Keep confidences.** As a sponsor, you have a responsibility to protect the privacy of others. Anonymity and confidentiality are core principles in strengthening your ability to sponsor and help others.

