

The Road to Recovery: Finding a Sponsor or Accountability Partner

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Being held responsible in recovery is not optional. Needs for drugs, alcohol, gambling, and even sex are hard to get past. Recovery is seldom possible without help from others, but if so, the quality of recovery suffers greatly making relapse more likely. Living a life in recovery involves setting goals and changing behavior. An early step in the process is accepting the need to be held responsible.

What is an accountability partner?

This is a trusted person you respect and ask for help. You agree that he can hold you responsible for your choices, attitude, and behavior. He can relate first-hand to what you are going through.

The most common form is a sponsor. This person guides somebody new through the process. Twelve-step programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous stress a "one-on-one" relationship. This relationship shares experiences and is focused on working the Twelve Steps. A sponsor will share her past, strength and hope; what worked for her. She must be honest, reliable, and discreet. Having someone like this in your life will greatly increase your chance of success.

The basics

The goal is simple. Meet often with your sponsor and let him guide you to find what works best for your personal recovery. Why? Recovery can be hard. Stress, cravings, and relationship problems are very common. Research also shows that depression and anxiety are also more common among people with addictions. Knowing someone has your back when you are feeling weak or alone is a great comfort.

A good sponsor will listen, challenge, and guide you to live a better and more disciplined life. He will not hesitate to call you out on your excuses and poor attitude.

You are allowing someone to see past the cover-up. This means talking about more than the weather or your favorite pastime. It means talking about the hard stuff. This can include cravings, triggers, problems in marriage and parenting, frustration, and boredom. Anything that steals your peace is fair game.

Talking about your progress and failures to someone you respect is a great motivator. This is especially true on the bad days when some people don't care enough about themselves to resist

cravings. But they may care about what their sponsor will think. We just hate to let down the people we respect.

How to find the right person

One option is to attend support groups and 12-step meetings. Let others know that you want a sponsor. Usually someone will give you her number and arrange to meet with you. During this meeting you will decide if it seems like a good fit. Many accountability partners will agree to a temporary arrangement to see how things go. This gives both people the choice to stop meeting if it is not helping. This is common, so don't be upset if it takes a few meetings to find the right person. It is worth it.

Local churches are also a good place to look. Many have recovery groups in the building. You can talk with a pastor about who they might suggest as a sponsor. Also many pastors and religious leaders are used to dealing with people who have addictions. They can be an excellent source of support. Don't forget—it's hard to do this alone.

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