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Evaluating the Quality of Sponsorship and other Peer Guidance Relationships

William L. White

Emeritus Senior Research Consultant
Chestnut Health Systems
bwhite@chestnut.org

Most recovery mutual aid groups have a system through which older members in successful recovery help orient new members to their particular recovery program. AA has formalized this process through the practice of sponsorship. Having a sponsor is an important indicator of intensity of mutual aid participation, with greater intensities of involvement being linked to improved long-term recovery outcomes (Sheeren, 1988; Montgomery, et al, 1995). Sponsoring others appears to be a particularly potent ingredient (Pagano, et al, 2004) with some long-term post-treatment follow-up studies noting over 90% remission rates in persons who sponsored others throughout the follow-up period (Cross, et al, 1990). Some recovery support fellowships do not have formal sponsors, but informal mentoring and guidance occurs within these groups.

Given the importance of peer guidance in recovery initiation and maintenance, it is important to look at factors that can be used to select a sponsor/guide or evaluate how well an existing sponsor/guide relationship is going. You

may wish to consider the following seven factors in those processes.

___ **Quantity of Sobriety** Has this person been successful enough in his or her own recovery for a long enough period that I can trust his or her guidance?

___ **Quality of Sobriety & Personal Character** Does this person live his/her life in a way that I would like to achieve? Are his or her core values congruent with those I have or would like to develop? Is this individual respected by others in long-term recovery?

___ **Knowledge of Recovery Program** Is this person knowledgeable about this particular recovery program? Is he or she a good teacher/coach?

___ **Quantity of Time** Will/does this individual have the time available to spend with me on a regular basis?

___ **Quality of Time** Will/is this individual able to set aside his own needs when we will

be/are together to focus on my needs?
Will/does this person avoid wasting my time?

___ **Accessibility** Will/is this person available to be reached during a time of critical need, including evenings and on weekends?

___ **Respect** Will/does this person treat me with respect? Would I / Do I feel physically and emotionally safe with this individual?

References

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