

*In ACA, the relationship between a sponsor and sponsee represents a spiritual connection between two people helping each other find life beyond the effects of growing up in a dysfunctional family. Adult children cannot recover alone or in isolation. Together, we learn to offer and accept healthy support. We learn what it means to be a friend.*

### “FELLOW TRAVELERS”

The unique model of sponsorship practiced in ACA places the sponsor and sponsee on equal footing, seeking answers and solutions together. Through sponsorship, adult children find empathy. This is the mutual understanding that puts action into our identification with another adult child.

As “fellow travelers” in recovery, we need not fear sponsorship as a reenactment of the domination, neglect, or control we experienced as children. For many of us, ACA sponsorship will be our first chance to establish a relationship based on equality and mutual respect. This may be an unfamiliar concept since we come from families in which healthy relationships with respect and trust were not practiced.

Asking someone to become our sponsor is a key step in our recovery. To find an ACA sponsor, we go to ACA meetings and events and listen to members sharing. We look for someone who has worked the Twelve Steps of ACA, attends meetings regularly, and understands ACA principles. We may also look for someone who has achieved an observable level of serenity and emotional sobriety. Typically, we look for a sponsor of the same sex to avoid romantic confusion.

We may ask for a potential sponsor’s telephone number and then call to talk about ACA. If we find we are comfortable talking with that person, we ask if they are available for sponsorship. We also discuss expectations of a sponsor/sponsee relationship. We might go through this process with two or three people. Eventually we ask one of them to be our sponsor.

In some areas, ACA sponsors are not readily available. In this situation, we may have to seek out a sponsor through a

### TYPES OF ACA SPONSORSHIP

**Traditional:** An experienced ACA member guides a sponsee through the Twelve Steps and helps them understand the ACA recovery process.

**Co-Sponsor:** Two ACA members with similar program time and experience support each other’s continued recovery.

**Temporary:** ACA members in a treatment or institutional facility may use a short-term sponsor until a more permanent sponsor in an ACA home group may be found.

**Long Distance:** ACA members who are geographically isolated may use online or telephone meetings for support. Where circumstances prevent face-to-face contact with a sponsor, long-distance sponsorship can still be meaningful and effective.

long-distance method or by visiting other towns where ACA is more active.

If we are asked to be a sponsor, we try to say “yes”. Sponsoring is one of the key actions that helps an ACA member maintain emotional sobriety while continuing to grow spiritually. By sponsoring others, we learn more about ourselves and the sequence of recovery. We learn that if we are working the Twelve Steps and attending ACA meetings regularly, we have something to offer another person. We can pass on the gift of recovery which was given to us.

### BEING A SPONSOR

An ACA sponsor shares his or her spiritual program of recovery with a sponsee and provides guidance for the newcomer building his or her own foundation for recovery through the Twelve Steps of ACA. A sponsor understands the effects of being raised in a dysfunctional family. A sponsor also understands the importance of resolving stored grief and reparenting one’s self through the ACA Steps.

ACA sponsors are not therapists or counselors, but they can offer needed support to a sponsee revisiting abuse, trauma, and other overwhelming experiences of childhood.

### An ACA sponsor:

- shares their own story, as well as their experience, strength, and hope in recovery,
- helps a sponsee understand emotional intoxication, the Laundry List traits of an Adult Child, and the effects of family alcoholism and dysfunction,
- encourages active Step work, meeting attendance, journaling, meditation, and seeking a Higher Power,
- encourages a sponsee to break old family rules which discouraged talking, trusting, feeling, and remembering,
- helps a sponsee identify, express, and understand feelings,
- leads by example in their own active recovery.

An ACA sponsor with an addiction must not be active in that addiction. We cannot sponsor others if we are drinking, drugging, or engaging in some other behavior that would qualify as a relapse.

### It is also important to remember that an ACA sponsor:

- is not a parent, authority figure, or Higher Power to the person being sponsored,
- does not judge or invalidate the feelings or insights of the person being sponsored,
- does not do for a sponsee what they can do for themselves,
- does not give or lend money,
- does not become romantically or sexually involved with a sponsee

## THE SEQUENCE OF ACA RECOVERY

Hitting bottom/Asking for and accepting help  
Admitting powerlessness and unmanageability  
Becoming open to spirituality and a spiritual solution  
Getting honest/inventorying our past  
Telling our story openly and honestly with another  
Humbly seeking the removal of shortcomings  
Finding self-forgiveness  
Making amends to those harmed  
Continuing inventory of daily thoughts and behavior  
Finding discernment  
Meditating and seeking spiritual direction  
Practicing love and self-love  
Carrying the message of recovery to others

## BEING A SPONSEE

A sponsor will expect a sponsee to actively participate in his or her own recovery. The sponsor will expect the person to be honest with themselves and others. Sponsees will need to make regular contact with their sponsor and will be expected to follow through on commitments. Sponsees with addictions must also be committed to abstinence. We cannot work an effective ACA program if we are dosing ourselves with alcohol, drugs, or other addictive behaviors.

A sponsor will watch for willingness from the person being sponsored and will pay attention to whether the sponsee completes Step work and attends meetings regularly. A sponsor will expect a sponsee to accept full responsibility for his or her program and behavior.

Making a decision to end a sponsor/sponsee relationship is not abandonment. However, when either party decides he or she needs to move on, that person needs to be honest and tactful about the decision.

The fellow traveler model of sponsorship calls both a sponsor and sponsee to practice the principles of the ACA steps in all their affairs. These principles include surrender, self-honesty, self-inventory, and willingness. This is the two-way street of ACA sponsorship.

## AFFIRMATIONS AND COMMITMENTS

### For Sponsees:

- I can ask for help without feeling like I am a burden.
- I can be equal in a relationship with another person.
- I have willingness to do whatever it takes to recover.
- I am capable of selecting a healthy sponsor.
- I will work a strong ACA program one step at a time.
- I will celebrate the milestones in my recovery.

### For Sponsors:

- I have something to offer another person.
- I can help someone with what I have learned in recovery.
- I can help another ACA regardless of the type of abuse we experienced as children.
- I can share my experience instead of giving advice.
- I will avoid “fixing” or rescuing others.
- I will maintain healthy boundaries.

*Information in this pamphlet comes primarily from Chapter 11 of the ACA Fellowship Text. For more information about ACA Sponsorship, please refer to that chapter.*

# ACA Sponsorship: Fellow Travelers



Adult Children of Alcoholics®/  
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