

Sponsorship in EDA

Sponsorship is a fundamental and vital component of Step Twelve: it is carrying the message of recovery in one of the most immediate, direct, and meaningful ways possible.

As we patiently and persistently work all of EDA's Twelve Steps, we experience a transformation that changes our perspective and provides us with hope that recovery from our eating disorder is possible. We happily share our experience, strength, and hope with those who suffer with eating disorders as we once did, glad that even our worst experiences can now serve a good purpose. Carrying the message of recovery reinforces gratitude, solidifies new habits of thought and action, and fills us with purpose and joy.

A sponsor-sponsee relationship is not a substitute for professional therapy. EDA encourages members to work with qualified therapists, dietitians, and other medical and health professionals who are trained and experienced in treating eating disorders, as needed.

Am I Qualified to Be an EDA Sponsor?

If you have worked the Twelve Steps of EDA, ideally with an EDA sponsor, and have seen improvements in your thinking and behavior, sponsoring others will enhance and support your recovery. You do not need perfect freedom from eating disorder behaviors or obsessive thoughts, nor complete resolution of body image issues, to be a sponsor. While you may feel unprepared to sponsor there is no better way to gain confidence than to jump in. We encourage you to sponsor others after you have completed working EDA's Twelve Steps. Sponsoring is a great way to work Step Twelve and to strengthen your own recovery. If you are unsure if you should sponsor, discuss your concerns with your own sponsor or contact sponsors@eatingdisordersanonymous.org

What Does an EDA Sponsor Do?

A sponsor's experience, strength and hope can provide insight and inspiration needed to successfully work a Twelve Step program of recovery. In EDA a sponsor:

- Takes others through the process of working the Twelve Steps of EDA
- Listens
- Shares personal experience, strength, and hope
- Provides honest feedback in a supportive way
- Avoids offering unsolicited advice on matters unrelated to working the program

What Does an EDA Sponsee Do?

In EDA a sponsee:

- Commits to working the EDA program and completing the Twelve Steps of EDA
- Regularly attends EDA meetings
- Maintains regular, frequent contact with Sponsor
- Is open to honest, positive feedback
- Asks for guidance when needed
- Takes responsibility for their own decisions and actions
- Does service in EDA to help maintain balance and perspective

How Do I Find an EDA Sponsor?

- The best way to find a sponsor is to ask people at EDA meetings, whose recovery you respect, to sponsor you.
- When you find meetings you like, regularly attending these meetings can help develop connections that can lead to sponsorship. EDA meetings are listed on the EDA website, www.4EDA.org.
- It is suggested that you do not select a sponsor for whom you have or might have romantic feelings, as this can distract from recovery.
- EDA members are working toward finding balance in their own lives and may be unable to say yes to every sponsorship request. Do not be discouraged; be persistent about asking additional people.

- Even if someone is not available to sponsor, they may know someone else who is available and may be willing to answer questions and share about their own EDA recovery journey. Collect phone numbers and use the phone.
- Delays in finding a sponsor can be frustrating. Remember, your recovery journey can begin at any time; for many EDA members, recovery began before finding a sponsor, by attending meetings, reading literature, and connecting with EDA members.
- The resources listed in this brochure have proven to be very helpful while members are looking for a sponsor. We suggest using them all!

Changing Sponsors/Sponsees

- While changing sponsors is not discouraged, it is helpful to focus on the total picture and on the positive. Sponsees often discover that hearing something they don't like from a sponsor can be difficult at first, but proves to be useful in the long run.
- If a sponsor cancels frequently, does not provide the sponsee with directions on working the Twelve Steps, or frequently offers unsolicited advice unrelated to recovery, a sponsee may want to consider working with someone new.
- Occasionally sponsors encounter changes in circumstances that affect their availability, and need to discontinue working with one or more of their sponsees.
- Sometimes a particular sponsor and sponsee just don't click. If differences in personality prevent you from working on your recovery, finding a new sponsor should be considered.
- If you are considering changing sponsors or "letting a sponsee go", discuss the situation (not the person) with a trusted EDA member to gain perspective.
- Regardless of the reason, changing sponsors should not be considered a personal failing for either party.

Sponsor/Sponsee Relationships

Although sponsees often develop strong and durable bonds with their sponsors, the relationship does not always extend beyond the context of working the Steps. Sponsees are responsible for their own recovery and should work to build their own network of friends and support in EDA.

We encourage everyone who has made it through Step Three to consciously practice reliance on their Higher Power, higher purpose, and/or the principles of EDA's 12 Steps, rather than depending too heavily on individual people to see them through life's challenges. Sponsors can often provide support and encouragement to their sponsees as they navigate becoming sponsors themselves. Relationships between sponsor and sponsee vary widely.

Resources

Often the most accessible resource for a new sponsor is their own sponsor. In addition, EDA offers a wealth of resources:

- Chapter Seven of the EDA Big Book, "Working with Others"
- Appendix C of the EDA Big Book, "An EDA Member Works the Steps"
- The Audios tab of the EDA website (www.4EDA.org) contains recordings of two workshops with accompanying handouts, as well as audios of brief introductions to each of EDA's Twelve Steps.
- The Literature tab of the EDA website (www.4EDA.org), in addition to housing a free PDF of the EDA Big Book, contains many useful brochures
- An audio version of the entire EDA Big Book found on the EDA Big Book tab of the website (www.4EDA.org).

Sponsors in EDA use these resources in various ways to help their sponsees work through the Steps. The people who respond to emails sent to sponsors@eatingdisordersanonymous.org can also help with sponsorship questions.

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For more information please
visit our website at:

www.4EDA.org

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