



Serving As a Sponsor – You Can Do It!

by Matt T.

When I first became a sponsor, I thought I needed to know everything. I worried I wasn't qualified, didn't have enough time sober, or wasn't "good enough" to guide someone else. But the truth is: sponsorship is not about perfection or expertise. It's about being willing.

Sponsorship is the #1 way we can serve our fellow addicts. Sponsoring others strengthens my own recovery, deepens my humility, and reminds me why I stay sober. Just as important, it's desperately needed. Many addicts struggle simply because they don't have a sponsor. A lack of sponsorship is often a direct reason people fail to find lasting recovery.

You Don't Have to Be an Expert

You don't have to have all the answers to be a sponsor. You don't even have to feel confident. The best way to start is simply by agreeing to be a temporary sponsor. That takes the pressure off. It lets both you and your sponsee see how things go without a big commitment up front.

Your main job is simple: listen, listen, listen. Remember the old saying — God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason. Most addicts are already beating themselves up; they don't need us to pile on. Instead, they need encouragement, hope, and a reminder that recovery is possible.

Use your own sponsor for your challenges. Then turn and serve your sponsee by listening to their struggles, sharing your experience, strength, and hope, and most importantly — encouraging them. Look for what they're doing right and tell them. Be a voice of hope.

Keeping the Right Boundaries

You are not your sponsee's therapist, and you're not their higher power. Recovery is their responsibility, not yours. Ask before you give advice. If your sponsee starts to drift or quits calling, that's painful, but it's not a failure on your part. Encourage them to find another sponsor if needed — don't take it personally. This is about their recovery, not your pride.

I also try to have my sponsees contact me. I'll reach out if I know they're facing something tough, or if it's been a while, but generally I wait for their call. It keeps the responsibility where it belongs.

Being Practical

There are some simple tools that help me sponsor more effectively:

- Ask good questions. I like to start with:
 - “How are you doing today?” — then really listen.
 - “How is your spiritual life?”
 - “Are you taking time for daily quiet time?”
 - “What’s wrong?”
 - “Been to a meeting lately?”
- If they say they acted out, I’ll often ask for more details — but I try to read the situation. Sometimes gentle questions are best.
- Keep pointing them to their higher power. I am not it.
- Encourage them to work the steps, and if possible, to attend a step workshop.
- Keep working the steps yourself. Sponsoring is no excuse to stop doing your own work.

A Few Final Thoughts

Don’t give up on your sponsee. But also, don’t be an enabler. The goal is always recovery. If you need help sorting that out, lean on your sponsor or others in the program.

At the end of the day, sponsoring isn’t about having it all figured out. It’s about being a fellow traveler, offering a hand, sharing your hope, and reminding another addict that they’re not alone. You can do this — and it will change your life, too.