



EMORY
CoDA

SPONSORSHIP: THE FELLOW TRAVELERS GUIDE

KEEPING YOUR RECOVERY & PASSING IT ON

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Your Step 12: Doing Sponsorship *Using The Fellow Travelers Approach*¹

WHERE TO BEGIN: What Is Sponsorship? Why Is It Necessary For Recovery?

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. As fellow travelers on the road of recovery, the sponsor and sponsee find empathy. This is the mutual understanding that puts action into our identification with another co-dependent or adult child of a dysfunctional family. With true empathy, we recognize our similarities. We recognize the difference between love and pity. With empathy, we are ready to help another person and to accept help. We understand what it means to be a friend.

Most of us choose a sponsor who has similar experiences or someone we can relate to from our meetings. We attend meetings and listen to those sharing their stories and experiences. Choosing a sponsor can be as simple as walking up to the person after a meeting and asking for help with the Twelve Steps.

If we are asked to be a sponsor, we try to say yes. We do not need to be intimidated or afraid that we will do something wrong. If we attend meetings regularly, we have something to offer another person.

Sponsorship is one of the program tools that helps us grow and learn more about ourselves and the Twelve Steps. Working the Twelve Steps with a sponsee dramatically improves our understanding of the principles of the Steps. *By working the program with another, we are compelled to think about the Steps and how they fit together.* We begin to understand their order and how they walk us toward a spiritual awakening. We see why an admission of powerlessness in Step One leads to surrender and seeking a Higher Power in Step Two. The decision we make in Step Three leads to willingness to begin a searching inventory in Step Four. The connection between the remaining Steps emerges for us as well. At some point, we realize we learned a lot by working the Steps for ourselves, but we learn even more by sponsoring someone in the program. Being a sponsor is a fulfilling journey that you will not want to miss.

For many, sponsorship represents the first time we have tried to establish a relationship on equal footing with another person. This is an unfamiliar concept for us since we came from families in which healthy relationships and mutual respect were not practiced. In CoDA and ACA, we need not fear sponsorship as a reenactment of the domination, neglect or control we experienced as children. CoDA and ACA sponsors offer respect and understanding instead of criticism and conditional love.

¹ Text excerpted and adapted from the ACA Big Book, Copyright ©2006, Adult Children of Alcoholics World Service Organization and Co-Dependents Anonymous material. Adopted by the Emory Monday Evening Meeting of Co-Dependents Anonymous Group Conscience as our preferred guide for sponsorship in recovery. You may choose to substitute the word “CoDA” for “ACA” in most of the matters discussed in this document, as the same principles apply to recovery in both programs. We need not feel confusion about the names since we’re gently reminded that our recovery begins when we start looking for similarities and principles, not differences or personalities.

We learn to desire the equality and trust that come from being in a sponsor and sponsee relationship. This partnership is such a contrast to our relationships before we arrived at CoDA or ACA. As adults, most of us seemed to have relationships in which we dominated people or worshipped people. Most of us were discreet about these two extremes. But when we think about it, we can agree that we have been near one end or the other of these two positions. There seemed to be no middle ground or equality in our relationships with another person. Many of us thought we were either superior or inferior. We seemed to never feel like we were good enough for our friends or others. In a sponsor and sponsee relationship, we have a chance to make a real connection with another person based on mutual respect and trust. We find friendship and intimacy with another person that brings self-respect. We are learning how to love one another.

Being A Sponsor – The Emotional and Spiritual Benefits

Sponsorship in CoDA and ACA is one of the key actions that help a member maintain emotional sobriety while continuing to grow spiritually. CoDA and ACA sponsors who actively help others with their program tend to face the challenges of life more easily. They have developed a support system in their CoDA and ACA groups. They know how to ask for help and accept it. Sponsorship represents the third element of a key promise made in *The Solution*: “We progress from hurting to healing to helping.”

While a sponsor can give much time toward helping others, the sponsor learns how to avoid the hero or rescuing roles learned in childhood. A CoDA or ACA sponsor is someone who truly understands the effects of being raised in a dysfunctional family. A sponsor understands the importance of focus and re-parenting one’s self through the Twelve Steps. The sponsor knows the difference between discovery and recovery. Discovery can involve reading and self-help books and educating ourselves about the diseases of co-dependence, alcoholism and family recovery. However, recovery from the effects of family dysfunction involves attending CoDA or ACA meetings regularly, working the Steps and sponsoring others. Discovery is knowledge. It is not recovery. This understanding comes from working the CoDA or ACA programs of recovery instead of merely reading or talking about it.

In addition to having experience with the Steps, listening is perhaps one of the most important skills that a sponsor can develop. A CoDA or ACA sponsor hones the skill of active listening and reflects back what is being said by the sponsee. That means a thoughtful sponsor helps a sponsee hear what he or she is saying. In these moments, clarity emerges for the sponsee. In some interactions, denial is exposed or personal progress is realized. Many times a sponsee is making more progress than he or she can see. Most adult children tend to look at what they think they are doing “wrong” instead of seeing the progress. A sponsor can point that out.

In moments of self-doubt, the CoDA or ACA sponsor holds up a mirror, which reminds the sponsee that he or she is doing a lot of things right and that things can work out. The sponsor suggests that doomsaying and predictions by the critical inner parent are not always inevitable.

Sponsorship is not one of the Twelve Steps, but its importance could be ranked in the same category. Through sponsorship, we pass on the gift of recovery which was given to each of us. Sponsorship is the vehicle by which we take the road less traveled to a true connection with others and a God of our understanding. Sponsors receive more than they give by helping another member work the program.

ACA sponsorship has evolved from the many styles of sponsorship of the various Twelve Step programs. ACA uses the “fellow traveler” or co-sponsor method of sponsorship in most cases, but there are other variations of these methods. *ACA sponsorship could be described as peer-to-peer help. The sponsor and sponsee are on equal footing, seeking answers and solutions together.*

We tend to avoid the teacher-student style of sponsorship since we rebel against authority and since we have difficulty asking for what we need in these situations. If our sponsor appears as teacher, we tend to regress to a people-pleasing mode. Some of us can try to anticipate what our sponsor would want us to think or do. In the teacher-student style of sponsorship, we can recreate the abandonment of our family. We can fear displeasing the sponsor just as we feared displeasing our parents. We subconsciously think we have failed or displeased our parent when we make mistakes or struggle with recovery. Under the teacher-student scenario, some of us can see Step work as assignments to be dreaded. We can view the Steps as something to be perfected, instead of the healing path they lead us upon. *Many of us coming over to ACA from other Twelve Step programs have had the experience of this model, and it did not tend to work well with us. We often felt belittled or unheard, but we remained silent. Many of us blame ourselves for not using sponsors effectively in our programs. But we find ACA sponsorship comfortable and desirable.*

The fellow traveler method of sponsorship seems to work best for us because it places us on equal footing with our sponsor. We can drop our people-pleasing or self-sufficient traits and ask for help. We do not have to feel intimidated. We do not have to think we are a burden by asking for someone’s time. We also learn we can make mistakes and not have to know all the answers to be helped. We see sponsorship, whether we sponsor others or are being sponsored, as a chance to grow.

Being a sponsor for others is something we look forward to in CoDA and ACA. We want to give back to the fellowship. We keep what we have by giving it away. This is a key to re-parenting one’s self and maintaining emotional sobriety. We also keep our word as a sponsor. We follow through. The sponsee keeps his or her word as well. The sponsee must be willing to do what it takes to recover in CoDA and ACA. This is the two-way street of sponsorship – willingness and following through with focus.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Beginning of the Fellow Traveler Model

In 2009, the ACA Sponsorship Committee recommended the “fellow traveler” or co-sponsor approach based on fellowship input. The ACA model of sponsorship is a modification of the method used in Alcoholics Anonymous. The AA model is a proven method of helping AA members find and maintain sobriety. AA members learn to surrender destructive self-will, practice rigorous honesty and seek God’s will in this model. These results are desirable in ACA as well; however, the Sponsorship Committee did not believe the AA method adequately addressed the tendencies of the ACA personality, namely our over-reliance on other for direction and approval and our tendency to try to manage someone else’s life. Without a modification of the AA model, it was feared that an ACA sponsor would play lord over a sponsee more willing to give up personal freedom and choice. So the fellow traveler model was developed to place the sponsor and sponsee on equal footing from the beginning.

The “ACA Sponsorship Pamphlet I” states:

“We suggest the ‘Fellow Traveler’ approach which allows the sponsor/sponsee to share the same road at this time but urging the person being sponsored to soon choose their own way. The sponsor helps (the sponsee) see alternatives and explores the consequences of this/her actions. *When asked for advice, the sponsor would be urged to respond, “I don’t know what you should do. Here’s what I did in a similar situation.”*”

This 1989 pamphlet also states:

“*The question on when to get a sponsor is best answered by the newcomer, but it’s agreed that as soon as the newcomer commits to the program of recovery he/she should connect with a sponsor so that they can find direction and not wander rudderless from meeting to meeting.*”

Some sponsor and sponsee relationships last a lifetime, one day at a time. Others are temporary, while even others begin and stop, and begin again. Whatever the rhythm of the relationship, the fellow traveler model of sponsorship calls each person in the relationship to practice the principles of the Steps in all their affairs. The principles include surrender, self-honesty, self-inventory and a willingness to seek and do God’s will.

ACA sponsors are not limited in their ability to help a variety of ACA members. For example, a sponsor with a history of verbal abuse may be asked to help a person who was subjected to physical abuse of hitting and battery. Even though the sponsor had no physical abuse growing up, he or she can relate to someone physically abused because emotional and physical abuse produce the same damage. The abuse creates obsessive fear, self-hate and a sense of being lost.

If the sponsor does not have an experience that relates to the situation at hand, he or she relates this truth. It is okay to say “I don’t know your exact circumstances, but I understand the loss. I understand the fear.” The sponsor and sponsee talk about the situation and options. Occasionally, the sponsor will recommend that the sponsee talk with someone who has had a similar life experience.

This is the crux of understanding the fellow traveler model of ACA sponsorship. The sponsor and sponsee are more alike than different. Because of this great fact, we can help one another when few others can. We can help each other find the ACA solution through the Steps and through reparenting ourselves.

With a willingness to be a fellow traveler, the ACA sponsor remains ready to travel with the sponsee to find solutions that benefit the sponsee's recovery. *At the same time, the person being sponsored becomes willing to listen and take action when another's experience can be helpful. The sponsee admits and accepts that family dysfunction occurred and is willing to take action to move forward into recovery.*

As a sponsor, we do not need to fear that we will make mistakes or harm someone through sponsorship. Adult children are survivors, and they know how to protect themselves. In some cases, there are hurt feelings and miscommunication, but lasting harm is not likely. With the fellow traveler model of sponsorship, we are not taking responsibility for the other person. We are not the person's therapist, counselor or life coach. We are traveling with the person as he or she participates in recovery.

The pamphlet on ACA sponsorship recommends a list of recovery actions that a sponsee could be expected to do. The pamphlet suggests that the sponsor help the sponsee develop an action plan from this simple list. The list includes doing family-of-origin work (a family history), Step work, journaling, and some level of service work. The service work can begin with volunteering to chair a CODA or ACA meeting. By doing this, the person being sponsored learns about giving back to the group and to the fellowship.

Having a sponsor can be the difference between remaining stagnated or finding greater levels of choice and freedom. We cannot overstate the need for the assistance of a sponsor to make real progress in recovery.

In some cases, a sponsor might recommend counseling. In CoDA and ACA, we are revisiting traumatic events suffered in childhood, releasing powerful emotions and opening the doors on the past. Our sponsors are not therapists or counselors, but they offer needed support to those revisiting abuse and trauma. A sponsor understands the need for counseling, but he or she also knows that counseling alone is not the sure path for the adult child. Counseling does not replace the need for meeting attendance and joining a CoDA or ACA group.

Another form of sponsorship is the co-sponsorship model. This model works best for two CoDA or ACA members with long-term recovery rather than newer members just beginning the program. In co-sponsoring one another, the two experienced members have a working knowledge of the Steps and Traditions and have completed family-of-origin work. They understand grief work and post-traumatic stress disorder and know how to address both. They have carried the message to others and served their group or Intergroup well. They sponsor one another with experience and respect.

In CoDA and ACA, there is also short-term, temporary sponsorship until a person settles on a more permanent relationship with a sponsor. Temporary sponsors have been used by ACA members who have just been released from a treatment setting or prison. These new members

use a temporary sponsor to learn about the CoDA or ACA programs, meeting locations and other program information. Some temporary sponsors become more permanent sponsors for some new members.

Multiple Sponsors

If we have an addiction in addition to being an adult child, we may also have a sponsor in a program that addresses the addiction. For example, there could be an overeating CoDA or ACA member with a sponsor in Overeating Anonymous or a gambling-addicted CoDA or ACA member with a sponsor in Gamblers Anonymous. Many CoDA and ACA members are recovering addicts in AA and NA as well. While CoDA and ACA are a way of life that can meet all of our emotional and spiritual need, it does not eliminate the need for or usefulness of these other programs.

An ACA Sponsorship Story on Learning from a Sponsee

"I learned quickly that there was more to being a sponsor than just being the program for a specific period of time. It takes kindness, caring, and an abundance of patience and nurturing, things I did not know existed. I learned them in ACA and other Twelve Step programs. I also learned my unhealthy attitudes and my negative feelings could be changed. The change would result in undreamed of good fortune.

I became an ACA sponsor after eighteen months in the program. It was a decision I mulled over for three months. I was not sure I was ready. I was not sure I had anything to give, and I was not sure that what I had to give was worth giving. I read a sponsorship pamphlet. I talked with my own sponsor. Then I took a long, searching look at myself as a candidate and made what I now consider my most healing decision.

Sponsoring others is my way of showing my gratitude for my program of recovery. To do it well, I try to maintain healthy boundaries between my sponsee and me in order not to take on their pain or try to fix them. This helps me show my sponsees the paths to take toward their recovery. By helping them, I am changing my unhealthy behaviors into positive ones. I try not to tell them what I think is best. I do, however, try to help them see that the decision they make is a good decision for them.

I applaud the intuitiveness they invariably exhibit, which they have been programmed to disregard before ACA. I believe that whatever they decide to do is a good move forward for them. Whether I would take those roads is irrelevant because, just as I am my own person, they are their own persons.

When we talk, I learn as much as they do. When I listen to them, I have found they hear me. We all want to be seen and heard. We want to be acknowledged for our ideas, our hopes, and our fears. When no one cared enough to acknowledge us, much less validate us, we locked ourselves up in a place that smothered us until we had to savagely fight for our very survival. Being an ACA sponsor means aiding a sponsee in that fight until they can stand up to whatever comes at them. If they feel overwhelmed, I try to help them see the problem in its less intimidating, basic form. When they can't do it alone, they learn to reach out and get the necessary emotional support and information to see their problem can be solved, how to solve it,

and then solve it. After learning to solve their problems, their lives are more peaceful. For some of us serenity is unnatural and frightening, so we have to learn to accept it.

When I speak with my sponsee, I remember their words and I learn. While the causes of our dysfunction are different, the effects are the same. In sponsoring others I sometimes find solutions to my own problems. Or I find solace in the fact I am not alone. As a sponsor I try to be a guide, not a teacher. I make it a point to praise the good work my sponsees do because validation is always important. I love seeing the miracles of their recovery as much as I love seeing my own. I make it a point to talk about those miracles, to remind my sponsee of the light awaiting them at the end of the recovery tunnel. Being a sponsor is a learning experience and a loving gift from God.”

Sponsorship Overview

While the goal is to be in a one-on-one relationship with a sponsor, we offer an overview of CoDA and ACA sponsorship experience that includes other methods as well.

Direct Sponsorship

Fellow Traveler – This is the traditional method of ACA sponsorship. A person who is willing to share experience, strength, and hope in helping the sponsee work his or her way through the Twelve Steps and to pick up the recovery tools for facing life on life’s terms.

Temporary Sponsor – Serves as an interim sponsor for a short time until a permanent one is found.

Multiple Sponsors – More than one sponsor to serve various needs of the sponsee, as long as the sponsee isn’t hiding out in the various relationships. We don’t use multiple sponsors to avoid intimacy with others or to “shop” for an opinion that we desire.

Co-Sponsors – Where two people are in agreement to sponsor each other. This model seems to work best for CoDA and ACA members having significant time and experience in the program.

Long-Distance Sponsors – This can work well for geographically isolated CoDA and ACA members. There is mail, email, telephone, tape recordings and voice stream where distance or circumstances prevent person-to-person contact. Additionally, the Internet has made these long-distance relationships more meaningful. Some CoDA and ACA members who are geographically isolated use online ACA meetings and live chat to work an ACA program. They use a private chat room or the telephone to do extensive Step work with a long-distance sponsor. In addition to the Steps, there can also be discussion and meaning found in the Twelve Traditions in this method of sponsorship.

Indirect Sponsorship

Meetings act as a sponsoring influence. The groups that sponsor a person indirectly usually emphasize the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, sponsorship, other program tools, and offer a well-stocked literature table with a phone list. The meetings are friendly and focus on recovery.

Step Study Groups that meet regularly to work the Steps together can provide indirect sponsorship. Note that attending a step study group or workshop does not take the place of one-on one sponsorship. (See CoDA Big Book, Page 23, et al.)

Service Boards or Committees should not be used as a replacement for traditional sponsoring, but these boards and committees can mentor healthy behavior and offer sponsorship influence.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why Do We Have Sponsors?

We cannot recover alone or in isolation. Without sponsorship we are usually relying primarily on self-will and self-reliance. Being sponsored gives us a chance to surrender our compulsive self-reliance and move forward. For the sponsor, it gives us a chance to transform our rescuing role into true friendship in which we give help and ask for help. This is what true friends do.

What Does a Sponsor Do for a Newcomer?

A sponsor provides guidance for the newcomer for building a foundation for recovery on his or her journey through the Twelve Steps. The sponsor shares his story with the person being sponsored. The sponsor helps the newcomer move beyond discovery into recovery. The sponsor helps the sponsee understand the characteristics of an adult child. He or she explains the many forms of denial. In addition to Step work, the sponsor encourages meeting attendance, journaling, meditation and seeking a Higher Power.

The sponsor encourages the newcomer to speak the truth of the abuse suffered in childhood. He or she validates the progress the newcomer makes in recovery. The sponsor helps the newcomer identify, express and understand feelings. He or she explains the importance of resolving stored grief.

The sponsor shares about the importance of connecting with the Inner child and becoming one's own Loving Parent. The sponsor shares his or her spiritual program with the sponsee.

What Does a Sponsor Do for Oldtimers?

We can always benefit from sponsorship, no matter how many years we have in the program. Many oldtimers in our programs did not have sponsors because there were none or only few in the early days of program development. Many read the program information, founded CoDA and ACA groups and immersed themselves in service work. They achieved recovery as best they could. As a result, some of our older members have realized they missed

crucial parts of the sequence of CoDA or ACA recovery. Many of these older members have shown humility by asking a newer member to help them with the Twelve Steps. Some older members have worked their Fourth and Fifth Steps (inventory Steps) for the first time through this method. It is never too late to work all phases of the CoDA or ACA programs, including the Twelve Steps.

What is an Effective Sponsor?

The effective sponsor watches for willingness from the person he or she is sponsoring. The effective sponsor pays attention to whether the sponsee completes Step work and attends meetings regularly. Some newcomers want to talk on the phone in great detail about their childhood experiences or relationship issues, but they remain unwilling to take action. They have many excuses, ailments and rationalizations for failing to take action. None of it makes sense when compared to the insanity or dysfunction in their lives. When this occurs, the sponsor moves on to someone who is willing to go to meetings and work a program. This is not a cruel decision, nor is it abandonment. We risk becoming an enabler if we listen to someone languishing in the problem without a plan to move forward. We also deny our recovery experience from someone who really wants what we have to offer as a sponsor.

Effective CoDA and ACA sponsors are in active recovery. They have worked the twelve steps and have an understanding of the sequence of recovery. The sequence begins with the realizing an ACA bottom, confronting denial and surrendering. There must be an admission of family dysfunction, followed by a self-inventory and admission of wrongs. Next the person asks for character defects to be removed and becomes willing to make amends, take a daily inventory and carry the ACA message to others. Active sponsors know this sequence and look for ways to help others follow this path through the Steps.

A potential sponsor leads by example. He or she shows up at meetings regularly and provides humble leadership and service at the meetings. In program business he or she observes the Twelve Traditions. The sponsor honors commitments.

An effective CoDA or ACA sponsor keeps the focus on himself or herself. The active sponsor knows his story and how to tell it with honesty and humility. In addition to Step work, the story can include childhood neglect, understanding grief, getting in touch with the Inner child, and becoming one's own Loving Parent. The sponsor explains the connection between childhood abuse and neglect and the effect that has on his or her adult life.

A CoDA or ACA sponsor deals with problems in a timely manner as well. The sponsor admits strengths and limitations readily. The sponsor is considerate and respectful of others. He or she has achieved an observable level of serenity.

What a Sponsor Does Not Do

A sponsor with an addiction must not be active in that addiction. We cannot sponsor if we are drinking, drugging or engaged in some other addictive behavior that would qualify as relapse.

A sponsor in CoDA or ACA is not a parent, partner, guru, family member, authority figure or Higher Power to the person being sponsored. The sponsor does not presume to have superior intellect, skills or talent. *The sponsor does not judge or label the sponsee.* The sponsor does not invalidate the feelings or insights of the person being sponsored.

He or she does not do for the sponsees what they can do for themselves. The sponsor does not give or lend money. He or she typically does not provide food, clothing, shelter or jobs. However, in some cases, the sponsor can urge a sponsee to become employed to gain financial independence.

The sponsor does not abuse, threaten or abandon sponsees. A sponsor does not become sexually involved with the person. Finally, the sponsor does not accept abuse from a sponsee. The sponsor protects his or her own boundaries.

Overcoming the Fear of Sponsorship

Abuse from authority figures in childhood has left us on guard as adults about authority figures. We tend to place people in the category of an authority figure when they may not be such a person. Some of us can be skeptical of sponsorship and sponsors. Our past experiences tell us that any leader, employer or officer is inherently an authority figure and is to be distrusted. This is one of the reasons that the fellow traveler model of sponsorship was implemented in ACA. *Sponsors in CoDA and ACA lead by example instead of by rules and threats. We need not fear sponsorship.* Some of the recovery work we do in CoDA and ACA is far too intense to face alone. On our journey, we need the assistance of a trusted friend with knowledge of recovery.

A sponsor is definitely needed for the sponsee to get the most out of CoDA and ACA. In dysfunctional and alcoholic families we learned to avoid telling the truth about our family to outsiders. We are honest with our sponsors, but there is no coercion here. We share with our sponsor only what we feel comfortable in sharing when we are ready. However, we make an attempt to challenge our denial. *We break the family rule that tells us to keep secrets or to keep information hidden. Hiding information or keeping secrets can prolong our confusion and isolation.*

How Do We Locate a Sponsor?

We go to different meetings and listen to members sharing their experiences. In addition to meetings, we can look for a sponsor at conventions, retreats and service activities. We find people who work a program attend meetings and have an understanding of CoDA or ACA principles. We ask potential sponsors what they expect of their sponsees. *As we listen to what we might be expected to do for our recovery, we remember how much effort we put into codependence and care-taking of others. Before recovery, some of us spent countless hours in resentment, losing sleep and cleaning up after someone in our codependent relationship. We usually worked long hours and paid all the bills. We rescued ungrateful people with our money or our time. We typically place everyone else first. There were moments of exhaustion or near*

exhaustion. In some cases, our immune system was affected, and we became ill. No day was too long, and no amount of effort was too much. So as we listen to suggestions about attending meetings or working the Twelve Steps, we realize that recovery takes far less effort than the struggles of codependence.

As we talk with a potential sponsor, we get a sense of compatibility, but we avoid notions of perfectionism or the perfect match. Differences are not always a negative. We should not be too picky as long as the person is committed to CoDA or ACA recovery and helping others.

Next, we can ask for the person's telephone number and call to talk about CoDA or ACA. We see if we are comfortable talking with that person on the telephone. We might go through this process with two or three people. Eventually we ask one of them to be our sponsor. If we want to move at a slower pace, we might ask to meet that person at a restaurant to talk about expectations. We can talk about what sponsorship includes and what it does not include. It usually includes availability of time to do Step work and an exchange of mutual respect. In some cases, we might talk about a trial period to see if it works out. We can commit to a trial period of four to six weeks to see how it goes. At the end of the time period, we revisit the agreement.

Sometimes sponsors are not readily available. When this happens we may have to seek out a sponsor through a long-distance method or by visiting other towns where CoDA or ACA is more active.

What Will a Sponsor Expect From a Sponsee?

A sponsor will expect a sponsee to actively participate in his or her recovery. The sponsor will expect the person to be honest and respectful. He or she will expect the sponsee to follow through on commitments to attend CoDA or ACA meetings. The person being sponsored will need to make regular contact with the sponsor. *The sponsor will expect the sponsee to accept full responsibility for his or her program and behavior.*

When Should I Get a Sponsor?

Newcomers are encouraged to get a sponsor immediately. Oldtimers without sponsor are also encouraged to get a new perspective on their process from a peer sponsor.

Should a Sponsor and Sponsee Be the Same Sex?

The ACA Sponsorship Committee interviewed many members of the fellowship. **They concluded that having a same-sex sponsor is preferable for heterosexual members to avoid romantic involvement.** Newcomers are vulnerable to manipulation and seek to accommodate others. They can focus on others rather than the program. **Even if there is no romantic involvement between a sponsor and sponsee, the potential for confusion is too great.** It is best for men to sponsor men and women to sponsor women to avoid confusion.

Gays and lesbians need to consider similar issues. *Dysfunctional behavior – whether gay or straight – can undermine the program for the sponsor and the sponsee.* We avoid these situations by having same-sex sponsors for heterosexuals and being mindful of our orientation if we are gay, lesbian or bisexual. This does not prohibit a gay man or woman from having a male or female sponsor, but there are issues to consider and to talk over.

Who Can Be a CoDA or ACA Sponsor?

Anyone in the CoDA or ACA fellowship actively working his or her own program may sponsor others in this program.

How Does Sponsorship Help the Sponsor?

By becoming involved in CoDA or ACA and helping others, the sponsor realizes he or she is making a real connection to life and people. This is what the person has craved but missed in childhood and in attempts at relationships before finding CoDA or ACA. *By staying involved the sponsor remembers where he or she came from. The person remembers the isolation, despair and confusion and does not want to go back there. By staying involved, the sponsor can avoid an ACA relapse and a return to isolation or self-sufficient hell.*

Involved sponsors also continue to grow spiritually and gain all the benefits of the CoDA or ACA way of life. He or she remains connected to a Higher Power through the Inner Child. By staying in meetings and in fellowship with others, the sponsor recognizes and lives the promises of CoDA or ACA. The person can reflect upon how far he or she has come.

When is a Person Ready to Be a Sponsor?

We are aware of members with many years in the program who have never done their family-of-origin work, grief work or Inner Child work, meaning they have not grown emotionally. So while time in the program is a factor for selecting an informed sponsor, it should not be the only factor. At the very least, a potential sponsor will have worked the Twelve Steps and will be aware of the “Laundry List” traits (see below, or see CoDA’s *Characteristics of Codependence*). The sponsor will be aware of his or her dysfunctional family role. The potential sponsor will have identified with at Higher Power and Inner Child and address some of his or her wreckage of the past.

Does a Sponsor Need a Sponsor?

Most definitely. Sponsoring others does not exclude a person from having feelings and needing to ask for help and support. The healthiest ACA sponsors have sponsors and use them.

How Many People Should You Sponsor at One Time?

Most people who have achieved a level of recovery have a full, rich and rewarding life, so their time is limited. Some CoDA and ACA members sponsor one person at a time while others sponsor as many as half a dozen. The number is not always important. *The main focus is how well we can help another person make progress in the program.* Some sponsors can help only one person at a time make progress in the Steps while others can help several.

New sponsors might start with one sponsee before expanding their commitment. The sponsor may gradually add another sponsee as his or her time permits. We should not use work, play or other activities to avoid sponsoring others. When we do this, we cheat ourselves out of the rewards of this important aspect of recovery.

What Can I Do for My Sponsee If I Am Unavailable at Times?

If we are pressed for time but still want to sponsor others, we can make it work. We begin by being clear from the start that we are limited on time but that we want to be a sponsor. We also make a commitment to attend meetings regularly ourselves. Effective sponsors need to attend meetings to be able to pass on the hope that CoDA or ACA offers. We cannot give away what we do not have, so meeting attendance is critical for our own recovery and personal growth. If we travel a lot, we must make a commitment to attend meetings in the cities we travel to. We can also participate in online meetings and telephone meetings. We make a commitment to find CoDA or ACA wherever we might travel.

We next help the sponsee develop a support network of CoDA or ACA friends and contacts. This helps when the sponsor is not available. With the support plan, the sponsee may attend extra meetings, call group members, journal or contact the sponsor by cell phone or email. These options may help the person being sponsored to seek support from others, in addition to seeking support from the sponsor. The sponsor and sponsee have face-to-face meetings when time allows. This type of relationship can work as long as the sponsor and sponsee are committed to making progress in the program. All the elements of a traditional sponsor and sponsee relationship can be accomplished by this arrangement as well. *Step work, phone contact, meeting attendance and service work can be accomplished even if a sponsor has limited time to give.*

How Does a Sponsor or Sponsee End the Sponsorship?

There are a variety of reasons for ending a sponsee and sponsor relationship. We have already discussed moving on from a sponsee unwilling to take action. At the same time a person being sponsored may move on from a sponsor unwilling to return calls or be available for program work.

Relapse into alcohol or drug use, disrespectful behavior and illegal or immoral behavior are grounds to dissolve the partnership. That said, disagreements in general are not always a reason for dissolving the relationship. When either party decides he or she needs to move on, that person needs to be honest but tactful about the decision.

We offer a fellowship story on how one sponsor and sponsee ended a relationship.

“In another Twelve Step program, a meeting leader suggested to newcomers to attend three meetings a week and study the Steps in one of them. I did those things. When it was time to find a sponsor, I got up my courage, asked that meeting leader and she agreed.

Two years later I wrote out my Fourth Step inventory. After I shared it with my sponsor she offered me refreshments. I realized that her regard for me had not changed, even though she knew all my shameful, guilt-producing behavior. I had no more secrets.

I have no words to express how light I felt. I truly thought I could walk on air.

Then one day my sponsor stopped attending meetings. I called to ask why. She said she attended an assertiveness training workshop and now had the tools to deal with her life. She no longer needed a program. She invited me to continue to call her, but I did not want to. It did not seem right if she was no longer coming to meetings.

I felt abandoned. If she loved me, she would come to meetings to see me, I thought. So I decided not to ask anyone else to be my sponsor. Someone else could just abandon me, too. I did not want to have to go through that feeling of being abandoned again. I did not know then that pain is built into all relationships. I gave up the good in fear of the pain.

So, while I still called people on the phone to “talk program” with them, I no longer had a regular sponsor. One program friend, in particular, became a co-sponsor. She calls me to talk, but then she insists that I share my current issues with her before she hangs up. We have never talked about a formal co-sponsorship, but that is how I view it. She is the one who will always listen to me.

As for my former sponsor, I saw her not long ago. I was taking an evening walk, saw and greeted her. She smiled, nodded and passed me. I turned to say something further but stopped when she did not look back. I let her go.

There have been others down through the years who have been informal sponsors for me: people I called for help and people who read my face at meetings and would not let me go until we had come to some resolution for what was bothering me. All of their help has been invaluable in my recovery.”

The following affirmations and exercises are for sponsors and sponsee. Read over the affirmations and attend a CoDA or ACA meeting. Share about what you have learned.

Affirmations for Sponsees

(These Can Also Apply to the Sponsor)

1. I can ask for help without feeling like I am a burden.
2. I am treating others with respect and expect others to treat me with respect.
3. I can be equal in a relationship with another person.

4. I am capable of selecting a healthy sponsor.
5. I have willingness to do whatever it takes to recover.
6. I am following the suggestions of my sponsor in my path of recover.

Affirmations for Sponsors

(These Can Also Apply to the Sponsee)

1. I have something to offer another person.
2. I can help someone with what I have learned in recovery.
3. I will share my experience instead of giving advice.
4. I will avoid “fixing” others or rescuing others.
5. I can help another Co-dependent or ACA regardless of the type of abuse we experienced as children.
6. I am more alike than I am different from another person.

Sponsorship Writing Assignment – For the Sponsor

To be an effective sponsor, you must understand the connection between The Laundry List traits (see below or see CoDA’s *Characteristics of Codependence*) and the ACA/CoDA Steps, particularly Step One. The effects of family dysfunction mentioned in Step One are The Laundry List traits which include fearing authority figures, getting guilt feelings when we stand up for ourselves and becoming an alcoholic or marrying one or both. There are other effects of family dysfunction, but “The Laundry List” traits are critical in understanding and working the First Step.

The First Step places the focus on the effects of family dysfunction and/or alcoholism and how we are powerless over these effects. Step One causes us to think about how our learned survival traits from childhood disrupt our adult lives. Our lives are unmanageable if we are honest about our hidden fears and secrets. We have no real choice until we address these Co-dependent characteristics or the Laundry List traits in ACA. Another program that attempts to help adult children places the emphasis on being powerless over people or alcohol in Step One. In ACA, we place the emphasis on the effects of family dysfunction or alcoholism in Step One. The ACA adapted Steps are designed specifically to help the adult child of a dysfunctional family. They are designed to address trauma and neglect in addition to addressing the addictiveness of the adult child personality. The CoDA and ACA Twelve Steps address shame, abandonment, fear and a deep sense of being flawed, while also leading the Step worker to self-worth, self-forgiveness and a true connection to a Higher Power through the Inner Child. (See *CoDA Big Book*, Page 105, “What is The Child-Within?”)

After understanding the powerlessness and unmanageability in Step One, the effective sponsor must know the sequence of recovery to help another person with his or her recovery process. There are different views on the sequence of recovery so we have chosen the Twelve Steps for one method. The Twelve Steps show a progressive line of recovery that begins with hitting bottom and leads to a spiritual awakening or awareness.

For this assignment, you are being asked to list the sequence of recovery contained within the Steps. *After bottoming out, the person proceeds through the Steps, if willingness has been achieved.* The person admits powerlessness and unmanageability in Step One and becomes open to the possibility of a Higher Power in Step Two. Beginning with Step Three, finish out the sequence of the Steps as you understand it. For help, look at each Step and ask yourself what the Step is asking the person to do. For example, Step Three involves making a decision while Step Four involves a personal inventory. **Complete the sequences of the Twelve Steps:**

Step One – Hitting bottom and admitting powerlessness and unmanageability.

Step Two – Coming to believe. Becoming open to the presence of a Higher Power and restoration to sanity.

Step	<hr/>	Three
Step	<hr/>	Four
Step	<hr/>	Five
Step	<hr/>	Six
Step	<hr/>	Seven
Step	<hr/>	Eight
Step	<hr/>	Nine
Step	<hr/>	Ten
Step	<hr/>	Eleven
Step	<hr/>	Twelve

Suggestions for Hosting a Workshop on Sponsorship²

Many ACA groups contact the ACA World Service Office wanting to know how to improve sponsorship or get more people involved in sponsorship at the group level. The ACA Annual Business Conference has also addressed motions from groups wanting more information about sponsorship. The CoDA or ACA pamphlets on sponsorship and this chapter are a great starting point toward that effort. But sponsorship begins with the individual and his or her attitude. We must understand that we have something to offer another person. We have lived through a dysfunctional upbringing, and we are practicing the principles of recovery. We are moving beyond mere survival to a real connection with ourselves, others and a Higher Power. We can help an adult child when science, religion and other avenues fall short. This is the great hidden fact about ACA. It is with this fact that we can build our sponsorship base and help the most people.

To put a sponsorship workshop in your area, we offer some basic suggestions. In addition to this chapter, read the CoDA and ACA pamphlets on sponsorship. Next, select presenters active in the CoDA or ACA programs. Ask them if they have worked the CoDA or ACA Twelve Steps and if they participate in CoDA or ACA recovery. Ask them if they have a sponsor or have used a sponsor. Workshop presenters should carry a clear CoDA or ACA message as well.

In addition to selecting presenters, planning a workshop on CoDA or ACA sponsorship includes selecting a date, time and location of the workshop. A flyer should be distributed announcing the workshop. You should also prepare an agenda that outlines the events of the day. You may want to record the speakers and use the recording as a resource for newcomers or to help new sponsors learn about sponsoring others.

You may also select a theme. For instance, you might announce a CoDA or ACA sponsorship workshop that focuses on the sequence of the Twelve Steps; journaling and the Twelve Steps; the Inner Child and the Twelve Steps; long-distance sponsorship; group sponsorship; the fellow traveler model of sponsorship; working the Steps in a study group; or the principles of the Twelve Steps.

Another theme might be Step Five and how to hear a Fifth Step. Sponsors can share their experiences with listening to a Fifth Step and what to do when Step Five is completed by the sponsee. Many sponsors instruct the sponsee to immediately work Steps Six and Seven once they complete Step Five. The sponsee is instructed to go home and to meditate on willingness (Step Six) before humbly praying (Step Seven) to have shortcomings removed.

To determine interest in holding a sponsorship workshop, announce a business meeting for that purpose. You can usually set the workshop time and date at this meeting and begin contacting presenters.

² NOTE: These Sponsorship workshop principles apply equally to CoDA and ACA.

Patterns and Characteristics of Codependence

These patterns and characteristics are offered as a tool to aid in self-evaluation. They may be particularly helpful to newcomers.

Denial Patterns:

I have difficulty identifying what I am feeling.

I minimize, alter or deny how I truly feel.

I perceive myself as completely unselfish and dedicated to the well being of others.

Low Self Esteem Patterns:

I have difficulty making decisions.

I judge everything I think, say or do harshly, as never "good enough."

I am embarrassed to receive recognition and praise or gifts.

I do not ask others to meet my needs or desires.

I value others' approval of my thinking, feelings and behavior over my own.

I do not perceive myself as a lovable or worthwhile person.

Compliance Patterns:

I compromise my own values and integrity to avoid rejection or others' anger.

I am very sensitive to how others are feeling and feel the same.

I am extremely loyal, remaining in harmful situations too long.

I value others' opinions and feelings more than my own and am afraid to express differing opinions and feelings of my own.

I put aside my own interests and hobbies in order to do what others want.

I accept sex when I want love.

Control Patterns:

I believe most other people are incapable of taking care of themselves.

I attempt to convince others of what they "should" think and how they "truly" feel.

I become resentful when others will not let me help them.

I freely offer others advice and directions without being asked.

I lavish gifts and favors on those I care about.

I use sex to gain approval and acceptance.

I have to be "needed" in order to have a relationship with others.

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More Characteristics of Co-Dependence

1. Typically, you come from a dysfunctional home in which your emotional needs were not met.
2. Having received little real nurturing yourself, you may try to fill this unmet need vicariously by becoming a care-giver, especially to persons who appear, in some way, needy.
3. Because you were never able to change your parent(s) into the warm, loving caretaker(s) you longed for, you may respond deeply to the familiar type of emotionally unavailable person who you can again try to change, through your love.
4. Terrified of abandonment, you may do anything to keep a relationship from dissolving.
5. Almost nothing is too much trouble, takes too much time, or is too expensive if it will "help" the person you are involved with.
6. Accustomed to lack of love in personal relationships, you may be willing to wait, hope, and try harder to please.
7. You may be willing to take far more than 50 percent of the responsibility, guilt, and blame in any relationship.
8. Your self-esteem may be critically low and deep inside you may not believe you deserve to be happy. Rather, you may believe you must earn the right to enjoy life.
9. You may have a desperate need to control people and your relationships, having experienced little security in childhood. You may mask your efforts to control people and situations as "being helpful."
10. In a relationship, you may be much more in touch with your *dream* of how it could be than with the *reality* of your situation.
11. You may be addicted to people and to emotional pain.
12. You may be predisposed emotionally and often bio-chemically to becoming addicted to drugs, alcohol, and/or certain foods, particularly sugary ones.
13. By being drawn to people with problems that need fixing or by being enmeshed in situations that are chaotic, uncertain, and emotionally painful, you may avoid focusing on your responsibility to *yourself*.
14. You may have a tendency toward episodes of depression, which you try to forestall through the excitement provided by an unstable relationship.
15. You may not be attracted to people who are kind, stable, reliable, and interested in you. *You may find such "nice" people boring.*

More Characteristics of Codependence is reprinted from the Meeting Guide of the Emory Evening meeting of Co-dependents Anonymous. This list has been reviewed and approved by our group conscience for use in our group to help us to more clearly identify our own co-dependent behaviors. This is not an original list and has been adapted from up-to-date resources on co-dependence.

“The Laundry List”

(14 Traits of an Adult Child of a Dysfunctional or Alcoholic Family)

1. We became isolated and afraid of people and authority figures.
2. We became approval seekers and lost our identity in the process.
3. We are frightened by angry people and any personal criticism.
4. We either become alcoholics, marry them or both, or find another compulsive personality such as a workaholic to fulfill our sick abandonment needs.
5. We live life from the viewpoint of victims and we are attracted by that weakness in our love and friendship relationships.
6. We have an over developed sense of responsibility, and it is easier for us to be concerned with others rather than ourselves; this enables us not to look too closely at our own faults, etc.
7. We get guilt feelings when we stand up for ourselves instead of giving in to others.
8. We became addicted to excitement.
9. We confuse love and pity and tend to “love” people we can “pity” and “rescue.”
10. We have “stuffed” our feelings from our traumatic childhoods and have lost the ability to feel or express our feelings because it hurts so much (Denial).
11. We judge ourselves harshly and have a very low sense of self-esteem.
12. We are dependent personalities who are terrified of abandonment and will do anything to hold on to a relationship in order not to experience painful abandonment feelings, which we received from living with sick people who were never there emotionally for us.
13. Alcoholism is a family disease; we became Para-alcoholics and took on the characteristics of that disease even though we did not pick up the drink.
14. Para-alcoholics are reactors rather than actors.

HEARING A FIFTH STEP

“Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”

Hearing or listening to another person’s Fifth Step is an ultimate act of service coming from love. To hear a person’s story, you should have completed your own Fifth Step and the remaining Twelve Steps. You should be working an active CoDA or ACA program by attending meetings and changing your behavior in workable relationships.

The following guidelines are one method of listening to a Fifth Step given by a CODA or ACA member. These guidelines are consistent with the Fellow Traveler method of sponsorship. This guide is designed to match the exercises in the basic ACA text. In addition to offering tips on hearing a Fifth Step, this guide will help you assist the person with Steps Six through Eight as well.

This guide is designed for a sponsor and sponsee working the Twelve Steps of CoDA or ACA. Typically, the Fifth Step is heard by the sponsor of the sponsee working the Steps. However, there are others who can hear a Fifth Step. These people can include counselors, spiritual advisors and member of other Twelve Step fellowships. A person should not ask a spouse, parents, relatives, friends or old lovers to hear his or her Fifth Step. The person hearing the Fifth Step should have an understanding of the design and focus of the Twelve Steps of CoDA or ACA. While ACA is similar to other Twelve Step fellowships, we have expanded the Fourth Step to include an inventory of one’s self. That means ACA looks at the effects of parental behavior and some sibling behavior in addition to the behavior of the individual. The sponsee needs a listener who understands what he or she is trying to accomplish with the Steps.

Hearing Someone’s Fifth Step Involves Three Basic Elements:

1. Understanding the sequence of the Steps and what the person is trying to achieve by working Steps Four and Five.
2. Listening with empathy and without judging the person.
3. Helping the person move into Steps Six, Seven and Eight, and the rest of the Steps after Step Five.

Number 1 – Understanding the sequence of the Steps and what the person is trying to achieve by working Steps Four and Five.

There is a specific sequence of the Twelve Steps that begins with the person hitting a bottom, asking for help, and admitting denial. The person doing his or her Fifth Step should have admitted powerlessness over the effects of the family dysfunction in Step One followed by an equal admission of unmanageability. There should be willingness to seek spiritual solutions in Step Two and Step Three. In Step Four and Step Five, there should be self-honesty and a

willingness to speak openly with another person about one's life. These are the undercurrent of attitudes that we listen for as we listen to the main details of someone's Fifth Step.

The result the sponsee is trying to achieve in Step Four involves a searching and fearless inventory of himself or herself. The sponsee is exposing secrets, abuse and false loyalty to a dysfunctional family system. The person is seeking clarity and a fair look at parental behavior that affected him other as a child and continues to affect the person as an adult. The sponsee is also addressing his or her own selfish or harmful behavior.

As you listen to a Fifth Step, you should not overly identify with the victim or victimizer aspect of the sponsee. Most co-dependents or adult children have been victims, and they have victimized others. As a listener, you seek neutrality. In Step Five, we avoid the urge to rescue the sponsee as he or she relates some of the harrowing events of childhood. We can feel empathy and compassion for the sponsee while maintaining our neutrality.

In Step Five, we encourage our sponsee to tell everything, holding back nothing, so that the person can be free of secrets and carried shame. As the Fifth Step progresses, we may briefly share some of our own story to create identification, but we do not dominate the time. The Fifth Step is for the sponsee to talk and to share his or her story.

Number 2 – Listening with empathy and without judging the person.

Most adult children have never been listened to, so listening to another adult child without judgment is possibly one of the greatest gifts we can give another person. Listening with empathy adds spirituality to the gift.

At the same time, listening with empathy does not mean that we suspend our duty to point our problematic behavior. We can gently highlight where a person has wronged others. We can help the sponsee see the exact nature of the wrong. As a sponsor, we can listen to others without judgment but still offer our experience on where amends should be made. We can point out problematic behavior that could be inventoried in the future. We do not do this during the Fifth step. We wait until the Fifth Step is done. At the end of Step Five, we offer the person a balanced assessment of his or her strong points that can be improved.

As the person shares his or her Fifth Step, we listen to the story with complete attention. We also listen for clues that the person has admitted powerlessness over the effects of family dysfunction in Step One. For example, do we hear the person still holding onto notions that he or she can control outcomes? Or is the person truly seeking to let go and focus on himself or herself? Is the person being honest? Is the person seeking help from a Higher Power?

Number 3 – Helping the person move onto steps six, seven and Eight and the rest of the Steps after Five.

To hear a Fifth Step you will need a pen and paper and a quiet, comfortable place. On the day of the Fifth Step, the sponsee should arrive with numerous lists and worksheets from the Fourth Step guide. The ACA Fourth Step contains exercises. The lists need to be complete enough to preset a searching and fearless inventory of the person's life. Listen to all the lists.

Information about character defects and making amends will typically come from exercises 5, 7 and 9. Exercise 12 has a list of positive traits that will help you balance the problematic behaviors.

Inventory of Laundry List Traits (How traits developed)

- Family Secrets ³
- Shame List
- Abandonment List
- Harms Inventory
- Stored Anger (Resentment)
- Relationships (Romance, sexual or friendships)
- Sexual Abuse Inventory
- Denial Inventory (Parent's behavior; Sponsee's behavior)
- Post-Traumatic Stress disorder worksheet
- Feelings Exercise
- Praise Work

These exercises represent a comprehensive Fourth Step that includes an inventory of the dysfunctional family system in addition to an inventory of the sponsee.

*To begin, you should allow plenty of time of the Fifth Step to be completed. Before the Fifth Step begins, you may tell the sponsee that you will listen to him or her without judgment. You may also assure the person that you will treat his or her story with confidentiality. Everything that is said during the Fifth Step will remain between you and the sponsee. You can tell the sponsee that you will take briefs notes while he or she talks. The notes will be used to help create a Sixth Step List and Eight Step Amends List when Step Five is done. (Do not take a lot of notes since this can be distracting as the person talks out his or her Fifth Step.) **Keep it simple.***

Sixth Step List (Defects of Character)

On a piece of paper, before the Fifth Step begins, write "Sixth Step List" at the top of the page. On the right-hand side, write "defects of character" or "ineffectual behaviors." As the sponsee talks during the Fifth Step, write down positive behaviors and problematic behaviors that could be addressed by attending meetings, journaling, prayer and further Step work. Helping a sponsee identify his or her character defects based on your own experience with the Steps is well within the Fellow Traveler method of sponsorship. Think about your own Step

³ These worksheets may be found in the ACA Big Book and Twelve Step Workbook. See. www.adultchildren.org.

work and how you addressed assets and defects of character. Help the sponsee identify negative thoughts and behaviors but struggle with seeing their good traits. As a sponsor and fellow traveler, you can help the sponsee see positive qualities that the person possesses. You can simplify this list by limiting it to three or four examples.

For Example:

Sixth Step List

<u>Assets</u> Selflessness Caring Creative Hard worker	<u>Defects of Character or Ineffectual Behavior</u> Selfishness Judgmental Jealousy Procrastination
--	---

When the Fifth Step is done, you will use this list to help the person move on to Step Six and Step Seven (removal of defects of character). The key is to balance the behaviors. Each adult child has strong qualities and qualities that can be improved.

Eighth Step Amends List

Also, before the Fifth Step begins, use a separate piece of paper to create an Eight Step Amends List. At the top of the page write "Eighth Step Amends List." As the sponsee talks, list names and incidents that should be addressed in Step Eight – *"made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all."* Place the sponsee's name at the top of the list. We must make amends to ourselves and forgive ourselves before we can take action to do the same for others.

To keep it simple and to avoid distractions during the Fifth Step, just write down the name of the person who will receive an amends in the left-hand column. Fill in the "incident" and "amends type" after the Fifth Step is completed.

For Example:

Eighth Step Amends List

Name of Person Receiving an Amends <small>(fill in during Fifth Step)</small>	Incident <small>(fill in later)</small>	Amends Type <small>(fill in later)</small>
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An Example of a Completed Eighth Step Amends List

NAME	INCIDENT	AMENDS
John (Sponsee)	Self-hate, inner critic	Learn to love myself
Sue	Damaged her car in a fit of rage	Pay to have car fixed

Mike	Gossiped about him	Stop gossiping
Father	Cursed him in public	Apologize for cursing him
Boss	Stole from him	Pay it back
My Daughter	Blamed her for my temper and my rage	Living amends, ask for forgiveness

When the Fifth Step is done, you will use this list to help the person move onto Step Eight. You might set up time on another day to fill in the step Eight list. *In Step Eight we become willing to make amends.* The Actual amends are made in Step Nine. Have the sponsee read about Step Eight for insight into willingness. Along with willingness, the key to making amends is making things right for harms we have done. Some amends are monetary amends in which we pay back money, while other amends are living amends in which we change our behavior one day at a time. Other amends can involve naming our behavior and asking for forgiveness from the person we have harmed. *We usually say "I am making amends for my behavior and for harming you. It was wrong/selfish/hurtful (pick one or a combination of these). I am learning how to live differently. I am not making excuses for my behavior. I will try to not repeat my behavior. In the meantime, here is what I am doing to make it right."*

We must back up this statement with program action such as attending meetings and helping others. We also change our behavior.

Recap on Preparing to Hear a Fifth Step

1. Set a date to hear the Fifth Step
2. Prepare for hearing the Fifth Step by reviewing the exercises in Step Four. These are the lists and worksheets the sponsee will be bringing to the Fifth Step.
3. On the day of the "Fifth Step, before the sponsee arrives, get a notepad and make a Sixth Step List and Eighth Step List. Avoid taking a lot of notes during the Fifth Step, but take enough notes to sketch out character defects, positive traits and individuals to receive an amends.
4. When the sponsee arrives, explain that you will listen with empathy and fairness to the Fifth Step. Explain that Step Four and Step Five involve rigorous honest and identifying the exact nature of his or her wrongs. Explain that you will help the sponsee identify positive traits and problematic traits as part of balancing the personal inventory and as part of preparing for Step Six and Seven.
5. Begin Step Five.
6. When the Fifth Step ends, review the Sixth Step List. Share your experience with identifying your own character defects and positive traits. Keep it simple when helping

the sponsee do the same. Give three examples of positive traits and three examples of character defects that the sponsee possesses. This helps the sponsee avoid focusing only on defects, and he or she will not be overwhelmed by a lengthy list. (The list of character defects and positive traits at the end of these instructions will help you and the sponsee select items for the Sixth Step list.)

7. Make plans to discuss the Eighth Step Amends List on another day.
8. Instruct the sponsee to return home and read about Step Six. He or she will find directions on how to proceed with Step Six and Step Seven. There will also be directions on integrating Laundry List traits.

For Use In Helping the Sponsee Determine Positive Traits and Defects of Character

Possible Defects of Character are:

Self-centered	Judgmental	Procrastinator
Perfectionist	Envious	Greedy
Lustful	Feeling superior	Dishonest
A gossip	Petty	

Positive Traits Include:

Strong	Sensitive	Intelligent
Compassionate	Talented	Organized
Spontaneous	Loving	Spiritual
Trustworthy	Judicious	Modest
Prompt	Hard Working	A Friend
Humorous	Willing	Kind
Courteous	Honest	Accepting
Creative	Good Listener	Tenacious
Tenacious	Accepting	An ACA/CoDA member

A Discussion About Step Eight and Step Nine

Step Eight involves becoming willing to make amends to those we have harmed while Step Nine puts that willingness into action. As you help a sponsee create an Eighth Step Amends List, family situations must be considered. By their nature, some dysfunctional families can be violent or potentially violent. In other cases there can be demeaning remarks and hurtful denial. We try to not project how an amends will proceed, but the Steps do not require us to place ourselves in harm's way. We also do not use an amends to have a showdown with our parents or relatives. *The amends involves our effort to repair harm we have caused and to forgive ourselves and others.* We want to make amends to our family to the best of our ability while also protecting ourselves from potential harm.

We don't grovel or plead while making amends. We can feel good about what we are doing for ourselves. Our attitude is one of humility and a sincere desire to make amends for harms done. Some people may accept our sincerity, and others may not, but we remain committed to our recovery. We have usually harmed other family members with remarks, judgments and physical abuse in some cases. We may have struck someone, and we may have been struck back. Yet, we are focusing on our behavior so that we can go forward. We cannot make excuses for our behavior to avoid making amends.

At the same time, there can be incest, emotional abuse and physical trauma perpetrated by the parents or other family members upon the sponsee. The sponsee is obviously not responsible for this behavior since he or she was a child. The child did not cause it and cannot cure it. However, the Twelve Steps require us to make amends for our selfish and destructive behavior as adults so that we can change from within and contribute to our recovery group and to society. There will be behavior by the sponsee that is clearly abusive to his or her family. In some cases it is retaliatory abuse in which the sponsee has actively sought to hurt the parents or family since the family harmed him or her. There could also be matters of money in which the sponsee uses guilt to get money from a perpetrating family member. It is an understood pay-off for secretive behavior. None of this is healthy, but it can be dealt with through honesty and a willingness to live life without secrets or dependence.

Asking an incest survivor to make amends to his or her perpetrating relative for harms the incest survivor has done after leaving the home must be discussed in greater detail. (Read Step Eight for more details.) We seek discernment in these circumstances since each one is different. We also seek fellowship experience. Some members will not make amends to a violent or perpetrating family member for reasons that involve personal safety and retaining self-dignity. Some of these parents or family members remain unrepentant and sick. There is lust and perverseness and a complete rejection of the truth. The sponsee must protect himself or herself from such family members. Under these extreme conditions, a direct amends to the family is usually not appropriate; however, the sponsee can find freedom from the shame that surrounds the sexual abuse if he or she remains focused on the Twelve Steps and seeks guidance from a Higher Power. At the same time, the sponsee must continue on with amends to other people on the Eighth Step List. The bar must remain high so that we can make things right and claim personal freedom. This is a courageous and meaningful path that fulfills Step Eight and Step Nine.

In other cases, incest survivors in our recovery groups have made face-to-face amends to a perpetrating parent or relative. The amends involved behavior committed by the incest survivor after leaving the home. With help, the person was able to judge the situation and discern the spiritual aim of Step Eight and Nine and to balance that with retaining self-dignity. These members knew they were making amends for adult behaviors that have roots in the abuse visited upon them by the family. In essence, they release the shame surrounding the sexual abuse while taking responsibility for their adult behaviors. In some of these cases, full forgiveness for the perpetrator usually comes later rather than sooner.

These examples are our fellowship experience that we can rely upon, in addition to prayer and a sincere desire to not back down from step work that can bring lasting and spiritual peace.

Some Characteristics of Recovery from Co-Dependence

When we read the characteristics and traits of codependence, we begin to identify and name the problems associated with it. In doing so, we begin to learn what codependence "looks like" in our own life and we begin to feel less "terminally unique," since others identify with these characteristics, as well. But if we know what codependence looks like, what does recovery look like?

When we become willing to do whatever it takes to gain recovery, we likely start regularly attending meetings and start discovering our own story. We learn how to share our story, we use the fellowship, get a sponsor and work the Twelve-Steps. We find that as our recovery progresses, our life changes in some of the following ways (excerpted from www.coda.org).

--->>> PROGRESS --->>>

	Codependence	Recovery
Denial Patterns	I have difficulty identifying what I am feeling.	✓ I am <i>aware</i> of my feelings and <i>identify them</i> , often in the moment.
	I minimize, alter, or deny how I truly feel.	✓ I embrace my feelings as being <i>valid and important</i> . ✓ I am truthful with myself.
	I perceive myself as being completely unselfish and dedicated to the well-being of others.	✓ I keep the focus on my own well-being. ✓ I know the difference between <i>caring</i> and <i>caretaking</i> .

--->>> PROGRESS --->>>

Low Self-Esteem Patterns	I have difficulty making decisions.	✓ I trust my ability to make effective decisions.
	I judge everything I think, say, or do harshly, as never "good enough."	✓ I accept myself as I am. ✓ I emphasize progress over perfection.
	I am embarrassed to receive recognition, praise, or gifts.	✓ I feel appropriately worthy of the recognition, praise, or gifts I receive
	I do not ask others to meet my needs or desires.	✓ I meet my own needs and wants when possible. ✓ I reach out for help when it's necessary and appropriate.
	I value others' approval of my thinking, feelings, and behavior over my own.	✓ I have confidence in myself. ✓ I no longer seek others' approval of my thoughts, feelings, and behavior.
	I do not perceive myself as a lovable or worthwhile person.	✓ I recognize myself as being a lovable and valuable person.

--->>> PROGRESS --->>>

	Codependence	Recovery
<i>Compliance Patterns</i>	I compromise my own values and integrity to avoid rejection or others' anger.	✓ I am rooted in my own values, even if others don't agree or become angry.
	I am very sensitive to how others are feeling and feel the same.	✓ I can separate my feelings from the feelings of others.
	I am extremely loyal, remaining in harmful situations too long.	✓ I am committed to my safety and recovery work. ✓ I leave situations that feel unsafe or are inconsistent with my goals.
	I value others' opinions and feelings more than my own and am afraid to express differing opinions and feelings of my own.	✓ I respect my own opinions and feelings and express them appropriately.
	I put aside my own interests and hobbies in order to do what others want.	✓ I consider my own interests first when asked to participate in another's plans.
	I accept sex when I want love.	✓ My sexuality is grounded in genuine intimacy and connection. ✓ I know the difference between lust and love.

--->>> PROGRESS --->>>

<i>Control Patterns</i>	I believe most other people are incapable of taking care of themselves.	✓ I realize that, with rare exceptions, other adults are capable of managing their own lives. ✓ My job is to let them.
	I attempt to convince others of what they "should" think and how they "truly" feel.	✓ I accept and value the differing thoughts, feelings, and opinions of others.
	I become resentful when others will not let me help them.	✓ I feel comfortable when I see others take care of themselves.
	I freely offer others advice and directions without being asked.	✓ I am a compassionate and empathic listener, giving advice only if directly asked.
	I lavish gifts and favors on those I care about.	✓ I carefully and honestly contemplate my motivations when preparing to give a gift.
	I use sex to gain approval and acceptance.	✓ I feel loved and accepted for myself, just the way I am.
	I have to be "needed" in order to have a relationship with others.	✓ I develop relationships with others based on equality, intimacy, and balance.

MORE RESOURCES AND HELP ON SPONSORSHIP

CoDA Sponsorship Handbook

CoDA Sponsorship Pamphlet

CoDA Newcomer's Handbook

CoDA Big (blue) Book

CoDA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions Workbook

CoDA Website: www.coda.org

ACA Big Book

ACA Sponsorship Pamphlet

ACA Twelve Step Workbook

ACA website: www.adultchildren.org

AA Big Book

AA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions Book

AA website: www.aa.org

Your sponsor

Others who are actively engaged with sponsorship

Others who are actively working their own recovery at your home group or other group

Your own recovery experience

Your Higher Power

Other resources that you find helpful: _____

We hope that this practical guide will deepen your recovery, as it has ours, as you commit to service work by applying Step 12 to your own life. We hope that you will experience, as we have, the rewards of focusing on our own individual recovery first and by being present for, and sharing our recovery with, another co-dependent who still suffers. We really are fellow travelers on the same path and we each have something important to share.

--The Emory Monday Evening CoDA Group Conscience