

The Twelve Steps

Sponsor or Accountability Partner

My friends, anyone who has been involved with a recovery program has heard the term "sponsor." I personally do not like that term, because it has been misused by so many people. I have seen some go through the steps and become a sponsor to someone, only to lord it over them and make them "jump through hoops." Rather than be a partner, they became a ruler or dictator. As a Christian who sincerely wants to help people understand who and what they are in God their Creator's eyes, and the completeness they can have in Christ, I prefer the term "Accountability Partner" instead of sponsor.

An Accountability Partner is responsible to the person they are partnering, and is accountable to God the Father for how they guide and teach His children. Also, in recovery, there are no "Lone Rangers." We learn to help and support each other, and that is how a healthy body works. In Eccl. 4:9-12 we find it to be very valuable to have a friend and companion, and in Proverbs 27:17 we read "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." Together with your partner you will develop a strong support team. Each must expect honesty and be honest with the other in all areas of the relationship. They must encourage many times by example - in other words, "walk the walk, and not just talk the talk." They must encourage meeting attendance, church attendance, and be able to communicate on a spiritual level. They need to pray for each other and pray together, daily if possible. As partners, you are bound by a contract, but you may resign or fire the other if you find it just is not working out, even after much prayer.

Things to look for in an Accountability Partner - He or she must be of the same sex; must have a growing relationship with Jesus Christ; must be a good listener; must have compassion, care and hope, but not pity; must be strong enough to confront denial or procrastination; should be able to offer suggestions that can help; and must be honest enough to share their own struggles. Having a good Accountability Partner is the best guard against relapse. Your AP will be able to help by offering feedback that can help keep you on track, because they have already been successful with the Steps. They are aware of the pitfalls, maybe old habits, hurts, hangups that begin to return. They can confront you quickly with truth and love, without placing guilt and shame.

Responsibilities of the Accountability Partner - He or she is there to discuss any issues in detail that may be very personal, so you must have complete confidence that he or she will not share or gossip with anyone else. They must be able to be reached for direction or help at any time. They DO NOT work the Steps FOR you, only answer questions, or be used as a sounding board to provide an objective point of view. Your AP should attempt to model a lifestyle of a child of God, thus teaching by example. So, you can see that an Accountability Partner is not only to lead, but to be worthy of that position, he or she must spend much time in prayer! Pray, pray, pray!