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confusing or tough but also when things are going well. Success and hope are also shared with a sponsor. Simply by sharing, we experience unconditional love, selflessness, patience, tolerance, honesty, and trust in these crucial relationships.

What a sponsor is not It is not a sponsor's job to be a landlord, loan company, lawyer, doctor, accountant, psychiatrist, financial broker, marriage counselor, or therapist. Sponsors who are in those professions leave that role at the door of CMA. Here they are like us: one addict trying to help another. If additional guidance was needed, sometimes our sponsors encouraged us to seek professional help.

What does a sponsee do? It is suggested that sponsees contact their sponsors regularly. Many of us called our sponsors every day, even if it was just to check in. We also met in person with our sponsors. Some of us had sponsors who told us how often they expected us to call and meet with them. Some of us had sponsors who didn't set specific requirements. Both ways worked. However we communicated with our sponsor, we found it was important to be honest and keep an open mind. We were willing to try suggestions before we dismissed them. We did the work our sponsors suggested. Our sponsors guided us but made it clear that we were responsible for our own recovery. We could not expect our sponsors to work harder on our own recovery than we did ourselves.

Sometimes we worried about being a burden, and our sponsors always told us that we were helping them a lot more than they were helping us. We came to understand that by using our sponsors, we helped them recover. Our sponsors often told us that they could only keep what they had by giving it away.

**New York Crystal Meth
Anonymous Intergroup**
P.O. Box 1517
Old Chelsea Station
New York, NY 10113
info@nycma.org 212-642-5029

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NEW YORK CRYSTAL METH ANONYMOUS

WHAT IS A SPONSOR?

SPONSORSHIP One of the first suggestions offered in Crystal Meth Anonymous is to get a sponsor. Just what is a sponsor? How do we get a sponsor, use a sponsor, and be a sponsor?

What is a sponsor? A sponsor is another recovering addict who offers guidance and support in a one-on-one relationship. When we started coming to CMA, people at meetings were there to respond to our questions, but that wasn't always enough, especially when we were new. Issues came up between meetings, and many of us found we needed closer support as we began to live a life free of active addiction. Our sponsors gave us that support.

What does a sponsor do?

- Listens
- Makes suggestions to help us stay sober
- Helps us work the Twelve Steps of CMA
- Helps us build a foundation for recovery by sharing his or her experience, strength, and hope
- Introduces us to recovery literature
- Notes progress that we are unable to see for ourselves

How to get a sponsor All we had to do was ask. Some of us sought out CMA members whose recovery we admired. Some of us requested recommendations from friends in CMA. Others asked for help getting a sponsor when we shared at meetings. Some meetings have Sponsorship Chairs, who keep lists of people available to be sponsors. Some of us talked to those people and got names and phone numbers of potential sponsors. When we summoned the courage to ask for help, we usually received a positive response. Some of us were told, "Yes, I'd be happy to" right away. Some of us were invited to meet and discuss the idea further to see if it seemed like

a good match. Sometimes members agreed to be an "interim sponsor," helping us for the short-term or just to try it out. Sometimes we were told no—usually because our prospective sponsor's plate was already full with other sponsees. We tried not to take it personally, even if we were disappointed.

How to choose a sponsor During meetings, we listened to what people said. We looked for members who had the kind of sobriety we wanted or whose recovery we respected. Many of us picked sponsors whose experience was similar to our own. It helped us relate to them. Some of us picked people with experiences that differed from our own. Both ways worked. It was suggested to us that we not pick anyone to whom we had a strong sexual attraction. Such attractions can get in the way of recovery, making it more difficult for sponsors and sponsees to share honestly with each other.

Who can be a sponsor? There are no rules, but most sponsors in CMA have:

- At least one year of continuous sobriety
- A working knowledge of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions
- Personal experiences dealing with life in recovery

When to get a sponsor It is never too soon or too late to get a sponsor. Many of us got a sponsor right away. Some of us needed to take time to decide whom we wanted to ask. Some of us resisted getting a sponsor. In hindsight, that made our early recovery more difficult. It has been proven through our experience that working with a sponsor makes recovery easier. While we looked for a sponsor, we were sometimes approached by people offering to sponsor us. Sometimes we let them but were not obligated to do so. Many of us began with

an interim sponsor until we found someone available for a more permanent arrangement. Some of us changed sponsors when it was not a good fit. Sponsorship did not have to be a life-long commitment, though these associations have often grown into meaningful, long-term relationships.

How does sponsorship work? CMA, like other Twelve Step programs, is based on the value of people with a common problem helping each other. Our sponsors helped us to trust and be trusted, perhaps for the first time. Many of us wrestled alone with our problems for so long that we had a tendency to isolate even after coming into recovery. With our sponsors, we started to see that we were no longer alone and never had to be again. We began to believe that we could do together what we could not do by ourselves.

Our sponsors were our hotlines. We called them when something triggered us to think about using or brought up unpleasant memories that used to send us to dealers, bars, or the Internet. Our sponsors provided comfort, identified with our feelings, and gave us hope that, in spite of how we felt, we did not have to use. Our sponsors acted as sounding boards when we had to make decisions. We found it a good idea to discuss major decisions with our sponsors—not so they could make the choice for us but so they could share their own similar experiences with us. Sponsors unfamiliar with a particular dilemma often directed us to someone else in the fellowship who might understand our situation better. Often, our sponsors made suggestions based on their own experience or gave us advice. It was our choice to decide what to do. There are no "musts" in CMA, but we tried to be willing to accept the help being offered.

Sponsors help not only when times are

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