



**Sponsorship in
Clutterers Anonymous**



Clutterers Anonymous

PO Box 91413

Los Angeles, CA 90009

Web: www.clutterersanonymous.org

Find Meetings: (866) 402-6685

Copyright 2018 by Clutterers Anonymous
World Service Organization, Inc. All Rights Reserved
CLA Fellowship-Approved Literature
Reprinted ___ 1 M

Order No. EN-___



The logo, Clutterers Anonymous, and CLA are all marks of CLA WSO Clutterers Anonymous World Service Organization, Inc. All rights reserved. May not be duplicated in any form without written permission.

Table of Contents

Sponsorship in CLA

Sponsorship (A Tool of Recovery).....	1
The Role of a Sponsor	1
Why Sponsorship?	2
What Is Sponsorship?	2
Questions About Sponsorship	3
Questions About Sponsorship in New or Small Meetings.....	6
Some Definitions and Distinctions	6
Sponsoring in CLA.....	8
The Rights and Responsibilities of Sponsors and Sponsees	8
What a Sponsee Does Under the Guidance of a Sponsor.....	9

For the Sponsee

Suggestions for Selecting a Sponsor.....	10
Questions a Sponsee Could Ask a Prospective Sponsor	11
Strategies for Handling Overwhelm Independent of Your Sponsor	12

For the Sponsor

Questions a Sponsor Can Ask Himself or Herself	13
Questions a Sponsor Could Ask a Prospective Sponsee	14

A Suggested Prayer	15
---------------------------------	----

Sponsorship in CLA

Sponsorship (A Tool of Recovery)

Sponsorship is a personal and confidential, one-on-one relationship between two clutterers. Sponsorship helps both the sponsor and the sponsee. It is customary that a sponsor have a sponsor. The CLA sponsor guides the sponsee through the program and the 12 Steps and is not necessarily a friend, but someone in whom we can confide. Sponsors share their program up to the level of their Step experience, strength and hope. Choosing a sponsor involves going to several meetings to find someone with whom we can identify—someone who has the type of recovery that we want. (from “A Brief Guide,” ©Clutterers Anonymous, 2009)

The Role of a Sponsor

A sponsor is a mentor and guide who shares personal experience, strength and hope. In recovery, the sponsee learns to evaluate suggestions and apply them accordingly.

Sponsorship is an integral part of our 12-Step recovery program. CLA encourages members to have the experience of being sponsored, being a sponsor or having a co-sponsor. Primarily, a sponsor offers guidance through the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions. Through this relationship, a CLA member further along in the process helps another CLA member [the “sponsee”] utilize the tools and principles of the program. Co-sponsors utilize the Steps, Traditions and Tools of the Program through a peer relationship. In the 12-Step tradition, we do not give advice. CLA is a program of suggestion. A sponsor may make suggestions and/or share their experience, strength and hope.

Why Sponsorship?

Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

One of the ways CLA members practice the 12th Step is by becoming sponsors. A sponsor can help us understand the Third Step concept “to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God” (or a Higher Power—“HP”) to address our powerlessness and unmanageability over clutter. Sponsors can encourage those they sponsor to identify and develop a relationship with an “HP”/God of their own understanding.

Being and having a sponsor opens the door to a special relationship. Relationships diminish isolation. Isolation can contribute to clutter. By establishing a spiritual connection, members reduce isolation and begin to grow in their recovery. Relating to a sponsor may help members reduce the sense of isolation and encourage deeper levels of intimacy, beyond what develops through sharing in meetings.

Meetings begin the recovery process. Sharing one-on-one adds another perspective and enhances insights into our cluttering behaviors. The reasons we clutter don’t need to be understood before we begin to work the Steps. The more we open ourselves to this process, the more likely we are to experience healing from unhealthy cluttering attitudes and actions. We will reap the benefits of our efforts as we continue the journey.

What Is Sponsorship?

By guiding us through the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions, our sponsors prioritize living the spiritual principles of the CLA program. Sponsors encourage a stronger connection to a

Higher Power. If or when they hear denial and rationalizing, sponsors offer firm, kind, objective feedback. They provide encouragement and validation. Sponsors help us learn to be responsible for our actions.

Sponsorship asks for a commitment to action by both CLA members.

Sponsors give support by sharing their experience, strength and hope. They may give writing/journaling and decluttering assignments. Although not required, sponsors may act as declutter buddies and/or be available for bookending. By getting to know the person they sponsor better, sponsors may see the “sponsee” through stressful slips and/or relapse situations. Often, sponsors provide an anchor in the storms of clutter. A sponsor may be a compass pointing us in the right direction.

As the 12th Step suggests, reaching out to other clutterers lays the very foundation that helps CLA—and its members—endure.

Questions About Sponsorship

Q: How does being a sponsor benefit me?

A: Sponsoring offers members the opportunity to review the Steps. Watching a sponsee grow in recovery can be uplifting to the sponsor and rejuvenate their program. Observing sponsees as they discover what works and does not work can provide teachable moments for the sponsor, too. When we offer guidance, we renew our own commitment to recovery.

Q: Do I have to finish all 12 Steps before I decide to sponsor someone?

A: According to CLA’s Tools of Recovery, “...sponsors share the program up to the level of their experience, strength,

and hope.” Some sponsors, however, prefer not to sponsor until they have completed their 4th and 5th Steps, and others until they have completed all twelve Steps.

Q: What pieces of literature would support my practice and/or study of the 12 Steps? Can I use other 12-Step Program workbooks or guides?

A: CLA members are encouraged to use the CLA yellow 12-Step leaflet, other relevant CLA literature, Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) literature (especially A.A.’s Alcoholics Anonymous, also known as “The Big Book” © 2001 and The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, © 1981.) Since the sponsor and sponsee have a private relationship, they may decide to use literature from another 12-Step program or something both have found helpful.

Q: How much time will this process take to complete?

A: Studying the Steps is highly individualized. We encourage you to begin! Do not let procrastination and perfectionism unduly prolong the process. We believe that steady progress--neither rushing nor dragging--will yield positive results.

Q: What are reasonable expectations for both the sponsor and the sponsee?

A: Honesty, trust and willingness go a long way when studying the 12-Steps. Both people need to communicate, as best they can, what they hope to gain from the relationship, remembering that we are all imperfect human beings. Developing healthy, uncluttered relationships is part of recovery. Negotiating time and space for the sponsorship relationship offers both people a chance to grow, make and keep commitments and establish healthy boundaries. The sponsor learns to listen without judgment. The sponsee learns to share their hopes, dreams and needs. Both people rely on the guidance of a Higher

Power/God of their understanding to help them in the recovery process.

Q: Do CLA sponsors receive special training?

A: "Training" comes through our personal experience of the Steps, Traditions and Tools, practicing the spiritual principles of the CLA program in our daily lives. Sponsors often learn from their own sponsors, by attending meetings, sharing with other CLA members, and asking God/a Higher Power for guidance.

Sponsors should be familiar with CLA and A.A. literature.

Q: Can I discuss my relationship with my sponsee with my own sponsor?

A: A sponsor has the option to share an issue with their sponsor, while protecting the anonymity of the sponsee.

Q: As a sponsor, how do I set guidelines and boundaries?

A: Together, the sponsor and sponsee determine the length, frequency and parameters of their meetings, phone calls, texts and/or emails. While a sponsor may want to use certain pieces of literature, the sponsee can also suggest various 12-Step and/or other readings. The sponsor and sponsee may set boundaries regarding discussion of personal issues, or issues better addressed in a different Fellowship. A sponsor may set boundaries to practice self-care, modeling healthy behavior with their sponsee. Both people may agree to a trial period for sponsorship, then evaluate their progress at the end of that period. Either person can choose to end a non-beneficial relationship at any time. We hope that love, patience and tolerance will guide that decision and the conversation.

Q: What do I do if the relationship needs to change or is not working?

A: When issues arise between a sponsor and sponsee,

we encourage you to approach the conversation in an open, loving way. Be patient and listen as you both move toward a solution. Sometimes a sponsee may resist change. Sometimes both people need to pause. We suggest praying, then “turning it over” to God and waiting for guidance. Then, if changing sponsors seems the best course, the sponsee may need to seek another or temporary sponsor. Not all relationships are meant to continue. Simply wish each other well and move on.

Questions About Sponsorship in New or Small Meetings

Q: What if my group is too new, young or small to have many available sponsors? What do CLA or other CLA groups suggest?

A: In areas where CLA groups are just beginning and no experienced sponsors are available, a Step Study group committed to meeting regularly can serve as a temporary sponsor for its members. Members read the CLA leaflet “Recovery from Cluttering: The 12 Steps of Clutterers Anonymous to gain an overview of the 12 Steps and can use relevant CLA literature. Members use a Step Guide and/or A.A. literature and share their written Step work aloud in the Step Study Meeting. Group members can sponsor newcomers up to the last Step completed within the group. For a definition of group sponsors, see the definition in the section below.

Some Definitions and Distinctions

- **Traditional Sponsor:** A CLA member who sponsors another member for an indefinite period of time, often meeting one-on-one and sharing via telephone, texts and/or email. Most sponsors offer guidance

using the Steps, Traditions and Tools of the CLA program. The sponsor and sponsee discuss, negotiate and form an agreement regarding the parameters of the sponsorship relationship.

[In this leaflet, the word “sponsor” usually refers to this traditional definition.]

- **Temporary or Interim Sponsor:** Some CLA members help someone “get started” or sponsor them for a brief period of time, while that person seeks a traditional sponsor. A temporary sponsor may help when a regular sponsor is unavailable (due to illness, relocation, etc.). Sometimes the relationship with a temporary sponsor works well and develops into an ongoing relationship.
- **Multiple Sponsors:** Some people may have a Step sponsor, a service sponsor and/or a sponsor in another program. Each sponsor fulfills a specific role in the CLA member’s recovery experience. Although this is unusual and possibly confusing, some people find it useful.
- **Co-sponsors:** Occasionally, two CLA members undertake a study of the Steps and/or Traditions as peers. People with similar issues or length of time in the program may prefer such a relationship. Often, co-sponsors have progressed through the Steps in other programs and are familiar with 12-Step spiritual principles.
- **Long-distance Sponsors:** With the advent of telephone and other forms of electronic meetings, members may establish a connection with another CLA member who lives at a distance. These relationships utilize phone meetings, email, private telephone calls, the Internet and/or texting to communicate.

- **Group Sponsor:** Group sponsors help sponsees by providing a safe place to begin their journey through the Steps. A sponsee struggling with an issue can benefit from the experience and success of other members. Hearing other people share their Step writings and reflections may offer the sponsee the encouragement needed to reflect and look within. If attendance falters, group members may show concern and practice accountability, contacting those who are absent.

Sponsoring in CLA

As a sponsor, we can either practice new healthy behaviors or sink into old patterns. A sponsor must consider potential pitfalls: sponsoring too many people, difficulty letting go of a relationship that is clearly not working, or over-committing. Some CLA members have other issues such as co-dependence, other addictive behaviors, and care-giving, etc. Therefore, attention to boundaries is essential: along with staying focused on the Steps, Traditions, and our own personal recovery. Sponsors should set appropriate time limits when conversing and listen without trying to fix things. Some sponsees do better with a more rigid structure, while others thrive with a more flexible approach.

The Rights and Responsibilities of Sponsors and Sponsees

You both have the right to:

- say “No,” especially if feeling unsafe or not ready;
- be treated with dignity, respect and appreciation;
- honor your own feelings, thoughts, and opinions, expressing them appropriately;
- change your mind about a decision;

- make choices, independent of the wishes, requests or demands of others;
- say you don't know or don't understand;
- ask for what you want or need;
- take care of yourself, no matter your circumstances;
- have respectful conflict, occasionally agreeing to disagree; give and receive feedback if a conversation feels unsafe and/or overwhelming;
- enjoy privacy and safety in your own sacred space.

You both have the opportunity to:

- be respectful and considerate of each other;
- handle frustration and disappointment in a healthy way;
- set appropriate boundaries, and
- be accountable for your actions, attitudes, thoughts and feelings.

What a Sponsee Does Under the Guidance of a Sponsor

Under the guidance of a CLA sponsor, a sponsee:

- works the 12 Steps, practicing them in all his or her affairs (using CLA and other approved literature);
- learns how the 12 Steps pertain to the individual, the 12 Traditions pertain to groups, and the Tools pertain to Action;
- places principles before personalities.
- grows in relationship with a Higher Power and the Fellowship, realizing that he or she cannot do it alone;
- practices faith and releases fear;
- becomes more open to consider new options and ideas;
- finds inspiration in other members' experience, strength and hope;
- develops and implements self-affirming life skills;

- lets go of old ways, including self-criticism.
- learns to take personal responsibility;
- identifies and avoids procrastination;
- acknowledges life's down side, but focuses on the positive;
- learns to be supportive of others;
- sees time as a valuable resource and uses it wisely;
- learns to set reasonable goals;
- listens to feedback and asks for help when necessary.

For the Sponsee

Suggestions for Selecting a Sponsor

- Attend meetings face to face or on the telephone, and listen carefully as other members share.
- Call CLA members for program-centered outreach; share your struggles and identify changes you hope to accomplish as you recover.
- Actively seek a sponsor who possesses many of these qualities:
 - Demonstrates continued recovery, utilizing CLA's Steps, Traditions, and Tools;
 - Has a relationship with a Higher Power/God of his or her understanding;
 - Acts responsibly and accountably, refraining from blaming other people;
 - Is someone with whom you feel comfortable and safe when sharing;
 - Displays reliability—spends time with you as agreed, listens attentively and in confidence;
 - Maintains a relationship with a sponsor or co-sponsor;
 - Aligns with CLA's message of recovery as expressed in our literature;

- Shares their experience, strength and hope in meaningful ways;
- Strives to maintain serenity in the midst of unresolved issues.

Questions a Sponsee Could Ask a Prospective Sponsor

The questions below are examples of what a sponsee might ask a prospective sponsor, but many of the answers may vary according to the sponsor.

- What does recovery mean to you personally?
- Can you help me understand what the relationship is between clutter and the 12 Steps?
- Will we be working on the 12 Steps together? Do I need to write on the Steps?
- I don't believe in God. Can the 12 Steps still help me?
- Can we use materials that aren't from CLA, like this book I have on organizing tips?
- How often will we talk? Will we set up a schedule?
- Can we talk in between our scheduled meeting times?
- Can we talk about things other than clutter? Like, if I'm having a bad day, can we talk about that?
- Can we talk about how my clutter affects my relationships?
- Are you okay with socializing outside of our sponsorship sessions?
- Can you help advise me about a cleaning routine?
- Can you offer me guidance with my paper clutter?
- If we live in the same area, are you willing to come over and help me declutter?

Strategies for Handling Overwhelm Independent of Your Sponsor

It's common to doubt your progress or feel overwhelmed. You may use some recommendations to weather tough times while waiting to reach your sponsor:

- Remember, you are not alone;
- Attend a meeting and share if possible;
- Contact program friends;
- Draft a gratitude list and share it with someone you trust;
- List your accomplishments;
- Read CLA, A.A. (or other 12-Step) literature;
- Journal or write about the event and your feelings about it;
- Share your writing, burn it or put it in your "God-Box," which some members use as a symbolic act of writing down concerns and releasing them to their Higher Power;
- Pray and meditate, seeking conscious contact with the God of your understanding;
- Do the footwork and let go of the outcome;
- Get physical. Walk around the block, do the dishes, clean the house, exercise or practice yoga;
- Be still, sit with your pets, notice the birds or other parts of nature;
- Ask for help and be willing to accept it;
- Slow down; focus on your breath; practice breathing deeply and slowly;
- Recite or reflect on 12-Step slogans (Progress not perfection; Easy Does It, etc.)
- Remember that thoughts and feelings are not necessarily rooted in fact;
- When you feel calmer, form a plan to support you in the future;
- Celebrate all your victories.

For the Sponsor

Questions a Sponsor Can Ask Himself or Herself

- Do I have a working knowledge of CLA-approved literature?
- Can I explain basic program concepts and terminology?
- Am I willing to encourage my sponsee to contact other recovering CLA members?
- Will I respect confidentiality, sharing what a sponsee says with someone else only if we both agree in advance?
- Will I seek guidance along this journey from my Higher Power?
- Will I encourage my sponsee to develop an ongoing relationship with a Higher Power?
- Will I be able to remember that God is the ultimate authority in my sponsee's life, and that my sponsees are responsible for their own decisions?
- Am I willing to share how I personally utilize the 12 Steps and apply the principles of the program in my life?
- Can I give without expectations, mindful of the principle "We keep what we have by giving it away?"
- Am I able to admit that I do not have all the answers, and will I ask for help if needed?
- Will I use "I" statements when sharing my thoughts and feelings?
- Will I honor the nature of the relationship by discussing the sponsee's issues rather than my own?
- Am I able to display sensitivity when dealing with trauma, grief, and other delicate matters?
- Can I help the sponsee to focus on "living in the

- solution” rather than “living in the problem?”
- Am I willing to challenge the sponsee to identify faulty thinking, unhealthy patterns, and other obstacles to recovery?
 - Will I practice compassion, kindness, patience, and tolerance?
 - Will I listen and ask questions without making assumptions and judgments?
 - Will I seek to maintain healthy boundaries with my sponsee, acknowledging that romantic, unethical, or illegal behavior is inappropriate?
 - Am I capable of providing structure without rigidity, allowing for some flexibility?
 - Do I “carry the message, not the mess” ...and not the member?

Questions a Sponsor Could Ask a Prospective Sponsee

- Why are you seeking a CLA sponsor at this time?
- Can you anticipate obstacles you may have if we begin this process together?
- Are you willing to attend CLA meetings regularly?
- Are you willing to meet with me regularly by phone or in person?
- Are you willing to write on the Steps and complete assignments I suggest?
- Will you be open to my suggestions or those of others?
- Will you make your best effort to practice honesty in our relationship?
- When we meet, we will focus on the Steps, Traditions, Tools and solutions; we may not socialize. How do you feel about that?
- Either one of us can end this relationship at any time.

If that circumstance arises, can we establish the best way to do that? Can we agree to give each other some notice?

- I will sponsor you in areas of my experience, strength, and hope. If I suggest another CLA member or resource for areas outside my comfort zone, will you consider them?

A Suggested Prayer

Some sponsor/sponsee relationships may fail because both parties are unable to set aside their beliefs and judgements.

Asking a Higher Power to help us release all that we think we know can be useful in continuing the relationship and working the steps.

Here is a variation of a prayer that many 12-Step Fellowships have found very helpful that can be prayed by both the sponsee and the sponsor:

“Dear God, please help me set aside everything I know, and everything I think I know about myself, my cluttering, these Steps, and especially about you, dear God, so that I may have an open mind and a new experience with all these things. Please help me to see the truth.”

