



Module 4 Handout

Co-Sponsorship ... How Does That Work Anyway?

Co-sponsorship is a concept that is not widely known or discussed. Our literature makes a few references to it, however, there are still many misconceptions and fears about it. We are here to hopefully shed some light on this, and perhaps dispel some of the fears.

Firstly, we would like to highlight that Traditional Sponsorship is strongly encouraged as the first option and that Co-Sponsorship is being suggested as one of the alternatives in situations where Traditional Sponsorship is not available.

Other Types of Sponsorship:

- Temporary sponsorship
- Long-distance sponsorship
- Other Supports: Step study groups, writing and discussion groups, meetings, service groups, business meetings, Hospitals and Institutions committees, steering committees, and Intergroups are all helpful in our recovery, but they do not take the place of having a sponsor.

Source: Sponsorship: What's in it for Me? p. 3

What is Co-Sponsorship?

Because Co-dependents Anonymous is such a new organization, there are few of us who have longevity and experience in working the Steps the CoDA way. As a result of this, co-sponsorship has evolved. Two CoDA members sponsor each other.

Co-sponsors meet or call regularly to share what they are learning about the CoDA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. They share their experience, strength and hope equally, growing in their own way and at their own pace.

Source: Sponsorship Booklet, 2003, p. 13

When CoDA was first organized, co-sponsorship evolved as a solution to the scarcity of willing sponsors familiar with the CoDA Twelve Steps. In co-sponsorship, two members commit to helping each other work through the CoDA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and support each other's recovery.

Source: Sponsorship: What's in it for Me? 2012, p. 3

Two CoDA members with similar recovery times may decide to sponsor each other through the 12 CoDA Steps. This may work particularly well for members that have already been in recovery for some time, and who are comfortable with the concept of sponsorship, or in areas where there are few people available for sponsorship.

Source: codependentsanonymous.org.au

Some common misconceptions about Co-Sponsorship:

Co-sponsorship is what happens when a sponsee has two sponsors.

Actually, no. Such a situation is referred to as “Shared Sponsorship”, where a sponsee has two sponsors and they have both been given spiritual freedom to discuss the sponsee’s issues. Shared Sponsorship is very rarely used.

From the Sponsorship Booklet, 2003 (p.13-14), the definition of Co-sponsorship is: Two CoDA members (or a small group of members who are at approximately the same place in the Steps) sponsor each other.

From the coda.org website: Co-sponsors may choose to have another CoDA member guide them, especially through difficult situations or when they get stuck. Sometimes Co-sponsorship is a good model for sponsorship when utilized in conjunction with a Step Study Group

I need to have an experienced sponsor. I want someone qualified to give me advice.

Time in recovery does not equate to spiritual fitness, nor qualification for advice-giving.

Recovery is an individual growth process. We do not rely on our sponsor to “fix us”.

From Sponsorship: What’s in it for Me? (p. 16): Sponsors don’t give advice. As sponsors, we share our experiences and direct our responses to the appropriate recovery tools of CoDA. These might include reading CoDA literature, writing an exercise in the workbook, keeping a daily journal, attending a meeting, or praying to our Higher Power.

From the Sponsorship Booklet, 2003 (p. 13): As in all sponsor relationships, the recovery goal in CoDA co-sponsorship is to have mutually beneficial relationships. Working the Steps, changing our behaviour and growing spiritually frees us from advising, controlling and rescuing.

If the two of us are both new, how can we possibly help each other? Wouldn’t it be like two blind mice trying to lead each other out of a dark room?

A dark room is less scary when we know we’re not alone in it.

Sometimes, the greatest help we can be to someone is to actively listen to them.

We are all uniquely useful in this world.

Don’t underestimate your usefulness, your value and the amount of help you can provide another CoDA member.

From the Sponsorship in CoDA Pamphlet: As you discuss various aspects of the program, you may become aware that each of you has some answers within.

Situations where Co-Sponsorship might be a good option:

I came to CoDA from another recovery fellowship (I may have worked the Steps there), and I am looking for someone who can help me navigate the path of recovery in CoDA.

I can reach out to the group secretary (or the GSR, or another identified Trusted Servant within the group) and let them know that I am looking for a co-sponsor.

Attending many meetings will certainly widen my search field and improve my chances.

I've been coming to meetings for a while (a year or more), and there aren't any step study groups being started anytime soon, but I am excited to start working the Steps.

I can reach out to the other group members (if I have already joined a group), and ask if anyone in the group is willing to be my Co-sponsor. It would be like a very small Step Study Group.

I can attend many meetings and contact the group secretary of each meeting to ask them about anyone willing to be a co-sponsor.

I've been around for a long while and I just need a "bouncing board" and an understanding ear.

I have likely made many good friends in CoDA over time. I can ask one of them if they would be willing to call our relationship an official co-sponsorship relationship.

My co-sponsor and I have both worked through the CoDA Steps and Traditions, and just need some ongoing spiritual support.

We have varied life and recovery experiences and value each other's input.

I might still have a Sponsor, but I find I don't have to rely so much on their support.

Co-Sponsorship might NOT be a good option for two Newcomers who are completely new to 12 Step recovery programs.

I am new to recovery, and I can't seem to find a sponsor.

It is strongly suggested that I widen my search and attend many meetings. Every day, if I can.

Finding a sponsor quickly so that I can start to feel better is not the goal here. I am embarking on a spiritual journey. I need to be patient with the process.

Since meetings are almost all virtual now, I can log on early and stay afterwards to experience some of the fellowship at each group. This is a great way to get to know people.

I can make use of all available contact persons for each group. I can send them an email letting them know that I am new and looking for a sponsor.

If the group allows it, I can ask for available sponsors during the announcements portion of a meeting.

I can prepare for the eventual work by acquiring a copy of the CoDA Blue Book, the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions Workbook, Newcomers Package (which is offered by groups to Newcomers), reading up on the various CoDA websites, downloading copies of the free pamphlets, etc. I can immerse myself in CoDA literature.

Some possible fears around Co-Sponsorship:

I won't know how to help the other person.

All I am asked for is to listen actively and be honest. If I do not have any experience with a particular issue or situation, I can freely state that.

I can help just by listening. I often find that the time allotted for sharing at a meeting is very short. In co-sponsorship, we are giving each other space and time for in-depth sharing.

I am not there to fix the other person. Their Higher Power is their guiding force, not me.

We will be like two students without a teacher.

There is a worldwide fellowship of recovery brothers and sisters available to us when we need them. The two of us can handle most of the work.

There is a wide array of CoDA literature and other documents to work through. The most important aspect of Step work is that we don't attempt to do it alone.

Where / how will we start "the work"?

There are several pieces of literature to help guide our journey:

[The 30 Questions](#) is a newly CoDA approved piece of literature, specifically designed to work through the first 3 Steps with a sponsor or a co-sponsor.

[2019 Introduction to 12 Step Study Group](#) can be used in either a step study group or together with a sponsor or co-sponsor to work through all 12 Steps and 12 Traditions using the CoDA Blue Book and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions Workbook.

[The First 14 Days - Workbook for Sponsees](#) is a document that was created by the CoDA Sydney Intergroup in Australia. It is not CoDA Service Conference Approved, however, many members have used it as another tool in Sponsorship. This workbook is used in conjunction with [The First 14 Days - Questions For Sponsors](#).

I won't know what to say when the other person comes to me for advice.

We try to NOT give advice. We can turn it back to the other person with "What do YOU think would be the best course of action in this situation? What are your options here?". This can be a perfect opportunity to be honest and practice saying "I don't know what to suggest in this situation. Why don't we reach out to a more experienced member and ask for their opinion?"

Following is a list of sample responses that sponsors can use for problem-solving:

- What Step / Tradition would fit here?
- Have you gone to your Higher Power with this issue first?
- How do you feel about your reaction to that situation?
- How did that situation turn out for you?
- Can you think of a better reaction you could have had, now that the situation is over?
- What have you done for yourself today in the form of self-care?
- Are you perhaps being a little hard on yourself about this?
- What would you say to a newcomer if they came to you with a similar situation?

Boundaries within a Co-Sponsor relationship:

Each co-sponsor relationship will be unique, and the two participants have the right to ask for and set any boundaries that they may feel are required for both to feel safe. Some basic boundaries include:

- We will not give each other feedback or advice unless directly asked for feedback or advice.
- We will not try to rescue or fix each other, nor act as each other's therapist.
- We will respect each other's way and pace in working the program.
- We will keep each other's confidence, listen actively and remain emotionally present for each other.

As in individual Sponsorship, boundaries are important, but because both parties are establishing them at the same time, from a more level playing field, they may be easier to implement.

It is suggested that both co-sponsors read the "Sponsorship in CoDA" pamphlet and the "Sponsorship, What's in it for Me?" booklet in order to gain a good understanding of their individual roles.

Benefits of a Co-Sponsorship relationship:

- Neither person has to feel pressure to provide sound advice or good direction. Think "equality" and "level playing field". We might see-saw from time to time, as we have different strengths and life experiences.
- Opportunity to practice being in a healthy relationship. Having my voice heard, and speaking up when I feel the need to.
- Flexibility in timeline and depth of work. We can spend more time on questions that really resonate with us, and jump to other literature if we feel called to do that. Group conscience is still that, even in a group of just two.
- Having someone like-minded to just talk to. To share more deeply than is possible during a meeting. When I share at a meeting, I want to bring my recovery (not my problems), to give the newcomer some hope. With my co-spo, I can rant and rave and get it all out of my system without the fear of being judged or being censored for cursing (if those are the terms we agreed to).
- Helping someone (even just by listening to them) builds our confidence.
- Recovery is an individual growth process, but we don't recover by ourselves. We need each other.
- Neither member has a "one-up" or a "one-down position".
- There seems to be a greater reliance on a Higher Power for answers.
- For those who are "people pleasers" there seems to be less "trying" to be a good sponsor or sponsee.
- For rebels, there is no authority figure against whom to rebel.
- For those who struggle with their need to control others, co-sponsorship can be a welcome relief because the opportunity to be in control is more difficult to achieve.
- For those who are "burned out" from taking care of others, co-sponsorship seems to be less burdensome than traditional sponsorship.
- Effective co-sponsorship provides knowledge of how a healthy relationship can work.

Source: Sponsorship Booklet, 2003, p.14

In summary, we would like to encourage anyone who has been unsuccessful at finding a Traditional Sponsor to perhaps be open to the idea of Co-Sponsorship.

*It's like jumping into a cold pool...it's fine after you get into it!
So give it a shot! You might be pleasantly surprised!*

Prayers and Affirmations for Sponsorship

If I am feeling burned out from sponsoring others, I can say:

Higher Power, please show me what I need to change in my life and give me the courage and the willingness to have it changed. If I have taken undue responsibility for others, I now surrender and return them to your care and safekeeping.

If I want to find someone to sponsor, I can offer:

Higher Power, I am now willing to be of service to another CoDA member. If you think I am ready, please guide us to each other. Thank you.

If I am having trouble finding a sponsor, I can ask:

Higher Power, I ask for your guidance in finding a sponsor who will work in a partnership with you and me. Please show me the qualities I need to look for and remove that which hinders my search. Thank you.

Source: *Sponsorship Booklet, 2003*

A Parting Thought

It is unlikely that any single human relationship will ever meet all of my wants and needs.
Accepting this idea brings some peace of mind and gratitude.

I become open to the fellowship of other recovering people –
a fellowship that includes many with whom I share the ups and downs
along our individual and collective spiritual paths.

A sponsorship relationship points me in the direction of emotional maturity and leads me
toward the ultimate sponsor, my own Higher Power.

Source: *Sponsorship Booklet, 2003*

KEEP LOOKING AND KEEP ASKING!

RESOURCES

For further support, contact the Outreach Representative in your Province:

- BC - bc.outreach@codacanada.ca
 - Alberta - alberta.outreach@codacanada.ca
 - Saskatchewan - saskatchewan.outreach@codacanada.ca
 - Manitoba - manitoba.outreach@codacanada.ca
 - Ontario - ontario.outreach@codacanada.ca
 - Québec - quebec.outreach@codacanada.ca
 - Atlantic (NB, NS, PE, NL) - atlantic.outreach@codacanada.ca
 - Territories (YT, NT, NU) - territories.outreach@codacanada.ca
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Available at cdrsestore.ca:

- [CoDA Blue Book](#)
 - [CoDA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions Workbook](#)
 - [Building CoDA Community: Healthy Meetings Matter](#)
 - [Newcomers Handbook](#)
 - [Sponsorship, What's in it for Me?](#)
 - [Traditionally Speaking](#)
 - [Twelve Piece Relationship Toolkit](#)
 - [Twelve Steps Handbook](#)
 - [Sponsorship in CoDA](#)
 - [Using the Twelve Traditions](#)
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Available at codacanada.ca:

- [2019 Introduction to 12 Step Study Group](#)
 - [The First 14 Days Questions for Sponsors \(non-CAL\)](#)
 - [The First 14 Days Workbook for Sponsees \(non-CAL\)](#)
 - [The "30 Questions"](#)
 - [Twelve Tips For Sponsors](#)
 - [September 12 & 13, 2020 - Sponsorship Bootcamp Recordings & Handouts - **AND** - October 24, 2020 - Sponsorship Meet 'n Greet Handout](#)
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Websites:

- CoDA Canada: codacanada.ca
- CoDA International: coda.org
- CoDA Australia: codependentsanonymous.org.au
- CoDA Fellowship Forum recordings: codependents.org
 - [June 15, 2019 - How To Be Sponsored - Ritchard I](#)
 - [June 16, 2019 - How To Sponsor - Ritchard I](#)