

## **DA Tool #12 — Preparatory meditation and writing for conference registrants:**

Please review the details below, then spend several minutes meditating on your own relationship with DA and BDA sponsors and sponsees. (Additional information, beyond what we've shared below, can be found in the DA Sponsorship pamphlet available for free download at <https://www.helpfordebtors.org/discontinued-da-pamphlets>.)

*DA Tool #12: "Sponsorship — We have found it essential to our recovery to have a sponsor and to be a sponsor. A sponsor is a recovering debtor who guides us through the Twelve Steps and shares his or her own experience, strength, and recovery."*

Rather than copying the entire section titled **What does a sponsor do and not do?** from pages 13-15 of AA's *Questions and Answers on Sponsorship* pamphlet, which we can download from <https://www.aa.org/questions-and-answers-sponsorship>, we have reframed the list as questions, which we believe are entirely applicable to sponsorship in DA and BDA. While the emphasis in the questions below is on newcomers, the questions can just as easily be applied to sponsees with years in recovery, and in multiple programs, especially those who are adding BDA meetings and the Additional Tools to their recovery in DA. Many of these questions could also apply to how we serve on PRGs and in our businesses, especially when supervising or mentoring (more on the latter later):

- 1) Am I willing to do everything possible, within the limits of my own personal experience and knowledge, to help newcomers get solvent and stay solvent through the DA and BDA program?
- 2) Can I show by present example and compulsive debting history what DA and BDA has meant in my life?
- 3) Am I ready to encourage and help newcomers to attend a variety of DA and BDA meetings, to get a number of viewpoints and interpretations of the DA program?
- 4) Will I suggest keeping an open mind about DA and BDA if newcomers aren't sure at first whether they are compulsive debtors?
- 5) Am I willing to introduce newcomers to other DA and BDA members?
- 6) Can I ensure that newcomers are aware of DA and BDA literature, such as *A Currency of Hope*; DA's 12, 12, and 12; and DA and BDA pamphlets? Will I also help make them aware of relevant AA literature, in particular: the *Big Book*; *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*; *Came to Believe*; *Daily Reflections*; *AA Comes of Age*; and suitable pamphlets?
- 7) Am I ready to be available to newcomers when they have special problems?
- 8) Will I go over the meaning of the Twelve Steps and emphasize their importance?
- 9) Will I urge newcomers to join in group activities as soon as possible?

## **DA Tool #12 — Preparatory meditation and writing for conference registrants — continued:**

Questions developed based on AA's *Questions and Answers on Sponsorship* pamphlet — continued:

- 10) Am I ready to impress upon newcomers the importance of all our Traditions and Concepts?
- 11) Am I willing to emphasize the relevance and spiritual value of anonymity, both on a person-to-person basis, as well as at the public level, including social media? (DA's *Anonymity* pamphlet is downloadable at <https://www.helpfordebtors.org/discontinued-da-pamphlets>.)
- 12) Will I try to give newcomers some picture of the scope of DA and BDA, beyond the group, and to direct attention to DA recordings and workshops, sharing about the history of the Fellowship, the Three Legacies, the service structure, and the worldwide availability of DA and BDA online and by phone — wherever newcomers may go?
- 13) Am I ready to explain the DA and BDA program to relatives of compulsive debtors, if that appears to be useful, and to tell them about Debt-Anon?
- 14) Can I quickly admit, "I don't know," when that is the case, and help newcomers find good sources of information?
- 15) Will I encourage newcomers to work with other compulsive debtors, as soon as possible, ideally at the time their sanity has returned at Step Ten? Can I help them find other forms of DA and BDA service to perform until then?
- 16) Can I avoid taking newcomers' inventories except when asked?
- 17) Can I avoid imposing my personal views on newcomers? (This includes views on religion and faith, politics and world events, and any other topics about which I may feel newcomers need strong guidance, even topics that seem directly related to DA and BDA recovery.)
- 18) Will I avoid pretending to know all the answers and try not to keep up a pretense of being right all the time?
- 19) Can I avoid offering professional services and advice, such as those provided by counselors, the legal, medical, or social work communities; yet sometimes help newcomers to access professional help if assistance outside the scope of DA and BDA is needed?
- 20) Am I ready to underscore the fact that it is the DA and BDA recovery program — not my personality or service — that is important?
- 21) Can I gently help newcomers learn to rely on the DA and BDA program, not on me?
- 22) Am I willing to be unoffended if a newcomer goes to other DA and BDA members for additional guidance or even decides to change sponsors?

## **DA Tool #12 — Preparatory meditation and writing for conference registrants — continued:**

We know a DA and BDA member who has been successfully sponsoring in AA for more than 25 years, in DA off and on for almost 10, and in BDA for four. When we say successful, we mean he has remained sober and solvent through his sponsorship of others. Many of his sponsees have stayed sober and solvent, too. But those aren't his successes. Those are the sponsees' and their Higher Powers' successes.

This member hated sponsoring for the first few years, although he loved his sponsors and couldn't be more grateful for what they had contributed to his life. But he wasn't able to emulate what they had done. Until he found the AA pamphlet paraphrased on the preceding pages, that is. Taking the whole pamphlet as his sponsorship operating manual and the pages paraphrased as his job description, he began to review the pamphlet with potential new sponsees — even if newer members had been sober for years, not just newcomers — before agreeing to sponsor them. Not only the shared pages, but all of the sponsorship pamphlet. When they reached the section titled **What does a sponsor do and not do?**, they would read each item aloud together and discuss mutual expectations.

More recently, he looked at these pages and realized that the bulk of his discussions with and suggestions for one of his long-time AA sponsees had nothing to do with alcoholism and sobriety. They had begun to dig deeply into DA and BDA recovery and Tools together. He suddenly knew they were no longer practicing the AA program together and suggested that they switch to DA and BDA sponsorship, asking his sponsee to get a new, separate AA sponsor. He believes that clear boundaries and clean sponsorship relationships are the responsibility of the sponsor. Most sponsees don't know what to ask for or even how to ask for something different when sponsorship relationships become enmeshed or otherwise unhealthy or ineffective. (NOTE: At the time of this revision, this member is sponsoring the referenced person in both AA and BDA, and their friendship has expanded exponentially, a true and vital gift for both of them.)

For now, we think the questions on the previous pages are plenty to consider on the topic of sponsorship. Depending on the pace of our recovery, some of the suggestions implicit in those questions may take years before we can take them completely and consistently. In the meantime, we can consider trying some of the communication and relationship suggestions at work and in our businesses, too.

For instance, how many work relationships might be improved by: taking a global view of the work you're doing together, rather than focusing on the granular with the attendant risk of micromanagement; quickly admitting, "I don't know," when that is the case; avoiding offering unsolicited criticism and advice, waiting to be asked instead; and avoiding the pretenses of knowing all the answers and being right all the time? Even more of the questions probably apply at work, depending on your personal character defects and situation.

As for having sponsors, thank God that we do. If we make the commitment to "stay to recover," we will need their help and support more than ever. We may even add a sponsor or two as we continue to grow and prosper. We know many members who have three sponsors in this program — DA, BDA, and service — and they need every one of them. We are just as worthy of love, help, and service as any newcomer who walks through the door. It's up to us whether we continue to ask for and accept that help. Those who came before us want to support us and are waiting to be asked. We never need return to compulsive debting or isolation again, one day at a time. Once more, let's "stay to recover."