

Steps and Service Workshop

2002 | Part 4 | Reading edition

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Transcript

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Well, the microphone here, we're getting ready to head for the home stretch. It seemed like there was one in the area of that, but one we want to get into to make sure we spend a little bit of time on is that whole business of sponsorship. I'll kick this off when you get down to pick up. In the whole area of sponsorship, two things that are pretty clear that need to be talked about. Probably more than that, but one is just that whole general thing about effective sponsorship, how we do it, and then how you start knowing when to move away, how to move away, that kind of stuff. And then the thing about the medication, which is an increasingly troubling kind of thing in this whole business of how we deal with people.

I think sometimes think that depression has become an attachment to alcoholism. These days of time, you almost don't have it without some depression, be it looked to it. Of course, it does have a little something to do with getting insurance payment for going into treatment, but nonetheless, it is a very, very common kind of a problem to deal with. Let me just sort of make some general remarks to start with about sponsorship. I believe it is a vital thing.

I've never been without one, except for that first little period when I came in to the program and didn't even know how to spell it, but so that's fine. Then I've never been without one, since. I've had three and still got my third one, and I'm very, very grateful. I'm a really lucky guy in a lot of ways. I don't know how you weigh it, but I've got to have one of the longest and strongest sponsorship lines. I know anything about it. I'm 45 years sober, and I've got a sponsor sober longer than me, and he has a sponsor longer than him.

That's unbelievable of having that kind of thing. What a great feeling to know that I've got two old relics like that above me. I tell you, an interesting thing happens if you look forward to it, if you're not already there. As you get older in the program, finding sponsorship becomes more and more of a challenge. Like I'm right now, as I mentioned earlier, I'm the oldest male member in North Carolina. I sort of have a, not a job description, but I kind of have a criteria for what I look for in a sponsor.

This is just me, but I want a sponsor that's senior than me for one thing. It's not absolutely vital, but it's vital to me. I want one that's senior just because it just feels good. I want one that's active in all legacies about college numbers. I'm somebody who believes that you can get locked up in the steps so tightly that you get almost as isolated in recovery as you worry in the alcoholism. So I think you can really get into that kind of staring at your neighbor and checking your emotional pulse every 30 minutes.

So I want somebody that's acting in all legacies that certainly recovers the heart and soul. But if I don't learn unity so that I can connect with my fellow members and with the world around me, I'm still in a heap of trouble. And then service, I believe any recovery that does not involve a healthy, vigorous service life is a recovery that's short changed. And this is a lot of where the real joy comes from. So I want somebody who embodies that kind of stuff in the way they function.

I want somebody that I like. I've never had a sponsor I didn't like. Some people say if you don't hate him, you

got the wrong way. I couldn't disagree more. I've never had a sponsor that I didn't like, that I didn't like to hang out with, that I didn't respect. He used the term he wrote. My sponsor always been kind of heroes to me. They're folk that I really look up to. And so I've sort of got that general criteria for what I'm looking for in one.

I've got a way, and I'll give you this just sort of background so that it goes into this thing of how you function in sponsorship. If it isn't a well developed marriage, so to speak, it's not going to have a lot of value. And so I've got a certain thing that I work out with. I don't have much experience, but I make this standard when I set up sponsorship for somebody, either somebody else sponsoring or with my sponsor.

There's three things that I want understood with my sponsor, and I've got it understood with the fellow who has that job today. One, my sponsor is the only person on this planet, the only one who's invited into my life unannounced. Nobody else has that permission. But he's somebody, it's his job. I've asked him to step into my life anytime about anything. Absolutely no whole part. And he's the person that I will listen to no matter what he's got to say.

I won't interrupt him. I might argue with him later, but I'm going to hear him first. And I won't always do what he said, but I will hear what he says. That's what I want him to tell me. And he's the only one I've got. He's the person I'll call when the chips are down. I may talk to a thousand other people, but when the chips are down, there is no question where I'm going. So that's sort of a fix I have on a job description for a sponsor.

I sometimes think that we do a disservice to the sponsor by making a too great expectation on what it ought to be. Sometimes like we get to thinking that the sponsor ought to be a combination of Adolf Hitler and Sigmund Freud. They've got to be a real kind of rock them, sock them, jump on you guy, and then have tremendous insight and understanding be able to respond to any problem no matter what. And that's a little unrealistic.

A sponsor to me is a fairly practical thing. Somebody that fits that description that I trust, who is somebody I can talk with about where I'm going to share their experience with me. And so I don't put those kind of real glaring kinds of expectations on the guy. I want it to be that kind of a sound, solid, functioning relationship. When I set up sponsorship, and I do this with people I sponsor as well as when I sponsor, I always make it a very serious transaction.

I always have a private meeting, a schedule meeting, so that we go in and use the meat for an hour, hour and a half, two hours. And basically what we want to do is solidify that relationship. Agree on what it is that we're looking for, but the expectations are so that there is no surprise in how we do business. If we're going to meet with regularity, like that six o'clock in the morning, the cruelty that he imposes on people.

Whatever it is, we make an agreement and then that's the agreement. And they become the terms under which we operate. And so I like the sponsorship to have a real kind of a sound, a business-like thing. It's what I'm dealing with is my life. And I don't want to be frivolous and casual about something that may be my lifeline at times, and I want it to be sound. I want it to be solid. I don't want it to be up for grabs.

So the way I look at it, it's only to keep me with that realistic expectations, face somewhat on that stuff. I was talking about earlier when I was trying to help start AA in the town. My job as a sponsor is to help the new person that I'm working with know that there's a solution, clearly know that there's a solution. And just as clearly

know that I'm not in, that I'm not in. And that came somewhat from watching people drop like flies when I left the town.

See, I had not let them know that there was a solution. All they knew is that I was a wonderful person, and that's not enough. That's not enough. This illness is far too deadly for that kind of a little lightweight approach. And so when I, that sounds real simple to say that, but knowing that there's a solution doesn't mean just throwing some words out of it. It means having them to have enough understanding that they know how to put that in motion.

Sometimes it takes a short time. Sometimes it takes a long time. I just say one more thing about this, generally about this thing of discontinuing sponsorship. I don't like the term fired. That's just not a good term for disrupting the spiritual relationship. It just doesn't fit. Because that's, I mean, we don't employ somebody. I mean, it's just something we agree in good faith to try to carry out. And sometimes it just doesn't work.

I don't commonly make it a practice to discontinue it until I'm absolutely convinced that it no longer has utility. And sometimes the kind of thing that I look at in discontinuing is, I'll give you one example of the guy I had that He's a wonderful fellow. He's over 20 years. Well, he's dry 20 years. And he was a guy that, that he was, he was one of the first people that I, that I stopped for therapeutic reasons. Lack of therapy, I think was probably.

I work with this guy, and, and he was a, he's a, he's a, he's a real verbal kind of guy who really believes that he can make a living doing nothing. I mean, he just thinks he can skim the world forever. And horrendous background loves to do fourth and fifth steps. If you ever want to do a seminar on fourth and fifth steps, I'll be glad to send him up here and do it. But that guy is absolutely fabulous and just loves to talk about his last operation.

He'll, he'll beat you to death with that. And loves to do fifth steps. But when it comes to six and seven where you start thinking about change, it becomes a different issue. And I work with this dude for nine years. And I listened to more fifth steps and I had patience to endure. And, and I never saw one ounce of any effort at, at recovery. You know, at trying to do anything about it. And he came to me one day, I've been beating on about a minute.

He came to me one day. He said, man, you're going to be proud of me. I said, thank God. What happened? And he said, he said, I made some amends. Well, I knew every amends he owed from all those fifth steps. I said, for God's sake tell me what it is. And so he told me it was about something he jumped on to college and, and so on. I said, well, tell me how it came about. Literally what happened? Two policemen armed came to his door to get the money.

I said, man, that ain't even close, you know. And, and he, and he aggravated that with one thing that, I, I try not to be a terribly arbitrary guy. And to set up just harsh judgments. But there's one thing that I will not sponsor. And that's somebody who jumps newcomers. I'm just not going to do it. Because, honest to God, don't know of anything more cruel. Excuse me. Then taking a wounded newcomer and depriving him of the right to recover.

So I just won't, I won't deal with that. And so this guy aggravated the case. I was going to stop anybody. But that made it a lot easier. And I stopped sponsoring that guy. I gave him several months notice. Because he'd not

have a handsome beast. I knew he was going to have a hard time. I said, buddy, you're going to have to find somebody. Gave him a date certain. And a date certain. He still hadn't found anybody here.

But I was out of here. You know, and so. And now he's 11 years later. He's 20 years sober. He's still calling me once a while. And he tells me a lot of wonderful stuff. And I pay absolutely no attention to it. Because none of it has any connection to reality. And so I listen to it like the wind blowing. And I'm cordial with him. And I hang up. And wait for him to call me again. And so sometimes, you know, in a case like that.

That was because I saw the lack of, you know, the guy just not willing to do the stuff. And in a case like that, I have no, I don't like doing that. But it was what I'm doing is perpetuating a myth. When I continue to allow sponsorship to be used to describe it. That's a myth. There is no sponsorship. And so I'm not willing to condone, you know, something where there's nothing going on. There are other times when the relationship just becomes dysfunctional.

Where people just won't follow the agreements and get more and more lax and slack about maintaining contact and maintaining viable dialogue. And so in a case like that, when there's no response to repeated warnings, I'll just say, you know, I think it's gone far enough. I'm not mad at you. I'll be your friend. But I'm not going to call this sponsorship. Because I think there is a viable dialogue that has to occur. But that to have meaning.

And so those kinds of things I put on our standards. We'll come and get Don talk about this a little bit and then we'll come back on the thing about dealing with it and the heading of that medication stuff. But that is a big issue and it's one that is well worth talking about a little bit. But let me get Don talk about that a little bit. And no one will work past quit in time. Even though we stole 45 minutes on breaks.

I've been sorting through this one of late. Because I've come to dislike the word sponsor. Because it doesn't mean anything anymore. It means too much. I had an experience that set it off and then I'll tell you what I think about sponsorship. It's part of my battle with ritual. But I was at a little conference in Ohio last year. I'm a host who was a young fellow about a year. A sponsorship line that says call me before you go to the bathroom in the morning.

Total taking over your life. And nice enough people but that was where he came from. I was 33 years sober. And as we began to interact during the weekend, it became clear to him that I would do something a little different. So he asked me. Because part of the ritual that this group goes through is I have a sponsor whose name is, whose name is, whose name is. And all the scalps are taken off the wall and put it out there for you to look at.

And the implication of the way it's done, if you're not doing it this way, you're not doing it right and get away from me. I hate to say it but that goes on already. So he asked me, do I have a sponsor? And I had to honestly say, please describe to me what you mean by that so I can answer. And when he was finished describing it I said by what you described, no I don't. And I watched his face. It truly disturbed me. Because I was a living lie.

You can't stay sober this long unless you do it this way. But I had. And I don't want to ever be put in, I've spotted you. So I started investigating. What the hell does that really mean? All I know about it is the way I respond. My experience is a little different because we weren't even allowed to go to that one. It depends on the

steps. We weren't fit for that meeting. They had real people commitment until we had something to say, which goes back to where sponsorship came from.

It's not in this book. It's described. It's not mentioned. A sponsor in any organization is the guy who says, guys who are our members, old Tom who would like to become a member. And the guy said, well, we're not too sure about it. Tell you what we'll do. If you will be responsible for him for a little while until he learns how we operate. So when he shows up the meeting, he don't screw it all up. You teach him what it is we do.

And then we'll all get together and let him do it and see if he got it. And you're off the line. That's kind of the way it is in the elks in the mostly, in a way it was here too. So that's one piece of sponsorship that I looked at as a word, one description of it. I am responsible to the new person to show them what it is we do here. Now I'm having difficulty these days because instead of showing what we do, I'm teaching them our lingo ones.

So in three or four weeks, they've got the lingo. And when you talk to you and they sound all right, and you're dying. They sound all right. We got the lingo. We didn't show them what it all we did. I came from a group that showed me. Let me describe sponsorship in here. And then I'll get on with it. Because it is described here. And the forward and the first addition is described. We have alcoholics and animals and more than a hundred men and women who have recovered and are seeming to help the state of mind and body.

To show other alcoholics precisely how we recover is a man. That describes it. My job as a sponsor is done with me. They showed me precisely how they let me cook. Didn't lie to me. It was a strange thing that I saw. My life was more important to them than anything else. They didn't care if I died. Now it's one of the first apparent conflicts we'll see in AA. Your life matters more made than mine, but I don't care if you die.

Show me precisely what they have done. Now we were in a limited environment. They couldn't do a whole lot for restrictions on your time and your movement. But part of what they did do was begin immediately working with others immediately. As I go through this book, I see the same thing. Everything about AA is immediate. As soon as you have some information that may save her life, go tell her. You don't have to wait until you've done everything by the number.

She might have died between. In fact, quite often, the person with three weeks of sobriety is more effective on a call than I am because they can't believe it. They can't even hear me. Besides, I talk kind of fluffy. Except on a 12-step call. Talk loud. Talk loud. Yeah. Talk loud. Bill uses the word protege in the book. And that's my understanding of the sponsorship relationship. A mentor and a protege. protégé is somebody new who wants to do what this person is doing.

A mentor takes time out of their otherwise busy life to walk gently with a new person. Be sure that one of us we do and how we do. It could be a friend then, but it's a relationship of equals from the very beginning. It's a relationship. Taking that background, the way I sponsor today and have for years in the free world is very simple. There are instructions in here about what to do when somebody asks you if you work with them.

There's some hoops to jump through, first of all. Let's say you've heard me and decided you want what I had. So you come to me after the meeting and say, will you be my sponsor? My response is my home group meets on Friday morning at 6 o'clock in St. Joseph's Hospital. In the aspirin room right next to the cafeteria. Why don't you

meet me there and we'll talk about it. I want to know, first of all, if you really mean business.

If you show up at my group at 6 in the morning on Friday, you mean business. I don't have to question you or interrogate you. If you don't, we can't talk about it. So I'll just wait. When we talk about it, I'm like Tom. There are certain things we need to know what's going to go on here. I'm going to show you precisely how I recovered through this, which means we have to find a time and a place that we both agree on, and it has to be regular.

The first lesson that I got was be regular. Now you can come once a week. You can come once a month. You can come every day. I don't care as long as we establish that. As long as you understand what we're going to do here is go through this. We're also going to do other things. But during this period of time, be quiet. If you knew anything, you wouldn't be here. I'm busy. I'm going to read this to you and then share with you how it is that we've brought to this, and then we'll talk about it.

And then you'll get assignments like I did, and they're not other people's assignments that come right out of here. This damn thing understands this completely. We're too dumb to even know when to pray, so it tells us when. It tells us how. It tells us when not to pray. When you get off, you're asking to go do something. It tells you what question they ask. I mean, they're really very clear. I left them all in devices.

I'll screw it up. So we will do that. Now, I believe that I'm responsible for exposing you to the wholeness of it. I have been influenced deeply by people that I could not put the word sponsor on that have had effect on my life so profound it changed. Bob White was one. He was one. There were some old timers in this operation when I got here that were giants. We don't need giants anymore, by the way. Any social movement that's getting started needs giants to break down the barriers.

But we just need leaders now. But anyway, I'm going to expose you at the proper time to my mentors. I have more on tape. You'll get to hear their voices. I love Raven Chuck's book, but I'd much rather listen to the talk he gave it to what came from. There's something about Chuck's he. So I will expose you to that. And at the proper time, and you don't know what it is. I do, because one of my favorite things, because I get asked to talk locally, in the first step one time.

I felt like I were fist stepping. And he was ultra sick, so it took a while. We went through one of those times ago. And he didn't know how I operate. We fist stepped all the way out. And I informed him that he was the ten. It's the time you got involved. And what better time than when you're all cranked up? You're temporarily telling the truth. LAUGHTER As a sponsor, I'm to be not only a mentor, but a guy. I've been over this trail.

I know the difference between a snake and on this path there really are no snakes. But some of them have thorns in them. Example, I got a kid that's been in and out and finally got him through some inventory. And a good part of the inventory, because he's young, was the way he mistreated women. And we got some very specific amendments to make. But the biggest one is he's got to change how he treats women. And when we went into the inventory, he had spotted a little lady that intrigued me.

And I said, well, perhaps you ought to leave that alone to her. He took that direction. And as soon as we finished the fist down, he says, can I call her? And I said, well, if you think you can have a date with her and not hurt her, but you got to ask yourself, can you call her and have a date and not hurt her? Call me back just when I

came down here and says, I'm having difficulty. How in the world am I going to have a date?

Well, I have to worry all the time about what I'm hurt. And I said, well, it isn't time then. I said, I don't tell him you can't. I suggest until you're straight to the thing. Because if you continue to harm people, you're surely not wrecking it. A change has to take place. A man doesn't meet him. I'm sorry. It means change. I change what I did here. I change what I do. I want you to meet and interact with my family.

I don't know whether you're going to have a family or not. She might as well find out what they're about. I get the psychopaths, by the way. Well, I do. Because I know who they are. They're just right in the world. And my children, because we communicate in my house, know that's who's sitting on the couch. They also know they're perfectly safe. Because I'm there. No question about it. I cannot cycle anybody to pretend to.

Don't pull your blood on me. Mainly, I absolutely adore them. I just love them like sick babies. And so they're... And they respect my home. Never have I had any trouble. And I've had some bad people in that. We start. And again, it's because of the way I was... I've got a special room. Some of you have been in it. It's a very private place. And this is where we're going to do our work. But first, we're going to start on the couch near the front door and the stairs that come down for a couple reasons.

You're not bringing your shitty attitude into my room. You may mess it with me. You haven't earned the right to go into my room yet. Sorry, but that's the truth. More importantly, I want you to see how me and my family get ready for the day. This one particular time is wonderful. I've got two daughters. Then we're in their early teens. And a few things are getting out of bed when you're alone. Try to get out of bed and get ready.

When you've got two teenage girls and a wife in the house, get ready for it. Just sit down and wait. I as well have somebody come over because I can't get in a bathroom till after that. Anyhow, the moon and ticker and I are sitting there. This is one who later threatened him on Broadway to kill me. He did it, obviously. But we're sitting there. And my 13-year-old comes tippy and down the stairs. And I've raised a mouthy one.

One who has attitude and like letters to the attitude. I encourage that. Her sister's a wimp with a lot of women. She comes tripping down the stairs and she says, Excuse me. I'm reading the book, I'm involved in life with death. I wish you would interrupt this meaningful. You know, I live here too. You've got a lesson. I want to expose you. If you have come to me to ask me to sponsor you, I want to expose you that I made me what I am.

Every now and then, one of the guys that come with me, I'm one of these deals. If they ever ask me, I'll see you two things. I try to get them to pay for their own ticket. They can't do that. I've got plenty of frequent flyer miles. They don't belong to me. They belong to my family. They get their own room. I'm not asleep. Unless the conference is paying for it. Just make sure there's two people. That's the regimented part.

I believe this firmly. When new people come to me, they're incapable of surrendering to God. They either hate him, don't believe in him, or confuse him about it. But surrender is the absolute bottom line requirement for moving it forward. You've got to surrender the old way entirely. So I let them surrender to me. Six o'clock my house. Make it a sacrifice. This is bad. Until the first time we meet, then they surrender to process.

And in the process, they're able then in time to surrender to God, and now that's when I let him go. We still continue on with my exposing. From here on, you can't count on me. And the way that works out, because that

may happen at the third step, it may not be until the fifth or sixth of my last four. We have had a rigid schedule. You must be there every Tuesday at six. That's the deal. Once we finish the fifth, sixth, and seventh step, you no longer have an appointment.

In fact, back at the fourth step, you no longer have an appointment. You go home and you make a list. As soon as your list is done, call me, and I will make time for you. But I'm not putting any restraints on this thing because this has to come from within. And it takes you a long time making your list. When you call, I will remind you that you've accessed spiritual power here, because everything from the third step to the seventh step is all part of one prayer.

It's one spiritual activity. Don't wait too long. So that's kind of how I do that. And then, once that's all done, take this inventory list, make a new list. I'm a listed person. All the people here are you old men's students. Make that list. Then add anybody you can think of because if you mess with them, you mess with them. That's what my sponsor told me. Then I was given an exercise that I will give you. Go back to your private place.

Take this list and look at it. Close your eyes and picture each one of these people in your mind. See if you can feel a willingness in your heart to look them right in the eye and say to them, I've been wrong and I've harmed you. Would you please tell me what I have to do to get the books to you? The free locked up in the penitentiary is so good. Literally lifted from my chair and set free. The willingness is the demonstrable sign of the presence of God.

It is so powerful. At the very instant I'm willing to be changed. I have already been changed. Then I kind of go over that list with him. My sponsor did with me. He had me because I couldn't get out and make amends. He wouldn't let me out and it would let you in. He said, well some of them we can deal with by mail. You're going to have to go see. And I learned a very important thing. I get to live with what I did. Sometimes from long period of time.

And there's nothing wrong with that. I'm not guilty or ashamed about it. But I have some pain in my heart over some of the things that I did. And I should have. It keeps me from getting arrogant. It helps me to understand. I made a guy some at the end of the day, Tom. He said, what do I get at the end of this? I said, you son of a bitch. I said, I get something better than that. No. Compassion. Okay. But bring me your list.

What do you do it on cards or yellow paper or toilet paper? I don't care. Bring me who you harm. How you harm them and what you think you can do to make them. Because part of this process now that I'm free is to help the people what I harm to get free to. If I harm you, I put you in a bad emotional state. I need to give you the opportunity to smack me down or forgive me or whatever you need to do. And almost people ever want us from me to come and say, I was wrong.

And you're waiting for years to hear me. Then you're pretty much on your own. Get on about it. If you wish, I will show you how I do the tenth step as soon as this. The tenth 11th and 12th step gone over left. I'm taking the tenth and 11th. I do not spend a whole lot of time showing people how to meditate. You really don't want to try what I do today. It's different than what I did last month. Been different all along the way.

I will share that with you if you wish. But you're kind of on your own now as far as this program goes. Now

you and I together will go out seeking. I take one of the guys I sponsor to a prison meeting when I'm committed to. Third Tuesday of everyone. The guy for two hours. Top of the lunatics for an honor and drive two hours back home. He's getting exposed to that. I take them to assemblies. I talk to them. We have a tradition and concepts meeting at my house every Wednesday night at 5.30.

When we're going to go through that, they need to see the whole scope of the deal. I've become what's known as an elder statesman in service. I think I'm just a cranky owner. My voice is heard through the people that I sponsor. The very nature of the fact that I became a trustee and did all this public stuff. I didn't get any prestige from it, but you all think I did. And the people at the assembly think I'm all the more.

So we got a problem. When I show up in the assembly, there's a group of people who believe if I say it, it's gospel. There's another group of people who believe if I say it, it's got to be bullshit. So I found out how to be really effective just to send ten people to work with me there. And my voice is heard ten times. Nobody knows what I said. Not that I don't go to assemblies, but not much anymore. I'm still very active in general service.

And if I sponsor you, you must know that. I will expose you to it. You may not fit in general service. You may fit now with some other kind of service. Unlike Tom, service is where the rich part of recovery comes. I know what I'm supposed to do here not to date with you guys. My real responsibility, my real job, is to make sure that after I'm dead and gone 50 years from now, whoever comes through that door gets the same.

And that means I have to stay actively involved in serving the fellowship as a whole beyond anything that I want. I just finished taking on general service. People I loved earlier. Some of them are really mad at me, and I don't care. The fourth edition of Big Book has a statement, and it's so outrageous that I could not say it home without saying so. And the fourth edition of Big Book is a statement that says fundamentally the only difference between an electronic meeting and a home group around the corner is one of format.

How many people are going to be killed by that one? So don't worry about it. It's been taken out. Five people. That's all it took. It was five people in the writer letter saying, this is outrageous. Put this on the agenda. I must let the conference see this. I don't think they're going to like it. They didn't. Right or wrong, as a sponsor and as a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, I don't care how it goes. The end result really truly doesn't matter.

What matters is the weak-eat talking about this fellowship will survive only as long as we're all talking about it. The better chance we have is surviving. If you need to vote, you haven't talked on it. And the stuff we did in the eighties that solved all the problems are brand new problems. You're going to try to solve them all over again. That's as it should be. Each new group of people needs to resolve the problems.

We don't want solutions. We want resolutions. Constantly bringing them in. Our group inventory covers that. Group up along to you had a closed meeting. I frankly think it should be an open meeting. So whatever group inventory I brought up, let's open it up. One of the guys in the sponsor said no one's keeping closed. And we engaged in the battle. Because the new people would come during that period of time work part of the decision.

They need to be part of the decision. You become part of my family if you wish. You know my wife, you know my children. We get together in my backyard. You don't have to clean up dog crap because we don't have a dog. But we get together and we become part of alcoholics and models. You know, respecting occupations.

Some of you know about our fellowship in the spirit conference. It's held up right around 10,000 feet. It starts on Thursday.

So on Wednesday night, we hold a pop lock. Both so you can all get together mainly so you can stay at 5,000 feet for a while. So when you get to 10,000, you're not going to get oxygen. Equation is sick. And we get the benefit. The main thing sponsorship does is for me, I'm constantly addressing my own way far away from it. I'm explaining to you what happened to me back in 1950s, fresh to me. I challenge every week, I challenge maybe I'm not an alcoholic.

Because that's one of those rocks that is warm under. It's wonderful because I get to go through this thing over and over and over. And I've made a host of friends. It's an embarrassment where I go. When we take a vacation, we can't tell people who we're going. They're going to get hurt because they want us to come stay at their house. I love you, but I don't want to stay at your house. That's why I brought that van.

I'm going to go camping. Except for Bruce Sars. I like Bruce Sars. We've got a lake out back and we've been fishing in the morning at six. Can't sock the lake perch and have it for breakfast. I'll stay with the public. Mentor and protege more defines it. Now, if we can understand, that's what I mean by sponsorship and we can use the word. And it's that way with many things and alcohol exponents today. The words that have no meetings because they have too many meetings.

I was in a meeting probably 15 years ago when it first hit me and I started my little personal thing about not becoming ritualized. I let it was sharing in the meeting and it was a good sharing. It came to a place she said, I had this particular problem. I did a quick tenth and it's over. It's gone. It moved on. I said, wait a minute. What'd she just say? She did a quick tenth. What the hell is a quick tenth? Now, I've been around a while.

I know she meant she had done a tenth step inventory. What the hell was that mean? Did she do it to where the big book shows, the way Hazleton shows, the way somewhere it went. And if I'm a new person, what the hell is a quick tenth? And I began to try not to get into the lingo but to describe the experience. Because you had to convince me. I didn't trust anybody here. I stayed here because I watched these three guys after the school.

The top's the good and the sound's good. I watched them on the yard. And I watched them on the tears. And I watched them as they moved through that penitentiary. I watched unselfish courage demonstrated by my sponsor. They were messing with our school at work time. And this was a shocker. This guy was cool. He was spiritual and never got upset by anything. He was doing life. And all of a sudden the administration, his sides are going to mess with our study school.

And he freaked out. That's what you got mad. That's what he did. He said, I'm going to go see Wilson who was the associate of warlord treatment. He stomped down the stairs and headed for the warden's office. And I know he's headed for the hole, he's headed. You don't go stomping into the warden's office, raise the hell. But she got a number on you. She has these going in the hole. Some period of time passed and he came back and he was happy and they quit.

But somehow I understood I had just seen true courage in action. It would have been so much easier for him to say, let it go. Then he wouldn't have to tie up Saturday and Sunday anymore. He didn't need that thing for

himself. He did this for us. He became a spokesman for those who had no voice and risked going to the hole. Having all these privileges. That's the kind of courage that I must have. Because I'm going to be asked along the way to go places that are really scary.

Like halls. The safest place I've ever been. I was in the middle of it. It's kind of a maximum, minimum, maximum security. The fences are all over the dam place. They don't want anybody out. And I'm in the center of it at night. And my mother and I have been talking. My mother gets nervous because I do a lot of prison work. And I have to mind her mom. My time to get nervous is when I was one. Not now. And I'm standing surrounded by the bad guys.

Middle of the night. And a feeling came over me when I was in the safest place. Nothing could help. I want people to experience what I've experienced. I want you to have my experience, but I want to expose you to that kind of coverage. As you are aware you are. That's all I'll take you. And whatever you want to do, do it. I actually have people come to me after I've shown them how to write inventory. And they didn't write it that way.

I'll listen to them anyway. This is the best way. They'll get back to this eventually. The big thing is they made an effort. And who the hell am I to diminish that effort? So I'll listen. Nothing else to do. I'm tired. The reason that I've been able to do what I've been able to do is because of the sponsor. When I was trusty, I was gone 50 weekends a month. Many times during the week. 50 weekends a month. Or 50 weekends a month.

No. That's what I've got by the time. No, I've never been soliciting my life. And at that time all of a sudden. I have no less than five people to take it through. I'm second. This is an overall. Until I realized the reason I was able to do this other stuff is because I did this every morning. I shared my experience with the new. That's why I get very disturbed when I hear service people say, well I'm getting ready to rotate so I think I'll go back to my group.

You have to go back to your group and make navy coffee. I don't want to just wander on. If you're in service and you leave your group to do service, you let service replace your group activity. You're trolling. You need to be a member of your group and then serve from there. Not the other way around. I've seen people who let service become their recovery. They're really hard to be around. It depends on which aspect. Long distance sponsorship.

This sponsor lives in Pennsylvania. How do I look on that rather than one to one? It's very difficult. One thing. If the piece of sponsorship is made taking it through the step work, we have to do that one to one. That can't be done long distance effectively. If the sponsorship relationship with one of two peers who are needing a mentor or I mean, I've gone some places. You haven't gone. You're ready to go. We can do that with a telephone.

I can sponsor people when we're talking about principles on the telephone. The step work has to be done face to face for me. The rest of me, yeah, there's no one. I have mentors too, by the way. A lot of different kinds of sponsors I've had. When I came out of the penitentiary, a little guy named Harry, I asked him to sponsor me. For one reason, Harry was elegant. Harry knew how to behave in one society. And I'm not stupid and I wasn't raised in a hut somewhere.

But in addition to his program, Harry took me to plays, to the symphony. He took me to the Broadmoor, where there's more silverware than anybody could ever use. He taught me how to behave in that environment. He

gave me that really simple thing. How do you know which one to use? Well, you start from here and then what do you weigh in? Jesus Christ. Harry died of an overdose because Harry didn't like to use the program.

But he was very good for me. He taught me something. One of my other sponsors, he and I became such close friends within two weeks in the fire name as my sponsor and we've been co-sponsoring each other. Let me mention one thing about the geographic thing. I mentioned earlier that as you get older in the program, finding somebody that fits the criteria becomes a real challenge. And the last time I needed a sponsor when my guy developed Alzheimer's and I had a little bit of lead time, I just started drawing circles about who was in catchment areas.

I hit pay dirt 3,000 miles away. And I would prefer having somebody in my home group. But it's a matter of what are you going to compromise? And so in those cases, you know, you're certain that there are times when I sponsor people in many parts of the country, I make it a point to avoid people in early recovery like the guy was talking about because it is tremendously important to have immediate access, to have that accountable relationship, the tight thing.

I wouldn't begin to take on somebody in early recovery. But it's one of those things that becomes a necessity. Like right now, my sponsor is probably going to outlive me. But he may not. And I already know who my next one will be if I have to. Now he doesn't know it. Nobody knows it. But I know it because I don't want to be that one. It's not going to hang off a cliff. It's just a part of what makes me a whole member.

And so when you get to this point, you have to think that way. Otherwise, you're going to be compromising yourself and not compromise. Let me mention one other thing for what is worth it. The thing that Don just described is a wonderful ideal way to work with somebody going through the program. For a long time, I was really frustrated with the revolving door. It was just watching people come through here and not even get in touch much and just going back out.

I was really hunting for some ways to more effectively grab folk and work with them. I was looking for anything. I've done taking people through steps on a lot of ways. One-on-one, do it 14 weeks. You name it, then. I'll try it. All of them work to some extent. And then one day, in fact, Don and I, he kept telling me about some he was doing that made sense. But I'm a kind of a visual person. I said, why don't you show me what you're talking about?

And we sat down, literally sat down in the corridor of a hotel and grabbed four or five other outstanding alcoholics and pulled them in. And I know you remember, he just opened the book and he said, well, here's what we do. And opened the book, read a sentence, and I had to break up the meeting because we just got going with the same. It was that simple. And at that point, that made sense to me that you could take a group of people and do what he's talking about and you could do it on a group setting.

And so I started, he was my mentor then. And so I didn't have a clue about what you did other than a hotel quarter. And so when I had something I wanted to discuss, I'd get on the phone and say, now what do you know about that? And he'd tell me they would do it. Well, I've been doing that for several years now. I'm not a magic bullet thinker. I know better than that. But in all the years that we've been doing that, we've never had a single person who's gone through the whole experience that's drunk again.

Now, I'm not a magic bullet guy, but I do believe that it's almost impossible to get drunk. If I follow this thing the way it's laid out and practice it. So I think it's a powerful kind of a thing. One reason, two reasons I just mentioned that I really like about that. One is that I'm a pretty heavily committed guy too. I've got an awful lot of things that I'm involved in. All of which are important. And so I have to fight for how to deal with the people I want to deal with.

And so this group approach really makes something realistic for me that otherwise wouldn't be. I just can't afford to time a good point to do the 101. In all honesty, if I had the luxury of time, I would not do it the 101. I'd do it the group. Because what I find is that the group magnifies the power. And that you never know whose experience is going to be really meaningful. So periodically, I just finished one last year and a half.

And so I just periodically do it with people I'm sponsoring and others that might want to join in. The last one, a year and a half, we finished with 30 people. And that's just incredible to me. You couldn't think drunk could stand still that long. Much less make that kind of commitment. So there are a lot of ways to do stuff. And I'll always be grateful for that one because they've made a tremendous difference with a lot of people.

We know where that came from. Where? Maxie. Oh, yeah. Yeah. Who was sponsoring? Jack is sponsoring. Yeah. It's all here anyway. It's a small family. Let's spend just a... Yeah, go ahead. I'll just make a real brief comment. I don't dismiss anything. That sponsorship, like Donald was saying, covers a multitude of sins. And it doesn't mean that there are all variations of sponsorship. Certainly, we've been talking about classic sponsorship, whereas that 101 with Mr. Wonderful, that's the Cadillac.

But in this day and time, we get an awful lot of people that almost overwhelm the resource. And so I think temporary sponsorship can serve a purpose. In our group, we do it. We make it available. What we encourage is that we do it for a set period of time, 60 days. And the function during that 60 days is to help the person get prepared to engage in sponsorship sooner or better. And at the end of 60 days, it concludes either with permanent sponsorship or movement toward that.

And in the course of it, what we do is just the obvious stuff. We try to get the meetings, give them access to somebody, then comfortably call. So I think there's utility for it. We change the words on a mic because we looked at that as an area. This is coming out of prisons and treatment. And the sponsorship relationship is almost a holy thing. It's a spiritual thing. There's not a fed temporary. So you change the word to temporary contact, and the function is the same.

Then you get exposed to the fellowship in your area. Then you find a sponsor. This contact will be your guide for you all. Let me read a couple quick things here and then back to Tom. These are descriptions of sponsorship. We search our acquaintance for a closed mouth understanding friend. I'm on page 74, but I'm skipping. It is important that you be able to keep a conference. They fully understand and approve of what we're driving at.

I mean, we'll not try to change our plan. There are some of the descriptive elements of sponsorship. Closed mouth, keep a conference. I lost a sponsor once. Because I came to him in the midst of a genuine crisis, told him some things. He said in my life, because after telling him about it, he says, that's insane. We're back and rescue your children, so I did. In absolute confidence, it's something I talked about from the podium today.

At that time, it was necessary that it stopped me. Anyway, I got back to town. What he has done is made it impossible for me anything that I think. And that changes. At the moment, I must be very careful not to pass on what you tell me in the conference. And it may seem silly to me that you need to have that quote. The medication thing is that some people need certain kinds of medication. True men are depressing people.

From my own experience in the field and in knowing some of it, some of them are helped by lithium, which is something that your body produces. If it doesn't, then you need to take it. We've got a lot of other fond members who need that. It's a chemical imbalance. The doctor I learned about it from said, if you need it, it works. And that's how they find out whether you need it or not. In fact, that's how doctors find out whether you need anything or not.

Today's new medications need adjusted on a regular basis. I'll put it this way. My problem with people taking medication, particularly for depression, is that I can't work with them. I can't. My experience is they can't show up. Even if they show up in the room, feelings are dead, so we don't go anywhere. And I'm more than willing. I have dear, close friends who have to take certain kinds of medication. It almost always comes back.

I personally believe this is just my belief from watching over the years and listening to my wife who is a 30-year nurse. Prozac is one of the most dangerous drugs in any alcoholic period. I won't say get off of it. I think we've killed some people here doing that. They need it to meet you. But if you're taking it, I will tell you this. The day is going to come, if you're here, or you will need to make that decision.

The one case that I love the most about it, God works nicely with me. He softens me and gives me views. Took on the old 18-year-old girl as a newcomer. And it wasn't very long until we discovered it. This girl had 102 personalities. She had been raised in a satanic cult. She was on some really heavy-duty psychotropics and antidepressants. All kinds. And we just worked. One of the things Monica did was teach her how to have him.

I'm serious. It helped. He saw a cat just trying to get her integrated. Monica just tore it on the net. And everybody taught. This is so real. One of the 14-year-olds who comes out, burns himself in cigarettes when he's out. When he goes back in, this is some real stuff. Anyway, this girl came to God is either everything or nothing. Get her own prank. Her own inner searching. Went to her psychiatrist and said, I'm through.

I'm more psychiatry. I'm more medication. Scared all of us. No withdrawal either. She functions and is a very fine member of her. It does really well. The personality shifts are still there, but she's not distressed by her. She knows who she is. She got her medication because it came from inside. Whatever that process was, I don't know, but it worked. The scariest time of all was when one of the personalities didn't know for sure whether they were alcoholic.

We wanted her to take the test. We know she's alcoholic, and we know seven of the others are too. So what are you going to do there? Okay. She had group conscience. All eight of the alcoholics said, we understand. We're going away while you take the test. It wouldn't be taken. And I don't understand any of this. I'm just reporting to you what happened. This particular personality did some controlled drinking and it worked just fine.

And when it was all over, the rest of them came home. And I don't know how that works, but all I can tell you is, regarding the medication she survived, we had a kid on methadone on time, a hundred-year-old guy

methadone. This is an eight or ten week withdrawal if you're lucky. He made the same choice. This is all or nothing. I'll take whatever heat there is. We had a friend that had a farm, a dog farm, a place because one of his screams, three days of mild discomfort, had another kid on the same dosage that took ten years.

Could not get past that. So I'm watching this and I want to be careful not to diagnose, but I'm very, very suspicious. I work with a psychiatrist and he said the main problem that he sees and he's an alcoholic. Any competent psychiatrist dealing would have to necessarily label in our meetings, we just call it mooks. If they're competent, that's how they'd have to do. The problem is we, the psychiatrist, are meeting to begin to throw drugs at it, so they don't get to finish it up.

So he's working hard now in the field to say, let's let this stretch a little bit. They may need it later. The ones I have trouble with are the ones who are self and they don't feel good, and they don't have trouble with that as they can. That's my own experience with the time we deal with a lot of it. We're finding a new thing you might want to watch. It's not a new corrections particularly, they have a fit of me and abusers.

And in tracking their histories back, we found that they were once children on Ritalin, and then they took them off of Ritalin, and now these kids are self and Medicare. It takes hyperactive kids and slows them down. These guys don't get screaming. Let me just mention a couple of things that, well, one, if you really want to get a hold of some information that I think is sound and solid from the professional field but fits an AA perspective.

There's a guy by the name of Stanley Gitlow, G-I-T-L-O-W, and he's an internist from New York and Ross, probably. I don't know if he has some tapes by me, he has a number of tapes that are out. Stanley Gitlow, do you have anything to add? If you know how to get in touch with Dycobi, he can tell you how to get in Dycobi. They've got Gitlow tapes. And this guy does his final job, as anybody has ever seen, of discerning that thing Don was talking about, about the sort of the false diagnosis stuff.

One thing he says in his talk about that is that he will not make a secondary diagnosis. You know, like it's so common now, when somebody goes to treatment, they get a barrel full of diagnosis when they walk in. He says he wouldn't even consider a second diagnosis until two years of sobriety because the false effects of what's happening are so misleading that you get these diagnoses that a guy has to live with for a long time.

So Gitlow is a really good source if you want some outside objective information. You can see from an AA standpoint. The other thing that to me is awfully important is for us to remember who we are. And there is a lot of tricky ground in this whole business of dealing with folks with medication. And it's just as Don said, it can be tremendously dangerous to start yanking around something in an area where it may be life-threatening to a person.

I think it's awfully important to remember who we are. There are two things that I would point out that are kind of important for me to think about. When I'm working with somebody, I want to know, or from my just layman standpoint, about the level of disability. You know, if I'm working with somebody, what I want to see is whether they can actually track what we're doing. And if they can't track what we're doing, what's the point?

And if you were there last night at the meeting and I told that kind of wild story, a very true story about the guy who came in and was so wild and nervous, and I put him to paint the wall. Because if I had tried to talk with

that guy or sit him down and get into any kind of stuff, what a waste of time. So I started with him where he was and let him work out his sort of wild and crazy gyrations. And then he settled in and became a solid AA member 25 years later, the guy still soaked.

It doesn't mean that he was a hopeless case just because he came in and zonked out of his mind. Sort of helping him work through that thing, get rid of that, and then he could go to work. And I think that's kind of important to keep in mind. If somebody is clearly out to lunch, I need to wait until somebody home before I start beating on the door. That's just plain old common sense. And the other thing is how to deal with it, what I do with my guys that I'm working with when I know that they've got prescribed medication, I set up a deal with them to negotiate with their doc about how to come off of it.

If they can, some people can't. But if they can, that's between the patient and the doc. And if I start messing around in it, what I'll do is mess it up big time. And it's an extremely, extremely dangerous ground. So one reason I think that's such an important issue, their places, like he's talking about, and they're places in this country where there's a kind of local ethic in place that if somebody's on medication, the sponsor tells them that they have to get a new sobriety date.

Well, that may not be mandating what to do about the thing, but think what pressure that puts on somebody. If you got somebody that's hanging on by an eyelash and you give them something like that, that's a dangerous place to be. I think there's some real, real reason for concern some real reason for being realistic about who we are. We're fellow alcoholics. And what we can help somebody do better than anybody in the world is to find recovery when they're in shape to be able to engage in the process.

And sometimes we have to step back and let them get through with whatever critical care they're undergoing before we can really start working with them. Doesn't mean that we can't, you know, do the best we can with them, but we just don't need to start trying to get down to some nitty-gritty work and doing four steps and all that. You know, you've got to wait a while for that. So it is a tremendously, tremendously important area that can, I have personally didn't observe the suicide, but I have personally been associated with cases where this kind of stuff got out of hand and there were actual suicides because of some kind of sloppy intrusion in something where we had no business.

So it's not niggling dime stuff. It's about people's lives. And I think we have to take it very seriously. Sometimes all we can do for long periods of time, I'm going to be checking. Just love them and accept them. One last story about medication, the last October I had some surgery. I know for a fact that when you go into the hospital you're at the mercy of well-meaning doctors. I didn't pray to be protected because I know I am protected.

Went in, the surgery went fine. It was pretty weird. I had a spinal block. I was awake and then I was asleep and then I went to sleep with my legs like this and I'm back and recovering my legs like this and I know they're there because I can see them. But in my head they're like this. That's because the last time you were in touch with them that's where they were until you feel them again. That's where they're going to stay.

Went home. It was so successful. I went on home. 2.30 in the morning they had to rush me back. I'm in bad shape. We're back in the ER. They're doing extraordinary procedures. And all of a sudden my head went, what'd you do? She said, well I just gave you a shot of morphine. Oh. So I threw up. Let's go back to extraordinary

procedures and about 20 minutes later you just gave me a shot of morphine. She said yes. I said, well you can stop, but he didn't even do any good.

Some don't get it. It's not going to have any effect. Quit. The nurses apologizing, the one I remember most, they were all lovely people. The one I remember most, though, is the one who was hurting me the worst. Saying, sweetie, I'm sorry I'm torturing you. I wanted to say, sweetie shit. Call me, sweetie. What I remember the most. He didn't mean most good. I mean, crisis. And people who are taking a shot.