

CleanTimes

October - December 2004

Serving the West Tennessee Area of Narcotics Anonymous

VRC in Chattanooga, Tennessee - November 24-28, 2004

SUGGESTIONS FOR FINDING A SPONSOR

Asking someone to be a sponsor can seem like a monumental task. When new to recovery, we sometimes feel intimidated by those that we admire. I have learned that there is nothing to lose and everything to gain by asking someone to sponsor me. I might feel uncomfortable asking a stranger for help, but it never bothered me to ask a stranger for drugs when I wanted it. Hey...the worst that can happen is someone says no.

Having a sponsor is a key ingredient to the recipe for recovery the NA way. The way we learned to get a sponsor was to go to a lot of meetings, like 90 meetings in 90 days and listen to people share.

Read these suggestions from the Sponsorship pamphlet IP #11.

*It is suggested that a sponsor be someone who has practice in working the 12 Steps and is involved in the program.

*How do u get a sponsor?

Listening is the key to finding a sponsor. The most obvious place to look for a sponsor is at NA Meetings. Talk, share, and listen to members of the program; get plenty of phone numbers and use them. When you find someone with whom you can talk openly and relate, simply ask that person to be your sponsor. Chances are the answer will be "yes".

Sometimes the person may be unable to sponsor you. Keep on trying! Remember that when one door closes, another will open. Continue to attend meetings, listen, and you will find a sponsor.

*Choose someone who has a firm grasp on the twelve suggested steps of recovery of NA, seems reasonably happy, and has the willingness to help other recovering addicts. We call people like this "winners" and it is a good idea to find your sponsor among these recovering addicts.

*When looking for sponsors, we considered their experiences in life, the quality of their clean time, their availability to us, and their willingness to help.

*It is strongly suggested that we find a sponsor of the same sex.

As far as what to ask, If you are listening in the meetings, these are the questions that will be answered when people are sharing. I personally suggest these very important questions. I have included what I consider to be a good answer to the question.

Do you have practice in working the 12 Steps of NA? (Yes)

Do you have a Narcotics Anonymous sponsor? (Yes)

Have you worked through the 12 Steps of NA with your sponsor? (Yes)

Are you involved in the program(do you do service)? (Yes)

Are you enjoying your life? (Yes)

All of these questions can be answered for you when you are listening to people share at meetings, before during and after.

I would suggest that you pick up the Sponsorship Pamphlet #11 at the next meeting you go to.

One more note; not everyone will be able to say yes, when you ask them to be a sponsor. There are many, many reasons why someone will say no. Do not take it personally. It is not a personal rejection of you. I know that when I have not been able to sponsor someone who asked me, it was because I knew I would not be able to make that kind of commitment to someone. It had nothing to do with them and everything to do with me.

There is only one way to get a sponsor...JUST ASK!

Richie

WHAT SPONSORSHIP MEANS TO ME

Jay W.

A little over six months ago, I made the decision to turn my will and my life over to my Higher Power and join Narcotics Anonymous. I was reluctant at first. I really didn't think recovery in Narcotics Anonymous would work. I had tried in the past, only to fail miserably. After coming to the rooms of NA for a couple of weeks, the message had begun to sink in. There might just be some hope for me yet. For the first time in my life, it became very clear that my life would be a whole lot better without the use of drugs and that recovery was possible.

Just after completing 90 meetings in 90 days, there seemed to be a void in my recovery process. Yes, things were beginning to turn around, but there was just something missing. It took me a few days to figure out that what I needed to fill the void was a sponsor. I procrastinated for a few weeks pondering whom I would ask to be my sponsor. It would not be an easy decision; my home group has many great recovering men from whom to choose. When it finally became very clear who I wanted as a sponsor, I froze in my tracks. I could not get up the nerve to ask this person. Although he and I have had many conversations before and after daily meetings about recovery, I just couldn't seem to ask him to be my sponsor.

My hesitation persisted on for a week or so until I finally asked him one day after a meeting. Lo and behold, he said, "Yes!" There was a catch, however. Because he was sponsoring so many others, it would be hard for him to take on another. So he agreed to be my temporary sponsor. That was good enough for me! I needed someone to give me that push into the next phase of my recovery - working the Twelve Steps.

By Narcotics Anonymous' definition, a sponsor is: someone we can trust to share our life experiences (good and bad) a person to whom we can go with our problems that may be too personal for sharing with the group. Primarily, a sponsor is a guide through the Twelve Steps of recovery. My sponsor, temporary or not, is so much more than that. He is there to remind me to keep constant contact with other recovering male addicts. He is also there to share his experience, strength and hope about real-life situations. He's not only a sponsor, but also a friend.

In the short time I have had a sponsor, he has taught me so much, not only in way of recovery, but in reality as well. With his help, I am well on my way back to becoming a productive member of society. I honestly feel that I would not have been able to stay clean this long without the help of my sponsor. For that, I thank and love him very much. A very short time ago, my sponsor gave me the OK to begin working the Twelve Steps. It is yet another journey on the road to recovery. I found out, very quickly, that I would need some serious guidance working the steps. I recall another addict saying recently "Working the steps is the world's longest homework assignment." They weren't kidding!

I've heard, in the program, that I should "stick with the winners". There is no question in my mind that my sponsor is a winner. His daily life, his commitment to his family and the program are evidence of that. With his guidance, suggestions, and persistency I, too, will be a winner! That is what Sponsorship means to me.

Trusting a sponsor - worth the risk

"A sponsor is . . . someone we can trust to share our life experiences with . . ."

IP No. 11, "Sponsorship"

THE POWER OF SPIRITUALITY

Throughout the course of my active addiction and even today in my recovery, it has become apparent that all my problems are basically caused by my inability to let go of control. As an addict I have this need to take control of any and every situation I find myself in, because my mind says, "What if my HP doesn't do it the way I want it done? What if I feel pain?" Every day in my drug use I would wake up and begin to figure out how my day would go and where I could get my next high and what I would need to say and to whom. I had all these elaborate schemes in my head, but they never seemed to go according to my plan. Instead of stopping and realizing maybe I couldn't control my life, I just kept on trying.

Finally I found Narcotics Anonymous and learned that I was powerless and my life was unmanageable when I tried to control it. The longer I stay clean the more I become aware of my desire to control certain areas of my life and once I become aware, I have the ability to let them go.

Working in the Activities Committee has taught me so much about the spiritual principles embedded in the twelve steps. It has been my experience that as long as we show up to do the footwork, everything falls into place exactly how it was supposed to.

Our committee met several times over the last month and the support and dedication we received was amazing. Even with all the planning and preparation we put in, there was still no concrete proof that everything would work out. I was once told early in my recovery that, "If it is spiritual, then it will work out." That concept proved itself true on Saturday and we ended up with one of the greatest NA events I have had the privilege of being a part of. Of course there were setbacks, such as a speaker cancellation and a small altercation over the times of the meetings, but through it all spirituality persevered. There is no doubt in my mind that a power greater than me was directing traffic yesterday and that is such an awesome, humbling experience. It reminded me that I'm not in control and it strengthened my belief that as long as I do the footwork, then I will be taken care of.

I love Narcotics Anonymous with all my heart and it takes days like Saturday to remind me of just how powerful and special this deal is. I truly believe that all things are possible in Narcotics Anonymous because spirituality can overcome any obstacle placed in its way.

Kelsey F.W.

HAVING FUN IN RECOVERY!

My first activity was a fundraiser for the Gold Coast Convention of Narcotics Anonymous. I was six days clean. I had been in Ft. Lauderdale for three days and knew absolutely no one. I was at a 6:00 meeting and afterwards this woman asked me to come with her to the event because she had someone she wanted to introduce me to.

Little did I know that this was going to be the start of my journey in Narcotics Anonymous. The guy I met that night was about my age, and had about six months clean. He took me around that night and introduced me to all the people he knew. It was a whirlwind. I felt so uncomfortable, but at the same time it felt so good to be there. There are people that I met that night, that I still know today, eight years later.

There are many things that we do in recovery. I could write all night about them and still barely touch the surface. So I will try to focus on my experience with activities.

After that first activity, I have gone to hundreds more, from convention fundraisers, to conventions, to learning days, to dances, to anniversaries, to Bar-B-Q's, to picnics, to what have you. I cannot get enough.

I was 21 when I got clean, and part of me thought that now I was going to be bored for the rest of my life, not getting high. Nothing could have been farther from the truth. I have traveled the country from coast to coast for activities in Narcotics Anonymous. At activities I have found that it is okay to cut up and enjoy myself clean. I have met many different and wonderful people. This fellowship has so much to offer and is so warm and loving, that I could not imagine going anywhere else. I have made relationships here that I always wanted, but could never sustain. I have history with people in these rooms and I know that I belong.

There was so much misery in my life using and life on life's terms is not always a pleasant hayride through the countryside, without activities I would miss out on the lighter side of life.

One of my favorite activities that I have attended was the kickball tournament earlier this year. It was so fun getting out there and being a kid again. Also I am a little competitive, and so I enjoy games like that. It was pretty amazing to see a bunch of grown folks out there kicking a ball around and cheering and trash-talking each other. It is stuff like that that warms my heart and reminds me that life is something to enjoy, not survive. Activities also provide an indispensable function, they help to build unity. When addicts from all over the area or region or world can come together and meet and talk and live recovery, our fellowship grows and in turn so do I.

My recovery depends on you guys, I need you in my life, not just in my home group. Supporting activities is key in an area if it is to flourish; newcomers need to see us enjoying life, just like I did when I got here.

ILS,
Jason E.

NEW MEETINGS ON THE BLOCK

A LONG TIME COMIN'

About a year ago, another addict and I were discussing the need for a new meeting in the Midtown area. We decided this based on the fact that when I got clean, there were several in this area that have since disbanded for one reason or another. Plus, we are both lazy and wanted one that was close to us both. So, it was decided that we would begin the quest for a place to hold a meeting somewhere in Midtown.

Between the two of us, we probably called about twelve churches with no luck. The night we chose was a Thursday night. Most churches we contacted did not have anyone there to let us in, no rooms available, etc., etc. Then we heard through the grapevine, that someone was already starting a meeting in Midtown on that very night. Though it would not be as good of a meeting as one WE would start, it would do. So the idea of opening a new meeting was put on hold.

Well, several months later, this same addict and I, plus a couple more addicts decided that we still needed more meetings in the Midtown area. This time, however, we decided upon Saturday night. We picked a format, a time, and rounded up some people who were interested in supporting the birth of this new meeting. Now, all we needed was a place to have it!

It was March of this year when we began the search. Again, we called church after church to no avail. We were beginning to think that maybe it was our will, not God's, that inspired this quest and maybe it was time to give up. Then, an addict suggested this church that was near his house. (How convenient!) So I gave them a call.

After getting in touch with this gentleman who was "in charge", I was under the impression that we were in like Flynn. Then, he told me that to let us meet there he would have to take our proposal to the board of directors. What? I was beginning to wonder whether this was going to happen after all.

All we could do at this point was wait and see what was going to happen. After all, if it's God's will, then there is nothing to worry about. And so it was! Almost a month later, we got the good news! It was now almost May, and things were finally under way.

The meeting is called Keep It Green, and it meets every Saturday night from 7 - 8 pm at the Trinity United Methodist Church Office building. The building is located on the Northeast corner of Evergreen and Galloway and the meeting is on the second floor. It is about a block west of the Memphis Zoo. As of right now, this meeting is not handicap accessible.

Our format is speaker/discussion. We try to have a speaker at least two out of the four or five weeks each month. Lately, we have had people share their experience, strength, and hope on working the steps. We are currently on 6 and 7, and will continue on through 12 from now until September. There have been many personal stories and other topics shared as well. Plus, some great discussion following the speakers. It is really a breath of fresh air to the Memphis area.

We are grateful to the many addicts who have attended this meeting and do so on a regular basis. I would like to also thank the Outreach committee for their warm welcome last month. It would be really nice, though, to see some more faces around. Our regular attendance is usually around 15 addicts. Personally, I feel that there is a lot of excellent experience being shared every week and it would be nice if more people were there to benefit from it. However, NA has really grown in Memphis, which means there are usually several meetings to choose from every night. I can't complain about that!

If you or someone you know is willing to speak either on a topic or their story or if you have a topic you would like to hear about, fee free to contact me at 210-9699. I'm Jeremy and I'm an addict.

WELCOME TO THE RIPLEY RELIEF GROUP OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

The Ripley Relief Group of Narcotics Anonymous invites you to join us. We are a newly formed group of NA located in Ripley, TN. We welcome the idea of being joined by fellow addicts from West Tennessee looking to share their experience, strength, and hope. We have formed this group with the idea that, "Traditions guide and Steps save lives". We realize that without each other we would have to trudge the road of recovery alone.

So come and join us on Tuesday nights at 8:00 PM anytime you can. We need all your support and love. This is where you old-timers could be of great service. So, once again we invite you to come share your experience, strength and hope with all of us. And if nothing else, we make great coffee!

Thank you,
Ripley Relief

.....
If you have a group you would like showcased in the Cleantimes Newsletter, or have an article, cartoon, poetry, or whatever sharing experience, strength and hope, please contact me, Connie G., 266-2430 or at kateyesldy@hotmail.com.

Birthdays and Anniversaries

October

D.H.F. 4th Group Anniversary - 10/8
Mike G. - 10/4 - 14 Years - Lunch Bunch
Stacy S. - 10/7 - 1 Year - Lunch Bunch
Scott B. - 10/11 - 1 Year - New Beginnings
Karl J. - 10/12 - 12 Years - Lunch Bunch
Dave L. - 10/14 - 1 Year - Lunch Bunch
T.J. - 10/21 - 2 Years - Clean A.I.R. of Jackson

November

Miki F. - 11/04 - 3 Years - Lunch Bunch
Johnnie D. - 11/15 - 7 Years - New Beginnings
Calvin G. - 11/22 - 11 Years - Clean A.I.R. of Memphis
D'etta C. - 11/22 - 9 Years - New Beginnings
Connie G. - 11/30 - 2 Years - Desire

December

Paul L. - 12/5 - 1 Year - Lunch Bunch
Carol S. - 12/10 - 1 Year - Desire
Debbie B. - 12/22 - 13 Years - Desire
Tony T. - 12/25 - 7 Years - Lunch Bunch
Jeffrey R. - 12/26 - 2 Years - Solutions
Drew M. - 12/28 - 9 Years - D.H.F.
Philip W. - 12/30 - 1 Year - Lunch Bunch

Editors Note: I apologize if your birthday has been omitted. Please get with your GSR of your Home Group and have them contact me, Connie G. - 266-2430 or at kateyesldy@hotmail.com for the next issue. Please note these are actual clean dates and birthdays may be celebrated on a different day. Listen for announcements in meetings for exact date of celebration.

SOLUTIONS GROUP

Potluck

Sunday - October 3, 2004

Potluck 4:00 - 5:00

Meeting to follow at 6:00

3867 Summer Ave. - St. Michael's Church *(in the cafeteria)*

Don't Forget!

Lunch with the Bunch

every 3rd Sunday at the Lunch Bunch
258 Merton

Everett Memorial United Methodist Church

**Don't miss out!
Come be a part of!**

XXII VRC

(Volunteer Regional Convention)

Chattanooga, TN

November 24-28, 2004

Marriott Hotel
Chattanooga, Tennessee

Right Down the Road

MRCNA

(Mississippi Regional Convention)

Tupelo, MS

October 15-17, 2004

Executive Inn
Tupelo, Mississippi