

Guidelines for Recovery Partners

- 1) Partners provide a non-threatening system of mutual accountability. For example, a partner can agree to call the other for support and prayer in abstaining from a harmful habit.

"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." JAMES 5:14-16

- 2) Partners minister to each other's specific area of need with directed prayer each time they meet. Openly sharing thoughts and feelings helps to clarify needs in problem areas. This also contributes to being freed from the past to live honestly in the present with realistic expectations.

"Pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." 1 THESSALONIANS 5:17 (NIV)

- 3) Partners encourage one another to progress from a state of physical, emotional and spiritual sickness to wholeness of life. Discomfort often takes place when unhealthy familiar behaviors are being transformed into new and healthy ones as we seek to do God's will.

"...consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." HEBREWS 10:24 (NIV)

- 4) Partners aid one another in applying biblical truths to personal and relationship needs. When partners openly share their faults with one another, honesty, trust, and healing occur. This also means we can quote scripture to exemplify an experience.

"Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'" JOHN 8:31-32 (NIV)

Mutual Agreement Between Recovery Partners

A key part in establishing a relationship with a "recovery partner" is to reach an agreement on how the partners want to interact with one another.

The agreement can establish:

- what the expectations are between one another.
- the period of time in which the agreement will be in effect.
- specified times to evaluate the quality of the relationship.
- an understanding of how the relationship and/or agreement can be terminated.

The agreement is intended to encourage the partners to make a sincere effort to:

- 1) Focus on the Twelve Steps and scripture as a tool to enhance one's relationship with God and others.

Moving at one's own pace is important. At times there may need to be encouragement or confrontation when one has quit working the Steps. If a partner is unavailable or can't answer a question, seek out another twelve-step person to assist in understanding how they use this discipline in their recovery.

- 2) Be available for phone calls or meeting in person.

A key to success in recovery is making and keeping commitments. Having someone committed to being available may be something new and is an important part of honestly confronting discomfort. Willingness to ask for or offer support and encouragement helps to achieve healing and wholeness.

- 3) Share my true feelings with my "recovery partner."

Rigorous honesty is important when sharing feelings. Feelings require acknowledgement and appropriate expression without their being judged right or wrong. Selective disclosure when talking about feelings creates doubt between partners. Telling the truth by clearly identifying and sharing one's feelings supports healing.

- 4) Refrain from giving lengthy explanations when sharing.

Sharing is not intended to be a lengthy or dramatic recreation of personal stories. Referring to journal notes or workbook writing keeps the focus on the subject being shared and helps to avoid "intellectualizing" when sharing.

- 5) Spend a minimum of 15 minutes each day reading scripture, praying and meditating, including prayer for your recovery partner.

Prayer is talking to God, meditation is listening to God. Spending time in prayer and meditation can be a vital part of the recovery process. This is a spiritual program founded upon seeking to know God's will and experiencing His grace.

- 6) Respect confidentiality by refraining from disclosing information about my "recovery partner."

The effectiveness of this program is largely based on trust. Fear of gossip may prevent some people from honestly sharing the pain of their lives. Healing will be hindered unless there is trust that personal matters will remain confidential.

- 7) Accept some degree of discomfort as part of the healing process.

Some meetings may be painful when memories of certain events or hurtful feelings are recalled. It is important to have a "recovery partner" available to show compassion and be supportive as we confront painful issues. During the early stages of recovery it is advisable to accept discomfort and not be distracted by entering into new intimate sexual relationships.

- 8) Support my "recovery partner" by listening attentively and giving him/her my undivided attention.

Listening attentively and asking questions enables one to explore the options and possible courses of action. This can strengthen one another's ability to make healthy choices that foster suitable outcomes. This program does not include a plan to fix others and give unsolicited advice.

- 9) Be kind to myself by accepting personal progress rather than perfection on this journey toward wholeness and seeking God's will.

Recovery is a personal spiritual journey that is enriched by our personal relationship with God. Progress is not

measured by the standards of others. Accepting progress rather than perfection can increase self-esteem by allowing mistakes to happen as part of growing.

10) Not to overly spiritualize my sharing.

Partners are not spiritual directors to each other, or a source of advice which is more appropriately handled by clergy or a professional therapist. Use examples of how God is working without excessive emphasis on scripture. Keep the focus on one's own life as a way to illustrate how God's will is being done. This concept supports God's desire to relate to us on a deeply personal basis.

11) Focus on the Twelve Steps as a tool to enhance one's relationship with God and others.

At times there may need to be encouragement or confrontation when one has quit working the Steps. If a partner is unavailable or can't answer a question, seek out another twelve-step fellow traveler to assist in understanding how they use this discipline in their recovery. It is inappropriate to impose personal views on one's "recovery partner," particularly regarding one's relationship with God.

Final Thoughts

Being accepting of our "recovery partner" or others does not mean accepting addictive behavior slips or the rationalizations that follow. Being able to lovingly detach means not taking the behavior breakdown as a personal affront—that one has somehow failed the recovery partner.

Partners are not responsible for each other; their responsibility is to listen and respond from their own experience, strength and hope. Being heard by a trusted person helps us to work through the decision-making process.

Having a "recovery partner" may be a way to experience the unconditional love of God for the first time. A sample of a Mutual Agreement Between Recovery Partners can be found in the Appendix 2.

**Sample of
Mutual Agreement Between Recovery Partners**

I, _____, agree to enter into a Recovery Partner agreement with _____, as a way to be supported and held accountable in dealing with behaviors that keep me from the best God has for me. I am seeking recovery from these ineffective patterns of behavior so that I may become more fully connected to God, others and myself.

I will make a sincere effort to:

1. Focus on the Twelve Steps and scripture as a tool to enhance my relationship with God and others.
2. Be available by phone or to meet in person.
3. Share my true feelings with my "recovery partner."
4. Refrain from giving lengthy explanations when sharing.
5. Complete the homework assignment each week.
6. Spend a minimum of 15 minutes each day reading scripture, praying and meditating, including specific prayer for my recovery partner.
7. Respect confidentiality by refraining from disclosing information about my "recovery partner."
8. Accept some degree of discomfort as part of the healing process.
9. Support my "recovery partner" by listening attentively and giving him/her my undivided attention.
10. Be kind to myself by accepting personal progress rather than perfection on my journey toward wholeness and seeking God's will.
11. Not to overly spiritualize my sharing.

The term of this agreement is from _____ to _____.

We agree to meet _____ (weekly, monthly, etc.) and spend time reviewing the progress and compatibility of this relationship. If, for any reason, either partner feels this relationship does not serve his/her recovery needs, notifying the other partner can terminate the agreement.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

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