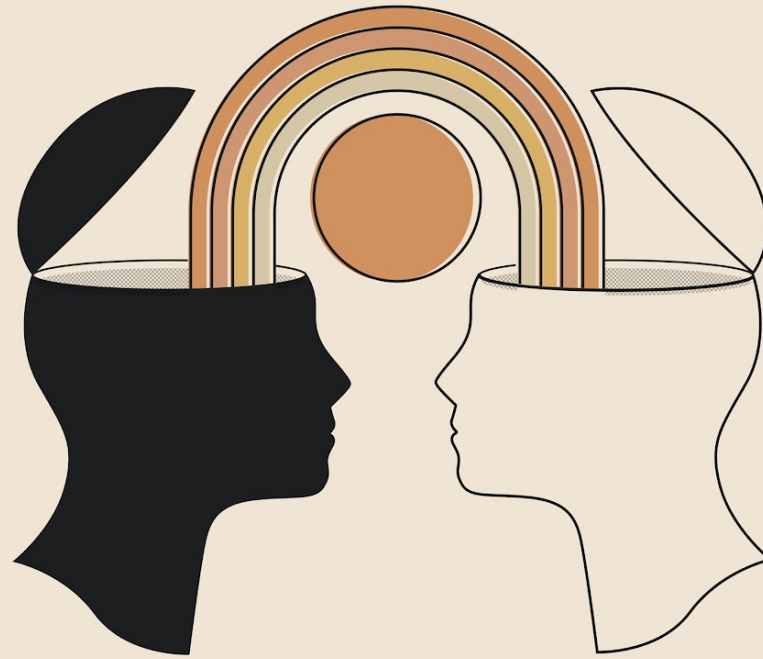


THE DAILY REPRIEVE
NEWSLETTER
APR/MAY 2023

An ode to my **Sponsor**



Welcome to the latest edition of the Daily Reprieve

As we navigate the journey of recovery through the 12 steps, we often find ourselves facing immense challenges that might take us to a drink. However, we can count ourselves lucky and blessed to have one invaluable support that can make all the difference - our sponsors.

These are the folks who have walked the path before us and have committed themselves to keep what they have, by giving it to us. They lend a listening ear, offer their experience, strength and hope and keep us from going back to the bottle (or sometimes even jail! lol!)

In this edition, we wanted to take a moment to express our gratitude to our sponsors through poetry, letters and odes.

So, to all the sponsors out there - a massive thank you!

Till next time,
The Singapore Newsletter Team

Thank you to my sponsor!

What I thank my sponsor most for is how she guided my alcoholic mind towards the steps. Whenever I am stuck in a situation she would encourage me to get it out on voice clips that I had to send to her. Unsensored, all of it, raw.

The purpose was not so much to have an immediate 1/1 intervention with my sponsor (sometimes yes, but not always). She would also ask me to attend a meeting that day, call a fellow & ask how they are (focus on them, no me) and lastly, listen to my voice clips again the day later.

This whole process - especially listening to the voice clips a day later - is very helpful. I often don't see the whole situation for what it is, but the day after I can assess the situation differently. Connecting with others on the day itself helps me getting out of my mind.

This whole voice clip process helped me so much to transition from being stuck to doing stepwork and eventually shift my thinking. Tina, I am grateful for how you guided me in this process. I had no idea what result you wanted and it didn't matter. I did blindly what you asked and the action led to great results.

~ *Tanja, alcoholic, 9 months sober*

Monday morning in an MRT station

Monday morning in an MRT station. Three months, of, "one day at a time". Sober.

Fear is overtaking my physical presence in a subtle way, with trembling hands and weakened legs. My mental state is on overdrive, consisting mainly of WHAT IF'S... Heading quickly toward the "Fack-it" button. A very familiar feeling to me called a drink. Its 10am prime time for the first drink of the day. In fact it is a little late by 90 days and a couple minutes.

I hear in the rooms to pick up the phone when you want a drink. Take down some numbers it could save your life.

Well, guess what—innermostself—it is exactly that time. It is, *my stood at the turning point*, time! Heading to my first job, since getting sober. Mind you, only becoming available as a direct result of my becoming sober. It's been a while for this newbie feeling on a variety of fronts.

I cannot move frozen with fear.
Pick up the phone or pick up a drink.

I wasn't thinking of my kids or wife or anything that was leaving when I reached my bottom, again.

The time now was my time between step 3 and step 4. Higher Power and self was in this frame of space, and the whale of alot of drinking hours.

I reach for my phone I dial some numbers. Three numbers to be exact. A couple of gentlemen that I met in the program previously, having chatted over coffee after meetings. One of them picked up. I

babbled about what was happening, "whoa whoa slow down catch your breath, it's gonna be OK if you don't pick up a drink. Just don't drink." That's what I remember of that phone conversation. Click.

The third number I called was what I referred to as my "friend in the program" due at the time to my inability to accept help from some one else at that time. The true flexibility of the program kicked in. "Have an open mind, be willing", call it what ever you need to but just don't drink. To become known as my sponsor.

He answers and knows by my stuttering voice that I'm not in a good space. His first question was, "did you drink yet?" My reply was, "no, not yet and I don't want to." "Good what's up?", I explained my circumstances going to work, mind you I have 20+ years in this field but not exactly - my previous expertise will not help with making this particular item (<pizza\$) and it is all hands on.

He calms me down by telling me to sit down and take some deep breaths. Do it while I'm on the phone now. You called for a reason this is what we are going to do.

Write down the 5 worst things that could happen to you in any of the situations that may arise today. Do it now. I remember him mentioning this is a program of action. As I finish reading off the last one, "now how is a drink going to help with any of this?"

My mind starting slowing down my hands were less shaky. I stepped in to the light and felt the wonderful sunshine illuminate every dark corner of my fears. I still have fears I continue to make mistakes. Without a drink I have a Choice and Hope.
~KC



A word from my sponsor...

When I came into the fellowship in the year dot (1987), after many failed attempts I finally realised the program actually had a working format and I could not pick and choose the parts I felt comfortable with. The many re-starts were proof enough.

I finally arrived at a primarily gay group called "The Living Sober Group" and for the first time among the many attempts I started to feel comfortable in A.A. It was at this group I found Andre V. He was one year sober at the time and after hearing his "story" at one of the meetings I knew I had found somebody I could talk to and duly asked him to be my sponsor. He hesitated at the task but sought the advice of his sponsor who was the founding member of the group, Peter M. Peter thought I was a good "project" as it were for Andre and we duly got together.

As individuals Andre and I could not have been more opposite if we tried. Our backgrounds were more than different and it was a huge learning curve for me. Understand at the time I was somewhat full of myself and very self-absorbed (all these years and it lingers on in many aspects) yet it was this strange man who was able to see straight through me and get me face to face with myself. I mean that literally, as we would often sit and talk using mirrors (sounds weird, but try it sometime!).

As I mentioned Andre had been just over a year sober, from living on a park bench and using a string around his hand and neck so he could raise the bottle to his lips as he shook too much to use hands only. A year later he was taking me on as my sponsor!

Circumstances at the time benefited us both and in a very short period we were sharing a small house together (as friends, please note).

I had never really managed more than a month sober and then would drink again. Andre navigated me to getting the elusive 1 year of sobriety. It was a very tough year for me and I am sure there must have been times when Andre wanted to box my ears but he remained patient, kind and tolerant. I will never forget him giving me that 1st year chip. Thereafter we remained lifelong friends and shared several homes together over the years but most of all this program on so many levels, we both found so many answers to so many things from so many people and many many meetings.

Sadly, Andre passed away in 2004 but I still take everything to him in prayer and meditation.

When I see and witness the miracles in this very group I still thank Andre V my life sponsor.

Regards, Terrance D.

I prayed for a new sponsor.

I had been on the dentist model of sponsorship for nine years. As in: the dentist isn't going to chase you down and clean your teeth. You've got to make an appointment.

But when my brother died from the disease of alcoholism in April 2022, all of my resistance to a spiritual awakening was suddenly gone. It was time to work a different sort of program. A deeper one. A more rigorous one. It would become part of my grief; it would be one way to love him.

Mirabai Starr wrote of the grace of grief after her 14-year-old daughter was killed in an accident:

I wanted to offer Jenny the gift of my commitment to accompany her on her journey away from me, even if to do so simply meant dedicating my heartbeat and my breath to her and paying attention.

I did not engage in this practice to prove something to myself or anyone else. I was not interested in flexing my spiritual muscles. I did it for Jenny. My willingness to stay present through this process was an act of devotion.

A devotional practice of paying attention to the moment-to-moment experience of my grief is the most sober challenge I've ever undertaken. Not because the pain brought me toward a drink, but rather because my addiction had once brought me close to death, and now my brother's death would bring me closer to God.

But I would need some help.

I found Katy in a beautifully implausible way. I shared in my favorite online meeting — The All-Inclusive Meeting in Los Angeles — that I was searching for a new kind of sponsorship. I said, "I've done the hokey-pokey with AA for years, moving into the center and then back out to the periphery. I wondered for so long if AA was for me. But now the question is: can I be for AA?"

A wonderful man named Spencer from that meeting gave my phone number to Debbie D, an absolutely delightful woman with 47 years in sobriety and a gorgeous Traditions Workshop speaker tape series that I highly recommend. She called and said "I'll totally be your sponsor, but I want to give my ladies a chance first."

Give someone else a chance? A chance to sponsor me?

This reversal of roles caught me off guard. Wouldn't I be the one getting the chance? Debbie's reframing of sponsorship was my first clue that I was stepping into a legacy of service completely different from what I was used to, and exactly what I needed.

One by one, four of Debbie's sponsees called me that week. Their experiences floored me, and their compassion humbled me. They knew nothing about me and yet were willing to reach across time zones — and generations — to connect.

In my first conversation with Katy she talked about trauma, and about losing family members to our disease. She had the energetic signature of an auntie, and more than 30 years of sobriety in AA. She told me "I don't sponsor sponsees. I sponsor sponsors."

Our work together has been methodical and holy.

It reminds me of an illuminating description of the Way of Taoism: It's not the river itself; it's the watercourse. It's the riverbed. That's the Way. And what flows through the Way is sometimes turbulent and sometimes placid; moving sometimes quickly and sometimes slowly. Katy is part of the river of my life now, and together we're traveling the Way.

I am working a program for my brother as a gesture of surrender to God's reality. I believe the opposite of self-centeredness is God-centeredness. I live in a world — in a body and in a lifetime — I cannot control. What greater gift to my baby brother than to allow myself to travel the Way with grace and courage.

All of us are just collaborators in one another's stories, and that includes our loved ones on the other side, our higher powers, our sponsors, our sober siblings, our ancestors, and authors and mystics we'll never meet but who have changed us.

Once a month Debbie D's sponsor holds a private online meeting, just for her sponsees, and their sponsees, and theirs. It's a huge group of women and men all over the world, representing countless heartbreaks and losses and triumphs and immeasurable wisdom.

Last year I lost the member of my family I was closest to, and absolutely nothing will ever make that okay. But stepping into Katy's guidance and her legacy of sponsorship has felt like joining a new family.

It's a legacy of hope and strength that someday I'll get to invite someone new into.

~Kel

The quote is from Mirabai Starr's book Caravan of No Despair

Here's a link to the LA All-Inclusive Meeting:

<https://lacoaa.org/meeting-details.php?id=12578>



Gratitude In Action

“But apart from taking me through the AA 12 steps, guiding me through good or bad times, coaching me on service, listening to my spot check inventories and been loving, kind and tolerant, what has my sponsor ever done for me?”...

I have had three sponsors in AA. All of my sponsors have guided me with an attitude of gratitude.

My first sponsor, Frank G - within my first week or so of sobriety, I bumped into him when picking my kids up from school. He recognised me from my first meeting. He asked me if I had a sponsor and offered to be my temporary sponsor until I found a sponsor. This was like showing a lifeline to a drowning man. He used to spend quite a bit of time teaching me about gratitude. He was there to support me when my previous marriage fell apart, during sobriety. And, then shortly afterwards, he was there for me when my mother passed away. I learned many lessons from Frank. I remember a time when I had picked up a big resentment over nothing with another guy in the fellowship. The irony is the resentment was with the guy that 12th stepped me and took me to my first meeting, who had, in essence, saved my life. I was away in Germany and I was calling Frank and I went to tell him about the resentment and he cut me short and said, “I don't care who is right or wrong, but, is this resentment you are carrying bringing you closer to a drink?” That really helped me to open my eyes and see where I had been at fault.

My second sponsor, James M - I was in my first few months of sobriety in Dubai and he basically ambushed me and became my sponsor one afternoon when he had just asked me to come over and read step 4 with him in the big book. He gave me a deadline of two weeks to complete the step before taking step 5. He impressed on me the importance of writing down my “toe curlers” and that I would need to share these when we did step 5. I really needed that nudge to get me going. When we went through my inventory, he made sure that we

went through my “toe curlers”. And, after taking step 5 with him, I experienced the step 5 promises.

My third and current sponsor, Jonathan D - I actually asked Jonathan to sponsor me when I moved to Singapore, instead of my first two sponsors that had approached me. I am always amazed at his dedication to service and working with other alcoholic. Jonathan has guided me through various challenges with my ex-wife, my kids, job and health. He has such an attitude of gratitude. Some years ago, I needed to have knee surgery. I had to stay in the hospital overnight. The next day, Jonathan insisted on coming to see me and escort me home. When he saw my lack of mobility, he instantly bought a wheelchair for me at the hospital. We have spent many hours with pen and paper. I am forever grateful for his wisdom and his time.

I have learned that the best way for me to demonstrate my gratitude for my sponsors is to pay it forward and work with other alcoholics and try and give them some of the love, patience, tolerance and kindness that I have received in bounds from these loving gentlemen.

Here are a few quotes from my sponsors that I always remember:

Frank G - If by 9am you meet 3 assholes, best to check in the mirror.

Frank G - The thing with opinions, they are like assholes, everyone's got one.

James M - Don't be a douchebag and help others.

Jonathan D - I am glad I'm in the lifeboat.

Jonathan D - Many meetings, many chances; few meetings, few chances; no meetings, no chances.

Jonathan D - I can't get full on yesterday's hamburger.

~ Simon A

Ode To My Sponsor

My fourth step was like a bundle of tangled up yarn, confusing and disorganised. In doing the fifth step over many months with my sponsor, we began to unravel it. Through his clear thinking and experience in the program, he was able to pinpoint areas I wasn't able to see. Quite often I was encouraged to look deeper. Sometimes seeing my part was really uncomfortable, but the pain only hurt for a few moments and was then followed by the serenity that comes when we cease fighting, and start to accept responsibility. He knew that unless we did a thorough fourth and fifth step, the Promises wouldn't come and I risked drinking again.

One of the more profound discoveries was when we came to a family member with whom I've had a very challenging relationship. This most certainly had to do, partly, if not largely, with her own nature of which I cannot change. My resentment toward her could have easily been passed over as just normal rivalry within a family as it wasn't easy to convey the significance of it in my writing, but he was able to pick up on the weight of it, recognising the feeling from his own experience. Having another human being relate to this, something I thought was an obscure dysfunction unique to my own family, brought a deep sense of spiritual connection. It was a higher power moment and I knew I wasn't alone, that someone understood.

I am so grateful to my sponsor for his guidance through the steps and I continue to pay it forward when helping others. Thank God for this program and for my sponsor!

~Margaret

Testimonial of appreciation to Jeremy, my sponsor

Journeying with Jeremy has totally changed my life!

Before I started journeying with him, I was addicted to alcohol and benzos. He pushed me gently towards admitting I was powerless against my addictions and I needed my higher power God to heal and help me. His daily reminders and coffee chats remind me that my life is worth living and there is so much more in store for me if I work the program.

Having been diagnosed as bipolar type 2 in 2018, I've had 3 admissions in the last 6 months and AA has really convinced me that recovery is a struggle but that we don't have to fight it alone.

Thanks Jeremy and the rest of the Boat Quay gang for journeying with me as I aim to hit my 60 days sober mark soon!

~Gerard

How my sponsor helped me get sober.

It has been 90 days since I achieved sobriety and clarity. After a relapse, I came into the rooms as an emotional wreck. I was afraid, shy, and shrinking into myself, not knowing how to control these waves of emotions.

I started drinking much later in life while in university. It helped me fit in so easily. I could be the mad one, the funny one. As years went by, I needed to climb greater highs to avoid the pain of existence. Soon the craziness could not quieten the desperation in me. I was living for others but with bitterness and resentments. Nothing could fill the hole in my soul. There was a glaring question that always echoed within me at all times - "Is this all there is to life?" I was constantly swinging between extreme pleasure and pain, resulting in suffering and destruction.

I had always done what was expected of me - study well, get into a good college, marry the right boy. I had this deep desire not to disappoint my parents, yet I rebelled. As a child of South Asian parents, we always lived double lives - the perfect daughter and the bohemian rebel. These two clashing voices created a toxic cocktail of shame, guilt, and resentments. I had an arranged marriage because I couldn't fight my parents, two kids, dream house with perfect decor, but inside, I was dying. I couldn't shop, date, drink, or eat away my sadness. A few good moments of acceptance and validation followed by disappointment and longing. I couldn't sleep, and each morning I woke up, I was filled with dread of how I'm going to get through the next 24 hours.

After years of wallowing in self-pity and loathing, at the onset of separation, divorce, and thoughts of suicide, I finally received my gift of rock bottom and powerlessness.

Through some strange set of events, I came into the room last September. I immediately felt a sense of belonging that was missing all my life. What impressed me most was the honesty and vulnerability. I then found my sponsor and started my 12 steps. I desperately needed a solution, and someone was willing to give it to me, so I grabbed it with both hands. There were those cycles of "I'm not a religious person!", "I want to give up!" to "Wow! The sun is shining! Birds are chirping!"

My sponsor held my hand through all of this. Calm, wise, egging me on, instilling patience, urging me to keep going until I reach the solution. I remember my skepticism when I read the promises. Can I really recover from years of pain and trauma? Somehow we made it to step 4. By then, I had accepted that I was addicted to pain and suffering, and peace didn't suit me. I had given up control of my life and gave it to my concept of a higher power - a fatherly, forgiving, protective figure.

And then something changed. We did step 4, 5, 6, 7 over 24 hours. I wrote down all the weights of resentment I had been carrying all my life, secretly hoping it would teach them a lesson. Boy was I in for a surprise! I hadn't realized how badly these dark clouds had blocked the light I could receive from God. We have never been taught how to deal with life's challenges and manage relationships. How to live for the soul, authentically, free from fears and judgments.

I'm not sure if it was the exhaustion of marinating in my negative resentments or the lack of sleep, but I finally heard God's voice for the first time when my sponsor asked how God would have me be, free from fears? It spoke to me. That clear voice of reason, free from ego and stupidity. The divine was within me all this time. It was a different feeling. I felt cleansed, light and floaty as a cloud. Like the light was finally shining in me. Seeing my part in my resentments was revolutionary. It gave me freedom from being the

victim of circumstances and misunderstanding. It gave me the key back to my happiness. I was suddenly attracting peace and stability. I wasn't struggling against the stream of life, I was floating while watching the stars and clouds above me.

I always wondered what I would do with all this extra time, now that I'm not exhausted from the drama and abuse of my body. All that time magically magnetised God to me. Creativity shone through me. I suddenly became constructive, I had a full day, free from stress because I know my Higher Power has the steering wheel. Eventually I had enough light to share with others. I thought about others and not in a self-seeking way. I saw the serenity my sponsor had and wanted to replicate that in my life. I want to thank her for selflessly giving me this gift. God is in us, in each and every divine being. If we can only let the light in, connect and magnify it to let it shine in our communities and families.

I only have gratitude to my higher power and my sponsor for making me trust in something bigger than myself, the magic of the universe, once again. To be Reborn! What glorious joy!

~Haz

An ode to my sponsor

When I joined AA, I had no intention of staying in the program. I just wanted to see what it entailed and return back to my binge drinking lifestyle.

After my second meeting, my now sponsor approached me and asked if I wanted her as my sponsor. I was apprehensive as I wanted to sit on the outskirts of AA and wasn't ready to get involved. I said yes thinking "what have I got to lose" but didn't want to start with step work right away. After a month I finally got around to starting step work. Over the weeks and months, my sponsor and I were baffled at how many similarities we shared in our story. I thought I was alone in the way I behaved and the traumas I had experienced but by her sharing her experience I was able to feel better about myself. I had never met someone so alike me in terms of how we operated.

I knew this couldn't be serendipity alone and that there is something so profound about this shared experience. This affirmed to me that I am in the right place and path, and to keep going.

I haven't looked back since that day and I am so glad that my sponsor made me understand myself better so I can be sober today.

~Sim

My first sponsor

I am Alvin, a hapless but grateful junkie and potential alcoholic (if I imbibe once more, I reckoned).

I could not stopped using drugs for more than 3 and a half weeks even when attending daily one 12 steps meeting until I started attending AA (alongside one other A's meetings and working the first of the 4 steps with a sponsor from AA, of whom I am forever beholden to. I think I am her first NA sponsee.0

With weekly an hour meetings in person or in zoom and texting and calls almost everyday, I had achieved the longest sobriety from methamphetamine iv ;- 3 months and a few days. I have had also averted developing a poly addiction to alcohol while trying to do the steps with her.

d

Her name will also be a fragrance in my heart. 🌹

~Alvin



My sponsor

She's really nothing like me, I thought
We have nothing in common, I thought
She didn't drink like me,
Or do the things I did.
She's got a husband and children, I don't.
She'll never understand me.

She is kind, calm and together though...
Maybe she can help me get like that too?
She's told me, in no uncertain terms, what I need to do.
I've nothing to lose....I want what she has.

6+ years later and I'm still sober
I'm calmer, kinder and more together than I've ever been.
I've benefitted directly from this wonderful woman's recovery and from her sponsor before her.
Our relationship has blossomed and she is now both sponsor and true friend.

You see I only saw the differences whereas she saw the similarities.
She practiced step 12 and I benefitted directly and have been able to help many women myself since, and so it goes on.
What a gift she is.
I'm truly grateful.

~Tina

My Sponsor

While I wouldn't want to compare my sponsor to a bat, he has an exceptional ability to listen. He asks me how I'm doing. I start off by telling him I'm doing great and tell him what I've been up to. He keeps listening. Then I tell him how I'm really doing. He listens and then listens some more. When I finally come to a halt, he asks some questions that show he's really been listening. Only when I've answered them does he start to offer an opinion.

First of all, he has an unerring ability to shift my perspective. He takes what I have told him and looks at the story and the thinking behind it (typically a combination of egotism, anxiety and self-pity) from a completely different angle. He shows me where I have embraced ideas that simply aren't true. He takes what I thought were catastrophic failures and helps me see them in their true proportions. By being loving and patient, he is teaching me to be loving and patient with myself, which are not exactly my strong points.

Just as importantly, he's also willing to challenge me. I complain that I don't have a sponsee; he asks me if I'm offering to be a sponsor in meetings. I say I don't know many other alcoholics; he asks me if I'm calling the ones I do know. Whenever I try and hide from the programme and avoid engaging with fellows – which is a lot – he calls me back. Isolating is one of my biggest defects of character, and I'm grateful that he doesn't let me get away with it, no matter how hard I try.

Whether he's being kind when I can't be kind to myself, or calling me out when I'm dodging the need to take action, what comes through is the man's passion for recovery. It's working wonders in his life, as well as mine when I let it. He really wants it. And I want what he has. So I think I'll keep him on as my sponsor.

~Adam H

My Ode to Sponsor

Dear, dearer, dearest Angela,

You are an absolute darling, love and honey
For all the love and support you've given me
Through the shitty struggles I had to face
You're always there, with your steady embrace

When I was face down, you lifted me up
When I doubted myself, your belief in me would never stop
You held my hand and guided me from one to twelve
Especially in step four, where I had to deeply delve

Your love, wisdom and sometimes not-so-gentle ways,
Helped me grow stronger, each and every day
You taught me to be honest and face my fears
One step at a time and dry my tears

Without you by my side, I would not have made it this far
You're a guiding light, a superstar
You always give me hope and showed me who I truly am
Thank you for truly living this program

You will always have a huge, special place in my heart
Thank you for being my rock, my guide and my start.

~ Adrian