



NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SERVICE ORGANIZATION OF COSA

Spring March ~ April **DOUBLE ISSUE** Pre-Convention May ~ June '07

My TOOLS for Sponsor and Sponsee

By Jackie F.

Sponsorship is a gift I give to myself. More than anything else I do, it keeps me focused on my personal recovery journey.

I have found it is a much more productive experience if we discuss expectations and agree up front on the ground rules. We renegotiate these as we find it necessary.

The following describe the process that I use with any potential sponsee. My style is a blend of my experience with the two sponsors I have worked under with my own twist. Other sponsors will have their own way of operating and every sponsor/sponsee relationship is unique.

I ask these questions when I am considering whether to work with someone:

Why do you want to work with me? (I frequently ask them to write me a letter telling me why they want to work with me and how hard they are willing to work— sometimes what they say clues me into their insecurities and lets me address any unreal expectations they might have of me)

What do you want/need to learn? (can they tell you why they want to work the steps— and what areas they think they need the most help with)

How do you learn best? (some learn well from reading while others learn best orally— they will HAVE to do some reading/study)

How much time are you willing to devote to working the steps? (some will need a longer period of time to finish because they have work and family obligations— if they don't seem REAL committed, I will pass)

struggling with? (I need to determine if I might be able to work with them— some addictions would pose a problem for me, ex. Chemical addictions, gambling)

How often can you meet in person? (I prefer weekly but sometimes meet every two weeks depending on the work schedule of the individuals— some sponsors and/or sponsees who travel a lot work primarily via the phone but I insist on regular planned meetings— our face to face meetings are to discuss their work on the steps, it is not just to “chat”)

I set these ground rules with them once we agree that we will work together:

What workbook or book do you want to work from? (I encourage them to look over several options and make a choice—I have worked from several and frequently they will too—some sponsors have a favorite book they prefer and will only work from it but I am very open.)

I will assign pages from their workbook or

What is your addiction(s) or what are you

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ISO Coordinator Position Available!

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Literature Order form, with CDs!

NEW!



Happy Spring!!!

Happy Spring!!!!

Volume 3, issue 5

Happy Spring!

~ Happy Spring!!!!

7th Traditions Individual

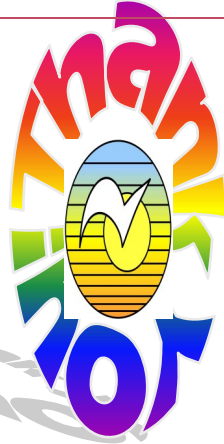
Albuquerque, Nm	\$15
Birmingham, AL	\$05
Hudson, NH	\$10
St. Louis	\$15

Convention Scholarship Fund donations to date: \$110
(we could use more)
In Service, Emilah D
ISO of COSA Central Office Coordinator



7th Traditions ~ Groups

Costa Mesa, CA	\$40
Dallas - Sat am	\$50
Granite Bay, CA	\$25
Granite Bay, CA	\$50
Houston Thursday	\$40
Kissimmee, FL	\$31
Mesa, AZ	\$16
Minneapolis, MN	\$50
San Francisco, CA	\$300
The Woodlands, TX	\$25



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to celebrate COSA Anniversaries, Birthdays,
or other special occasions!

It will be sure to bring the 'heart' of recovery to their life
the whole year through!!

See Literature Order form on p. 7

Income from newsletter and literature sales, our annual convention, and your donations are our COSA fellowship's sole sources of financial support. We are self-supporting! Our current income pays our operating costs and covers only 10 hours a week of employee time. We need your donations in order to improve our service to you and develop our communications and outreach! You can earmark your donations! Please let us know if you would like a COSA ISO Board member to contact you.

**YOUR CONTRIBUTION WILL HELP
THOSE WHO ARE STILL SUFFERING!**

We encourage every group, intergroup and member to submit articles that **share your ESH** (experience, strength, and hope). Also, articles and announcements that **share upcoming COSA events** in your area; such as retreats, workshops, speakers etc. Articles that give a voice to your story. We also would love to hear your ideas for **what you would like to see** in future articles. The Balance is a newsletter for the membership, by the membership.

WE NEED SUBMISSIONS!!!

Please send your articles to: **COSACopy@yahoo.com**
or by snail mail to the COSA ISO PO Box listed on the envelope below.

Hope to hear from you soon...

Contact the ISO of COSA

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COSA VOICES STEP THREE: MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND OUR LIVES OVER TO GOD AS WE UNDERSTOOD GOD.



In my recovery there came a time when I had to as I write these words. make a decision. For me this has been a one time This decision however was NOT an emotional once in a life time decision. This is the essence of decision. It was a decision of action. It was a the Third step for me. This decision marked a decision that required a whole lot more than words turning point in my process of recovery. While I on a page. It required a Changed attitude and way of continue to revisit the decision over and over, I thinking. For the rest of my recovery my life will no made it once and only once. It is marked in time. I longer be my own and belongs to the "God of my distinctly remember the moment I "made a decision understanding". That means that for the very first to turn my life and my will over" to the God of my time in my adult life-I truly look to someone, understanding. I remember the room, who I was something OUTSIDE my self to solve my problems. with, and what I said. Actually the Big Book third It means that self-reliance has truly "run amuck". It step prayer was read. It is on pg. 63 and it goes as means that I now know in my head and heart that follows-"God, I offer myself to Thee-to build with without the help of the Higher Power my life will me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of not go well—to say the very least! the bondage of self, that I may better do they I trust that with the help of a sponsor, others too will.Take away my difficulties that victory over them come to know the power this powerful step offers may bear witness to those I would help of Thy and experience a truly life changing eternal moment. Power, They Love, and They Way of Life. May I do ~ ~ Margie S., Indiana Thy will always?"Wow—the experience still moves me

STEP STUDY QUESTIONS~ FOR GROUP DISCUSSION OR PERSONAL REFLECTION

Step Three Questions:

- What specific fears do you have regarding taking the third step?
- What does "turn our will and our lives over to the care of God" mean to you?
- Recall a time when you were filled with fear and anxiety and the situation turned out okay for you.
- Write a paragraph about the above situation. How does that affect the decision required of you in Step Three?
- In what ways might you hide behind the third step?
- What will it cost you to turn your will and life over to the care of God, as you understand God?
- For how long a period will you choose to turn over your life?

SPONSORSHIP *Cont'd from p.1*

book to read and complete. (I always assign the reading that precedes the question area— they need the information and I ask them to highlight or underline what they find especially interesting, etc. and we will discuss it before we discuss the answers to their questions— I adjust the amount depending on each sponsee and what they seem able to handle.)

I have them get a journal or notebook

and they are to write down any thoughts and questions that come up. (when we meet we can discuss them and they can take notes if they wish)

We discuss how they are going to keep their information secure. (One of my sponsees keeps her most private information in shorthand, some use a computer and password protect it, some keep it away from the house, etc.)

We discuss using the phone. I tell

them the hours I am willing to have them call. (They can call me after 7 am and before 9 pm.) They also are told to leave me a message if I am not available and let me know if they are in a crisis and need me to return the call ASAP or if I can just call when I have some time to talk. Sometimes I require them to check in with me weekly at an agreed upon time. (If I worked, I would not let them call me at work unless it was an emergency.) I usually give them my cell phone number but tell them

Continued on p.4



COSA VOICES STEP FOUR: MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL INVENTORY OF OURSELVES.

The fourth step reminds me of the old saying, "It's going to get worse before it gets better." By the time we reach this step we have already undergone the most profound life-changing experiences of our adult lives. We have bottomed out. We have "come to believe" that the only way to sanity is with "a power greater than ourselves." We have surrendered our will and our lives. So what else could we possibly need to do to experience the transformed life this 12 step recovery program offers? Well as the 70's song writer noted, "We've only just begun!"

There are many suggested guides for accomplishing the "searching and fearless moral inventory" the fourth step requires. This process shows us how, maybe for the first time in our lives, to face not only the bad things in our lives but the good things as well. We begin to experience a type of grace never before experienced. We can learn to be honest, open and willing to change-- The H.O.W. of this wonderful program.

~ Margie S., Indiana

I have written a few fourth steps in my years in expectation of how the world should behave and recovery. Early on I thought the fourth step was assuage my fears was always the core issue. I also about telling stories. I thought it was a great saw that I was Capable of some pretty ugly opportunity to tell you all of the tales of the bad behaviors myself. I had to take a look at the fact things I had done; better yet the things that "they" that I was always so busy pointing my finger at the did to me! I must say that in my early years the addicts in my life that I had never stopped to look sponsors that heard my fifth steps for those at my own behavior and what I was doing to others. inventories were patient and helpful in that I must My expectations were always that the addicts were have needed to talk and tell those stories. I was not to have integrity but really I never did. ready for the humility that came in the steps that What I found about the fourth step was it was a followed.

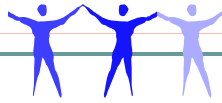
A number of years ago I was presented with a this program. The fourth step prepares for the different kind of inventory. I came to understand fifth, then the sixth and the seventh. This step the steps in a very different way. I got to see that appeared to be a big order when I looked at it but writing an inventory was about looking for patterns when I actually did it I realized that each step was in my behavior. I had spent a life time becoming a but a small piece in a great plan. Nothing about it spin master in my own mind. I had loads of fear- has to be done perfectly. In fact it is the beginning based resentments that I was sure were fully of a lesson in great humility and humility after all is justified. When I set them all on paper and began to what gives us the gift of being perfectly imperfect. take a look at the root of most of them I began to see that I was at the root of my resentments. My

~ Julie H., Pennsylvania

STEP STUDY QUESTIONS~ FOR GROUP DISCUSSION OR PERSONAL REFLECTION

Step Four Questions:

1. The Set aside prayer: Dear HP help me set aside everything I think I know about myself to see what you have to reveal to me.
2. Read about the 3rd and 4th Steps in the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*
3. Find a quiet place.
4. Make an appointment with myself.
5. Be thorough with my 3rd step.
6. Start with a list of the people, places and institutions you resent, such as: porn shops or religious affiliation.
7. List all of the reasons why I resent each one of these people or things.
8. Keep the focus only on myself forgetting all of the wrongs others have done to me.
9. Keep adding to the list until it seems complete to me.
10. Write about how these resentments have affected my life. Have they affected my pride, sense of security, finances etc.
11. What are my worst fears about these situations?



COSA Calling: Our TELEMEEETINGS A NEW BRIDGE to RECOVERY

We decided to start a telemeeting because we needed another meeting during the week and we didn't have the opportunity to drive to a face-to-face meeting. At

the beginning we didn't know if there was going to be another person on the call besides us. Now we are averaging 25 callers every Tuesday. So far it has been an amazing journey! First of all, we created a website to "market" the Telemeetings, (after we gathered information from another fellowship about how they did it). Our website is www.Cosacall.com

On the Website, we explained what a Telemeeting is, we added the readings we use, a page for the sched-

ules and one for the FAQs. We also created an email address cosacall@yahoo.com to answer people's inquiries. We then registered the Tuesday Night Telemeeting as a Group with COSA and scheduled the first conference call! That was in February 2006.

Some of the scripts were adapted from the SF face-to-face meeting. The readings have been an interesting project-- some have been changed, some are original literature, and some are now Conference approved literature, as of the last COSA Convention. Mavis, the COSA Literature Chair, helped us with the readings and the copyright issues from other fellowships' literature.
~ Alessandro, CA

www.cosacall.com



Two years ago, when I attended the COSA convention I was struck that people were experiencing their very first face-to-face meetings. I also heard stories of

folks who drove 1, 2, and 3 hours to get to a meeting, and entire states that didn't have COSA meetings. I realized how lucky I was to have multiple COSA meetings close by. I also travel quite a bit and while there are certainly many 12-step meetings available around the world, sometimes there is no sub-

stitute for a COSA meeting. I was aware that another fellowship had started Telemeetings and it was working! I knew I wasn't in a position to start a COSA Telemeeting on my own so when the time was right I asked for help...and found it! I'm so grateful to folks in that other fellowship who shared materials, logistical info and ESH about their Telemeetings. Being a part of the start-up of the telemeeting was a recovery tool in and of itself for me. It brought me even closer to a friend in recovery and I can now

travel anywhere and call into my COSA telemeeting. There is nothing better than doing something that meets both my own self-care needs and supports others in recovery. I gain perspective and feed my sense of hope with every call. It is my dream and hope that geography is never the reason someone is without recovery support. It is also my dream that the telemeetings will help folks find others in their area so that they can also start face-to-face meetings. Ever-grateful,
~ Kerry M., CA



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I was not sure how I would handle the phone meetings but I have to say, it is my life-line and I mean it in every sense of the word. My first call I couldn't introduce myself. As I listened to the readings with such a caring tone, I just couldn't stop crying, a release that overwhelmed me entirely. Every caller that shared continued the process and I forced myself to "share." I cried

throughout and barely said anything, but as I did, people from around the US embraced and hugged me. They may as well have been in my home with me at that point. After three weeks and three call-in meetings, I have bonded with this lovely group. I have hope, and that is all I have to cling to right now. The HP has gathered up the hurting hearts of our group to make something good, from some-

thing bad. Knowing that the group focuses on the HP to bring continued healing is everything to me right now. Thank you for everyone who is able, through their own pain, to share themselves to maintain this wonderful support system. Without hurting hearts, the group would not be able to do the great work that it does within all who participate.

~ Susan, Northville, Michigan

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I live in a state where there are no face to face meetings, so the Tuesday night telemeeting is a life line for me. When I am having a difficult time, hearing the experience of other people gives me strength. When I'm in a better place, I can

share how I got there with others on the call. Each week, a reading or a speaker gives me more information about the COSA program. I'm getting stronger knowing I have options. My isolation and pain are slowly being replaced by the experience,

strength and hope myself and others bring to the COSA call. Hearing from people all over the country (and some weeks from elsewhere in the world) gives me hope. I'm so grateful for the telemeeting! ~Peg F. in Montana

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As a mother struggling with the discovery of my husband's sex addiction, my first response was to run to as many COSA meetings as possible to try to "fix" the situation. Looking back I see where this may have created abandonment feelings for my kids.

The telemeeting gives me the opportunity to attend a meeting without leaving home. I can set my phone to mute to address my offsprings concerns when something comes up, right during the meeting if need be. It has been a godsend.

I find the meeting "safer" and more anonymous than regular face-to-face meetings. Being on the phone, no one can see me or identify me. The COSAs who have organized and who run this meeting also keep it very safe by the very way they've structured it.

One might think that it is not as personal as face-to-face meetings but actually, people keep coming back week after week and we get to know each other. We build relationships and enjoy "getting current." There is beauty in our geographic

diversity. People thousands of miles apart can come together to share experience, strength and hope. Newcomers who have no face-to-face meeting in their region get the opportunity to meet "old-timers" who have been in COSA for years, sometimes decades. Talk about bringing us out of our isolation and into the light!

It's an amazing phenomenon, one that other types of 12-step meetings are using more and more too. I believe it is a trend that will encourage wide-spread healing.

~Martha

I started attending the teleconference meeting after I was traveling so much for my job I wasn't able to attend meetings on the road. I also didn't have enough privacy when traveling to be able to attend meetings away from home, which left all of my life to try to live on the weekend-- including driving 80 minutes round trip for my COSA meeting. Well, needless to say, I was getting disconnected.

I was looking for alternative meeting times when I came across the

Telemeeting and totally zoomed in on it. It was great - I could use the hotel internet, hook up a headset and phone into the call on my computer each week.

I've finally quit that horrid job but still call into the meeting. It is not a long meeting, we have many attending and we don't do in depth step work, so it cannot be my major work meeting, but it has helped me too; it has really kept me to know there is a safe place even via the phone.

One of the best things is how it has helped me to hear the greetings at the beginning of the meeting. People call in from all over the country -- Seattle, Atlanta, Houston, San Francisco, L.A., Orlando, Phoenix, Chicago, Salt Lake, Dallas and the list goes on. It helps me to know that what I thought was just something I had to deal with and the initial relief I felt when I found a local COSA meeting, was expanded to know that I am not alone even across the country.

~ Judianne, Scottsdale,

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As a some-time participant in the Tuesday Telemeeting, I have seen how valuable this meeting is. I thought it would be good to have an article about it in the Balance, as this meeting is so vital to the recovery of many COSA members.

~ Lindy T., Berkeley, Ca

TELEMEETING SCHEDULE

TUESDAYS 7PM Pacific (8 Mountain, 9 Central, 10 Eastern)
Tel: 605-725-3600 Passcode: 020179#

Email: cosacall@yahoo.com

THURSDAYS 6PM Pacific (7 Mountain, 8 Central, 9 Eastern)
Tel: 712-580-1800 Passcode: 56565#

Email: newserene12@yahoo.com



Spring

2007



STEP FIVE: Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

STEP SIX : Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Every year as we approach the date of releasing the room blocks for the Annual COSA Convention, I get quite obsessed/frantic with these room blocks. I know how many we originally blocked in our contract with the Hotel and how many we have to utilize in order to avoid penalty from the Hotel. And for the last week before these rooms are released, I contact the Hotel daily to find out how many rooms are reserved. And I send out several emails to ISO Board Members, to COSA Yahoo Group, I announce on my weekly COSA Telemeeting, and I send emails to anybody that might not fall into these categories that I have an email address for. I even contact the SAA Central Office to see if they need any rooms. So it becomes an obsession because I feel responsible for getting these rooms reserved. (Note: No one has asked me to be responsible for these room blocks. LOL!!) I emailed my Hotel contact the morning of the release date to see how many rooms were reserved under our block. Her response showed we had not made the minimum to avoid penalty. I wondered if I should reserve a couple extra rooms and announce that I have them in case anyone needed them. If not used, I would cancel them a couple days before Convention started. I kept struggling with this. I knew the cutoff time was midnight (not sure the time zone). These thoughts dragged on and on all day because my job was extremely busy that day. So that evening as I was driving to meet a sponsee for

coffee, it hit me that the release of the room blocks would occur in several hours. There was a brief thought about making a note and reserving some rooms when I returned home. But then it occurred to me that I was being codependent with the entire COSA Fellowship. I have done my best to get the word out that the release date for this year's Convention rooms is May 1st and people's inability to reserve rooms is not my responsibility. When we signed the contract, I did not determine the number of rooms to put in the block. That was a decision made by the entire ISO Board. I got to the coffee shop before my sponsee. I pulled out my LONG list of things to do before this year's Convention. I found the item noted Hotel Room Block. By it I wrote "Let it go."

And I have!! Why do we make ourselves responsible for so many things that no one has asked us to be responsible for? And the amount of energy that we exert towards these so-called "responsibilities" is incredible. If we can redirect these energies towards taking care of ourselves, what a great gift that would be to ourselves. That sounds like a plan to me!!

I discovered this character defect of being responsible for things I am not responsible for during my 4th Step and shared it with my Sponsor in my 5th Step. It was in the writing of "Let it go" on my list that I moved to the 6th Step.

~ Joey Z., Baton Rouge, LA

Our Sixth Step says we become entirely ready to have God remove the defects of character of which we become aware in our Fourth Step and share in our Fifth. One of my aha! moments, becoming ready to have God remove the defect of seeing myself as a victim came when I was reading the big book of Alcoholics Anonymous, from which our 12 Steps are borrowed, it reads:

". . . Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly without provocation, but we invariably find that at some point in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt."

This is certainly true in my life. It was so freeing when I realized it; because, while working the steps to the best of my present ability, I am given the courage to change the only one I can - myself. The beautiful thing (we call it "lagniappe" down here) is when I keep the focus on me (by working steps, by doing service work) and get out of Higher Power's way, sometimes, others change also. I know their change cannot be my motive because if

it is I am not working my program and have taken the focus off myself. An example of this in my life has been learning to apologize; not only when I know I am wrong but also when I think I may be right. I have come to believe that I can be right or I can be in relationship. The funny thing is that when I apologize when I think I am right, I am often given the gift of seeing my part and that there is really no wrong or right it is just all perspectives. Today I'd rather feel the freedom that comes with a loving attitude than the dungeon that comes with fear that I will lose something if I'm not right, that I'll be one down. By no means do I suggest that I have this loving attitude and the ability to see others' perspectives all the time. But you all remind me that it is progress not perfection and to be gentle on myself for those times that I operate from fear based defensiveness and a need to be right. I have gotten great guidance from other COSAs on figuring out how do I take care of myself in those situations rather than how do I prove myself right. Thank You Fellowship!

~ Lisa W., New Orleans, LA





STEP STUDY QUESTIONS~ FOR GROUP DISCUSSION OR PERSONAL REFLECTION

Step Five Questions:

Can I talk to my HP or G-O-D in a way that builds trust between myself and my HP?

In preparing to admit to another human being, am I ready to admit to myself the exact nature of my wrongs?

At an appropriate time, am I able to share with my co-sponsor, or sponsor, the exact nature of my wrongs (my 4th Step)?

Step Six Questions:

What benefits are there of keeping some of my defects of character?

Am I willing to have G-O-D remove ALL my defects of character, even the ones that offer some pleasurable feelings?

Do I believe G-O-D CAN remove all my defects of character? If I woke up tomorrow and G-O-D had removed all my defects of character, how would I know? How would others know?

Am I willing to have G-O-D remove all my defects of character in G-O-D's own time?

SPONSORSHIP *Cont'd from p.3*

work toward.)

it will be turned off if I am in a meeting, or movie, or church, etc.— and they are the ones who do the calling, not me.)

I tell them to make a list of other “safe” folks they can also call for support. (They need to get in the habit of calling others beside me— if they have children, calling someone else who has kids, if they feel a connection to someone else in the recovery program that can be a good one for them to contact, etc. etc—many times they isolate and this helps them get out of their shell— I ask them who they have called besides me each time we meet.)

I have them write down what their definition of “sobriety” is going to be. (this gets them focused on their objective in being in recovery and gives them a goal to

I have them make a list of at least three ways they will take care of themselves each month (massage, pedicure, naps, walks, read a non-recovery book, get their hair done, go to movies with a friend, etc.— many need “permission” to be kind to themselves.)

I have them make a daily plan to get them focused. (Read a daily 12-step meditation or devotional, write in their journal, read other recovery books, etc.)

IF they frequently come to our meetings without some work done, if they do not reach out and call me, if they are not meeting their commitments to me, if they frequently reschedule our planned meetings, etc., I talk with them about this. We make a different game plan with which they can follow through OR I will release them.
~ Jackie F., Houston, TX



Jackie's Sponsor Resources

12 Step Recovery workbooks usually have a section in them about being a sponsor. In addition to those sections in the various books I have used, the following have been especially valuable for me:

Twelve Step Sponsorship-How It Works by Hamilton B. --Published by Hazelden (Has 3 parts—Finding a Sponsor, Being a Sponsor, Working the Steps)

“In the final analysis, what lies at the heart of the sponsorship process is the authenticity of the relationship we build with our sponsees. If we are honest and ethical with them, respect their vulnerability and their

trust in us, help them work the Steps, and model Twelve Step principles to the best of our abilities, we will have served them well.” --P. 223

A Sponsorship Guide for 12-Step Programs by M. T. --Published by St. Martin's Press (Has 4 parts— Sponsorship Basics, Working the Steps with a Sponsor, Common Issues That Come Up and What to Do When They Arise, Additional Thoughts on Sponsorship.)

Interesting format. States a question and then provides feedback from 8+ different sponsors:

“I came to believe that we each have our

own path, and that my job as a sponsor is not to get my sponsees to work the steps exactly as I did...but to discover their way to work the steps.” --P.59.

If You Want What We Have—Sponsorship Meditations by Joan Larkin, --Published by Hazelden (366 readings plus an index)

“This is a book of daily readings based on the developing relationship of a sponsor and a sponsee over the period of one year in Twelve Step recovery.”—Intro page
For each day of recovery, a question or concern raised by a newcomer is followed by a response from his or her sponsor.