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Dear Friend in Recovery,

Many people contact the GSA inquiring about how to obtain an ABA sponsor. The GSA Board has passed on all such inquiries to us, the Literature and Outreach Committee. The following suggestions have received Board approval and thus represent the best guidelines we can offer at this time.

Although we have no definitive solution to the vitally important problem of finding experienced sponsorship in a Fellowship as young and new as ABA, here are a few suggestions:

1. **Participate in ABA telephone meetings** which can provide a great deal of support to isolated members. During your sharing or at the end of the meeting state that you are in need of a sponsor. Even if no one is immediately available, you may still find help since reaching out to others is a crucial tool of recovery detailed in the ABA textbook. Acquiring ABA contacts to check in with other than our sponsors has proven to be a pillar of our recovery. The more pillars we have the better!
2. **If you cannot find a permanent sponsor ask for a 'check-in buddy.'** This is an ABA member who will work with you through Step 1 (which is unique to ABA; not found in any other 12-Step program) and then turn you over to a sponsor from another Fellowship to guide you through Steps 2 through 12. For example, you might be a sober alcoholic already working with a sponsor in Alcoholics Anonymous when you discover ABA and decide to join. Your ABA check-in buddy (someone who has ABA sobriety and is herself working through the 12 Steps with a sponsor) will work with you to support you in getting sober and moving through Step 1. You could then ask your AA sponsor to guide your work in ABA Steps 2 through 12 since they are identical to the AA Steps. As you do that you will probably remain in regular contact with your check-in buddy to talk about questions surrounding food/body/weight, etc. The buddy system is a vehicle for allowing qualified ABA sponsors to work with more newcomers than they would otherwise be able to manage, since the time and effort required to be a check-in buddy to someone is less than that required to be a formal sponsor.
3. **Attend 12-Step meetings of other Fellowships** if there are no face-to-face ABA meetings in your area. Open AA meetings are particularly useful since the textbook Alcoholics Anonymous is still considered the basic textbook of ABA recovery while our book is viewed as a supplement (p. xiv in the ABA textbook.) The AA program is the forefather of all 12-Step recovery and its wisdom is helpful to all of us. You may find someone there who is willing and able to sponsor you, in concert with an ABA check-in buddy. Attending meetings of other eating disorder 12-Step Fellowships may or may not be helpful for you since their definitions of the drug and of sobriety are quite different from ABA's.

4. **To help you work the Steps, a Step Study in your area may be helpful.** This usually consists of a group of people who come together with an experienced leader and go through the AA textbook in a structured manner, completing all 12 Steps in a few months. Phone your local AA Central Office for information about such studies. If you are not an alcoholic you will need to find an 'open' Step Study which caters to people from all 12-Step Fellowships. You will then need to replace the word 'alcohol' with such terms as 'the feeling of being in control,' anorexia, bulimia, compulsive eating, as it fits the sentence (p. xiv of the ABA textbook.)

5. **The Annual ABA Retreat held near Edmonton** since 2003 provides great support for many members from all over the world. It is a great place to make connections, strengthen your recovery, and perhaps find a sponsor. Many people come early or remain in Edmonton afterward and are hosted by local members to further enrich their experience here. We hope you consider coming to the next Annual Retreat in September. Further details and a registration form are usually available on the website by June of each year. The recordings of speakers from past retreats and from ABA's International Conferences in 2008 and 2013 are available for purchase and contain abundant experience, strength, and hope. Details are listed on our website.

Sincerely yours,

The Literature & Outreach Committee of the GSA of ABA