

Talking with a Partner / Family Member

This document came out of an email conversation with a fellow. They asked what was my process is for speaking with the partner or family member of an addict I sponsor.

"Happy to offer some ESH [experience, strength, hope] on this. I've done this a few times, and to my surprise it has always gone really well. Here's the steps I take:

1. Secure consent with sponsee. Explain why this can be helpful (family members can often try to sabotage recovery out of jealousy, anger, feeling de-prioritized, or feel the sponsee is keeping secrets). I say it helps to "get everyone on the same page." and let the family member/ partner know why you'll be busy for the next month or so. The goal is to have a 3-way phone call, not a private call where sponsee isn't present.
2. If sponsee doesn't give the OK, ask what they might be afraid of. Are they worried I will spill the beans? Or is it just uncomfortable? It can be helpful to probe on the "willing to go to any lengths" part in this. I also sometimes remind them that there are lots of other sponsors who don't care to do this, and if that feels like a better road that's OK. I'm a stickler for it because it sets them up for the best chance at success. Try to bring it up in the first 1-3 calls.
3. If they give the OK, I am careful to have a "pre-game" talk about it. I remind them that their confidentiality is the top priority, and I will mostly be sharing about myself as their sponsor. I will sometimes do a role play, or repeat word-for-word what I'll share with the family member / partner. Building trust with sponsee is key.
4. We now focus on securing the family member / partners consent. We try to setup a 3-way call (I don't speak to family members 1:1 yet). Is the partner willing to meet the new sponsor, just to go over the recovery program and answer any questions? My goal is to be of service. I am probably the first person the family will have met who is recovered. This can be really powerful for their healing as well.
5. I let the sponsee setup the 3-way call. I introduce myself: "Hi, my name is _____ and [sponsee name] asked me to sponsor them. I've asked to setup this call so I may answer any questions you might have and do what I can to support [sponsee's] recovery journey. I find it often helps to get everyone on the same page."
6. I then ask if the family member has questions. They usually have a ton, but are shy to start or very nervous. So I will wait (listening is very important - they are used to being steam rolled by the addict and will be looking for this behavior in me). After a long pause I might say, "Would it help if I share my sobriety date, my recovery journey, or any information on how the Program works?" This usually gets the ball rolling.
7. At this point the family member will usually ask a lot of questions. I patiently go through each one and after a longer pause ask..."is there anything else that comes to mind?" The call can sometimes take an hour. But it is worth it. The family member is usually extremely grateful, and the sponsee is usually happy, too, not having to carry the burden of explaining it all.
8. Sometimes I find it helpful to see if a bi-weekly check-in call is good. Feel free to ask the family member this, to create "continuity of care" and save the energy of back-and-forth

scheduling. This might help the family member to know that there is an upcoming date to ask more questions and that they are not being left in the dark.

Remember that we are the living miracle -- " The age of miracles is still with us. Our own recovery proves that! " (around p.153). Until the addict or the partner meets us, they may have some strong prejudice and doubts that the Program works at all.

The first time I did this I experienced a massive spiritual healing and pulled over in my car to cry. It was a real gift. I hope you get to have a positive experience too!

Sincerely,
-Stan"

by stan in recovery: <https://staninrecovery.neocities.org/>