Example #17 — My Sponsor

This is a resentment against someone in the program — a topic discussed frequently in recovery meetings and online forums but rarely demonstrated in worked examples. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions acknowledges that "we found that the weights and measures of human justice were not the same as those of the Higher Power" (12&12, Step 10) and that resentments within the fellowship are some of the most dangerous, because they can drive a person away from the very community that keeps them alive.

Columns 1 & 2

#17) My Sponsor

- **A)** He told me I wasn't "working the Steps right" and dropped me after I missed a few calls.
- **B)** He shared something I told him in confidence with other people in the program.
- **C)** He always has time for his newer sponsees but makes me feel like I'm an afterthought.

(He doesn't really care about me — I'm just a number to him)

Column 3 — Resentment Inventory

> *"God please help me see the truth about my resentments"*

#17) A — My Sponsor / Told me I wasn't "working the Steps right" and dropped me after I missed a few calls.

Affects my:

SELF-ESTEEM — *"I am..."* | Fear of being...

- I am a good person who is trying my best. *(not good enough, defective, unteachable)*

PRIDE — *"Others should..."*

- Others should see how hard I'm working, even when I slip up. No one should give up on me. *(abandoned, rejected, disposable)*

AMBITION — *"I want..."*

- I want a sponsor who meets me where I am, not where he thinks I should be. *(failing at recovery, never going to get this right)*

SECURITY — *"I need...to be okay"*

- I need someone in my corner who won't quit on me to be okay. *(alone, unsafe, nobody has my back)*

PERSONAL RELATIONS

- A real sponsor commits to their sponsee and doesn't bail when things get hard. *(not worth the effort, too much trouble)*

SEX RELATIONS — *"A real man..."*

- A real man doesn't need another man to hold his hand through life. *(weak, dependent, pathetic)*

POCKET BOOK

- *(Not directly affected in this resentment)*

#17) B — My Sponsor / Shared something I told him in confidence.

Affects my:

SELF-ESTEEM — *"I am..."*

- I trusted him with the hardest truths about myself. *(naive, foolish, exposed)*

PRIDE — *"Others should..."*

- What's said between a sponsor and sponsee should stay there. Period. *(humiliated, violated)*

SECURITY — *"I need...to be okay"*

- I need to know that the people I trust in recovery won't use my honesty against me. *(unsafe, betrayed, can't trust anyone)*

PERSONAL RELATIONS

- Recovery relationships are supposed to be the safest ones in my life. *(nowhere is safe, nobody can be trusted)*

Column 4

> *"God please help me see the truth."*

The Realization

"How have I done the things I've resented in Column 2 to the person I've listed in Column 1 and/or others?"

- I've told people they weren't doing things right — at work, in relationships, even in recovery. I've been rigid and judgmental.
- I've shared other people's personal information — gossip is one of my biggest defects.
- I've dropped people when they became inconvenient. I've given more attention to new, exciting things and neglected people who've been around longer.

> *"God, this is a sick person like myself. How can I be helpful to them? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done."*

Fourth Column — "Where had I been..."

SELF-SEEKING: *My selfish actions or activities were...?*

- Didn't call my sponsor for weeks, then got angry when he wasn't immediately available.
- Didn't do the assignments he gave me, then resented him for pointing it out.
- Talked about him behind his back to other members of the group.
- Went looking for a new sponsor who would be "easier" — someone who would tell me what I wanted to hear.
- Used his failings as an excuse to not work the Steps at all.

SELFISH: *My selfish attitudes were...?*

- He owes me his time because he agreed to sponsor me.
- A "good" sponsor would be more patient with me. I shouldn't have to change on someone else's schedule.
- If recovery people can't be trusted, maybe the program doesn't work.

DISHONEST: *I was in the delusion that...?*

- I was in the delusion that my sponsor dropped me "for no reason" — when the truth is I wasn't showing up, wasn't calling, and wasn't doing the work.
- I was in the delusion that I wanted a sponsor, when what I really wanted was someone to make me feel better without me having to change.
- I was in the delusion that his imperfections meant his guidance was worthless.

AFRAID: *I was afraid...?*

- Afraid that he's right — that I'm not working the program, and that I'm going to drink again.
- Afraid that if I can't trust my sponsor, I can't trust the program.
- Afraid that I'm the common denominator in every failed relationship — including this one.

The Chain

AFRAID: Afraid he was right — that I'm not doing the work and I'm heading for a relapse. ↓ drives → **DISHONEST:** In the delusion that I wanted help, when I really wanted comfort. That his flaws invalidated his message. ↓ produces → **SELFISH:** He owes me his time; a "good" sponsor would be easier; maybe the program doesn't work. ↓ generates → **SELF-SEEKING:** Didn't call, didn't do the work, badmouthed him, went shopping for an easier sponsor, used his failings as an excuse to quit.

Harm

- **My sponsor** — disrespected his time; didn't follow through on commitments; gossiped about him to other members; damaged his reputation in the group.
- **Other group members** — put them in the middle of my conflict; spread gossip; created division in the fellowship.
- **Myself** — lost valuable recovery time; delayed Step work; nearly left the program entirely because of a resentment I refused to put on paper.
- **My recovery** — used a resentment against someone in the program as an excuse to distance from the program itself — the most dangerous form of self-sabotage in recovery.

Sources & Attribution

Direct Big Book text: p.64-¶3 (list resentments), p.66-¶1 ("the alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot"), p.67-¶2 (SDSF questions)

BBA workshop methodology: Seven areas of self, Column 4 SDSF format, The Chain

Recovery literature & psychology: Resentments against sponsors and other program members are one of the most frequently discussed topics on recovery forums (r/alcoholicsanonymous, SoberRecovery.com, InTheRooms.com). The 12&12 addresses this directly in Step 10: "We can try to stop making unreasonable demands upon those we love. We can show kindness where we had shown none. With those we dislike we can begin to practice justice and courtesy, perhaps going out of our way to understand and help them."

Recovery literature consistently emphasizes that resentments within the fellowship are especially dangerous because they threaten the alcoholic's connection to the program itself — the very lifeline that keeps them sober. Irvin Yalom's research on group therapy (*The Theory and Practice of Group Therapy*, 1970) identified "transference" within therapeutic groups as inevitable — members project onto group leaders and peers the same relational patterns they have with authority figures and family. The sponsor resentment is often a recapitulation of earlier authority-figure conflicts (parent, teacher, boss), replayed in a recovery context.

Note: This is a constructed example created for this guide. All names and details are fictional.

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