

## SPONSOR – GROUP MEMBER CONTRACT

**Member Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #s: *Home* \_\_\_\_\_; *Work* \_\_\_\_\_; *Cell* \_\_\_\_\_

**Sponsor Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #s: *Home* \_\_\_\_\_; *Work* \_\_\_\_\_; *Cell* \_\_\_\_\_

**Group Facilitator Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #s: *Home* \_\_\_\_\_; *Work* \_\_\_\_\_; *Cell* \_\_\_\_\_

**Calling Schedule:** \_\_\_\_\_ Sun    \_\_\_\_\_ Mon    \_\_\_\_\_ Tues  
\_\_\_\_\_ Wed    \_\_\_\_\_ Thurs    \_\_\_\_\_ Fri    \_\_\_\_\_ Sat

**Format for Daily Contact:**    *\* Details follow for each item*

- ✓ **Feelings Check** (core emotions, not just thoughts)  
I feel \_\_\_\_ about \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
- ✓ **Get Current** (temptations, boundary violations, bothersome thoughts or situations, etc.)
- ✓ **Accountability** (Top Line and Bottom Line behaviors – see explanation)
- ✓ **Share Bible reading** (devotional or inspirational material)
- ✓ **Prayer**

**Top Line Behaviors:**

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Bottom Line Behaviors:**

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Others in My Accountability Circle:**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Group Member's Signature and Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Sponsor's Signature and Date*

## Explanation of the Items that Make Up Daily Contact with Sponsor

### Feelings Check:

There are only eight core feelings: **glad, sad, mad, lonely, hurt, fearful, guilty, and ashamed**. It's also possible to feel **numb**, which would be a ninth category.

Obviously, you'll experience gradations of these feelings, like *ecstatic* at just becoming engaged or *pleased* with the weather (both are variations of glad). You can be feeling *anxious* about an upcoming test or meeting or *terrified* because you've just been diagnosed with cancer (both are nuances of fear). Bottom line, though, all our emotions fall somewhere in one (or more) of these nine broad categories.

Often we share **thoughts** and describe them as **feelings**. For example, you might say, "I feel like you're not listening to me." That's a statement of opinion, **a thought** not a feeling. The feeling would be, "I feel *hurt* when you don't listen to me" or "I feel *lonely* in this relationship and *angry* when you don't stop watching TV to listen to me." See the difference?

#### *Sponsor's Questions:*

- *How are you feeling now?*
- *Have you had any other strong feelings today?*
- *What were they?*

When you communicate with your sponsor, include a "feelings check." Simply state your feeling(s) **in that moment**. If you had a different feeling(s) that dominated the day, share that, too.

### Getting Current:

To get current simply means to describe your day, including both the significant events and the bothersome ones. Getting current is providing a "laundry list" of what's happening in your life, especially anything that's eroding your serenity. It also includes disclosing any boundary violations you've committed.

#### *Sponsor's Questions:*

- *What happened today?*
- *Is anything bothering you?*
- *Did you violate any boundaries?*
- *What are you grateful for today?*

## Accountability:

Remember, your sponsor is your main accountability partner. He/she is the primary person you invite to question you about your recovery program. Your accountability report should cover your *participation* in your “top line” behaviors (explained below) and your *avoidance* of your “bottom line” behaviors (also explained).

### ***Defining Bottom Lines***

*Twelve Step groups often use the term “bottom line behaviors” to describe conduct you need to **avoid**, such as these examples:*

- Controlling others
- Controlling self (in the sense of “white knuckling”)
- Compulsively watching TV
- Compulsively shopping, cleaning or other secondary acting out behaviors
- Compulsively eating or gambling
- Compulsively working (to avoid relationships)
- ‘Hanging out’ with others who are engaged in addictive behaviors (drugs, alcohol, gambling, etc.) as this promotes an atmosphere of acceptance that places one at risk.

### ***Defining Top Lines***

*“Top line behaviors” describe healthy choices you make daily, such as the following:*

- Eating well
- Resting
- Playing well
- Praying
- Exercising/caring for your body
- Bible reading or meditating
- Connecting with safe people
- Journaling your activities, thoughts, and feelings
- Practicing gratitude

#### *Sponsor’s Questions about Accountability*

*Have you engaged in any ‘medicating’ behaviors today?*

*Have you fantasized or obsessed about your ‘medicating’ behavior of choice today?*

*Have you visited inappropriate places or people today?*

*(‘Inappropriate’ defined as those places or persons whose presence would place you at risk)*

*Have you taken care of yourself physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and socially today?*

*Are there any specific areas where you need to be accountable today?*

*Have you fully disclosed everything that you need to disclose?*

These concepts about being accountable to a sponsor are tools to help you maintain sobriety. Hopefully, by this point in your progression through this L.I.F.E. Guide, you've achieved some length of sobriety from your addictive condition.

Obviously, sobriety begins when you stop medicating pain with the use of your coping method. At first glance, this "sobriety" definition seems straightforward. We addicts tend to justify whatever it is that we want to do, and we prefer to operate within a wide margin of behaviors we choose to view as not acting out. Being committed to a program of rigorous honesty (as well as being willing to go to any lengths to get well) demands we scrutinize all our actions.

**A healthy recovery program with transformation as the goal requires a total, absolute abstinence period from all activity associated with acting out behaviors in which we were previously engaged in an effort to medicate our emotional pain, as well as intentional thoughts (fantasizing or obsessed "excessive, unreasonable zeal"). Abstinence could be for any period of time, but it is recommended to be at least 90 days. The purpose of this abstinence period is to help to "reset the brain chemistry" so that the person can begin to deal with life more realistically and rationally without medicating.**

### *Neurochemical Benefits*

An abstinence period serves several purposes and has a variety of benefits. First, by abstaining from escaping through preoccupied thoughts and their continued use, even in "tapering off," you'll experience a cleansing of your brain chemistry. As an example, an alcoholic or drug addict needs to be sober for a number of days before the chemical is completely out of their system, i.e. a time of detoxification, both physiologically and psychologically. We addicts have a constant supply of our "drug," because even fantasies (sexual and non-sexual) produce chemicals in the brain that cause us to feel pleasure. These chemical reactions are a natural part of life, but addicts have abused this and other chemical reactions to medicate and escape their feelings. Stopping your coping activities allows the brain chemistry to return to near normal; nevertheless, there may be lifelong residual physical consequences, especially for chronic or heavy users of chemical substances.

Another benefit of abstinence involves the addictive characteristic called tolerance. Tolerance means the addict requires more of the addictive agent to achieve the same result, and addicts find themselves continually "chasing the first high." An alcoholic or drug addict, for example, develops tolerance so that he requires more alcohol or drug to achieve the same effect, thus the same amount produces less effect. In similar fashion, behavioral addictions, such as gambling, sex, romance, shopping, work, and the like, build a tolerance for requiring more activity, or more exciting activity. You may find that you need a greater amount of stimuli than you once did, which has led you into more frequent activity and/or activity involving greater risk. Being abstinent for a period of time will help to reverse some of the symptoms from your acting out behavior.

## ***Correction of False Core Beliefs***

An additional reason addicts need to experience a fairly lengthy period of abstinence is for the purpose of changing their belief system. Addicts hold many (unconscious) core beliefs that have their roots in our life experiences. Most core beliefs are established before the age of five. (See “Ghosts from The Nursery” listed in the bibliography) Because we are all “needy” as a result of our abandonment trauma, our coping strategies soothed and satisfied us and we soon discovered our addiction was our most important need, for it was our best (though false) solution to the pain of our abandoned hearts. A period of abstinence exposes our core beliefs, which, for many, is the primary reason for the recommendation for individual counseling to identify and modify these unhealthy beliefs. This counseling is best engaged *after* the first 90 days of the abstinence period when the brain has had some time to ‘recover’ and thinking is more rational. Counseling may be very helpful to speed the process to gradually reverse the false belief system.

A period of abstinence will counteract another core belief: that our medicating is our most important need. (Again, our trauma of abuse and abandonment created this lie.) If you’re married, to cite a sexual example, when you abstain from sex and still receive love from your spouse, you eventually learn a new definition of love. If you’re single, through abstinence you’ll discover that you can find love from intimate friendships that you couldn’t find in acting out sexually or through unhealthy relationships.

## **Suggested Boundaries for the Abstinence Period**

You should observe specific boundaries during a 90-day timeout period to help you abstain from coping strategies, acting out thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Following are some suggestions:

- **Surrender credit cards; have no more than the minimum amount of cash on your person; establish an accountability record for *all* expenditures.**
- **Use no alcohol or drugs, other than those prescribed by your physician.** If you have *necessary medications*, discuss a plan with your physician, as well as your sponsor and accountability group, regarding the management and safekeeping of your medications. For many, legitimate medications become the *alternative* behavior of choice (switching addictions).
- **Watch no TV.** You may choose to make an exception for news shows, history, or sporting channels, or similar appropriate fare, but avoid soap operas, talk shows, sitcoms, and night-time dramas, many of which have alcohol, drug, and unhealthy relationship situations, which can provoke acting out thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, particularly in early stage recovery. Such programming encourages escaping into fantasy and can prompt triggers that you know are problematic.
- **Minimize fantasizing.** Many things can prompt a fantasy, but it’s prudent to avoid those. As an example, music elicits powerful responses for many of us. If you’re one who’s strongly prompted by music, listen only to tapes or CD’s, where you have control over what you hear. Review your list of acceptable music with your sponsor.

- **Change the routes you normally drive.** If certain roads are on the path to places that trigger for you (e.g. bars; homes of drinking and/or drugging buddies; stores, especially if there is a sales promotion; favorite restaurant, unless accompanied by someone with whom you have an accountability relationship; wherever you may be ‘triggered’), then choose another way to go.
- **Establish a defensive protocol when alone at home for 2 hours or more.** Call your sponsor or an accountability partner before, during, or after extended periods of time alone in order to eliminate the “dead zones” of time when you're not accountable. Report what you'll be doing to stay out of trouble.

## Withdrawal

Regardless of the nature of your addiction, there will be a period of withdrawal when you stop using your “drug of choice.” All addicts similarly experience withdrawal symptoms when they stop acting out. Remember the neurochemical effects of compulsive behaviors that produce ‘feel good’ feelings? The brain reacts when there is no longer that influx of chemicals, and that reaction is called ‘withdrawal’ and may be noticeable.

Some symptoms of withdrawal include genuine physiological symptoms, such as headaches, body pains, sleeping and eating difficulties, or gastrointestinal distress. All are stress-related reactions that may come from stopping the ‘medication’ that you have been using. ***If your physiological symptoms persist, or become an issue of concern, see your physician as soon as possible to rule out any serious condition and to provide treatment to prevent a serious condition from developing. Advise your physician of your withdrawal from the compulsive thinking, feeling, and acting out behaviors that have been your history.*** Some will, also, experience psychological symptoms, such as anxiety and/or depression, which may be an underlying condition that is now made worse by your having stopped your “choice of medication.” Other stress related symptoms may become apparent as time progresses; however, as you move further and further away from your experience of “using,” these symptoms will diminish, if not be relieved all together. ***If, after the 90 day abstinence period, you still experience emotional discomfort or distress, contact your physician who will evaluate and treat you as needed to bring relief. Be sure to advise your physician concerning your withdrawals from compulsive thoughts, feelings, and acting out behaviors.***

It’s important to remember that “this, too, shall pass,” as an AA slogan promises. You won’t always feel so miserable physically **or emotionally**. When you sense that familiar craving to act out, remind yourself that it’s temporary and it will pass. If necessary, this is a time to contact your sponsor because this craving places you at risk to act out. **Reach out for the “L.I.F.E. ring.”** Compare the craving sensations to running up a steep hill. The feelings will intensify and resisting will get harder, but if you choose not to give up and give in, you’ll soon be over the crest of the hill, and the going will be much easier.