

## ON SPONSORING SELF AND OTHERS

The growth and transformation of our own core self and that of others requires a type of relationship called sponsoring. In essence, sponsoring involves seeing and blessing the core self and its many resourceful qualities. This allows these qualities to become more present, to flourish and to become a force for a good in our individual lives and the world at large.

### THREE KINDS OF SPONSORING

We sponsor people when our actions and our attitude tell them that they belong, they exist, they are seen, they have value, they are important, they are welcome and they contribute. This can happen when, say, we acknowledge someone's contribution at work, we truly pay attention to what someone says, or we make the effort to be present at an event that is important to someone. Sponsoring makes the other person feel empowered and resourceful, which enables them to grow and bring their qualities into the world.

However, when we are physically or emotionally absent and when our attention is elsewhere, we create a relationship of non-sponsoring. Not noticing someone or not making time to listen, for example, can send the message that they are not seen or noticed, not valued or special, that they do not belong and that they do not contribute. This can make people feel passive, empty, worthless, powerless, displaced and anxious, which in turn leads them to emotionally wither, pull back from relationships and become less and less resourceful.

Worse than non-sponsoring is negative sponsoring, which occurs when our treatment of others is driven by negative judgements and negative internal states. When we act from fear, pain, or ignorance, we can physically or verbally abuse, shame and blame, or isolate others from their family or cultural systems. This can send them the message that people should not be here, that they are nothing or problematic, that they are worse than others or a burden, or that they are unwelcome and underserving of being here. Such messages can generate powerful, negative emotions like fear, guilt, and shame.

### IMPACT OF SPONSORING

It is said that everything you pay attention to grows. The very act of perceiving our inner qualities helps to bring them into existence or encourages them to flourish. At least, that is the case with positive sponsorship. Non-sponsoring makes our unseen parts wither like flowers in a shady

place, while negative sponsorship can cause existential pain that we may end up dumping on others or numbing by abusing substances.

Indeed, sponsoring has a profound impact on ourselves and on others. Our partner, relatives, friends or even strangers on the street can be affected by how we relate to them. Children in particular, who build their sense of self by gauging how their parents react to them, develop self-confidence, self-pride and self-love when they are made to feel that what they bring into the world is desired and good. If, however, they receive the message that their inner qualities are bad and defective, they may develop into adults that deny key parts of themselves and struggle with a negative self-image or toxic emotions.

There are also systemic forms of sponsoring. Discrimination, for example on the ground of one's sexuality or religious beliefs, is a form of institutionalised negative sponsorship that marginalises groups and creates rifts in society. And some forms of nationalism involve positive sponsorship that identifies the nation's qualities and instils feelings of pride, safety and belonging. History is full of examples of sponsorship being both a destructive and creative force that has affected communities, countries and continents.

Sponsorship can also have an effect at work, especially when leaders sponsor their people or when organisations create sponsoring cultures. This encourages people to develop their talents, follow the leader and contribute to the organisation's goals. Non-sponsoring and negative sponsoring kills off people's motivation and commitment, which can cause talented people to leave or undermine the performance of the organisation as a whole.

There is one other entity we can sponsor: ourselves. Self-sponsorship is the result of how we treat ourselves, talk to ourselves or respond to what we do, think and feel. If, for example, we forgive our failings and create space for our needs and desires, we engage in positive self-sponsoring. We can also ignore our needs and dissociate from our emotions, which create a non-sponsoring relationship. Worse, we can negatively sponsor ourselves by berating ourselves, abusing substances or staying in unhealthy relationships. Depending on the kind, self-sponsorship can help us grow, stay stuck or spiral down into misery.

### **(UN)LEARNING SPONSORING**

A final thought on sponsoring: we learn to sponsor by having it modelled, for example at home by our parents or at work by our leaders. If as children we are positively sponsored, we are likelier to treat ourselves and others in this same way. If we are negatively sponsored, we will internalise the messages, treat ourselves badly and extend that courtesy to others. Like waves in a pond, sponsoring ripples generations into the future and far beyond our individual life.

Sponsoring is a practice that is strengthened through regular usage. We can train ourselves to relate in a compassionate and accepting way, to focus on what is good and to identify the positive intention that underlies every behaviour. And we can unlearn the habit of non-sponsoring or negative sponsoring, by tackling the underlying beliefs and negative emotions that we acquired throughout life. For more information on how this can be done, contact us on [info@coreinstitute.nl](mailto:info@coreinstitute.nl).