



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

A.A. General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

Summer 2014

Dear A. A. Friends,

Let's open our meeting with a moment of silence, followed by the A.A. Preamble: "Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

"The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership, we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety."*

A.A.'s TWELVE STEPS

"On studying the Twelve Steps, many of us exclaimed, 'What an order! I can't go through with it.' Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection."

Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 60

STEP THREE

"My name is Ed. I have been a member of Alcoholics Anonymous for the past 30 years or so. I received a prison sentence and a diagnosis of cirrhosis of the liver. I put myself in this position. I feel as if I have made a good Third Step. I am very happy to be alive today. I am working on my Fourth Step daily. It would feel so good to complete my Steps. I'm not scared of dying; I would just like to be right with my Higher Power. Everyday I wake up and turn my will and my life over to the care of my Higher Power. I try to pray for my resentments to be lifted every morning. I can't believe how well this is working for me. I have a lot of time, so I pray for everyone."

— **Edward G., East Central Region**

'TAKE IT AS IT COMES.'

"My name is Jim and I am an alcoholic! I have been in prison 33 years. I'm secretary of my group and I'm in three A.A. meetings a week. I go to the parole board soon, and should get a date, but I've been to the board 12 times, so you never know. Believe it or not, my philosophy is, if God wants me in prison, I should be in prison, so I'm not that bummed out over my life. I should take it as it comes and try to help the ones still suffering. I had a stroke and was partially paralyzed, but I'm improving. It was a very humbling experience. I don't really know what to say, my story is so simple. I'm a little scared about getting out after so long. I don't blame anyone but myself, for the lazy choices I made in life. A.A. helps me to share my story." — **James M. L., Pacific Region**

A SENSE OF PEACE

"I'm not sure how to start this letter, but I would like to mention how much A.A. has changed my perspective thus far. I recently celebrated five months sober and, although I am incarcerated, I have never felt more at peace with myself. The facility I am in supports recovery and I have been blessed with a sponsor who meets with me to work through the Steps. I just did my Fourth Step and I have completely immersed myself into this program." — **Ida B., East Central Region**

ONE A.A. HELPING ANOTHER

"My name is Randy, and I have been a member of Alcoholics Anonymous for over seven years. I have been sober most of that time, although there was a period that I was just dry. I stopped going to meetings, which resulted in the downward spiral we know all too well. I stopped praying, helping others and working the Steps. Not exactly in that order but you get my point. I became very stressed out, due to the fact that I was not turning my life over to God. I was not talking to anyone about my fears, I continued to sink deeper and deeper, and then I snapped. I believe with all my heart that if I would have been doing all the things I had been taught in A.A. it would not have happened. Even though I had not taken a drink, I was an alcoholic, sick as I have ever been in my life. A friend of mine came to the prison I was in at the time. He is a fellow member of A.A., who has been corresponding and going through the Big Book with me. It has been another spiritual awakening that I really cannot find words to explain. I read my Big Book daily and try to help others every chance I get. I finally feel sober again. Most of all I am so grateful to have God in my life today. He runs the show, most days, and guides me through this jungle. I am not so sure I could do without Him. Thanks to all the A.A. members that have come before me and especially the ones that follow. I pray that I can help someone, like my friend who came to my prison helped sponsor me." — **Randy S., Southeast Region**

"I am so involved in Alcoholics Anonymous that at times I forget about my pending cases. My mission here is to work with any alcoholics who have a desire to stop drinking and to continue to remain sober when I am released. I'm surprised how many inmates feel comfortable speaking to me on what seems like a confusing and very difficult subject for them. May God's grace be with you all!" — **Robert G., Southwest Region**

WORKING THE STEPS

"My name is David and I am an alcoholic. I've known that I was for about five years now. Before that I just considered myself a drunk. However, after my third D.W.I. arrest in five years, I decided enough was enough. I sought treatment, began attending A.A. meetings in my community, and after my 90 day incarceration, I maintained four and a half years of sobriety. During that time, I never got a sponsor, I never worked the Steps, and I never took a moral inventory. Whether

I chose not to out of fear or pride, I will never know, but what I'm sure of is that even after 18 plus years of drinking, seven alcohol related arrests, and five totaled automobiles, I was under the delusion that I could do this on my own. So why am I writing you now? I find myself in jail again. I've been arrested and will undoubtedly be convicted for another D.W.I. I am prepared to face the consequences of my actions. I just wish I knew how I fell so hard, so fast. I've been asked by my loving, amazing, and astoundingly patient wife, and others, why I started drinking again. I wish I could tell them, I wish I could explain the thought process that led me to think that things would somehow be different this time. Consciously, I knew where things would end up, yet I kept drinking and kept lying to myself. I've been sitting in jail now for two months, so I guess I've been sober for two months as well. What I can say is that I now know and believe that I cannot do this on my own. I've tried and failed. I'm tired of hurting; I'm tired of carrying around the guilt, fear, paranoia, and anger. I've begun reading the Big Book, believe it or not, for the first time. I'm still amazed at how it describes my life so perfectly. I want to start Step work, I know that I am powerless, I've proven it." — **David A. M., Southeast Region**

"Hi, I'm Tresa S., currently in prison. I'm an alcoholic and have been one for years. In 2012 I stopped going to meetings and working the Steps. That led me back behind these gates and wire fences. Currently I am in a recovery program here. I'm so grateful for the support of A.A. My motto is, 'A.A. is the way; just don't stop working the Steps.' Upon release I know I have to maintain my A.A. support and contact with my sober friends. Thank God for the sober friends I have today who understand where I came from." — **Tresa S., East Central Region**

A.A. LITERATURE

"Here at this facility we have no A.A. program. Last night, when I received the A.A. literature, a lot of people were interested. Three other inmates and I had our first meeting. I feel like a new man today." — **Edward G., East Central Region**

"Thank you for the literature. If you only knew how much this means to me. The material you sent me will be used with respect and appreciation. As we speak I have begun to read the Big Book. It's amazing the things it refreshes in my mind. It will be shared with any and all who are ready for change. I hope to hear from a local group very soon. A few of us sit around and discuss the Twelve Steps or take turns reading out of the Big Book. We're looking forward to developing a meeting format and, hopefully, soon a 'group conscience.'" — **Al A., Southeast Region**

'A LIFE WORTH LIVING.'

"There's not a rule book or a manual for being an alcoholic. What do you do? Or where do you turn when you feel life's not worth living? Another day of drinking is unbearable. I never thought there would be anything or anyone to turn to, that would understand or comprehend my problem with alcohol. It didn't help that I was a person who thought I could handle my problems on my own. But I'm here to tell you that today I know I can't handle them on my own, and that without help and the Fellowship of A.A. I probably wouldn't be here to write this today. I now have 'A life worth living.'" — **Anthony G., East Central Region**

THE BIG BOOK, ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

"Hello, I'm Robert and, without a doubt, I'm an alcoholic. From 1981 up until my current sentence, I've been arrested over 75 times

and I have better than 200 nonviolent charges. But each and every one had something to do with drinking or trying to get money to buy a drink. I've mistreated everyone who was close to me. None have suffered worse than my sons, whom I haven't done anything for in their entire lives. I'm in prison now for a minimum of six years. I've done nothing but had 'pity parties' for myself, and run from reality. I've been attending A.A. meetings on and off over the years, but not applying the information that's provided. I'm afraid to share my experiences in the meetings; sometimes, all I do is read. Recently, an outside A.A. member made a challenge. He stated that if we read from page 17 to 164 of the Big Book, it would change our lives forever. Well, today I am on page 122 and a light has definitely been turned on. And more importantly, I need someone to work with me, because I've had a false sense of hope many times. I'm so tired of being alone, living in my mind, selfish, etc... Help Please."

— **Robert S., Southeast Region**

'THANK YOU'

"The Alcoholics Anonymous General Service Office has always been very attentive and helpful to me through the years. I want you to know that this faithful service has also helped me mature and grow as I've walked my path in recovery. It shows me it's possible to trust and have hope in humanity in some way. May God's presence abound in your awareness daily!" — **Rosina R., Pacific Region**

...WITH GRATITUDE

"This is Celia W.; thank you for your letter. I just received it today; I also received a really nice letter today from my outside Corrections Correspondence Service contact. How ironic that I got them the same day! I wrote her back already to establish correspondence. Thank you." — **Celia L. W., Pacific Region**

"I am enjoying this journey of recovery more each day. The prison that I'm in has a lot of avenues toward healing and wholeness, and the Twelve Step process is highly regarded. I'm coming up on my first year milestone in May 2014 and I'm excited to live my life today." — **Jim G., Pacific Region**

"I have a meeting later today at 7:00 pm; it's the once a week A.A. meeting hosted by individuals from outside the jail. I go into court tomorrow to accept my plea, and am not sure if I will be sentenced then. If I am sentenced I will be shipped off to federal prison. Either way, as long as I have A.A., among many other mental tools for sobriety, I will be OK." — **Joseph O., East Central Region**

CORRECTIONS CORRESPONDENCE SERVICE (CCS)

If you will be incarcerated for at least six more months, and are interested in corresponding with an outside A.A. member with whom you can share your experience as it relates to your problems with alcohol, please write to A.A.'s General Service Office to request a correspondence form. This is a random match with men writing to men and women writing to women.

PRERELEASE CONTACT

If you write to G.S.O. within three to six months of your release date and give us your destination (city and state) and approximate release date, we can try to arrange for someone to write to you just prior to your release. This would give you a chance to have an A.A. contact in your home community to help with your transition from A.A. on the "inside" to A.A. on the "outside."

We look forward to hearing from you.