



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Fall 2022

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 people 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."*

One Day, One Plan, at a Time

"My name is Archie. Drinking and drugs got me here for 25 years to life. My case is not violent, and it is crazy how I got here. I have had a rough life, along with mental problems. I have yet to be able to attend an A.A. meeting or find a sponsor in here. Through the grace of God, I have stayed sober. I have had a few alcohol relapses, but I know now it is just not for me. I can't drink and be normal, because then it leads me into more poor decisions. My ultimate goal is to get out and go straight into a program, something I was unwilling to do in the past. One day at a time, I am on my way." — Archie B., Pacific Region

"My name is Sal, and not only am I an alcoholic, but I am also an ACOA (Adult Children of Alcoholics). When this facility reopened after a long COVID-19 shutdown, I was temporarily unassigned from A.A. due to conflicting

hours with another self-help group. After my 18-week completion, I returned to A.A., requesting to be reassigned into my previous hours position, just like my fellow group members. Unlike the rest of my cohorts, I was placed on a waiting list that went on for the next six months. In the meantime, I started having a bunch of problems. I felt overwhelmed, sad, lonely, abandoned, left out. All these negative thoughts started invading my mind. My first coping skills thought was to attend A.A. and process. The problem: I was not being assigned to attend. I started falling into despair. I didn't want to get up in the mornings anymore. I have seen the warning signs of a dry drunk, and I reached out to my support network. Thanks to my relapse prevention plan, today I remain in the middle of the herd." — Sal C., Pacific Region

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Using My Voice to Help Others

"My name is Jeramy, and I am currently in jail in Kentucky. I am in the jail's substance abuse program, taking the time I have here to discover who I am and what is the purpose. I struggle socializing with people, mostly out of self-hatred. I do hope that I can use my voice to help others. I find peace when I write poetry, and it is my hope that other alcoholics and addicts can find peace or understanding in my poetry. I dedicate this poem to Alcoholics Anonymous and hope that it reaches someone who needs it:

Bondage of Self

*These four walls, these four walls, forever hold me in.
Keep me trapped in misery, over and over again.*

*I know you're thinking prisons, or this concrete cage
called jail.*

*But the walls that keep me imprisoned don't come with
court dates or bail.*

One wall is labeled anger. It stands taller than I can see.

Another is named resentment, that stays staring back at me.

*The third one is named guilt, where I am the only one
I can blame.*

*And the last one is named fear, a ferocious demon
I could not tame.*

*I know these walls surrounding me were built by my very
own hand.*

*Trials, tribulations and obstacles blinding me from
discovering who I am.*

*As I bow my head, I admit defeat, I reach out for
some kind help.*

*I pray these walls fall apart, releasing me from
bondage of self."*

— Jeremy G., Southeast Region

"My name is Larome W., and I am currently incarcerated due to my sixth DWI traffic stop. I previously never thought I had a problem with my drinking. I just figured it was always unfortunate situations that kept recurring. I never had a car accident, never caused any property damage, and never caused injury to myself or anyone else. My problem was that the authorities always found me asleep behind the wheel on each incident over the last 22 years. I maintained employment with the same employer for the past 27 years and considered myself as living a middle-class lifestyle; therefore, I assumed alcohol was not a major problem in my life. During this current incarceration, there was a book left in my jail cell called *Narcotics Anonymous*. I decided to read it, and I was so inspired from this book that I couldn't stop talking about it. I was then referred to read *Alcoholics Anonymous*, and I am getting that same inspiration as before, reading this book. I always assumed that an alcoholic was one that lived on the streets with that bottle in a paper bag always in his hand. I see now that I was completely wrong. While reading this book, I have learned that an

alcoholic can look exactly like me, with my middle-class lifestyle, or could be someone with a more prominent position, with more wealth. I have learned that alcoholism is an illness that affects any individual who consumes alcohol, regardless of their lifestyle. I have also learned and admitted that I am completely powerless over alcohol, which has caused my life to become unmanageable. My previous drinking pattern and current situation is a witness to my self-destruction, which led me to where I am today. Simply stated in the book, I can't ever have that first drink! I am very undisciplined, and I am willing to let God discipline me to practice complete sobriety. This book is giving me so much insight and I want more. I want to be part of Alcoholics Anonymous, fellowshiping with other members and engaging in the Twelve Steps program of recovery in my life. I wish I had had prior knowledge of Alcoholics Anonymous in my life; I know for a fact I would not be in my current situation. I am ready to fully commit to the program now. I want what A.A. has, and I am willing to go to any lengths to get it." — Larome W., Northeast Region

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"I am writing you today to share my spiritual awakening experience, praying it will one day save the life of a still-suffering alcoholic. This miracle took place on March 25, 2022, at a hospital in Columbia, Missouri. A brain tumor, the size of a nickel, was removed from my head. The operation normally would have only taken three to four hours, but due to complications, it took 13 hours. It is only by the will and grace of my loving God that I am still here today. I have been in and out of incarceration for 32 years because of my denial to commit myself to a simple Twelve Steps program. For years I have known that if I take a drink, the phenomenon of craving develops and I will find myself unable to stop once again, leaving behind family and friends. I have character defects — resentments, depression, worrying, anxiety

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— that all I can do is try to remove, always asking, can God take them all away? Alcoholics Anonymous Step Six helped me a lot to remember I am striving for spiritual progress. Some of my character defects may be with me for the rest of my life, but most have been toned down or eliminated. All Step Six asks of me is to become willing to name my defects, claim them as my own, and be willing to discard the ones that I can. Prison is a season in my life; it doesn’t dictate my worth or my future. However, practicing the principles of A.A. in all my affairs and being a person, God has given me control over my destiny. My destiny leads me into the lives of a variety of still-suffering alcoholics. It is imperative that I work with others, as others have worked with me. Faith without works is death. I live a spiritual life by working with others and helping them survive the desire to drink again. The best reward for working the Twelve Steps is to watch the eyes of other men and women open as they move from darkness to light, to see their lives filled with new purpose and meaning, to see families reunited, to see the outcast alcoholic received back into the community with full citizenship, and above all else, to watch people awaken to the presence of a loving God in their lives. Believing, as I do today, has made it easier for my Higher Power to keep changing me. As time progresses, I continue to live by these principles with great care and insight. My whole attitude and outlook about life will continue to change; the miracles will keep coming. God granted me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” — Larnell B., Southwest Region

In Harm’s Way

“I am incarcerated in Florida, and I am 35 years old. I started drinking when I was 10 years old. It all went downhill from there. I was drinking and then doing drugs.

I just never saw the harm of drinking. It was legal and cheaper than the drugs and made me forget about the pain. I was living a crazy lifestyle with alcohol and drugs, and it got me here. I have lost everything — my daughter, my place, and my job. When that happened, it hit me hard, but I was placed in prison. I feel like it was for a reason to stay put and change my lifestyle. I have learned that if you want something out of life you cannot be doing it while you are intoxicated. I never thought I would be in prison, that everything I love would be taken from me in a blink of an eye because of a choice or decision I made. Only life you live while intoxicated is a prison sentence and you end up dead. Thank you for your time.” — Amber J., Southeast Region

“I just wanted to let you know that I received the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* book and other A.A. literature. Thank you for looking out. The one thing that I always seem to forget is that the Fellowship will always be there for a member. Thanks again. Just a little about myself: My new sobriety date is February 4, 2022. I am looking to get out of prison around the beginning of March 2023. I have been in and out of the Fellowship for

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many years. But as I look back there is one thing that was keeping me from a true and happy life of sobriety, and that is I never truly surrendered. I always said I surrendered, but never really meant it. I faked it until I tried to make it. I always had that lurking reservation in the back of my mind, but I am finding out that I am putting myself in harm’s way more often, and it is starting to put fear in my mind. I am calling them indirect suicides; it is really becoming a life-or-death situation. I finally had to ask my Higher Power to lift the obsession and get rid of all the reservations. I am looking forward to working the Steps, and to stop fighting my disease and to begin living my life on the spiritual principles of the Fellowship. I truly believe I have to come back to the Fellowship, or it is going to be ugly. So that is the plan. Due to the

COVID-19 pandemic, they don't run A.A. meetings now. But I do my Big Book readings every morning; at least that is something for right now." — Gary S., East Central Region

"I am writing today because I want to stay sober while incarcerated and when I am released one day. As I just finished reading a copy of last year's Grapevine 'Keep It Real' issue, I came across the A.A. news, and it would be nice to correspond with someone and keep it real. I am 42 years old, serving a 15-year sentence, and hoping to make my next parole. However, my drinking had a lot to do with my careless acts, which now have me behind locked doors. At one time in my life, I lived a sober life, attending A.A. And after time passed, I thought I could do it without A.A. Slowly but surely, I began to drink again, and after my husband passed, I drank even more. He is no excuse for me being here. It is the fact that I thought I could do it on my own. Now, realizing this and having come to my senses, my desire to stay sober is stronger than ever before. Hope to hear from you all at G.S.O. or anyone willing to shed some A.A. light and advice. Thank you for your time." — Audry R., Southwest Region

Grateful for Your Support

"This letter is regarding how I want to show my gratitude toward your support as a Fellowship. Thank you. The contributions I have received: literature, the Grapevine, etc., have been helpful to me and others as I share them throughout the prison. Even though we cannot get a meeting here, I still feel we have them just talking one-on-one with other fellow alcoholics. Building, sharing

experiences, strength and hope helps a ton. COVID-19 has brought a new light to my recovery. Not being able to go to a group setting, I had to find ways to still let go, and did that through prayer and support. In conclusion, we still don't have any meetings running here at the jail, but with my fellow alcoholics, we still find the way to deal with life's terms without using, and we follow an important way of life. We can't keep it unless we give it away. In fellowship." — Chris P., Northeast Region

Corrections Correspondence Service (C.C.S.)

This service is for incarcerated alcoholics who have at least six more months to serve. We randomly match an outside A.A. from another region, with men writing to men and women writing to women. We do not provide letters of reference to parole boards, lawyers or court officials. We do not assign sponsors; however, once you make contact, an outside A.A. member may be willing to sponsor you. If you have an interest in sharing about your experiences as they relate to sobriety and problems with alcohol, then please write and request a form. We appreciate your patience.

Prerelease Contact

This service is for incarcerated alcoholics who have a release date scheduled three to six months away. We do not assign sponsors; however, once you have transitioned from "inside" A.A. to "outside" A.A., someone may be willing to sponsor you. We try to arrange for an outside A.A. in your home community to temporarily write to you just prior to your release. You can request a form, or write to us, providing your release date and destination (address, city, state, phone number).