



# SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Winter 2016

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."\*

## HOPE

"Thank you for introducing me to T., my A.A. correspondent. T. is an awesome person who has touched my life and shared so much experience, strength and hope with me. I have been sober since 2011 and I love A.A. and this spiritual journey I have been on. I work my Steps, and apply the A.A. program to my life. T. has helped me step up my program, so thank you so much for this wonderful Corrections Correspondence Service. It helps, and that it is a good thing. I am serving life in prison, but thanks to A.A. I wake up every day with joy, love in my heart and hope."

— **Shawn T., Pacific Region**

"I have been an alcoholic since the age of 12. I am now 35 and ready to surrender my life to God. My drinking has been my downfall and is partly the reason I am in prison today. I have tried to stop hundreds of times, but I could never do it alone. I want to have what A.A. has to offer. What scares me the most is that upon my release, in about five months, I will have no permanent place to call home. I know for a fact that I will attend a meeting my first day out and ask for a sponsor and home group. I am an intelligent individual, but when alcohol is in the picture, I am a complete Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. I thank you A.A. for giving millions of people like me hope for a better future. I thank you from the bottom of my heart." — **Jorge H., Pacific Region**

## 100%

"Alcoholism has run my life for the past 15 years and enough is enough. Before coming to prison I went through my first-ever treatment program and stayed sober for 80 days — the longest I've ever stayed sober not being locked up. In that time I was going to A.A. meetings every day. Sounds perfect, right? I did two very wrong things: I didn't listen, and I only gave about 90% to A.A. That other

10% is what took me down. I know now I need to give 100%, no matter what. From now on my life is: sobriety, spirituality, and then everything else." — **Phil V., East Central Region**

"When I stayed in touch with A.A. I could just see how my life stayed on track and how people really cared for each other. I loved it. I was proud of the way I was living. I lost nearly everything this time — all because I lost touch with A.A. and with myself. I am sick and tired of living this way." — **Charles B., East Central Region**

## A.A. LITERATURE

"I am in my cell reading a Grapevine article and it's reminding me that I do have something to be grateful for every day and that is: the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous and its literature. From my pocket-sized Big Book to *As Bill Sees It* to my *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* book, I have yet to find a page that does not give me comfort, a sense of serenity or, at the very least, an understanding about a situation or feeling that may be troubling me. Thank you A.A., for not only being everything I need to live life sober but also for showing me the world as I have never viewed it." — **Joseph S., East Central Region**

"I am currently incarcerated due to a relapse. As always, when I drink it ends in incarceration. The A.A. literature is all I can think of to soothe my mind and get me back into the Steps. It's so easy to fall back if I don't participate in my recovery on a daily basis. My sentence should run around six months and

I want to spend that time focusing on my recovery before getting out. I am thankful for the help and support and the helping hands of A.A." — **Kirsten D., Southeast Region**

## JUST FOR TODAY . . .

"I can finally say I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired. Obviously, my alcoholism has kept me in a revolving door that is all too common in prison. But, I am thankful for my 18 months of sobriety, good health, and people who sincerely care about me and my freedom. I am thankful I found this address and that I have an envelope to write to you with." — **Jamie C., West Central Region**

"I have been to prison for a D.U.I. more than once, and I still go back and do it again! I have been in A.A. but did not work the program. This time my life needs to change before I kill myself or others. I know this program works, and this is the best place for me right now. I did attend a meeting on the outside, and had a sponsor, but I thought I could do this on my own. Today my attitude has changed. I'm trying



to better my life and be a responsible member of society. I wish I could have taken a better path. But I realize it is never too late to have a good future, as long as I stay focused on just today.” — **James S., East Central Region**

## GROUPS ON THE ‘INSIDE’

“I wrote to you guys at A.A. asking for a Big Book and other things that would help me start an A.A. meet here in prison. The book and group handbook were a blessing and I want to thank you for them. I have moved to another prison and because of your help there is now an A.A. meeting in the place I left and there is already one going in the prison I’m at now. Thank you.” — **Dustin M., Pacific Region**

“If you’d asked me years ago whether or not I had a problem with alcohol, I’d have laughed and said, ‘No.’ But thanks to my involvement in our Primary Purpose Group at my present institution, I’ve learned through the process of being honest with myself that I’m an alcoholic! My desire for excessive alcohol and my uncontrollable urge to binge drink has become a huge problem for me. It’s caused me to lose employment due to being arrested for a DUI. It’s destroyed relationships with my family and friends and has caused destruction in my life for many years! I’ve come to learn that I’m completely powerless over alcohol. It’s through the efforts of A.A. that I’m able to put my life in perspective and maintain a feeling of hope and sobriety. I’m truly grateful to A.A. and to all those involved. My life is changing for the better.” — **Marcelino S., Pacific Region**

“We are blessed to have a member from an outside group come in as a sponsor for our meeting every Tuesday evening. I have been sober since 1992 and have not missed a single meeting in those years, except when the meetings were postponed for weather or security reasons. I lift my voice with my experience, strength and hope for the men to carry outside of these fences. Our meetings are small as of this date; 15 inmates, yet it’s my desire to help it grow as we carry our message to the alcoholic who still suffers.” — **Frank S., Southeast Region**

“I am just over 11 months sober. I was in county jail for three months and it was a great place to do Twelfth Step work. Armed with my Big Book and a schedule of local meetings, I talked to anyone who came in who would listen and some who didn’t want to. I am now in prison for three to six years. I find it hard to look at this as a blessing, but harder to look at it as anything less. I am truly blessed to be sober and that I didn’t hurt anyone and I didn’t get hurt. My victim wrote a nice letter to the judge that talked of forgiveness and asked for lenience. He also wrote me a letter to tell me he was proud of me for getting sober. Yes, I had to pick a fight with the nicest man in the bar. Here in my pod we started a meeting. We are only a dozen men. We only have two Big Books, one Twelve & Twelve, and half a copy of *A.A. Comes of Age*. I often think the first groups were probably four or five guys huddled around one book. I think it is the closest we get to each other in this place.” — **Aaron J., West Central Region**

## CONNECTING AND COMMUNICATING WITH OTHER A.A.s

“I have spent most of my life in and out of lockups, and being an alcoholic has been a constant contributing factor in this equation. One of the biggest mistakes I made in the past was, upon my release, I was determined to avoid seeking help from a support system, or even connecting with other alcoholics through A.A. I need to communicate with other alcoholics lest I forget from where I came and who I am.” — **Lawrence L., Northeast Region**

“I need help to stay sober when I leave. I’ll have been here for one year. I need some encouragement and advice. I’m 38 and have this last chance to make it. Relapsing will lead to death. I’m blessed to still have my life right now.” — **Christopher G., Southeast Region**

“I’m 21 years old and I grew up in a home with an alcoholic father who was prone to violent outbursts. I remember being 5 and taking a drink of his beer and him thinking it was funny. Even as a child I can clearly remember that I felt I didn’t fit in. I felt inadequate and worthless. So, when I was 11 it wasn’t a shock that I was already drinking alone on a daily basis. I progressively got worse. I’ve had many relapses, a couple of hospital stays, and now a temporary stay behind locked doors. I’ve worked the Steps to the best of my ability. However, the God of my understanding has been there with me through it all. I know I can’t be too far off the mark.” — **Samantha E., Southeast Region**

“As a direct result of my arrest and drinking I’ve lost my home, my job, my fiancé, my children, everyone’s respect, and my sanity. As I am reading the Big Book it has given me hope that it’s not too late and, by the grace of God, I may be able to salvage some of these things that are important to me. I am very familiar with A.A., as in the past I’ve been mandated to attend. This time when I get out it will be my own personal choice to stay sober to hopefully regain my family back. My father died at 39 due to alcoholism. I have chronic pancreatitis at age 36 and I don’t want my children to grow up without a father as I did. I feel I don’t love or care enough about myself to do it for me, but until I do, I am going to use my children as my motivation.” — **Jesse P., Northeast Region**

“I am an alcoholic. I have been sober for two years — working the Steps with a sponsor, going to meetings, and reading my Big Book. I was a member of A.A. before I came into the prison group, but I wasn’t being responsible for my recovery, working the program, and following simple suggestions. I love giving what’s been freely given to me. It brings me closer to other members of A.A. who are doing the right things by staying sober and working the program.” — **John C., Southeast Region**

“I was 19 when I was arrested, and I was a volatile drunk. I have a daughter who was born seven months after I was arrested. I’ve never met her but one day I might, and I want to be sober for that. She’ll be about 14 now, and reconciliation is possible. I’ve hurt a lot of people I love because of alcohol. The thought of drinking oneself to death doesn’t sound like a bad way to die until you see the path of destruction that looks like a tornado’s path and then you realize the tornado is you. I’m not sure what relationship I’ll have with my daughter, if any, but I want to be sober; I want to be a presence in her life and an example. But my desire to stop drinking is also for me.” — **Mitchell W., Southeast 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. We appreciate your patience if you do not hear from us in a timely manner. Obtaining outside contacts often takes time.

## 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.