



# SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Winter 2022

Dear A.A. Friends,

Let's open our meeting with a moment of silence, followed by the A.A. Preamble:

**A**lcoholics 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."\*

## Note from the Editor

"I wanted to take the time to thank all those members who write to us here at the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous United States/Canada. Your letters have spiritually rearranged this alcoholic and continue to do so daily. We are very grateful that you let us share your personal stories with others through this newsletter. You have touched so many lives. If others would like to share their recovery journey, as it relates to alcoholism, to be included in a future newsletter, please write to us at General Service Office, P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York NY, 10163. All here at GSO wish everyone the best in your recovery journey, one day at a time."  
— Eileen A., Corrections Coordinator

## Alcoholics Anonymous — What a Fellowship

"I am the chair of an institutional A.A. group. I have been in for 12 years now, yet my sobriety date was 7-1/2 years ago! I am writing to relate a positive experience from this past July 2019. I asked for and received an escorted pass to attend an A.A. meeting each Friday night in the community. I've been going there for about 18 months now. It's really good to see and feel how a real-world meeting operates, compared to an "inside" one—it's a fuller, more genuine participation, for one, and more importantly, a complete acceptance of us, lacking

judgment, is indeed refreshing. It is sure good to feel normal for a couple of hours a week! Just last August, I asked for, and received, permission, to be escorted to our district committee meeting. I was, reportedly, the first incarcerated person to attend a committee meeting in this district. I gave a two-minute talk about my journey (getting approved to be escorted took about a year of persistence) and gave a report on the status of our institutional group, explaining that it was a big deal for many of our "inside" members to contribute \$2.00 to our group, when the average wage inside is close to \$3.00 per day in pay. The reception I received was very warm and encouraging. My takeaway was that there was real authentic warmth and support received from many, if not all, in attendance. Imagine this: a convicted murderer and retired cop shaking hands and expressing best wishes for each other. Yes,

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*"Service maintains our sobriety. So get involved and stay involved."*

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that happened! Only in such a fellowship as A.A. could this have been possible. It lifted me up and gave me additional hope, which is the main reason I am writing. Service maintains our sobriety. So get involved and stay involved." — Stuart F., Eastern Canada Region

"Hello, my name is Nicole B. I began attending AA meetings at our facility a few months ago, and we are about halfway through the Twelve Steps and I absolutely loved them. When I started, I was hesitant because I did not feel that I had an alcohol problem — I did not drink often and rarely drank in excess. I did, however, drink occasionally and would drink to be more social in group settings. I realize now even that is a problem when it comes to alcohol. These A.A. meetings have opened my eyes to the fact that no matter the circumstances in which alcohol is used, it can still be dangerous and have serious consequences. I caused a car to crash in 2018 that led me to be in prison today. I got behind the wheel after drinking and hit another vehicle. I injured a man and a few weeks after the crash, he passed away. I am now in prison for intoxicated

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manslaughter. I have not touched another alcoholic beverage since that night, and the choice I made to stop drinking was a no-brainer after the tragedy I caused. I wanted to give A.A. a chance because I had heard good things, and it was one of the only alcohol-related meetings offered at this prison. I am so

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happy I did. This is my first time ever in prison, and I want it to be my last. My fellow person in custody (also our A.A. meeting leader) told me that talking to other people involved in A.A. all over the country has really helped her, and she has encouraged us to reach out, to do the same. These A.A. meetings have helped me a lot by putting me around other people facing similar things in life. I am reaching out in hopes of being able to speak with other A.A. members who may have a story like mine. Thank you for taking the time out to read my letter.”

— Nicole B., Southwest Region

“I am grateful to have found the path to sobriety. Thanks to a person who has helped me see things in a different way. I don’t want to mention his name because I want to respect his anonymity. All I can say is that he is from Coachella, California. With the help of this person, and A.A.’s recovery program, I have been able to stay sober behind the walls. I started drinking when I was 10 years old, and I remember that ever since then, alcohol has brought me nothing but bad things. Alcohol has not only affected me negatively at a personal level, but also those close to me whom I love the most: my wife and kids. The emotional damage is the most difficult part, trying to go through recovery alone without asking for help. That is why I am sharing my story with you. We do not have a big enough recovery program in this facility. My friend recommended I write to GSO and ask for help. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and allowing me to share my story from behind the walls.” — Jose G., Pacific Region

“I was a 22-year-old alcoholic trying to drown my feelings of pain in a bottle. I used to be functional, had my own roofing company, and all my physical needs met. Today, I am an alcoholic with 25 years of sobriety, a college student, model prisoner, and working for my freedom. My plan, after parole, is to have a second chance at being a productive citizen, to live a quiet life with my wife, children and grandchildren. I have earned multiple educational degrees, and I attend A.A. classes regularly and work full-time. I am ready to give back to my community.” — Jeffrey M., Pacific Region

## Sharing and Learning We Are Not Alone

“The last time I drank was nine years ago during my last SHU (segregation housing unit) term. All these years of sobriety have been easy. But recently I was exposed to hand sanitizer with alcohol. The smell of it was, and still is, a trigger. I like that smell! That night in my cell, I humbly asked God to make me dislike the smell of it. The next day I checked, but I still liked it. So, I understand that God was to work something else with my shortcoming. Sure enough, the point was to share it at group. Due to COVID19, we don’t have A.A. meetings. However, I am in the OMCP (Offender Mentor Certified Program) and I shared with them. They acknowledged that they had the same issue. Now I wish to share with you. Thanks.” — Fidel P., Pacific Region

## Just Keep Trying

“I am a 34-year-old woman. I am sober, found my spiritual self, and met three ladies who bring my A.A. meeting every Tuesday in my life. I am pretty sure they are not done helping with the rest. Let me tell you about my A.A. experiences. The very first time I tried this program, I was one of those who thought it was a church for drunks. I did not believe in God or anything else and thought that just like many others in my life, these people would quit me. I tried the whole sponsoring thing, and I am not going to lie, she was amazing, but I wasn’t ready. Again, denial was a huge river, and I was knee-deep in stuff, honestly drowning in it. I would pick up on little sayings from others, but again, I wouldn’t touch a Big Book. After binge-induced nights,

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I decided to take off from Louisiana to Florida. Well, here I sit in Mississippi. This time I must face the facts: I am an alcoholic. I’ve done all the things I heard people talk about in the A.A. meetings. I also started to listen to the other women and God and started seeing so many blessings. For everyone who is new to this, I beg you to find a group that you feel at home with. It doesn’t matter how long it takes, keep on going, even if you don’t yet believe in it. Eventually you will see that these people love you and will not give up as long as you try. Don’t feel like an alien. Trust me, most of them have been where you are; your life is worth being sober and you are not beyond repair. Work this program at your own pace; you do not have to rush. There is no set day for you to finish the program. Never quit. Just keep on trying, and call for help when you need it, no matter the

time. A.A. folks love to give back; it is what they do. Well, thank you for listening to my story.” — **Brittney G., Southeast Region**

### **Gratitude for Everything**

“I am so deeply grateful to A.A. and all the blessings that come through working the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. Once again, Alcoholics Anonymous has saved me and given me my life back. I was, for the most part, raised in the rooms of A.A. in Thousand Oaks and San Fernando Valley in California. My last bender was over 20 years, and it was a hard road. Today, it is truly one miracle after another. I am seeing in the little steps, day by day, that God is doing for me what I cannot do for myself. Today was a rough day with my behavior, but at least I can recognize it. Today I pray and simply do God’s will and stay out of my own way. Thank you, God, for all the seemingly good things in my life as well as all the seemingly bad. Thank you for everything you have given me and all that I have lost because it has all been necessary for my spiritual growth. Have a blessed day, and always pray! Amen!”

— **Joey F., Pacific Region**

“Dear A.A.: I wanted to say thank you for your response to my last letter. I received a copy of the A.A. Big Book on October 2, and then I received the welcome letter on October 3. I am sure you, as an organization, get a lot of letters all the time from incarcerated people all over the U.S. I just wanted to take the time to thank you for taking the time to read my letter and then sending exactly what I asked for. I have been taking the program seriously since being incarcerated. After attending multiple meetings a week, I am taking everything seriously for the first time in my life. I realized I should have done this long ago, but as we learn in A.A., a lot of us A.A.s don’t hit rock bottom until jails, institutions, or even death. As sad as I am about messing up and landing in prison, having to be away from my fiancée and kids, I am really glad I was able to sober up enough to know the program can help me live one day at a time in a sober lifestyle. I’m very glad you responded on behalf of A.A. because at this point in my life, it lets me know that there are people who believe in me. They want to take recovery seriously and have no issues sending helpful tools for me to do it. Once again, thank you very much for sending the letter and A.A. Big Book to me, it really made my day. Sincerely.”

— **Jay S., Pacific Region**

“Dear Bill Wilson: Thank you for giving me the courage to be honest with myself and face the ugliness that I still harbor after my teen years. My highest aspirations amounted to nothing more than dreams of material success or winning the admiration and approval of people around me. Deep down I couldn’t even see how truly selfish it was. I knew nothing of love, forgiveness, abiding patience, enduring hardship, or true

generosity. I really didn’t know anything about the realm of the spirit. I was totally lost, confused, adrift, blinded by selfishness and vain pursuits, not even believing that any person could truly care about another person. Or better yet, not believing in a power up above, capable of mercy, compassion, grace, or understanding, a power even having a plan or a will for me on an individual basis. Thank you, Bill Wilson, from the bottom of my heart for showing me that there was a way out. I’ve found forgiveness. Even though I’m in jail, stuck here waiting for a bed to open up at the treatment center; I am sick, tired, scared, lonely, and unsure of when I’ll finally be released for treatment. At the same time, there’s a funny feeling. It seems a miracle has occurred, and I don’t even have a care or a worry at all. I may have accumulated something else, something unheard of, maybe it is called patience or maybe acceptance. Though my connection to a power from above feels frail, tenuous most of the time, maybe he will begin to absolve me of all the hatred, worry, and fear that has clouded my judgment for all these years.” — **Chad M., Southwest Region**

“I am writing you, first and foremost, with the utmost gratitude for responding to my letter with the humble heartwarming answer to my prayers that A.A. has a subcommittee forum for members to help with incarcerated persons’ correspondence. The support, fellowship, and simple camaraderie will be graciously appreciated. Not only by me, but any member that sincerely devoted themselves to this amazing program. Thank you! Thank you! Secondly, I received the copies of the A.A. literature: the Big Book and the Daily Reflections, which I have begun to read (I am halfway through the Big Book), and I meditate every day on the inspiring food for thought provided by those daily messages. Thank you! Thank you!”

— **David S., Pacific Region**

### **‘Finding’ a Big Book**

“I am in prison due to my alcohol addiction, along with some criminal charges that came from a D.W.I. unfortunate situation. I am 35 years old this month. My first A.A. meeting was when I was 16 years old, and of course I didn’t listen. When I was around 12 years old, my sister, a cousin, a friend, and I started smoking weed on the weekends. This was the mid-nineties, and life was awesome. Rock music and rap were great when we were high and during anything else we did to get high first. At 15 I started stealing shots of whiskey from my uncle and my dad when they were at work. By the next year I was drinking every weekend, doing crazy stuff. We would record our parties on video and watch them the next morning and laugh the headaches away. Then, when I was almost 18, my mom left my dad and I felt abandoned, although I was hardly home anyway. We would rage all night for two to three days straight and

then feel like crap for a week. After that, then we would do it again. We put our minds and bodies through hell. This drinking, drugging, and smoking continued for years. At 25 years of age, in 2009, I brought a friend to a party with me to drink some beer and we drank two cases. I woke up with someone carrying me to the car, and my head hurt so bad I was passing out, in and out. The guy had smashed the interior right side of my skull and face in, completely shattering the bones. My eyeball was hanging on by the cornea stem only. I remember the ride to the hospital; I touched my head, and I am sure I touched my brain. It knocked me out completely — just the pain alone. I woke to the cops asking what happened. The next morning a surgeon put me back together with all new titanium: a forehead, eye socket, temporal area, jaw hinge, and nose bridge. That cost me only \$500,000 total. I stayed with my aunt and uncle, the one I had sneaked shots of whiskey from at 15. I did a 90-day court order in a local halfway house, where I found A.A. I had a hard time keeping my life going, making bottles and all while still attending A.A. once a day. In 2016 I won the East Texas Music Award for Rap Artist of the Year. Forty-eight hours later I was headed to detox and lost the rights to my baby girl who I worked so hard to keep. I have discovered a religious belief and found myself unsatisfied on scientific facts, so I stopped reading my bible, only having prayer to a god I knew was real. A couple of days later I found an A.A. Big Book sitting in the day room here in prison. So, I wrote down everything I remembered from my sponsor and made a structure to live by again. The Big Book is my bible. I have had a great spiritual experience, freeing my mind and body. I have forgiven myself for my actions. I am trying to have a good plan for my release. My children are fine; God put them in a good home, and I talk to them a lot. I will soon be back getting ready for their teens; they are 6 and 9 years old now. Time flew by and I've got to stay in this program if I am to be a good father." — **Levi D., Southwest Region**

"My name is Travis, and I am an alcoholic. You know, I have not said that in about four years now, and as soon as I put it on paper I began to tear up. If the address and my state number don't give it up, I am incarcerated in Pennsylvania. Right now, I am sitting in the hole. For those who do not know what the hole is, it is solitary confinement — 23 hours in your cell and you must sit there for 45 days for a positive urine analysis. I literally have one piece of paper and one envelope, and instead of writing to my father or my girlfriend to let them know I am okay, I decided to write to Alcoholics Anonymous. For the past year and a half to two years, I have been drinking. At first it was not every day, although there is booze everywhere. I am talking about fermented fruit sugar and

bread. It is disgusting, but then again, I drink to get drunk. After a while, it started to taste good. Along with some other forms of alcohol I've dealt with, my life has been spiraling downhill fast. I have been hiding it from my loved ones this whole time, and it kills me when I tell them how good I am doing. I am in college here in jail, and that is one thing my father wanted me to do. Now I could be kicked out because I wanted to get loaded. My life is a mess and I need help. I have had the Big Book in my cell for years now, and it just acted as a paperweight. I came to the hole on Thursday, 9/29/2022. I brought the Big Book with me for the first time in three years. I was detoxing and I just picked up the book. I started reading "How It Works" and "There Is a Solution," and when I turned to the back to read the stories of experience, strength, and hope, they weren't there. It is a small Big Book, pocket-size, you know. Instead of the stories, it had A.A.'s main address, so I decided to write, just as I've heard we should do. There was a guy on a plane, and he asked the attendant for a drink and before she came back, he had reached in his pocket and pulled out his coin. That reminded him how important his sobriety was. Now look at me, I was looking for the stories and the A.A. address was there instead. I was supposed to be released April 2023, but now that is out the window. I can hope for April 2024. If I had kept going and went home, I would have died. So this is a good conscious moment." — **Travis D., 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).