



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Fall 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."*

THERE IS A SOLUTION

"Almost none of us liked the self-searching, leveling of our pride, the confession of shortcomings which the process requires for its successful consummation. But we saw that it really worked in others, and we had come to believe in the hopelessness and futility of life as we had been living it. When, therefore, we were approached by those in whom the problem had been solved, there was nothing left for us but to pick up the simple kit of spiritual tools laid at our feet. We have found much of heaven and we have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed."

—*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p.25

FROM A FORMER INMATE

"I have been sober three years, and in those three years I have become a self-taught concert photographer and graphic artist. I am currently working to patent and license a new type of photographic design. I spent 23 years in and out of corrections as an inmate, and I have been out since 1996. A.A. and its principals saved my life, because without A.A. I never would have stayed out of prison, let alone having my work known and having a dream job. I actually have a life now, and A.A. helped save me. Thank you. I found your pamphlet on "Corrections Correspondence," in a meeting and felt a need to try and help and maybe write to someone that has a chance of getting out someday. I have spent time in eight prisons, and I am blessed to be alive, and I know what those men go through. I didn't learn it in a classroom, in a sense, although I guess it ended up being one. I have succeeded in life outside of prison and I may have something to share that will help someone — that is my hope." — **Richard W., Pacific Region**

A.A. MEETINGS

—'A SOURCE OF STRENGTH'

"My name is Lloyd and I am an alcoholic. My life was consumed with the use of alcohol. I was trying to escape the painful feelings from being physically abused. No matter how much I drank I could

not make the pain go away. My drinking was out of control; I tried numerous times to stay sober and always failed. Prior to coming to prison I was in and out of the rooms of A.A. since the age of 14. Coming to prison has opened my eyes to how out of control my life has been. I am grateful for the meetings here. They have been, and continue to be, a source of strength for me. Today my life is better than it ever was. I have learned so much about myself and the reasons I ran to the bottle. Some days are a struggle, yet I am able to get through each struggle without a drink. With the help of my Higher Power I have overcome some tough situations. He gives me the ability to take a personal inventory and focus on how to make the necessary changes I need to make to remain sober. Each day is a learning experience and by changing my thinking I am open to the changes I need in my life. I look forward to hearing about others' experience, strength and hope." — **Lloyd B., Northeast Region**

"I know I said I was an addict and that caused confusion. Truth is I have been a struggling alcoholic for 20 years. I tried other programs, first being afraid to truly admit my problem, but the truth is A.A. hits 'spot on.' I enjoy the meetings." — **Kelly M., Southwest Region**

EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH AND HOPE

"I'm really looking forward to corresponding with an outside A.A. member. The amount of knowledge I gain from the outside members' experience, strength and hope is priceless. Especially considering I'm in solitary confinement and I have no other access to A.A. besides my blessed Big Book and monthly Grapevine (thank God), but the insight I get from the letters sent in from outside members is unparalleled. Please, please bless me with an outside member to correspond with. I'm really looking forward to exercising this gift by sharing my experience, strength and hope with someone, but most importantly, gaining from their experience, strength and hope. Thank you." — **Jody P., Southeast Region**

THE BIG BOOK, ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

"I have been sober for six months of thirty years of my life. I started with alcohol at eight years old; I wanted to be like Dad, who I thought was the greatest. I did have a great father and I have experienced a lot of good from him. I never believed in a Higher Power unless you were talking about 80 proof. This is my rock bottom. I lost my younger brother last November, and I don't know how much time I will get on this DUI charge. I have read a lot of the stories in the Big Book and can relate. I always thought I could handle everything, but that was a lie I kept telling myself. It's a blessing that I don't have any family or wife, and have never had kids of my own. I've been in many relationships. Now that I have been sober I can see the emotional hurt that I caused people. When

I walk out of here I won't have the family I once had, I'll have a new one. The more I read the Big Book I can see the mistakes I have made and I pray to God for another chance." — **Claude R., Southeast Region**

"I'm sitting in jail because of a DWI. While here I joined the A.A. meetings. As I read the A.A. book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, I came to realize that I am an alcoholic. I may not drink all the time but I am powerless over alcohol when I do drink. The book has helped me to understand that." — **Lorrie S., Northeast Region**

"I am incarcerated, and I will be for at least 18 more months. Can you please match me with someone to correspond with? A.A. has made life bearable in here. I have read every A.A. book written. I have read my Big Book cover-to-cover four times now, I can't get enough — it gives me hope!" — **Robert C., Northeast Region**

"I was self-committed to a mental institution. While there, at age 18, I was introduced to A.A. I even chaired A.A. meetings in prison, including Big Book and Grapevine meetings, the last of which I thought I invented! While in the mental institution I was given the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*. It was as if I had read it for the first time, no longer did I use pronouns such as we, or us. It has been solely, me or I, for this alcoholic! Words were jumping off the page at me. I also managed to get a copy of the Twelve and Twelve book." — **Steven M., Northeast Region**

IT WORKS!

"Until starting A.A. I did not realize I was an alcoholic. I thought just having a beer or a drink when I got home was ok, and I see now it was, but it did not stop there for me. I would drink to get a buzz and it effected my life, both at home and work. It took A.A. to help me realize this and for that I am grateful. Thank you, and from the bottom of my heart, thanks to Bill W. and friends for starting A.A. and helping me get my life back. I'm Mike, and I'm an alcoholic, and by the grace of God, I keep coming back, because it works, if I work it!" — **Michael F., East Central Region**

SETTING A GOAL

"I've set a personal goal for myself — I'd like to attend the International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous in Atlanta, Georgia, July 2-5, 2015. Can you send information?" — **Philip W., Southeast Region**

'A PROGRAM OF ACTION.'

"I love that this is a program of action. I have taken action by starting a Big Book study meeting and have opened myself up to walk through the Steps with others. At this time I'm working with three other A.A.s, and even though I don't understand too much Spanish, I attend Spanish meetings as well. I have learned that sometimes just being there speaks louder than words." — **Evan S., Pacific Region**

'HAPPY, JOYOUS AND FREE'

"I have been locked up for almost five years and still have more time to do. I've been going to our Sunday morning A.A. meeting the whole time. For the first few years, I listened, shared a little, read some, but something clicked in my head. I felt I needed to share more. I have a problem and I need to talk about it, not keep running from it. For the next two years I started speaking in most meetings, reading the literature and working through Steps One, Two and Three. Not wanting to let anyone into my life, I was afraid

to get a sponsor. I even wrote about it in an area newsletter. Again, something clicked and I got a sponsor; I am currently working Step One with him. Since I found my Higher Power and actually started thinking hard about A.A. and recovery, my life is great. Now I'm happy and healthy — mentally, physically and spiritually. I'm learning how to deal with my problems. I'm actually happier now than ever in my life. My head is clear, I now process my thoughts differently. Some people in here think I'm crazy, 'How can you be happy in prison, without your family?' But I am happy. I thank the guy who suggested to me years ago, that I should try A.A."

— **Scott A., Northeast Region**

WITH GRATITUDE

"I'm an alcoholic and currently doing 13 years. As an alcoholic I always knew my life was unmanageable, but I enjoyed drinking; it helped me numb my pain and forget my problems. I got introduced to A.A. while in a halfway house in 2005. I'm currently attending A.A. here every Tuesday and I'm grateful for the A.A. volunteers. Today I'm sober, although I still get that craving for a drink. I'm thankful to be alive and have another day sober, which isn't always easy." — **Cynthia R., Pacific Region**

"My name is Jay, and I've used alcohol and drugs for 30 years. I'm 45 now and have decided to quit drinking altogether. I also realize alcohol is the root of my many arrests — 17 due to my addictive lifestyle. I have hurt many people, including my two boys 15 and 16. This is my second time in prison, the first in 2004 was for a drinking related charge. This time is for something more serious and my release date is 2016. I started attending A.A. meetings here, and find them very useful now that I'm serious about quitting. I also started reading the A.A. book *Daily Reflections*; it blew me away on the first page. I can relate to everything I read, and also feel a strong connection to the passages. The book is brilliant and smart." — **Jay M., East Central Region**

CCS

"The prison correspondence service (CCS) has made a big difference in my life. God has a wonderful way of working through people. A.A. has done wonders. The Steps are priceless and I continually thank God. As long as I have the humility to be grateful, God will continue to provide." — **Paul A., 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.