



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Winter 2015

Dear A.A. Friends,

May you enjoy this Holiday Season in love and service. Your friends at the General Service Office wish you sobriety, peace and good will.

Now, 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."*

KEEPING HOPE, FAITH AND LOVE ALIVE

"Hi, my name is Joseph and I'm a recovering alcoholic. I found one of your books, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, and read through it. I am so amazed at some of the stories and great accomplishments made by the people in this book. I want to thank all of you for your dedication and determination to keep hope, faith and love alive in the hearts and minds of those who were lost. We as a people really do appreciate all the support and strength you instill in us, the victims of alcohol abuse. I am very blessed to be happy and still strong. I know there's a long road ahead of me." — **Joseph H., Southeast Region**

DON'T QUIT BEFORE THE MIRACLE

"I am a full descent Navajo Indian from Arizona and grew up in Texas. I have accepted my alcohol problem and need help. I currently attend A.A. meetings here at the county jail on Monday nights. To be honest, I have never participated fully in an A.A. group until now. I know that I have a problem and I am at the age where I am through with drinking. I am willing to do almost anything to maintain sobriety. The one person who never gave up on me was my Higher Power, God. The more involved I get in A.A., the more I see the true meaning of what the program is all about, helping the suffering alcoholic. One of the greatest things I have obtained from this experience is the love and understanding of my Higher Power. He has given me hope despite the darkness. A.A. has taught me to look at my inner self, and graciously welcome God into my life. 'One-day at-a-time' and 'Don't quit before the miracle happens,'

are now a part of my vocabulary. I look forward to continuing my walk with my Higher Power and continuing living a sober lifestyle."

— **Robert B., Southwest Region**

CUNNING, BAFFLING AND POWERFUL

"Many times, my illness tried to let me think it was OK to 'just have one,' but as we all know, it's cunning, baffling and powerful. Thinking about my ten years of drinking I don't remember one time without a blackout. I'm so thankful for the Fellowship of A.A. and the Wednesday Night Into Action Group. We have some great volunteers that come here and share their personal experiences with us. I'm also especially grateful for the Grapevines. I read 'Young and Sober,' Jan. 2015 edition and found it very inspirational that I'm not the only one my age (27) that got sober. I've read the Big Book. I get out soon and want to have everything ready so I can go right to a meeting." — **Christopher S., Southeast Region**

THE REWARDS OF SHARING

"I have been in and out of different A.A. meetings and have attempted to get sober. But I was always the guy in the back of the room, just there to get a paper signed; I was never truly 'in' the meeting. It is one of the best feelings I have felt in a long time to openly discuss and share my struggles, worries, triumphs and experiences with other people. I never understood what I could possibly get from meetings. Now I am

involved in these meetings and I learn so much from every single one I go to. I am currently trying to work the Steps in a more thorough manner, but find it hard to do in my situation." — **Matt B., West Central Region**

"My name is Alex, I am an alcoholic. I am 16 years old and sending this from a juvenile detention facility. I am possibly facing a year in the juvenile equivalent to prison. I've been in and out of the A.A. rooms since I was 14, and for the past two years have not been able to get together more than a few months of sobriety. A six-month binge landed me in the hospital twice and pleading guilty to a crime. I have, yet again reached one of many bottoms. I currently have 16 days sober. I have been kicked out of three treatment program in the last six months, but this time I'm ready with no excuses. I am done fighting. I manage to sleep every night starting with a one-hour workout routine, then a story out of the Big Book and a prayer. I am sending this mostly because I am bored and saw the address in the Big Book. I can't talk to another alcoholic while I am here, so at least I know one will read this." — **Alex N., Southwest Region**



“Since working my Steps and taking one day at a time, I plan to try to make amends and allow my Higher Power to do for me what I can’t do for myself. I will be waiting for a correspondent. I want to tell my story, but I just wanted to touch base, so that I can receive someone to share my experience and they share theirs. It took me a while since being connected to this service; I wanted to be sure I was ready, and I am. I am also seeking my diploma. Thank you for your time. I will continue to use the tools of the program, one day at a time, to stay on the road to recovery. I remember that promise each day. I am always asking myself, have I spent time using my A.A. program today? What can I do to keep my promise to myself?” — **Pamela L., Southeast Region**

IMPORTANCE OF SERVICE

“Last year our facilitator made parole and we were all like ‘what now?’ Being older and able to talk loud I ended up being voted the new facilitator. Being in prison, someone has to get things going, get books and literature out. And by getting things going, I have been honored to serve my fellow alcoholic inmates. I have surely been so blessed by being in a service position. I hate to admit it, but it’s here that I feel I finally got the program. Being in service, I have come out of myself, I can speak to a group of hardened convicts, who are by nature skeptical. I will still be active in our group until I leave.” — **David W., Southwest Region**

WILLINGNESS

“I am 53 years old and I am happy to say my sobriety date is 4/11/2008, almost 7½ years! Although all of that time has been as an inmate, I know it counts just as much! I struggled with my disease for 28 years until losing my freedom completely, which became my rock bottom and finally brought ‘willingness.’ A fellow inmate asked me to listen to her Fifth Step! Although I’m not sure if I possess all of the qualifications, I truly feel flattered and blessed, as it was an auspicious experience for us both. In the meantime, I’d be very appreciative if you advise me how I can go about being a part of A.A.’s prison correspondence.” — **Mary R., East Central Region**

“Because of my arrival to state prison everything has changed; I’ve had my ups and downs but I am hanging in there and still sober. I still have some time to go and I don’t want to lose what I learned in the Fellowship of A.A. I am 31 years old and I feel that I still have a whole life ahead of me. But for me the real test is going to be upon my release; it scares me to death and I need to learn how to be strong and more than willing to stay sober. I have hit rock bottom and have no other way than to go up, I just need help to know how. I am open to tips, suggestions, even advise. I had a Big Book but I found out that it falls apart when you actually read it cover to cover. God bless you and easy does it.” — **F.R., Pacific Region**

“I am currently incarcerated in a county jail. A few weeks ago an A.A. meeting was announced for us inmates and I attended. I was familiar with A.A. and its Twelve Steps, but I guess I was never really too sold on the idea of the whole thing. Maybe just too immature, or just not ready. I’ve always believed in God. I was introduced to alcohol at a young age, and was hooked right away. Long story short, I’ve been battling this addiction for 25 years now. It’s ruined my life and anyone who has and does care about me has been affected.” — **Erin E., Southwest Region**

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

“Thank you for all you do. I am serving a life sentence for a crime committed under the influence. In a lot of ways, it seemed my life was over until I got involved in a one-year recovery program, based on the Twelve Steps of A.A. It is not easy taking a hard look at oneself and taking responsibility for one’s life. I graduated the

program. Last year my Dad died. I am grateful that we were both sober and had a good relationship, which was not always the case. Today all my relationships are better. My family even says that they are proud of me and the changes that I’ve made in my life. None of this would have been possible without A.A. As I continue on this journey I would like the option of corresponding with an outside A.A. member.” — **Eric F., Southwest Region**

“With this incarceration it’s time for me to sober up and open my eyes to the disease I have from alcohol. I freely thank God I never hit or killed anyone, but the hurt and embarrassment I have put my family and friends through. I have to do something to make me the real person I am — a sober good man, Dad and friend who is there to help the next alcoholic who is walking in my shoes.” — **Todd B., East Central Region**

“I am the G.S.R. (general service representative) for both meetings here and correspond with outside members to help inside members achieve sobriety. I believe this is the A.A. way, because you can’t keep it unless you give it away. What once was a joke, has now become reality. I can clearly see a new perspective in life thanks to the A.A. program and the Grace of God. Learning has become fun, helping has become a way of life I want to continue. I am getting released soon and need a place to start over. A place with supportive services and the inspiration to make and live out a lifelong commitment. I need to be around positive people with the same goals as mine. I want to do well in life and not return to prison. I will work very hard to be that person God wants me to be. I know I can change, because change comes from within. It’s in my heart.” — **Don P., Southeast Region**

“Alcohol changed me from a moral, self-efficient, independent man, to a bewildered, frustrated, conniving, disobedient alcoholic. Alcohol has, without any doubt or question, lowered my standards in all aspects of my life. It’s turned me into a person I never once was; a man with no self-control or respect for himself, a man without morals, worries, or care of his self-worth, or responsibilities as a man and a father. I became an alcoholic at 16 years old. I’m now 26, and wouldn’t be able to tell you anything about my daughter. Not even something as simple as what her favorite color is. I’ve managed to burn all my bridges with people I considered close friends. My life has hit rock bottom and I have nothing to show for it except my G.E.D. I knew something had to change, when on the cart in the dayroom I came across an A.A. book. I now follow the Twelve Steps, and apply them to my day-to-day life. I’m more spiritual now and know my life depends on my sobriety as well as my obedience to my spiritual principles. Life for me is no longer what I can get out of it, but what I can give.” — **Anthony B., Pacific 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.