



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Winter 2017/2018

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."*

Feeling "A Part Of"

"I currently have a lot of time to reflect on my life. Since coming to prison, I have completely changed my life through meetings and fellowshiping with my A.A. family. I have real friends, where I had none before. My drinking companions could hardly be called my real friends, although when drunk we seemed to have the closest kind of friendship. My idea of friendship has changed. Friends are no longer people I can use for my own pleasure or profit. Friends are now people who understand me and I them, whom I can help and who can help me to live a better life. I have learned not to hold back and wait for friends to come to me, but to reach out and be there to meet them halfway, openly and freely." — **James R., North East Region**

"I still have issues, but honestly I feel a little bit more connected to the world now than I have in the past. There was a time that I had sobriety. I attended meetings and had ongoing therapy. I fell in love with a woman and we got married. We started a life and worked hard, but we became complacent in our sobriety. We both messed up, but both of us are striving to find our balance through God and A.A. meetings." — **Fernando P., South East Region**

"I was introduced to A.A. while in prison the first time, but then it wasn't for me, or so I thought. 'It's for winos and bums!' Of course, I was just like them, but I did not know it. In the end it didn't matter how I got to A.A. At first I came for the donuts and coffee, whether my mind was opened or closed to the possibility of getting help in A.A. Then I discovered the pamphlet 'It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell.' I thought I was alone with my suffering, but I found people who were just like me, people who had struggled with alcoholism but who found a way out. By listening to what these people had to say,

I was able to recognize many of the problems that alcohol had caused in my own life. For me, it was the first step toward recovery."

— **John T., Pacific Region**

Ready to Change

"I would wake up and think about how long I should wait to drink a beer or some liquor. I reasoned with myself that 9 a.m. was not too early. I turned myself in this year for a DWI in 2013, an accident involving an 18-wheeler with my daughter and stepdaughter in the car. They are fine and didn't get hurt, but I was in ICU for a while and had physical therapy for over a year. You would think that would sober me up! My husband left me and won't let me see my daughter, and my family has stopped talking to me. I heard about A.A. for years but never thought I had a problem. During my reception into the state prison, I picked up an A.A. book that seemed all right. I'm trying everything I can to get better for my daughter so I can be in her life. I've been drinking since I was very

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young, and I do want to stop. I received my desire chip last night at my first meeting ever. Although this is a long way from who I believed I was, I want to see if A.A. will work for me. I'm ready to change my life." — **Jessica L., South East Region**

"I was just released from jail, but once again, I'm back in. Too many times to count — and every time I get locked up it's because of alcohol. I have been drinking most of my life. I'm 50 years old and I want to stop. I'm now ready to admit that I am powerless over alcohol, that my life has become unmanageable. For the first time in my life I have read the Big Book from the beginning to the end. So, I would like to thank Alcoholics Anonymous all over the world for carrying the message to me." — **Derrick C., East Central Region**

"I am a Native American, and I have finally decided to write to A.A. I have had the address for a while — like two months. I have a drinking problem. You know how I know this? Because I am back in prison for my second DUI. While I have been in here this time, I have started to want to change the way I am. I have been an alcoholic since I was a teenager — my whole family was, too. The majority of my family passed away due to alcoholism. I realize that my kids won't write me because I am in here again. I miss them so much, but I want to be a better person first. Sometimes I try to

imagine myself sober out there, and then I just laugh, because I need to be 'out there' to find that out, but for now I want to change 'in here.' I'm reaching out because in here most of the ladies don't want the same thing. We have A.A. in here and it brings hope to me. I enjoy being sober now and having all the benefits — good health, happiness and my family — well, slowly that's happening! I am taking this very seriously. Thank you."

— Joy M., Pacific Region

"I am not from here. I came here knowing nobody, trying to start over, but it didn't work out like that. I ended up with a 15-year sentence for aggravated assault. Reason why? I was supporting my alcohol and drug addiction. During this time in prison, I've been going to A.A. and I have learned a few things I didn't see in myself before. I believe I have had some kind of spiritual awakening."

— Carlos M., South West Region

Giving Away What Was So Freely Given

"Hello, my name is Rodney. I'm a grateful alcoholic: I'm grateful that I'm sober today. For 17 years I was a selfish, self-centered alcoholic. My booze came before any responsibility. My alcoholic life was the story from the Big Book about the tornado wreaking havoc. I left a swath of angry, insulted family and friends everywhere I went. It all came to a screeching halt on October 17, 2009, when I committed a violent crime while highly intoxicated. Two families' lives were forever changed that tragic day. During the many months I spent in the county jail, I started going to A.A. It was in those meetings that I learned what true freedom really is. I learned not only how to solve my drinking problem but also how to remove all of my defects of character. I have been going to meetings for nine years now through three facilities, and the A.A. way of life has been a lifesaving, life-changing experience for me. Today, as I chair my Wednesday night meeting with true humility, I'm truly grateful for our Fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope each and every day. But for the grace of God, I'm sober today. I currently sponsor two guys and am walking them through the Steps, sharing the wisdom and knowledge that was so selflessly given to me. My sponsor has truly been a blessing to me through this time of my life. As I begin my next endeavor of going to school, I can honestly say that coming to prison wasn't the end: it's the beginning of my story! I know I'm only one drink away from destruction, so I take life one day at a time. I stay focused on how I can be of service to the Fellowship and to my fellow alcoholic. To keep what I have, I have to give it away." — Rodney J., South West Region

"During the many months I spent in the county jail, I started going to A.A. It was in those meetings that I learned what true freedom really is."

"I have been sober for a long time, but it never really sank in until a year ago, when I started working the Twelve Steps and Traditions and reading the Big Book. This gave me a real understanding of what the A.A. Fellowship has been doing for me and so many others all these years, and it has affected my life in so many ways,

both wonderful and sad. Because of my new understanding, I realize I am not the center of the universe. It's not about me 'getting'; it's about how I can carry the message to alcoholics everywhere in the world. It is my heart that speaks when I carry the message, and I find myself trying to be the first guy at my home group meeting just to set up chairs or pass out literature. I have a burning desire to participate at my meetings — to share my stories and listen to everybody else. It's a privilege and an honor to be able to share my story in Sharing From Behind the Walls and with alcoholics everywhere." — Charles G., North East Region

"I would like to thank A.A. as a whole for making me feel like an A.A. member. Even though there are no A.A. meetings in here, I still feel a part of the Fellowship. A.A. has changed my life. Since being here I have honestly and thoroughly worked the Twelve Steps again; I asked the chaplain to hear my Step Five. I am now temporarily sponsoring two others who have a desire to stop drinking. It is definitely a powerful experience to give others what I was given so freely." — Cody E., South East Region

Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired

"I had my first drink when I was 15 or 16, but it was not a problem back then: I drank once in a blue moon, and only when I was with an adult. The desire to drink became a problem for me after I turned 21 and started drinking a lot. It just became more and more frequent until I wanted to drink every day. I still have 'relapse thinking,' but I really, truly want to stay sober. I'm sick and tired of what alcohol has been doing, but it's hard for me. I hope that one day at a time the want for a beer will go away, and that sobriety will get easier the longer I stay sober." — Sabrina W., South West Region

"I am currently doing a five-year sentence for child endangerment from a DUI. Believe me when I say this: I never would have thought that I would put my children in danger, but we seem to forget that we are dealing with alcohol — 'cunning, baffling, powerful.' My alcoholism also pushed my wife of 10 years away from me, and all of my other family does not reach out to me. You would think — or I should say, most normal people would think — 'That would make me drink *more* if that happened to me.' Well, to tell you truthfully, I have been drinking since I was 10, and now, 39 years later, it has put me back in prison for the third time. I am ready for a change. I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired." — Darrell B., South West Region

From Hopelessness to Hope

"I was introduced to Alcoholics Anonymous in 2010 and never took it too seriously. There were too many 'yets' in my life and not enough desperation, but now I am convinced that I am a real alcoholic, one of the hopeless variety, who is now incarcerated on an eight-year prison sentence. It took what it took, but now I want to take the Twelve Steps of A.A., and for that I need the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous." — Jason K., South West Region

"The good thing is that this place has actually given me so much more than I ever expected. I have been sober since March of this year. I don't have much support from family and friends outside of this place, so while the other women here get greeting cards and letters, it takes all I have not to burst into tears. But I do

“Willing to go to any lengths...”

“My name is Anna, I am an alcoholic, and I will soon be 63 years old. I am currently incarcerated for six DUIs, five of which I incurred in 10 months. I was very fortunate that I did not hurt anyone physically during my relapse, and each day when I wake up I thank my Higher Power for that. I first got sober in August of 1983. I began to build a new life, and I obtained a sponsor and met my now ex-husband. We had our first child together; she was born two and a half months early due to physical abuse from my then husband. For many years to come, I would hide that abuse from others in A.A., except from my sponsor. She asked me many times to face this issue, but I was never able to leave my husband. In July 1989 we had a girl; she is a wonderful child. In February of 1992, our second child was born — also very early due to physical abuse. I went back to college after my sponsor encouraged me to be more independent, and I received my first degree in 1995. In 2009, I received a bachelor’s degree in management. Several weeks later, my sponsor died. I had 25 years at the time. My sponsor was my rock. Before she died, she asked me to do one thing, and that was to leave my husband. So, how did I end up in jail? How did I relapse? I failed to get a new sponsor, and my focus went away from my A.A. program to other things. I used to sit in meetings and hear others share about relapse. I’d say, ‘How can you drink after 30 years of being sober?’ But by July of 2012, at 29 years sober, I started drinking again. I got my first DUI in March of 2013. Too embarrassed to go back to A.A., I tried to do it all on my own and got two more DUIs. I got drunk and went for a pack of cigarettes — hence my fourth DUI. I went to jail for five days as I had a warrant for the January DUI. I got my sixth DUI when I had an accident with a tractor trailer. On November 30, 2015, the judge ordered me to jail with no bail, and I believe that saved my life. So I use December 2015 as my sobriety date, and I am willing to do whatever I need to stay sober. I am very grateful to be alive and to be able to tell my story. My name is Anna, and I am an alcoholic.” — **Anna D., North East Region**

have my sobriety — I keep telling myself that. I am now starting to learn of peace, happiness, usefulness and tranquility in my life. I was so hopeless before, and I never realized that until I sobered up. A.A. gave that to me, and I will always have the greatest appreciation a person can have for something. I try to do better every day. I really hope I do because I cannot go back to that life, ever! I can’t wait for the day to come that I can get out of here and go to A.A. meetings every day and drink coffee.” — **Melissa T., East Central Region**

“My name is Scott, and I’m an alcoholic. I’ve been involved in A.A. for almost eight years, and I have been locked up for the same amount of time. It is not easy being in prison, let alone being an alcoholic, but I am grateful that I found A.A. and that it has saved my life. Today, my life is great despite being locked up. My head is clear: I’m actively working the Steps with a sponsor, and I can see when my thinking is wrong and needs to be changed. I found taking the Twelve Steps and attending meetings help to fill the void alcohol once took up. I’m lucky here — I have two A.A. meetings and two other 12-step meetings to attend to help keep me active in my recovery. I just received a one-year parole kit and my sponsee told me, ‘God has plans for you, and maybe he wants you to spend another year helping me work the Steps.’ (I’m working with my sponsee; I get a lot out of helping him.) I thank the guy who gave me the push I needed to attend my first A.A. meeting almost eight years ago. Thank you, Alcoholics Anonymous and those volunteers, for offering hope to the hopeless.” — **Scott A., North East Region**

The Daily Maintenance of Our Spiritual Condition

“‘Jails, institutions and death’: I have experienced them all. Thanks to my Higher Power, even though I’ve died many types of death, I’m still alive. I am in an institution for the mentally ill (criminally insane). I underestimated the value of the A.A. program and my relationship with God. After working the program for some time now, I still believe that my sobriety is contingent upon the daily maintenance of my spiritual condition. Because of this, I enjoy

my sanity once again, thanks to God and the A.A. way of life.” — **Samuel Z., South West Region**

“I have been sober since December 7, 2013. A.A. has made me a better person, and it has saved my life. I love the A.A. program and the people in it. I need more recovery and want it badly, so I read my Big Book and try to practice my Steps every day.” — **Cameron G., South West Region**

The Gift of Desperation

“After becoming deeply entrenched in the A.A. community at the prison I was in and diligently taking the Twelve Steps, I began sneaking a little on the weekends. I understand that honesty is one of the most important parts of the program, and I’m terrified that I am ‘constitutionally incapable of being honest’ as the Big Book describes. I am lost and in desperate need of help. What I have come to realize is this: I am an alcoholic of the gravest kind. I’m completely crushed at present, devastated and isolated in the hole with only my Big Book. My God is telling me to reach out and find more like me. I know I can get this right, with a little guidance from the outer A.A. community.” — **Graham F., Pacific Region**

“All alcohol ever did for me was to lead me down a path of prison and destruction. I’ve been sober now for 13 years. I got involved in A.A. after a board hearing denied me for parole. They said I needed to attend A.A. meetings, so I started going, but my drinking didn’t stop. I used to be drunk in the A.A. meetings, but I started listening to some of the stories of the guys who I knew had stopped drinking — guys who had similar stories to mine and who had turned their lives around. That was when I realized that change is possible.” — **Robert R., Pacific Region**

“I am an alcoholic. I seemed to have hit rock bottom a large number of times; it’s only now I have come to realize that I had a problem: denial. My life had become unmanageable for the last three months. I have three DWIs although I deserve so many more. I cannot count the number of public intoxications I have had. My drinking is out of control. I have never seriously decided to quit until

now. I am no longer in denial. I would like to start working the Twelve Steps with a sponsor as soon as possible.” — **Amy W., South West Region**

“Finally admitting it truthfully, I am an alcoholic. I’m 32 years old and alcohol has ruined my life. I am currently incarcerated. So many birthdays and school dances missed, so much time... wasted. Money literally pissed away (forgive my vulgarity), and fights in jail. I won’t do this anymore... I can’t. I’m really done! And I can’t go it alone. Any and all the help you can provide me would be gratefully received.” — **Joshua B., South West Region**

Working the Twelve Steps

“I am 53 years old and have three felony DWI convictions. I have been in and out of the A.A. program since 1982. I have had some successful periods of sobriety but find myself now at the point of no return with alcohol. I have identified the Steps that I hadn’t completed as thoroughly as I should have, and I am currently doing them again with the help of an A.A. sponsor during my period of incarceration.” — **Diana P., West Central Region**

“This is not my first felony DUI. I had found A.A., got sober, and stayed sober until I had my third baby in September 2015. Unlike the first two deliveries, I had severe postpartum depression this time, but by the time it was properly diagnosed and treated, I was already in relapse mode. I went back out for five or six months until I picked up another felony DUI. They held me for two weeks with no bond. When I got out, I drank for two more days. So now here I sit, waiting for my sentencing. I look forward to starting the Twelve Steps again.” — **Amy S., North East Region**

“Self-Seeking Will Slip Away...”

“I used to be ungrateful and selfish. But all I cared about then has changed. I’m grateful to have Alcoholics Anonymous and a God of my understanding in my life. Today I’m an alcoholic in recovery. My sobriety date is December 31, 2015, thanks to A.A. I couldn’t do it alone. Keeping sober is the most important part of my life. The most important decision I ever made was the decision to give up drinking.” — **Derrick M., East Central Region**

“My name is Stan H., and I am an alcoholic. I was an alcoholic way before I ever took my first drink. I grew up believing that ‘real men’ drank beer, and I had plenty of proof. I really enjoyed the way it made me feel invincible. I needed a few drinks in order to socialize with others and to feel like I fit in — to feel like I was good enough, funny enough and talented enough. My biggest problem with this line of reasoning was that I always needed more to keep feeling good enough! I never once thought that my real problem was that I was insecure and felt inadequate, and that I could raise my self-esteem. The male role models in my life all spent their lives sitting in bars, so at 17 years old, serving in the U.S. Army in Germany, I began to drink. I drank and drank until I hated everything about myself, and one day, while drunk, I took a man’s

life out of anger and pride. After about 10 years in prison, I started going to A.A. meetings, and I started to listen to other people tell my own story. Strange how we were all so similar. Eventually I started sharing, asked for a sponsor, worked the Twelve Steps, and began to heal. Today, I have passed 29 years sitting in a prison cell. I’m 19 years sober; I sponsor others; and I am blessed to be in recovery.” — **Stan H., Pacific Region**

Meetings on the Inside

“I have a sobriety date of January 26, 2016, thanks to my willingness to work our A.A. program and completely give myself to the simple instructions. These last 18 months have been life-changing, and I’m experiencing the Ninth Step Promises. I have read A.A. literature — the Big Book and the ‘Twelve and Twelve.’ I became the chairperson for meetings here three days per week. It is an awesome experience to be of service and to carry the message to other alcoholics.” — **Robert W., South West Region**

“I am in prison and attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. We meet once a week for two hours, on Fridays. I’ve been in prison almost 20 years now, with five and a half years left to do. I’ve been sober now for almost all of those 20 years. My sobriety means everything to me, and I must stay sober if I am going to make it when I get out. I am 61 years old and I don’t want to die in prison.” — **David H., South East Region**

“Thankfully, we have a few wonderful volunteers who allow us to have a weekly A.A. meeting. I’m an alcoholic and drug addict of 35 years who now has three and half years of sobriety. Without A.A. I would not be able to maintain sobriety in a place like this.” — **Chad L., East Central 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).