



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Fall 2008

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."*

POWERLESS

"Hello, my name is David and I'm an alcoholic. My life is out of control, and I'm completely powerless over alcohol. Thirty days ago I ran out of booze, went into a grocery store and tried to steal a bottle of wine. I did this right in front of my children. I got caught and was thrown in jail. Sitting here I realize that I have hit rock bottom and need help desperately! I'm 47 years old and have been drinking since I was nine. I've come to realize that I've lost who I really am, and I don't know how to function in society sober anymore. My family is suffering, my life is crashing around me. I have an A.A. book (blue) and have been reading it daily and nightly. Every story is me! Chapters 1-11 are a godsend to me."—**David G., Pacific Region**

"I am an alcoholic who has been drinking since 10 years old. I had my first drink at age 7. I am 37 years old and currently in lockdown at a prison. I am a gang drop-out seeking a new way of life. I traded the book *Silence of the Lambs* for the A.A. Big Book as a joke, and [the joke was on me] what I read blew my mind! I've turned my life over after that. I'm waiting to leave the prison. I'm on a violation. I should leave in 5 more months, but I am scared. Can you help me overcome my alcohol sickness and help me rebuild my life?"— **Anonymous, Pacific Region**

"My name is Don and I'm an alcoholic and before being incarcerated my life was impossible. The more I drank the more I withdrew from life. Every day was a mission to get alcohol. I collected cans, panhandled, I even mowed lawns so I could get a bottle. I didn't eat, I didn't take care of personal hygiene, I lived in the woods. But I didn't care as long as I had my bottle. On a warm summer night I passed out next to a tree on the other side of the road. A short while later, I was being woken up by a police officer. The officer felt sorry for me, so instead of locking me up, he drove me to a train station. There at the station I slept peacefully on a bench. The next day I returned to that spot where I passed out, and that same tree that I was leaning on was demolished, snapped in two like a twig, debris everywhere. It turns out that very same tree on that very same night was hit by a drunk driver,

and if I had not been woken up by that nice cop then I could have died. I took that as a sign and swore to myself that I would never drink again. I signed myself into a crisis center where I found A.A. For a while, I was doing good, staying sober, working the program to the best of my ability. Until one day the crisis center banned smoking. That made me angry and bitter because tobacco had nothing to do with my program. I couldn't accept the new rule and my resentment made me leave the crisis center and I relapsed harder than ever before. In a few short days I woke up in a jail cell, not knowing how I got there and still not being able to have a cigarette. It turns out that I robbed someone. So now I'm doing time. Today my head is clear, and I feel a little closer to God than before."—**Donald B., Northeast Region**

"After 12 months sober in 2003-4, I had 'just one drink.' I did this for a month or two before I had just two. Six months later—I was a full-blown alcoholic. I had a nice Cadillac and over \$1,000.00 saved in my checking account. After marrying a woman I met in a bar we traveled to many towns in one long drunk. A fifth of Vodka at home, an argument, passing out, and a later call to the police brought the police to our 'Domestic Disturbance.' I refused to go outside. They sent the dog in. I came out with the dog on my upper thigh. This last drunk, on Aug. 26th, 2005, was my last day drunk and free. I've been in jail and prison and A.A. since. Please help me to contact an A.A. group to have a meeting the day I get out. I've done A.A. before. I wasn't ready. I'm ready. I'm serious. I'm an alcoholic with 2 1/2 years sobriety."—**Erik R., Pacific Region**

'HOW IT WORKS'

"My name is Vinny and I am an alcoholic who is on his 5th prison term in three different states. All together I served a total of 24 years and at the end of this term I'll have, with juvenile schools for boys included, 30 years in some type of institution. I was brought to my first A.A. meeting October 17, 2006, by a friend who was an A.A. member, on the day after I was released from prison. I had just done six years. I wasn't even out 12 hours when this friend met me. I was throwing down my second 12-pack of beer and was very drunk. The next day I was at an A.A. meeting and don't remember anything, except that I had a severe hangover, and I needed a drink. I also remembered thinking 'what the hell are all these crazy people so happy about?' Well, right there and then I decided never to go to another meeting and I told my friend, 'I love you like a brother, but I can drink and control myself.' He didn't push A.A. down my throat, he just said, 'Brother, I'll be here when you come around.' Since the time he spoke those words he passed away. He was 69 years old and died sober in his sleep. Bob served 26 years straight in prison for murder. He was sober the entire 26 years in prison, where he himself found A.A., and an additional 15 years on the street sober. Forty-one years sober, may he rest in peace. I will always remember his kindness toward me. [Several incidents later...] It took six more years in prison and five years on parole to follow. I was only home eight months from my last term. Long story short, here I sit. Since getting back to

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prison, I've started going to A.A. I have enjoyed my longest period of being sober while in prison. I am now sober since January 2 of 2008, and for me that's the longest period of time since I started drinking at 12 years old. I am trying to grasp the Steps of A.A., yet I need help and am not afraid to ask for it. I love to read the Big Book. I read How It Works over and over again because I seem to be drawn and stuck to that chapter. I wish my friend Bob were still with us, I would have had a sponsor. I just thank God every morning I have another day sober in my life, and I mean that, I really do. I always thought that running to God for answers made you weak. How wrong I was! I am ready to do this for myself and become an A.A. member for life. If I don't, as I heard before, *alcohol* is right outside these walls, doing push-ups and pull-ups waiting for me to get out. Thanks and God bless you all."—**Vincent D., Northeast Region**

"I was going to meetings and doing 'my own' recovery program, just getting my feet wet and staying on the outskirts for 14 months. Prior to this, I was on parole for my fourth DUI. After getting out of prison, I put myself straight into a treatment program, both to beat the system and hopefully find the magic cure to my affliction. Obviously neither worked, I graduated with flying colors. (You bet I can program up and tell them what they want to hear). Anyway, I graduated and was even living in a clean and sober house, doing my very best to fake it, and of course I relapsed, slowly at first and then BAM!—here I am. All the hope my family, my children and myself had had was crushed (or so it would seem). For the first time in my life, I got down on my knees and prayed. November 19, 2007, in the early morning, in jail, my recovery truly began. There was no white flash or awe inspiring change. It has been slow and sure; for one who never could or would believe in God, an amazing change has happened. I have been thoroughly and honestly going through my Big Book and Twelve and Twelve, doing my morning readings in my *Daily Reflections* and *As Bill Sees It*, and meditating. Yes, even I have been working with my Higher Power who, for lack of a better name, I call God. My family has noticed a profound change in me and how I am dealing with my situation. I take full responsibility for my actions and see just how blessed that no one was hurt. I am so grateful I can ask my Higher Power to take away my drinking thoughts, I don't know how but it works. I'm working on Step Four but am kind of stumped. Who can I share with on Step Five? Can someone help walk me through it? My life has got to change. No...I've got to change. I know the only way this will happen, and the only way I will stop this vicious, insane cycle is not to drink and I cannot do this on my own. I have tried my way and so many other ways. Now, finally I am trying A.A.'s way and in this short time (six months) I feel and see a profound change.—**Ron S., Pacific Region**

PEOPLE, PLACES & THINGS

"Hi, my name is Michael and I am an alcoholic. Once again I am serving time. I managed to put together 3 ½ years of sober living—after putting my family through Hell!! Anyway, toward the end of my recent period of sobriety I started slacking off on my meetings, not hanging with my sponsor or my friends in A.A. I started dating an old friend of mine—someone who drank and drugged. Things were going good (I am sure you can see where this is headed) for a good while, probably 3 or 4 months. Well, one thing lead to another, I finally stopped going to meetings blowing off all commitments, voice mails, etc. Then my mother went into the hospital and never got out, God rest her soul, and me being the alcoholic I decided to drink—I used my mother's death as an excuse to drink. I knew exactly what I was doing and what would happen if I picked up a drink—and it did. So here I am writing you from prison once again. Anyway, I'm hoping to hear from a member. Thanks for listening."—**Mike T., Northeast Region**

"To Whom It May Concern, I would like to start off by stating that I believe A.A. is a fantastic program that works wonders on a daily basis. I haven't always been of this ideal when it came to A.A., but after years of coming in and out of the program I've come to the conclusion that sobriety is best for myself and my family. Admitting that I was an alcoholic wasn't the hard part, it was the fact that I still yearned for the 'good ole times' in the past. Time and time again, especially lately, that search for the past has ended me up in the same place I'm writing from—and that is jail. Over the last five years I've lost a marriage, house, license, jobs, contact with my children, and the respect and trust of my family and friends. I kept pointing the finger at everyone else for my downfall, but the common denominators were alcohol and myself. I'm more than ready to stay sober once I am released. I just hope and pray that I can surround myself with the right people to assist me in this endeavor. I regularly attend A.A. while incarcerated, but only attended sporadically once I'm out. Also, I neglected to get a sponsor. I know what needs to be done, but have such a difficult time with the follow-through part of things. I'm reading the Big Book almost daily to keep my mind wrapped around sobriety. I'm not sure if there are any other readings that could be sent or advised of, but any assistance would be greatly appreciated in my struggle for sanity and sobriety. I've only heard of the proverbial bottom until now, but now I'm in it and can't wait to get out. Thank you for your time and patience regarding my battle with alcoholism, my attempt to hold on to my sanity, and my efforts to put my life back together—one day at a time."—**Joseph C., West Central Region**

'CONSTANT VIGILANCE'

"Ladies and Gentlemen: *Oh, it is so true* that a relapse happens as if the disease has been active! After 13 years of sobriety, I call 2007 the 'Year of Relapse,' I'm pleased to say that I'm approaching eight months of sobriety, though. My escapades have landed me in a Correctional Center for Women. Inmates are only allowed to receive new books (no used, underlined, loved and taken-to-meetings publications of *any* sort), so I write you to request a Big Book to serve me for the next six months—please and thank you. If you'd like for me to stock the literature rack here with brochures, I'd be glad to accept the responsibility for that. I understand that I may be the only Big Book some of these women see in their lives, and there's one A.A. meeting weekly for new arrivals, so the book I receive will be put to lots of use—and upon release I will donate it to my home group."—**Susan B., 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.

PRERELEASE CONTACT

If you write to G.S.O. within three to six months of your release date and give us your release date and your destination (city and state), 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 "outside" A.A.

We look forward to hearing from you.