



# SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Fall 2023

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."\*

## One Long Rollercoaster Ride

Since walking into the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous, this fellowship has given me my life back. This is where I found the God of my understanding. The program has and continues to teach me how to exercise and cultivate love, peace, joy, happiness, freedom, serenity, sobriety, contentment, purpose and to have balance on a day-to-day basis.

"I grew up in a broken home. My father was an individual who struggled with addictions of his own. He lashed out by expressing his emotions with verbal and physical abuse towards our mother, my sister and I. I was in and out of foster care from the age of 4 until I was 16 years old. Our home was dysfunctional on so many levels. As I started to travel on this journey called life, I allowed myself to latch onto folks who were as broken and wounded as I was in spirit, soul, body, mind, and heart. Unfortunately, I started to covet and worship materialistic worldly possessions, people, places, and things that gradually led me down a path of destruction. I hurt a lot of people with my words and actions, such as my children, their mothers, other family, friends, and my community at large. I started using substances at the age of 16, such as alcohol. I experimented from time to time with street drugs. Because of my reckless, riotous, and immoral living, this led to broken relationships. It also led to several jail terms. I lost jobs

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due to my attendance several times. I lived in a world of denial. In my own mind I believed everyone else was the problem, not me. This insanity went on for many decades. Deep down inside, I did not know how to be a father, friend, partner, or mentor. I was spiritually lost and spiritually separated from God, blind, dead, enslaved, and helpless and in need of a savior who I have since found. So, in regard to my offense, it was a huge wake up call and this incarceration certainly got my attention. I really was determined to get serious about life and recovery. And that, my friends, I did, with the help of A.A. I will close this letter off by saying I am looking forward to growing in this wonderful program with you all. God Bless." — **Stephen D., Western Canada Region**

## A Newcomer Asks

My name is Ricci, and I am an alcoholic. I am in custody at a County Jail. To be honest I guess I am just trying to reach out for help. I don't know where else to turn. I don't have anyone to call or ask for help. I am at rock bottom and trying to overcome my addiction and get some help. I'm so sick of waking up in jail. I am so sick of feeling sorry for myself once I sober up. I have flashbacks that haunt me in my sleep. Alcohol has ruined everything in my life. I just want to know about A.A. I am willing to try anything. I just want to be sober and fix what's left of my life. Like I said, I just don't know where to turn anymore. Just trying to reach out because my way isn't working. I hope this reaches someone that can point me in the right direction. Thank you for taking the time to read this. Please help. — **Ricci M., Southeast Region**

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## No More Half Measures

I would like to share some of my experiences, strength, and hope with others who are in prison. My name is Antonio. I was born and raised in a bad neighborhood, around drugs,

alcohol, and gangs, and I am a product of that environment. Growing up I picked up addiction at a very young age. At first, like any young kid with no real-life worries or stress, it was fun and exciting. I realize now that it was more to numb me from daily struggles and depression. My alcoholism and addiction started off as just going to a friend's drinking and smoking weed, harmless you would think, then with more frequent use

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*"I am a believer and will carry what I have learned here onto the streets to help our youth."*

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due to higher tolerance. I would start to rebel, become aggressive, violent and began the first step of my criminal life. I have attended A.A. and other 12 step programs while incarcerated, but to be honest I never applied myself, I never paid attention. I was that guy to sit in the back hoping that I was never called on, as I counted down every second until the meeting was over. I half measured the meetings as I did my life.

Now I believe that I am a new man, a man who has purpose, a father who is more than capable of protecting and caring for his kids. I have been here in county jail 17 months now, and for the past 10 months I have been a porter in the mental health unit, helping many affected by the excessive use of alcohol and other substances. Our minds begin to get infected. I have met so many good souls in this unit. I have had the pleasure of being part of the therapy they offer in our unit. One thing I am very proud of is the workout program. Running can clear the mind of negativity and the urge to drink. Me and a friend also chair A.A. meetings for the mental health inmates. We are able to do 3 to 5 hours a week going over Steps 1 to 12. We have open discussions, listen as a group, and provide feedback. I am at a point in my life that I am finally awake, my eyes are open, I have been sober 17 months and I know that a day at a time I can live the rest of my life as an alcoholic and stay sober. I have found myself. I now have goals that I set to accomplish every day. I now have very positive people in my life, ones that support my sobriety and the things I do in here. I had always been selfish in my addiction, always wanting and taking, hoping that it would fill the void I have inside me. Always wanting more and never getting enough. I now have figured out how to fill that hole, that void that has driven me crazy. I now fill it with helping others, listening, guiding, and helping heal wounded minds one at a time. I am no longer that man in the back counting down the minutes to leave. Nope, I am now that man that's sharing 5 minutes past our hour, hoping that I could somehow reach the man in the back. If I could get through to at least 1

guy in here or out there, then I am doing God's work. Angels come in all different forms. I know my angel had her hands full with me. I am a firm believer that the older you get the wiser you become. It is never too late to take control of your life. I know that without following all the steps, applying myself, understanding them I would not be the man I am today. I am a believer and will carry what I have learned here onto the streets to help our youth. I came from nothing, always played the victim. Now that I am well, I want to continue to spread the joy of change here and out there. Thank you A.A. members recovering alcoholics. Thank you to the General Service Office and to everyone who reads and reaches out to Sharing From Behind The Walls. Your stories have helped me find my purpose. God will be with you.

— Antonio G., Pacific Region

### **Building a Strong Foundation**

Hello, my name is James. I'm writing you from a State Prison in Pennsylvania where I'm again serving time. I've begun the process of trying to learn how to live as a useful person, and this begins with admitting I'm an alcoholic. Looking back on my life, my troubles began 44 years ago when I had my first drink at the age of 13. I was trying to fit in with the "cool kids" after my family had moved to a new town. My first arrest came about 1 month later. I won't bore you with war stories of my 6 juvenile arrests or the 18 arrests as an "adult". I'm trying to put the past behind me and as a start I'm scheduled to attend A.A. meetings in prison next Saturday. Talking with other inmates I've learned that we get to read the Big Book and the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions book while in the meetings. I know I need more than once a week, so I'm writing to ask if it's possible for someone there to bless me with a Big Book and a copy of the 12 Steps and 12 Tradition Book so I can read and study when I want to. I don't have family support any longer due to my previous actions, so I'm praying that with some outreach and continued positive actions I'll be released with the knowledge and strength to a be a better, sober man. I now know that if I want to change my life, I've got to change my actions. I can't expect a better life to just be given to me. Every previous time I've left prison I've gotten drunk that very day – even after doing 5 years. I now know and can admit that I am powerless over alcohol, and I need to start now if I want to overcome my struggles and build a strong foundation for a better life. — James R., Southeast Region

### **AA Is a Godsend?**

Alcoholics Anonymous has transformed my life even while incarcerated. My name is Richard W., and I am an alcoholic. There is no doubt in my mind today. I have been incarcerated for 31 years. I went to my first Alcoholic Anonymous meeting

in the county jail in 1991. I have met so many wonderful people on this journey, who have contributed to my recovery, I've been sober for 31 years by doing it one-day-at-a-time. I'm now incarcerated in Ohio. We have a Wednesday night A.A meeting online here, and the outsiders attending online are a Godsend. You can hear gratitude in their voices when they are carrying the message. Alcoholics Anonymous and my Higher Power (God) have truly transformed my life. Thank you so much Bill W. and Dr. Bob. My Recovery date is October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1991. — **Richard W. East Central Region**

## Regaining Faith

Thank you so much for the quick response to my letter. Life has been tough lately and your response brightened my day/week!! I'm still in the "SHU" and will be here for a while. I've now read the big book twice and I am about to finish the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Each time I find something else to meditate on and something that makes my heart sing when I relive wonderful experiences over and over. It was also encouraging to read your "Sharing from Behind the Walls". Thank you to all of their experiences. May your higher power be with all of you! — **Jacob T., Pacific Region**

My name is Mia H. I don't know where to begin. Everything has been coming together. In this puzzle, I held the jigsaw carving my future, confusing my family with my alcoholic destructive ways. Actually, a drug addict turned me toward A.A. years ago. Not sure if it was pride that caused me to continue. I was losing faith with God. I was jealous of others. They could manage and seemed happy, faithless, and numb. I resisted the faith, believed it somehow would get better. Romance, death, trust, calm, loyalty, happiness, education, family were slowly breaking apart. I know A.A. methods saved my life so many times. This time I regained faith in God, A.A., mental health, and family. I found this address in the Big Book and it said send mail to see how God's path guides you. This letter is a dove of faith. — **Mia A., Southeast Region**

## Inside Sponsorship

I'm Jessica, 35 years old from Mississippi. I have been in a County Adult Detention Center for a year awaiting my court date. My sponsor had been chairing the meeting there and introduced a program called A.A. inside sponsorship. The idea was to give women who are serious about their sobriety an opportunity to work more than just Steps One, Two, and Three. They would work a Big Book study class weekly, and our sponsors would be there with us. We could call them every day and go through our lives and stay in contact and chair individual A.A. meetings inside our zones when we didn't have a meeting. I was the first to start the program in my facility and I'm writing to explain how much of a difference it made in my life and my outlook on recovery. I mean, I thought

I had everything figured out beforehand but once I started working the Steps everyday with my sponsor it made a huge difference in my life because I found someone that cared about me as much as I cared about myself. Someone who would tell me what I needed to hear and give it to me straight no matter how upsetting it was. I have worked all 12 Steps and 12 Traditions, and I have managed to bring others to meetings, others who are serious about staying sober and working the program. So far, we have done great and I'm so proud of the girls and myself for getting the stuff together to keep the program in place. It's definitely worth having in every facility around the world to help others. It made such a

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difference in my life. I'm leaving jail on 5 years house arrest and hope that I can help with keeping the program going any way possible in my facility. If it's not in your facility I suggest getting it added. I have 11 months sober and without this program and a sponsor willing to follow me into the free world or to prison and be there the entire time I'm not sure I would be as confident about my will or my sobriety as I am right now. — **Jessica W. Southeast Region**

It all started with me going to A.A. with my father as support. I was young and had no desire to drink, so I didn't pay attention to all the stories, as well as the pain and suffering that alcohol had brought these people. But then there comes a time when young man becomes an adult, turns 21. I started partying and drinking regularly having a couple of 22 ounces, that led to a 6pk, then a 12 pk, eventually a case, and then came time when beer didn't do it for me. So, I started drinking whiskey, and 8 years later I am full blown alcoholic. I got to a point where I was going to work early so I could stop at the bar, and maybe the liquor store so I had a drink for lunch break. That leads me to the next phase. I am driving home after work one night, and I fall asleep behind the wheel, and I have a head on collision with another motorist. Once the cops arrived, they smelled alcohol, and at this point I was unconscious. I was taken to the hospital with my jaw broken in 4 places, and 2 broken ribs. They drew my blood; my BAC came back .219. I was then charged with substantial bodily harm and sentenced to a 2-5 year stay in the NDOC. I am currently housed in the High Desert but that could soon change. I look forward to continuing this correspondence with you all. Thank you. — **Christopher K., Pacific Region**

## Alcohol Cost Me My Freedom

My name is Robert C., I am 31 years-old and I have been an alcoholic since I was 16 years old. I am currently serving a year in county jail. I have had a long history of alcohol-related incidents leading to various incarcerations, including prison, jail, and different programs. Never have I done A.A. until now. By choice I have been going to the group meetings held here in Michigan. I used to judge and criticize A.A. without actually giving it a chance or checking the facts about it. At the last meeting I went to I picked up a copy of the Big Book. Lo and behold, I love it. It is exactly what I need in my life. I stayed up late because I couldn't put the book down. The guys that volunteer to come in are very nice gentlemen. One was showing us his 15-year coin and the other showed us his 24-hour coin. That was when I decided I WANT TO EARN MYSELF A COIN. I added it to my list of goals. I am determined to succeed. Alcohol has cost me too much, and I am tired of it. It has cost me my freedom, relationships with my family, employment, vehicles, and so on. While reading the A.A. book and seeing the P.O. Box address in New York I received an urge to write to you. I don't know why, or even what will come out of me writing but it was just something I had to do. I am currently going over the 12 Steps and I feel that the first 3 are something that I have already been working on. I have been on a spiritual journey for quite some time now. I went into complete isolation before coming to jail and as a result, became in tune with my spirit. I now have a Spirit Guide I can depend on to be there for me when I am in need. But this is where things get difficult. Step 4: How do I go about creating an inventory of myself? Do I include both rights and wrongs? When I do Step 5, how will they properly appraise without giving biased opinions? This is hard and I feel like it's only going to get more difficult. But I AM ready. I will accept any help I can receive. I AM ready to join the A.A. Fellowship and hopefully 15 years from now I will be showing off my 15 year coin. I am a reflection of the light on others while they are in their darkest times. And I want A.A. to be part of my testimony. Thank you for your time. — Robert C.  
East Central Region

## Knowing I am Not Alone

Hello, my name is Antonio. I have been incarcerated since October 2021. I am currently housed in a Detention Facility. I

am the chair in my unit and have been in service for about 19 months now. It is very humbling for me to help others. I started drinking as a teen. I grew up in a broken home and turned to alcohol to numb the pain. I could not go a day without a drink. I have gone to A.A. meetings throughout the years but could not stop drinking. Drinking has cost me my freedom over the years. I have been sober for almost 2 years now and I take life one day at a time. Helping others and being of service has opened doors for me in my current situation, because in the unit I am in, I can help others with mental disabilities. I am grateful for this experience because it helps me know I am not alone. In the past it was hard for me to apply myself in the meetings because I wasn't ready. But for the past year and a half, being with this group of individuals and working my way up to a chair through service and commitment has shown me I've had it in me to apply myself this whole time. I'm not going to lie; the struggle is real. I know through my higher power and consistency, I will prevail over my sickness, one day at a time. I look forward to your A.A. newsletters; they inspire me because I see that A.A. works all over the world. I am happy to be part of the program. Sincerely, — Antonio A., Pacific Region

## Corrections Correspondence Service (CCS)

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 members of the same gender identity. 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.

## Pre-release 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).