



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Fall 2025

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 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."*

Needed: One Big Book

"I am serving a 15-year bid in the Department of Corrections here in South Carolina. I am in need of the A.A. Big Book. I will take care of the A.A. book you send me, and the most important thing is, I'll read it and apply it to my life. As of right now, I'm seven months clean and sober." — Richard B., Southeast Region

Looking for Support After Release

"I was recently authorized by the prison to start a recovery group here at the penitentiary. This is a peer-led group without an inside staff or outside sponsor, but it's modeled off A.A.'s Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. We have open sharing and discussion regarding the Twelve Steps.

I am a recovering alcoholic with 24 years' sobriety and have an outside sponsor. I currently chair the meetings but have been encouraging others in the group to take turns chairing, making the coffee, and checking out the various recovery books. Ideally, I would like to connect members in the group who have alcohol issues with an outside sponsor and coordinate with established A.A. groups in the various Washington State counties to support individuals being released from prison." — Jeffrey M., Pacific Region

Not the Person I Used to Be

"I am in prison for a D.U.I. I took another human's life. For the past seven years I've been working the Steps. I have been locked up for 25 years, and I go to the board in December 2025. I have been in recovery classes since 2017. I am not the same person I was 25 years ago. I need brothers that want me to be a part of their lives. Steps One, Two, and Three are how I started in the Twelve Steps. Step 1: Honesty. Step 2: Open-mindedness. Step 3: Willingness. I understand I have a disease!" — Alvin F., Pacific Region

Acceptance Is the Answer

"My name is Eric, and I'm an alcoholic. I've been sober and applying the Steps of the Big Book for seven days, as of writing this letter, but I have not drunk alcohol in over two years. I am incarcerated and serving a life sentence. I am asking for a Big Book because I experienced a spiritual awakening on day six of my recovery. My recovery began when I quit running on self-will and actually turned my will and life over to the care of God as I understood Him. I just got out of the way, didn't gripe, let God handle it, and it worked out just the way it was supposed to. Acceptance was the answer that I discovered. Thank you, A.A." — Eric W., Southwest Region

Asking for Help

"I want to share the message with everybody, but I have to start with my accepting that there is a Power higher than myself — I want to be able to feel that! In the past, not having a Higher Power was just one of my issues. That feeling and the confidence of knowing beyond any doubt that there is a power greater than myself to assist me. What I have done or believed (or not believed) has only ever gotten me to places like the one I'm in currently. It's not working. I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired. I wish there was something more I could donate or give back, but unfortunately the only thing I can share is the word of A.A. and spread it within the community here and the community on the outside, if or when I ever get out of here. I sit in this little cell, where I use the same contraption to drink water and urinate into, but I also have food, and I'm blessed to at least have that. I don't want

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to give you any more sob stories, but as tears come running down my face in embarrassment, I ask for any help you can think of for me and/or the other inmates. Thanks, with all respect.” — Christopher Ray T., East Central Region

Blessed, Things Are Turning Around

“I am 684 days sober. This is the longest in my entire life I have been sober. I have battled alcohol addiction for as long as I can remember. My family had to move on after years of my putting them through hell. My addiction has taken my family, my health, my sanity, and finally, my freedom. After my family gave up on me, I really went off the deep end: I suffered seizures that were devastating, and even though I got pancreatitis multiple times, I still wouldn’t surrender. Finally, I spent over a month going through psychosis in a county jail. I spent 16 months in the county battling a sentence of 21 years. I decided I wanted to be sober in jail. There was a recovery navigator who came to the jail every two weeks. They would bring me Step work, so I worked the Steps by myself, and things started to turn around. I’m looking to be home at the end of this year and am getting the tools to stay sober. I’m truly blessed.”

— Joshua P., East Central Region

Asking for a Blue Book

“I recently attended a meeting chaired by a man named Richard (what are the odds?), and he gave me information on how to obtain a blue book (Alcoholics Anonymous) for myself by writing to this address. This has been the longest period of sobriety in my life, and I would like to maintain it once I’m free. I have attended other ‘Anonymous’ meetings before, including Alcoholics Anonymous, outside of jail, and even had my own blue book. But my personal library (among other things) was one of the casualties of my drinking problem.” — Richard C., Southwest Region

Freedom on the Inside

“All the Grapevine stories that I’ve read are positive. I’ve started to really do A.A. In Freedom on the Inside, a lot of people talk about the Corrections Correspondence Service via the General Service Office. The stories I read talked about how they wrote, and the CCS wrote back, and they got a sponsor, and the sponsor sent them literature. So wonderful. I was so excited.” — Carrie W., Northeast Region

Not Alone

“I am writing because during my time here I have found the wonderful and lifesaving program that is Alcoholics Anonymous. When I go to meetings, I see that I am not the only one with this disease; that I am not alone in my want for sobriety. It only works if you work it!” — William B., East Central Region

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Our Stories Are for Everyone

[Note: The following excerpt is from a Spanish-language letter.]

“Thank you very much for replying to me. I was very happy that you did. And I loved the magazine you sent me — it’s incredible what it has done for many people like me. The stories touch me and motivate me to continue in A.A. Here where I am, a fellow comes, but he speaks only English, and I speak it just a little. But I attended a meeting, and they showed me what they were studying, and the page they were on. They read in English, and I read in Spanish. It made me really happy to participate in that meeting. They were studying the Traditions, and I knew what they were talking about.” — Elena P., Pacific Region

New Way of Life

“I am grateful for A.A. because I have now acquired true joy, happiness, and serenity. Even though I’m currently a prisoner at a facility in California, I am free from my 20 years of self-imprisonment and the self-destructive lifestyle that my addiction led me to. In having found a new way of life that has replaced my grief with inner peace, today I put my Twelfth Step into action by being of service to the more than 10 A.A. members for whom I facilitate meetings. I share my story and talk about the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and the lessons they teach on addiction and how to change. I have found a meaningful purpose for my life, and it’s sharing with those who are suffering the antidote that is A.A. to help them break free from the hands of this disease called alcoholism.”

— Saul G., Pacific Region

I Love A.A.

“I am currently involved with the A.A. survivors’ program here at my correctional facility. I have been participating in A.A. for the past eight months (three meetings a week), and for the last two to three months, I have been responsible for facilitating our weekly meetings. I love A.A., the brotherhood, and the relationships I have formed during my time as a member. Many of us (myself, included) look forward to our meetings, to seeing familiar faces and catching up with each other and the things going on in our personal lives. Through the Fellowship, the literature, and the Twelve Steps, many aspects of my life (the road of sobriety and everything in between) have been transformed in a positive way. And I look

forward to continuing my journey outside of these institutions.” — **Matthew M., Northeast Region**

Getting Prepared

“I know that it’s a cliché, but A.A. has changed my life, and I have two to two-and-a-half years left to study before I return to the outside. I want to know more so that when I leave, I’m better prepared for life. I also would like to set up as much of a support system as I can before I leave here. My biggest fear is that when I leave, I will return to my drinking because my old life with my wife and family will be gone. I am afraid that I will fall and lose my reason to stay sober and lose any hope I have right now. I want to strengthen my foundation here while I am still sober so I can fight against my urge to drink my pain away.” — **Jonathan G., Southeast Region**

Gratitude for This Program

“Greetings from the Sunshine State to you all in the Big Apple. My name is James, and I’m a grateful recovering alcoholic and addict. I wish to first and foremost express my humility and gratitude for the life-altering experience, strength, and hope of our Fellowship in our Program. I’ve been actively attending our Twelve Step meetings here at my facility since October 2021 — approximately 11 months after I got clean at age 31, when quarantine restrictions were finally lifted and we got our meetings back in full swing. I happily pass out chips at our meeting, and as of January 2025, I have completed Step Four, which was one of my goals for the new year. I am currently on Step Five. Upon my release, I will be attending 90 meetings in 90 days. This is recommended as an active and critical part of the continuum of my sobriety and lifelong recovery. I cannot begin to convey how transformative these Twelve Step meetings and Fellowship have been. The opposite of addiction isn’t sobriety, it’s connection. I once gave up everything to have one thing, and now I’ve given up that one thing to have everything: my family, a systemic liberation, an excellent bill of health, and a way to lead by showing that recovery is possible. Pride comes before a fall, and an ego fueled by arrogance proved to be a great barrier in my life. It took the divestment of everything, including my voice, for me to come to the realization that humility is something that can only be acquired, and my pride is something only I can give away. I close this letter with my unconditional love, hope, and encouragement for you folks up there in the Big Apple, along with my gratitude and prayers.” — **James W., Southeast Region**

Correspondence Will Be Appreciated

“I am deeply spiritual as a benefit of working an honest program of A.A. I hope to make a connection with someone in the area where I’m going to be released to help me continue

my Twelve Step work. I need to continue to put my recovery first as I reenter society. I am determined to lay a solid foundation so I can build a better future for my daughter and me. I have faith in this process, and I look forward to receiving any correspondence. Your help is greatly appreciated.”

— **Sharon L., Southeast Region**

Please Show Me How This Works

“I’m looking for some help. Some sort of accountability. Drugs and alcohol have had me in chains a lot longer than the system has. I don’t want to keep down the road I’m on. I’ve been in prison for seven-and-a-half years, and I’m scared out of my mind. My Higher Power revealed Himself to me in a way I’d never experienced before. Everything clicked. I’m just so glad God hasn’t given up on me, and I still have a chance to try again. I don’t know what the future holds at this new compound, but I know I want to keep whatever it is I found recently, and I know that means staying sober. I need something solid, something I know I can rely on. All I can hear God scream to me is ‘Fellowship!’ — to give it a real chance. I always kept it. I never truly gave it over to Him. I have my Big Book and have just reread the first 164 pages. I really need some help. I don’t know how all this works. It just seems like the right thing to do, so I’m trying it. If there’s anything y’all can help with, I’d greatly appreciate it.” — **Jackson V., Southeast Region**

Ready and Willing

“Had it not been for my local A.A. recovery community, I would likely have died long ago. Who knows. I have my instructions, and my Fourth Step begins promptly. The last paragraph in Step One in the ‘Twelve and Twelve’ (page 24) spoke to me tonight as I was turning in. It talks about becoming ‘as open-minded to conviction, and as willing to listen as the dying can be.’ So that is why I wrote tonight: I’m standing willing to do anything that will ‘lift the merciless obsession’ from me. I’m setting aside my old thoughts, beliefs, and opinions and becoming ready and willing to thoroughly follow the path. Surrender and obedience seem to be the newest additions to my vocabulary.” — **Christopher M., East Central Region**

Seeking Help with the Steps

“I am 48 years old and have been in prison since I was 19. I have been attending A.A. meetings at this institution for several years. I have been sober since 2002, but I was not living a clean life. My defects of character — fear, anger, resentment, etc. — continued to ruin my life and my contentment. I have made many changes in my life, but I have never formally worked the Steps with the guidance of a sponsor. I would appreciate any help in finding someone who

would be willing to help! I want to thank everyone involved with Alcoholics Anonymous. I have met some amazing people who credit A.A. with saving their lives.” — Sal M., Pacific Region

Thanks for the Literature!

“Thank you so very much for the Grapevine and Voices of Women in A.A. Along with me, other women within my pod have greatly enjoyed the literature. I am still awaiting trial and a release date. I’m learning a great deal about myself. I continue reading and trying to learn as much as I can about myself, my disease, and refocusing on my decisions to make a better tomorrow.” — Sherry W., Northeast Region

Please Send Big Book – I’m Ready

“Just got my hands on a copy of the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* book, and I am fixing to dive in. I’m a recovering alcoholic, and I was curious if maybe y’all could send me an A.A. Big Book. I hope that through this book I can grasp the Steps as well as work them into action with pencil and paper. I’m clean and sober today, but it took my probation’s being revoked to do it. I’ve been drinking since I was 12 years of age. After completing rehab, I fell off the wagon and started drinking heavily. Some days I would drink myself sober, then other days I would be so whiskey-sick, I couldn’t get off work quickly enough to hit the liquor store. I’m thankful to be alcohol-free today, even though it took a one-year sentence, and my probation’s being revoked to do it. I want to get my life back, and I want to be the big brother my little brother needs me to be. I’ve always been a drunk. I’m so thankful for the opportunity to read the Big Book and find my Higher Power through the Steps and apply them to my life. I’m ready to grab this alcoholism by the horns with the help from a sponsor. God bless all who put the pen to paper and defeat this sickness.” — Dalton W., Southwest Region

Digital Literature Behind the Walls

Contracts with various vendors have enabled A.A.W.S. and AA Grapevine literature to be available on tablets found in the various correctional settings in the United States. This is a new service that continues to expand. The available literature has expanded to include *Box 4-5-9 newsletter*, *Sharing from Behind the Walls newsletter*, *Plain Language Big Book*, *the Primary Purpose Podcast*, and over 30 additional pamphlets in English, French, and Spanish.

We have established a new contract with the vendor Smart Communications. On July 21, 2025, A.A. material was uploaded and will be available to all facilities with Smart Communications tablets. Please request a Tablet Literature list from the Corrections desk when writing for listed literature if you have access to Smart Communications Tablets and need more information on the available literature.

Telecom and Communication through Tablets

The corrections desk has begun to communicate with members behind the walls via GTL/Viapath. If you have access to this platform, and would like to reach out to the Corrections Desk to request literature, meeting support, information on Corrections Correspondence Service, or Prerelease Contact information, please direct your message to corrections@aa.org. Additionally, if you have access to another tablet or telecom provider, the corrections desk can respond to inquiries by phone at (212) 870-3085. When calling please include your name, location of facility, DOC number, and any other details specific to you that will allow the corrections desk to support your request for any of the services we provide.

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.

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.)