



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Fall 2009

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."*

THE TWELVE STEPS

A.A.'s Twelve Steps are a group of principles, spiritual in their nature, which, if practiced as a way of life, can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole. (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 15).

'HERE ARE THE STEPS WE TOOK...'

"My name is Nora Jean. I have 14 months sober thanks to A.A., God, my sponsor, and my support network. I am currently in prison. After celebrating my first year and doing the Fourth and Fifth Steps (cleaning house), I turned myself in on a Probation Violation Warrant with the support of my sponsor and the Fellowship. My first Steps to clearing the wreckage of my past. Thank God they bring meetings here once or twice a week. I need them so much. Thank God for A.A. I have received so much support. I've been reading the literature and it really gives me encouragement. I try to spread the message and help others through my experience, strength and hope. I get out on a Friday. I will be at my Friday night meeting and I can't wait. Thank you A.A. from a very grateful recovering alcoholic."—Nora Jean C., Northeast Region

"My name is Nick, and I'm a 26-year-old alcoholic. I am currently serving an unknown amount of time in prison for charges stemming from my alcohol use. This isn't my first rodeo either, but it could be my worst, by far. And therein lies my greatest fear, for it's only been getting worse and worse since this cycle began. I have been introduced to the A.A. program on a few different occasions, but I guess I wasn't ready to absolutely follow it. That is, until now—I hope. This time around it seems that I might have lost everything. Funny, because it's felt like this before, only—once again—this time it's worse. Having realized this, I picked up an A.A. book almost immediately upon arriving here, with the intention of stopping this ride before it goes too much further. Here I am,

looking at anywhere from one to six years of my life down the drain. I need this to stop before I give them reason to bury me under the jail. I've currently completed the first three Steps and am building up the courage for the Fourth. Or rather, I understand the first three, but am still in the process of slowly realizing them. And I'm procrastinating on the Fourth."—

Nick P., Northeast Region

'...WHICH ARE SUGGESTED AS A PROGRAM OF RECOVERY.'

"My name is John and I am a alcoholic who is incarcerated in a prison because of my abuse of alcohol. My drinking is out of control and I admit I am powerless over alcohol and my life is unmanageable. This is my sixth prison term, yes my life is out of control and unmanageable. It's always been the same—I come into an institution, get sober and healthy, and have all these dreams of a better life and plan on never making these same mistakes again. But I'm crazy or something because I won't stop. I start with one beer and then in no time I'm worse than before and in no time I'm back in jail or prison because of my drinking. My mind is clear right now and I'm willing to learn and am open to the concepts one learns to live by in Alcoholics Anonymous. Would you please help me turn my life around and live by the Twelve Steps? I'm dying every time I pick up that first drink and I want to live now. Please help."—John R., Pacific Region

"Four days prior to catching this felony, I successfully completed a 28-day rehab. I was so positive that I had a grip on recovery from alcoholism. I felt strong; I had a plan. The thing I lacked was spirituality. I needed something to help me when my 'plan' failed and my strength weakened, as both did. Looking back, I can point to a lack of spiritual principles as the reason for failure in every period of sobriety. So really, I have no problem with Step One. I've spent 25 years trying to skip over Steps Two and Three. Not to say that I haven't honestly tried to get it right. I can practically quote the chapter to the agnostic in the Big Book. I really want to believe, I *want* to surrender. I want to gain some sort of spiritual contact in the next six years. I don't know what I'm asking for, but the fact that I am asking makes me feel better, you know?"—Robert C., Southeast Region

THE BIG BOOK, ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

"I have completed reading the first 164 pages of the A.A. book and am now moving on to the personal stories. On that note, I was surprised to have actually been able to understand and relate to the message. I learned a few things—two of the most important principals '...nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics.'; and

that I should never take that first drink ‘no matter what...’ I met the Four Horsemen and hung out with them for many years and their company has made my life a living hell. Never in a million years would I have thought that these three simple slogans could help anyone bypass the insanity of a drunk like me: 1. First Things First. 2. Live and Let Live. 3. Easy Does It.”—**Ralphie G., Northeast Region**

“Hi, my name is Joe. I’m currently in prison for an intoxication assault. I recently sent out for a copy of the Big Book. When it arrived, I couldn’t put it down. I pretty much knew I had a problem with alcohol, but I’ve always blamed it on other problems. I’m ready to admit that I’ve been an alcoholic since the age of 15. I turned 27 last March. Twelve years—and I’m in prison because of my drinking. Up until now I blamed everything on my parents, my brother, pretty much on how I grew up. No one grew up like me. No one could understand why I drank. At first it was for fun, to fit in, because—before beer—I never did. Then it turned into a crutch and finally into my worse enemy. Even while my oldest son was begging me not to drink when I got out of prison, I was still thinking I would. Now I realize how much of my time, money, and life was consumed by alcohol. I’m done. I don’t want that life anymore. As soon as I got on this Unit I started requesting A.A. meetings. Then, it was to help myself, but mostly it was for parole. Now it’s for me. That’s why I’m writing you now.”—**Joe S., Southwest Region**

“I am an alcoholic who is finally sick and tired of being sick and tired. I have begun working a program of living and working the Twelve Steps. We don’t have regular A.A. meetings here, but the prison has set up a meeting with a gentleman alcoholic (wow, does that sound like an oxymoron or what!?) who comes once a week to share the basics of what A.A. is all about. By improving my conscious contact with my Higher Power, as I understand him, I am experiencing a peace which I only dreamed possible in the past. The Big Book I am now enjoying belongs to the prison library. This one from the library has become a constant companion, but I must return it soon. Thank you all for being there for me. If I didn’t have A.A. to help lead me back to my Higher Power, I don’t know what I’d do.”—**David B., Southeast Region**

JUST ONE DRUNK SHARING WITH ANOTHER

“Greetings. I would like to say thank you to A.A. Y’all are so helpful. My last drink was on 12-26-01. I ended up in prison the next year and on 10-26-02 I started attending A.A. What a lifesaver! Today A.A. is a big part of my life. It has saved me and I am thankful. I love A.A. and everything it stands for. Through your Corrections Correspondence Service (CCS), I have an A.A. contact on the outside. He has been very helpful. Right now I am in a program at another prison. Once a week I attend an A.A. meeting. Sometimes we get outside people to come in. I just wanted to say thank you and let you know how I am. Thanks for all the help over the years.”—**Melvyn H., Pacific Region**

“I received a letter from a link with an outside A.A. member. There is a lot of support among drunks. When I got out of prison last August, I could not get any help from anyone. I was back in jail in seven days for being homeless while on probation. Anyway, I’m glad to be part of the Fellowship of

Alcoholics Anonymous. I’m secretary here for our group. Though I’m limited, I’m glad to serve. Thanks again for the outside link. With only the love that God can give—the love of one drunk for another.”—**James H., Southeast Region**

‘THE PROGRAM WORKS, REGARDLESS OF WHERE YOU ARE.’

“I’ve been arrested three times—two for DUIs and this last time for I’d rather not say. Up until a year ago, I was untamable. Nobody could tell me anything; I knew it all. Sounds familiar, huh? Well, this last charge I caught scared me into going to rehab. I left rehab, went straight to court and was sentenced to four years mandatory. It’s been a little over a year since I’ve been locked up and I’m still sober. It hasn’t been easy. If it weren’t for him and my father, I’d have not made it this far. There aren’t any A.A. meetings where I am. I’m still working my Steps, thanks to my sponsor, and reading my Big Book. I just wanted someone to know that the A.A. program works, regardless of where you are. What’s the saying? You’ve got to give it away to keep it. Well, I’m trying to give it away.”—**David C., Southeast Region**

“My journey in sobriety through A.A. started on Friday, October 3, 2008, at 9 am. I am serving a term of 1-2 years, of which I have completed almost ten months. My charge is for my third D.U.I. It has not all been a negative experience. I prayed to my Higher Power that all I wanted was to get to see the sunset every day. I wasn’t sure what to expect at my destination. But when I arrived, my Higher Power was still watching over me. I was not only placed in a dorm-style, minimum security institution, I found myself in a cube where the only bars are on two 3’x6’ windows, through which I get to see the sunrise at 6:30 am. And through another set of windows, the most awesome sunsets at 2,800 feet elevation. I have watched a fox family with three pups growing up in a large meadow for the past three to four months. There are also groundhogs, hawks, 20-30 deer, 30+ turkeys and rabbits, plus I get to see the highway, which is my way home. So this note is to be a testimony to the fact that the Higher Power does answer small prayers. He gave me more than I asked for.”—**Gerald G., Northeast 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 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.