



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Fall 2012

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."*

'... I FELT I WAS READING MY LIFE.'

"I recently started reading an A.A. book in jail. When I read it, I felt I was reading my life. We don't have meetings here. I don't really have anyone that I trust or know. Just from reading your Big Book, I took notes and did Steps One, Two, and Three on my own. I know I am ready to change. I just did Step Four to the best of my ability. When I started looking at why I was mad or resentful at the people in my life, it was because I didn't get my way. I got mad because they weren't living my way. All I know right now is what I read in the A.A. Big Book. Just doing my best to follow it Step-by-Step." — **Josh B., Southwest Region**

'SPIRIT OF THE UNIVERSE'

"I have never been in jail and I am 35 years old now. I've been able to stop for months—10 months was my longest sobriety—but I always go back to booze. I would drink vodka shots at eight in the morning and be good and buzzed by noon. On weekends I had to work, but as soon as I was out, I'd pop a beer and get home and vodka, vodka, vodka, until I passed out. I've been in here for a month; the first week I went to an A.A. meeting (and have gone to every one since). I met a guy from my hometown and we talked and I started to see that this may help me. (I've always doubted A.A. could help.) I thought A.A. was all about God, but when I read the Big Book I read words like 'Spirit of the Universe' in the 'We Agnostics' chapter, and I realized I may not believe in God yet. I'm not saying I don't, I just never had that connection with Him, but I do believe in a Supreme Power. I like that phrase 'Spirit of the Universe.' It fits my belief and ideas." — **Buddy W., Northeast Region**

HOPE

"I was recently sentenced to six months for drinking-related offenses. I am brand new to A.A., but really like what it has to offer. I have spent the last 12 years of my life in a bottle. For the past three years I have wanted help, and now feel that I have finally found it with A.A. I was reluctant about A.A. before, but now I realize it is what I have been looking for. I have found some good in 'my bad.' A.A. is helping me more than I ever imagined. I have hope back in my life. I really enjoy sharing what has happened to me in the last few months with other inmates who are going through some of the same things.

I am set to be released in a few months. I hope to not only better myself more and more by then, but also to impact other men's lives as well." — **Ryan B., Southwest Region**

"I was introduced to the A.A. program about four months ago when I arrived at the prison. A.A. at this prison consists of about 60 guys who come regularly. I've burnt bridges and lost everything materially, but also everything I loved and cared about—including my family—due to my alcoholism. I have no money at all because of the problems I've caused and no one outside of here will help. In the last four months, A.A. has changed my life. I'm learning to grow up and mature as a man and face issues from the past without the use of alcohol. I can look at myself in the mirror and be happy with what I see. I have a sponsor in here who is a great person and helps me with my Step work. I destroyed my life and now I'm working on putting it back together." — **Kenneth R., Pacific Region**

"I am a grateful recovering alcoholic. I have battled this disease for over 20 years and I have finally realized that trying to do this on my own is not going to happen. I was first introduced to A.A. in 2002, and didn't pay much attention to what these people were saying. What a mistake! It was eight years later, after two drinking-related charges, that I checked myself into my first rehab. We would go to A.A. meetings every night. After a few meetings, I finally started to get it—that these people were just like me, plus they didn't judge me or talk down to me. They were there to help me understand, add a handshake and a smile, and I was sold. I started going to meetings again and it felt good to be back in the rooms. Unfortunately, I had to answer for my charges. I was given one year, so here I sit. I am truly grateful for A.A. and I will continue with service and meetings when I am released. I never thought it was possible to feel that good and have fun without alcohol. Boy, was I wrong! A.A. opened my eyes and that's what I want, not only for me, but also for my two boys, whom I cherish dearly." — **Richard S., Northeast Region**

THE BIG BOOK

"My name is Chris. I am 26. I am serving a 10-year sentence for a very unfortunate side effect of my wilder days. I have been incarcerated for two years now. Several months ago, I found a copy of the A.A. Big Book here in one of these cells, and I began to put the principles described therein into practice. I am amazed at the results! I have not had this kind of mental and spiritual clarity in many years, if ever! Thank you." — **Chris H., Southwest Region**

"Thank you for the Big Book. I have read it cover to cover several times now. No matter what is going on around me in prison, I'm able to find a peace about myself after reading, and asking God to help me with the situation. I also want to thank you for introducing me to my A.A. correspondence guy. He writes me every week, and is helping me through my Steps. He has also got me signed up for the A.A. Grapevine. We only have one meeting a week here in this facility. It is every Thursday night. I haven't missed one since I started going, and don't plan on it either. It's the only place I feel comfortable in here. I want to say thank you for keeping the doors to A.A. open to everybody, no matter where they are, or what they have done in the past." — **Kenneth K., Northeast Region**

“Hi. My name is Jessica and I’m an alcoholic. I’m currently a resident at a prison for women. I’ve been reading the Big Book for a few months now and going to meetings when available. When not available, a couple of girls here get together and study the Big Book together. I read ‘A Vision for You’ again today and just cried and cried. It’s Mother’s Day and I’m in prison. My family has disowned me because of my antics and I don’t blame them. I’ve relied on God and your book to lead me through the Steps. I’m jittery and alone and could really use some friends. Thank you for writing this book and reading my letter.” — **Jessica C., Southeast Region**

‘HALF MEASURES AVAILED US NOTHING.’

“I never in a million years thought I, me, ‘Mr. I Know Best,’ would ever be behind bars. This is where my actions to maintain my disease have landed me. I am being very hard on myself. You see I am not a stranger to A.A. I thought I knew better than the people in the program. Half measures availed me nothing. I can honestly say that I am willing to try anything and follow suggestions. I am very afraid that if I do not remain sober this time, that at the very best I will end up in a cell for a very long time. It is more than likely that I will surely die, either directly from alcohol consumption, or suicide. I am currently just over seven months sober, and the same amount of time incarcerated. I pray every day for God to remove the desire from me and to help me through the day. Before bed I thank Him for another day. Thank you in advance for any help that you may provide to me.” — **Stephen B., Northeast Region**

“I got arrested again. It seems so unreal because I let alcohol take over my feelings. I truly love my family and my children and can’t believe I let this happen again. I’m in jail on some terrible charges this time and I’m scared to death. I hope and pray I don’t lose my family. I know I can’t drink—yet I drank. Alcohol has broken up my beautiful family for the last time. I never went to A.A. meetings like I should have after my first arrest. I was in *denial!* I need a power greater than myself to help me stay sober. I convinced myself that since alcohol is legal it’s not that bad. Well, I’m in jail and God saving me from worse is the only way I can deal with it. I am very ashamed of my actions and am paying a very high price. I will go to A.A. meetings and read the Big Book. It probably has saved my life. I was ready to just give up on life because I was so depressed. I love my fiancée and my three beautiful children—ages 13, six, and two and a half. I need help; and my fiancée quit drinking the night this all happened. We drank way too much and let alcohol do this to our family.” — **Stanley N., Northeast Region**

‘... FREE IN SPIRIT.’

“I am writing to say how blessed we truly are to be sober today and that God has definitely done for me what I could not do for myself. Even though I’m behind these walls in prison, I’m free in spirit and continue to grow in my spiritual relationship with God. I continue to keep a conscious contact with God and to pray for His will to be done and the power to carry that out. A.A. has taught me so much about my shortcomings or defects of character that I don’t like, such as selfishness, controlling of others, self-centeredness, manipulation, and fear. These are things that I continued to ask God to remove from my life and to help me carry the message to the alcoholics who still suffers.” — **Randall C., Southwest Region**

“I recently told my story at an A.A. meeting, and after the meeting an outside A.A. member approached me and spoke to me about Alcoholics Anonymous. He stated that after hearing my story, my main goal should be pursuing some type of connection to the outside A.A. community as soon as possible, instead of waiting to be released. So here I am! I have never worked the Steps, nor have I ever read the A.A. Big Book, or any of the A.A. literature. I have been at this facility going on three years, and have attended A.A. here since then. I started going to A.A. in 1997 when I was at another prison. I never said anything other than, ‘My name is Mike and I’m here to listen.’ I used that line for 12 years. When I came here in 2009, a man

came up and talked to me. He still comes here, he still talks to me. Three years later, I celebrated my 15th year of being sober. This man asked the prison if he could purchase a 15-year chip for me! I’m not proud of the fact that I’ve never read the Big Book, or worked the Steps and I look forward to one day having a sponsor that will work with me on those issues.” — **Mike K., Pacific Region**

“I am an alcoholic and my life had been quite unmanageable, which I did not fully realize until I became removed from society and was forced to reflect on my past. Or, I should say, ‘given the opportunity to reflect on my past.’ Because without this incarceration I may be dead by now. Since my incarceration, I began working the Steps and a recovery program. Today, I am a new creature, thanks be to God, and my willingness to turn my life over to Him through A.A. I am an A.A. chairman at this prison. I truly want change and to get involved with services and A.A. in my area. Step Twelve, I feel, is the key to my sobriety.” — **Ross P., East Central Region**

POWERLESS

“I am now 51 years old; this is my fourth ‘falling on my face and losing everything.’ I’ve had great stretches of sobriety — but pride, resentments and willpower always brings me back to the booze. It is quite obvious to me and the world that I am powerless over alcohol. This time around I cannot afford to not grasp the simple A.A. program of Twelve Steps. I’ve done everything in my power during my incarceration to keep me focused on and surrounded in a recovery program. In my head I keep thinking 90 meetings in 90 days. That’s what led me to writing the A.A. General Service Office; not only did it give me opportunity to get out of self, but each time I am able to start a meeting in my block, attend the one the jail provides or the simple ability of writing a letter to you, provides me with a little more insurance against relapse and a grand opportunity to share with another alcoholic who is willing to listen. A.A. provides a means of learning to stay away from the first drink. I thoroughly enjoyed *Sharing From Behind the Walls.*” — **Jeff E., West Central Region**

CCS — ‘MAKES A DIFFERENCE’

“I take my recovery very seriously and I do not want to leave my sobriety to chance. We have a saying here, ‘Those who fail to plan, plan to fail.’ Thanks to your Corrections Correspondence Service (CCS), I have been blessed with an outside correspondent. I just thought you would like to know that the correspondence service does make a difference to those of us who use it.” — **Raymond F., Southwest Region**

“Well, I have a contact from A.A. thanks to you all. So far he has written three letters to me. He is guiding me through the Twelve Steps. I am also enjoying learning from the A.A. material, one day at a time. I am currently working on Step Two. Thanks for your support.” — **Darryl D., Southwest 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) and approximate release date, 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 A.A. on the “outside.”

We look forward to hearing from you.