



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Fall 2013

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."*

A.A.'s 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. ...

"Many people, nonalcoholics, report that as a result of the practice of A.A.'s Twelve Steps, they have been able to meet other difficulties of life. They think that the Twelve Steps can mean more than sobriety for problem drinkers. They see in them a way to happy and effective living for many, alcoholic or not."

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pp. 15, 16

THE STEPS — 'AN EYE-OPENING EXPERIENCE'

"My name is George, I am 33 years old and currently serving a 15 to life sentence for a drinking-related crime. I was incarcerated at the age of 29; I am a first-timer in the system. Thank God that I've been sober for about 3 ½ years. I will admit these years have been the best of my life, despite being in prison. For me to drink was just for fun, I wanted to fit in, be cool and simply enjoyed the buzzing sensation. It made me feel invincible, not in a physical way but in a sense that everything seemed easier; things used to flow better. I started drinking when I was 20 years old, and I got into A.A. here in prison, actually in county jail, before coming to prison. I've been fully attending meetings once a week here in prison. It's been an eye-opening experience, learned quite a bit, and I know there's much more to learn. For me, the most important thing is understanding and applying the Twelve Steps to my life. You've got to want it for yourself. The one thing I will admit that I quite can't understand yet is the term: that I will forever be a recovering alcoholic." — **George R., Pacific Region**

"I only have seven months to go. I've been trying to work on myself by trying to work the Steps to the best of my ability. I'll be honest, it's turning out to be a lot harder than I thought. In prison it's really tough to put aside pride, selfishness, self-centeredness and self-will.

If I can start to work on myself now, and make advances on humility, open-mindedness, willingness and honesty, I might be well 'ahead of the game' when I get out!" — **Kenneth S., Southeast Region**

"My name is Dave and I'm currently in prison for the next nine months. I have been around A.A. since I was 15 years old (25 yrs). I've had my share of problems, and obviously I'm still having them! I know I'm an alcoholic and that every time I drink no good comes out of it. The sad part is that a part of me still wants to drink when I get out. Even though I know where it's going to lead, I still want it. For the first time in my life, I read the first 164 pages of the Big Book and it's got my attention. I've never tried working the Steps and wouldn't mind giving it a try. Maybe, while I'm doing something in here, something will click. I'm willing to give it a shot." — **David C., East Central Region**

'... A LIFE, NOT AN EXISTENCE.'

"I am very grateful, that this institution has volunteers bringing in meetings. I am grateful to have copies of the Big Book and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* to read daily and people in the Fellowship to correspond with. Not much different in here than on the 'streets' when it comes to recovery — you get what you put into it and only those who truly want it, find it. A.A. has given me a new perspective on life and tools to deal with life on life's terms. I now have peace of mind through challenging times (such as now, in prison) and can look in the mirror and smile at who I am becoming because of A.A. I now view obstacles/challenges (which I used to run from, etc.) as growing opportunities. I wake up joyful and expectant about the day ahead, rather than with those old painful feelings of shame, guilt, humiliation, and remorse that I'd have to drown away with another drink to deal with the coming day. Wow, what a change! A.A. has given me a life I could only dream about as I once struggled, searching for it at the bottom of each bottle. Today I have the Twelve Steps, literature, a Fellowship of friends, and peace of mind and self-respect. I have a life, not an existence!" — **Christy D., Southeast Region**

OUR BIG BOOK — ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

"About a week after I got arrested I had the opportunity to attend an A.A. meeting in the county jail, and I was overwhelmed with the realization that I was exactly where God wanted me to be — back in A.A! Yeah! I have to tell you, I truly missed the Fellowship and I sat there in that meeting with tears streaming down my face from the feeling of peace and serenity that came over me. It was a beautiful thing. There is another fellow in here with me who is here because of his 10th DUI. He has admitted to me that he knows he has a drinking problem. So we talk every day, multiple times a day. I plan to study the Big Book with this fellow alcoholic." — **Jeremy K., Pacific Region**

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

“Maintaining my sobriety and my newfound lifestyle is challenging anyway, but it is laughed at and mocked inside this cage. Sobriety is not sobriety when it is forced, but I remain grateful nevertheless because I know where the other road leads: loneliness, isolation, delusion, dereliction and even death for this alcoholic. I am serving a sentence of three and a half to ten years in state prison. I am 35 years old and my conditional release is in six years, my minimum is three and a half in June 2015 and I am working toward that date. My wife and newborn baby, I have yet to see her, have been a complete blessing. I look forward to returning to college, A.A. and my family, and becoming a father, daddy, husband and friend that God wants me to be. I owe all the thanks in the world to A.A. and God, for my recovery and sobriety which has been freely given to me.” — **Jeremy G., Northeast Region**

“Things will get better. I sincerely plan to change my old ways. I wish I had made better choices, because then I wouldn’t be in my current situation. Either way, locked up or not, I plan to make strong positive changes in my life. I feel confident about myself succeeding. I think this A.A. program of recovery is going to help me better myself. I feel a lot more grown up than I have been because I really want to finish the Steps. I read through my *Daily Reflections* and Grapevine and hold my own meeting. I can’t help but notice how much the readings in my *Daily Reflections* are so on topic with what I’m going through. I’m a 23-year-old alcoholic, who hit my bottom and am now working to recover. I became a person whom I said I never wanted to be, and now I’m careful when using that word ‘never.’ Now I see in others how I used to be, and it’s quite disturbing. I’m young, sober, and a committed Native American, and I count my blessings from the bottom of my heart. I thank you for what you guys have done for me; I have hope!” — **Gordon A. Jr., Pacific Region**

“My name is Frederick. I am an alcoholic, serving yet another sentence for something stupid I did while drunk. That is my history, getting drunk and locked up for stupid things I would never have done sober. I am a binge drinker, that means I don’t have to drink all the time, but when I do, I drink a lot. Drinking turns me, a usually mellow and quiet man, into a wild animal. I’ve come to realize, finally, that there is no safe way for me to drink without eventually losing all control. It literally changes my entire perspective about everything. I think it’s safe to say that I’ve finally hit bottom. Strange how there is a sort of freedom in that, isn’t it? I have been in and out of ‘The Rooms’ for about five years. Between 2007 and 2011 I did manage to get a few sober years together. But I’ve never completed the Steps past number six; I never took a responsibility, such as making coffee or chairing; and mostly I sat in the back of the room and texted my wife. I also didn’t share very often. I wish now that I had realized the seriousness of my condition and put more effort into my recovery. It’s a scary thing to realize that even one drink could ruin your life, and possibly the lives of others. It’s even scarier that I would still love to get drunk. I hope to be released this year; I’m so afraid of going out and repeating past mistakes. I just turned 37; I’m definitely getting too old for this. I am in a four-month therapeutic community and I also attend three A.A. meetings a week. I’ve got a pocket Big Book and I’m working on Step Four right now. I’m hoping to correspond with someone who understands and can maybe help me through the Steps. Any help is very gratefully appreciated.” — **Frederick C., Northeast Region**

PRERELEASE CONTACTS

”Hello! My name is Sean W. I don’t correspond with too many people in the outside world. I started drinking at the age of 17 and finally decided that I had enough. I’ve been drinking most of my adult life. I would drink seven days a week; I would drink in the morning if I had a hangover. My drinking was part of the problem when I came back to prison. I figured it was time to admit I have a drinking problem. I used to drink until I passed out. I would get angry and pick a fight with anyone that was looking to fight. I started attending Alcoholics Anonymous when I was at one prison. When I got transferred to another institution I started attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings here. I had an inmate at the first prison invite me to a meeting, and I came to realize that I had an addiction to alcohol. I figured I needed to start to recover. I hope you will be able to help me look for an A.A. contact in my home town. I would really appreciate any help you could provide me with, right at this moment in time.” — **Sean W., Southeast Region**

“Hello, my name is Darryl C., I’m, an alcoholic and I need help. I started going to A.A.; at first I thought it was not for me, and then I saw people with the same problem as me. Now my baby’s mom and I, and my kids are closer than ever. Now I need an A.A. contact because I’m about to get out. It’s going to be me, my sponsor and church and work for the first year. I have been sober now for one year and six months and I want it to stay like that — so please ‘Help Me.’” — **Darryl C., Southeast Region**

CCS — IT WORKS!

“Hi! This is Dale C. from a correctional institution and I am writing concerning A.A.’s Big Book, and also to thank you for all that you and God have done for me! I received my A.A. outside contact from the Correspondence Service, and he’s awesome! He has 29 years sober! I plan on staying in contact with him when I get released. They do not have A.A. here but, just some really amazing things have happened. One thing you are not going to believe. I got a letter from my best friend from my childhood, who is in A.A. now. I hadn’t seen nor heard from him since I was 17 years old and I am 43 now, except, it wasn’t just a letter. He has had eight DUIs, several arrests, etc., and he wrote me and wanted to know if I was ready for A.A. yet, and ready to turn my life around. He says that he has four years sober now. Amazing, huh? Thank you for everything, and for all of the help. I really needed A.A.!” — **Dale C., 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 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.