



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Fall 2020

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."*

Gratitude for Alcoholics Anonymous

"Thank you for responding to my letter, for reaching out. I do appreciate it. I have the concept of A.A. I have been part of A.A. in the past, from 2004 to the present. I started out drinking at the age of 14 and kept drinking until I was 29. I have not been drinking, smoking weed, or using pills for eight years now. The Twelve Steps have really helped me throughout the years. COVID-19 has closed so many helpful places and organizations. I will wait until the literature is available. I do not have access to computers, cell phones, Internet or online meetings. I want to look up Grapevine and La Viña on the Internet, like many of my family and friends. But I am grateful, and I enjoyed the stories from 'Sharing From Behind the Walls' for now; I need to contribute something to the next issue." — Carl B., Pacific Region

"I am delighted to let you know that I am blessed and graced by God and A.A., in and with my recovery. I am fortunate and very happy to be alive and among those who experience transformation from the program, even here in prison. Before I came to prison, or even a meeting, I was alone and desperate. Life was a void — meaningless, with no purpose. I never thought that I could be free and have good times without alcohol and drugs. I never thought that I could face reality and accept life on life's terms as it comes. For many years, my life was unmanageable: I was hopeless and helpless, dependent on alcohol and drugs. I was powerless and in demonic bondage — for 41 years. Now with God and the working hand and love of A.A., I am seven years sober and clean, and I am enjoying my sobriety one day at a time. My sobriety date is May 5, 2013. Learning to live by and in the Steps and Traditions is my

blessing. I am an active member who is involved in service behind these walls. Now I have much to live for and many opportunities to practice the Twelve Steps and Tradition Five. My life is beautiful and fun today. I enjoy reading and living 'How It Works,' and I truly love Step Eleven." — Tony J., South East Region

Breaking the Cycle Through the A.A. Principles

"Here is my story. My 'inheritance,' most think, began in Europe, where my great grandfather (Levi D. of Pennsylvania) left his leg. He returned home as a disabled veteran of foreign wars, and, soon after, his wife left him alone to raise nine children in a three-bedroom house. My grandfather had quit school when he was in the fifth grade to work in the mills. What my parents, uncles, cousins, all my siblings and I *really* inherited was generational poverty, family separation and alcoholism. Does the cycle of poverty and pain come before or after the alcoholism? To what lengths are we willing to go to trudge on to secure our prosperity? By any means necessary? Some say, 'Half measures avail us nothing.' Never surrender; trudge on!' My eldest daughter will be 20 years old in January 2021; she is already a fourth-generation waitress and well into her alcoholism. So much defines her destiny. I am determined to end this family cycle of separation and alcoholism with this generation, with the help of you, my friends in A.A. By instilling the proven principles of A.A. into our family's traditions, we can preserve our prosperity — for our health is our greatest wealth." — Shawn T., Pacific Region

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Finding Fellowship in Meetings

"I am in no hurry to go home, although I miss my family terribly. I have come to find myself in these four walls. I am scared I will not be able to walk the walk when I am free. I have found God. I realized there had to be something greater in the works if I started to think differently. It is the biggest blessing — he is giving me awareness. I am now aware of the devil's schemes; the darkness wants me back. Through God I will remain strong. I feel as though I have made good progress, considering that I am in jail. I do not want to fall victim to the influence of other inmates. I am a bit of a

loner, but I prefer it that way. I like to be alone with my thoughts: I guess that is why I am writing, to vent these thoughts to make them real. Deep down I know only God can fill that void. I have been to meetings here in the facility, and I love what A.A. offers — the people and the laughs. There is a sense of unity and acceptance I have never had before. I study the Big Book daily. I thought, Why not write to A.A.?" — **Lauren H., South East Region**

Asking for Help

"I have worked the Steps and have attended meetings out there but not diligently. The furthest Step I have worked was Step Four. The longest I have stayed sober was six years, and that is because I was incarcerated for four of the six years. I have worked the Steps and had sponsors, but through my own lack of self-will and addiction, I never followed through. I want to stay sober. I am serious about my sobriety this time. I really need help and sponsorship please; can you help me?" — **Allison K., South West Region**

"First, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to you for providing this material. I have been involved with the program on and off (more off than on) since I was in my teens (I am 51 years old now). I am aware that a selfless attitude is instrumental in an alcoholic's sobriety. Nonetheless, without the A.A. program and you, this simply would not have happened. You may very well have helped me alter the course of my life — which brings me to my next point. I believe I have finally reached the point where I will do whatever I have to do to change my life. I just learned this last week from someone affiliated with the parole board that I will probably never go home (I am doing 13 to life). I have finally reached the point where I simply have nothing to lose by engaging in the program rigorous and honestly. It seems God removed the final obstacle that was preventing me from giving myself wholly and completely to the A.A. program. However, I find myself in a conundrum. Of course, with the current COVID-19 epidemic, our group activities — such as church services and A.A. meetings — are currently suspended. The importance of A.A. fellowship has never been so clear to me as it is now. The necessity is absolute. However, even when meetings were being held, they consisted of a bunch of inmates sharing to look good for the outside A.A. people coming in. I understand the nature of the disease, but I am at a point where I need the help of fellow A.A. members who are genuine and serious about living the principles of A.A. to maintain true sobriety. It was my hope that the General Service Office might be able to put me in touch with members in my area — or put them in touch with me — who might be able and willing to help me change my life. I am desperate and in urgent need. I cannot overstate this: I need help badly; I want to live! I need to get this right. I need genuine, practical, down-to-earth sobriety, no gimmicks or window dressing. Please help. Again, I have no more time for games." — **Richard M., East Central Region**

The Power of the Third Step

"Hello, my name is Rodney. I would like to share my experience with you on what happened when I made the decision to turn my

will and my life over to the care of God as I understand him. The first 29 years of my life could easily be defined as one bad choice after the other. My last bad choice, in 2009, caused me to abandon my two young daughters. I had lost contact with my older one four years prior to my arrest. On July 19, 2014, I completely turned my life over to God. It brought a peace over my life that to this day surpasses all understanding. I have prayed without ceasing, which includes the Serenity Prayer. With the priceless guidance of my sponsor, I have worked a thorough program of recovery that has taught me the difference between being selfish and being selfless. It is not always about me and what I want — that is selfishness. Praying the Serenity Prayer and putting my trust in God — that in his time he will bring my

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daughter back to me — that is selflessness, but it is hard. I am very blessed to say that on April 3, 2020 (her 17th birthday), I reunited with my daughter by speaking with her for the first time in 15 years. (This happened thanks to an angel of an aunt.) Because of what I have learned in A.A., I can honestly share with my daughter my desire for a life of sobriety and service work. These past six years have been filled with blessings, but reuniting with my daughter is by far the greatest of those. This coming October I will receive my 11-year chip. One day at a time I can get through this sentence with the help of my higher power, and I can start being the father I was meant to be. I encourage anyone who is unsure to sit quietly in prayer. A little talk with God could change your life! It did mine." — **Rodney J., South West Region**

Corrections Correspondence Service (C.C.S.)

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 men writing to men and women writing to women. 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).