



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

'A CHANGE INSIDE —A SENSE OF PEACE'

"My name is Kevin and I am currently being held in prison. I have been attending meetings and I already feel a change inside, a sense of peace. I hear my stories over and over and I learn different things about myself through each person I've heard share. Our guys who come in from the outside are great. They have a lot to offer me in my new recovery. I am ready to take certain steps, and you just can't know how it makes me feel inside after attending these meetings. I recently got two other guys to go with me. To see them agreeing with other guys' stories, and to see them light up and ask questions about their problems, made me feel good. I'm glad they got their first meeting. When we returned to our cell house, we once again sat down and discussed what we heard and learned from the meeting—kind of a second meeting. The peace it brought between us is like a bond. I like that!"—**Kevin S., Southeast Region**

THE PROMISES see THE BIG BOOK, pp. 83-84

"My name is Dustine and I'm an alcoholic. I've been through the game of life. Because of my alcoholism, I've lost everything in my life. I've lost my children, husband, home, cars, license, material possessions and my freedom. I'm sure you know how the list continues. Not only have I lost, I've also been through tremendous abuse. Living on the streets for years and going through turmoil has only allowed me one outlet left. I came to know a loving higher power. Thanks to the Fellowship, I've become a very spiritual person. I love my higher power. He has shown me grace. One promise that has come true for me is, 'I will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it'. In spite of everything I've gone through I do not regret it because I got to know God. If I were told I could live

my life all over again, I'd refuse. I would only want to live it the exact same way because I was so broken I turned to God. I don't believe I'd have such a relationship with him if I didn't go through everything I did. I also know I've touched people's lives during my sober bouts. There is nothing more rewarding than that."—**Dustine R., Northeast Region**

HOPE AND PEACE —IN THOSE ROOMS

"I am an alcoholic who wants to find a way to stay sober. It feels like only yesterday that I was 16 years old, getting drunk and in trouble. Now I'm 44 years old and still doing the same stuff I did as a teenager. The times I've been able to stay away from booze, I'm a fairly normal guy. Once I start drinking, I stop doing everything but drinking. I've gotten to the point where I feel a bit hopeless. Sometimes I'm even glad I'm locked up where I can't get any booze. I've had some success in A.A. on the outside. After six months, nine months, one time for a couple of years, I've gone back to the bottle. I've hurt my family and caused so much shame. This time I went into a neighbor's house to find some alcohol while I was having the DTs. Everywhere people know me, I'm thought of as an incurable drunk. People don't know what to say to me anymore. I don't know what to tell them either. I've been locked up since Christmas day 2007. I haven't drunk since then. I still have cravings to drink. I go to the one A.A. meeting per week here. I pray and read some literature. Some days I feel like the same person. I get so angry so fast. My mouth gets me in trouble. I just would like some peace in my life. I'm sick of being a self-conscious nervous wreck wondering if I'm going to drink again when I go home. I don't have a problem with God, but I think he may have a problem with me. I just don't know?"—**Daniel D., East Central Region**

'WE WERE POWERLESS OVER ALCOHOL—OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE'

"My name is Bradford D. I am writing you to say that I got a prison sentence of 1½ to 4 years for my second DWI. To be honest, I am 39 years old and I have been in and out of jail since I was 18. I've done one year in the county jail and got released and again I started drinking, and again back to the county jail. Finally, prison got me. I was stealing money from my family for alcohol. Me and my mom and dad always argued about my drinking. I've been in and out of relationships due to alcohol destroying me. I was even married once for six months and lost my marriage over alcohol. My family is not proud of me, now they are upset with me. When I caught my second DWI, I fell asleep at the wheel and totaled my girlfriend's car. I drove an unregistered vehicle with no

license and also got a \$2,700 fine along with my second DWI. On the outside, alcohol was my food. All those other times, I heard of A.A. in jail, but never put it to practice in my life. Now at 39, I have nothing to show for it but a prison sentence and a green outfit to match. Every time I got my own place and things for my apartment, I would sell my things just to get a drink. I even had blackouts—where I didn't remember what happened the night before and ended up waking up in a cell. Please help me!"—**Bradford D., Northeast Region**

"My name is Johnny. I have been in and out of A.A. for years. These last couple I actually asked for help and got sober for a while, only to try it on my own once again, with of course, the same results. Here I am in jail again. I am really ready to get sober. I have tried very hard the last 1 ½ to 2 years. I managed to get the most sober time since I was 15 years old. Guess I just didn't try hard enough. I thought I was o.k. until my wife filed for divorce, I fell and broke three or four ribs, lost a good foreman job, and got a call that my brother was killed in a motorcycle accident. All this in five weeks! This is all harsh, but not an excuse. It was through this that I realized I was not prepared to deal with life on life's terms. I looked in my spiritual toolbox and it was nowhere, as far as I could remember. I had been robbed! By who? Myself! How disappointing."—**Johnny H., West Central Region**

THE A.A. PROGRAM OF RECOVERY

"Do A.A. people really live by the code of behavior described in Chapters 5 and 6 of the Big Book? That's really incredible. You people must be close to sainthood! I don't know if I can really live that way. I am willing to try. I'll do anything to keep from returning to alcohol. And I do mean ANYTHING!!! I want to stay sober so bad I can taste it. I'm still going through 'classification' so I am unable to go to the meetings yet. They do have them here. Once I am classified I will have more freedom of movement, so I will be attending the meetings. As you are no doubt aware, there is plenty of booze available in prison. On my word of honor, I have not touched a drop. I am done. I think I've already drank enough liquor to float a battleship, so I won't be missing anything. I am 54 years old. I'm looking at 15 good years before I reach life expectancy at 70. I want those years to be quality years. I truly believe the first step in making them so is sobriety. So I'm all in. From the bottom of my heart I thank A.A. for reaching out to me. Take care."—**Howard N., Northeast Region**

"My name is Daniel and I am currently incarcerated. I celebrated eight years sober on August 15, 2008, and shortly afterwards was arrested for a combination of new stupidity, arrogance and wreckage from my past that I chose to ignore. This has amounted to me serving a year here and then a state-sponsored trip to answer more ghosts who reside elsewhere. A.A. brings meetings in here several times a week and I am immensely grateful for that."—**Daniel M., Northeast Region**

THE BIG BOOK

"I was recently reading my pocket-size Big Book, when, at the end, I came upon Appendix VI on pg. 189. Having read the Big Book several times over in my 40 years, I had generally

skipped over this page (and unfortunately, many others too) as I felt I had no need of it. This time, however, my situation is a bit different, as I am fairly well tucked away in a maximum security prison for breaking into my *own* home (needless to say, I was drunk). My family has left me, and I've lost everything I had to alcohol. I have an extensive criminal record that, unfortunately, is 100% related to my drinking. I'm most likely looking at a year or two behind bars as a result of my last debacle. Had the police not picked me up, I probably would have died. Alcohol had wasted me—spiritually, mentally and physically. Recently, however, I was given the one precious gift that saved my life—and that is God. He proved to be the crucial piece in the 'sobriety puzzle' that always seemed to elude me. Now, thanks to His mercy and undying grace, I have that new 'design for living' that I could never find before; and that old 'puzzle' (meaning my unwillingness) was totally solved. As a true, hardened ex-con (I say ex-con because that man no longer exists, even though I am still in prison), I was not one prone to believing in miracles. But let me tell you that they do exist—and that the fourth dimension that Bill mentioned in his story is open to anyone—be he willing to ask for a ticket."—**Russell, W., Northeast Region**

'CONSTANT VIGILANCE'

"My name is Dan, and I'm a recovering alcoholic, writing to you from jail. As a man who had nine years of sobriety, with help from God and A.A. and a lot of hard work and perseverance, I'm telling you now that I have slipped. I guess that would be pretty obvious, considering where I'm writing from. Mine is the usual story. I was, at one time, very involved in A.A.—starting with coffee, then speaking and volunteering at a detox center. As is usually the case, after about eight years I went to less and less meetings, called my sponsor less and less, and here I sit. I'm a perfect example of what happens when someone in recovery does not stay diligent with his or her program. I'm not a stupid man, I just did the same thing that, sad to say, many have done before me."—**Daniel B., 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.