



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Spring 2015

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."*

GOING TO A.A. MEETINGS

"Long before this booklet was even thought of, every single idea in it and many more suggestions for living sober were learned and *proved successful* by hundreds of thousands of alcoholics. We did this not just by reading, but also by talking to each other. At first, we mostly listened.... What we did was simply go to meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous."

— *Living Sober*, p. 76

A SUGGESTION FROM DR. BOB

"It gives me great pleasure to share my thoughts with you because you always seem to care. I'm coming up on my 25th year of recovery and I'm very proud that I buckled down and let my mind and actions work the program of A.A. So long as I'm thinking as I'm thinking now, and so long as I'm doing the things I'm doing now, I don't believe I'll ever take another drink. Whenever I have that urge to think I can drink again sociably, I remember what Dr. Bob said about thinking and doing the things of the suggested program. I don't know about anybody else, but I owe Dr. Bob a debt of gratitude for this one simple idea, for this complicated alcoholic." — **Ernest V., Northeast Region**

A 'MAIL MEETING'

"I wrote you before to let you know that I had not heard from an outside contact. This is to tell you that today I received a lovely letter from someone and I'm writing back now. I look forward to a 'mail meeting' with my outside correspondent. I will keep you posted as well." — **John R., Southeast Region**

'... WHY ALCOHOLICS LOVE TO GO TO MEETINGS'

"I don't get mail or letters from the outside. I will keep this letter short even though I have a lot to say. I do want you to know that I did live in a treatment program for 14 months, and I got sober

there. We went to A.A. meetings every night, I was trying not to drink again so I did what A.A. members told me to do. I started hearing my story when people got up to share, and I understood why alcoholics love to go to A.A. meetings. I just want to thank you again for helping me and I will stay in touch. God bless all of you." — **Willard B., Pacific Region**

"I am here for D.W.I. and want to share some very important reasons how I got here. I quit going to meetings and quit calling my sponsor. Please take my bad example and use it for something positive. Do not follow my example. Stay in touch with a sponsor and keep going to A.A. meetings. I have 2½ years left to do in prison and I hope that this letter will reach someone so they don't have to go through what I am experiencing. Thank you." — **Paul B., East Central Region**

"My name is David, I am the facilitator of an A.A. inmate group. I have been able to serve my fellow inmates in this manner for several months now. Our meeting was barely limping along, but now it's starting to liven up. We were running the meeting with a beat up Third Edition Big Book until we received up-to-date A.A. literature. Our group is listed with G.S.O. Thank you so much for your help, please know our group is very grateful for any assistance A.A. may provide." — **David W., Southwest Region**

'... BACK FROM THE BRINK'

"I am writing for a twofold reason; I would like to thank the people of A.A. for all the help they give others who struggle with alcohol, both on the outside and inside of the prison walls. It is through the willingness of those on the outside to help another alcoholic that A.A. even exists here behind the walls. Their sharing and kindness is what draws those of us who want a different life when we are released to the A.A. program. I, for one, have found a deep spirituality through forgiveness and the making of amends. I am currently finishing the Fourth Step and plan to do the Fifth Step upon my release. A.A. and God have saved my life, and I want you to know that this program has brought me back from the brink." — **Albert T., Northeast Region**

"My name is Heather I have been brought exactly to the place where I am supposed to be. Yes, it might sound strange but at 20 years old I found alcohol, which lead to abuse, losses and jail. My life depends on being clean, sober, safe and secure. Alcohol and men have been the number one things I have depended on. Last Palm Sunday I made a decision to put God first. I thought I could protect my three children better alone, but with God we all are safe! I'm waiting here in jail, looking at my alcoholic life. I'm so thirsty for God's word and to how to work the Twelve Steps. I found a torn up little A.A. publication and used a self-journal to start with." — **Heather C., Southwest Region**

‘...A WAY OF LIFE.’

“Alcohol has destroyed my life. It is only now, after two and a half years of incarceration, that I am able to see the destruction for what it is. I am completely powerless over alcohol. It is through the efforts of A.A. that I am able to put things in perspective, and maintain a feeling of hope. I’ve been reading *Sharing From Behind the Walls* for about a year now. I can relate to the contributors in every way. We have put ourselves in a terrible situation, in a terrible place. Life may not always be fair, so it is up to us to decide to pick ourselves up and find the right path. In prison it’s so easy to feed into the negative people and thoughts. A.A. has thrown us all a lifeline with the newsletter and correspondence service. I enjoy reading the stories of hope and the realization that A.A. isn’t just a program of recovery — it’s a way of life.” — **Robert C., Northeast Region**

‘IT WORKS!’

“First things first, I am an alcoholic. My alcoholism began when I was a teen. I remember the horrible taste of alcohol; however, its effects were a different story. These effects brought on the early stages of my insanity. Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting to get different results. Alcoholism led me to a lifestyle of irresponsibility and recklessness, which led to my incarceration and bottom. Hitting rock bottom brought me to admit I was powerless over my alcoholism, that my life had become unmanageable, Step One. Next, I came to believe that a Power greater than myself could restore me to sanity, Step 2. Then, I made a decision to turn my will and every area of my life over to God, Step 3. As a result of being a part of my A.A. group, I am privileged to have many awesome outside sponsors. There are many other volunteers who sacrifice their time, lives, and service for us. They help make recovery possible, through sponsorship, reading the Big Book, following the Twelve Steps and Traditions in all our affairs, and fellowship with men who share their experience, strength and hope with us! Today marks 401 months of recovery and serenity for me. You see, it works, if you work it! I’m looking forward to continue living a life of recovery, unity and service.” — **Ramon A., Southeast Region**

TOOLS OF THE A.A. PROGRAM

“My name is David and I’m an alcoholic. I’m currently serving a prison sentence for an alcohol-related incident. Before I ever knew I was coming to prison I decided to give A.A. another try, after hitting bottom and winding up in county jail. Early on I attended as many meetings as I could and followed the advice given to me by the volunteers bringing in the A.A. meetings. I earnestly started working the Steps and reread the Big Book. I say reread because I have been in and out of A.A. for years. I never gave A.A. or myself a real chance. I didn’t listen to anyone, always wanting to do it my way. I’ve just recently been released from confinement after 22 days. During this time I had my Big Book, some Grapevines, pen and paper, and letters from my sponsor and support group. I’m grateful! I’ve also celebrated 21 months of sobriety in December and completed the Twelve Steps. During my alone time in confinement I spent some extra time on Step Eleven. Prayer and meditation are a big part of my life. I still have seven years left before my ‘out date’ and using everything I’ve learned in A.A. I know I’ll make it. With my Higher Power, support group and the Big Book, I know I’ll be just fine. If you’re new to A.A. or coming back like me, please be honest with yourself. Look at where your running the show has gotten you and

give yourself a break! Find that Higher Power, get involved, get a sponsor and give yourself a chance. The A.A. program works, but only if you work it!” — **David B, Southeast Region**

‘BEYOND MY WILDEST DREAMS’

“I should be released to a half-way house in early May. I’m originally from the east coast but I will be moving west where my Mom, sober nearly 30 years, lives. Once I get on my feet, I plan to either continue as a touring songwriter and musician or attend medical school. Anything is possible now and I look forward to a life ‘beyond my wildest dreams.’ Thank you.” — **Daniel W., Northeast Region**

“My name is Adam, and I’m sitting in solitary confinement 3,000 miles from home. Sitting in this cell I decided to really read the Big Book. I decided to do the Twelve Steps exactly how they’re laid out. When I read ‘How it Works’ it explained every trouble and behavior I couldn’t quite figure out clearly. I’m doing my Fourth Step now and I’m really digging deep and trying not to miss anything. I really believe this is the way and I’ve finally found the answer that was in front of my face the whole time. I have to believe this will work because quite frankly there’s nothing else left, I’ve tried it all to no avail. The Big Book showed me everything I ever did and I believe that if I do what it says I will have this spiritual experience it speaks of.” — **Adam L., Pacific Region**

CORRESPONDENT

—FROM INSIDE TO OUTSIDE

“I have had the opportunity to correspond with an individual on the outside while I was incarcerated for over 7 years and 10 months at a halfway house. I have learned so much from A.A. I started attending A.A. during my second year of incarceration. I had been a daily, heavy drinker for almost 25 years. I did not have any desire to stop, except when I was hungover or incarcerated. I have recently been released and I’m looking to carry my message to others. With the help of A.A. meetings and *Sharing From Behind the Walls*, I was able to look deep inside myself and to find my shortcomings, along with my desire for immediate gratification. I had to humble myself and start to practice empathy. I have seen a lot of things behind the bars and have learned to be more patient. I would like to be an understanding corrections correspondent.” — **Bruce J., Pacific 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.