



# SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Summer 2023

Dear A.A. Friends,

Let's open our meeting with a moment of silence, followed by the A.A. Preamble:

**A**lcoholics Anonymous is a Fellowship of people 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."\*

## Part of something awesome

I am in prison cleaning up the wreckage of my past (talk about doing things you don't wanna do). Anyway, I recently received a response letter from the Corrections Correspondence Service, and I just wanted to share with you how excited I was to have received it. I can say in all honesty that I feel like I am part of something so awesome, so huge, and great. I've heard it said and I've read it in our literature, and now I've actually experienced it to the bone; being part of something good and positive, it is inspiring. Thank you. — George H. Pacific Region

## Thank you Grapevine

I am an incarcerated alcoholic with a sobriety date of 4/26/22. I am writing today to express my gratitude for the support I have received from the General Service Office and to share my experience, strength, and hope as it relates to A.A. in a correctional facility. First, I want to say, "Thanks" to GSO for the packet of correspondence and literature. The packet contained a personalized and thoughtful letter penned by a member on the Corrections assignment, and an issue of the most recent the Grapevine magazine, a newsletter called *Sharing From Behind The Walls* and a cover letter with an attached application form for registration in the *Corrections*

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*Correspondence Service*. The Grapevine issue couldn't have been more appropriate as it had a special section called "Remote Communities." For a guy like me who is in jail, it resonated. Reading stories about the unique obstacles and struggles A.A.s in remote areas have had to overcome to launch meetings, attend meetings, and stay connected has been inspirational. Meetings 90 minutes away, language barriers, areas with minimal population; these are stories of amazing determination. Accessing A.A. meetings has been a challenge as there are no offerings of meetings in my jail complex. However, even though I can't attend meetings, I take action to make A.A. an integral part of life and stay spiritually fit. These actions include daily reading out of the Big Book and/or The Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions, re-reading select passages out of the Grapevine, working with other alcoholics and connecting with a sober member of A.A. via telephone twice a week. The telephone session with my friend has meant a lot to me. This activity has been a keystone in my fellowship activities and source of spiritual nourishment. My friend and I schedule time to talk on the phone twice a week, read aloud from the Big Book, three pages at a time, taking turns who reads page by page. We started this virtual meet-up routine by reading from the Prefaces, the Dr.'s Opinion and alternating between a chapter (first 164 pages) and a personal story among the 42 stories in the back of the Big Book. After we

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finish reading, we discuss the content and our "take aways" — applying it to what we got out of the reading and relating it to something we're experiencing in our lives. The phone sessions have been tremendous and meaningful; a foundation for my growth and catalyst in broadening my understanding of the steps and principles of A.A. Besides the knowledge I have absorbed from reading out of the chapters, the personal stories have enriched me and expanded my connection to the fellowship. I am amazed at the various demographics represented and the different trails that have been blazed to the rooms of A.A. The process of phone meetings with my

friend has attracted another inmate who shared his story of struggles with alcohol and his desire to stay sober through the steps. He asked me to help him go through the Big Book and I set aside time to work with him in the spirit of service. God provided me with an opportunity to help another alcoholic and give away what has been freely given to me by my friend. At any rate, those are steps I am taking to stay sober, foster spiritual growth and stay sane. As I fight my case, I am grateful for God, the fellowship of A.A., and the steps and principles that are a design for living. There are many challenges attached to being in jail, navigating the environment with its maladies and coping with numerous personalities and negative elements. A.A. continues to help me turn despair into hope. Placing A.A. at the top of my affairs has helped me change my attitude, outlook, and perspective. I am going to continue trudging and allow God and A.A. to guide me through this difficult season: "*What we have is a daily reprieve contingent upon the maintenance of our spiritual condition.*" — p. 85 of the Big Book. Thanks for allowing me to share. — Mureithi D. Pacific Region

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*"I am thankful I have this opportunity to share my experience and hope with others who may be going through the same thing I am going through right now."*

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### **Thirty years, one day at a time**

I got sober 11/20/2020. I would have over 15 months sober before I was released in March 2022. I had a lot happen to me that drove me almost nuts. The God that helped me stay sober day one really looked better day two and day three. But when the waves of life came crashing down and the winds pounded me, I forgot who's been there all the time. He may not remove my mountains but will enable me to have strength to climb them. I just need to remember days past. How He always got me and my family through things. I have an 81-year-old mom, two sisters and one brother. On November 3, I was sent to a medical unit at another prison. By the time I made it to the new Heart Unit, one of the bypasses had closed 99%. I had four put in in 2014. They were only able to open it 20% by balloon. I suffer from heart disease and have blockages in my legs and neck. I'm back where I started but in the old hospital part, it is called Skilled Nursing Unit. It has 15 rooms and was closed in May because another one bigger was built next door. There are 11 of us. Because of our needs we had to come here. No stairs. But you guys brought the meeting to me. I have the *Sharing From Behind The Walls* and new magazine and your letter; I will treasure like the others. You guys really care. I started doing treatment and meetings

around 1995. So, I am coming up on 30 years. I may be there already I had signed up for A.A. but never made a meeting at the new place. I am 59 and life is about to change. I work on my spirituality with a mentor. There's no A, B, C, answer. It's how and what you get out of. I have five to eight years left. One day at a time. Take care, — Robert F. West Central Region

### **Progress, not regress**

Yes, it's me, Laura M., again. I recently (July 24, 2022) celebrated 10 years sober. Ok, so maybe they weren't all happy. I went to jail on July 24, 2012. I have decided I got rescued not arrested, because the way I was existing out there was not helping me or anyone else. Now I have been in this facility for nine of those 10 years, I attend a lot of groups, have real friends and my family is actually pleased with my progress. That's another thing, I progress not regress. — Laura M. Northeast Region

### **Blessed to be sober**

My name is Portia, I am 49 years old. I am an alcoholic. I am writing to you from my Pod in a detention center. I am blessed to be sober since May 22, 2020, that is the day my life changed. I got locked up July 21, 2021, for my third DWI and violating my probation. This experience has given me time to think and to get my mind right with my Lord. I take it one day at a time and every Sunday if we have Sunday school I go and I always thank the Lord for that day because I am supposed to be dead or in a coma, thank God! I am here thinking about what I have done and what I can do to better myself. On Wednesday I go to A.A. and talk about my first drink and my first, second, and third DWI's and the blessing I have received. Since May 22, 2022, I have been sober and I have been doing time since July 21, 2022. I get out September 6, 2023, and I have learned from my mistakes. I lost my job, apartment and my car, no kids. I upset my family, but I do have the good Lord watching over me, blessing me in so many ways, with A.A. meetings, the Big Book, my family and friends. I love myself more. I have peace, faith, and strength, and also respect for myself and others. I talk to and try to help others if I can, to help me stay focused and keep a level head, not drink or do foolish things. I feel great each day and I am taking it one day at a time. Thanks for letting me share my story. — Portia B. Southeast Region

### **Thy will be done**

Hello, Corrections Correspondence Service. Hello, family, brothers and sisters of A.A. I was grateful to hear a response from CCS. It brought a warm feeling over me with the help of my higher power. Thank you so much for sending me a *Sharing From Behind The Walls* with excerpts from different

grateful and hopeful alcoholics sharing their experience, strength, and hope with me as if I was right there in a meeting with them. Feeling their joy and defeat just like I do from time to time, but now I have hope again that I can stay sober longer than 26 months. As sobriety goes, I understand that I have a long way to go on my reintroduction to the program and the fellowship; one day at a time. As long as I can remember in my drinking career it took a period of time to destroy my life all the way to the point of me being homeless, losing everything and being locked up one more time. This has really been an eye opener to me. Also, not having friends or family to support me in whatever situations in my life that I've been through, sometimes it feels like I am in this journey of life all by myself. But of course, my higher power assures me it has been there all along through some of those near-death experiences that I was spared so many times. Even through the good experiences in my life, while I am writing, when I look back at the end of the day, I have a lot to be thankful for. I am thankful I have this opportunity to share my experience and hope with others who may be going through the same thing I am going through right now. I am beginning to understand more than to be understood. I don't mind if you share my letters with others, as they have shared theirs with me. So, my prayer every day until I am freed from jail, is that my higher power's will be done and whatever outcome comes out of this that my acceptance of it won't be bitterness or resentment. So, thank you A.A. for the love and consideration. Sincerely, — **Craig B. Southeast Region**

### From tragedy to sobriety

My name is Bradford P., and I am an alcoholic. Unfortunately, it took tragedy for me to finally admit this. I lived a life of denial and fear. This culminated in me turning to alcohol, as I always have, during a time of sadness and self-pity, drinking to the point of blackout, and driving intoxicated home. Predictably, I drove the wrong way on the freeway, driving headfirst into oncoming traffic. I murdered two innocent people that night and put another innocent man in a wheelchair. They were just coming home from a long day in worship at a church convention. A true definition of "innocent." When I learned the extent of the destruction I had wrought, I laid in the hospital bed, and I knew three things: 1) I never wanted to drink again. 2) I never wanted to hurt another person again. 3) I didn't want THIS to be who I was. I had to change. I didn't really know how or what form that would take, but I promised I would stay open-minded (I would later find out that was a spiritual principle of A.A.). Years later, after going through the criminal justice system, starting my sentence of 23 years to life, I ended up in prison. I ended up in several self-help programs and have gleaned much from each of them, but I believe that A.A. has the template for my

sobriety in life. I am finally ready to work the steps as *thoroughly* as humanly possible and I am asking for help from someone who has gone through that journey themselves. Thank you for listening. — Sincerely, **Bradford P. Pacific Region**

### Overcoming guilt

I sit in prison at 46 years old, I've given 35 years of my life to institutions, Juvenile Hall, California Youth Authority, county jails and prisons. I am 22 years in my third strike, 25 years to life sentence and in two days I go back to board for possible release, and I am scared. I am scared because I have to face my consequences and be judged sober. I have never faced anyone with my future in their hands clean and sober. For a couple of weeks, I have fought the urge to drink or do drugs, which would mean "Denied Parole" for sure. Yes, I can get substances here before anyone would give me 45 cents for top ramen chili soup. When my worry, anxiety, fear and low self-esteem get the best of me I'd run to alcohol. My lack of courage to face things would have me feeling guilty and shameful so it would be ok in my mind to drink or do drugs. When I am angry at myself for being weak and not being in control, I'd run to substances. I become lazy and resentful, blaming others for my shortcoming. I no longer feel that way about myself because I know my self-worth and know my options. I may be anxious today, but I am stronger and focused. So, I am still sober. I know I will stay sober and continue to grow in rehabilitation as I overcome low self-

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esteem, shame and guilt, which will always mean I will overcome my character defects — fear, anxiety, lack of courage, anger, impulsiveness, insecurities, callousness and addiction. Take care because I care. — **Tyrone T. Pacific Region**

### Paradigm shift

My name is Devante T., I am 30 years old, and I am an alcoholic. I have been humbly incarcerated since I was 16 years old, which is when I chose to commit my offense. While attending an A.A. meeting at my old institution, I held onto two old newsletters of Fall/Winter 2019 Issues of Sharing From Behind The Walls and an AA Grapevine May 2021 Journal Magazine. I felt the energy from others in the A.A. community. I joined A.A. back when I was volunteering as an

“Inmate Activities Coordinator” clerk in which I helped enter in slips for programs and organizations in the computer; among other computer developing activities. A.A. was just starting back up in 2021; post COVID-19 and I knew I needed to be a part of the group because I know I am an alcoholic and I have been avoiding every string attached to that truth and the consequences of it. In addition, I wanted to work on my interaction with a group of strangers. My story begins back when I was eight years old; I was molested. It weirded me out and I didn’t know what was happening. That moment triggered my experiment with alcohol, my older brother and I would go into our granddad’s bar/fridge and steal shots of alcohol/beer. That adrenaline rush of habit and rebelliousness continued with me stealing beers, liquor, and cigarettes from anyone who had them. I have been around family members and strangers who drank and that also led me to stealing puffs of marijuana from my mom. From ages eight to 11, I slowly on occasions drowned my mind, emotions, and childhood in that thief of alcohol, marijuana, cigarettes, food, money, anger, aggression. As my excuse, I never experienced filthy drunkenness, my tolerance level increased. At 12 years old, I was sent to live with my dad and sister. After being abused again, I kept the secret. This further bred my relationship with alcohol. While trying to avoid the pitfalls and triggers of my addictions I made an unplanned choice to do something different. I showed up to an illegal street race; stole a gun from my employer out of boredom. I wanted to start a robbing adventure to fund my short time goals. Then I reasoned that I would leave all criminal habits alone and live right. I got caught. I didn’t want to give the gun back. I ran away from home and hid in a vacant house that I wouldn’t mind living as a free citizen. I tried to go back home; gather some money, clothes, food, laptop, etc., but got stopped by a police officer. I resisted arrest, fear and worry magnified and I chose to shoot the officer multiple times, in a cemetery. It was a blessing he made it out of that place alive. My youth died in that place; my essence was overgrown by the brush I hid under. Now I am serving a 30-year sentence. My new parole hearing is 2024 instead of 2033. I have been dissecting my past and studying all of my mistakes and gaining realization

and understanding of my true purpose through my continued relationship and communication with God whom I chose to call Allah.

My mind still gives in to stress and I think of drinking and smoking weed. But as I live this sober life and grow, mature and heal, I know each day that God (Allah) blesses me with a different type of high and intoxication every time I write something from my mind and heart. I still feel lonely, but I know God blessed me to create this letter and all past content I share with others to finally draw people into my life. My process of healing, recovery and traveling started with psychology/behavior; I studied plenty of things to relate to my past, present and future; including others; my discipline is comfortable with Islam and my paradigm shift began when I started telling my truth in November 2022 at age 29; in meetings and to a friend. From this day forward I feel a sober life has helped me continue the process of healing. I just need to know others understand. — Devante T. Southwest Region

### **Corrections Correspondence Service (CCS)**

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).