



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Summer 2018

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 "We" Program

"My name is Dana and I'm an alcoholic. I am humble enough today to know I can't do this alone. We alcoholics have to work together. My story is like so many others, and I know I'm not alone. However, my head tells me I am. I'm in prison on my seventh DUI. I spent the last few years angry at A.A. because nobody from my home group reached out to me here in prison. I let my ego get in the way, and I stopped doing the next night thing. I'd like to get plugged back into A.A." — **Dana H., Pacific Region**

"I started drinking when I was around 12 or 13 years old. My childhood wasn't like most, but whose is anyway? I am legally blind due to child abuse. I had it all, from an alcoholic stepdad to sexual abuse. I always loved the effects of alcohol — it was my escape from reality, plus it took away my insecurities. I attend A.A. here at the prison and have found other alcoholics I can talk to and who know what the struggle is like. I already have an A.A. book (the Big Book) and although there is more to my story, I pray that what I have shared can help someone. It helps me to share it. Today, I have God in my life, as well as true friends who want the very best for me. Today, February 17, 2018, I have been sober 10 months. I am so grateful." — **Robert P., Southwest Region**

"I started drinking at a very young age. I believe I had my first sip of alcohol at age 9 at my sister's party, when I began to play quarters. By age 12 I was drinking 40 oz. bottles of beer on the weekends, and by 15 I was 'all in' with the drinking lifestyle. I was

controlled by it and all that it brought me. I lived for it! I always found myself around booze or chasing it. I somehow skated through school up to my senior year, when I dropped out. When I was 18, being served in different locations made me feel popular. How booze encircled me! I did some jail time in my 20s and was first introduced to A.A. there. I stayed sober for a long time but relapsed, and after several years, I wound up back in state prison for a DUI after surviving a terrible car accident that put me in a coma. Now that I'm sober, I know what lies ahead. I hear a lot of people around me who have the same issues and we try to make it together." — **Henry G., North East Region**

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Working with Others

"I am currently helping a fellow inmate with Steps Six and Seven. I can only share my experience, strength and hope with her by the grace of God and the Fellowship of A.A. Thank you so much for assisting me in working my Twelfth Step in working with other alcoholics, which Chapter Seven in the Big Book is completely devoted to doing. It is an honor knowing that I am giving back what was freely given to me." — **Whitney H., South West Region**

"I am a very proud member of A.A. I have had a couple of relapses, but I know what the program can do for you if you honestly and truly work it. I did have three years and ten months sober and then I relapsed, which is ultimately the reason for my incarceration now. By sponsoring five other women I hope to help myself. I just want to share what has been so freely given to me with these ladies and also stay sober while I'm here." — **Tracy B., South East Region**

"Every single A.A. meeting that I have been to has been with the help of many people. Both of my parents have long-term sobriety, and for them the obsession has been lifted — they seem to have recovered. I have tried many times to control my obsession only to have a blackout. Attempts at controlling the outcome when I drink have failed every time. As it says in Bill's story on page 13 of

the Big Book, “[I] became willing to have my new-found friend take [my old ideas] away, root and branch.” I have a sponsor and I sponsor one other inmate. The ‘concept’ on page 62 talks about belief in a higher power being the keystone of a new arch through which I will pass to a new freedom, which I know to be true. The program has taught me acceptance (page 417), so I learned to stop focusing on what was wrong, like not having enough A.A. meetings inside. Instead, I applied the Third Tradition, and we created our own meetings/Big Book studies. If only I had been less restless, irritable and discontent, I may have learned earlier.” — Adam M., North East Region

Powerlessness

“I am a 26-year-old alcoholic. I have come to the realization that I am powerless over alcohol! Being powerless over alcohol paved the road that led me to a 12-year prison sentence. For a long time I was angry about my circumstances, but the A.A. program has taught me how to make the best of my situation, and I have made a decision to do that. Alcoholics Anonymous has

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convinced me that those who thoroughly follow the Steps can and will succeed. Like the Big Book says on page 315, ‘This program is for people who want it, not people who need it’ — and I want this more than anything else. I am no longer like a child, forever wishing for impossible things. People can only succeed if they are committed and passionate about A.A. I attend every meeting available behind these walls and I learn something every time, for which I am eternally grateful.” — Jeremy G., West Central Region

“My name is George and I’m an alcoholic. I’m 32 years old and have been a heavy drinker since the age of 19. Since about the age of 20, my life has been a crazy cycle of binge drinking followed by jail. When sober I feel like I’m a pretty decent guy, but when I’m drunk there’s no telling what may happen. I have been in and out of A.A. for about seven years. Every time I get out of jail I have good intentions. I always seem to start off OK, but when I get about 30 days sober, I always seem to go back out and drink. With me I don’t just drink and pass out anymore, I just can’t stop. These binges are always followed by a jail sentence. I believe there’s something bigger than me out there, but I struggle when it comes to praying. I know I have Step One down, and I guess Step Two is just realizing that I can’t do this alone. Step Three is kind of where I’m stuck. I know I’ll never be able to beat this without the help of A.A. Even then, I’m not beating alcoholism, but just trying to stay sober one day at a time.” — George H., North East Region

“I am 32 now and I’m an alcoholic. I took my first drink when I was 14, and most of my life I have been homeless or in jail or prison. Drinking anything, even cough syrup, made me feel good. And I would drink in the public bathrooms in whatever community I was living in. I would drink with other homeless people and walk around all night. I would be the first person at 6:00 a.m. at the gas station to ask people for their money to buy a beer. I am an alcoholic, and I’m tired of drinking beer all day, every day. I need sobriety.” — Isaiah P., Pacific Region

Seeing Things in a New Light

“I am 56 years old and have been in and out of A.A. since 1981. There have been times I thought I was ready to work the program but started drinking again. The words from the Big Book are the same as they always were, but I’m seeing them in a new light. At my age I’m sure I have another drink in me. The question is, do I want that? The answer is no, and I’d love to have someone help me on this journey.” — William M., South East Region

“I am a recovering alcoholic. I have been healthy and sober since 2007. I’ve been participating in a Native American sweat lodge and I also attend A.A. I grew up on a reservation in Southern California, and I’ve been around alcohol, drugs and violence all my life. I used to drink but I never considered myself to be an alcoholic. After attending A.A. meetings and actually taking them seriously, I realized that I am an alcoholic. I was in denial for the longest time, and I finally had to be honest with myself and look deep within. I am familiar with the Steps; I understand how to apply them in my daily life and my spiritual practices.” — Jeremiah H., Pacific Region

Willing to Go to Any Lengths

“I had thought that I wasn’t really an alcoholic, that I was really only addicted to marijuana and pills. That was a lie my alcoholic mindset told me. At first I was truly able to control the drinking — having just one or two — then I started buying it for myself: it began with a small bottle and then progressively became a lot more. When I woke up in the hospital after a night of drinking, I knew I was an alcoholic, but I couldn’t, wouldn’t and didn’t want to stop. The night before New Year’s Eve, I got really drunk, and someone called my parole office. I walked to the gas station to get a cup of coffee, and my parole officer pulled in about five or ten minutes later. I was breathalyzed by my P.O. and the local police and taken back to jail for the sixth time, to be brought back into prison. I attended the A.A. meeting in jail until I came to prison. I got the pocket edition of the Fourth Edition of the Big Book. For the first time I’m truly ready to go to any lengths to stay sober. I have had a few mindless thoughts of going home and drinking, but I really don’t want to, no matter what! It scares me, and I can relate to alcoholism being an allergy. Every time I drink I end up back in jail or in prison. Is it really worth it? To drink for a couple months, then go back in? To me, apparently it was. I truly appreciate the hand of A.A. through several relapses. You still welcome me with open arms and have never given up on me.

Spiritual Awakening

"I had my first beer in the fifth grade with my best friend. I was trying to experience the feeling of alcohol because my friend's mom would drink all the time and loved it. Well, I didn't feel any different after the beer, so I was a little confused. Then I started drinking rum and vodka heavily in the eighth grade on a daily basis, and I've continued to do so every day since then, unless I was locked up. All through high school I'd have a bottle from my bus stop until I got to school at 7:15 a.m. There I had a separate locker for all of my liquor bottles. I ended up getting put on probation in the ninth grade, and my dad called me in as a runaway because I didn't come home on time from a graduation party. I got tested at school by the truancy officer, and the results came back positive for alcohol — they were the highest levels they had ever seen. I was sent to boot camp for violation of probation. I then got pregnant at 17. The father of my daughter was a very nice man and very good to me. He was a very good father to our daughter, and still is, but I left him for another man, who did not love me. I drank every day and had another child. I was very depressed that I had left such a great man and my daughter behind. I really hit the bottle and drank for seven years, because I had completely lost the love of my life. I ended up going to prison during that second relationship. After that term, I was hitting the bottle to the point where I had the shakes and was having seizures. I was a homeless, heartbroken, full-blown alcoholic. I was starting to get 86'd from everywhere. It got so bad I even got 86'd from the mortuary. Slowly, I started asking God, 'Why? I never hurt anyone!' Everyone had turned their backs on me and I didn't get it! Then in February 2018, I finally had my spiritual awakening and understood the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. It finally clicked! I'm now figuring out what my purpose is on God's Earth, and that is to help others." — Erin B., Pacific Region

One day at a time, with A.A., I'm OK. I love you all, and may God be with you always. Stay sober, one day at a time, sometimes one second at a time!" — Douglas P., North East Region

"I am ready to go to any lengths for recovery. I am 45 years old and so past time — or maybe right on time? I so wish, hope and pray that I can be a true asset to A.A. and carry the message in times to come. I am an alcoholic and I'm in jail for reasons related to alcohol. I read the Big Book through and through and continue to read." — Joshua E., East Central Region

Being Restored to Sanity

"It has been years of riding the fence, going between sobriety and insanity, trying to get back into A.A.'s Twelve Steps and to maintain a sober and serene lifestyle. I've struggled and fought with this for so long. I can honestly say I have finally, at last, surrendered my will and my life over to the care of God as I understand Him. In doing this I hope that I may lead someone to recovery, or help someone to understand the importance of surrendering and accepting what it takes to get a grip and carry on to a beautiful life. It's time for me to be ready to give back what I've been given throughout these years in A.A. by the wonderful people inside the Fellowship. I am 52 and I'm still alive. My dad was not alive to see the daughter that I used to be before I hit my bottom, but that's OK because I'm not that daughter anymore. I'm better. I'm sane and sober!" — Dawn S., South West Region

"I've been sober since August 2017, when I made the choice to face the circumstances of my relapse and surrender to the will of my Higher Power. Relapse has its place in my story, but only in the former part, because today sobriety is my focus. Today, being in here is not a bitter end, only the price that had to be paid. I have a lengthy sentence thanks to my lack of perspective about my insanity with alcohol. I sincerely desire to live in the way I once knew — of happiness, of peace, and of usefulness that came to

me as time passed while growing and working the program of recovery I found in the pages of *Alcoholics Anonymous*." — Michael C., South West Region

"I am an alcoholic. I am currently awaiting my sentence for my fourth DUI. I have peace of mind knowing how lucky I am to have found A.A. The A.A. Fellowship will stand by you. I've been drinking since I was 8 years old. I have been through so many treatment places. I've been in and out of A.A. meetings. It seems like the only time I've ever been sober is when I'm locked up. I always think I can still do the same thing and get it right. I always got back on top and my world kept coming back down on me. I feel it's time for me to make a change in my own life. Hopefully through the grace of God I will find this new way of life with A.A." — Michael B., South East Region

Gratitude for Meetings on the Inside

"I've participated in A.A. since 2014. During this current incarceration I was still overcome by drinking, but I've been sober over two years, since March 2016, thanks to Alcoholics Anonymous. A.A. helped me understand that I wasn't alone with my problems and that sobriety is possible, which I've seen through the testimony of fellow A.A. members. I need the support of A.A. in order to stay strong and remain encouraged. Thank you for your time and the support you lend to us alcoholics. It's humbly appreciated: you saved my life." — Mario O., Pacific Region

"I've been clean and sober since October 1999, and I only did this by coming to prison and getting involved in A.A. meetings, one day at a time, with my Higher Power, God." — Bernard K., East Central Region

"I am a Native American and alcoholism is terrible among our people, so bad I tried to stay clear of alcohol because of the negative stereotype of the 'drunk Indian.' A.A. has helped me in

the past with getting sober. When I was free I would go with people who were court-ordered to A.A. meetings. I would enjoy them, and it gave support to the person I went with, so it was a 'win-win.' A.A. meetings are so much better when you are free than when you are incarcerated, but in here I cherish what A.A. time I do get. Thank you for your time, thank you for helping others stay sober. God bless you for all you do!" — **Dennis P., West Central Region**

"I have been sober for three years and three months, and it feels great! Before A.A. I was drinking every day. When I was 17 years old, I drank myself into a coma. I continued to drink every day until I got locked up. I got introduced to A.A. in here and have loved it ever since. I go to every A.A. meeting here and I want to continue to go when I get out." — **Raymond W., East Central Region**

Working the Steps with a Sponsor

"Hello, my name is Jennifer, and I am an A.A. member. Now is the perfect time in my life to take my recovery seriously and to start living the program of A.A. I got arrested on April 13, 2017, and my sober date is the next day. I am on my third DUI and my fourth retail theft. I had eight years sober back in 2008, but I slowly stopped praying, going to meetings, and calling my sponsor. I had gotten a good second-shift union job and put that before my recovery. I relapsed and ended up losing both. The past 10 years have been filled with constant battles, which have always begun with me picking up the bottle. My family and children are done with me, and I have had no contact with them for over a year. I knew when I got arrested this time I was asking to max out. This program has worked for me in the past. I know it can work again, and I am ready to put forth the effort. Currently, I just finished a Fifth Step with a lifer who is also involved in our program." — **Jennifer S., North East Region**

"There is no A.A. Fellowship here. Yes, I am a loner. I do have a sponsor, long distance, and he guided me through the Twelve Steps some time ago. I practice the Steps in my daily life. I pray and meditate, and I have the desire to remain sober today much more than I have the desire to drink." — **Tim W., South East Region**

A New Way of Life

"I am currently serving a 25-year sentence for my third felony DWI. My story is long, but I will run through just the highlights. I was released from prison in 2011 and was on top of the world. I had my wife, dog, home, job, and everything a man could ask for. Little did I know I also had a drinking problem, and so A.A. went in one ear out the other. The courts had had me going to A.A. since 1993, so recovery had long been a part of my life — I just never cared about my recovery. Yep, you guessed it: now I care. At the age of 40, I started to do some listening. Now, three years later, I am in full recovery mode, and I know I cannot do this by myself. I have my A.A. group in here and A.A.'s Twelve Steps, and I

am always on one of those Steps as a way of life. As of today, I am on Step Seven. Anyway, I just really wanted to say thank you for all your support over the years. It has never been in vain because I have finally heard all that was being told to me through my years of going." — **William C., South West Region**

"I have seen what alcohol can do to a person like myself. I am not new to the A.A. Steps or Traditions; my favorite Tradition is number three. I started drinking at age 9. I can't spell correctly, I believe from all the abuse of alcohol. I don't have wet brain, but my body has been through hell from the disease of alcoholism. I cannot thank Bill W. and Dr. Silkworth enough for this amazing A.A. way of life." — **Daniel P., North East Region**

"I started drinking at a very young age — at 13 — and my life took a downward spiral very soon after. I ended up pregnant at 15 and in jail at 18, and ever since then, I've been trying pretty much on my own to get and stay sober. It lasts for only so long and I am back at it again. I hate what alcohol ended up doing to me. I've been incarcerated over three years now and just finished a nine-month program in here. It was an awesome program, but I just know I need more than that. Recovery is going to have to be a lifestyle for me and I'm ready to do my part." — **Elisa K., South East Region**

"As an alcoholic, I know the real prison is in my mind, and while the physical restraints of fences or walls are only temporary, alcoholism is a permanent condition that needs the medicine that A.A. prescribes. I have been incarcerated for 28 years; I have a life sentence. I have been going to A.A., and it's the most positive program for someone who wants to stop drinking, like myself." — **Carla H., South East 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).