



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Summer 2021

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."*

One Day at a Time

"In my recovery, the more I involve myself in the A.A. material, the more I understand the origin of my character defects. These defects in my character were born in my childhood, when I was introduced to fear, sadness and shame. I did not like the feeling of being a coward, but I did not want to be abandoned. That is where my unhealthy quest for approval began. At the age of 11, after a hard-working day under the sun with my father, we would drink a shot or two of tequila before lunch. So that became my medicine. I got 'medicated' whenever I was hurt or angry or felt the need for acceptance. When I started attending A.A. meetings, the slogan 'One Day at a Time' spoke to me. It is like a rhyme. I know now that I was an alcoholic. But then, even though I was not drinking alcohol anymore, I did not see that my life was still unmanageable. I could not memorize the Twelve Steps, let alone work them. Eventually, after plenty of effort, I had a spiritual awakening. That is because I came to believe that a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity. Today, thanks to A.A., I am a different man. Shortcomings still surface from time to time, but God removes them all. Thank you for your support."

— Sal C., Pacific Region

A Reason to Smile

"I have spent the past 10 years under the influence. I am 38 years old, and the last clear memories I hold are from my late 20s. I did not just lose a decade; I lost everything, including my sanity and self-respect. All I have is my life, my bible and my A.A. book. I am hoping you can help me help myself; not just to get my life back, but to rebuild a stable life; that you can teach me to be open, so that I can learn how to maintain and live that life. I got into A.A. because I wanted what you sober people in the church basement have: a reason to smile. I did not find a way to smile because I was lazy and entitled. I did not want to work for it. Today, I am in state prison under the rock — rock bottom, that is. Something happened in September 2020 that made me want to change my ways. My eyes opened for the first time in 10 years. A parole violation caught up with me, and this ended up saving my life and got me clean and sober. Now I am ready to put the work in. I have no idea what to do or where to start. I have no idea who I am these days. God bless the person who decides to help me help myself. If no one does, I cannot say I blame them. Something inside of me told me to write this letter. I am leaving the rest to God. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I hope you have a wonderful day; I know I will. I am not only alive, but I am also awake and sober." — Lindsay O., South East Region

"Today, thanks to A.A., I am a different man. Shortcomings still surface from time to time, but God removes them all. Thank you for your support."

Expressing Gratitude

"First off, I want to say thank you for the very nice letter I just received coming from your General Service Office. I thoroughly read the contents of that entire envelope. I read your two-page

letter twice to understand that we all can contribute day by day, sharing with one another our feelings, strength and future hope. I found your letter very warm, and I felt encouraged. I know that getting connected with A.A. will help me out in life, because I know from past experiences. I was drinking just to pass time by. I know I will have less than 60 days, Lord willing, until I go to court for my motions, scheduled in May 2021. If it is not too much to ask, can you continue to brighten up my spirit and write me back in return?" — **Anthony F., South East Region**

"My journey in sobriety has only begun. With the support and guidance of people like you in A.A. and that of my higher power; I look forward to living a new life."

"I just wanted to say thank you for allowing me to share my story with others like myself. I really need this because I understand that this is an illness that can lead to death. I am a father, and I love my children. You see, my mother passed away when I was two months old, and my father was killed — right in front of me — when I was 9 years old. I suffer from depression, which led me to drinking, which progressed to drugs. I am 45 years old now, and I have been sober now for five years. My bad choices led me to prison, and I have nine years to serve. I do believe that prison saved my life. I do believe in God; I often pray, and I attend church services at the facility. I am on an A.A. waiting list and have been seeking other ways to improve my sobriety. I read stories from *Sharing from Behind the Walls*, and one day I hope to be able to share my story. I am finding my way now. I feel better, and I have been making amends with my friends and family, working out, reading, and learning to enjoy life through clean and sober eyes. Today I am grateful that I have another chance to live and this time with the help of A.A. I know I can make it one day at a time." — **Leroy P., Pacific Region**

Reaching Out for Fellowship

"My name is Robert. I am 51 years old, and I have a really bad problem with alcoholism. It has destroyed my life. My family has turned their back on me instead of helping me. Alcoholism has led me into jail over stuff I do not even remember. I have been begging for help; I have no one to talk to, and I need someone to talk to. Both of my grandfathers were bad, too. If I do not drink, I am the nicest person you can ever meet. Since I have been incarcerated, I have only talked to a couple of people. I need someone to correspond with. Mental health and

alcoholism do not go well together. People do not understand alcoholism. I fight it, but I cannot control it. I really hope this was not a waste of time. I honestly need a correspondent that knows what I am going through. When I get out of jail, I will be homeless, and I do not want to turn back towards the bottle. Thank you so much for your help." — **Rob G., South East Region**

"I am currently incarcerated in a South Carolina prison. I stumbled across the fourth edition of *Alcoholic Anonymous* and it changed my life. I have found God, for the very first time in my life. I think I am working the Twelve Steps, and I am rereading the A.A. Big Book. I cannot tell you how grateful I am for the A.A. Big Book! Unfortunately, I currently do not have access to any meetings. I was wondering if I could possibly get a sponsor who would be willing to write me back and forth? I want sobriety more than anything I have ever wanted in my life. The stories in the A.A. book really hit home; I relate to every single story. I want to thank A.A. for giving me hope. A.A. has been a huge blessing in the form of a book. Thank you so much for your time." — **Angel W., South East Region**

The Power of Humility

"Hello, my name is Justin, and I am an alcoholic. Through the winter I have read the awesome writing from incarcerated alcoholics like myself from around the country. Now I am writing to request the *Sharing from Behind the Walls (SFBTW)* spring edition. The hard work that goes into putting together the short meeting-in-print is helping me stay sober. Not able to reach a meeting in the jail, *SFBTW* fills that void and gives me the courage to humble myself. I have asked my higher power to lead me on a path of no return — to the legal system, that is. This is not my first time behind walls due to the disease of alcoholism. I have been in and out of jail in my hometown since I was 16 years old. Our disease never gets better, only worse. Admitting our powerlessness over alcohol is our only answer. Step One works if we work it. Through understanding and humility, I can remain powerless and focused. To know that we are powerless is to be humble; that is a fact for our types. 'Stay humble so you do not stumble,' as my Corrections Correspondence Service member says. He has also taught me that worrying, like all defects, is rooted in self-centeredness. When we are super focused on ourselves, these defects grow like weeds in the garden. When we are focused on others, all our good traits start popping up. One day at a time I remain sober behind these walls. Every time I am called to go out to the recreation yard, I turn into a ghost. Finally, I think my higher power is showing me that my sobriety is going to have to take place outside these walls. Sobriety is easy on the

outside, and the more I humble myself, the more Step One comes into focus, through thankfulness, humility, staying teachable (and powerless), staying sober. Reading two pages a day in the Big Book, plus keeping in touch with the General Service Office, helps. I am not perfect and never will be. When I do not pick up that first drink, I can live with not being perfect. Thank you for *Sharing from Behind the Walls.*”
— Justin D., South East Region

No Longer a Prisoner

“My journey in sobriety has only begun. With the support and guidance of people like you in A.A. and that of my higher power; I look forward to living a new life, instead of dreading

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each new day and seeking oblivion through the bottle. The real test for me will be when I am released. I will be fortunate to have availability to the many meetings in my hometown area of Cape Cod, Massachusetts. They have morning meetings seven days a week at 7:00 a.m.; that meeting is literally a seven- or eight-minute walk from my house. A minimum of 90 meetings in 90 days will be a start for me when I get home. I will be able to begin each day with a meeting. As I write this, I finally feel full of excitement and hope. I do realize there will be hard days and struggles, but if I work the Steps, get a sponsor, stay close to God, and keep sobriety as my number-one focus one day at a time, then my drinking days will be behind me. I will never forget where I have been, as I stay in service to others and to the Lord. So, with that I say thank you, and keep up the great work. Please know what a difference you are making in people’s lives. I am sure that you and everyone working there are extremely busy helping to combat this horrible disease of alcoholism. I have enclosed some things to read, if anyone finds the time; they reflect what a prisoner is doing to stay sober until physical freedom arrives. Thank God I am no longer a prisoner to my own thoughts. Bless you, and may peace be with you.” — Peter F., North East Region

“I Want to Be That Kind of Man”

“My name is Franklyn. I am 38 years old and currently incarcerated. I have been in A.A. since I was 15. Alcohol has controlled my life for way too long. I have been in many treatment facilities and many different programs inside these institutions. Over the years, I have been closed-minded to

anything anyone had to say about how to get it together. I always thought I could control my drinking, but it never worked; it always takes me to almost complete dereliction. In 2012, I was in a serious motor vehicle accident when I was drunk. I thank God no one else was involved in the accident and got physically hurt. But I put my family and friend through hell mentally. I was in the I.C.U. for two months with a broken spine, ribs and legs. I was saved by the grace of God and great doctors. I now have 28 screws and two 14-inch rods in my spine, and a rod in my right leg. Even after almost dying, I went back to the booze. I have been living a life of complete insanity. I left prison, relapsed to do the same thing, and still I expected different results — like being able to control my drinking. Now here I am back in the penitentiary for a ‘vacation’ from drinking; I have six months to go. I know in my heart that I should do something different. I am now 100 percent open-minded about doing a Twelve Step program, and I try my hardest to live by different principles. My alcoholism has broken me and my family. Alcohol is not a party for me, and it has not been one in a long time. It has controlled every aspect of my life for way too long. I could not function or do anything without a drink. My life was centered on drinking and getting more. I have a 9-year-old daughter, Layla. Her mother is a great woman who is years sober now. I want what she has more than anything: sanity and freedom from the chains of alcohol. I am ready to go to any lengths to get it today. I hope and pray I can find someone to help me get my foot in the door to a program or a halfway house when I get out in October. I should do something different; I am committed. I need to go somewhere I can build a support system and start the healing process. I am open to any advice and would love to hear any helpful information or positive stories. Thank you so much for your time and commitment to helping other alcoholics. I pray I can do the same. I tried in here, but it is

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rough. Due to Covid-19 we are locked up 23 hours a day. All programs are done with workbooks in our cell. I am in a personal growth program that I have taken completely seriously, I am finally open to anything that will keep me from taking that first drink. I know I have a lot to give, and I want to be that kind of man. Thank you.” — Franklyn R., 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).

If you are receiving this newsletter and you would like to have an A.A. member write to you and share their experience, strength and hope, please fill out and mail in the attached form.