



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Summer 2022

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 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."*

Freedom from Heartache

"My name is Kelsey, and I am an alcoholic and addict. I came to believe that I can never drink again. I don't want to ever drink again. It has only ever led to jails, prisons, institutions, hospitals and, most of all, heartaches. I was to the point where every day I was in a blackout, drunk, hurting myself and anyone who loved me, cared about me, or who was in my path or around me. I believe anger is equal to love. No matter how many times I tried to stop or told myself 'just one drink' or 'just this once,' it never worked. I first came to A.A. in 2008, after doing time in New York. There I met a great woman who became my sponsor and friend. She really had me buckle down, and I worked the program. It was great while it lasted, until I started hanging out with old friends. In 2017, I found A.A. and N.A. again. I enjoyed the meetings; they worked for me. It always made me feel better to share my story, to relate to others. At that time my ex-husband was

using drugs, and I gave in to him and the drugs; I never went back to the meetings. Now, I am here, at a prison doing a two-to-five-year sentence for my DUIs and probation violations. I just completed a four-month program that is based on behavioral health and addiction treatment, and I have come back to the meetings. I remembered how much I enjoy meetings, and I believe the memory of other stories may be what saved my life — one day at a time. April 8 will be my first-year anniversary of being sober, but that is also behind the bars. I have read the Big Book before, and now I have a new copy. I am enjoying it, and I have started working the Steps and will hopefully find a sponsor. God is my highest power, and he is helping me through every step of the way; he has always been my helping hand. Now more than ever, I have become more spiritually mindful, aware and grounded. I want freedom from addiction and the heartache it has cost me. I did a lot of crying in that

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four-month program, and I believe a lot of it was grieving the loss of alcohol and knowing that we must go our separate ways." — Kelsey C., Southeast Region

"My name is David, and I am incarcerated for life because of alcohol. My life with alcohol went from drinking occasionally on the weekends with my buddies to binge drinking all night. Beer was not enough. I needed something more uplifting than just beer, so I started drinking vodka with orange juice. That gave me the boost I needed to make me feel the way I wanted to feel within myself. Unfortunately, my life spiraled out of control. It

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became unmanageable. I lost control of my well-being and that of others around me. I lost my job because alcohol interfered with my job performance, doing a sip here and a sip there. Now I am incarcerated because of my own negative actions from abusing alcohol and other substances. The last time I drank alcohol made in prison was April 28, 2009, on my birthday. I started my path to sobriety and began applying A.A. to my life by admitting in front of 60 inmates that I am an alcoholic, that my life had become unmanageable, and that I needed help to change. I started to stay away from old negative ways and moved to new positive ways to stay sober. I continue my sobriety as I write this life-changing letter to you. I asked my God for help and understanding so that I can see and think clearly, to be able to understand what I need to do to stay clean and sober, even while being incarcerated. I continue to attend the A.A. meetings here in jail and read my A.A. literature, seeking sobriety day and night by staying away from negative people and places where alcohol is sold or consumed. Thank you for letting me share my life experiences with you. One day at a time works!” — **David V., Pacific Region**

“My name is Garrett, and I am an alcoholic. I am incarcerated, serving a five-year sentence. We were introduced to A.A. and the Big Book here at the facility. Upon reading the Big Book, I felt this intuitive thought, as if God had said, ‘Hey, write to these guys.’ This inspiration was so great that I must admit I tried to put the idea out of my mind. I rationalized it — how this was a foolish idea — but the thought would not leave my heart. Hence, the purpose of this letter. I do not know where this letter may take me. It is not my first rodeo being introduced to A.A. or being incarcerated. What I do know is that I am sick and tired of being sick and tired. My sobriety date is September 7, 2020; God willing, this is my last. With the compelling urge to write these words I have learned from my prior sponsor: ‘Is it odd or is it God?’ No matter how strange it may seem, I truly believe that God is behind this notion that I have turned my will and life over to his care; I will just go with it! I guess that

I will find someone out there who will share their story with me. I have learned that there is not a greater bond than shared suffering.” — **Garrett A., Southeast Region**

Grateful for Another Chance

“I am writing you this letter to inform you that I would love to continue participating in the Corrections Correspondence Service. I have been corresponding with an A.A. member on the outside whom you matched me with in 2021. We have been corresponding for some time now, and it has been beneficial for the both of us. I have been in state prison for a year and a half now without A.A. being offered at the facility (it is a shame!). So I do cherish my correspondence with my partner. Thank you so much for this service that you have provided to me.” — **Glenn Z., Northeast Region**

“My name is Adam, and I am an alcoholic and an addict. I am now 22 and a half years sober and incarcerated. I thank God for being here with me through this journey and the Twelve Steps program. In reading the Big Book and the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, it is my understanding that in recovery I might relapse once I get outside if I don’t keep myself right with God. Thank you, A.A., for being there for me and giving me another chance to see the right side of the streets.” — **Adam S., Southeast Region**

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The Joy of A.A.

“I would like to continue writing to an A.A. member on the outside. Thank you for this opportunity. It is helpful to me at a time like this. Our whole prison is shut down and in quarantine. I have no one on the outside to share my thoughts and feelings with; your Corrections Correspondence Service provides me with an outlet right now. I love reading *Sharing from Behind the Walls*. I feel like I am right in the same room with some of these people. I gather strength and hope from these stories. I am a newcomer to A.A., and I am just learning what the Twelve Steps are and how to work them. I love reading

the Big Book, and often find familiarity in its content with how I used to think. I find it wonderful when I come across things that show my thinking has changed into a new direction. I now know why A.A. is so successful. Thank you again for providing this service. I know this is saving my life right now.” — **Angela H., East Central Region**

“My name is Jorge, and I am an alcoholic in recovery. It is seven years now that I find myself incarcerated, and I just want to share my experience. When I was young and did not care about anything, my childhood wasn’t so bad. I grew up in an alcoholic family, so I picked up all the bad

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examples. Anyway, now I am 43 years old, and I feel a lot of life inside me; I feel plenty of passion and energy, maybe not to change the world but to help my brothers and sisters who have the same disease that I have. Thanks to my Higher Power and my A.A. group, we can do anything; we can move forward and walk on the right path. I have been reading some of my fellow brothers’ and sisters’ stories and it is amazing to compare each and every one of our experiences, fighting this horrible disease. I keep writing about my experience with others that have the same problem. I pray every day to help them overcome everything and every obstacle, one day at a time. Thank you for updating my new mailing address. I just wanted to share with you that I am enrolled in a high school program. It has helped me a lot. My thoughts are now clear. With the help of all my A.A. brothers and sisters, I can clearly say now that I am a changed man, a man with a vision. With the will of my Higher Power and the Twelve Steps, my disease is gone. Well, I still have to keep fighting it out there. My faith is strong and with the help of my A.A. family, I will keep strong. Also, I want to thank the Corrections Correspondence Service for giving us the opportunity to express ourselves, to give our testimony. All the pain I had is now in the past. Now I pray every day that the victim’s family can have peace in their hearts and forgive.” — **Jorge G., Southwest Region**

Turning Fearfulness into Fearlessness

“My name is Paul, and I have been a grateful participant in a group here in this facility since 2011. I used to be fearful of my emotions and how I relate to people. I used to take everything too personally. My self-esteem was low. I was intimidated by angry people and by any kind of personal criticism. I had a hard time standing up for myself. I was angry and unhappy, and I took my aggression out on others. In a word, I was *miserable*. Today I am less fearful and more fearless. I choose to accept responsibility for my actions. I have to be fearless in the evaluation of self. I must be vulnerable, transparent, and brutally aware if I want to be healthy. I now make goals. I challenge my past to find my freedom to work my recovery, to break the grip of negative thoughts and actions, and to celebrate growth. I now rely on a new, healthy sense of self-esteem. I build strong relationships and develop new skills. Alcoholics Anonymous has allowed me to embrace and better understand my flaws, to strive for peace and serenity, and to live in the solution. I take fearfulness and turn it into fearlessness. You are worth it. A.A. can do you wonders if you work it.” — **Paul M., Pacific Region**

“Much courage and success to the operations of your office. It is a pleasure to have friends in such humble places. I was feeling somewhat discouraged over the last couple of weeks. There are moments when the enemy (whom I have clearly identified as, the flamethrower,) attempts to discourage my progress. Still, this is necessary. I am writing you from jail in New Jersey. Here I am awaiting transport to a state prison to serve out the duration of four years. Since October 2019, I had sought connection to my Higher Power. My sober date is July 5, 2021. Yesterday I commanded a power hour of prayers on my bunk (faces covered, tears running, shedding my defects of character). My Higher Power is incredible! Not a cloud on the horizon.” — **Avery F., Northeast 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).