



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Spring 2016

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 NEW FREEDOM AND A NEW HAPPINESS

"I am a very lucky man to have people from A.A. in my life today. They have made it much easier for me to hold my head up high even in the situation I am in. I still have a lot of work to do to feel whole again. That void I have had for so long is starting to be filled with a man that I can live with. I am a responsible human today and that feels great. I no longer need to run and hide in a bottle. What a blessing and a true freedom. I am also much happier. Yes, even being incarcerated, I am a much happier person. Today is a precious moment that is fun to live in." — **Dean M., Pacific Region**

"Maybe it's just a small taste, but I truly have the joy of living (even behind these walls), and it revolves around freedom from the obsession to drink. Obviously, my new attitude comes from my relationship with my Higher Power. The Big Book certainly gives me hope and a strong foundation, as well as knowledge of my personal condition, and is a great comfort during this hard time. I continue to look for those who could benefit from the program among the new members of my community, and fellowship with the ones who are already here traveling the same road." — **Jeffrey R., Southwest Region**

THE STEPS WE TOOK

"I woke up in a cell the size of a parking space, alone with nothing. I realized that everything I owned in life was pretty much in that cell with me. I'm a father of three kids who don't know me, but I love them just the same. I realized something had to change, I had to change because I did not like where I was and I didn't know where to begin. Today, I'm in an alcohol and substance abuse treatment program that I voluntarily signed up for. I am learning about my problem more and more every day. I am currently working on Steps Four and Five, and I'll be honest, it really is taking a lot out of me, but I know how important this is." — **Zach T., Northeast Region**

"I was 11 months sober before coming to jail drunk. After an explosive and very emotional court hearing, I stopped reading every morning, stopped counseling and stopped going to meetings. I started

to beat the hell out of myself mentally again. I bought a gallon of vodka. Today, I know I can't go on this way. I'm dedicating my life to A.A.'s Twelve Steps because they work. I'm 100% sure of three things: that I am a true alcoholic; that A.A. works; and that I'm willing to follow everything the program says. I need help with the Twelve Steps. I want to admit my faults, work through them and clear away my past." — **Steven C., East Central Region**

"Alcohol destroyed my life – quickly. I did not drink until I was in my 30s, but it quickly led me down a path of utter destruction and despair. I chose alcohol over my family, friends, jobs, responsibilities and self-respect. While incarcerated, I have made a strong effort to surrender my life to God. This has helped me with many behaviors, feelings and emotions. I firmly believe that Alcoholics Anonymous and the Twelve Steps are integral to long-term sobriety and I want to do all that I can now and upon my release to stay involved." —

Tracy Mc., Northeast Region

"I realize that the Twelve Steps and other things I do daily will help me to stay clean and sober for the rest of my life, because I do not want to go to prison again, I have had enough pain to last me a lifetime." — **Lorenza N., Southeast Region**

"I haven't had a drink in eight years, because of A.A. meetings and my correspondence with A.A. members on the outside and reading the A.A. Big Book every day. I have come to understand that drinking has been the root of all my problems. It's only when I'm under the influence of alcohol that bad things happen in my life. While doing Step Four, taking a fearless moral inventory of my life, I came to understand this." — **William J., Pacific Region**

"In the year between my arrest and my imprisonment I was fortunate enough to stumble into my first A.A. meeting, learn the tools A.A. provides, and apply them to the best of my ability in my life. In going through the Steps, service work, and sponsoring others I have been able, with the help of my Higher Power, to stay sober and accept life on life's terms, one day at a time. A.A. has given me a solid spiritual foundation for my challenging journey ahead. It has given me strength and hope for the future." — **William K., Southeast Region**

SURRENDER AND WIN

"I can't remember what I had for lunch yesterday. But I can remember thoughts and feelings I had the first day I drank. For the first time in my life I felt comfortable in my own skin. I was relaxed and had the confidence that I could do anything I tried. I thought: this is my new friend, and nothing will come between me and it as long as I live. Then I blacked-out and passed-out. I was so sick the next day and swore that I would never do that again. That was the first of countless times I would lie to myself. I've been in, out and around the rooms for decades. I've always been self-sponsored. Now I see that knowing the program and quoting some of the literature is not doing the program. Half Steps have truly availed me nothing. At 53 years old I'm done. I'm ready to take directions for recovery." —

Gene E., Northeast Region

"I'm 32 years old and this is my third trip to prison, on top of countless jail stays and juvenile detention commitments due to my alcoholism. I need help. After speaking with the volunteer that comes here, she said I should write to you. I'm not sure what to write other than I want to be free of this sickness. All of my family has disowned me, my children hate me and I've reached my bottom. I surrender! The loneliness is what gets me the most. I am terrified of losing the little bit of hope I get from the weekly meeting. What do I do between meetings? Please put me in contact with someone willing to take a chance on a miserable drunk like myself." —

Christopher T., Southeast Region

"I've been in prison a few months now, and I had never been to A.A. before. I've only been going a few weeks now, but it has helped me greatly. I never understood why people give up control. At the meeting they asked us what our fears were, and then asked why we give ourselves to a Higher Power. At first I didn't answer, but I saw other men put their hearts into it, so I answered, 'I have a fear of letting go and losing control.' I never understood why someone would give control to something they can't see (a Higher Power). But I'm here because I gave my control to alcohol. I couldn't see that I gave alcohol my control, so why was I so afraid to give my control to something healthier that would make me happier?"

— **Jessi M., East Central Region**

A 'PERFECT DRUNK'

"I took the quiz in the pamphlet, 'Is A.A. For You?' I got a rude awakening. I answered 'Yes' to all the questions. Then, after about an hour of wondering where my life would take me and was there any hope left for a 'perfect' drunk like me, a feeling of great hope for a great life, a sober life came over me, from God, my Higher Power. I immediately wrote to A.A. to get as much info and help as I could. My Higher Power is now guiding me with hope and faith every day."

— **John W., Northeast Region**

"Myself and two other ladies started to read the Big Book together weekly. We each have our own copy to read from, both when we meet and also when we are alone in our cubicles. Secondly, as a result of sharing A.A. brochures and our recovery experience, several ladies have asked about Al-Anon information and contacts for themselves and their families outside — many of them are adult children with alcoholics still active in their family or are alcoholics themselves and recognize the need for both them personally and their loved ones."

— **Diana H., Southwest Region**

"I have been reading *Daily Reflections* and I felt blessed in a way I've never felt before. A.A. has been and is a blessing, with it I realized and know I can quit the juice if I make it a part of my life as I know I am and will do." — **C.H.B., Southeast Region**

WITH GRATITUDE

"I think it is great that there are men and women that take the time to come to jail and donate their time and share their stories with us. They come in three times a week here, and I think it is great that they do. We will be having an A.A. meeting tonight. I hope it will be a good meeting because I need one." — **Mike A., Northeast Region**

"Today marks nine months of continuous sobriety for me. I am so extremely grateful for the Twelve Steps and what they have done in my life. Currently I reside in prison, as part of my amends process. It truly is amazing that I can be locked up and still be a free man! I believe that God has put me here so that I can be of service to his children who have yet to experience the freedom I have been given."

— **Patrick B., Northeast Region**

"Drinking has caused my life to spiral downward, burn many bridges and ruin relationships with those that matter most. I have two sons whom I have not seen in years because I was too busy drinking to

make an effort to be in their lives. I went from having a good girlfriend by my side, two beautiful children, everything a man could want to sleeping in abandoned buildings with a bottle of vodka in my hand. But losing everything I once had did not matter to me because alcohol was there to comfort me. Jobs would come and go, even places to live would come and go. But alcohol was always there to comfort me. Still, to this day, I have not tried to talk to or see my kids. But when I get out I do want that to change. I know that if I continue to drink I will come back to prison. I have always known about A.A. but never gave it a shot. It's not until now, after being in prison and being sober a few months, that I want to try A.A." —

Ray C., Pacific Region

"This is the first time I have picked up one of these A.A. pamphlets and to my amazement it has some really powerful words, inspiring words. It has given me a different picture of what takes place in the meetings. I was the one who said I can do this on my own. I guess you can say I have woken up and smelled the coffee, finally realizing it's not going to happen that way. As it states in the Big Book, you really need a support system, so I'm hoping to get it right this time."

— **Anthony G., Southwest Region**

"I have the disease of alcoholism. I have been in and out of A.A. since I was 18 years old. I am now 42. I have been in and out of prison since 1999. Amazingly, prison has saved me from myself repeatedly. All that can happen has happened. I have surrendered, and I know without a doubt if I drink again I will die. I am learning to love myself so I can love others, and I am also learning why I drank to begin with. My goal is to make the A.A. way of life my life. I want to live and enjoy life without the use of alcohol. I am looking forward to hearing from a member from the Corrections Correspondence Service." — **Tracey P., Southeast Region**

"I have been told that there are no outside A.A. members bringing meetings into this facility. Nevertheless, A.A. is still alive and well for those who choose to get involved. Today, I just found out, there are three of us A.A.s who see each other every day and may now share our experience, strength and hope with each other that we may continue to recover from alcoholism. Some of us have finally found that only through utter defeat are we able to take our first steps toward liberation and strength." — **B.D.F., East Central Region**

"I have begun attending A.A. meetings here every Thursday night. I'm happy to say that I received my three-month chip just two weeks ago! This wonderful program, along with God, is helping me put my broken parts back together. I have been lucky enough to receive a Big Book and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* from the woman who chairs the meetings here at the prison." —

Heather B., Southeast 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.