



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Fall 2011

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 VISION FOR YOU

"Our hope is that when this chip of a book is launched on the world tide of alcoholism, defeated drinkers will seize upon it, to follow its suggestions. Many, we are sure, will rise to their feet and march on. They will approach still other sick ones and fellowships of Alcoholics Anonymous may spring up in each city and hamlet, havens for those who must find a way out."

Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 153

THE BIG BOOK

"I am fourteen years old, and am currently in a juvenile correctional facility due to some poor decisions I made. I am writing this letter because I just finished reading the most inspirational book I have ever read in my life. This book, of course, is *Alcoholics Anonymous*. A couple of weeks ago, one of my peers noticed I was having a rough time. As a result, he told me that he wanted me to read this book because it changed his life and he believed it would change mine. I wasn't even done with the first chapter before it was already catching my attention. I just thought it was so awesome how your words could change thousands of people's lives and change everybody's point of view on alcohol. Not only did it change my point of view on alcohol, but also on drugs. I have been drinking since the age of 11. After your book, it really changed my life. Thank you for that. I hope that you will continue to help more people change their lives just as you did mine. Once again, thank you, and God bless you all." — **Anonymous, Southwest Region**

"The Big Book helps me so much. I can identify with a lot of the things I read in it. I have been drunk for a long time, and I know with the help of my Higher Power and the A.A. community, I can live a life of sobriety." — **Ernest S., Northeast Region**

"This isn't my first time in jail, but I'm hoping it's my last. I've been through several treatment centers and different programs. I don't have a sponsor, but am committed to getting even a temporary sponsor when I get released from jail. Since I've been locked up,

I've done a lot of studying of A.A.'s Big Book and the Twelve and Twelve. I've been trying to quit drinking for almost two years, off and on. The part about not asking for help and not humbling myself to get rid of my self-pride to better understand God's will for me is at an end." — **Kevin R., East Central Region**

ACCEPTANCE

"I am an inmate currently serving a sentence for a third conviction for driving under the influence. Having spent the last ten years struggling with my alcoholism, both in and out of the rooms of A.A., it's only now that acceptance is coming to light. I need to do the work necessary for recovery, and to regain my life and live a purposeful existence." — **Leonard M., Northeast Region**

"I am an alcoholic. I could never say that before with a sincere belief. It made me feel dirty and I felt it didn't apply to me, even though I knew I drank a lot. I didn't care enough about my life not to drink. My mind set was, 'who cares?' A drink will solve everything. How horribly wrong I was. In fact, it made everything worse. Now, because of my alcoholic behavior and lifestyle, I am sitting in prison with a life sentence. Looking back over my life, I am able to see how alcohol has seriously wrecked my life. Not just mine alone, but other people's lives also." — **Kozi S., Pacific Region**

SURRENDER AND WIN

"I've had problems with drinking since I was 19 years old, and now I am 40 years old. I'm finally ready to stay sober. In the past, I still thought I could drink a little. You know, the things we think we can do that as an alcoholic, we can't do. It's our crazy thinking that somehow we can drink—it's total insanity. Today, I know I can't drink—not even one sip at any time. I have finally surrendered! As an alcoholic, I know I need to stay focused and never think that I don't need A.A." — **Moses H., Northeast Region**

"If there was any doubt that this is a progressive illness, it has been demolished. I never thought I would be here. I can assure you that if I was not an alcoholic, or active alcoholic I should say, I would not be here. I went from 'I don't need help' to 'ok, I know I need help, but I'm still ok—sort of,' to now, where I need and *want* help. I'm scared, because I'm not really sure I can do it! I have tried to change to some extent, I think. I guess I'm not totally sure, but the truth of the matter is I want to change now." — **Maxim A., West Central Region**

ANTHONY T. SHARES IN SPANISH

"Primero que todo bendición, que Dios los bendiga a todos ustedes de A.A. por tan excelente trabajo que hacen. Bueno, tu sabes quién soy yo, Anthony T., el Boricua borrachín. Hace cinco años me separe

de mi esposa por culpa de mis malas decisiones y de la mala vida que yo le daba, por el alcohol. Hoy me duele mucho, porque uno no sabe lo que tiene hasta que lo pierde. Ella era mi vida y mis hijos mi luz. Hoy día he perdido contacto con ella. Le pido a mi Poder Superior que algún día ella regrese a mí con mis hijos para hacerla feliz, ya que no tomo alcohol. Quiero que me den otra oportunidad. Deje de tomar, no por ella, no por mis hijos. Lo hice por mí, porque quiero que mis hijos y mi esposa se sientan orquilloso de que Anthony, sí, puede vivir sin alcohol y, sí, puede ser un padre y un esposo normal.” — **Anthony T., West Central Region**

... AND THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

“First, with all God’s blessings, bless you all at A.A. for the excellent work you do. Well, you know who I am, Anthony T., the Puerto Rican drunkard. Five years ago, I separated from my wife because of my bad decisions and a bad lifestyle that I attribute to alcohol. Today it pains me so much, because you don’t know what you have until you lose it. She was my life, and my children were my light. As of today, I have lost all contact with her. I ask my Higher Power that someday she will return to me with my children and I will make them happy, because now I don’t drink. I want them to give me another chance. I stopped drinking, not for her, not for my children. I did it for me, because I want my children and my wife to feel proud that, yes, Anthony, can live without alcohol and, yes, he can be a father and a normal husband.” — **Anthony T., West Central Region**

PEACE AND SERENITY

“A.A. has saved my life. A.A. has given me peace and serenity when there was none to be found. I want to continue to share the experience, strength and hope with each person I meet. I fully agree that the transition from here to home is very slippery, but with the help of A.A I know I can do it.” — **Derrick D., Southeast Region**

“Hello! My name is Kristy. I am currently incarcerated at a women’s prison. I am seven months pregnant and tomorrow will be my 100th day of sobriety! I’ve made the decision to turn it *all* over to God. I know I’m just beginning and have a long road ahead of me. I am going to give birth to my son here in prison in November and I’m greatly saddened by the choices I’ve made. There is something that happens every time I read the Big Book or the Grapevine. I get such a sense of peace, like God’s right here with me. Thank you so much!” — **Kristy T., Southwest Region**

THE STEPS

“My name is Russ and I am an alcoholic. I am 45 years old and currently residing in a minimum security prison. I was arrested in 2009 for my fifth D.U.I. in less than ten years. I have not had a drink since. By God’s will, no one was ever hurt physically through my actions. I had no idea that my sentence would allow me to embark on what I now know to be the most uplifting and rewarding spiritual journey of my life. My incarceration meant that I would lose my business, home, possessions, and standing in my community. At the beginning of 2010, I found myself alone in a cell, completely and utterly bankrupt—mentally, physically, and spiritually. It was at this point that I resolved to take my own life. I languished in my woe and self-pity for nearly a week. I was quite familiar with A.A., having succeeded several times in abstaining for several years at a time. Despite this, I always found myself lacking something, which led in time to another bout with active alcoholism. In the wee hours of the morning of January 7, 2010, I awoke from a fitful sleep in a strange and surreal moment of clarity. I tumbled from my bunk, hit my knees and took the first three Steps. It’s now a year and a

half later and I have suffered no return to all the encompassing blackness that was my prevailing mental state. In addition, I have but one amend to complete my Eighth Step list. There are some 1,250 men incarcerated with me at this facility. Homemade liquor consumption and desperation are the norms. My new life and, more importantly, my past experience have given me a unique ability to try to help others who, like me, consider themselves beyond help.” — **Russ G., Pacific Region**

‘GOING TO ANY LENGTHS’

“I knew I needed to quit drinking. I had entered the rooms of A.A. many times. I was never able to stay sober longer than four months. I knew what I needed to do to stop and that is to get a sponsor and actually *work* the A.A. program. However, I just would not commit. I couldn’t imagine living my life without my crutch. I didn’t want to quit drinking, I just didn’t want all the bad things that accompanied my drinking. My alcoholism has put me through the wringer. I have been in psych wards (for depression and suicide attempts), homeless a couple of times, in jail countless times, and now finally prison. I’ve lost a lot due to my drinking. Well, I can now say with certainty that I don’t ever want to drink again and am willing to go to any length to not only stay sober, but to have the happiness and joy most of the recovering alcoholics in the rooms of A.A. seem to have. So I have been thinking about my future. I know when I hit the streets in five to six years, alcohol will be a temptation and I cannot tread that road again. I have been reading the Big Book and am anxious to work the Steps. I need A.A., and realize it is more than just staying sober. I want to be ready for the time when I am a free man again.” — **Michael F., Southwest Region**

THE VALUE OF CCS

(see entry below)

“Greetings and salutations. I hope and pray you all are healthy, happy and sober today! I am sending you the enclosed application form in the hopes that you can once again find me a sober member of A.A. to correspond with. You found me a great man about seven years ago named Jim P. He sponsored me ever since and has walked me through the Steps several times. I always tell him he saved my life, but he won’t take credit. But it’s true! He fell ill a few months ago and is now unable to continue corresponding with me. I feel lost without him and it breaks my heart. But I *must* continue forward or I fear I will once again succumb to this ugly disease we suffer from.” — **Tod C., Pacific 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), 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.