



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Winter 2023–2024

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."*

Turning My Life Around

"I sat there wanting to talk but couldn't because I was too scared of what they might say or think about me and my problem, so I started reading the Big Book and the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. As I read these books and talked about what I read in meetings, I found out things that I didn't know about myself, as well as things I didn't want to admit to. I am turning my life around, thanks to this program. When I spoke for the first time no matter how scared, it was like my words knew how to flow out to help someone else that needed to hear what I had to say. I have one of the most caring, loving, kindhearted, helpful, funny, down-to-earth sponsors. She isn't just my sponsor, she is a great leader, friend, and mother who will give it to you just like it is. But it's not only her. Truth be told, I don't know where nor how my life would be without the A.A. program. I have a clear outlook on my life now that I have been 13 months sober. I just want to say thanks to those who got the A.A. program started." — Edna R., Southeast Region

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One Day, One Meeting at a Time

"Hello, my name is Heather C., and I am an alcoholic. I have been sober for almost 2½ years now. I am in state prison in Las Vegas, doing 8–20 years. I am eligible for parole in 5 years. I am lucky we have a weekly A.A. meeting in here and I was able to get a Big Book, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, and Daily Reflections. I have claimed to be sober before, even made it one year without a drink, but I was still a drunk, just one who had white-knuckled it for a year. I never worked the Steps, never had a sponsor, or found a home group to share with. Now after

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six months of meetings, doing Step One last month and lots of reading, I have a whole new perspective. I know I have a long road ahead of me, but I am taking it one day at a time. I start my day with my coffee. That and a bit of religious study put me in the right mindset for the day. I'm on Step Two and struggling a bit. Hoping my second request for a corrections correspondence volunteer to write to me will allow me to discuss it one-on-one. I got a spring edition of 'Sharing from Behind the Walls' and would love to get more of them. It was very inspirational. I see references to the Grapevine magazine; I have never read one but would love to know how to get it. I am trying to put my time inside to good use: A.A. meetings, religious services, mental health classes and continuing education in paralegal and religious studies. I have to remind myself that there are some positive outcomes from my incarceration. I am truly sober this time. I am not even

craving a drink. I have been offered drugs and turned them down. Now feeling at one with my Higher Power, who I call God, I am high on life. I have even reconnected with my teenage daughter, who sadly remembers more years of me drinking than sober. I will have more amends to make when I get to that Step — but I'll take it one day and one meeting at a time. God bless A.A. and the volunteers who come to the prison every weekend. This time around, I will go to A.A. daily and find that home group and a sponsor! To everyone incarcerated — God Bless!" — **Heather C., Pacific Region**

Raising My Hands to the Sky

"Hello, I would like to share my personal story and experience. On your next response letter, I want to know if you can publish my story in Sharing from Behind the Walls or La Viña. It would be personally rewarding for me to know that my story gives encouragement to others who are suffering from the terrible drama of alcoholism and drug addiction. I have learned throughout the years that my stubbornness, drugs, and alcohol cause me many

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difficulties. Today I am in jail serving a 30-year sentence, of which I have served 18 years sober with the A.A. program, and I have not consumed alcohol or drugs. Every morning when I get up, I raise my hands to the sky, as a sign of my redemption, hoping that my past experiences are not repeated in my life. Only for today. Worries are a lack of faith. Best regards." — **Jose L.B., Pacific Region**

Ready to Get Clean and Sober

"Hello, my name is Joseph Petit. I am currently an inmate at the Connecticut Department of Corrections. I'm 36 years old and have been an alcoholic/addict for a long time, since I was born, I suppose. But my life has been unmanageable for a long time now. I have been in and out of rehab and detox centers many times but mostly to make a judge or family member happy. I was never there for myself; I was never ready to get clean and sober. I have finally hit my bottom, and I'm truly ready to get clean and sober. I attended a few A.A. meetings here and there on

the outside, but again, never took them seriously. I started to attend weekly meetings here in prison, I have begun to read the Big Book, I read 'A.A. in Prison,' and I read every Grapevine I can get my hands on. I love the stories and the hope and strength shared in the books!" — **Joseph P., Northeast Region**

Step by Step...

"I am writing this letter with the utmost appreciation and respect. Thank you for the books you sent me. The days, weeks, months, have been long. All this time passed helped me remember my past stubbornness that caused me to lose my wife and children, for which I feel guilty. We now have a beautiful friendship. The time I have spent in jail has helped me reflect and think about a new life. It is clear that I have to start from zero and slowly keep my sobriety. I have 18 months to serve before I am released, and the illusion of going to a new home is why I need to stay clean from alcohol and drugs. Because it is my own life at stake, I insist on staying sober. Many here do not want to know anything about personal recovery. I have four daughters, and I want to be with them. For now, the only therapy I have is reading the book you sent me. That being said, Happy 24 Hours. Step by step, we can go far." — **Lucio R.S., Southwest Region**

Grateful Because I Couldn't Do It Alone

"I used to be ungrateful and selfish. All I cared about was getting drunk. I was disrespectful to my family and friends. Then it changed. I'm grateful to have Alcoholics Anonymous in my life and a god of my understanding. Today I'm an alcoholic in recovery. My sobriety date is 12-31-2015, thanks to A.A. I couldn't do it alone. Keeping sober is the most important part of my life. The most important decision I ever made was the decision to give up drinking." — **Derrick M., East Central Region**

Gracious Hand of God

"Regardless of my current circumstances, some wonderful things have happened for me over the months. After a lifetime of being a defiant pagan and living without a god consciousness, I finally met God as I understand him. He came to me through testimony and the encouraging faith of the Alcoholics Anonymous Fellowship, by their words in the A.A. Big Book. While I was barely existing in the darkest hours of my life, lost and confused with nowhere else to turn and no one to turn to, the gracious hand of

God led me through into his loving light. I had hit the bottom of my bottomless pit for the very first (and last) time. This caused my mind to open up, and I realized that the way I was living my life and what I was believing in clearly was just not working and never would. I came to understand that the only way I am going to change the way I live is staying successful and remaining sober (thus also a free man) by practicing the A.A. principles and living the life this great program teaches." — Daniel C., Pacific Region

Hopeless No More

"I see how much alcohol has played a role in my current situation as well as my lifelong personal struggles with alcoholism and addiction. My mother died in August, only 17 days after I became incarcerated. I believed then that my life was over. I've been moved to a unit that houses the 'program participants.' I'm on the list to get into the program that utilizes the Twelve Steps of A.A. as a pathway to freedom. The Big Book and Twelve and Twelve and Daily Meditation books here are all missing pages and often unavailable for me to use. I'm sure if more of these materials come to this place, they will not only benefit me, but the people around me as well. I have had nearly two months of sobriety, and the daily meetings we have are vital to my sense of hope. Softcover books and Grapevine copies are greatly appreciated and well utilized to carry the A.A. message to not only me, but also to other men in this unit who are trying to change our lives, one day at a time, even under less than desirable circumstances. Thank you for helping people recover from a hopeless state of mind and body." — Robert C., Southeast Region

Seeing the Program's Light

"To the recovering alcoholic I would say 'Keep coming back — it works if you work it.' To the alcoholic who still suffers, I must quote from 'How It Works,' Chapter 5 in Alcoholics Anonymous, page 58: 'With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start.' For those of us who are slow learners, it can take years before we see the 'light' of the program turn on. I am grateful that the 'light' finally came on for me, and I can see Alcoholics Anonymous for what it truly is: a fellowship of men and women sharing their experience, strength and hope that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. I am sincerely amazed when I think, from time

to time, I have been sober 18½ years. It is A.A. and people like you who make things like this possible." — B.D.F., East Central Region

I'm Ready This Time

"Dear Fellow A.A. Members, I currently have been in jail for three months, roughly. There was a brief period of being released but put right back in the pokey only four days later! Since then, I've picked up the Big Book. Getting past page one of 'Bill's Story' was the hardest! I've been trying to get past that page since I was 20 years of age! Six years! Let me tell you, it's probably the best thing I've done since then. I've got so many underlines, stars, circles, and squares around passages that I relate to 100%! The best quote for me, that I will say every day until the day I die is, 'I'm a success today if I don't drink today.' Chapter 16, Acceptance Was the Answer, is very moving for me. Family life has been a real struggle. I have a 5-year-old son. He wants to be like his daddy more than anything! I don't want him to be like Daddy. I have a beautiful girlfriend whom I was supposed to marry this year, but I managed to botch those plans. My parents have sacrificed a lot to get me sober through the years. If only I had received this gift of A.A. and a spiritual way of living sooner, maybe things would be different. I love myself and my family so much, I'm willing to go to any lengths to prove it. I've been sober for two weeks and one day today. I just want to thank everyone committed to spreading the word of A.A. Today I can already see a willingness to change and a difference in attitude and thought. All by admitting I'm powerless and believing in a Higher Power greater than myself. I'm ready this time. Ready to do what I should have done years ago!" — Ryan B., Pacific Region

Learning That We Are Not Alone

"Wow! You don't know how good a feeling it was to get my own Big Book. I haven't been able to put it down. Every story I read hits me right at home. A few weeks before I got it or decided to write, I had made three various attempts at suicide. I had lost hope. I have been struggling with this disease since I was 14 years old. Of course, I'm mentally ill as well. So they both play into each other. I've only got 14 months left in my sentence. I was in pretty bad shape out there; getting arrested saved my life. Of course, getting that Big Book did too. It couldn't have come at a better time. I've had it now 2½ weeks, and I

must tell you that I'm praying every day. I read my book every day. I can't thank all of you at A.A. enough. You definitely are doing an awesome job of carrying the message to the alcoholic who's still suffering, because like I said a month ago, I had given up all hope.

Let me tell you how good God is. I found a fellow A.A. friend, but boy does he make me work. I'm very grateful for him. We do a lot of the Big Book together and we can work the Steps together. I really love the saying 'Easy does it,' and now I truly understand the meaning of 'One day at a time.' I'm so glad the book taught me that I'm not alone, and I'm also very pleased to have a relationship with a Higher Power. Thank you again so much! And may God continue to bless our path." — **Terrence B., Southeast Region**

A.A. Changed Who I Am

"I started attending A.A. in May on the outside. I immediately went and found my A.A. home group. I never experienced a feeling of belonging ever before in my 36 years, as I felt that morning. I remember, even though it was gray and raining, the sun seemed so shiny in my life from being in that room. I found what I've truly been searching for with God's help. I remember when the meeting ended, I sat outside until the next one, which was three hours later. I continued to go two or three times a day, leading up until my incarceration. I am very new to A.A., but I'm very eager to dedicate all I have to bringing it to this detention facility. A.A. and the Big Book have changed who I am on the inside." — **Michelle A., Southwest Region**

Alcohol – Always My Downfall

"This is not my first time in jail, and I've become quite discouraged at my repetitious behavior. The common factor every single time is alcohol. I've in many ways allowed it to rule my life. To feel 'normal' or to feel 'good' or 'better,' I've felt as though alcohol was necessary. However, once I begin drinking, more often than not, I cross the line of feeling good and pass into an even greater depression than before I began, and what is worse, I no longer am in

control of my behavior once intoxicated. This has always been my downfall. This time, since my arrest, I've decided it must be the last time I come to jail, and to make this happen I must abstain from alcohol." — **Wesley G., Eastern Canada Region**

Helpful Impact of Sobriety Message

"The reason for my letter is to express my most sincere appreciation for your encouraging and uplifting work of service that your organization has been doing for so many years and in so many lives. Through the men and women who have sacrificed so much of their lives to visit us behind these walls just to bring us a message of experience, strength and hope. I, myself, am one of many who have been impacted by your sobriety message. It has helped me to evolve into a man, not the man I could be and probably not even the man I should be, but definitely not the man I used to be." — **Frank V., Southwest Region**

Corrections Correspondence Service (CCS)

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 members of the same gender identity. 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).