



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Fall 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."*

The Gift of Life

"I am 32 years old and started drinking at 10 years old. I've been arrested for public intoxication more times than I can count, and for DUI five times. Once I even struck a person with a car I had stolen while in a blackout. Alcohol is the one thing in my life that has held me captive, and I am so beyond ready to admit I am powerless and I need help. I have halfheartedly attempted to get sober numerous times. I never actually committed myself to my recovery. Last year, my friend, fiancée, and her 19-year-old daughter all died. I want to make something of myself. I am the lone survivor of the little family we had created. I have been given the gift of life and want to spend it sober. I appreciate the literature you have sent me."

— April S., Southeast Region

Feeling Free on the Inside

"My last drunk was the night I got into trouble, April 27, 2014. I've been in prison since April 2014. I toughed it out in here for five years and then started going to A.A., and my problems have become so much easier to deal with. Since starting to go to A.A. meetings here at the prison I've been actively working toward my rehabilitation. A.A. has made me

want to better my life. I still have 11 years left of my sentence, but I feel free on the inside because of Alcoholics Anonymous." — Bart D., West Central Region

Twenty Years – Sober and Clean

"I used to drink daily starting in high school, and then in the Air Force, where I did a lot of blackout drinking and partying. I drank as a civilian every day. I stopped drinking hard liquor when my kids were born, but always had a beer in my hand. On this trip to prison, I gave my life to my Higher Power, Jesus Christ. I never knew Him before, but I realized my life was unmanageable, even if I spend the rest of it in prison. I finally got into A.A. to work the Twelve Steps, and have been sober and clean for over twenty years. I attend A.A. here in prison every Monday night and enjoy participating and working the Steps to continue my lifelong recovery." — David M., Pacific Region

Getting Love, Honesty, Kindness....

"The alcohol had me down for keeps. Alcohol had control of me. I couldn't look in the mirror, and when I did, I'd see a drunk. And here I am now with almost five years! I work the Steps with my sponsor and also call when I have questions. This is what I get out of the rooms and the books: love, honesty, kindness, respect, caring, faith, willingness, acceptance, encouragement, sobriety, belief in a power greater than myself, the importance of sharing my resentments, and so much more." — David R., Northeast Region

Looking for Hope – Found It

"I wanted to share with you an experience I recently had that I can only describe as a Higher Power. The last couple months I have been really struggling, and I really don't have anyone to talk with. However, on Wednesday nights two gentlemen come to the jail and bring the message of A.A. to me and about 15 other inmates. It's the only space where I can let my guard down, and I open up to those other men about how I have lost hope and, really, the will to live. For those three hours I feel almost like I'm not in jail. I share about my

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feelings of hopelessness, and a few of the others can relate. One morning I was praying to God to please give me some hope, but this time I asked, 'Could you please give me a sign that there is hope for me?' Then, around noon I started reading a book, and on the second page in bold letters it read, "I dedicate this book to anyone looking for hope." I was filled with such emotion. A warm glow came over my body; oh my gosh, it was the same warm feeling I used to feel after that first sip of alcohol that went to my toes and back to my head, except this time I cried like I hadn't cried in years. I had a calm feeling that everything was going to be okay. I don't know if this constitutes a spiritual experience, but it sure gave me hope when I had none." — **Henry J., Northeast Region**

Wow! A Spiritual Awakening

"Since my recent completion of the Twelve Steps, I have had a spiritual awakening, and my gratitude for Alcoholics Anonymous is overwhelming. Let me take a deep breath — I really need you all so very much! It's only now after all these years that I've finally made contact with the General Service Office in New York. Wow! Seriously, this is such a big deal. Thank all of you for your hard work and dedication." — **Hillbilly F.H., Southwest Region**

Blessed to Do Service

"I have felt lost in the criminal justice system, but each of the days I've been here, I've been able to help others and gain a deeper sense of empathy for my fellow man. Over the past eight months, I've helped 46 men order and receive copies of the Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*; I've hosted 27 A.A. meetings, as well as had countless conversations with other fellows. In short, I'm blessed to perform these duties. It hasn't been without its challenges and disappointments, but I'm thankful for my sobriety and my foundation in the Twelve Steps to help me through it all." — **Jacob S., Pacific Region**

Requesting Correspondence

"I am a devoted Christian, but I have seen the benefits of working and practicing the Twelve Steps. I am currently working Step Four, and my Higher Power led me to write to you about being able to correspond with someone on the outside. I will be paroled soon, and I truly believe and understand that in order for me to maintain my sobriety on the outside, I have to continue fellowshiping as a member of A.A." — **Jeremi J., East Central Region**

On Fire for A.A.

"I'm stuck in the hole, solitary confinement, until I go home in three months. I've already been here for over two-and-a-half

months, and during this time I've read my Big Book all the way through, and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, too. I also read a chapter a day out of my *Free on the Inside* and *Came to Believe*, and all of this has got me on fire for the A.A. program. I've come to believe it's the absolute key for me to stay sober." — **Joey S., Southwest Region**

A.A. Literature Helps

"All of the A.A. literature is helpful for me to reflect on my problem and also to prepare me for when I leave prison. I have a better way of dealing with my problem by following the Twelve Steps and attending my meetings. Additionally, reading about my problem gives me the wisdom to share with someone who is suffering." — **Jonathan V., Southwest Area**

Sober and Spiritually Free

"At 18 I got locked up for the first time, still not realizing I needed God and that I was my own worst enemy. When I got out, I continued drinking, even losing my teeth, but that didn't affect me, because my thinking told me everyone else was the problem, not me. I didn't have the desire to face life on life's terms, so I went back to jail for stealing a car. This happened in 2021, and I began to evaluate what had become of my life. I'd moved across the state, four hours from home and just gotten out of rehab. I had 28 days clean, but at that time, I didn't understand that no matter where I go, my problems will follow. Two weeks after returning to the streets, I caught a robbery and two aggravated assaults. I'm back in here now, and it's been a heck of a journey, but when I called on my Lord, He set me free. I'm sober and I'm spiritually free today — the most freedom I've ever experienced behind prison walls.

I've got a little poem for you, my brothers:

Now my freedom is gone once again
Because in my addiction I didn't surrender to win.
I could have died out there in my madness,
Leaving my family and friends with the emotional baggage.
A lot of addicts won't make it back to jail.
That's why today I'm grateful for my cell.
It's crazy when I look back on the time I've spent,
All because of the pain and hurt, oh how I often forget.
Everything in my life—
No, I don't regret, because the man I'm coming to be—
My Lord, He set me free."

— **Jordan K., Northeast Region**

Happy and Thankful

"I am so happy and thankful to you for sending me the Big Book. I am now on Chapter Seven, which is the farthest I've ever gotten — ever! Right now, I am truly on fire for recovery and God. I want to strengthen myself as much as I can before my release. I know I have to constantly practice prayer and meditation, as well as seek a strong relationship with God."

— Kaila S., Pacific Region

So Awesome

"I received the A.A. literature today—thank you! Our system for tablets here in Nebraska is through the company Global Tel Link (GTL), and Edovo is an app that's available on our tablets. I think it's so awesome that A.A. has made all the books/audio books available for the prison system!" — Kelly Joe H., West Central Region

Depressed, but Not Drinking

"I have to say I was a little depressed when I saw your letter printed on the stationery for the 2025 International Convention. I am from Detroit, and I was sober when the convention was supposed to be there. I was all excited about it because it would've been my first one. As you know though, it was canceled due to Covid. Even though I got depressed when seeing your letter, I didn't even think of drinking over it. Thank you, HP and A.A. A little interesting story: I'm former military. I did my basic training at Fort Dix army base. I was very active in my alcoholism at that time. I got drunk my last night in Detroit and arrived hungover. Then I went into town on a pass on my last night there and blacked out. I left Fort Dix hungover also. I can't live in the future, and I only have today, but thanks to A.A., so far I plan to arrive at Fort Dix sober and leave the same way. Unfortunately, this time it will be at the prison." — Kyle B., East Central Region

A.A., a Good Place to Start

"They have a weekly A.A. meeting here with outside volunteers, and I attend it every week. It's the first time I've ever done A.A. meetings and actually taken the program seriously. I have come to find that I like what A.A. stands for very much, and I want to continue being a part of it once I'm free. I am preparing myself to help others when I get out. I feel like A.A. is a good place to start, as that is what it's all about, but I could use some help: maybe find a sponsor to help me work the Steps so that I can continue in my sobriety and help others to do the same in theirs." — Nicholas K., Pacific region

The Gorgeous Third Step Prayer

"I never knew that A.A. was so spiritual. It's been a blessing to me because that's what I needed my approach to recovery to be based on. Then something very special began when I happened upon [the Third Step Prayer] on page 63.

God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy love, Thy power, and Thy way of life.

I'm fighting tears thinking of it even now. I read that gorgeous prayer, and I immediately cried and started thanking God because this prayer was written on the last page of my beautiful mom's Bible. I had my own copy of the Bible, but my Momma would always say to read hers. She has since passed away, and I didn't see the prayer there until afterwards. I never got to share it with her, and how I wish I had, because I needed that prayer. The thing is, I always thought my mom wrote that prayer because she was a beautiful wordsmith. When I read it after she died, I knew my life was finally on the right track. I just want to say thank you to you and your families. I just finished the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* book, and now I'm reading *Living Sober*. A.A. has brought me more spiritual enlightenment than any religion has." — Omega S., Southwest Region

Finding Family in the Fellowship

"I came in broken and ready to give up on life. I got a sponsor and worked the Steps. I finally found something in life to belong to. I never expected to find that in A.A. I have recovered from a hopeless state of mind. I have found a new family in our Fellowship. While I am incarcerated, my home group has not let me go through this alone. I am not used to people showing up for me the way my A.A. family has done. It is truly amazing to experience the attitude change, and I have faith and trust in God like I never have before." — Robert G., East Central Region

Capacity to Change Lives

"I really appreciate this pro/gram and believe it has the capacity for life-changing results. I also want to thank you for this program." — Ryan G., Northeast Region

Reaching Out for Help

"I am a full-blooded Navajo Native American from Arizona. My choice of drug is alcohol — not liquor, only beer. I worked as a union ironworker, building bridges, skyscrapers, and roadways for large industrial companies. I traveled to different states for work; the money was always good, and so was the

nightlife. I was headed in high gear to destroying my marriage of 23 years because of my drinking. I'm retired with lots of free time, but now I've got my third DUI and am back in prison, not enjoying this life. I joined A.A. when I was going through court. Now I'm here in the department of corrections, and I'm still going to A.A. This time around I've finally found something that would save me because I'm really enjoying what I hear in the meetings. I think to myself, 'If I don't do this for me, I might end up with more time away from my family, or end up ending someone's life — or alcohol might end up ending me.' My friends from childhood lost their lives like that; all lost too young. So that's why I'm reaching out for help." — Ryan M., Southwest Region

Wouldn't Hurt to Try

"I am 32 years old and currently incarcerated with very little support, but your books have restored my mind. I'm also writing because my heart is telling me this may save my life, and it wouldn't hurt to try." — Samantha M., Pacific Region

To Share, to Give Back

"Five years ago, I was a full-blown alcoholic with no control. I was irresponsible and selfish with no desire to stop drinking. Now I understand who I am and what influences led me to drinking. I've been sober for over five years as of March 15, 2024. I want to continue this journey with the hopes of sharing my story. I was once a professional arena football player with dreams of getting in the National Football League. However, my struggle with alcohol took me down a different road. Today I'm a facilitator in A.A., and I hope to share my story and give back to those whose lives have become unmanageable. I hope that with this letter I will hear back from someone so we can share our unique stories and continue our sobriety." — Stefon C., Lone, California

Request for Mini Big Book

"My sobriety date is September 7, 2022. I am currently in prison and will not be able to go to a meeting and get my two-year token (I also was unable to get my one-year token in 2023), but I will be released in August of 2025 and will be able to make it to get my tokens then. I am writing today to make a request: I would really appreciate it if you could send me a pocket edition of the Big Book. This way, when I'm

released in 2025, I can carry it with me everywhere I go to serve as a reminder, and that way, I'll always have A.A. with me." — Steven W., East Central Region

To Live a Life of Service

"I have gotten sober and relapsed multiple times for short periods since I went to my first meeting. I realize now that my biggest obstacles have revolved around half-stepping and not going to enough meetings, not doing the Step work. I also now realize that my inability to let go of old relationships has hindered me from getting sober and working on myself. I've been in and out of prison for the last 19 years because of my drinking. I've been sober for over three years now, and I've decided I'm not going to go back to my old ways. I've been inside for three years, and I completed the Twelve Steps for the first time late last year. I also completed the GED program they have here. I'm writing this letter because I want to dedicate my life to doing service work when I get out of prison, because I know that it will give my life the purpose and meaning I've been searching for my whole life." — Toni C., Pacific 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).