



# SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Winter 2025

Dear A.A. Friends,

Let's open our meeting with a moment of silence, followed by the A.A. Preamble:

**A**lcoholics 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."\*

## Willing to Help Other Alcoholics

"My name is Tanya, and I'm currently a member of A.A. I chose A.A. due to the fact that my addiction started with alcohol as an early teenager. I'm very grateful for this program. It's a daily meditation for me to read about others' life experiences, as well as doing my own Step work and personal inventory. It is very important for us alcoholics to have a Big Book, as well as a Higher Power, whom I choose to call God! My spiritual awakening came from a dream I had when I felt I was meant to die. Now I recognize that people, places, and things are very important to me, and I have to choose these things well. At this moment I'm sitting in a county jail in Alabama where we're blessed to have a pocket edition of the Big Book. I currently have a Big Book in my purse in my property, and I'm anxious to get out and be able to read more chapters in it. My copy's a lot bigger than the pocket edition we have here, but I'm grateful the staff here allows us to have it. I've read it through once. I'm currently reading it again for a second time and will re-read it for the remainder of my stay here. I thank God for A.A. I have a home group, and I'm so excited for my upcoming court date so I can get out

and pick up the chips I've missed while being incarcerated (I'm missing my 30-, 60-, and 90-day chips). I will continue this for the remainder of my life. I have dreams to start an A.A. group, as well as to get out and help other people to get into our Program. All of us women alcoholics help one another in our journey to recovery. I know I'll never be perfect, but I also know I'm an alcoholic and I have the desire to *stop* drinking and the willingness to help other alcoholics! Thank you for the literature to help us alcoholics recover. I, Tanya, like the Wright Brothers, am on my own flight to success. I no longer have to be Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, no more split personalities — I'm just me, Tanya, the only one!" — **Tanya A., Southeast Region**

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*"I know I'll never be perfect, but I also know I'm an alcoholic and I have the desire to stop drinking and the willingness to help other alcoholics! Thank you for the literature to help us alcoholics recover."*

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## A Meeting That's Lasted

"I wrote to your organization many years ago with an interest in starting an A.A. meeting with only inmates involved. Many years later I came back to that same unit and noticed the same A.A. meeting still in effect there, using the same format that I'd put together (using just a *Grapevine* magazine). Thank you, A.A. General Service Office!" — **Charles R., Pacific Region**

## Amazing Book of Alcoholics Anonymous

"I am currently reading the fourth edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, and to be honest I am amazed. Through this reading I have become aware that I am an alcoholic and that I am powerless over my addiction. I struggled for years on end, and I have tried everything to stay sober and have

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failed miserably. I have always tried to do it on my own and failed every time. Through this program I have begun to find myself, and with the help of other alcoholics I have been able to see my flaws and strengths. I have been introduced to a lifestyle that, from what I can see, helps people in so many ways one can't even begin to explain."

— Jason L., Southwest Region

### **Blessings of the Fellowship**

"My name is Gordon, and I am an alcoholic. My sobriety date is 9/5/22. I have a sponsor (he knows he's my sponsor) and before I got locked up, my home group was in Sacramento, California. Right now I'm at a fire camp in northern California. We service our community by doing state and national park cleanups, as well as controlling burns. When it's not fire season, we're blessed to do A.A. meetings every Monday night. Recently I was asked to be the meeting's secretary. It's a blessing because I get to be active, not just attend meetings. I still write, call, and get visits from members of my home group and other groups in the area. I'm not just reaching out to talk about my awesome home group though. My hope is to share the message when times get tough and to get content for our meetings. When I was in county jail, I asked admin for a copy of the Big Book and, if possible, back issues of *Grapevine*. They came through with a paperback copy of the first edition of the Big Book, along with eight past *Grapevines*! Then, when we received a county-issued tablet, I was able to download 15 books from A.A. World Service." — Gordon S., Pacific Region

### **Stay Involved; Stay Sober**

"I'm 47 years old and I've been drinking since I was 12 years old. I am currently incarcerated in a correctional facility in Wisconsin. Drinking is a way of life here in Wisconsin; it's everywhere. Drinking alcohol has ruined my life. I am currently serving a five-year, nine-month sentence for my seventh D.U.I. I've lost my beautiful wife of 16 years, and I've lost all of my possessions for at least the third time. I will have to completely rebuild my life from the ground up when I get out.

At least I have an idea of how to do it since I've had to do it before. I am going to try harder this time. I always relapse because I do not stay involved with A.A. and the recovery community. This time I'm going to work all the Steps with a sponsor in a sober living environment. I want to stay involved this time and become a sponsor because I believe helping others stay sober will help me stay sober." — Jacob T., East Central Region

### **Thank You!**

"We, the men of this Florida correctional facility, would like to thank you for being available to us to write this letter asking for help. On August 1, 2024, we held our first open meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. We have consistently held meetings every week since. We usually have 15 men attend and have had up to 25. Everyone is excited and looks forward to the meeting each week. The answers to our questions are in the Big Book and are our guides to the Steps. Thank you for helping us and so many others get and stay sober. We look forward to hearing from you soon."

— Terry H., Southeast Region

### **Inspirational Support**

"I really want to thank you for all the books and letters. The support has been very inspirational to me. Thank you very much for everything, and I do pay it forward." —

Jeanne D., Pacific Region

### **Stay in the Fellowship!**

"I started drinking at 16. I dropped out of high school halfway through my senior year because I wanted to get drunk all day and couldn't at school. I black out often while drunk and steal stuff and assault people. I used to get drunk and high at work while waiting on tables. They had a full bar, and I would steal and drink the alcohol all shift. I would drink to 'be cool' and fit in, going to parties, getting wasted, and acting like a fool. I would record myself chugging full bottles of lower-proof liquors and Four Lokos and send the videos to all my friends. I'm really glad I gave up on that. I'm going on six months of sobriety, which is really good. I am very proud of myself. I had just gone to my very first A.A. meeting on the outside about a week before getting arrested and going to prison. I believe that this will be so much easier and possible now with God's help. Now that I'm actually willing to accept His help and not deny Him entirely, there is nothing I can't accomplish. I hope to hear back from someone soon. God Bless! 'Why give up everything for one thing when you could give up one thing for everything?' From one A.A. member to another, stay strong, pray for God's guidance and grace, and stay in the Fellowship! Thank you!" — Keith I., Northeast Region

### **Hope for a Better, Sober Future**

"Someone somewhere was generous and thoughtful enough to purchase me a subscription to *Grapevine*. These little booklets and the inspiring testimonies they contain have carried me through difficult times and given

me hope for a better, sober future. I'm now within four to six months of being released and am highly anticipating finding my own home group family. The A.A. community is a true blessing and a light in the darkness, guiding good people back to sanity and restoring lives. Certainly, the spirit of a Higher Power resides in us and among us, lifting us out of the desperate pit of alcoholism." — Kevin L., Southwest Region

### **On the Right Path**

"I'm writing regarding your letter saying that I qualify for your Pre-release Program. You see, I'm a lifer. I was sentenced to 15-to-life and was not eligible for parole until February 2025. When I went to my parole hearing in February 2024, I stipulated for three years. What that means is I told the parole board that I wasn't ready for my hearing: that I needed more time to address my alcohol and drug problem, to come up with a parole plan; to deal with my anger issues; to find out what made me take someone's life. I can say that I've put in a lot of work, and I'm on the right path. The sponsor I have is helping me with the 12 Steps, and I don't want to lose the bond we're establishing." — Kevin N., Pacific Region

### **Powerless, Unmanageable, Thankful**

"It takes a lot of courage (and swallowing of pride) to admit that you're powerless over your drinking; that your life has become unmanageable. It certainly did for me. I've been taking it one day at a time, going through the Steps one at a time, and the program has fully become part of my life. I don't know where I'd be without this, and without the wonderful, outgoing, and loving people, like my tremendous sponsors. My charge holds one-to-five years, and I'm fighting cancer as well as my addiction. The hardest thing I've had to do at this point, though, is to admit that I'm powerless and need people like y'all and my sponsor, who are so caring, to take the time to help me. I just want to say thank you so much. I've changed so much and look at things totally differently. I refuse to give up, because I want to do better for myself and to be successful in life — period. I know I am going to be successful at whatever I do if I continue to take it one Step at a time and one day at a time." — JoAngela J, Southwest Region

### **Seeking Support in Staying Sober**

"I started drinking before I was even in my teenage years. My grandfather was an alcoholic, as were my father and my mother. I grew up normalizing this antisocial behavior/disease at work daily. What I was exposed to, I practiced;

what I practiced, I learned; what I learned, I became: an alcoholic who numbed the feelings he didn't like with drinking. I always thought I had my drinking under control, but in truth, it controlled me. So what I am seeking is someone to help me break each Step down, personalize them, and then apply them to my daily living, principle by principle. I pray my letter touches the hands of someone who's been where I've been, who will take the time to invest in someone who's made a decision to seek support in staying sober and being of service by sharing my story." — Randy R., Pacific Region

### **Wanting a Solid Foundation**

"I know I no longer want to die, but if I keep going down this path, I'm going to do just that. I've asked God to step in and help me to a better life than the one I've led so far. He must have heard me, because I got one of y'all's newsletters and found the strength to reach out to you all for any and all the help I want/need. I have about one year left, and I want to have a solid foundation when I leave." — Richard B., Northeast Region

### **Having God and the Fellowship**

"I got arrested in April of 2014, which was what saved my life. I was within months of dying from alcohol poisoning and malnutrition. I know this may sound crazy, but I thank God daily for being arrested because I was truly dying. Now I have A.A., my Higher Power, and the Fellowship of our members to help me one minute at a time, one day at a time, one month at a time, and so on. I thank God daily for giving me the courage, strength, and hope to stay sober. My life when I get out of prison will be completely different now that I have God and the Fellowship of A.A." — Stewart D., West Central Region

### **It Works – If We Work**

"A.A. has given me a sound sense of peace through the steps of recovery. Even though my addiction isn't just alcohol, I've found a sense of brotherhood and support through the A.A. volunteers and my fellow brothers of incarceration. The saying goes 'Keep Coming Back! It works if you work it!' Well, it does, and I don't plan on retiring from it soon." — Rufus A., Southeast Region

### **A.A. – Always There**

"Just prior to my release in May 2022 I received some *Sharing from Behind the Walls* newsletters, along with other A.A. conference-approved literature. I stayed sober throughout the 29 months I was in county jail and prison.

When I was released, I had a friend pick me up at the gate. Three hours later we were back in my hometown, and it led me to a relapse that lasted for almost a year and got me back inside. I decided to write because A.A. has always been there for me. I am a spiritual person, and I love my Higher Power. My days are filled with prayer and meditation in the hopes of getting it right this time. This summer I'll be turning 39 and my only child will be turning 13. It's been four years since I've seen 'Peanut' (his baseball teammates lovingly call him that). Hopefully, this new opportunity will bring him and me back together before any more of our lives are behind us. A.A. saved my life. God led me to A.A., and A.A. led me to God. Thank you all for your commitment to service. The Steps are so amazing. I owe my life to A.A."

— Christopher M., East Central Region

### Asking for Help

"In between meetings I do a lot of reading. I've located several books put out by Alcoholics Anonymous on the tablet the prison provided and have found them to be quite helpful. I want this more than anything, and I pray that I'll connect with someone who can help me stay the course and begin working an honest recovery. My life has been truly unmanageable, and I come to you in this letter asking for your help — something I've never been able to do before with anyone. For years I've only ever tried it my way and only ever gotten the same results. I'm convinced today this program works, and I'm eager to continue working on it with the assistance and guidance of others in Alcoholics Anonymous." — Thomas Q., Southeast Region

### Alcoholics Anonymous Announces the Release of the Plain Language Big Book

Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) has announced the publication of the *Plain Language Big Book: A Tool for Reading Alcoholics Anonymous*, a new resource designed to make the Twelve Step recovery program more accessible to individuals who may encounter difficulties comprehending the language of the original text *Alcoholics Anonymous*, which was first published in 1939. The Commonly known as the "Big Book," the original edition serves as the cornerstone of A.A.'s Twelve Step recovery program from alcoholism. The *Plain Language Big Book* retains the foundational ideas and spiritual messages of the original but presents them in simpler, more contemporary language. This new edition is designed to assist those who may have reading challenges or lack regular engagement

with other A.A. members who can explain the program. The creation of the *Plain Language Big Book* responds to a need expressed by many in the A.A. community to make the lifesaving message of A.A. more accessible. Developed collaboratively by A.A. members and publishing professionals, this edition serves as a *vital tool for individuals seeking understanding of the core tenets of the A.A. program.*

The *Plain Language Big Book* has been published with the support of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, as expressed in a vote of A.A.'s 2024 General Service Conference.

### Digital Literature Behind the Walls

Contracts with various vendors have enabled A.A.W.S. and AA Grapevine literature to be available on tablets found in the various correctional settings in the United States. This is a new service that continues to expand. The available literature has expanded to have newsletters such as *Box 4-5-9* and *Sharing from Behind the Walls*, along with the addition of the *Plain Language Big Book*. Please request a Tablet Literature list from the Corrections desk when writing for listed literature if you have access to Tablets and need more information on available literature.

### 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).