



# SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Spring/Summer 2024

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."\*

## A.A., Trustworthy and Safe

"My mind is changing about whether I want to be a drinker. If nothing else, A.A. provides a trustworthy place I can go, somewhere safe with people I can relate to. I am finally thinking I'd be interested in doing the Steps. I don't have a lot of money to get another opinion from a professional, if that makes sense. Even though a lot of the

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time I think I'm completely different from A.A. members, I always seem to come back to meetings. I live in Alberta, Canada. I'm a 35-year-old woman who can start a new career in the career she never knew she always wanted. I have been on and off showing my face at meetings for years now. Sometimes I think A.A. is something I never wanted for myself. It makes me not want to go. I do appreciate knowing and understanding that major cities in

Canada and the States have a time and place I can go for whatever reason. Thank you for being a rock like that. Within the last month I've just gotten a desire to stop drinking, which is new. Thanks again." — Ashley K., Western Canada Region

## Reading That A.A. Book and Enjoying It

"Now I am back in prison until 2027, if I can stay out of trouble — 2030 if not. And it just so happens that trouble goes everywhere I go, and I find I just like drink and dope. Now it has landed me in the hole for three months with no phone calls to my family and only the Bible to read. But somehow, I have managed to end up with an A.A. book. Not only have I read it from cover to cover (which is how I got this address), but I *enjoyed* reading it. While I was reading the chapter about the man with a beard and hair down to his belt, riding trains, I couldn't help but think, if he would have had a knife in one boot and a .38 revolver in the other, *This sounds like and reminds me of me!* I also realized that everyone in the end is living a life of happiness. Not only do I want to be happy, but also sober and closer to my Higher Power. If there is a way I could be blessed with any books, booklets, pamphlets, periodicals, and newsletters, I would be forever grateful. While I sit every day and pray and try to find myself, I realize what everyone in the Big Book has today is sobriety. If it had not been for my cellmate here in the hole with pen, paper, stamp, and envelope, I would not have been able to send this and ask for help. Please and thank you, and God bless." — Charles K., Southeast Region

## Sober, Wanting to Help Others

"My name is Daniel, and I'm currently serving prison time at a unit in Abilene, Texas. I'm an alcoholic, but I've been sober now for almost four years. My sobriety date is March 4, 2020. I only became sober, however, because of my incarceration. I was never able to attend meetings while in county. Once the trial was over and I was sentenced, I made my way here to my first prison unit. I was seeking to

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grow and stay sober. Prison is not much different from the free world when it comes to the availability of one's vices. I was searching for literature, meetings — anything that could help. In February 2023, I finally came across an A.A. book and read it over and over. But I was still lost, still looking for help. I fully surrendered to God, gave my life over to Him completely. At this time, I was also able to meet another alcoholic who had only been incarcerated a short time but had more than five years of sobriety, had worked the program, was living in Steps 10, 11, and 12, and was sponsoring individuals. This gentleman was able to get the unit to allow a Twelve Step program to begin. We hold meetings once a week in a private room. I am learning the Steps but feel I can't begin acting them out without a sponsor. I want to maintain my sobriety as well as help others and bring more into the Fellowship." — **Daniel G., Southwest Region**

### **I'm Ready Now**

"I am a 57-year-old long-suffering alcoholic. I am currently doing time for my second DUI, my seventh in total. Over the years I have methodically drunk myself out of a mother, a father, a wife of 26 years, a home, and two sons, not to mention the countless jobs, numerous friends, and thousands of dollars. As I sit here among more than a thousand inmates, I find myself, except for God, all alone. I firmly believe I have, after years of effort, finally hit rock bottom. I have always heard of A.A., and now I'm sure I'm ready to turn my will and my life over to God and give it a try." — **Danny M., Southwest Region**

### **A Spiritual Experience?**

"I just wanted to share with you an experience I can only describe as a Higher Power. The last couple months I have been really struggling. I really do not 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. This is the only space where I can let my guard down and open up to those other men about how I have lost hope and, really, the will to live. For those three hours, I almost feel like I'm not in jail. I shared about my feelings of hopelessness and a few of the others could relate. In the 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?' 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; this 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 would go to my toes and back to my head, except this time I cried like I haven't cried in years. I had this 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. I just wanted to share that with you." — **Henry J., Northeast Region**

### **To Lead an A.A. Life**

"I understand that I am an alcoholic, and my life has been very unmanageable. I lost my parents, who were my adoptive parents, who gave me everything, and all I did was hurt them. Now it's time to get back my life, not just for them, but also for myself. I realized that if I kept going like I was, I would soon be dead or doing life in prison. It is time for me to get help. I know A.A. works. I have friends who are still in A.A. with good sobriety, happy lives, and joy in their lives. I want that. Please help. I want to use this time to work and remain not just sober, but also to lead an A.A. life. I am tired of being sick and tired." — **Lance B., Northeast Region**

### **A Very Grateful Alcoholic – Alive and Well**

"I've tried for years to stop drinking. Once I did so successfully for four years, only to fall backward and fail spectacularly! It sounds ridiculous to me that we always seem to fool ourselves into thinking we can handle alcohol after years of sobriety, only to end up right where we left off! Insanity at its finest!

I'm serious about staying sober, and I will. I'm in jail right now. I've pretty much hit my bottom at this point and feel there's only one way to go, and that is *up*! Guess I need to be here to realize I can no longer pretend I'm not an alcoholic, because I know I am. I'm a very grateful one at that. Grateful to still be alive and well. I'm working on the Twelve Steps and I'm on my Fourth now. These stories I've read in here have opened my eyes in many ways and brought me to new dimensions in my life. I'm excited to live and learn the program and finally find peace and happiness." — **Lynette B., Pacific Region**

### **A Miracle Happened Here**

"I am writing to share with you the miracle that has happened here on my unit Lynaugh Unit in Fort Stockton, Texas. A new group has been born here called the Game Changers. We meet once a week in the gym, and our membership is about 30 people. But we are growing. We gain about four to six people monthly, and so at an average meeting we have about 40 to 45 people (newcomers and

guests included). Many come to see what all the hype is about, and that is making us grow quickly." — **Marcos A., Southwest Region**

### **True to My Spirituality**

"I think I had a brain injury almost 10 years ago. I'm afraid it might not get much better, and that's okay with me. Not being of service or being able to help others achieve sobriety is not okay with me, though. Maybe just sharing my hope will be enough. Spirituality, like A.A., is the strong foundation of faith. Spirituality is like the anchor that holds the unity of the Holy Spirit together here on Earth. Keeping true to my spirituality is my responsibility, and that's okay with me." — **Megan E. S., Pacific Region**

### **Get My Life in Order**

"I am in prison for the eleventh time. I have been incarcerated for 37 years because every time I get out, I am homeless, and I go hang out in bars and drink alcohol, and that leads to my doing drugs, too. I believe in God, but I break all the rules and Commandments of God's will. By any means, I get alcohol every day until I am arrested and put in jail, where I can't get it.

I'm going to die in prison if I don't get my life in order. I am 58 years old; I am a dishonest person. I steal to get money for alcohol. I pray to God and feel like my life is cursed and God just doesn't care about me." — **Michael D., East Central Region**

### **Sobriety, So Much Better**

"I have had a problem with alcohol since I was around 13 years old. I've been to treatment four times in my life, and every time I've gotten out, I've regularly participated in A.A. meetings, every day if possible, as I found out that A.A. meetings were my key factor for sobriety. When I got out and didn't attend meetings, I found myself in a relapse that led me to getting my parole revoked for the first time in my life. I'd never been through the Department of Corrections or in prison before and never wanted to be.

I started my own A.A. meetings here, using just the fourth edition of the Alcoholics Anonymous book. Now I can have a program of A.A. in jail so I can show the younger inmates the beauty of A.A., and that it truly helps if you open your heart and spirit, as well as your mind; that sobriety is so much better than the disease of being an alcoholic; so that they can have a happier, healthier, lifestyle.

I also lost my 22-year-old daughter to a drunk driver last year when she was walking on the side of the road. My daughter mattered, so I am changing my life for her, but I

need to fix myself before I can help anyone else!" — **Michael W., West Central Region**

### **Didn't Need a Drink—Needed a Meeting**

"It's so nice to be writing two days away from being 14 months sober, and it's on a solid foundation. It was because of my strong awareness of God, my Higher Power, that I didn't fall apart like I've seen others do in here. I didn't need a drink; I needed a meeting. Then another. The torches you carry save so many lives. It's hard staying sober on the inside of prison, but because of you and the people who show up to chair meetings for us inside, the miracle happens over and over.

I cherish being sober. It's one of the miracles that keeps happening over and over. God really shed a light on us. Grace! Bill W. and the first members gave us so much wisdom. They found God. Then gave it all away." — **Robert F., West Central Region**

### **We Are One**

"My name is RJ, and I'm an alcoholic. I've been behind these walls for 19½ years of a 25-year sentence. I am an alcoholic who fights daily to stay sober. I remember when there was a time that I had to drink in order to sleep. In the morning I would always forget about the night before, but that was cool with me because I was running from a past that was full of demons. My past is very bad, but my future is looking good, only because I have God in my life and the strong support of a group of brothers in A.A. who support me enough to make me not want to ever pick up another drink.

So, to all my falling, lost, and broken brothers behind these walls, please know that we are all one. I love y'all and pray daily that you, me, and all of us stay strong. And to the others who have walked away from A.A., just know and remember these last words: Our doors at A.A. are always open and we welcome you. Take care, my brothers. Thank you for listening." — **Jacques R., Southeast Region**

### **There Is Still Hope**

"This is my first time seeking help on my own, and I am terrified. Writing my problems down on a piece of paper and sending it halfway across the country to a total stranger is baffling and makes me rather nervous. But considering I've put myself in more embarrassing situations than this in the past, what harm can this letter do?

I am a 27-year-old Native American woman who is currently serving a prison sentence for a number of assaults I committed while under the influence of alcohol. I started

drinking when I was 9 and tried meth when I was 17. This is my second time in prison. My first time was for ingestion of meth. I consider myself a drug addict in recovery but an alcoholic in trouble. This definitely feels like my rock bottom. I see a stranger when I look in the mirror, and it makes me sad. Is there still hope for someone like me?

I guess what I'm looking for is a mentor, a sponsor, or maybe even a 'friend' to help keep me grounded in my sobriety, especially once I'm released from prison. Everything I've been through in life has pushed me in the wrong direction. Because of that, I isolate; I keep to myself. I'm quiet, shy, very withdrawn, and prefer to keep people from getting close to me.

I'm still unsure if writing this letter will do any good for me, but it can't be any worse than being an active participant in my drinking. I admit that I am powerless over alcohol and that my life has become severely unmanageable. As terrified as I am of doing this, I humbly ask for help and guidance." — Taylor W., West Central Region

### **Alcoholic to the Bone, and in Recovery**

"Hello! My name is Michelle, and I'm an alcoholic. I am a transgender woman who was assigned male at birth. I am serving a four-year sentence for a felony battery charge, and I'm fortunate to have gotten only four years with my history. It does me well to practice gratitude. Prison is a rough environment, but it's what needed to happen. I'm hardheaded. I've had to have all my freedoms taken away in order to be able to see things more clearly. I have a lot of time to focus on myself and on recovery. My mother ordered me two copies of the Big Book, and they were delivered a few nights ago. One of the copies is in Spanish. Conversationally, I'm fluent in Spanish, and I now hope to learn to read and write better in my second language.

So far as introductions go, I'll start with a little bit about what it was like to be an alcoholic and addict in the trans community. I had a terrible misconception about life. I thought I needed to drink and party in order to cope with the pain of feeling so misunderstood. When I came out of the closet, I was a teenager. I lost some important relationships, and some of my family is more accepting now than they were back then. It was hard, feeling rejected so often by the ones I cared for most. So I would find myself in

scary places with strangers, simply because the alcohol and drugs changed the way I felt and changed how I socialized.

Fortunately, I've got a wonderful mother, so I've had certain advantages in life: medical insurance, canteen money, rent checks, clothes, food — really anything. The problem was that I was an alcoholic to the bone, so the more privileges I had, the more I could manipulate things to get my next drink or drug.

My psychiatrist calls me eccentric, but among A.A. members, I'm simply a member. I fit in. In the places I've been, people say, 'Get in where you fit in.' A.A. offers me a sense of belonging.

I have a sponsor back home. We talk on the phone sometimes, and I send letters to the home group. It's only been in the past two to three months that I've gotten back to Twelve-Step recovery, so I'm still laying down my foundation. Oh, God, grant me the serenity!

I need as much of the program in my life as I can get. One day at a time, my life is changing." — Michelle, Southeast 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.

### **Pre-release 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).