

# DOES ANYONE ELSE LOOK LIKE ME IN ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS?



CALL 24 HOURS  
0800 9177 650

## WE WROTE THIS LEAFLET FOR YOU.

We understand how it can feel coming into AA from different cultural backgrounds. We felt mixed emotions as we walked through the doors of our first AA meeting, just as you did. We too came looking for help as our drinking got out of control, and we found AA. Some of us sat in our first meetings looking around the room feeling different.



**INSECURE JUDGED  
SCARED ALONE NERVOUS**

## MANY OF US FEEL THAT CULTURE IS A PART OF WHO WE ARE.

Culture is more than the visible things you can see, for example, how we dress, eat, and look. It shapes our values and beliefs. In AA we celebrate all different cultures, and we want you to be able to share it with others who understand.



We have shared our experiences so that you can see that the AA programme has worked for us and can also work for you. Although wonderful examples of recovery exist in every room of AA meetings, we completely appreciate the need for a space to share our specific culture - a place you can share with others with the same background and understanding.



Please take a look over leaflet for all experiences.



## RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT

I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, **I want the hand of A.A.** always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

## OUR APPEARANCES CAN MAKE US FEEL DIFFERENT FROM OTHERS.

Alcoholism affects any person irrespective of gender, ethnicity, or background. When we connect with others, we realise we have more in common than our differences. It is easy to focus on the differences. The journey of recovery is about focusing on our similarities, in this way, we get well together.

since we can use these to connect with others. There is no shame in getting help. We keep what is shared at AA meetings confidential. This allows us to express ourselves freely at meetings and in private conversations without fear of repeating our comments. AA is a safe space where we can be open, honest, and vulnerable.

There is no judgment in AA. We all have had similar journeys. We were once ashamed of our past and our patterns of behaviour, but today they are an asset

*We hope our paths cross at some point, but if we don't get the opportunity, we will be with you in the fellowship of the spirit.*



AA is a universal program that works for anyone from different ethnic and diverse backgrounds. You are never alone. It may feel like people do not understand you, but they always do. Although we may not be in your first few meetings, you can connect with us through many different cultural networks throughout the AA.

0800 9177 650 help@aamail.org

## HOW DO YOU FEEL?

- Nobody else looks like me in AA
- I'm alone nobody understands me.
- How can you help me if you don't understand me and my culture?
- Everyone is judging me because I'm different to everyone else in the room.
- This won't work for me, I don't fit in, AA is only for white people.



**BRAVE**  
**FEAR**

**FAILURE**  
**GUILT**  
**AFRAID**  
**SHAME**

**EMPTINESS**  
**LONELINESS**  
**FRUSTRATION**  
**DENIAL**

What if someone I know is in the meeting or people find out about my drinking?

I'm scared, do I have to talk about my drinking in front of everyone?

I think I am a bad person.





Raja

RAJA

I came into AA believing that I would not be accepted partly due to the environment I grew up. Growing up in a predominantly white area, we suffered with racism. I am from a Muslim Pakistani background. I thought when I walked through the doors of AA, I would encounter the same issues.

From the moment I walked through these doors I have been shown nothing but love, never once have I felt left out. My struggles with alcohol go back 3 decades until that point of realisation that I need a new beginning. During these periods I walked in and out of AA many times. Every time I came back, the love of the fellowship was there to welcome me back. If you're struggling with alcohol, please reach out and someone somewhere will reach out and show you the same love I received.

**From the moment I walked through these doors I have been shown nothing but love, never once have I felt left out.**



Raj

RAJ

My wife and children had left me and I was in total despair. I knew that I had a problem with alcohol because it was affecting me mentally, physically, and spiritually. I had tried to cut down or stop several times in the years leading up to this using different techniques and strategies. But every time I thought it was ok to drink again, a new harmful consequence would unfold. It was a losing battle. Alcohol removed my inhibitions and fears. I felt like I fitted in, even though I looked out of place. The trouble was that I didn't know when to stop.

My first AA meeting was when I was in rehab. I reluctantly said that I thought I might be an alcoholic. Then I judged those around me and questioned the AA programme. Someone suggested that I just sit and listen to the stories people were sharing. I attended my first meeting alone the day after I was discharged. Until that point, I still felt alone. I still looked out of place, but now I was welcomed with open arms. Since that day, I have received the most amazing compassion and unconditional love from AA. I was asked to keep coming back and I did. I was told that nothing mattered more than my sobriety; it should always be my priority. I obtained a sponsor, bought lots of literature and attended as many meetings as I could. I also held several service positions.

Sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly, my life was transformed. Whatever I had lost came back to me in abundance. I became a functioning member of my family and society again. My race, background and beliefs have never been commented on in AA despite all the live meetings I attend being populated predominantly with white, Christian folk.

Being a part of AA has been the most transformational experience I have ever encountered. Life has been amazing at times, and I have had to deal with difficulties at times as well, but in AA I have handled situations which used to baffle me when I was drinking. I discovered a much better person within myself than the one who started drinking so many years ago, and I am forever grateful to AA for this.



Navraj

NAVRAJ

I remember sitting in my car in a church car park outside my first Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meeting. Thinking, what am I doing? What is a bald Asian guy doing outside a church on a Thursday night trying to help stop drinking. I sat there, staring at the church, completely consumed with fear, but there were two opposing fears. The fear of walking into my first AA meeting battled with the fear of trying to continue drinking as I had been. I knew deep down that walking into that AA meeting for help was far less daunting than trying to battle alcohol myself.

A kind soul led me into my first meeting. I looked around the room and thought to myself everyone looked normal. Where were all the alcoholics? Hold on, where were the other Asians? I was terrified of being the only Asian in the room; I thought everyone would judge me. Irrespective of my thoughts, I was warmly received, and everybody was friendly. Here was a group of people who openly shared their issues with alcohol and were now living happy sober lives. I left that meeting with hope and no longer felt all alone.

Although the rest is history, I often remember that night with great affection and laugh. My journey to reconnect with my community and Sikhism started in the basement of a church. A room full of strangers helped save my life, and it did not matter that not one of them was Asian or Punjabi. Although this was my journey, I learned it is different for everyone. After working with others from my community, I now understand the importance of representation and seeing a familiar face is vital for some. This is why we now have South Asian and many other culturally focused meetings where I can discuss topics such as lived experience, extended family, and community pressures.



Yasmin

YASMIN

My name is Yasmin, I'm a Muslim woman and I'm a recovering alcoholic.

By making the admission that I think I'm an alcoholic, I came into an alcohol treatment centre and then went to AA in the community. I have stuck by it ever since. I never knew there were people like me, with the same sick head. I thought I was the only one in the whole wide world with this problem! It was so refreshing to see that I wasn't alone. That there were people like me from all walks of life and it didn't matter what race you were as addiction crosses all borders. Listening to others really helped me understand the disease better as well as to hear how people were recovering.

I have a chance to recover today and live happily, so long as I am willing to use the tools like prayers and meditation, doing outreach calls with other members, continuously working the steps every day and being grateful. I am continually learning and feeling better every day. Miracles do happen and they happen every day. Where once, I was drinking every day to now, I'm totally abstinent is a miracle. Since coming into AA my whole world has opened up. I have so much clarity and sanity now. Allah has guided me to other fellowships too, which has deepened my understanding of self and others - recovery just continues to give where alcohol continued to take.

I am never cured of this illness, but I do acknowledge the time and effort taken to live sober, one day at a time, as I continue with my journey. I am so grateful to Allah for bringing me on this path. Without the help and fellowship of AA I would be so lost, I am learning new things every day and keep healing. My desire for you is to keep coming back and enjoy a better life, it really does work, and you are worth it!



Shana

SHANA

When I think back to the time I first entered AA, I remember being overwhelmed with so many different emotions at once and trying to put a brave face on before entering the room. I had a million thoughts racing through my mind as I approached the door, 'Is this a good idea?', 'How many people will be in that room?', 'Will I be judged?' and so on. I was greeted by a number of women at the meeting and asked questions about myself, I remember one of them saying 'You're in the right place' and after sitting through the meeting I realised she was right.

As time went on, I got stuck into the programme, worked the steps and made amazing friends however, lingering in the back of my mind was always the lack of diversity in the room and usually being the only POC in the room. My experience involves having to educate some AA members on appropriate language to use around race and ethnicity which has been difficult at times and highlighted my feelings around being different.

Being in the fellowship of AA has been the most rewarding gift I have ever received and being amongst fellow alcoholics is paramount for my recovery.

Representation is important in meetings, so I try to do service posts to give back to AA but also in case someone who looks like me walks in the door and can see that recovery is possible no matter what your background is.



Tony

TONY

Colour didn't enter my conscience when I called AA for the first time, the only request that I asked from the person I spoke to at the telephone service was that any correspondence that Alcoholics Anonymous were going to send me was in an unmarked envelope. I didn't want my neighbours knowing my business.

I turned up at my 1st meeting half cut, I sat down at the back and my first words in a meeting were, "I'm not sure I'm an alcoholic and my name is Tony". I looked around at the people and they didn't look like the drunks I grew up with, they certainly didn't look like me, there was one brother there, we didn't make any sort of contact at the time, you know the brother nod. They all looked normal to me; they were fashionably dressed, they were all spotless, clean hands & faces, hair in order. Their shoes & trainers weren't scuffed or ripped. They reminded me of group of people you would see at a small county fair, very white. I felt at the time they needed me to teach them about drink & being a drunk. I was expecting to get a pill at the end of the meeting, but all I got was 'keep coming back.'

I kept coming back because I was made to feel welcome at that meeting. They spoke to me about their drinking, they didn't let me get a word in, and in that strange & weird moment, I realised I had no clue about the drink. They called themselves alcoholics. I thought that was such a posh word, people use to call me a drunk and the connotations that surrounded that word use to destroy me inside.

I listened to those people, I put the action in those people told me to do, I ended up getting sober within 5 weeks.

Colour nor race came into it for me; my survival was at stake; the drink was starting to take my mind. The frequency of my blackouts and the severity of the consequences started to really scare me.

AA works if you work it.



Rita

RITA

It was tough as a Sikh girl growing up. I felt very lost until alcohol came into my life and numbed my pain. Everybody else was doing the same, so I just joined in for the ride. Until it started to take over every aspect of my life.

I was dragged to my first meeting kicking and screaming. I really didn't want to go. My uncle had been in AA for several years and was around 15 years sober when he convinced me to go. My life was in a mess, and I was going nowhere fast. I only agreed to go so everybody would get off my back for a bit. Little did I know within a year I would end up as an outpatient from rehab and would be forced to attend the very same meeting every week. This still wasn't enough to break me.

It took 14 years of recovery and relapses until I finally found my way. It has been tough, but worth it. Every experience I have ever had has taught me something, and I can learn to see the beauty in everything. I am human, and I get things wrong sometimes, but I know it will all be okay. I have found people I can be myself around, and I am getting more comfortable with who I am every day. I have reconnected with my Sikh faith and have found the joy in living again. There is always hope...

**It has been tough, but worth it. Every experience I have ever had has taught me something, and I can learn to see the beauty in everything.**



Karen

KAREN

The last place I wanted to be was in an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. I avoided AA like the plague for almost 8 years. The more I read reasoned critiques of AA, the more I knew the programme had absolutely nothing to offer a queer, Black, disabled, agnostic atheist woman like me. I had abandoned myself to the God of Reason.

My turning point came when I despairingly realised that despite 300+ hours of therapy, reading "quit lit", trying harm reduction, and more, I still could not control when or how much I drank. I was defeated.

I was often the only Black woman in meetings, and feeling special and different kept me drunk. But I kept coming back. I eventually found a sponsor, got a service position, and did the Steps, which transformed my life. I had been rocketed into the fourth dimension of existence.

In 2019, I set up the Sober Sistas WhatsApp group for Black women in AA. In May 2020, we started the UK's first AA meeting for Black women. This opened the door to a vast world of Black and people of colour online meetings, which revolutionised my recovery. I learned to reconnect to my ancestral spirituality and discovered a wide array of ways to deepen my relationship with my Higher Power.

This "tribe within a tribe" has watered the soil of my recovery, enabling me to feel that I finally belong in AA. I can now take my seat proudly in meetings, carrying the message to Black newcomers who need to see someone who looks like them to keep coming back.

**I did the AA Steps, which transformed my life. I had been rocketed into the fourth dimension of existence.**