IHSAAN-DO
Way of Excellence

KNOWLEDGE | CHARACTER | ACTION | CHANGE
PEOPLE FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

STRONGER INDIVIDUALS
STRONGER FAMILIES
A STRONGER UMMAH

IHSAAN-DO
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ADDICTION & RECOVERY SERIES
EDUCATE | PREVENT | SUPPORT | RESTORE



EPISODE 7

THE SIGNS WE CANNOT IGNORE

RECOGNISING ADDICTION BEFORE IT BECOMES A CRISIS

PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL & BEHAVIOURAL WARNING SIGNS
WHAT PARENTS, TEACHERS, LEADERS & FRIENDS NEED TO RECOGNISE

SAME PERSON.
DIFFERENT BEHAVIOUR.
SAME POTENTIAL.
DON'T GIVE UP.

- BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES
- EMOTIONAL CHANGES
- PHYSICAL CHANGES
- CHANGE IN FRIENDS
- FINANCIAL WARNING SIGNS
- DECLINING PERFORMANCE

- SECRECY
- MOOD SWINGS
- SLEEP CHANGES
- LOSS OF INTEREST
- RISK-TAKING
- LYING
- MONEY PROBLEMS
- ISOLATION
- IRRITABILITY
- A DARKER TOMORROW

> *One sign may mean nothing. But a pattern of changes may be telling us something important.*

EARLY RECOGNITION CAN SAVE LIVES.



- NOTICE THE CHANGE
- ASK THE QUESTION
- LISTEN WITHOUT SHAME
- SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES
- GET HELP EARLY

ARTICLE BY
KANCHO ABDULLAH BAYETT

COMING NEXT
EPISODE 8
WHEN THE FAMILY MUST STEP IN
Family Intervention, Boundaries, Communication & Creating a Recovery Environment

DISCIPLINE | PURPOSE | A BETTER UMMAH

ONLY THROUGH IHSAAN

WE ARE NOT FIGHTING AGAINST PEOPLE. WE ARE FIGHTING FOR PEOPLE.

EPISODE 7: THE SIGNS WE CANNOT IGNORE

Recognising Addiction Before It Becomes a Crisis

Article by Kancho Abdullah Bayett

INTRODUCTION

SOMETHING HAS CHANGED

Sometimes addiction doesn't announce itself. There is no dramatic moment. No confession. No obvious evidence.

Instead, people around the person begin noticing small changes: “He's not himself anymore.” “She's become very secretive.” “His friends have completely changed.” “She's always tired.” “Money keeps disappearing.” “His schoolwork has collapsed.” “I don't know what's happening.”

And because each individual sign can have many explanations, families sometimes ignore the pattern. One sign may mean nothing. But a pattern of changes may be telling us something important.

This episode is about learning to recognise those patterns early.

1. ADDICTION IS NOT ALWAYS OBVIOUS

We often imagine someone struggling with addiction as someone who is visibly intoxicated, completely dysfunctional or living on the street. That is not always the reality.

A person can still attend school, go to work, exercise, socialise, pray, participate in family life and appear successful, while privately struggling with substance use or another compulsive behaviour.

Functioning on the outside does not necessarily mean everything is fine on the inside.

2. THE FIRST SIGN MAY BE CHANGE

Instead of asking “Does this person look like an addict?” ask “What has changed?” Compare the person's current behaviour with their normal behaviour.

Has there been a significant change in friends, sleep, mood, money, school, work, appearance, family relationships, interests, honesty, responsibility, or religious and personal routines?

Change is information. It doesn't automatically prove addiction. But it deserves attention.

3. BEHAVIOURAL WARNING SIGNS

Watch for:

- Increasing secrecy.
- Frequently disappearing or unexplained absences.
- Breaking previously established rules.
- Sudden defensiveness.
- Risk-taking and repeated lying.
- Losing interest in previous activities.

- Neglecting responsibilities.
- Unexplained changes in routine.
- Constant need for money.
- Spending increasing amounts of time obtaining or using a substance.

One or two of these signs can occur for many reasons. The concern grows when several appear together and persist.

4. THE FRIENDSHIP TEST

Friends can change naturally. But sudden changes in social circles can sometimes be significant.

Ask: who are they spending time with? Where are they going? What activities are replacing the old ones? Are the new friendships encouraging healthy behaviour, or risky behaviour?

Don't automatically assume “new friends = bad friends.” Instead, understand the environment. Who we repeatedly surround ourselves with can influence what we consider normal.

5. SECRECY

Privacy is normal. But secrecy is different. A young person may begin hiding their phone, locking doors unusually often, deleting messages, becoming extremely defensive about their whereabouts, hiding purchases, giving inconsistent explanations, or becoming angry when ordinary questions are asked.

Again, none of these proves drug use. But when secrecy accompanies other major changes, pay attention.

6. MONEY — FOLLOW THE PATTERN

Addiction can become expensive. Families may notice money disappearing, frequent requests for cash, borrowing without explanation, selling possessions, unexplained debt, missing household items, or financial emergencies becoming increasingly common.

Sometimes the person isn't spending money on the substance directly. They may be paying for transport, social situations, other people's substances, debts, or attempts to conceal the problem.

Sudden unexplained financial changes deserve a conversation.

7. SCHOOL & WORK

Another major warning sign can be declining performance. A person who was previously punctual, responsible and motivated may become late, absent, distracted and disengaged.

Look for falling grades, missing assignments, skipping classes, poor concentration, absenteeism, declining work performance, disciplinary problems or loss of motivation.

Don't immediately label the person lazy. There may be something underneath the decline.

8. SLEEP CHANGES

Different substances can affect sleep differently. Families may notice staying awake through the night, sleeping excessively, reversed sleeping patterns, extreme fatigue during the day, difficulty getting up, or unusual periods of high energy followed by exhaustion.

Sleep changes can also result from stress, mental-health difficulties, adolescence, work schedules and many other factors. Look at the whole picture.

9. MOOD CHANGES

Watch for significant changes such as irritability, anger, anxiety, depression, emotional numbness, rapid mood changes, unusual aggression, withdrawal, paranoia or extreme restlessness.

A person may appear completely different from the person the family knew. And sometimes the substance is being used to manage an emotional problem that existed before the substance use began.

10. PHYSICAL CHANGES

Depending on the substance and pattern of use, physical warning signs may include changes in appetite, significant weight changes, bloodshot eyes, poor coordination, tremors, slurred speech, unusual sweating, changes in sleep, extreme tiredness, unusual agitation or neglect of personal hygiene.

Never diagnose someone based on one physical sign. Look for clusters of changes.

11. THE LOSS OF INTEREST

This can be one of the saddest signs. A young person who once loved sport, martial arts, friends, family, school, creative activities or community may gradually stop caring.

Their world becomes smaller. The substance — or the behaviour surrounding it — takes up more space. When healthy interests disappear, ask why.

12. THE “I DON'T CARE” PHASE

Sometimes the person knows their behaviour is causing harm. But instead of changing, they begin saying: “I don't care.” “Whatever.” “It's my life.” “Everyone dies anyway.”

This can be a sign that something deeper is happening. It may represent emotional exhaustion, depression, shame, loss of hope, dependence, or a belief that change is impossible.

Don't answer hopelessness with more hopelessness.

13. THE LYING CYCLE

Addiction can create an increasingly complicated web of secrecy. First: “I didn't take anything.” Then: “It was only once.” Then: “I can stop whenever I want.” Then: “You're imagining things.”

Eventually, the person may begin lying not because they want to hurt their family, but because they are trying to protect the substance use. The behaviour becomes something that must be defended. That is a serious warning sign.

14. WHEN RESPONSIBILITY COLLAPSES

Look at everyday life. Is the person still keeping commitments, attending school or work, caring for their belongings, helping at home, maintaining relationships, managing finances and looking after themselves?

Addiction can gradually move other priorities down the list. The substance becomes more important. That is one of the defining dangers of compulsive substance use.

15. THE FOUR QUESTIONS

When you're concerned about someone, ask yourself:

- Is there a significant change?
- Is the change persistent?
- Is it affecting important areas of life?
- Is the person losing control?

If the answer is increasingly yes, don't wait for a catastrophe. Intervene early.

16. DON'T WAIT FOR “PROOF”

Families sometimes say: “We need to catch them first.” But waiting for undeniable proof can mean waiting until the situation becomes severe.

You don't need to accuse someone. You can simply say: “I've noticed you've been struggling lately, and I'm concerned about you.” That opens a conversation without pretending you know everything.

17. HOW TO START THE CONVERSATION

Choose a calm moment, a private environment, a time when the person is sober and relatively settled, and a tone of concern rather than accusation.

Try: “I love you, and I want to understand what's happening.” “I've noticed some changes and I'm worried.” “You don't have to be afraid to tell me the truth.” “If something is happening, we'll work through it — but we need to face it honestly.”

Then listen. Don't turn the conversation into a lecture.

18. WHAT NOT TO SAY

Avoid: “You're a disgrace.” “You're just weak.” “You're throwing your life away.” “Nobody will ever respect you again.” “You're an addict and that's all you'll ever be.”

These statements can increase shame and drive the person further into secrecy. Instead, challenge the behaviour and protect the person's dignity.

19. COMPASSION DOES NOT MEAN ENABLING

This distinction is essential. Supporting someone means helping them seek treatment, listening, providing healthy structure, and encouraging recovery.

Enabling can mean giving money that funds substance use, covering up repeated consequences, lying to protect the person's reputation, or making excuses indefinitely.

Support recovery. Don't support the addiction.

20. WHEN IT BECOMES AN EMERGENCY

Some situations require immediate medical attention. Call emergency services if someone cannot be awakened, has severely slowed or stopped breathing, has a seizure, has severe chest pain, has collapsed, is severely confused or unresponsive, has extreme agitation or dangerous behaviour, or may have overdosed.

Don't wait for certainty. When someone's life may be at risk, get help.

21. A SPECIAL WARNING FOR PARENTS

If you discover that your child has used a substance, the first reaction may be anger. That is understandable.

But before reacting, remember: your child needs you to remain an adult when they are struggling to remain in control.

You can be firm without being cruel, compassionate without being permissive, protective without becoming enabling, and serious without destroying hope.

22. THE ROLE OF TEACHERS & COACHES

Teachers, martial-arts instructors, coaches and community leaders can sometimes notice changes before parents do, because they see young people in structured environments.

They may notice declining discipline, attendance problems, mood changes, social changes, loss of concentration, aggression, withdrawal, or sudden performance changes.

A responsible leader doesn't immediately label the young person. They raise the concern and connect the person to appropriate support.

23. THE ROLE OF FRIENDS

Friends sometimes know first. They may notice: “He's using every weekend now.” “She's taking pills.” “He's mixing substances.” “She can't go out without using.”

A friend should not attempt to become the person's therapist or doctor. But a friend can say: “I'm worried about you.” “Let's get someone we trust involved.” “I'll go with you to get help.” That could change a life.

24. THE ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE — DON'T ABANDON THE PERSON

Islam teaches us accountability. But it also teaches mercy. A person's wrongdoing does not erase their human dignity.

Allah says: “Do not despair of the mercy of Allah.” (Qur'an 39:53)

This principle is powerful in recovery. A person can have fallen deeply and still rise again. Our responsibility is not to pretend the behaviour is acceptable. It is to help the person return to what is better.

25. PURIFICATION IS A JOURNEY

Allah says: “Successful indeed is the one who purifies it.” (Qur'an 91:9)

Recovery is, in many ways, a rebuilding process. Not simply "stop using," but: clean the environment, repair relationships, develop discipline, treat underlying problems, rebuild trust, strengthen faith, develop purpose, and create healthy routines.

Recovery is rebuilding the whole person.

26. THE IHSAAN-DO WARNING SYSTEM

We can teach our communities to look for five areas:

- Body — physical and sleep changes.
- Mind — mood, concentration and psychological changes.
- Behaviour — secrecy, risk-taking and loss of control.
- Relationships — isolation, conflict and changing social circles.
- Responsibility — school, work, money and family obligations.

When multiple areas begin deteriorating together, pay attention.

27. EARLY ACTION CAN CHANGE THE STORY

Imagine two scenarios. Scenario A: the family notices changes and ignores them. The person becomes increasingly isolated. Substance use increases. Relationships deteriorate. The crisis eventually becomes impossible to hide.

Scenario B: the family notices changes and speaks early. The person is assessed. Support begins. Boundaries are established. Healthy relationships are strengthened. The person receives appropriate treatment.

Same warning signs. Different response. Different possible future.

28. TO EVERY PARENT

If your child is struggling, don't wait for them to hit rock bottom.

You don't have to wait until they overdose, they fail school, they lose their job, they are arrested, their marriage collapses, or they lose everything.

Early intervention matters.

29. TO EVERY YOUNG PERSON

If you recognise yourself in this article, don't say "It's already too late." Say "I need to speak to someone."

Tell a parent, a trusted family member, a teacher, a counsellor, a doctor, an imam or trusted community leader, or an addiction professional.

You don't need to solve your entire life today. You only need to take the next right step.

30. THE MOST DANGEROUS SIGN

There is one warning sign we should never ignore: hopelessness.

When someone begins believing "There's no point," "I can't change," "I'm already ruined," or "Nobody cares"

— that is when we must move closer, not further away.

Hope can be the bridge between crisis and recovery.

REMEMBER

REMEMBER THE FIVE

Notice the change. Ask the question. Listen without shame.

Set healthy boundaries. Get help early.

THE JOURNEY SO FAR

Episode 1 — When the Screen Becomes the Master
Understanding digital dependence, social media and pornography.

Episode 2 — Understanding Addiction
How habits become compulsions and how we take back control.

Episode 3 — The Gateway of Stimulation
Vaping, cigarettes and nicotine.

Episode 4 — From Experimentation to Escalation
Cannabis, alcohol and other substances.

Episode 5 — When Pills Become the Problem
Prescription drug misuse, stimulants, opioids and the hidden danger of “medicine.”

Episode 6 — When the Drug Takes Over
Cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin, fentanyl and other high-risk substances.

Episode 7 — The Signs We Cannot Ignore
Recognising addiction before it becomes a crisis.

COMING NEXT — EPISODE 8

WHEN THE FAMILY MUST STEP IN

Family Intervention, Boundaries, Communication & Creating a Recovery Environment

What should a parent do when they know something is wrong? When should family members confront the problem? How do you set boundaries without destroying the relationship? When is professional intervention necessary? And how can a family become part of the solution instead of becoming part of the cycle?

IHSAAN-DO

Knowledge • Character • Action • Change

We are not fighting against people. We are fighting for people.

Stronger Individuals. Stronger Families. A Stronger Ummah.