IHSAAN-DO
Way of Excellence

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

STRONGER INDIVIDUALS
STRONGER FAMILIES
A STRONGER UMMAH

IHSAAN-DO
Way of Excellence

ADDICTION & RECOVERY SERIES
EDUCATE | PREVENT | SUPPORT | RESTORE

IT LOOKS HARMLESS... BUT IT CAN STILL HURT.

EPISODE 5

WHEN PILLS BECOME THE PROBLEM

PRESCRIPTION DRUG MISUSE, STIMULANTS, OPIOIDS & THE HIDDEN DANGER OF "MEDICINE"

REAL KNOWLEDGE. REAL CONVERSATIONS. REAL CHANGE.

PAIN
ANXIETY
STRESS
PERFORMANCE
SLEEP
ESCAPE
DEPENDENCE

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS CAN STILL BECOME A SERIOUS PROBLEM

SAME PILL. DIFFERENT STORY.

KNOW THE FACTS
RECOGNISE THE SIGNS
UNDERSTAND THE RISKS
USE RESPONSIBLY
SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER
CHOOSE A HEALTHIER PATH

> *"Not everything that is prescribed is risk-free, and not every pill is what it seems."*

DISCIPLINE
PURPOSE
HEALTHY CHOICES
BRIGHTER TOMORROW

MISUSE
DEPENDENCE
OVERDOSE
BROKEN LIVES

AWARENESS TODAY.
HEALTHIER TOMORROWS.

ARTICLE BY
KANCHO ABDULLAH BAYETT

COMING NEXT
EPISODE 6

WHEN THE DRUG TAKES OVER
Cocaine, Methamphetamine, Heroin, Fentanyl & Other High-Risk Substances

Understanding the attraction, the neurological impact, rapid escalation, overdose risk, dangerous combinations, warning signs and the road to recovery.

EPISODE 5: WHEN PILLS BECOME THE PROBLEM

Prescription Drug Misuse, Stimulants, Opioids & The Hidden Danger of "Medicine"

Article by Kancho Abdullah Bayett

INTRODUCTION

"BUT IT'S MEDICINE."

When people hear the word drugs, they often imagine something bought on the street. But there is another side of the addiction problem that can begin much closer to home: the medicine cabinet.

A medication can be legitimate. It can be prescribed by a doctor. It can even be extremely important for someone's health.

But when medication is taken without a prescription, taken in a different amount or way than prescribed, taken more often than directed, taken for its psychological effects, shared with someone else, or combined dangerously with other substances — medicine can become misuse.

Prescription medicines are not automatically harmless simply because they came from a pharmacy. Misuse of prescription opioids, sedatives and stimulants can lead to dependence, addiction, overdose and other serious harm.

1. WHAT IS PRESCRIPTION DRUG MISUSE?

Prescription drug misuse can include:

- Taking someone else's medication.
- Taking your own medication differently from how it was prescribed.
- Taking more than prescribed.
- Taking medication to get high, feel different, stay awake or escape.
- Sharing or selling prescribed medication.

A medicine prescribed appropriately for one person is not automatically appropriate or safe for another person.

2. WHY DO PEOPLE MISUSE MEDICATION?

The reasons can be surprisingly similar to the reasons people experiment with other substances.

- Pain — someone wants relief from physical pain.
- Stress — someone wants to switch their mind off.
- Anxiety — someone wants to feel calm.
- Performance — someone wants to study longer, stay awake or perform better.
- Curiosity — someone wants to experience the effect.
- Peer pressure — someone is offered a pill by a friend.
- Escape — someone wants to stop feeling what they are feeling.

And this brings us back to a central principle of this series: sometimes the substance is not the real problem. The deeper problem may be — "I don't know how to deal with what I'm feeling."

3. THE THREE MAJOR GROUPS TO UNDERSTAND

For this episode, we are particularly concerned with three broad categories.

A. Opioids — Some prescription opioids are powerful pain medicines, including those containing morphine, oxycodone, hydrocodone, codeine or fentanyl. They can be medically useful, but they also carry risks of misuse, addiction, physical dependence and overdose.

B. Benzodiazepines & Other Sedating Medicines — Some medications used for anxiety, panic, seizures or other conditions, such as diazepam or alprazolam, can cause sedation and physical dependence, along with the risk of serious withdrawal reactions.

C. Stimulants — Prescription stimulants have legitimate medical uses, including treatment of ADHD. But stimulants can also be misused, and misuse can affect the cardiovascular system, mental health, and in some cases carries significant overdose risk.

4. “I ONLY TAKE THEM TO STUDY.”

This is becoming an important conversation. A student may hear: “This pill will help you focus,” or “Take this and you'll be able to study all night.”

The problem is that medication designed for a particular medical condition is not a general-purpose performance enhancer.

The person may begin believing: “I can't study without it.” And now the medication has moved from Treatment → Psychological reliance. That shift deserves attention.

5. THE DANGER OF BORROWING MEDICINE

A friend says: “I've got something that will help.” It may seem harmless. But you don't necessarily know:

- The correct dose.
- The person's medical history.
- Possible allergies.
- Drug interactions.
- What else they have taken.
- Whether the medication is genuine.
- Whether the tablet has been altered or is counterfeit.

Never assume that someone else's prescription is safe for you.

6. THE COUNTERFEIT PILL PROBLEM

There is another danger in today's drug environment: a pill may not contain what you think it contains.

A person may believe they have purchased a familiar prescription medicine when the product is illicit or counterfeit. This creates an additional layer of risk, because the user may not know the actual substance or strength they are taking.

That is one reason why never taking pills obtained outside legitimate medical or pharmacy channels is so important. Counterfeit pills are known to significantly increase the risk of overdose.

7. OPIOIDS — WHEN PAIN RELIEF BECOMES DEPENDENCE

Opioids can be effective medicines for certain types of pain. But repeated use can result in:

- Tolerance — the body adapts, and the same amount may produce less effect.
- Physical dependence — the body adapts to the medicine, and stopping can produce withdrawal symptoms.
- Opioid use disorder — use becomes problematic and begins causing significant impairment or distress.

These are not identical concepts. Physical dependence does not automatically mean addiction. But dependence can become part of a serious substance-use problem and should be managed with appropriate medical guidance.

8. THE DEADLY MIX

One of the most important messages in this entire series is this: mixing substances can greatly increase danger.

In particular, combining opioids with alcohol, benzodiazepines or other sedating medicines can dangerously suppress the central nervous system and breathing.

A person might think: “It's only a sleeping tablet,” or “It's only alcohol,” or “It's only my prescription.” But combinations can produce effects that are far more dangerous than people expect. Never experiment with drug combinations.

9. WHAT DOES AN OVERDOSE LOOK LIKE?

With opioid overdose, warning signs can include:

- Extremely slow or shallow breathing.
- Difficulty waking the person.
- Unusual sleepiness.
- Gurgling or choking sounds.
- Limpness.
- Pale, blue or cold skin.

If an opioid overdose is suspected, treat it as an emergency. Call emergency medical services immediately and, where available and appropriate, administer naloxone according to local guidance. Stay with the person and follow emergency instructions.

This is not the time to worry about embarrassment. A life is more important than a secret.

10. WARNING SIGNS OF PRESCRIPTION DRUG MISUSE

Parents and families should pay attention to patterns, not isolated moments.

Medication behaviour:

- Frequently asking for medication.
- Taking medication earlier than scheduled.
- Claiming medication was lost repeatedly.
- Visiting multiple doctors for similar medication.
- Taking someone else's medication.

- Hiding pills.

Behavioural changes:

- Secretiveness and withdrawal.
- Mood swings and irritability.
- Loss of motivation.
- Changes in friends.
- Declining school or work performance.

Physical changes, depending on the substance, can include excessive sleepiness or unusual agitation, poor coordination, slurred speech, changes in sleep or appetite, tremors, or unusual energy and restlessness.

One sign alone does not prove misuse. Look for a pattern.

11. WHEN THE MEDICINE BECOMES THE PRIORITY

One of the clearest warning signs is when obtaining or using the substance begins taking priority over ordinary life.

The person begins sacrificing school, work, family, money, relationships, health, faith and other responsibilities.

The substance has moved from being something the person uses to something the person feels they need.

12. “I CAN STOP ANYTIME.”

This statement deserves compassion, not ridicule. Many people genuinely believe it. But the real test is not what someone says.

The real question is: can they actually stop? Can they go without it? Can they handle stress without it? Can they sleep without it? Can they study without it? Can they cope with pain without misusing it? Can they face difficult emotions without reaching for the substance?

If the answer is increasingly no, professional assessment may be appropriate.

13. DO NOT SHAME THE PERSON

There is an enormous difference between holding someone accountable and destroying their dignity.

Calling someone “a junkie,” “a loser,” or “a disgrace” does not build recovery.

Instead, confront the behaviour without condemning the human being. Say: “What is happening is dangerous, but I have not given up on you.” That message can open a door.

14. THE ISLAMIC PRINCIPLE: THE BODY IS AN AMANAH

Our bodies are not disposable. Our minds are not disposable. Our lives are not disposable. They are an amanah.

Allah says: “And do not throw yourselves with your own hands into destruction.” (Qur'an 2:195)

This principle calls us toward responsible choices. Medication has its legitimate place. Treatment has its legitimate place. Pain relief has its legitimate place. But deliberately misusing substances and placing one's health and life at unnecessary risk is another matter entirely.

Ihsaan means excellence in how we treat the amanah Allah has given us.

15. REAL STRENGTH IS NOT NUMBNESS

Our society sometimes teaches people: “Don't feel. Be tough. Keep everything inside. Take something to calm down.”

But real strength is different. Real strength is learning how to face difficulty without destroying yourself.

That may mean talking to someone, making dua, seeking counselling, exercising, sleeping properly, building healthy relationships, learning emotional regulation, seeking medical treatment when necessary, or simply asking for help.

Asking for help is not weakness. It is awareness.

16. WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

- Know what medication is in the home, and keep it appropriately secured.
- Teach children never to take someone else's prescription.
- Explain why medication must be taken exactly as directed.
- Talk about drugs before there is a crisis.
- Watch for behavioural changes.
- Create an environment where asking for help is safe.
- Act early — don't wait until the situation becomes catastrophic.

17. WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO HEAR

You don't need somebody else's medication to prove you're strong. You don't need a pill to prove you belong. You don't need to stay awake all night to prove your worth. You don't need to numb yourself to deal with pain. You don't need to follow the crowd.

You have permission to walk away. Say: “No.” “That's not for me.” “I don't need it.” “I'm going home.”

And if you have already crossed that line: “I need help.” That sentence can be the beginning of recovery.

18. IF SOMEONE IS ALREADY DEPENDENT

Do not attempt to manage serious dependence through shame or sudden, unsupervised changes. Some medications, particularly certain sedatives and other drugs, can produce significant withdrawal when stopped abruptly.

Medical guidance matters. A healthcare professional can assess what substance is being used, how much, how often, whether dependence is present, whether withdrawal is a concern, whether other substances are involved, and what treatment or support is appropriate.

Recovery is possible. But sometimes recovery requires more than determination. It requires a plan.

19. THE BIGGER LESSON

Episode 1 taught us about digital stimulation. Episode 2 taught us about addiction and compulsion. Episode 3 explored nicotine and vaping. Episode 4 examined experimentation and escalation.

Now we have reached another important realisation: danger does not always look dangerous. Sometimes it looks like a prescription, a tablet, a bottle in the cupboard, a friend's medication, a study aid, a painkiller.

And sometimes the sentence is: “Don't worry. It's only medicine.” But the right question is: “Is it being used safely, appropriately and for the purpose it was prescribed?”

20. THE IHSAAN-DO MESSAGE

We are not trying to create fear. We are trying to create awareness. We are not trying to condemn people who struggle. We are trying to create pathways back.

We are not simply telling young people: “Don't take drugs.” We are teaching them to know themselves, know the risks, know their triggers, choose their friends wisely, protect their body, protect their mind, ask for help early, build purpose, and live with Ihsaan.

REMEMBER

A prescription can be medicine.

Misuse can turn medicine into a problem.

Dependence can become a trap.

And recovery can begin with one honest conversation.

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.”

COMING NEXT — EPISODE 6

WHEN THE DRUG TAKES OVER

Cocaine, Methamphetamine, Heroin, Fentanyl & Other High-Risk Substances

Understanding the attraction, the neurological impact, rapid escalation, overdose risk, dangerous combinations, warning signs and the road to recovery. Because some substances can move a person from experimentation to crisis with devastating speed.

IHSAAN-DO

Knowledge • Character • Action • Change

Don't merely remove the addiction. Build the human being.

Stronger Individuals. Stronger Families. A Stronger Ummah.