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

FALLING IS NOT THE END... GET BACK UP.

A NEW DAY
A STRONGER YOU

TRIGGERS
CRAVINGS
OLD HABITS
PEOPLE
PLACES
STRESS
ISOLATION
COMPLACENCY

AWARENESS
DISCIPLINE
SUPPORT
FAITH
PURPOSE
A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

EPISODE 10
THE RELAPSE TRAP

ONE MOMENT CAN TAKE YOU BACK... BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO.

PROGRESS NOT PERFECTION

TRIGGERS, CRAVINGS, LAPSES vs RELAPSE, RELAPSE PREVENTION & GETTING BACK UP

RECOGNISE. PREPARE. RESPOND. RECOVER. CONTINUE.

IDENTIFY TRIGGERS | UNDERSTAND CRAVINGS | CHANGE YOUR ENVIRONMENT | SEEK SUPPORT | PREVENT RELAPSE | GET BACK UP AND CONTINUE

> *"A setback is not the end of the journey. It's a sign to adjust, refocus and come back stronger."*
> — KANCHO ABDULLAH BAYETT

THE R.E.S.E.T. MODEL

R	E	S	E	T
RECOGNISE the trigger and craving	EXIT the dangerous situation	SEEK support (immediately)	EXAMINE what happened	TAKE the next right step

DON'T STAY STUCK. RESET AND MOVE FORWARD.

TURN TO ALLAH, AND KEEP GOING.

COMING NEXT EPISODE 11

REBUILDING THE HUMAN BEING
Identity, Purpose, Discipline, Relationships, Work, Study, Spirituality. & Becoming Who You Were Meant to Become.

ARTICLE BY
KANCHO ABDULLAH BAYETT

DISCIPLINE | PURPOSE | A BETTER UMMAH | ONLY THROUGH IHSAAN

REAL PEOPLE. REAL STRUGGLES. REAL CHANGE.

EPISODE 10: THE RELAPSE TRAP

Triggers, Cravings, Lapses vs Relapse, Relapse Prevention & Getting Back Up

Article by Kancho Abdullah Bayett

INTRODUCTION

RECOVERY DOESN'T END WHEN THE CRAVING RETURNS

Someone has been clean for three months. They are exercising. They are praying. They are working. Their relationships are improving. Life is beginning to feel normal again.

Then something happens — a familiar place, a familiar person, a difficult emotion, a stressful day, a memory, a message, a photograph, a smell, a thought. Suddenly, the craving returns. And the person thinks: “Why am I feeling this again? I thought I was over it.”

This is where many people misunderstand recovery. A craving is not a command. Having an urge does not mean you have failed.

The goal of recovery is not to guarantee that temptation will never appear. The goal is to develop the ability to recognise it, manage it and choose differently.

1. WHAT IS A TRIGGER?

A trigger is something that increases the likelihood of returning to a destructive behaviour.

Triggers can be external — certain people, places, websites, social media, parties, money, certain times of day, access to substances, old routines.

But triggers can also be internal — anger, loneliness, boredom, anxiety, shame, sadness, frustration, exhaustion, feeling rejected.

Sometimes the person isn't craving the substance or behaviour itself. They are craving relief. That distinction matters.

2. THE TRIGGER → CRAVING → ACTION CYCLE

A useful way to understand relapse is: trigger → thought → craving → urge → decision → action → reward or relief → reinforcement.

The earlier we interrupt this cycle, the easier it is to change direction. You don't have to wait until the final moment. Interrupt the cycle early.

3. CRAVINGS CAN FEEL POWERFUL — BUT THEY PASS

A craving can feel overwhelming. The mind may say: “I need it.” But a craving is a temporary internal experience. It rises. It peaks. And it eventually decreases.

The person does not have to obey every thought that enters the mind. This is one of the most important skills in recovery: learning to experience an urge without acting on it.

4. THE FIVE-MINUTE DECISION

When the craving becomes intense, don't immediately make a permanent decision. Make a short-term one. Tell yourself: “I'm not going to act on this right now.”

Then change your environment. Walk. Call someone. Drink water. Exercise. Make wudu. Pray. Leave the room. Go somewhere safe. Put distance between yourself and the trigger.

Sometimes the most powerful decision is simply: “Not now.”

5. HALT — FOUR DANGEROUS STATES

A useful recovery reminder is HALT:

- Hungry — physical discomfort can reduce self-control.
- Angry — anger can create impulsive decisions.
- Lonely — isolation can make old coping mechanisms attractive.
- Tired — exhaustion weakens judgement and resilience.

When several occur together, vulnerability can increase. So sometimes relapse prevention begins with something surprisingly basic: eat properly, sleep, rest, connect, and regulate your emotions.

6. KNOW YOUR HIGH-RISK MOMENTS

Every person should develop a personal relapse map. Ask: when am I most vulnerable? Morning? Late at night? After an argument? After receiving money? When I'm alone? When I'm celebrating? When I'm stressed? When I'm rejected? When I'm bored? When I'm around certain friends? When I'm online?

The answer will be different for everyone. But knowing your pattern gives you power. What you can predict, you can prepare for.

7. CHANGE THE ENVIRONMENT

If a person knows that a particular environment repeatedly leads them toward relapse, returning there unnecessarily is not strength. It may be poor planning.

Recovery sometimes requires saying: “I don't go there anymore.” “I don't associate with those people anymore.” “I don't keep that substance in my home.” “I don't engage with that online content.” “I don't put myself in that situation.”

This isn't weakness. It's wisdom.

8. BUILD A RELAPSE-PREVENTION PLAN

Don't create the plan while you're already in crisis. Create it while you're strong. Write down:

- My triggers — what situations put me at risk?
- My warning signs — what happens inside me before I relapse?
- My escape routes — where can I go when temptation appears?
- My support people — who can I call immediately?
- My healthy alternatives — what can I do instead?
- My reasons — why am I choosing recovery?

Keep the plan accessible.

9. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A LAPSE AND A RELAPSE

These terms are often used interchangeably, but they can be useful distinctions. A lapse can describe a brief return to the behaviour. A relapse generally refers to a more sustained return to problematic use or behaviour.

The most important point is not the terminology. It is the response. A lapse does not have to become a relapse.

The dangerous thinking is: “I've already messed up, so I might as well continue.” That's the trap. Stop the slide early. Seek help. Tell someone. Identify what happened. Learn from it. Strengthen the plan. Get back on the road.

10. SHAME CAN BECOME A RELAPSE TRIGGER

This is one of the cruelest cycles. A person makes a mistake. Then thinks: “I'm useless.” “I'll never change.” “I've failed again.” “What's the point?”

The shame becomes unbearable. So they return to the very behaviour they were trying to escape. The behaviour creates shame. The shame creates pain. The pain creates another escape.

Recovery requires breaking that cycle. Accountability is necessary. But hopelessness is not.

11. ACCOUNTABILITY WITHOUT HUMILIATION

A person in recovery needs people who can say: “We love you too much to pretend this isn't happening.” But also: “We love you too much to give up on you.”

That is healthy accountability. Not “You're a failure,” but “This behaviour is harmful, and we are going to help you confront it.” Correct the behaviour without destroying the person.

12. DON'T CONFUSE TEMPTATION WITH FAILURE

This is particularly important for young people. A thought is not an action. A craving is not a relapse. A temptation is not a moral defeat.

The critical moment is what happens next. You can notice the thought. You can acknowledge the feeling. You can step away. You can ask for help. You can choose differently.

Strength is not never being tempted. Strength is learning what to do when temptation comes.

13. REPLACE THE OLD REWARD

Remember the addiction cycle: trigger → behaviour → reward. If we remove the behaviour without replacing the reward, the brain may keep searching for relief.

So ask: what was the addiction giving me? Escape? Excitement? Connection? Confidence? Relief? Stimulation? Numbness?

Then build healthier ways to meet those needs — stress met with exercise, loneliness met with community, boredom met with meaningful activity, emotional pain met with counselling or support, spiritual emptiness

met with worship and reflection, and a need for achievement met with training, study or work.

Don't just remove the behaviour. Replace what the behaviour was doing for you.

14. FAITH AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE NAFS

Islam does not teach that self-mastery is effortless. We struggle against the lower impulses of the self.

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

That purification is a journey. There will be moments of strength. There may be moments of weakness. But the believer continues returning to Allah and striving toward what is better. The struggle itself can become part of your growth.

15. TAUBAH MEANS RETURN

A person who falls should not think: “I've gone too far to return.”

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

Taubah means turning back. But genuine repentance also involves action: recognition → regret → stopping the wrongdoing → correcting what can be corrected → striving not to return.

Hope doesn't mean ignoring consequences. Hope gives us the strength to face them.

16. WHAT SHOULD A PERSON DO AFTER A LAPSE?

Don't hide. Don't disappear. Don't isolate yourself. Don't say “I'll start again next month.” Act quickly.

- Stop — end the behaviour as soon as possible.
- Get safe — move away from the substance, environment or trigger.
- Tell someone — contact a trusted person.
- Identify the trigger — what happened before the lapse?
- Strengthen the plan — what needs to change?
- Seek professional help if needed — especially if lapses are becoming frequent or dangerous.
- Continue — do not turn one setback into surrender.

17. WHEN RELAPSE BECOMES AN EMERGENCY

Some situations require immediate professional or emergency help. These include overdose, unconsciousness, severe breathing problems, seizures, severe confusion or agitation, dangerous withdrawal symptoms, suicidal thoughts or immediate danger, severe intoxication, or psychosis or loss of contact with reality.

Don't try to handle a medical emergency through willpower. Get emergency assistance. If opioid overdose is suspected and naloxone is available, use it according to instructions and seek emergency medical help.

18. PARENTS: DON'T WAIT FOR PERFECT PROOF

Parents sometimes think: “We need absolute proof before we say anything.” Not necessarily.

If you see significant changes in behaviour, relationships, money, school, sleep, mood or physical wellbeing, you can start a conversation. You don't need to begin with an accusation.

Try: "I've noticed you've been struggling lately. I'm concerned about you. I want to understand what's happening, and I want to help." Start with concern, not interrogation.

19. FRIENDS: BE THE PERSON WHO INTERRUPTS THE CYCLE

Sometimes the person who notices first isn't the parent. It's the friend. You might say: "I'm worried about you." "You don't seem like yourself." "You don't have to deal with this alone." "Let's get some help."

You don't need to become their therapist. You don't need to carry the entire problem yourself. But you can be the person who helps them take the next step.

20. RECOVERY NEEDS A REASON

When temptation becomes strong, people need something stronger than "I shouldn't." They need "I have something to protect."

My iman. My family. My health. My future. My dignity. My children. My purpose. My dreams. My community. My life.

Purpose creates resistance.

21. THE IHSAAN-DO RELAPSE PROTECTION MODEL — R.E.S.E.T.

- Recognise — identify the trigger and craving.
- Exit — leave the dangerous environment or situation.
- Seek support — call someone. Don't isolate.
- Examine — understand what caused the vulnerability.
- Take the next right step — return immediately to the recovery plan. Not tomorrow. Not next week. Now.

REMEMBER

FALLING IS NOT THE END.

STAYING DOWN IS THE DANGER.

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.

Episode 8 — When the Family Must Step In
Family intervention, boundaries, communication and creating a recovery environment.

Episode 9 — The Road to Recovery
Treatment, rehabilitation, counselling, faith, community and rebuilding a life.

Episode 10 — The Relapse Trap
Triggers, cravings, lapses vs relapse, relapse prevention and getting back up.

COMING NEXT — EPISODE 11

REBUILDING THE HUMAN BEING

Identity, Purpose, Discipline, Relationships, Work, Study, Spirituality & Becoming Who You Were Meant to Become

Because stopping addiction is only part of the journey. The next question is: what are we going to build in its place?

IHSAAN-DO

Knowledge • Character • Action • Change

A setback does not erase every day of progress that came before it. A person can fall and still rise.

Stronger Individuals. Stronger Families. A Stronger Ummah.