

Dependence, and the things that hook us

Some things give a quick lift, then quietly ask for more. That is dependence. It is not weakness, and it is not only about drugs. Understanding how it works is how you stay free of it.

HOW DEPENDENCE WORKS

- A loop: something gives fast relief or reward, your brain learns to want it, and you need more for the same effect.
- It creeps in slowly. Most people do not see the line until they are past it.
- It is not a moral failing. It is how brains and habits are built.

THE SUBSTANCES AROUND YOU

- **Caffeine:** coffee and energy drinks like Red Bull push your body, then wreck your sleep and leave you flat.
- **Nicotine:** vapes, Snus pouches, shisha, dokha and midwakh all deliver it, and it hooks fast, whatever the flavour or form.
- **Alcohol:** a depressant that lowers mood over time, with real health and legal risks here.
- None of these fix stress. They borrow calm from tomorrow.

IT IS NOT ONLY DRUGS

- Anything that gives a fast hit can become a crutch: gambling and betting, video games, social media, even food.
- The pattern is the same: reach for it when uncomfortable, feel worse after, reach again.

SIGNS WORTH NOTICING

- You need more to get the same feeling.
- You reach for it to escape, not to enjoy.
- You have tried to cut down and could not.
- It is costing you sleep, money, work, or people.

IF YOU ARE WORRIED, ABOUT YOURSELF OR A FRIEND

Tell someone you trust: a parent, a school counsellor, or a doctor. This is not something to carry alone. Small steps work: name it, remove the easy access, and put a better habit in its place.

The things that hook you are not on your side.

This sheet is general guidance, not medical advice or a crisis service. For a free, confidential helpline near you, see Find A Helpline (findahelpline.com) and Befrienders Worldwide (befrienders.org), or speak to your school counsellor. Informed by research on substance use and mental health in Qatar (Wadoo et al., 2022; Alabdulla et al., 2021).