Warning Signs:

The use and abuse of drugs are serious issues that should not be ignored or minimized and we should not sit back and hope they just go away. If left untreated, use and abuse can develop into drug dependence. As a result, it is important to recognize the signs and symptoms of drug abuse early. If you're worried that a friend or family member might be abusing drugs, here are some of the warning signs to look for:

1. **Physical and health warning signs of drug abuse**

- Eyes that are bloodshot or pupils that are smaller or larger than normal.
- Frequent nosebleeds--could be related to snorted drugs (meth or cocaine).
- Changes in appetite or sleep patterns. Sudden weight loss or weight gain.
- Seizures without a history of epilepsy.
- Deterioration in personal grooming or physical appearance.
- Injuries/accidents and person won't or can't tell you how they got hurt.
- Unusual smells on breath, body, or clothing.
- Shakes, tremors, incoherent or slurred speech, impaired or unstable coordination.
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2. **Behavioral signs of drug abuse**

- Drop in attendance and performance at work or school; loss of interest in extracurricular activities, hobbies, sports or exercise; decreased motivation.
- Complaints from co-workers, supervisors, teachers or classmates.
- Unusual or unexplained need for money or financial problems; borrowing or stealing; missing money or valuables.
- Silent, withdrawn, engaging in secretive or suspicious behaviors.
- Sudden change in relationships, friends, favorite hangouts, and hobbies.
- Frequently getting into trouble (arguments, fights, accidents, illegal activities).
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3. **Psychological warning signs of drug abuse**

- Unexplained change in personality or attitude.
- Sudden mood changes, irritability, angry outbursts or laughing at nothing.
- Periods of unusual hyperactivity or agitation.
- Lack of motivation; inability to focus, appearing lethargic or "spaced out."
- Appearing fearful, withdrawn, anxious, or paranoid, with no apparent reason.

Signs and symptoms of Drug Dependence:

Drug dependence involves all the symptoms of drug abuse, but also involves another element: physical dependence.

1. Tolerance: Tolerance means that, over time, you need more drugs to feel the same effects.

Do they use more drugs now than they used before? Do they use more drugs than other people without showing obvious signs of intoxication?

2. Withdrawal: As the effect of the drugs wear off, the person may experience withdrawal symptoms: anxiety or jumpiness; shakiness or trembling; sweating, nausea and vomiting; insomnia; depression; irritability; fatigue or loss of appetite and headaches. Do they use drugs to steady the nerves, stop the shakes in the morning? Drug use to relieve or avoid withdrawal symptoms is a sign of addiction.

In severe cases, withdrawal from drugs can be life-threatening and involve hallucinations, confusion, seizures, fever, and agitation. These symptoms can be dangerous and should be managed by a physician specifically trained and experienced in dealing with addiction.

3. Loss of Control: Using more drugs than they wanted to, for longer than they intended, or despite telling themselves that they wouldn't do it this time.

4. Desire to Stop, But Can't: They have a persistent desire to cut down or stop their drug use, but all efforts to stop and stay stopped, have been unsuccessful.

5. Neglecting Other Activities: They are spending less time on activities that used to be important to them (hanging out with family and friends, exercising or going to the gym, pursuing hobbies or other interests) because of the use of drugs.

6. Drugs Take Up Greater Time, Energy and Focus: They spend a lot of time using drugs, thinking about it, or recovering from its effects. They have few, if any, interests, social or community involvements that don't revolve around the use of drugs.

7. Continued Use Despite Negative Consequences: They continue to use drugs even though they know it's causing problems. As an example, person may realize that their drug use is interfering with ability to do their job, is damaging their marriage, making problems worse, or causing health problems, but they continue to use.