



## CASE STUDY KEY FOR PRESENTER(S)

**NOTE: Please see the key as “talking points” and feel free to put in your own style.**

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### Part I:

You have been best friends with Naomi for three years. She is outgoing and brightens every room she visits. Most people would never suspect, but her mother is sick, and her health has been worsening. Naomi does not like to bring the mood down, so she rarely talks about this. She is focused on school and running track because she can only pay for college with a scholarship. A couple of months ago, at a regional track meet, she badly fractured her ankle.

She kept going to school, but had to end the track season early. In a couple weeks, you notice some changes. She starts ditching class and seems distracted when she is present. You ask her about this, and she says, “It doesn’t matter, I’m there on test days, so it’s not like I’m failing.” You ask where she goes during class and she says that she has physical therapy for her ankle. She sometimes asks you for money (she has never done this in the past) because she is taking Uber to her appointments. When you ask to hang out, she says no, which is not normal for her. She often made time for her friends and should have more free time now that she cannot go to track practice. She is distant and hardly opens up to you anymore. When you ask her if she is okay, you get inconsistent responses. Sometimes she says, “everything is okay” with a shrug, but sometimes she gets angry and barks “why do you even care, are you bored with your own life?”

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### What puts Naomi at risk for developing an opioids addiction?

*Risk factors include:*

- *Sadness and stress (her mother is ill and she feels pressure to do well in track and school to land her scholarship)*
- *Being injured → many people become addicted to opioids after a doctor prescribes painkillers. Pills may be given to anyone in chronic pain, who suffered an injury (for example, from sports or a car accident), or who had surgery.*



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What are some of the signs that Naomi may be facing an addiction?

*Signs include:*

- *Changes in behavior, such as ditching class*
- *Being distracted, distant, and shady*
- *Asking for money*
- *Mood-swings and irritability, e.g., Sometimes she says, "everything is okay" with a shrug, but sometimes she gets angry and barks "why do you even care, are you bored with your own life?"*
- *Changes in interests → no longer hanging out with friends*



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### Part II:

Two months pass. At this point, you are almost sure Naomi has an opioid addiction. Her grades tanked, she looks sickly, and she rarely stays at school for a whole day. It is hard to have a conversation with her because she always cuts them short and her responses don't make sense. The rest of your friend group noticed, but they aren't as close to her, so are not as worried. You call her mother's cell phone for information and find out that Naomi's mother has been in the hospital for the last month. Naomi rarely visits her mother and when she does, it is to ask for money. This is not the Naomi you knew: she was very close to her mother and would never try to take advantage of her.

At this point, you decide to intervene more seriously. You explain that you've seen changes in her since her injury and that you are worried about her well-being. You ask if she has been taking anything. At the mention of substance use, Naomi flies off the handle.

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### What would you do now?

*There are a few options:*

- *Reach out to a community member (such as a school counselor)*
- *Call whoever she is living with (such as her father) and tell them what you think may be happening.*
- *Speak with your parent or another trusted adult*

### Could the situation have been dealt with in a better way? If so, how?

*Naomi can definitely still be helped, and her reaction did give more confidence that the addiction was more than speculation. But, a professional needs to get involved because now Naomi may become more secretive, hostile, and less likely to accept help.*