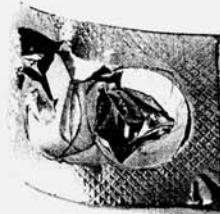


Psychiatric drug addiction

There is no guarantee that coming off psychiatric drugs will be easy, and the uniqueness of individuals – their particular problems and possibilities – means that no single approach can work for everyone. Nevertheless, users/survivors will be encouraged by the sheer diversity of strategies offered by contributors to *Coming Off Psychiatric Drugs*: the accounts of 28 people who successfully discontinued using drugs and eight professionals who supported them.

There is a consensus that reducing doses by degrees is the best way to minimise withdrawal risks. This is especially important if a psychiatric drug has been taken for more than one or two months. A successful withdrawal is also more likely if the right kind of help is present, including a good self-help group and qualified specialists. But usually, the circumstances for coming off are likely to be less than ideal. And often, there may be no alternative to self-help. As Gerda Wozart, one of the contributing

former users of psychiatric drugs, encourages: 'We are on our own, called upon to live in a responsible way. We are not only sentenced by others, muzzled by others. We always have more forces (and



self-helping forces, too) available than we might have thought in dark days.'

Faced with the refusal of many mental health professionals to tackle the difficulties of withdrawal and dependence, contributors to *Coming off Psychiatric Drugs* found their own solutions: socialising and working

together; exploring the meaning and nature of madness; trying to avoid stressful (family) relationships; searching for meaning in their lives; living closer to nature; doing therapeutic bodywork, meditation, yoga, spiritual practice and prayer. Most important, they took precautionary measures to cope with a possible return of their original problems. They sought (and found) support from doctors or homeopathic doctors, therapists (psychotherapy, hypnosis, massage etc.), natural healers, and from other therapies such as breathing techniques, vitamin treatments, acupuncture and many more.
Peter Lehmann

See www.peter-lehmann.de

Peter Lehmann (editor) (2004) *Coming off Psychiatric Drugs: Successful Withdrawal from Neuroleptics, Antidepressants, Lithium, Carbamazepine and Tranquillizers* is available for £14.99 from Mind Mail Order: 15-19 Broadway, London E15 4BQ; tel: 0844 448 4448; email: publications@mind.org.uk; website: www.mind.org.uk/osb