

Let's talk Medication...

Have you heard the statement, “If he is on his medication he is fine, but then he goes off of his medication then all hell breaks loose!”? I am sure you have if you have anyone in your life with a Mental Illness.

Why is it, that something that appears to be as simple as medication, is such a difficult thing for so many? I will give you my non-professional but experienced opinion of this dilemma. First of all medication is only one component of maintaining a Mental Illness. It is my observation that medication alone is rarely effective and this is why. Medication gets us (the Mentally Ill) to a point chemically that we can think more rationally and logically – once we are at that point we have a pretty clear vision of our lives... for most of us, our lives are not simple and thereby we realize that we have many issues and many disturbances to deal with. Now it is not just the bad, it is also the good. When we are medicated we have hopes and dreams and wonder if those can be fulfilled as the past would say, they cannot. Therefore, therapy is a requirement. To be able to process the past along with the hopes of the future and to somehow stabilize the present, medication doesn't fit the bill, by itself.

Many of the medications that the Mentally Ill need to take for their Mental Illness have a variety of side effects that make the physical, not so pleasant. Imagine waking up every day feeling as though you have a mild flu. Some experience dehydration and seizures, others are so lethargic that simple tasks are like climbing a mountain. Stomach cramps are frequent and many

digestive problems can occur that makes socializing or being somewhere other than home, very uncomfortable. Side effects from medications can be somewhat life changing. As a Mentally Ill person who looks into the future with a clear mind and the realization that it is possible that you may feel these side effects on one level or another for the rest of your life, is not an encouraging one.

Now, for those of you that are consumers, you might be saying, “He said it! Medication is awful!” Yeah, I said it – but you **WILL TAKE IT!** The above was not an excuse to not take medication. I have heard them all used most of them, “It makes me feel funny, I can’t write because of the seizures, I spend half my life in the bathroom, and so on...” Well, talk to your doctor and see what can be done to calm these symptoms – it is **NOT AN EXCUSE** to **NOT** take them. It is my personal mantra – “If I don’t take those pills, I will die!” and you know what, it is very much the truth.

For those of you that are reading to understand this aggravating dilemma, and it is **SO** aggravating. Understand the dynamics and the process. So many of us say, “well, he stopped taking his meds!” and throw our hands up in the air. If you truly care, take it a step further and ask, “Why did he stop taking his meds?” I assure you there is a reason and the reason, far too often is not as simple as medication side effects. The reasons vary with a myriad of emotional/mental issues. Paranoia, depression, and mania **DO COME** even **WITH** medication. Medications are constantly being altered in order to combat the chemical changes in a body. Seeing a psychiatrist once a year, until you have found the right “cocktail” is simply not enough. A regiment

needs to be put in place. An action plan needs to be implemented.

When you plan a vacation, how much time do you put into it? You research on the internet for hotels, flights, entertainment and restaurants. You try to schedule your flight with your personal schedule, your hotel to your needs and wants, and restaurants to your expectations and taste. You travel to a destination in which you have always wanted to experience or to a destination that you return to because of your fondness for the region. So how do you plan for your life? This question is posed to both the Mentally Ill and their loved ones... “What are you doing to plan for your life so that your journey is the best that it can be?”

I am going to leave you all with that question for a couple of days and I will come back to it with something I hope to introduce to my fellow consumers and families one day called, “The Road Map – simplifying the process with goals and issues to a difficult and bumpy road.”