

WEIGHT LOSS SUCCESS = EQUALS=LESS ANTI-DEPRESSANTS?
MAYBE NOT!!!!

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Many of us were told that after we had lost our weight, we might have less need or no need at all for the medications that we had been taking. This may indeed be true when it comes to medicines that treat diseases such as diabetes or hypertension. These conditions are often caused by obesity itself and the need for medication diminishes as we become less obese.

However, the situation is very different when it comes to “psychotropic” medications or “meds for the mind” so to speak. We may need less of the medications that we take for mood and temperament difficulties after weight loss, however we may need the exact same amount or perhaps even MORE! We may even need to start taking “mind meds” for the first time. It is important to differentiate between illnesses that are created by our obesity and those that might still be there whether or not we are obese.

Of course, the sole fact that we are obese can cause us to become anxious or depressed. In such situations, these conditions of temperament or mood are said to be “secondary” to the obesity. In other words, our primary condition is obesity and our psychic difficulties are only secondary to the obesity itself. If this is the case, our need for anti-anxiety agents or anti-depressants may lessen or disappear as we begin to feel better about the way we look.

However, more often than not, depression, anxiety and bi-polar illnesses are primary conditions. They are illnesses in and of themselves. They do not disappear with weight loss and may in fact be triggered by it. In these situations our symptoms are considered to be “endogenous” or “rising from within.” This means that we are either born with them or they get “triggered” by something that activates them at some later time in our lives. In any event, they are primary conditions that are biological in nature and have an existence all their own in addition to overweight.

In other words, most of us have the primary disease of obesity and some of us may also have another primary condition- that of our neurological make up. In fact, unknowingly, in part we may have been over eating in an attempt to treat our psychological make-ups- attempting to use food as medication. Some began to overeat because we were feeling so anxious or depressed or agitated to begin with. This often is a factor in helping to create the condition of obesity in the first place!

Some of us have come in to this world with a neuro-biological predisposition to more anxious or depressed temperaments. Chronic psychological symptoms caused by our biological make-up are so painful and stressful. Perhaps we over ate in an attempt to soothe these unpleasant states. But then we only helped to create another painful problem without curing the first. Without the ability to use food as a form of self-medicating, it is

entirely possible that we may develop more frank symptoms of depression, anxiety or bipolar disorders AFTER we have lost weight. Perhaps our un-medicated and unidentified disorders account for some of the people who develop “**cross-over**” addictions. Alcohol, gambling, and over-spending may all be new attempts to self medicate. Once again, however, **these** disorders are as destructive as obesity and they might be helped with proper medication. We may even manage to regain our weight, once again self-medicating with food, and never realize that our biology is playing a role in our addiction.

If we do not take these possibilities in to consideration and work with our doctors to find the proper medications, we may develop other significant and profound issues. Some people may have been attempting to medicate the agitation caused by mania with food. When this is no longer possible, they may exhibit frank manic or depressive episodes. Others may feel like failures because even though they may be thinner, they are still unhappy. Weight loss only cures depression, social phobias **and panic** attacks if they are secondary to the obesity. You are not failures. You simply may have more than one primary condition.

Perhaps we were put on medication prior to weight loss and it was successful, but are unsure if we were treating a primary or a secondary issue. The best way to find out is to stay on the medication during and after weight loss. Then, and only then, if you feel really stable and want to try cutting down or ending the medication, work together with your prescribing physician and, with their approval, start cutting the medicine down slowly. Remember, this should be in concert with your physician because you will have someone to work with who specializes in medicine and behavior. The two of you will be able to assess together your quality of life without the medications and whether or not you need to return to them.

Once off medication, it takes several weeks to a month for it to completely leave your system, so don't reach conclusions too soon. If old feelings such as anxiety, dread, **or** despair start to return, and if you and your doctor have assessed that they are biological in nature, hopefully you know what drug worked in the past and you can return to it. Possibly, you might have to try on a few new types of medications (like shoes) to get the right fit. Furthermore, although it may be easier for our bodies to metabolize medication than it is for our bodies to metabolize vitamins and minerals from food, **nevertheless**, it may be possible that you will absorb LESS of your psychotropic medications after weight loss. Again, work with your doctor to see if you need an *increased* dose due to absorption issues or due to the fact that you are no longer taking additional self-administered medication- FOOD.

If we cut down on our medicines or cut them out completely, we may experience many months or years before the need to return to medication arises. Perhaps it will never return. But, if the need does arise, it is generally because our biology has been triggered by one or more of life's difficult stressors; losses, abandonments, prolonged stress, etc. It may just return for no identifiable reason, just because our biology **has** a life all its own. Guess what? Depression might also be triggered when we realize that our obesity was not our

only problem in life. Some of us fantasized that we would no longer have any *real* problems once we had lost weight. Oh, if life were only that easy!

Don't be stubborn. Along with your physician, find or return to the medications that your particular biology may need in order to feel well and have true quality of life. Only a Pollyanna would say that it is possible to live a deep and meaningful life without, at times, experiencing feelings of pain, fear and anger. These feelings cannot be avoided if we are to feel truly alive. However, and so importantly, anxiety, depression and rage are not *feelings*. They are *symptoms*. We don't have to feel them or live with them, nor should we be expected to. Symptoms can be helped. If you need help, please reach out for it!

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