

## From Failing Meds to the Ones That Worked

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I fell into schizophrenia in 1976 when I was 28. I had been promoted out of my job in New York to a different job in Michigan. As soon as I moved to Michigan, I was put in an intense training program for my new position. The company only gave me 1 month to find housing. I had to study and look for a house at the same time. Since I had brought my 2 Samoyeds from New York with me, housing was hard to find. A dog being in an apartment was common in New York, but not in Michigan. However, one day before my month ended, I was able to rent a flat from a co-worker.

I continued to go through training programs for my new job on-location, and I traveled out of state for training at the same time I tried to get settled. I stayed stressed out all the time. My behavior became peculiar and I didn't talk very much. I became paranoid. I thought my co-workers were whispering about me behind my back. I started to show stress in my face. So, my manager had me take a few days off. He had noticed a difference in me also. When I returned to work, the pressure of the job wasn't any less. All I did was work and train. I had no social life. Plus, I had not met any people outside of work. After a work day, I walked my dogs, prepared dinner for myself; went to bed waking up the next morning with the same routine of walking the dogs and being to work by 8 AM. I believed that working as hard as I did would get me further ahead on the job.

I was driving home from work one day when I began to hear voices inside of my head. It wasn't just one voice talking—it was many in a low tone. I couldn't distinguish what they were saying. It sounded like a radio between stations, with a lot of static. Time went by, and the voices became clearer. I was still very paranoid and delusional. I thought people on my job were all judging me to see how well I did my job. I felt they could read what I was thinking and that I could talk to them without opening my mouth.

I didn't see a psychiatrist until almost 2 years later. I was diagnosed as paranoid schizophrenia. The psychiatrist prescribed Valium, and I was admitted to the hospital for 2 weeks. After being released from the hospital, I was still hearing voices. My psychiatrist prescribed a

high dosage of Thorazine. Thorazine is an antipsychotic medication. It kept me sleepy all the time, hindering me from working a full day. It also kept my nose plugged. It didn't stop the voices. So he tried Stelazine, another antipsychotic medication. Stelazine wasn't any better than Thorazine. I experienced thought disorder from taking it. My mind raced. I thought extremely fast, racing from one thought to another; making irrational statements. My thoughts were disorganized and didn't make any sense. I couldn't take this medication either. Back then (1978) there weren't many psychotropic medications to take.

I could no longer hold my job. I stopped seeing my psychiatrist. And, I wasn't on any psychotropic medications for years. My life wasn't easy.

In 1995, I flipped out. I had severe psychosis. I was hospitalized. This hospitalization was for 5 years straight in 3 different hospitals. The hospitals treated me with Haldol, Seroquel, and Zyprexa. I had side effects from these meds. Haldol kept me anxious. Seroquel kept me sedated and I felt sleepy and like a zombie. I couldn't stop eating with Seroquel and Zyprexa caused me to be borderline diabetic. Plus, I still heard voices.

After I was released from the hospital, I still took Seroquel that one psychiatrist prescribed. I gained so much weight, I was unrecognizable. I took it for years, then stopped on my own. After then I have been placed in 3 other hospitals—from 2 weeks duration stay to 2 months. In these hospitals, they gave me Celexa, Geodon, Depakene, Valium, Haldol, Thorazine, Zyprexa, and Olzapine. None of these meds controlled my symptoms. It wasn't until a 2010 hospitalization, I was diagnosed paranoid schizophrenia with chronic depression. I was prescribed a combination of Venlafaxine 75 mg, Risperdal 3 mg, and Trazodone 50 mg which helped me tremendously. I have had no side effects, and I have stopped been delusional, paranoid, and I don't hear voices and I am not depressed. I am grateful to the psychiatrist who helped me. After more than 40 years of psychosis, I can now say, I feel better than I have ever felt in my life. I feel like a new person. Being on meds that work for me has helped me to see just how out of touch with reality I had been in the past.