

Benefits of Staying on Medication

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The benefits of staying on medication help you to be on the path to recovery. It may take some time for your doctor to determine the exact prescription for your needs. There is a possibility that a combination of medications will be the best fit for your situation. For me, it took several months to get the exact prescription to best treat my symptoms. Do not be surprised if a new and better prescription is offered occasionally. For me a monthly injectable was added to my treatment plan which helped me tremendously. Medicines are available that can reduce the impact of symptoms, increase your independence, and increase quality of life.

The first benefit I realized about staying on medications happened while I was in a Homeless Respite. One of my symptoms was that I thought I had special powers. My clouded thinking made me think that when I looked into other people's eyes, I could know their thoughts. Staying on the right medications made me realize I did not have special powers. That cloudy thinking was in fact a symptom of my schizophrenia. The benefit of staying on medication made me understand what is real and what is not. This was an essential first step in moving forward.

The second benefit of staying on medication was that I began using a strategy to determine if my delusions were real. "Checking the Evidence" is something I often do to separate delusions from reality. For example, I could be inside my apartment and think that I hear someone talking about me outside my door. I go and open the door to check the evidence. There is usually no one at my door and certainly no one talking about me. If there is no evidence then, it is my brain disease talking.

The third benefit indirectly relates to the effectiveness of my medication. My medication will not do everything it is supposed to if I drink alcohol. I soon realized that binge drinking increases paranoia, voices, and delusions. No matter how good the medication is, by drinking alcohol it undermined the affects of the medicine. It was difficult to stop the bar scene, but it was a necessary decision that would help me live a productive life.

Making sure I was under the care of a mental health professional is the fourth benefit. This gives me face time to a medical mind who looks at me through a fresh set of eyes and they are aware of the latest medications and support systems for recovery. Keeping up with my appointments keeps me from falling through the cracks. Most recently my health-care provider put me on an antidepressant. This third medication has lifted my spirits, given me more energy, and has decreased negative feelings. Now I rarely feel out of sorts and the negative feelings have been replaced with increased confidence. Bottom line staying on medication and being under the care of a mental health professional are steps to the foundation to getting to a major turning point in my recovery.

After following these steps, one day it dawned on me that I was in a good place. Taking the correct medications managed my symptoms quite well. I wondered what was next in addition to my daily routine. I understood I had to take my medications to live a productive life. One of my first thoughts was wanting to assist others with the same diagnosis. This led me to the idea of using my writing skills to help others in their recovery journey. Thinking that writing about my experiences may help others, I googled "first person accounts" related to schizophrenia and my life changed for the better. An academic journal popped up called *Schizophrenia Bulletin* published by Oxford University Press. They accepted first person accounts of patients with schizophrenia. They did not pay, but still it was a way to get my story out to mental health professionals who work every day with patients with schizophrenia.

My first two articles were rejected. My third submission was accepted and I began sharing experiences that mental health professionals could use in treating patients. Once I was able to get my eyes off myself, I was able to assist others in their recovery journey by writing about my experiences. None of this would have happened without consistently taking my medications and meeting with my mental health professions.