



***Psychiatric Drugs:
A Harm Reduction, peer-informed
rights' based approach***

Housing First Conference

April 10th, 2018



Community Access expands opportunities for people living with mental health concerns to recover from trauma and discrimination through affordable housing, training, advocacy and healing-focused services. We are built upon the simple truth that people are experts in their own lives.



MADAME SOSOSTRIS
Specializing in Palm-reading,
Fortune-telling, tarot reading
and drug-drug interactions

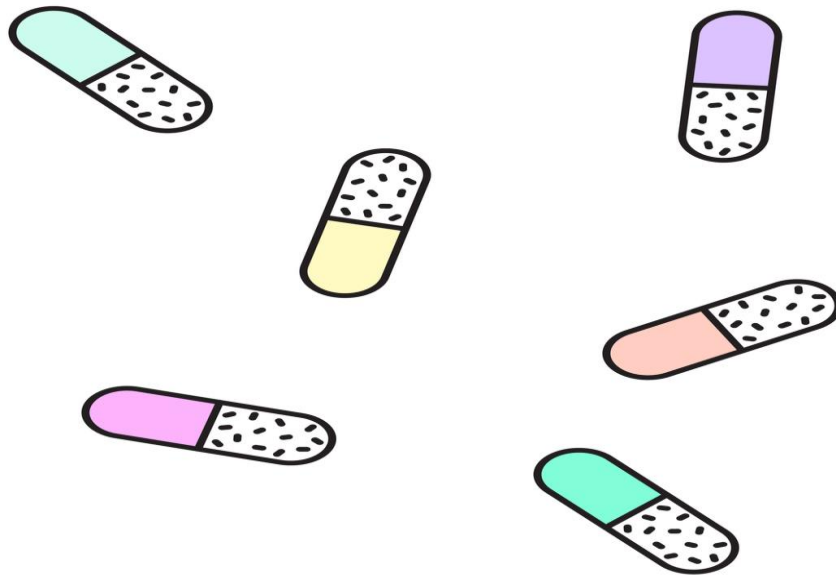
I'm working with a 14
year old boy who is on
Trazadone, Prozac,
Ritalin and
Zantac. What
will happen if
I add clonidine?



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Let's Discuss!

💊 What are the barriers to employing a harm reduction, rights' based, recovery-oriented approach with psych. drugs in supportive housing?



Funders' expectations

Psychiatrists who feel certain they know better than "housing providers"

Lack of (unbiased) information

Our own fears/discomfort

Individuals' histories of going off medications and winding up in the hospital

Our feeling that individuals seem to do better when they are taking their medications as prescribed

Fears of liability

Distrust of us from those taking psych meds

Are you in your RIGHTS' mind?

Infusing our values

- 💊 Self-Determination
- 💊 Cognitive Liberty

Some Legal grounding

- 💊 The Nuremberg Code/The Declaration of Helsinki
- 💊 UN Resolution on Human Rights
- 💊 The Belmont Report
- 💊 The US Constitution



ACTIVITY

Traditional Responses

To the individual:

- “Have you talked with your psychiatrist? Maybe they’ll switch you to another medication.”
- “I’m worried you are smoking pot. Do you want to go to rehab?”

Without the individual present:

- “They lack insight.”
- “They are self-medicating.”

Informed Decision making

- 💊 Understand that pros/cons is likely too simplistic
- 💊 Admit limitations of what is known about psychiatric medications
- 💊 Validate and explore individuals' lived experience of psych drugs as critical form of expertise
- 💊 Help the individual consider meaning/value of each risk/benefit connected to their personal goals, health concerns and values, etc.
- 💊 Learn from/share resources that utilize a critical lens

Harm Reduction

- 💊 “Just Say Know”
- 💊 Beyond *All or Nothing*
- 💊 Peer support/support systems
- 💊 Tapering tools
- 💊 Withdrawal strategies
- 💊 Alternatives/Expanding options
- 💊 Activism – building momentum together

Just a few resources

- *A guide to Minimal Use of Neuroleptics: Why and How* –
<https://www.madinamerica.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Guide-to-Minimal-Use-of-Neuroleptics-.pdf>
- *Harm Reduction Guide to Coming Off Psychiatric Drugs* -
<http://www.willhall.net/files/ComingOffPsychDrugsHarmReductGuide2Edonline.pdf>
- <https://education.madinamerica.com/>
- <https://withdrawal.theinnercompass.org/>
- *The Bitterest Pills: the troubling story of antipsychotic drugs*, Joanna Moncrieff
- *Anatomy of an Epidemic: Magic Bullets, Psychiatric Drugs, and the Astonishing Rise of Mental Illness in America*, Robert Whitaker

THANK YOU!

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