

Paxil Withdrawal Guide



By Darcy Baston

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Designed by Darcy Baston.

Darcy Baston may be reached at:
www.paxilprogress.org

To every past, current and future paxilprogress.org visitor. Without you, I would not have been lifted back up from where I fell. May this guide be of equal support and value. **You are all, my heroes.**

To my parents, who found countless ways to give love and support when I was too proud and stubborn to acknowledge it.

To Andrea, my love, who blurs all my boundaries. You are a light that pierces all dark.

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Let there be no more doubt that angels walk the earth.

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Paxil Withdrawal Guide

By Darcy Baston

Introduction

Paxil is an SSRI class medication with a short half-life, which means its use should not be halted abruptly.

What doctors may fail to tell you, is how to withdraw from it and how long that really takes. And even if they set up a reduction schedule for you, they may not mention the complexities and difficulties the withdrawal experience offers.

Paxil withdrawal can be difficult. Withdrawing from a medication like Paxil impacts your whole being for years, and is a complex and exhausting adventure for many.

This is your withdrawal guide. In here you will find ideas and suggestions on what to do about Paxil withdrawal. This guide is founded on years of my own experience, and the thousands of anecdotal and inspirational exchanges I've had as founder of paxilprogress.org, the internet's best resource for experience driven information on Paxil and Paxil withdrawal.

I haven't used scientific or statistical methods to come up with the ideas in this guide. They have been observed anecdotally to be useful tools in my own journey, and in the lives of many [paxilprogress](http://paxilprogress.org) visitors who have also braved anxiety, depression and Paxil withdrawal. There's something for you to discover in this guide.

Now is your time. Never has there been a more exciting time for you. If you're actually experiencing life with Paxil or are just collecting information, now is your time to be aware and filled with possibility.

I've been where you've been. I've seen much of what you've seen. I've had my own thoughts and emotions crippled by depression, fear and obsessions. Many people have been through all these things but have been made to avoid their purpose, lest it somehow diminish them. The truth is, we've never been less than wondrous and lovable. You've found a document that will remind you of this, and can help you learn how to live without Paxil if that is your goal.

In 1996, I had my first panic attack. It ripped through me with a force I had no idea was possible. Back then I hadn't the faintest notion of my own ability to create my own world so I became an anxious debilitated victim. I was so convinced that I was going to die unfulfilled and forgotten! As anxiety accelerated my thoughts of doom and despair, I became terrified of the world. Believing that anxiety was coming AT me, and not FROM me, I began running. I ran away from food, people, taking trips or anything else that seemed to feel just mildly stimulating or that required me to challenge myself.

Flooded with anxiety, I fasted, trembled, avoided, dodged, angered, pushed and ran. It didn't occur to me then that I couldn't run from myself. The anxiety and I were always there, together. Eventually I just stopped participating and tried to quit being. I began sitting still and did nothing for days and months. I settled for just looking at the floor while trying to close myself down and lose the ability to feel anything. I created a void for myself so that even the worst of panic attacks, (the kind that fire again and again for countless

tortuous hours) would not be owned by me. My thoughts and opinions went silent. Once devoid of that sense of humanity, I tried to end my life.

I'm still here. I'm still here because somewhere along the way, when the dark consumed me and I could see nothing else, I noticed a faint light I wouldn't have noticed if it wasn't surrounded by pitch. All that was left for me to do was just walk towards it. It sounds cliché and the experience should be understood as being a bright loving reminder to not lose hope. In this document, you will find ideas and empowered perceptions that will show you that you will walk towards your own light (and have always been). You only had to create the destination.

YOUR OWN LIGHT CAN AND WILL PIERCE YOUR DARK.

My journey brought me to Paxil, which introduced a whirlwind of experiences that would push my limits to great ends. I leaned on Paxil, used it to stay the remembering of my recently bruised past, and lost even more of myself. With Paxil, I was functional, but still empty. I was living, but not alive. I noticed a growing resentment within me that felt like I was settling for convenience and not growth (which is always more difficult yet infinitely more rewarding). I then began to remove Paxil from my life and found yet another challenge, one that would produce a tsunami of personal growth: **Paxil Withdrawal**.

I eventually figured out how to survive withdrawal, and did so with the help of thousands of people who have, and continue to visit **paxilprogress**. This community was my method of meeting you and sharing with you.

Through more than 5 years of gathering knowledge on anxiety, depression, and almost 5 years of intimate exploration on Paxil, Paxil withdrawal and how lives are affected by it, I hope I have created something resourceful for you.

You are precious. You are not forsaken to always being miserable.

Freedom is in you...

Disclaimer

Paxil™ is a registered trademark of GlaxoSmithKline. Prozac™ is a registered trademark of Eli Lilly. The content of this guide, the web community **paxilprogress** and its content are not affiliated with GlaxoSmithKline nor Eli Lilly in any way.

This guide is not intended and should not serve as a replacement for qualified medical care. Its purpose is to be a source of inspiration and perspectives that you may not have considered before. It's meant to widen the boundaries you may have built around yourself.

This guide is a snapshot in time of my beliefs and experiences. Just as any other human being grows, details and experiences change. Yours will too.

This document is an invitation for you to grow by contrasting and comparing personal experience and knowledge with your own, until you find your peaceful middle. I succeeded in finding joy, peace and freedom without the dependence of medications like Paxil using the ideas you'll find in this guide. I hope they will do the same for you.

Before you begin to withdraw, observe and prepare

Let's get started. I'd like to spend some time discussing what Paxil is and how it can impact your physical, cognitive and emotional reality. If you're going to do this with some skill, it will be beneficial to know what you're withdrawing from. However, in many situations, it won't be Paxil that you'll be challenged by, but some poisoned part of your self-image.

Paxil is a Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor (SSRI)

Paroxetine (Paxil, Seroxat, Aropax) is an SSRI used principally to treat mood affective disorders. Approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services (FDA) in 1992 to treat anxiety related conditions, paxil **progress** visitors have shared numerous other reasons for having it prescribed to them, which include intermittent, post partum and long term depressions, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS), Fibromyalgia, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), thyroid irregularities, head injuries, eating disorders and more. This is not a complete list. Doctors have been free to develop new uses for their patients, including the relief of headaches. A drug that potentially affects your mood, personality, appetite, sleep habits and interest in sex has actually been prescribed for temporary pain relief.

Paxil can be considered the multi generational offspring of many other medications that date back as far as the end of the 19th century. Some of its ancestors include cocaine,

tricyclics, monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOI) and the popular SSRI fluoxetine (Prozac). Often referred to as a *me too* drug (implying a competitive marketing strategy against other medications), Paxil's manufacturer GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) marketed it as being even more selective than other antidepressants.

Paxil has a half-life of less than 24 hours. This means that Paxil is a substance that your body actively seeks to remove and it takes less than a day for your body to reduce the concentration of Paxil's active agents in your blood by about half. This is a short half-life compared to Prozac, which has a half-life of more than a week. I believe the shorter half-life of Paxil contributes to the potential for withdrawal symptoms. The body is used to being in control and making gradual changes. A drug with a short half-life will rock your world as your body scrambles to adjust.

But is it a physical dependence?

In the fall of 2002, the justice system pondered if Paxil was habit forming or simply had the potential for a withdrawal experience. I believe that Paxil is not habit forming in the traditional sense. It is however a substance the body reacts to (especially during its introduction and removal) and it does so uncomfortably.

Here's why: for a drug to be labelled habit forming, you have to demonstrate a drug seeking behavior often at the expense of rationality, safety, and economic feasibility. This means you have to be highly desiring of the drug for the sake of having the drug. This isn't quite the case with Paxil. My own withdrawal experience and anecdotal research tells me that people don't usually crave and dream about a colored pill lustfully enough to attempt to rob a bank, steal from a relative or sell a car. In short, a withdrawal experience is not

accompanied by a strong urge to get more Paxil. Instead, someone withdrawing from Paxil mostly desires a relief from the withdrawal symptoms. And here's where the lines blur.

The definition of addiction describes how a participant may also seek a substance to avoid the withdrawal experience. This is like someone seeking cocaine because the depression of the down time is too great. Since Paxil withdrawal may include symptoms of depression, it sounds just like one facet of cocaine addiction.

And to confuse matters further are people who have learned to cope with life and its inherent challenges with a medication. They may feel like they have a predisposition towards using a drug to feel like a trouble-free human being. They may not know how to do it any other way. This kind of behavior reasons that a drug can be used to shorten a grieving period or to relieve an old fear. If it worked during the last two life hurdles, why wouldn't it for the third right?

In the end, I am concerned that there's mostly a behavioral influence in someone who seeks Paxil. Most people trying to get off the stuff have no interest nor inclination to entrench themselves again into the old way of doing things—a way that brought this withdrawal adventure on. However, withdrawal does incline someone to wish they weren't feeling withdrawal symptoms, so we can't just blanket the particularities and say Paxil is completely not addictive nor habit forming. It has a bite.

The 2nd S in SSRI is Serotonin

The class of medications known as SSRIs control the flow of serotonin from transmitters to receptors in your brain. Serotonin is a neurotransmitter/hormone. This hormone plays a major role in your body—it affects your moods, your libido and digestive system. I believe Paxil greatly affects how your whole body communicates chemically with serotonin and therefore makes it difficult for you to identify internally what is being felt by what parts of your body and why. The broad usage of this hormone in the human body may explain why so many people have different things happen to them when they withdraw.

But what does Paxil do with the serotonin?

When neurotransmitters send a message with serotonin, some of it is gobbled back up before reaching its destination. It's like selective censoring or dumping hundreds of marbles quickly into your hand. Your hand catches some of them, and the others continue their journey to the floor. Paxil takes away your hand so that they all hit the floor. In other words, Paxil stops the reabsorption of serotonin back into the transmitter that sent it. As the drug family name that Paxil is in suggests, Paxil is a Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor (SSRI). It stops your transmitters from reuptaking (taking back) what it sends out. By inhibiting the natural reabsorption process, your brain's receptors get a more generous helping of serotonin.

The body didn't evolve to always mess things up. It's actually designed to try to balance things, be well and not work so hard. Life and stress will certainly challenge it and upset its balance, but it prefers to sleep in at least once in a while. To me it seems that using Paxil is a gamble that the flood of serotonin it causes will be in the right amount, at just the right time and that you'll somehow feel better, while circum-

venting any chance your body has to figure it out. Whatever the result, withdrawal involves an attempt on your body's part to get back under the scale and it may tip one way to the other until it's chemically satisfied. This process can feel uncomfortable and take months.

How does taking Paxil affect your daily life?

Since Paxil affects chemical communication in your body, your ability to perceive daily experiences or self identity can be affected. Do you not measure and observe life by how it relates to your body and how much of your body you say is YOU? Science is still learning how emotions and serotonin are linked, but personal experience is clear that one affects, or is derived from the other. While on Paxil, your potential to experience a wide range of emotions that run from frightening anger to passionate bliss is diminished. This influence on your emotions is the desired effect of Paxil since it can diminish your negative sensations so that you can become a more productive and less encumbered machine (or human). But it turns out that it's not necessarily selective about what it diminishes. Your joyous passions and sex drive can also get put on a shelf.

It's so nice to get rid of the clutter of depression, sadness and anxiety with handy shelves. It's a shame people forget to look at where the clutter is coming from in the first place.

You'll certainly notice how Paxil has affected your life once you're free of it. Once Paxil's influence is diminished, the emotional gates will open. You'll most likely experience an intensification in your favorite emotions like joy, passion and light heartedness and possibly anxiety, depression and a sense of hopelessness. Being a human being is a rich encompassing experience that depends on all the pleasant and difficult internal experiences. However, being free of Paxil

will enable you greater choice, freedom and access to your internal state so that you can do some serious healing instead of just buying time with symptom relieving. You're human. You're supposed to feel, and you have the ability to choose how/what, but you have to learn how. Keep reading.

A few questions before you begin to withdraw

Why are you on Paxil?

To help you decide why you would stop taking Paxil, it's useful to understand very clearly why you decided to use it in the first place. Any decision you make affects you intimately and will for years.

What did your doctor say?

We usually trust our doctors and why shouldn't we? They are there for us. They endeavor to not only relieve our discomforts but lead our health in prosperous directions. At least, that's the idea. You probably went to your doctor hoping for a solution to all your physical (body/mind) struggles. That's not such a bad idea and you're not alone with these kinds of expectations. Doctors are very frequently the only people who can keep you alive and well. It's very likely that you first heard of Paxil from one.

Nevertheless, the doctors that have prescribed Paxil have not all said the same thing nor established the same reasons for its use in terms of benefits and long-term repercussions.

Some of the things doctors have said about Paxil include (and these are not necessarily true):

- Depression or Anxiety is a disease comparable to diabetes and using Paxil to modify serotonin levels is like insulin to blood-sugar levels.
- Paxil is safe and non-addictive.
- Paxil must be used for many months before the probability of remission is diminished.

- The possible side effects are minimal and people are generally not bothered by them enough to stop taking Paxil.
- Paxil will cure you.
- You can withdraw from Paxil by alternating doses where you take more one day then the next.
- You can withdraw from Paxil by halving your dose every week.
- You can withdraw from Paxil by halving your dose every 3 days.
- You can withdraw from Paxil by halving your dose every day until you're at 10 mg. and then just stop.
- You can stop taking Paxil at any time you wish without a withdrawal plan.
- You may have a chemical imbalance that Paxil restores.
- Your dizziness is definitely an ear infection and not Paxil withdrawal.
- You have the flu, Paxil cannot make you feel that way.

The above list is not exhaustive. Take a moment to decide if you're on Paxil solely because of what your doctor said. Don't decide at this time if your answer is good or bad.

How much did you know about Paxil?

We don't always make health related decisions because of what our doctors shared with us. Often we seek Paxil because we heard about it from a friend or an advertisement. Ask yourself how much you knew about Paxil before you began taking it and entertain the possibility that you may have made the decision unprepared or under a pretense or expectation that experience is now revealing as false.

I had considered including a long discussion about money and the medical industry in terms of how it motivates companies to push unsafe/marginally tested products, how it restricts governing agencies designed to protect consumers

from achieving their mandate, how it gets a sales force to tell doctors whatever they have to hear to grab their samples and suggest their product, how it funds research with conflicts of interest and more. However, the media and legal system will reveal all of this in time and for now I'd like to invite you to forget about blame, forget about suspicions, to not play the victim and develop a new position for yourself—a position that will empower your entire life:

You are responsible for your own life. This means it is up to you to learn everything you can about everything related to your existence. You **MUST** research every pill you take. You **MUST** get second/third opinions. You **MUST** realize that since you can make mistakes as a human being, so can your doctor, or the sales agent that visited him/her, or the pharmaceutical company that makes a drug, or the FDA, or the share holders and so on. There is no way you can test the integrity and honesty of all the steps in the stairway that lifts a drug from a laboratory to your mouth. Therefore, it is up to you to just study, research and talk to people frequently and especially to those who have already walked the path you are about to. Your opinion is higher than anyone else's when it comes to managing your health. You are the one who has the most information about you. Just knowing your blood pressure is but a drop in the bucket of your daily experience. You know about that crummy job that raises it in the first place. What medical test can your regular doctor suggest that will mention your workplace's street address? What drug will write a resignation letter for you?

Now I'm not saying you should let your opinion overrule professional care, although it's up to you to ignore me. Take everything into consideration and slow down. When you think you're depressed and seek a doctor's

care and a medicine is suggested, give yourself the freedom to think about it first. Sleep on it for a few nights at least. Taking a mind altering drug is an extremely serious thing. You owe it to yourself to not decide in the moment as a prescription slip is being written on.

Of course, even if you do all that, you may still get stuck one day (or have already) on some miserable medication. There were probably plenty of good intentions going around and there's no point in laying blame or getting upset. Just observe closely, and choose differently and consistently to invite a new experience. If you don't have the time to research your own life and what your body ingests with great detail (and it's not a good sign if you won't take the time), find someone in your social circle to do it with you. And if you know somebody who is swamped or isn't particularly fond of reading, do it with them.

Either way, don't be hard on yourself. You're here now and empowered, hoping to create a new experience for yourself. Weighing yourself down with self judgment like "It's so wrong to take this drug, look at where I am now" will not help your withdrawal. Accept that you too are human and can only learn from what you have access to, and there are often forces that can determine (for a period of time) what level of access you have to the truth.

Were you aware of alternative solutions?

Sometimes when you've been surrounded by medical counsel, friendly advice and advertising that all say the same thing, you can be left with the feeling that there is one and only one solution for you. Not to discredit the beneficial awareness these sources can create for silent sufferers, but sometimes the constant warning (true or not) that you may have a problem that requires a product, helps you forget to

explore all other alternatives. Some alternative solutions you can explore are : psychotherapy, acupuncture, family support, herbs, exercise, diet, self love, world view, emotional preferences, personal empowerment and view of self and spirituality. There are so many other affective parts of life that often go unnoticed in favor of a drug solution that focuses on but a small portion of all that you are.

Drugs are never the sole solution to mental health concerns. In the grand scheme of things, do you see yourself as being someone full of a potential that can only be enabled by something you swallow? (I'm still trying to get chocolate to do this.) Ask yourself at this time if you took the time to go within for an answer instead of without.

Who are you?

One last introspection I'd like you to make to help you decide if you should withdraw from Paxil (and why) involves a look at who you believe you are as a person. It's useful for you to examine your views about yourself, expectations, likes, dislikes, how you perceive the world and past experiences. The time you spend looking inward will strongly influence your withdrawal experience.

How do you measure success?

Examining your hopes and expectations is an important thing for you to do. Ask yourself if you're withdrawing from Paxil because you're tired of how it feels or is it because you feel like giving life a go without it. Also decide what is the perceived reward from withdrawing from this medication. These questions are important because if you have an uncomfortable withdrawal, your definition of success will be challenged. To help with your attempt to define what success means to you, consider the following possible perspectives:

Does success mean the reaching of one REALLY BIG goal where you and your love/hate relationship of the world depends on it? Differently said: The reward is in the end result and if you don't get it, it's a failure because without the end result, the reaching is meaningless.

or

Does success mean a daily commitment to reach for something better every day if you reach them or not? Differently said: The reward is in the process of moving towards something and there is no failure because just by reaching for it, you are successful.

My success with withdrawing from Paxil was inspired by perceiving #2. I really believe your success will at least partially depend on your focus on the process too. Here's why:

If you prefer to focus on the end result and not the process, your eyes are looking outwardly and you'll miss seeing yourself. You could make yourself work unnecessarily and not notice that you can torture yourself by reducing the magnificence of your life to a petty game of win/lose. By perceiving #1, your sense of purpose depends on a result that you imagine is validating your effort. But doesn't the world get in the way of reaching those big goals all the time? Wouldn't that mean that adopting perspective #1 would make your whole effort meaningless if you don't attain the end result? Realize that your effort is incredibly valuable on its own, no result is necessary to prove that.

Should you adopt perspective #2, every single thing you do, if it works to get you 'there' or not, always rewards you because you're still moving forward. Trying is progress, and any progress is a key to success. With perspective #2, pauses and interruptions that feel like obstacles and

setbacks become new beginnings to keep moving forward from.

“When you treat a disease, you win, you lose. But when you treat a person, you always win. “ - From the movie Patch Adams.

This doesn't mean that perspective #1 should be completely abandoned. It's still useful to hold dear to the ultimate goal that you are moving closer to every day. Try to prefer a particular result while remaining confident that you will still grow in health and prosperity if the result happens right away or not. You may not even be in a frame of mind to notice your own progress while you're in the thick of things.

You're not only withdrawing from Paxil, but the beliefs that first chose it.

How do you make priorities?

What is most important for you? What would you like to remember about your life and this journey later on? What you deem most important can influence your progress through withdrawal.

Admitting that kids will continue to ask for the car or cry for food, and jobs will still take a lot of time and energy, it can be difficult to know what your main focus should be. It's still a good thing to collect some life resources and spend time loving your family, but you're going to have to prioritize yourself. Possibly more than what you're usually comfortable with.

Without you, your family or job can't have you. It's that simple and funny. This means that if you want to participate in regular daily experiences, you have to promote yourself. It's time to get a little selfish and achieve long-term independence so that you will be there when you want to give of yourself. There is nothing wrong with putting yourself first during this withdrawal period, because the rewards to you, your employer and family will be even greater. It's comparable to investing money. You give to yourself (the savings account) now so that you can give to others later. The bulk of withdrawal will take anywhere from a few months to a few years. Surely you can handle a year of extra walks, more delicious fruit and luxurious baths?

Withdrawal can be tough. It challenges your brain, body and awareness. Withdrawal is an invitation to change a great deal about yourself and since that process depends on you, you need to focus on yourself as much as possible. Count the occurrence of the word 'you' in this document and you'll get a feel for the importance of what I'm saying. You can't live your life without an inner focus which helps you define your relationship to it.

Of course, focusing on yourself doesn't always cater to money collecting. You may need to use your vacation time during the tough parts of withdrawal, and yes you could lose your job. But don't be immediately afraid and consider the following:

- Money does grow on trees. It's paper!
- You're going to want to get this withdrawal business over with and ignoring your personal immediate needs will make it take longer.
- If you lose a job, it can be seen as a blessing to motivate you to take the time to go through withdrawal with a

greater commitment.

- Life doesn't wait, why deny it?
- Ask yourself if you could handle losing one job and get incredibly healthy and confident so that you can excel at your next one?
- Ask yourself if you think it fair to you, or your employer, if you gave a mediocre effort, lost your job and the time you could have spent healing anyway?

There is a trap in all this career chess. You may start thinking, "OK, I'll wait until I have more money saved up or the kids are back in school or... ." Let me reiterate this plainly:

LIFE DOESN'T WAIT

If you don't choose to commit to your withdrawal now, you're also choosing to repeat and strengthen a behavior/dependence that can work even harder against you later. Take it from a recovered procrastinator and do it now. Life is infrequently easy, nor monochromatic enough to give you the chance to withdraw without a single other demand begging your full attention and energy. So admit that any time is a good time because life and health is there for you to manage *all the time*. It's different if you're an expecting mother, but I'll elaborate on that later.

What is your relationship to emotion?

It's time to reach really deep inside and discover what you're going to heal. I want you to know that your emotions will go astray like a super-bouncy ball on a busy street. Your emotions will come at you in different directions and perhaps in flavors you've never had before. This is your invitation to prepare to become the most objective, observant, forgiving and cognizant person you've ever been. You may be surprised by the intensity of emotions you've been missing that

Paxil was helping repress.

Many people don't like feeling a great deal of emotion. It is however very helpful to learn how to live with a full emotional range. You're going to have to muster the most self love possible. You can try imagining yourself a beautiful creature or immortal soul and the point is to view yourself as someone given full permission to feel. Otherwise, you won't learn to master yourself and will again feel like a leaf in the wind hoping to land on the ledge of an ingestible temporary rescue.

Try to figure out what emotions mean to you and how you prefer dealing with them so that when they come for a visit, you'll have a clue. I suggest you spend the most time investigating how you handle intense frustration and anger since they are frequent challenges during withdrawal.

Health considerations

Withdrawal can give you good or bad days, and it gets better over time. Therefore, it's a good idea to keep all your doctor's appointments to make sure there are no other health issues that can be dangerously aggravated during a sleep interrupting, high stress and flu-like withdrawal. Some other health challenges you may have could share symptoms with Paxil withdrawal and it's wise to keep a useful amount of comparison based knowledge to know what's what. I recommend you describe your every day. Using the public message forum at paxilprogress.org, is a useful way to do that since it lets others learn from your experiences too.

If you're pregnant, have just given birth or are nursing, it's important that you work very closely with your health care providers so that you and the baby are monitored consistently. You will be generally told that withdrawing from

Paxil during pregnancy is a bad idea. However, there is a growing number of research articles that mention potential withdrawal risks to the baby if Paxil use is continued during the later parts of pregnancy. It's also useful to know that Paxil is transmitted through breast milk.

The ethical burden of whether you should let your baby be exposed to Paxil rests with you and your health care providers. When in doubt, just ask what love would do.

What do you expect?

Ask yourself this: how do you expect this withdrawal will feel and how do you expect you'll feel a week, a month or years later?

Now throw those expectations away. Expectations are knives that will threaten and cut away at your sense of success. They have no constructive use in withdrawal, so get rid of them. Expectations can set you up to think you're feeling what you're not, and you're going to need the most honest observations possible without any mental bias. Learn to live in the moment and not well wishing. You can expect to get better, but you shouldn't guess at when in case it takes a little longer than that.

Withdrawal requires that you live in the moment so that you can clearly see your progress in whatever form it is at the time, without a negative thought system like, "oh God, this is worse than what I expected. I'm sunk." It is incredibly empowering to see new experiences for what they really are : something you can assign new meanings to and not premeditated ones bordering on fear controlled fictions. You will feel how you will feel when you feel it. Realize that every difficulty experienced is a reminder that you're doing it, you're getting there and that you have the right stuff. But,

if you really can't be who you are without an expectations system (there's nothing wrong with not liking surprises), ask yourself if choosing to be that way really serves you. I find that when we look at our expectations, we discover that they are blankets hiding fears. Especially when it comes to love and relationships.

There are expectations people frequently have around this antidepressant withdrawal experience, and some of them are seductive traps. Don't worry. I'll give you some ideas on how to steer clear of the worst ones while gaining an understanding of the others.

A world of expectations

Withdrawal involves much more than physical discomfort. How you feel about yourself and the world around you will also change. Your senses could heighten, your emotions will swell and time too cruel for impatience. These emotions will be the fuel for expectations that can hold you back from progressing further.

As you redefine your life, the rest of the world will notice (often unfavorably) since their expectations of you will become challenged. Let's now look at the most influential and likely expectations you'll encounter inside and out.

Chasing after normal

Ever use/hear the expression, "I just want to be normal"? I've said this, and have heard others use this expression so often that it must be addressed. If we take the usual context in which this desire is made, people want to be healthy, comfortable, productive, loving and stable. In other words, when people seek normalcy, they may also mean that they want to live a life without challenges or personal growth opportunities. And why not! Isn't being comfortable and without great challenges nice? Of course.

The problem of course, is realizing that the only person deciding what's normal, the only person ultimately keeping score, is you. Normalcy is a mental construct—an idea. Life is never predictable enough to fit an idea. In fact, it changes constantly, shifts and redefines itself the moment you think you know all there is to know about it. Therefore, you can never be normal or any other imaginary static idea. You can only be you, feeling what you'd prefer feeling for a period of time—which you also decide. Have you noticed all the

imagination in this game of chasing after normal? You may feel like there is a thing called normal and it's having a big house, being happy, having enough money, having two cars and so on.

But you're not a cultural phenomena. You're you! You're not a popular statistic or spending habit. You're a wonderful creative human being! Having health or medication challenges is not wrong. You don't have to hate it, and think you don't fit in the world while declaring failure with judgments like "I'm not normal". Every single moment in time is normal for you, and going where you're going—including through challenges—will get you there. Truth is, you never leave it.

You see, health and comfort will come and go. You know it's like that already by remembering a few of your physical adventures. Therefore, don't go after normal, something which doesn't exist. Go after what you'd prefer and admitting that it will come and go at times, you won't feel inspired to judge yourself as being defeated.

The normal scale comes from you, is defined by you and is judged by you so please don't look around and outside yourself to identify other things as normal. Instead, look around and identify things as being who you are and want to be, or not. Never is there a requirement for you to fit in the masses. You are only required that you fit in yourself and know that it's always a perfect match. There's a lot of sleep-walking going on. Choose to stay awake.

And finally, since you are life demonstrated (you're alive aren't you) and life changes all the time, it isn't fair to your sense of confidence to expect yourself to remain exactly the same throughout your life. Break your expectation chains now and let yourself become the next and greater version of

you. Never seek to be normal and deny yourself love until that imagined end. Love yourself now. You're perfect as a lovable human being already and you are free to change the definition of yourself at any time. Life will change you without you consciously participating in it anyway, so you may as well take the wheel.

Expecting to return to the old you

One other flavor of chasing after normalcy sounds like, "I just want to be the old me again." Please avoid trying to be the old anything, because the old you is the one that had the behaviors and experiences that created your health challenges and use of Paxil. Aren't you seeking to change that? Don't believe that you can go backwards. You can't go backwards. Life is a one-direction thing where if you need to repeat something, you re-create it and not revisit it. It's always new no matter how similar it may feel. The cyclic pattern in anxiety/depression (fear and gloom which helps you anticipate more fear and gloom which helps you create fear and gloom etc.) demonstrates this clearly.

You're constantly in an act of experiencing life and redefining yourself throughout. This mechanism guarantees that you'll never be stuck forever in a rut. It's impossible unless you consciously try to stay in an imaginary bubble, and even then, life is already leading you out of it. Considering all life experiences death, it's obviously built into life that you never stay the same forever nor do people around you. Watch someone experience a stroke, and you'll notice change twisting their arm. Therefore, if you want to be like you were before, decide to reach that point again as a custom tailored reinvention and never a return. That way, you remove the possibility of feeling an imaginary defeat by not being in the past. It also empowers you to know that any anxiety/depression you feel in the future, is a new experience

that you can also change then, like you are now.

Ask someone who has been physically abused if living in the past as the old version of themselves is more healing than working with who they are in the moment. Always move forward even if you want similarities in yourself and experiences. You can make it look the same, but the foundation of perspective will be different, and liberating.

Expecting bad tomorrows

Don't. It is very important that you get out of the habit of thinking that just because it was difficult withdrawing or even just living through today, that it will be so tomorrow or the next few hours for that matter. Don't set yourself up to fulfill a prophecy that you've invented as part of a coping mechanism demanding control. Trying to control something is the quickest way to lose control, especially when it is done out of fear.

Have you ever heard about romantic relationships that died quickly as soon as one partner began trying to control/predict/measure the other? The idea holds true with withdrawal too. Since you can't predict your withdrawal, why give yourself a way to experience defeat by seeking to predict it through some fearful attempt to control everything? I realize it's difficult having been there myself. But it's so empowering to figure out how to not need to control and just trust the process as if it were steps towards new beginnings. Every life process is.

Withdrawal is a process where you move away from old ideas and experiences in favor of (by choosing) new ones. You can't move in new directions when you're stuck or hell bent on worrying and seeking to control the old ones. Your judgment on today, if it was a horrible day or a pleasant

one, will make you emotionally biased to feel about it that same way the next time. So if you think you're forsaken to miserable tomorrows, you will invite that experience to you unnecessarily.

Treat every difficult day just as it is: a difficult day. Once you practice this way of thinking over and over, you'll begin to treat hours as hours and minutes as minutes and miserable tomorrows won't be imagined by you. Get back in the moment where your attention is needed. You have a hard enough time dealing with today already, so don't take your focus away from what you can do right now to predict what you may not do later. You'll deal with the future as present moments when it's here. You'll do even better having learned so much today. If you're not dreaming of miserable tomorrows, you won't be making yourself anxious or depressed about them either, and you'll be better equipped to move through them if they do come off as miserable.

It's important that you even go beyond this idea so that you can also remove your attachment to instant results. Withdrawal will end and it will get better, but don't fall prey to the expectation of it. If you expect tomorrow or the next week to be easier, it probably will be but never be disappointed if it isn't. Withdrawal is a process, and within it lies a commitment to live the rest of your life differently. A step back is an opportunity for you to heal with even greater focus while you're there, and then take an even greater step forward.

Changes don't happen because there were few steps backwards. Changes happen because of the even greater number of steps forward.

When you include the time frame “the rest of my life” in your goal to withdraw from Paxil, no setback is permanent or disappointing because you know that your life is still being lived and you are still living it consciously. In light of the rest of your life, you always have the opportunity to continue to make choices related to your commitments. Consistency creates intended results. If you spent 5 days or 5 years writing a book, either way you can be proud of having written a book. If you spent 1 month or a year withdrawing from Paxil, either way you’ll have achieved what you set out to do.

Trust life to take the time it needs so that nothing goes unnoticed and a full richness is felt, even if it gets really tough.

Expecting support

Withdrawal can get you feeling groundless and cranky! Your family members and those you love are bound to notice and possibly misunderstand. A very loving and open dialogue with family about what you’re going through is essential. Take the opportunity to share your perspectives about making progress even when it seems like things are worse. Even people with clear and confident opinions will still look to your example for answers. If anybody isn’t sure what to think of you, they will observe how you think of and treat yourself. So love yourself dearly and be forgiving of your outbursts so that they can know what they can do too.

Unfortunately, mental health challenges that are treated with medications are often seen as a sign of weakness, or are believed to pose a safety risk to others. In a society that believes that might and predictability is right, your journey to health can be challenged by those who invest a lot of time into believing health denotes character. Try not to just assume that illness is a sign of weakness or permanent danger. Your life and perspective are so unique, that nobody can

claim nor assume that they know yours as well as you do. We spend so much time trying to be right about each other, that it can hide the relative truth—our own truth. Therefore, try to do your best to find health and feel compassionate for those who don't know your experiences. It's nobody's fault if they don't know everything about you. People are free to create their own views, opinions and expression methods independently of you, and they will despite your best efforts. No single opinion from one person can magically overtake another. So forgive opinions that don't reflect your truth, as you would yourself for not knowing theirs.

Should you tell people about what you're going through to help them or at least motivate them to understand you? Of course! It's your responsibility to at least tell the world who you are and how you are experiencing it. It's also your job to share what your needs are in light of your effort to create a better life for yourself. Nobody will know anything of your truth unless you guide them along. If you don't, the fear and lack of respect for mental health challenges will only continue. This is your time to shine some light! Besides, it's very therapeutic to get your challenges within reach (to make it easier to visualize that you are holding them, because that is an essential perspective) so that they feel easier to manage. You can't remove the spider in your pants if you're not willing to hold it first.

Try to inform friends and family of the difficulty of what you're going through and how it will benefit them. It's a journey to a reward that they too will receive : a healthier and loving you. Cause them to know that they can help you immensely by being patient and forgiving with you, as you are trying to be with yourself.

Despite your worthy and noble efforts, some family and romantic partners may reject this exchange with you and may seek to change their relationship to you in ways you did not intend or desire. If you're going to request their love and patience, you must first give it to them. This guide does not deal with the art of salvaging complex relationships, but it would help if you tried not to blame people for not wanting to work as hard as you are on your life. To obligate people to live your challenges (too intimately) alongside their own, can be seen as unfair. Continue and forgive those who choose to leave, distance themselves or occasionally withdraw their support, so that a better foundation can be set for their return. If a partner does not return, know that it's not about you. They've rejected the experience and not you (a beautiful soul) directly.

I'm not saying married couples should split when one goes through something the other finds difficult. What I'm saying is not to feel like a victim if it does happen.

Also, if you're more of a spiritual person, you'll agree that the universe gives us what we need, when we need it, even if we don't notice. I've found that when you feel you need support as part of your solution, and people seem to scatter, it's the universe's way of letting you know that the support you seek should not come from the love of others, but the love of self. The motivation to seek self-love is greater when the people you're being distracted by (from going to them for answers instead of yourself), are less available.

Employer considerations

I've touched upon your career a little and I'd like to delve a little further. Employers are constantly under pressure and may judge you when they learn of your health. This isn't to say it's right, it's just a frequent reality and we must forgive them for trying to run a business or organization while being in a financial position to pay everybody. You do however have to decide if your health is worth more than present money acquisition goals. It's a question of how aware you are of the benefits of long-term health over short-term money comforts.

Give your employer the benefit of the doubt and let them know why your productivity is lower if you feel it is and you're sure they've noticed. I think it's better for them to think you're contributing less because of the health challenges (so that they don't blame you personally, but are invited to blame the health) than let them conclude you just don't care as much or don't have the willingness to be part of the team (so that they don't think you never will either).

I certainly hope you don't have to burn any bridges when you need time to yourself to withdraw. What's funny is that once free of the numbing effect of Paxil, people often leave their current positions anyway because it wasn't meaningful enough for their new goals and purposes. The self exploration built into withdrawal can make you see parts of your life that were unexplored or neglected.

In the meantime, try to create a sense of commitment with your employer so that they know that things will get better. I know that many of you don't have paid sick days or lengthy holiday time for the months withdrawal can quickly take, but do your best to not forget about your commitment while you're working.

Expect a physical impact

Paxil may affect your mood through your brain, but withdrawing from it will touch so much more. Your body can be given quite a jolt and it's important you don't expect it to be the only source of information on how well you're doing. However, it will still remind you that you are indeed seeking new solutions.

Stress

Your body and brain will experience this withdrawal alongside the part of you that is self aware. By knowing how you usually handle stress, you can have an idea on how you'll generally react. Withdrawal will get your stress hormones pumping and potentially trigger fight or flight responses. I'm not saying you'll spontaneously go running around in circles waving your arms. I'm just hinting that sitting still could be a new challenge. It's time to stock up on bubble bath, candles and soft soothing clothing.

Dietary considerations

Because we often have an emotional relationship to food, the emotional roller coaster of withdrawal can affect your eating habits. I can't foresee everything about your relationship to food in times of duress, but it's helpful to be reminded of the importance of a healthy diet. Withdrawal will sap your energy and immune system so keep up with your favorite solutions of getting fueled up. I suggest you don't use caffeine or sugar and instead get more water, rest and vitamins from vegetables and fruit. Be sure to consult your doctor about what form of supplements and dietary improvements are safe for you. The body will try to heal but you have to give it the tools.

Withdrawal can cause nausea so see if it's medically safe to modify your meal distribution to eat smaller amounts of food more often. Sometimes even the 'full' feeling can be very uncomfortable. Never let yourself spend too much time in hunger. The hunger experience can easily trigger anxious or depressive frames of mind as you experience feelings of lack.

Exercise

Nothing speeds up your body's ability to deal with stress hormones, toxins and pent up frustration like exercise. If you can get into the habit of at least 15 min. of walking a few times a week (assuming your health is in a position to do so safely) you'll be able to use a natural solution. Your body did not evolve to depend solely on man made chemicals. Obviously, the benefits of exercise to the rest of your well-being are too numerous to cover here.

If you're an anxiety sufferer however, you need to be aware that high intensity exercise can be an anxiety trigger. The mind and body are intimately linked and just as anxiety can raise your heart rate, a raised heart rate can trigger or at least contribute to anxiety. It is up to you to find the comfortable balance where you can boost your metabolism gently.

Withdrawal Symptoms

I can't predict or guarantee that you will or won't experience some or all of the symptoms I may mention. What I have compiled here is a list of symptoms I've either experienced myself or have learned from others who shared their experiences at **paxilprogress** since September 2000.

Some of these withdrawal symptoms can mimic other health challenges and that's why it's important you play an active role in helping your health care providers sort out particulars over time. The trap I'd like you to avoid falling into is the popular belief that withdrawal symptoms are a sign that all your mental health challenges are coming back full force.

I will say this again and hope you memorize it as part of your current inner dialogue, "just because I feel like I have a health challenge during withdrawal, does not mean it's the same challenge I was feeling before".

It is possible though. If you feel the same health challenge you had before during withdrawal, it may be that since medications don't cure challenges, only treat the symptoms, you may indeed be facing the same challenge as before.

The reason for prioritizing the first over the second is that a trap lies within the second. If you believed the second without the first, you could set yourself to believe that all this time spent with a medication was a waste of time and a failure. That is not true. With a medication, you traded one experience for another and you are now just choosing a third. I say a third instead of a return of the first experience, (when you felt sick the first time before any medications) because you've acquired so much more knowledge and per-

spective since then. You are indeed in a brand new position. You are no longer having a challenge that you know nothing about. You now know something about it, and can therefore perceive and manage the challenge differently. You do color everything different every day with your personality, choices and preferences. Realize the creative influence you have and keep moving forward.

I'm not convinced that Paxil is a cure nor that you have a need to take it for the rest of your many years of life. Paxil isn't a cure, it's more of a band-aid. It relieves the symptoms so that you can do your inner work with greater comfort. It's a small stepping stone for you to see how your balance works but you shouldn't remain there. Nor is Paxil required for you to test your balance.

However probable it is that your challenges may still need your attention (and it's fair for you to keep searching for alternative solutions), withdrawal can still create its own self limiting anxiety/depression/OCD like experiences. But, since you're a different person than when you first faced it, you can expect it to go differently. If you're seeking to withdraw from Paxil, you're doing things differently already.

Now let's dissect and discuss frequently reported withdrawal symptoms.

Dizziness and the whoosh effect

One of the first symptoms to materialize is dizziness. This dizziness may not only affect your balance but also your visual acuity. The term *whoosh effect* comes from how the dizziness feels. When you move your head by looking from one place of focus to another, your vision blurs and remains smeared even after you've stopped moving, and then the point of view from which you just moved has to catch up. It's like a Star Trek motion blur effect as seen when ships jump to warp speed. (Streeeeeeetch...and...whoosh back together!) Ever notice how the flight trails then suddenly catch-up with the ship far ahead? Imagine things smearing and then catching up to you when you turn your head.

Non-visual dizziness is related to your perception of movement and balance. Although people usually report just general discomfort, some have been known to have trouble controlling their balance to the point of tripping and falling. I've personally had this experience where I was doing something requiring some physical accuracy (like changing toner in a photocopier) when my dizziness suddenly flared and I stumbled to the floor. I had never had this experience before and have not experienced it since Paxil withdrawal.

However difficult the dizziness, there are ways for you to reduce the discomfort:

- When doing an activity that requires continuous focus changes (near to far, far to near) like scanning a shopping aisle, try to look up to a distant point every now and then to stare off into the distance and rest your eyes. Avoid trying to focus on movement like other shoppers, but not at the expense of running into things or people of course. Do what you can.

- When you're at home and looking at something fixed like a book or TV and you keep looking at something else like a child or clock, close your eyes first, and then turn your head and open them when you think you've about made it to the new location you wanted to look. Doesn't seem like much at first, but do this for hours and you'll feel better than just having darted your field of vision from one point to another without closing your eyes. The point is to avoid experiencing the whoosh mentioned earlier.
- Take a nap. Keeping your eyes closed for longer periods of time helps even more. So does being physically still as to not let movement trigger feelings of vertigo.
- Spend some time every hour or less staring out a window to a distant point. Avoid focusing, and just let your eyes rest on that far horizon. It's refreshing.

Sometimes the dizziness feels like a lack of concentration. Getting more sleep and a little Ginkgo(herb) can help but it may still be difficult. Your mind can feel quite scattered during withdrawal and clinging to one thought for just a moment can require some effort. Telephone numbers may even prove to be a challenge as your short term memory seems affected. I'm not suggesting you are experiencing physical damage. My intent is to convey that withdrawal can be very distracting (as if the brain's chemicals get all wonky as it re-asserts itself) and anything requiring a focused attention can feel quite slippery. Take your time, breathe deeply and enjoy this unintended desire to slow things down. Grab some more rest while you're at it.

Zaps and waves

One of the strangest symptoms of withdrawal are what online communities like **paxilprogress** call ZAPS and WAVES. Lasting anywhere from a month, to a year or more (rare), zaps can be quite varied and confusing. Zaps can feel alien, and can vary in level of discomfort subjectively. They're called zaps because they feel like an electrical jolt in your head, and are often accompanied by limb jerks. It's as if a jolt of energy, sometimes reported as audible within the individual, was felt in the head and/or body. The frequency at which they can occur varies anywhere from a couple a week to many per hour.

Waves are a milder variation of zaps where the experience is not as jolting, and is experienced as temperature changes or swashes of sensations around the spine, head or limbs.

It's very difficult to conceptualize this withdrawal experience since it varies so much and deals a lot with your own vocabulary and how your body feels to you. Here's a few ways people have described the experience:

- Sudden perceived change of temperature in waves moving up or down the spine coming from or ending at the head. The waves I felt mostly traveled up and ended at the back of my head.
- An electrical sensation or sudden jolt felt in the head and/or spine and limbs.
- Sudden or frequent unintended muscle twitches. I'm not talking about a twitching eyelid or pulsing forearm. I mean sudden vigorous jerks that leave a noticeable tension in the area where it occurred.

- Sudden changes in light intensity in the perceived field of view.
- You pick up on an electrical BZZT or POP noise in your head that you're not exactly sure was heard by your ears. Nobody has heard another person's zap that I know of. It is an internal perceptual experience with a clear cut start and finish interval that feels quite like you could actually hear it.
- Sudden sensations or rushes of sensations you can't quite identify traveling through your body and/or limbs. I've yet to find the vocabulary to describe a sensation that feels like it's inside at the bone and yet is also felt as, and leaves a sensitivity to, friction on the skin.

Although zaps and waves sound intimidating, they are short lived. Like other withdrawal symptoms, zaps and waves will fade over time with perhaps an occasional recurrence months to a year down the road that you should not judge as a return to adversity. I would like you to know however that they seem to occur more frequently when you're at rest, or at least trying to. All agree that they are extremely annoying.

Dreams

What would any human experience be without the company of dreams? I can't tell you what the meanings of your dreams will be, but I can tell you that they frequently change flavor during withdrawal.

Paxil withdrawal intensifies dreams. I leave the research to you to discover what role stress and emotion play in dreams. My opinion is that as your stress goes up and your emotions intensify, so will the content in your dreams.

Dreams frequently become more aggressive during withdrawal. Therefore, I encourage you to not assign an absolute meaning to them during the early stages of withdrawal. Save the judgment for a later time when the withdrawal is more comfortable and you have built an informed frame of reference. Just be observant while detached so that if you do happen to have a violent dream where you are involved in something you wouldn't normally do while awake, you do not feel compelled to repeat the scenario.

Dreams may get incredibly poignant for you and I would like to comfort you into knowing you are not necessarily having an experience you should avoid under some concern that they are a true statement of who you are. You need to get more sleep during withdrawal. Never avoid rest just because the dreams are uncomfortable or frightening. Remember that it does get better.

Sleep disturbances

Dreams can wake you in the middle of needed rest, but so can other things invited by withdrawal.

You could get really agitated and sensitive during your withdrawal efforts. People dealing with anxiety have frequently been jolted awake by a panic attack that occurred in their sleep and this could continue during withdrawal. Since withdrawal seems to amplify the senses, you can also discover that you're overly sensitive to noises, room temperature or even an itchy nose. With time you'll gain an expertise on falling asleep despite the annoyances and making this skill a priority will serve you well in the long run. If you have children, you may have this skill already but it could be challenged like never before. Be mindful but don't panic. It's not permanent.

For people who have experienced the best sleep they've ever had while on Paxil, getting those eyes shut and consciousness put on a shelf could be a challenge. I know personally what it's like to have the days' events chewed on at night when sleeping should be the main focus and I empathize with you!

Emotional upheaval

I've touched upon emotionality a little already but now I'd like you to dig deep. If you're on Paxil, withdrawing from it or have never touched it, you already know how influential emotions are. During withdrawal, you may feel a quantity or intensity of emotion you may not have experienced before.

Paxil can be a great tool for reducing the emotional impact of depression, anxiety, OCD, PTSD or PMS but it doesn't seem to be as selective as its SSRI classification led you to believe. Along with suppressing the bad stuff, goes much of the good stuff. Withdrawing from Paxil can revitalize you in ways you had forgotten were possible.

I believe that we all have preferred emotional boundaries. There are certain events and situations where you feel more or less loving or afraid and those rules quickly change when life takes you by the hand and leads you to the roller coaster. When you're on Paxil or withdrawing from it, those boundaries become flexible and if you're not aware of the possibility of going through sudden shifts, you could feel intimidated and run.

Who you are is not a distinct thing, but a concentration of possibilities that Paxil withdrawal can blow into. You may be used to being a cool cucumber and find yourself wanting to raise your voice more often. And yes, you may just start crying for no reason on many occasions. Benefits of relief

felt through self expression are self evident and I'm letting you know that you may not recognize yourself for a while. That doesn't mean you're losing your mind. You're actually reclaiming it by recreating it consciously this time so you can put new good/bad labels to behaviors instead of letting Paxil to the decision making for you.

It's not black and white of course. You could feel too wide in your emotional range for many months after the withdrawal spends itself. I encourage you to keep seeking counsel but not at the expense of once again giving up your participation in tailoring your behavior. You're actually going to be in a primordial opportunity of reinventing yourself. It's a time for you to feel the way you'd like to about events instead of how you used to. So use what you'll discover and treat each day like an opportunity to be that super loving or humorous person you know you've always wanted to be.

You could experience very intense emotions that may seem like fits or rage. These outbursts are not to be feared outright nor ignored. As you establish new emotional boundaries for yourself (chemically or not), you're naturally going to have to investigate extremes to decide if you're here or there or neither. I'm not saying you should demonstrate physically what you feel at every opportunity (that is for your value system to decide), especially if you are feeling quite hostile. Instead, I'd like to invite you to learn how to feel an emotion without feeling a prison-like directive to demonstrate it. The hard part of course is how to get all that's bottled up inside, out, without strangling that noisy neighbor.

I can't guide you to all there is to know about emotion management (I have my own journey too), but I can lead you in some interesting inner dialogue and shifts in perspective that may prove useful to you:

- Just because you feel it, does not mean it suggests a permanence in who you are or wish to be.
- Admit that you can be and are probably frequently wrong about many things, so don't try so hard to be proven right. This guide could be wrong, for you.
- If someone is upset at you or seems to be, know that it's not about you. Any event is meaningless until someone (you) gives it meaning. So if somebody's aggressive towards you, realize that they chose that experience and action all by themselves even if you feel you gave them cause. Imagine the difference in reactions between a 5 year old or 16 year old being given \$10.00. For the former, it's a ransom in chocolate while for the latter, it's not even a new CD in Canadian dollars. The difference is in the choice on how to react given personal desires that have nothing to do with you.
- Reinvent your time model. You may be really emotional right now, but that can change in a few hours or days. Aim for months before you create a prophecy for yourself or avoid prediction habits altogether. I once heard an interview with a Tibetan monk who spent 5 years deciding if she should stay in a village she didn't enjoy. From her perspective of time, it was a quick uninformed decision.
- Just because you feel like causing another harm or at least yell their ears off does not necessarily mean you will or automatically have something wrong or crazy about you. It takes too much time and effort to be ugly to somebody anyway. I do not mean in the context where you are experiencing abuse of course. I mean when a child drops a dish or a coworker takes your parking spot.

Urges and temptations are opportunities for you to decide who you choose to be.

- When you feel out of control, realize that your emotions are just having a shouting match and you need to see through them and apply your most loving core definition of who you want to be. Pausing to decide if continuing a behavior is a truth about yourself you wish to share can be useful. Obviously, the truth for the moment could be that you're just temporarily anxious or depressed.

Anxiety

The problem with anxiety is that you can get anxious about being anxious now or later. This was my cycle. It went something like “Fear of being afraid in case I get so afraid I’ll be too afraid to handle it.” During Paxil withdrawal, your past or new anxious thoughts/emotions could feel like new challenges. This is often the case because anxiety is a repetitious combination of thought, body and personality, and Paxil is not a cure for all three. Just as an accelerated heart beat during exercise can trigger anxiety, so can a fearful thought accelerate the heart. Thought and body lean on each other and one can fuel the other to complete the anxious circle that keeps perpetuating and hindering your efforts.

Fortunately, all parts of you that are touched by anxiety are within your grasp to heal and guide. Providing a complete discussion on how anxiety works is beyond the scope of this guide but I would like to share some observations.

Many people who have had panic attacks may recall having spent time trying to find a cause for them. Although there have been many personal discoveries about what created the anxiety, withdrawing from Paxil is often stressful and attention grabbing enough to contribute to its resurgence. You probably have a higher incidence of panic attacks when you’re faced with a big challenge or generally stressful time period and Paxil withdrawal is no different. By experiencing this withdrawal challenge and stressor, you’ve possibly put yourself into a great source of panic attacks. However undesirable this return to anxiety may be, it’s a helpful step away from Paxil and towards permanent solutions that maintain themselves with a gradual and simpler effort on your part.

You cannot treat the whole of your anxiety while Paxil is hiding it or preventing you from feeling it by denying you

the truth of it, and the encompassing experience. When you get a cut, what makes you decide if you should go to the hospital or not? For some it would be to watch for bleeding or the intensity of pain. What if your ability to see blood or feel pain was changed? How would the accuracy of your evaluation change accordingly? Feeling intense anxiety is a good motivator for seeking permanent solutions such as psychotherapy and cognitive behavioral therapy.

Paxil can create its own anxiety and you'll notice the difference once you've been off for a while. The important thing to remember is that just because you feel anxious today, or have been for the last week or year does not mean that you are forsaken into being forever anxious. Believing yourself trapped or stuck can create even more anxiety; so just don't believe. This is easier to accomplish when you let your belief precede experience.

Try to gain perspective from the following insights and suggestions:

- While withdrawing, you are not in a familiar state of being. You cannot predict how things will go until you're done withdrawing, so don't! But do spend a lot of time imagining how great it will be to not be so anxious. This puts your focus on something positive and makes the ability to create what you seek much easier. It also gets you to stop anticipating being anxious, which relaxes you, which reduces the probability of anxiety which gets you to stop anticipating being anxious, which relaxes you which...
- You cannot and will not get rid of anxiety completely—at least not if you want to be a human being. You can get

rid of the chronic poisonous kind though! What I mean is that not being able to stop your car on an icy road will still get your blood running as will a ball flying at you when you're not expecting it. But remember this, "as you feel differently about anxiety, so will it feel different to you when it happens." There's a great healing power in this perspective.

- If you spend a lot of time with those WHAT IF types of mental chatter like, "what if I panic—what if I get sick—what if I have to use the bathroom and there isn't any—what if I pass out—what if they laugh at me—what if I'm discovered—what if I die—what if I die and my body lets go of its waste etc.", make sure you spend an equal amount of time answering those questions. No really! Answer those questions. Once you have answers, you can stop asking and the scenarios you're inventing will most likely not occur anyway. The point is to deal with the situations now, when you have time to breathe, than to be on the spot and a victim to a rushed imagination. While you're at it, have the panic attacks about those scenarios ahead of time too. Think about them and panic now so you won't have to later.
- Talk to, accept and love your anxiety. This can be the most difficult thing to do since you've probably hinged a lot of importance on anxiety leaving you, especially once you're off Paxil. Treat your anxiety like a cut. You instinctively seek to protect and heal a cut and that is never done by hating or ignoring it. (Natural healing of the body aside for the purpose of the example.) By loving your anxiety you change your relationship to it. Anxiety can actually be your mind's way of trying to get your attention focused on some challenge still unconscious and festering.

- Welcome the opportunity to heal all of yourself, including the anxious manifestation. Problems tend to be remedied when you address them in a gentle caring way and not with aggressive avoidance or attack. Then again, writing your anxiety an angry dismissal letter works too. Tell it to get out of here, but thank it for trying. The trick if there even is one, is to not get attached to the time it takes nor the results. State your preference wholeheartedly and repetitively but move away from the need to have it realized right away, next month or even next year. Anxiety is so often a control game. And as strange as it sounds, real control is gained when you let go of the need to control. Ponder that, it's a powerful discovery.

Of course, if you'd like to approach your anxiety physically instead of mentally or spiritually, herbs can help.

Valerian Root Herb

Always consult with your doctor before taking an herbal supplement.

People with anxiety have frequently sought help by using a sedative/hypnotic medications like Lorazepam™, Clonazepam™, Flurazepam™, Temezepam™ or Alprazolam™ (generic Xanax™) to just *take the edge off*. Valerian Root is an herbal supplement that seems to be much safer and less intrusive.

Valerian Root is available in different delivery methods and concentrations. This herb works as an anxiety or insomnia reliever, which means you could take some of it before, during anxious moments or before bed. You can even have some throughout the day to feel a continued general sense of relaxation. You'll have to experiment a little to find what works best for you, but always choose

to take the smallest dose possible for a few days to see how it affects you. I've tried several brands and have always found recommended doses to be too high.

I've noticed that Valerian Root feels like a gentle calming wind where thoughts don't necessarily slow down but take on a duller quality so that one's reaction is subdued, resulting in a predisposed frame for relaxation. Of course, substituting daily Paxil doses for Valerian daily doses is not the intention here. Do try to keep it occasional and situational. Let an herb aware doctor guide you.

Since Valerian Root has a sedative or depressive quality to it, I wouldn't recommend it for people experiencing solely depressive moods.

No matter how anxiety amplifies during Paxil withdrawal, be sure to commit to the perspective that you are now making a statement about how you wish to live your life, and no matter how hard it gets, or how thwarted your efforts seem, time will reveal your progress and not always the moment. Use what you think are setbacks as indicators that you are still moving forward. If you still feel the anxiety, you might still be receiving reminders that there is more work to be done. It's OK to settle in a comfort zone every now and then if it's refreshing but don't stay there!

Anger and Frustration

Withdrawal can be one of your greatest challenges. It can touch everything about you including your desire to be whole and calm. Progress will be celebrated only to be taken away temporarily. It's no big surprise that you can get downright cranky! Hey! Give me back my life!

Paxil withdrawal does seem to create an angry response that feels completely automatic and uncontrollable. Before I delve into this, remind yourself like before that this is only temporary.

Within a month after your last dose of Paxil, the world could get really annoying to your super sensitive nerves. Small things may invite you to make a fist and pound a table while big things could cause spit to fly. Remember that your emotions will be exploring extremes before they settle into distinct zones. Anger, in this hectic world that denies you so many things (like rest), is one of the most difficult challenges. I'm warning you of this possibility because it can seem so real while time slowly tries to tell you it isn't.

I also believe anger to be the result of emotions unexpressed. Since Paxil does a great job in quieting anxiety, depression and other emotions you were hoping not to, their return will feel like an emotional revenge. Your inner dialog may say, "How dare I not feel! I will feel anything I want to feel for the rest of my life and there's nothing you can do to deny me again this time!"

Although I make it sound very clear and focused, it's rarely experienced as an internal dialogue with a clear direction. More frequently, it comes out as, "if that toilet seat is up/down one more time I'll put plastic wrap on it!"

Unfortunately it can also be as severe as, “I hate you! You’ve ruined my life!”

Here are some things to tell yourself when you have some steam to blow:

- Withdrawal can be really challenging and you could feel completely fed up. You don’t have to blow up the world to know you’re fed up. This is your experience and why would you wish others to go through this? Do you really wish them pain? Is this a true statement about who you want to be?
- You are who you are and your opinions never need to be validated for them to be real and true to you. If you were the last person on earth, would you still want to throw dishes at someone or something to somehow affirm your convictions? If you need to do a physical demonstration of your agitated discomfort, a sponge brick is just as useful.
- Instead of trying to prove everybody wrong, try to find out why they think they’re right.
- When somebody is really ticking you off, ask yourself if you have any of the “things” within yourself that you believe about the other person.
- This mood is temporary so don’t make an angry life consequence out of a temporary moment.

- You're probably wrong, or at least not completely right. No really! We all are. Nobody can experience life as you do, nor can you know what another is thinking/feeling quite like they do having never lived all their years for them, as them. You can fantasize all you want, life is probably 95% different for each person. If you don't believe it, pretend and ask more questions about their truth instead of telling your own truth repeatedly, just in case. If you're going to be a know it all, at least do the research. Or, notice what it feels like to believe that nobody REALLY understands you. Now imagine that every single person on the planet has that problem.
- Nobody can tell you their truth until you stop spending all your time sharing yours.
- It's not real. This is a tough perspective to explore because you basically have to disbelieve your whole experience and that is not something people accept easily. Give the world the benefit of the doubt that what you're feeling may not be a real reflection on what's around you, no matter how real it feels. Let the passing of time (if you get angry at something or someone, wait 8 hours and see how it changes) reveal the truth to you. An emotion is often just a snapshot in time. Don't live the past or future. Let the future come to you while you observe how the moment creates it.

In the event that you feel so hostile that you entertain doing harm to another, sit down and refuse to move a limb (you'll be learning to make choices independently of your mind, which is soul work) and then personally or with guidance, seek external help. I'm not saying this will definitely happen to you, but people are diverse and complex and it would be a form of denial to hide from the possibility.

Depression

There's plenty about withdrawal symptoms to get depressed about. It's not easy. Withdrawal affects the same parts of you that depression can, and when the two are mixed together, feeling hopeless is easy.

Depression can happen to anybody in this adventure if it's chemical or the result of withdrawal pushing you to your tolerance limits. I believe it often hinges on if you see yourself as a victim or just someone having an experience, and in either of these two, the person's measure of time vs. results complicates things further.

I believe that depression of the reactive kind has to do with how you measure the scale of what you can endure, for how long and when you decide it becomes suffering, with or without a desire to escape. Being reactively depressed can also lead you to thinking that your plights are permanent. This of course is impossible. The human body is not an eternal thing so you can discard all notions of permanent suffering. It's just not possible. Besides, you're constantly learning new tools and shifting perspectives. Change is built-in! You won't stay the same.

Withdrawal related depression, like others, can feel incessant. I've been there. The good news is that it's only a perception fed by intense stimuli and is thankfully illusionary. You cannot be in the very same withdrawal experience indefinitely. Even if you sit depressed and do nothing to help the withdrawal, the body is still hard at work striking a balance fed by genetics and millions of years of evolution. The human species didn't evolve to be dependent on a distant future invention called Paxil. Nor was it created by God to be so, if you fancy that reasoning.

Chemical depression (still largely unproven and I mention it because I don't know as much about the thyroid gland and other hormonal shifts) can still be helped by looking at how you view/react to the world. By avoiding life condemning thoughts you can cognitively improve chemical health. And even if that doesn't work at all, doesn't seeking to think differently not help you move towards your changing health goals?

When dealing with depression, keep these things in mind:

- You're allowed to be depressed. How much time do you allow yourself to grieve the death of a loved one? A week? A month? A year? Do what your heart needs to heal by giving yourself permission to fall. You're not supposed to be an internalizing/unfeeling wall. Even if it feels like it's some specter and you can't figure out where it's coming from, it's OK to be there for now. It will change.
- Just because you are depressed today, does not mean that you'll be the same way tomorrow. This will not last long if you consider that there are plenty of years ahead of you which will be depression free. You're getting there already. Being depressed for a while if it's your first time or the hundredth time, does not mean you're automatically forsaken to being depressed forever. Life doesn't have condemnation built-in. Only your imagination can fool you into believing that you're stuck for good.
- Having a depressive experience does not signify a return of a daily depression like you may have had before. Perceive this one differently.

- Admitting the previous points, how can you possibly know how long a depression will last or if it will be here tomorrow? You can't, but you can avoid it by not contributing to it. You can shorten its duration by not believing or convincing yourself that you'll have more episodes. And even if you do, does it really serve you to have a moment of, "aha! I'm depressed! I was right damn it"? Wouldn't it be more useful if when you did feel depressed again you thought, "hey, here's that depression again. I wonder what I can do to make it better today". The trick is to never need to know if you'll be depressed in the future or not because it doesn't immediately matter. When and if you get there, you'll be a different person equipped with even more knowledge and experience with depressive episodes and you'll be better prepared to dispel them. You can help yourself get better if you do the work now however, and that involves not entertaining fatalistic scenarios.
- When you have thoughts like "the whole world hates me", ask yourself if you interviewed the billions of inhabitants on this planet to find out if this was even remotely true. Get out of the illusionary bubble whenever you can by challenging your beliefs so that you don't miss out the opportunity of the adopting the next growth promoting one.
- When you have thoughts like "I just can't go on like this anymore, I would rather be dead", seek love immediately through friends, family or even a hot line. If you think you don't have any friends, think again (billions of people, remember). There's at least one friend you forgot about and millions of others in the social services sector that would give you so much without expecting any return. You came here for a reason, your soul chose to have

experiences for its/your growth and this dark period will pass too. You're not coming up to a wall or finding an ending, you're moving through something and you can never stop moving. Wait, relax and rest with a candle, music or something while thinking of a laughing baby, a bundle of baby kittens or someone bending over and ripping their pants.

- If you're committed to getting off Paxil and depression hits you hard during the withdrawal, know that it's only temporary. You're so close to being free from experiences you no longer want, it's worth waiting just another day or week. Trust that the end goal is coming to you with perfect timing. In the meantime, no matter how low you feel or how little you actually want to do, push yourself at least a little each day. Try singing, watching a comedian, catch a funny movie (like Patch Adams), take a walk outside, go around collecting hugs or best of all: volunteer. You'll be immensely surprised at how good it feels when you're in the service of others. The universe is a copycat machine, confirming that you already have what you give, because you were able to give it.
- Laugh. Just laugh. Depression killer #1 is laughter. You cannot be low while raising enough energy for a completely senseless zany outburst! If you can't think of anything funny, just practice laughing. The body sends out happy-hormones often with the physical demonstration and not necessarily the punch line.

There is a very popular herb that is also supposed to be very effective against relieving depressive symptoms: Saint John's Wort. European medicine will even prescribe it for depression as a first defence, preceding the use of pharmaceutical chemicals.

Saint John's Wort

Always consult with your doctor before taking an herbal supplement.

If you haven't heard of an herb called Saint John's Wort (SJW), you've missed one of the more actively discussed depression relief herbs. The discussion is even occasionally controversial. But does it work?

Yes and no.

Be warned. Never take SJW with any other medications unless your doctor advises you to. Always notify your doctor immediately if you plan on using SJW to elevate your mood. SJW and SSRI class medications are known to affect similar areas in your brain chemistry and when mixed, can produce really dizzying results that are not comfortable.

However, if you've been off Paxil for more than a month (and I mean zero Paxil, not even a 1mg dose snuck in two weeks ago) and your doctor agrees that it is safe, you're still in for a learning experience. Here's why:

Myth #1: You may believe SJW is good for all mood challenges. No way. SJW feels very stimulating and can aggravate anxiety conditions. If you're very anxious and have problems relaxing, SJW is not for you.

Myth #2: You believe you can just go out and buy some, try it, and be completely clear when you say it does or doesn't work. Not exactly. There are many herb manufacturers out there, and many of them go about extracting ingredients or designing their delivery methods very differently. They even haven't

completely standardized doses from one brand to another. The packaging or delivery differs in that some SJW products are in pills while others are tinctures. To complicate things further, some pills are hard compressed while others are dissolving capsules. Because dose/concentration levels vary from brand to brand, some brands may be too weak and you won't notice anything while others are quite potent so that you feel over stimulated.

Myth #3: You take it and look for miracles the same day. It doesn't usually work like that. Some circles agree that SJW must be taken daily for weeks to months before its full potential is realized (metabolized) in your system. Others have said that SJW should be used situationally since daily use can increase skin and retina sensitivity to UV rays in light if taken for long periods of time.

Myth #4: SJW helps restore a chemical imbalance, just like Paxil does. I'm not sure. Our society is trained to think that medications and herbs work through a process of identifying a lack in your health that medication/herb fills. But, some naturopaths may tell you that herbs don't do anything except provide the ingredients for what your body was going to do on its own anyway, if it had the raw materials available. I can't end this debate for you, but taking SJW does tend to feel good.

What I've experienced personally, is that when I take SJW, I feel energized and chipper. It's not so much that I have this new fountain of energy, it's as if I'm just that much closer to my own fountain of potential. SJW seems to make it easier to call forth what's already within, that

depression tries to bury. It feels like knowing you're going to be debt free next year and you can't help but have a bounce in your step. Your body's sensitivity will determine what effect it will have compounded by the make, quality and concentration of the brand you've selected.

SJW is worth investigating. In Europe, SJW is prescribed much more often than it is in North America.

Paxil Withdrawal Flu

Remember the classic viral flu?

*You feel nauseous, your bowels are liquid, your head is pounding, you're without energy and even if weren't, your concentration and coordination are so low that threading a needle or tying your shoes would win you an Olympic medal. Welcome to a collection of experiences that internet support groups are calling **Paxil Withdrawal Flu**.*

Flu-like symptoms affect you physically causing aches in places you didn't know were capable of generating pain signals! There are a few things you can do to alleviate the flu experience however. I don't know near enough about the real viral flu to fully know how it compares symptom to symptom with Paxil withdrawal, but some general care towards similar symptoms is still possible:

Nausea

Try eating a simpler diet that has less caffeine, less fat, less sugar and fewer solids. Soup, oats and apple juice are useful when you just can't keep anything down. Keeping up with your electrolytes is paramount so get drinking when you can't eat. This excludes alcoholic beverages. You may even find that softened or cooked fruit and vegetables are easier to handle than meats and raw plant fibers. One great solution is to drink chamomile tea before and/or after eating a meal. Chamomile is a great stomach pleaser. If your bowels are not too soft, you can even include some fennel seeds to steep in the hot water. One naturopath I met suggested keeping up with yogurt products since the bacteria used to make it aids in promoting healthy flora in the intestines, where food needs to be broken down further by bacteria to have its nutrients absorbed. Although you often hear that milk

coats the stomach, it still breaks down into acid during digestion. Also, don't miss the comforts of mint.

If at any time you feel like vomiting and you're sure it's not related to a food allergy or poison ingestion (not to frighten, just being thorough), try taking slow deep breaths where you exhale faster than you inhale. Try sitting at a table, leaning forward with your head cradled in your arms like naptime from elementary school. Just cross your arms on the table, and rest your head in the middle. I've found the table sitting position to be a useful companion to gentle rhythmic breathing when trying to keep food down. If you prefer sitting on a soft couch, you can put a pillow on your abdomen while sitting down and leaning forward on it until you're comfortable. I'm not sure why this works for me, but give it a try.

Headaches

There are many different kinds of headaches that come from different situations and I'm certain you've had at least a couple in your life to know what has worked before. Your tried and tested methods of coping with headaches are worth remembering here during withdrawal. Paxil withdrawal headaches seem unpredictable, but they do get better over time. I found cold or hot compresses, diluted peppermint oil placed under the nose or applied to temples, drinking more water, taking a nap, closing the eyes to rest the focus mechanism, lying down, massaging the neck and/or temples, eating something non-stimulating and performing deeper rhythmic breathing helpful. The point is to find a level of comfort while you move through the experience.

Bowel trouble

I've noticed that people withdrawing from Paxil or who have been off it for a while have had, or continue to have a hard time keeping things solid back there. Unless you have a dietary condition restricting your fiber or wheat gluten intake, feel free to switch to whole grain bread or spoon some 100% bran in your cereal or other recipes while also increasing your water intake. Fluid loss is accelerated during times of softening bowels and it's your job to make sure you replace the water. Fruits and vegetables have different kinds of soluble and insoluble fiber that are worth considering if you're seeking to solidify your claim on normal bathroom experiences. A little cheese would probably help but your best bet is to consult a dietitian or many of the freely available pamphlets and brochures in your town's health center(s).

Poor Concentration

Whozama whuzzit? C-c-c-can't talk? Have you read this page five times already? Paxil withdrawal invites all kinds of challenges with focus and concentration and although rest and relaxing activities can help your comfort, sometimes you just need a little brain boost to get that check book thing right. Ginkgo is the most frequently suggested herb in Paxil withdrawal circles. When used daily (check with your doctor to see if this is OK for you or that it won't interact with other drugs you may be taking) expect to have a general sense of detail retention and memory longevity as you work your mind from As to Bs. You won't automatically be able to prove Einstein wrong, although you could if you were so inclined. Some people, including Patricia Griffon, author of *Blind Reason*, have been able to do incredible work all the while the mind feels scattered.

Note to those with anxious, depressive or compulsive racing thoughts: taking Ginkgo feels like your thoughts are made crisp, agile and poignant. If you're having a hard time dealing with intense negative thoughts, Ginkgo may not be useful to you. Instead, I suggest you keep your mind at ease. Try to find mental challenges that don't depend on time or quick results and try a crossword puzzle or card game.

Until your concentration level is back to where you like it, keep training your mind intentionally. The point is to continue being an active contributor to your knowledge despite the fuzziness.

Low to no energy

In this situation, as with all others, sleeping seems to be one of the first sensible restoration forces. Get those holidays booked and delegate responsibilities for a while if possible.

Avoid the caffeine trap! Stimulant highs of any kind are always short lived and are often followed by a drop of energy. The only way to achieve consistent energy output is through exercise, rest and healthy diet. You'd best invest in complex carbohydrates, walking and avoiding stimulants like nicotine. Be prepared for a drop in energy when you quit smoking, but over the months it will rise back up. You may however want to delay quitting smoking until after the other energy returns if you want to avoid having to deal with multiple withdrawal challenges simultaneously.

Granted, you may be someone who never touches caffeine, never smokes and eats like an athlete who is still robbed of energy during withdrawal. I commend everyone for trying to shard! Continue investing in your body today, so that you'll ease it back into your arduous activities later.

That list is in no way exhaustive and similar symptoms may be observed for any number of other health challenges, including an actual flu. Err on the side of caution and continue to manage your health with the help of your doctor.

Learning about yourself

Ultimately, Paxil and Paxil withdrawal will place you in situations of spontaneous decisions, reflection and deep introspection. You may be or have already been challenged, pushed, pulled, silenced, spread too thin, stuffed inside, yelling out loud and a crying, laughing, fearing, conquering, defeating, submitting or dominating. Nuances will become rushing waves and rushing waves spinning tornadoes. Through all this, just when you thought the world was getting mean on you, you'll notice that you've been learning all about yourself. Surprise! The Paxil experience is always about you and your relationship with yourself in terms of mind, body and spirit. Not that Paxil is unique, all of life does this, but it certainly makes it plainly obvious!

You were born to experience yourself being yourself as whoever from one moment to the next, on Paxil or not, happy or sad, in love or fear. You don't have to agree but I'm pretty sure you've witnessed yourself saying and doing things you hadn't imagined before.

That's what I'm talking about. You can't imagine every possible outcome for yourself, so when something other than your expectation of future events occurs, you learn to accept and move forward. You learn not about what different events can occur, but what different reactions you choose to elicit in their presence. Investigating your reaction/action system is what this section is about.

How you deal with tough challenges

When faced with a tough challenge, do you slam, push, pierce or retreat? What amount of faith do you hold that no matter what approach you choose, you'll eventually get through it? If there's an easy way and a hard way through the challenge, each with equal rewards, which one do you choose? How you answer these questions affects your experience with Paxil withdrawal directly.

You're probably facing quite a few challenges right now. On your plate are morsels of Paxil, mental health, family and work. I can't tell you how to juggle these things completely, but I can suggest a priority: YOU. Once you have a better grasp on yourself and how you deal with adversity, you'll have less searching to do when dealing with things, and everybody you give your time to will benefit. This isn't arrogance. This is being realistic. You may be feeling that your self worth is less than what you'd like, and it's time you realize and demonstrate that you know you are more.

Hidden emotional agendas

Now let's introduce the process of RE-acting vs acting. When a challenge first makes itself known to you, what's the first thing you do? You probably think back to a past event that may be similar and recall what you did to handle it then. This is RE-acting and is so automatic and instantaneous, it feels like an original thought. Here's an example:

Scenario #1: Imagine you're standing in a check-out lane and you break wind. You're not sure if it was loud enough for another to hear, but as soon as you're done, you hear the person right behind you snort and let out a little chuckle. Probably laughing at you right?

But are they? Did you ask them to find out? No, you just assumed that everything is about you because of the level of embarrassment you probably felt and automatically went into defensive mode, looking for a reaction from the world. But where did you ever learn to believe that being an animal with a digestive system was embarrassing? You probably learned a long time ago that passing gas was unfavorable depending on your gender, public position and so on. This is RE-acting, when you don't act according to full awareness and acceptance, but according to instructions from an old record you don't even challenge for its worth anymore. Now consider the weight of this automatic process in terms of the stigma to mental health, your self judgment and self worth, or discrimination. Do we really think new thoughts or do we keep regurgitating old ones? Are we that lazy? A little more tragic is that we'll even tell our friends about our embarrassment, and relive the discomfort unnecessarily over and over.

Another example:

Scenario #2: You're out for a walk in August and go past a huge house. There's a 3-door garage, 2 SUVs, and you see two kids are playing tag on the front lawn. You also notice an adult washing one of the cars and throwing suds at some other person with longer hair who is watering flowers. You hear laughter and feel the warmth of the sun on this great day.

Sounds like a great happy family with mother, father and children all together outside enjoying a summer day while having no material worries. Now watch how your emotions change when I complete some details of the story:

- The person watering the flowers is a same sex partner.
- The children are adopted.
- The house was broken into in the past year, most portable possessions were lost and the third child was murdered.

Did you feel a subtle shift in emotion, or surprise? Did the extra details cause a change to the imagery in your mind's eye? Notice the RE-acting process now? The story is not true (however possible). I just made this up as an example showing that when we feel anxious or depressed, you and those around you will go through a lot of RE-acting fueled by a lack of awareness.

Precognized beliefs can form hidden emotional agendas that weaken the foundation of your withdrawal effort. This process of automatic association colors almost every single thought in your mind and this is what can make withdrawal from Paxil and your mood challenges so difficult. The moment the withdrawal triggers an anxious or depressive response that seems familiar (as applied to a previous experience), you may automatically think it's your OLD problems returning and that they're here to stay. The instant you suddenly burst into tears at work, you think you're losing it or are an emotional wreck. It doesn't have to be perceived that way!

We have to get ourselves to stop reacting and begin choosing to act in fresh new ways. Isn't it interesting how given a choice to react negatively or positively, we almost always choose the negative? Why is that? Spend some time pondering that question.

This Paxil withdrawal stuff may be something you're going through for the very first time. This means, you don't have an accurate history of information to guide you. Your goal is then to not let your past feed you too much because it doesn't contain much relating to this experience. Instead, seek to see what today is like experientially while avoiding quick judgments. Try to make conclusions about your health over time, supported by experience.

By taking your time with an intense withdrawal moment, you can not only avoid seeing yourself as being stuck in a lifetime of misery, you can also give yourself the time to find the truth about this collection of moments in your life. Whatever challenge comes your way, and it feels like it's too much to handle, ask if you are reacting on past experience or are you genuinely living in the moment seeking every angle for a useful new resolution? Take some time writing down more specifically what challenges you've had recently, what your first reaction was and what you may have realized later after you've had the time to let it all sink in.

Quick-Fix ruts

Many of your experiences with mental health and medications are probably mind boggling! Who the heck in their right mind wants to feel this way for another minute? Not me, and not you I'm guessing. As useful as pain can be for aiming us in a direction to heal wounds, we certainly don't like it and want it gone fast! Unfortunately, mental health and mood challenges are fine wines and not burgers. We just can't realistically approach all of it with a quick result mind set. This doesn't mean you can't begin feeling some relief and benefits right away with weekly psychotherapy sessions, personal journals and communication with friends or other favorite rewarding activities.

We live in a time period that moves REALLY FAST! Our work demands our best performance all the time, our kids need our greatest love consistently, cities are becoming bigger and its residential housing pushed farther away, requiring us to drive farther which leads to getting up at an uncomfortable hour to make it in on time. I know you recognize all that acceleration and it's probably creating more stress than you ever thought possible, even for the smallest things. And then, a mental health challenge comes along requiring your full attention. When are you allowed to pause and be human and grow? Sunday? What about that soccer game you have to go to? In the end you're left with two struggles: being human for your mental health and being a machine to keep the world spinning as we are agreeing to. I'm dizzy too.

This fast paced lifestyle is what makes an antidepressant so alluring. Medications can reduce bad moods in just a few weeks that would take months in therapy. How heaven sent it is to be able to keep up with real estate deals while past months or years of anxiety are whisked away. The speed game is all about doing at the expense of being. If a culture

from the other side of the planet came to see you and asked, “who are you”, should you answer, “I’m a stock broker” ? No. Who you are lies foundationally beneath what you do and no anxiety or depression can touch your core. You can only forget it’s there or have your attention distracted from it by a panic, compulsion, depression, or a medication.

If the quick-fix madness continues, you will know less and less about your independent core self and more and more about your dependent surface self, through a medicated filter. I don’t think we want the history books to read Paxil Humanity 1992-2022 instead of just Humanity 0 to whenever.

Relationship with yourself/Deity

I admit that many people like who they are on antidepressants. I often ask if they like themselves because of what they can do or because of who they are. Since doing comes from being (you act like a nurse when you believe yourself to be), you need to BE before you can DO. Paxil cannot help you BE, it can only help you DO by suppressing the challenges of being while those same challenges are supposed to contribute to the creation of your being. You don’t give love without first being loving and although it may seem like Paxil can make you more loving by calming self possessing depressions, you should know that you were loving without Paxil and perhaps hadn’t quite figured out (yet) how to bring it out of the depression. Whenever you learn how to be who you are despite a challenge, the challenge is no longer a challenge but an opportunity for you to declare yourself.

Who are you anyway? Let’s go through an interesting Question & Answer process that will dig down to this core I keep mentioning. Imagine your Deity, creator, master, wise friend, is having a discussion with you about who you are. The following sample question and answer dialog will put you into

the context that you're a parent and that you feel like you're not getting/giving any or enough support and love during Paxil withdrawal. Digging into who you are, may reveal where the real strength and comforts lie.

Q is for the Deity asking the question, and A is for a possible reply from yourself:

Q: *Who are you?*

A: I'm a parent.

Q: *What is a parent?*

A: Someone dedicated and committed to loving and raising a child or children.

Q: *Who is that someone who is also a parent?*

A: I'm me, Michel(le).

Q: *Who are you Michel(le) ?*

A: I'm son/daughter to my parents.

Q: *You keep announcing roles and associations, who are you beneath all that?*

A: I'm Michel(le) ! A human being.

Q: *So you're Michel(le), the human being, mother/father to young ones, son/daughter of your parents?*

A: Yes!

Q: *Are you loving?*

A: Of course!

Q: *Do you feel like you're someone who is a source of love for your young ones?*

A: Obviously.

Q: *If you are a source of love, where does the love come from?*

A: Well, the love does come from me. I give a part of me to those I love, and it goes out as love.

Q: *Where did this love you have to give come from?*

A: From me.

Q: *Did you get this love to give it to someone else?*

A: No, I just love the kids on my own.

Q: *So if love doesn't come from anywhere but you personally, you must be made of the stuff.*

A: I guess I am!

Q: *And other parents who love their kids must be made of love too, to have it to give.*

A: Makes sense to me.

Q: *I've seen people donating to charities that don't involve children as an act of love. So they must be made of love too.*

A: I guess every person is made of love.

Q: *When you love someone, do you lose a part of yourself?*

A: No, I'm still me. In fact, I feel better giving love and being generous.

Q: *Then if you cannot lose any part of the love that you are made of, why do you believe you need something from another, which you never lose and are made of?*

A: ...

And so on. The point here was to invite you to come up with different answers and even different questions so that you can find your core, the one that informs you of who you are. You won't find your core with a thought. In fact, you'll find it when you're thinking less. You have to get out of your mind to get back to your senses. When you're really depressed or anxious, look for moments of stillness. It doesn't matter if you don't get a sense of who you are right away and don't be fooled by racing negative emotions that aren't even real to the moment, but come from the past. If faced with the challenge of deciding if something you're feeling is real or not, check to see if it's the most loving and peaceful emotion and if not, keep looking. Your peaceful core is there waiting for you, you only have to peel back the loud, noisy and frightened layers to find it.

Your answers to the questions found throughout this document will reveal much about who you think you are, who you really have created as yourself or have yet to become. You can even measure your progress through anxious/depressed/OCD mental health challenges by seeing how your questions and answers change over time. In fact, they're supposed to. I didn't continue with that fun Q&A dialog because it would have went on for pages until the questions themselves were the answers and that's the whole point of life I think. Who you are is never carved in stone. It is up to you to choose in every single moment who you'd rather be and I encourage you to aim high. You are made of love.

If you are made of a solution and therefore are the solution, it's possible that you already have all that you need to get through his withdrawal challenge. You may not see it nor believe it, but just because you can't see a solution, doesn't mean it's not there waiting to be found. Create your life continuously instead of seeing it as just happening to you.

Everything is waiting for your wondrous purpose.

Knowing to poise yourself as the body/mind/spirit solution for this Paxil withdrawal challenge is the first step towards demonstrating it. Now is your time to entertain the different positions you can take strategically when demonstrating yourself as the solution/liberator for and from Paxil. Get excited! Things are going to get better!

A withdrawal technique

Now that you know that you are a person with a core that cannot be permanently harmed, you can go through withdrawal and come out the other side in great shape. There's more than one way to withdraw from Paxil and different methods are coming out all the time as people learn to customize what works for them. I offer the following listing as a guide containing time periods that generalize tons of observations from my own experience and those of paxil**progress** visitors.

These time frames and numbers were generated from public exchange, anecdotes and private E-mail based on what worked the most often for people. The list is not exhaustive and you will need to keep a keen eye for subtle or gross differences in your experience.

I encourage slow and gradual withdrawal periods. I've noticed in feedback from paxil**progress** visitors that doctors aren't always aware of the slow healing process involved in withdrawal. When people are aware of time requirement, they can see themselves through the journey more gracefully.

Nevertheless, it is very important that you never stray from a plan your doctor has suggested for you without first discussing it with her/him. Instead, bring your ideas to your doctor and discuss your individual knowledge and experience so that you both benefit. I want you to be safe while still progressing forward using ideas and suggestions that experience has shown me to be the most effective.

Gradual Reduction Method

In the following pages is a table which describes a reasonable gradual withdrawal time line. It includes a list of challenges that may present themselves, and when. Please know that your experience may differ.

Gradual Reduction Method	
Description	Lower dose is maintained for a period of time followed by a drop and another maintenance period. (Ex: 15mg daily for a month, 10mg daily for a month, 5mg daily for a month, then stop.) 5mg drops are frequently successful, but not more so then 2.5mg drops.
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most tolerated. Personal boundaries can endure this experience more often. • Changes are introduced gradually and are easily noticeable over time. • Withdrawal intensity varies less and feels more predictable. • High success rate. • Can be easily tailored to suit the individual.
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long and exhausting. • Keeps Paxil in system for longer period of time. • Goals feel harder to reach. • Requires faith.
Day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dizziness, headache, nausea, bowel softening. • By day 2 or 3: zaps. • By Day 7: dizziness and whoosh effect is more pronounced and challenging. • Sensitivity to internal / external environment increases. • It may feel uncomfortable, but the first week won't be the most difficult.

Day 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You're in the thick of things now. Both your emotions and physical self are complaining together. Relax and soothe yourself as much as possible.• Emotion upheaval begins to peak. Dreams, confidence, and attitude are all affected.• Dreams become very active and unpleasant.• Zaps feel worse.
1 Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Previous symptoms repeat and may feel worse as you approach 0mg.• If you haven't been keeping notes, you better begin now. You will still have a wash of good vs bad days and may not be able to see clearly from one day to the next how you're progressing.• Emotional upheaval still poignant, but patterns emerge and familiarity begins.• Old zaps fade away quicker. They may change flavor a little before stopping however.
3 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At this point, it's all about struggling for clarity. You're coming out of the depressions/anxieties mostly caused by Paxil and having to determine what level of your own anxiety/depression is there to grow through.• Now you can review your diary of experiences in a complete way, since you're out of the most poignant symptoms of a dosage change, and can choose to reduce dose by another increment knowing what the next 4 weeks will generally be like.• You'll surely notice by this point how sensitive you have become to the world around you.• Anger and frustration are very noticeable.

6 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anger and frustration may be exhausting but should be fading.• Physical aches may continue along with digestion woes but others will have quieted by now.• Zaps (if any) are infrequent and probably gone.• If you've made this far, you've learned a lot. I hope that you've already spent time working on how you wish to conquer anxiety/depression/OCD from within yourself.• If you haven't already, enjoy the benefits of psychotherapy.• Things should begin to be predictable. You'll still have some bad days but don't let them make conclusions for you.
1 Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You've achieved a GREAT deal! Congratulations.• At this point, you should be very well aware of who you are, what works, what doesn't, and to what degree you still have growth ahead.• If at this time you feel like you haven't progressed to satisfaction, don't fret. Just continue your commitment but consider investigating the usefulness of your methods. Obviously, some may not be working or your approach to ideas and perspectives may need some expansion.• Remember, if you are not where you want to be, it doesn't mean you've failed. It means you have removed some wrong answers and are that much closer to the right ones that will work for you.• Many people consider a year the measurement of their success. A year is a completely exciting and worthy goal, but don't stop here! Continue to use what you have learned.

Special Consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You may choose to withdraw in 2.5mg steps or less.• You may require a leave of absence from work.• May requires a delegation of responsibilities at home/work.• You have to organize and plan doses carefully.• Dose management in little steps can be difficult.
Coping	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Faith reigns with this investment in your future. You will get there! Hang on!• Sleep, diet and water are so important. Keep up with vitamins and safe herbs.• Others have done this. Look for strength in them.• Stressing.
Stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personality stability most challenged.• Fixation on goal at all times is paramount.• May require holiday from work.• Family may be intimidated by sudden changes (for the better eventually).
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A pill cutter.• Anything you find to be soothing and calming.• Aromatherapy, movies, laughter, love, support.• Sponge for squeezing during tough moments.• Books on anxiety/depression/stress/spirituality.

Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If one dose reduction speed is too much, try smaller steps.• There's a high success rate with this method, which can be enhanced by consistency with proactive choices and life commitment.• Changes are gradual, be patient.
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Tools at paxilprogress

You don't have to go through this alone. There are tools available to you such as books, counseling, family, friends and the welcoming community of people at paxil**progress**. Here are a few sections at paxil**progress** you can enjoy :

<http://www.paxilprogress.org>

The main welcome page.

<http://www.paxilprogress.org/forums/>

This is the heart of the community where most discussion occurs. If you want to learn from people who made it through withdrawal, or journey alongside those still in the thick of it, this public message forum is where it's at.

<http://www.paxilprogress.org/faq/>

The Paxil and Paxil Withdrawal FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions). This dynamic and frequently updated forum section is a great place to learn of new ideas that may not have made it into this edition of the guide.

<http://www.paxilprogress.org/information.php>

The Information Section contains news, research links, opinion columns, breaking information, and more.

<http://www.paxilprogress.org/books.php>

A section offering information on books, interviews with authors and more.

Suggested reading

Books

Fox, Bronwyn. *Power Over Panic*. Shakti River Press, 1999.
ISBN 0962732710.

Bassett, Lucinda. *From Panic to Power*. HarperCollins Publishers, 1995. ISBN 0060927585.

Walsch, Neale Donald. *Conversations with God, Book 1*. G. P. Putnam's Son, 1995.
ISBN 0399142789.

Gerzon, Robert. *Finding Serenity in the Age of Anxiety*. Macmillan, 1997. ISBN 0028615999.

Ruiz, Don Miguel. *The Four Agreements*. Amber-Allen Publishing, 1997. ISBN 1878424319.

Glenmullen, Joseph M.D. *Prozac Backlash*. Simon & Schuster, 2000. ISBN 0684860015.

Zukav, Gary. *The Seat of the Soul*. Simon & Schuster, 1990.
ISBN 067169507x.

Healy, Dr. David. *Let them eat Prozac*. James Lorimer & Company Ltd., Publishers, 2003.
ISBN 1550287834.

Janis, R. *When a Child's Mind Screams*. SAGA Books, 2004.
ISBN 1894936310.

Web

<http://www.benzo.org.uk/healy.htm>

A reasonable protocol for a buffering/conversion
withdrawal method put forth by Dr. David Healy M.D.

Paxil is an SSRI class medication with a short half-life, which means its use should not be halted abruptly.

What doctors may fail to tell you, is how to withdraw from it and how long it *really* takes. And even if they set up a reduction schedule for you, they may not mention the complexities and difficulties the withdrawal experience offers.

Paxil withdrawal can be difficult. Withdrawing from a medication like Paxil impacts your whole being for years, and for many, is a complex and exhausting adventure.

This is your withdrawal guide. In here you will find ideas and suggestions on what to do about Paxil withdrawal. This guide is founded on years of my own experience, and the thousands of anecdotal and inspirational exchanges I've had as founder of paxilprogress.org, the internet's best resource for experience driven information on Paxil and Paxil withdrawal.

I haven't used scientific or statistical methods to come up with the ideas in this guide. They have been observed anecdotally to be useful tools in my own journey and in the lives of many [paxilprogress](http://paxilprogress.org) visitors who have also braved anxiety, depression and Paxil withdrawal. There's something for you to discover in this guide.

Now is your time. Never has there been a more exciting time for you. If you're actually experiencing life with Paxil or are just collecting information, now is your time to be aware and filled with possibility.

I've been where you've been. I've seen much of what you've seen. I've had my own thoughts and emotions crippled by depression, fear and obsessions. Many people have been through all these things and have been made to avoid their purpose, lest it somehow diminish them. The truth is, we've never been less than wondrous and lovable. You've found a document that will remind you of this, and can help you learn how to live without Paxil.

Freedom is in you...