

Terminology Guide

Lived experience reflections on
antidepressants, withdrawal & deprescribing



Activating medication: Activating medication includes a substance that stimulates the nervous system. Substantial activation affects are typical of many commonly prescribed antidepressants (Citrome et al., 2019).

Akathisia: A movement disorder characterised by: physical unrest, inability to stay still, markable increase in movements experienced with both mental and physical agitation affecting cognitive distress, sleep impairments and in extreme cases is linked to suicidal ideation (Lohr et al., 2015; Loonen et al., 2009).

Harm reduction: Intentional processes to strategically and humanely minimise risks and harms associated with substances (Horowitz & Wilcock, 2022).

Hyperbolic taper: Gradual and personalised reduction of a medication, with the lower end of the reduction taper requiring less than prescribed quantities of the medication (van Os & Grot, 2023).

Iatrogenic harm: Harms that arise due to clinical negligence, lack of clinical knowledge of practitioners and/or the information of medications and their associated side effects (Foulkes, & Stringaris, 2023).

Deprescribing: Deprescribing entails reduction of a medication for eventual complete discontinuation. This process is often enacted when a medication no longer provides benefit to the individual, and/or to address medication side effects (Scott et al., 2015).

Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRI): SSRI's are commonly prescribed medication for the treatment of depression and other psychiatric disorders. These medications function through serotonin increase, primarily as a mechanism for symptom management of depression (Edinoff et al., 2021; Murphy et al., 2021).

Post Acute Withdrawal Syndrome (PAWS) or Protracted Withdrawal Syndrome (PWS): PAWS or PWS is an identified condition of multiple symptoms or medical complications that occurs following cessation of antidepressant medication. These may include but are not limited to: akathisia, cognitive impairment, sleep disturbances, physical distress (particularly gastrointestinal distress), mood affectations and extreme fatigue. PAWS can last for months to years. (Gastaldon et al., 2022).

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