



**PROS
AND
CONS
OF
ANTIDEPRESSANTS**



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by Jamie Leslie

In the mental health world, one of the stigmas that are often seen involves taking medications for mental health. There tends to be a great deal of uncertainty and high opinions on if psychotropic medications are beneficial or harmful. The reality is that regardless of what medications or supplements people put in their bodies, there is risk and gain involved. It is important that the consumer do their homework to educate themselves on the benefits and the risks of any medication or supplement they consume. Relying on the rumor mill or how their Great-Uncle handled taking certain medications will only fuel the continued stigma that goes along with psychotropic medication.

This article's intent is to weigh the pros and cons of anti-depressants. In the Mental Health profession, there is a wide range of psychotropic medication that is used to treat a variety of diagnoses. Anti-Depressants are commonly used to treat the symptoms of depression, anxiety, seasonal affective disorder as well as other forms of depression. According to an article titled "All About Antidepressants" written by Timothy J. Legg, PhD, CRNP, anti-depressants aim to correct imbalances of neurotransmitters in the brain that are responsible for changes in mood and behavior. The most common types of anti-depressants are called Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs). According to the article "All About Antidepressants" they have the fewest side effects and appear to be the most effective at treating depression.

So what are the pros of using SSRIs? According to the article "How Your Depression Medicine Can Affect Your Life" written by Ellen Greenlaw, anti-

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The end of overeating

by David A. Kessler, MD

Book review by Liz Kornkven

Dr. Kessler is the former commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration. He is also a pediatrician. I like this book because Dr. Kessler uses studies to backup what he is proposing. Yet it is also understandable from a layman's perspective.

"People get fat because they eat more than people who are lean." This isn't the only factor in weight gain though. Food that is extremely palatable can hijack our eating plan. Palatable foods are foods that have an agreeable taste but scientifically, palatable foods stimulate our appetite and prompt us to eat more. Foods high in fat, sugar, and salt are palatable. The book notes, "In the normal rat, free access to palatable foods is a sufficient condition to promote excess weight."

Sugar and fat are strong reinforcers but sugar is the dominant factor. The book notes, "...the breaking point at which the animals will no longer work for a reward (of sugar and fat mixture) is slightly lower than the breaking point for cocaine." The neurons in the brain that are activated by taste and other palatable properties are part of the opioid circuitry which is the body's primary pleasure system. The opioids or endorphins have similar rewarding effects similar to morphine and heroin. Stimulating the opioid circuitry with food compels us to eat. Eating high fat and high sugar foods can relieve pain, stress, and calm us down but the effect is short-lived.

The amount of sugar in processed foods is much higher than what we would experience in less processed natural foods. Rewarding foods are rewiring our brains, which mean that the foods we eat are changing our brains. The more rewarding food is, the stronger the learning experience that causes the automatic behavior. When food is highly rewarding, it can create automatic behavior such as overeating.

The book reports, the most effective foods are those that can change our feelings. Eating highly palatable foods are in that category because they provide momentary pleasure. This pleasure acts as a substitute for other emotions. These palatable foods dominate our attention. Against our wishes, a striking food cue can occupy our thoughts and stimulate our emotions to provoke impulsive eating.

In this process, we may become discontented with our expectations of the reward we expect from eating highly palatable food versus what we actually experience from that food. In order to experience the prior level of satisfaction, we may need to eat more food, or get more calories, or find another novel way of experiencing satisfaction. For example: two pieces of cake instead of the usual one piece, foods higher in sugar or fat, pie with buffalo wings, and onward. Just as a compulsive gambler can't just place one bet, so many people cannot stop after a few bites of hyper palatable delicacy. We can become conditioned to seek more reward which is more palatable foods. Foods high in sugar, fat, and salt cue us to want more; more arousal, more thoughts of food, more urge to pursue food, more consumption, more opioid-driven reward, more overeating to feel better, more delay in feeling full, more loss of control, more preoccupation with food, more habit-driven behavior and ultimately, more weight gain.

Kessler states, "Chronic exposure to highly palatable foods changes our brains, conditioning us to seek continued stimulation. Over time, a powerful drive for a combination of sugar, fat, and salt competes with our conscious capacity to say no."

Highly palatable foods are available almost everywhere and anytime. Many social and work situations are constructed around food. We can eat just about all the time. This fact promotes increased consumption of food. Snacking is the new norm. And snacking does not decrease the caloric intake at mealtimes.

Treatment options include realizing it is possible to say no—we have a choice but that choice lasts only a moment. We can practice new behaviors and learn new thoughts to keep the old thoughts at bay. It's impossible to avoid the temptations of highly palatable foods but we can learn to respond to those temptations in different ways.

We need to become mindful of the situations that lead us to eat. Then you have to decide not to eat out of habit. Next we need to have competing behaviors planned before you get the cue to eat palatable food. For example, when I walk into the house, I'm not heading for the kitchen first. I will choose some other competing behavior first; like taking a walk before dinner. We also need to formulate new thoughts that compete with our old thoughts of overeating. We use a script that helps us carry out the new behavior. We change the way we talk to ourselves about food. It's also important to have support to make changes in the way you approach eating.

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BOOKSHELF



Three Trails Book Review



The end of overeating.



TAKING CONTROL OF THE
INSATIABLE AMERICAN APPETITE

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Developing your own set of rules helps you not to overeat. Rules are guided by higher brain functions so they can substitute for unconscious actions. For example, we need to view the pursuit of sugar, fat, and salt in a negative way.

Here are some principles for Food Rehab according to Dr. Kessler:

- A.) Conditioned hyper-eating is a biological challenge, not a character flaw.
- B.) Overeating is a chronic problem that needs to be managed, not one that can be completely cured.
- C.) Every time we act on our desire for sugar, fat, and salt, and earn a reward as a result (like emotional fulfillment), it becomes harder for us to act differently the next time.
- D.) The loss of control that characterizes conditioned hyper eating is magnified by diets that leave us feeling deprived.
- E.) New learning can stick only when it generates a feeling of satisfaction so diets that leave us hungry, unhappy, angry or resentful won't work in the long run.
- F.) Restoring control over our eating requires many interlocking steps so we need strategies to overcome overeating.
- G.) Lapses are inevitable.
- H.) Eventually, we can begin to think differently about food; recognizing its value to sustain and protect us from hunger but denying its authority over us.

To change the way you eat, you'll need to focus on how you approach food, craft a plan to which you can devote concentrated attention, and recognize progress is incremental and effortful. Since calories do count, choose food in appropriate quantities. Begin by eating half of your usual meal and then notice when you become hungry again. Adjust the size of your meal so you become hungry approximately three to four hours after eating. What you eat is important. Protein is the most satiating macronutrient. Fiber tends to be satisfying because it's used by the body more slowly so it's a good choice. Learn to savor foods you can control like those with protein and fiber.

Learn to understand what triggers overeating and plan accordingly. As we make choices not to seek out a reward, new learning begins to take hold in your brain, and a trigger begins to lose its powerful association.

A useful Mindfulness technique to help step back from the habit of reaching for food while you're under stress is to name the feelings you're experiencing. State, "I feel sad." Looking at your emotions objectively helps to open up options for coping. You can ask yourself if eating will truly help you deal with this emotion. Think of other options to help you cope with your emotions like calling a friend, taking a walk, or take a relaxing bath. Exercise is one of the best substitutes for highly palatable foods. It can help change the way you look at yourself. Sometimes you can use negative associations. When you see a plate of hot chocolate chip cookies, think, that's hundreds of calories that I don't want and which will derail my eating plan. The idea is to undercut the emotional reward of the food and cool down the stimulus.

The ability to eat normally without becoming obsessive about food is a definition of long term success. There may be set backs and slips but that is part of the journey. "The enduring ability to eat differently depends on coming to view these foods as enemies, not friends." We need to change our perception of these hyper palatable foods (ones that are high in sugar, fat, and salt).

Make a Calming Lavender Lotion

by Trish Hussion

Ever wanted to know how to make lotion? This DIY lotion recipe shows you just how easy it is to make homemade lotion with only three ingredients!

Ingredients:

1/3 Cup Coconut Oil
2 Tbsp Beeswax (1 2oz bar)
5 Drops Lavender Essential Oil

Supplies:

1 Double Boiler
1 Electric Beater or a whisk and some patience
1 jar or container to contain the lotion

Step 1:

Measure out the Ingredients - Coconut Oil can be purchased online or in some craft and soap supply stores. Beeswax can come from a single 2 oz bar or 2 Tbsp of beeswax pastilles or grated beeswax.

Step 2:

Using your double boiler, melt the coconut oil and beeswax. Once the mixture is melted, add in your lavender essential oil. Pour it into a bowl and let it cool completely.

Step 3:

To make sure the consistency is how you want it, use an electric beater or hand whisk to whip the lotion mixture for about 10 minutes. This will help the coconut oil remain whipped even at room temperature

Step 4:

Pour it in a jar of your choice. Homemade lotions remain good for at least a couple of months. Enjoy!



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depressants can improve on general mood. This boost in mood can improve on motivation to get back to doing the things individuals used to enjoy doing. Often times a big drain that individuals who experience depression notice is a loss of pleasure in doing the things they used to enjoy doing as well as a decrease in motivation. Antidepressants can also help improve with sleep. Quiet often insomnia is a frequent symptom of depression, so with the right anti-depressant a person may notice a decrease with insomnia and better quality of sleep.

Antidepressants can reduce the symptoms of restlessness as well as decrease suicidal thoughts according to Greenlaw. In the Book, *I Want to Change My Life* written by Steven M. Melemis, PhD, MD, the author also notes that individuals who utilize anti-depressants for anxiety will also notice a higher tolerance to stress. Steven M. Melemis, PhD, MD also notes that anti-depressants can help lesson depressive symptoms experienced during grief. He notes that it doesn't block the grieving process but the medication can give a person the energy needed to go through the grieving process.

This leads us to look into the risks involved with taking SSRIs. The Mayo Clinic has a website that notes one drawback is the possible side effects can be experienced.

Common side effects from taking SSRIs include: drowsiness, nausea, dry mouth, insomnia, diarrhea, nervousness, dizziness, sexual problems, headaches and blurred vision.

Another concern when taking SSRIs, is that there could be some possible safety issues with the medication. The Mayo Clinic notes that there are sometimes safety issues with drug interactions. Some antidepressants can cause dangerous reactions when combined with certain medications or herbal supplements. Also antidepressants can cause high levels of serotonin to accumulate, which could lead to Serotonin Syndrome. This is considered a rare safety issue, but still one that can happen. Here are some signs of Serotonin Syndrome, according to The Mayo Clinic: anxiety, agitation, sweating, confusion, tremors, restlessness, lack of coordination and rapid heart rate. In some cases, antidepressants can increase suicidal thoughts or behavior. This tends to occur most often with children, teenagers and young adults under the age of 25, according to The Mayo Clinic.

The Mayo Clinic also notes that a lot of issues with antidepressants are experienced if people suddenly stop taking their medication without doctor approval. If someone stops taking medication they may experience withdrawal symptoms such as: nausea, dizziness, lethargy, and even flu-like symptoms. It is recommended to work with a doctor to gradually decrease a dose rather than to suddenly stop taking it.

Ultimately it is up to the client as to what they decide to do if they are battling depression. An informed consumer can help alleviate any rumors or unfounded concerns centered on the use of antidepressants. One thing to note is that antidepressants work best with the aid of counselling. With the help of counseling and anti-depressants, the client will be battling their chemical element as well as their thought and environment factors that can play into what causes the depression they experience.

As always, keep your free WYCS in mind for aiding you during this battle and give us a call at 780-865-1333 to set up an appointment.



STAFF CHANGES

It has been a busy summer that has seen some changes to the staffing here at Three Trails. **Liz Kornkven**, who was originally a part-time therapist, is now a full-time counselor at Three Trails EFAP.

Also, **Shelly McAlpin**, who was previously an intern for Three Trails, is now a Provisionally Licensed Counselor and a part time counselor at Three Trails!

Thank you all for your patience during the changes to staffing and we hope you all had a fun sun filled summer!

