

Sandy's Story – I'd Rather Be Anxious Than Depressed

For 14 years I have been on medications that made me feel sane when I felt crazy, and for that I am grateful. I've got one pill because I'm ADD; I've got two for depression, and another for thyroid. I relapsed a couple years ago on alcohol, spent 9 days in a residential facility getting cleaned up, and once again I practiced gratitude for the medical rescue.

But now I'm in a crisis of a new kind. On my wedding day, I weighed 118 pounds. Today I was shocked to see 172 staring at me from the digital display on my scale. I looked down to see who else was standing on the scale. We've made adjustments to my meds over the years, but still I gain and gain.

I have conflicted feelings about reducing my medications. They put me into some kind of neutral state that prevented me from registering what I saw in the mirror or worrying about weight gain. But it's like a purgatory. I cried less on the full dose, but I also slept all day and lost the positive charge that everybody – most of all I myself – loved about me.

It used to be my biggest emotion was shame for all the damage I had done to my life and the lives of my family. I've don't a lot of work around that. Now my biggest emotion is hatred of this body I can't even recognize anymore. It is really depressing to be on drugs for depression if they make you hungry all the time and fat. Another woman in my Suppers group had had a similar experience and said, "I'd rather be anxious than depressed." "Yes!", I thought. I'd rather be anxious than depressed too, as long as it helps me lose weight and get my positive charge back.

So I decided to use my Suppers meetings to help me stick to the task of eating healthy foods and staying on top of daily exercise. My therapeutic friends are gently helping me get honest and just generally giving me a cheering section while my doctor helps me reduce my medications. He really believes in exercise for depression. Walking every day with my husband and friends from Suppers helps reduce the panicky feelings. Fortunately, the important people in my life already know they can't expect me to sit still too long.

Diet and lifestyle change is the only direction I have left to head in. But it's not easy to know which things to try. Sometimes the best support I get is when somebody says something that makes sense of the jumble inside my head. I've reduced my medications by half and I can honesty say I feel better. Now I know I really would rather be anxious than depressed. I can even say I experience moments of real joy.