

MEDICATIONS VS DRUGS

Why do people with a mental illness turn to illicit drugs for relief?

Mental illness comes in all forms from depression to the more complicated illnesses like schizophrenia. In most cases there can be a combination of these illnesses as well. Due to the complicated nature of these illnesses, being diagnosed and prescribed the right medication can be just as complicated.

Additionally, if there is peer pressure, denial, embarrassment, lack of support or family members who refuse to acknowledge their child has an illness this only exasperates their ability to attain a proper diagnosis with the right medications.

However, just being diagnosed does not mean the doctors can immediately prescribe the right medication. Prescribing medication for mental illness is just as complicated and illusive as the illness itself.

Some medications can actually cause the symptoms they are supposed suppress.

Dre's battle included all the above issues but is unique to him. Every individual experiencing mental illness will have their own story. I am sharing Dre's story so that it may help others to be more compassionate and supportive of their family and friends or just the person on the street. I strongly believe that if you asked them, they would tell you that it wasn't where they expected or wanted to be.

Dre's younger years would be described as traumatic to say the least. Starting with a chaotic childhood with dysfunctional parents which you can read or listen to through the articles I have posted on this website.

Dre came to live with me in July 2021. Shortly thereafter he was displaying signs of delusion and was talking really fast and we immediately thought that he was on drugs. Fortunately, he had spent this time with his cousin, who was only 3 months older than him. She vouched for him and said he wasn't even doing cannabis. Dre offered to go to the hospital to prove it. We were so worried about his symptomatic behaviour we immediately took him to the Guelph Hospital. This would be the first of a long trail of hospitals yet to come.

Immediately, upon admission he was put on a "Form 1" which meant he was in a controlled section of the hospital and not allowed to leave. He spent 2 horrendous days in the Guelph Hospital. My daughter (Dre's aunt) and I spent every minute with him until he was transferred to the Grand River Mental Health Hospital in Kitchener.

The Guelph Hospital is not a place for mental patients. He was segregated in a section of the hospital that had 3-4 rooms with no windows and a uniformed police officer at the entrance. No one came to check on him, not even to offer him food or drink. My daughter and I stayed with him in stages as it was so exhausting that we could only handle a few hours at a time. However, we never left his side. Nothing prepares you for dealing with someone with a mental illness. They are delusional but they are convinced it is reality and to them it is. You are heartbroken watching him suffer but even worse was how the hospital treated him. The whole time we were there they only came in once a day to ask if he wanted anything. He wasn't set up for food trays like other patients and when we asked for an extra blanket or a chair to sit on, they responded and acted annoyed that

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they had to comply. Therefore, when each of us would return for our shift we would bring food, drinks and blankets. I finally started making phone calls and threatening to call a lawyer if he wasn't moved immediately to a mental hospital. The administrative wheels began to turn and after two and half days he was finally transported to the Grand River Mental Hospital in Kitchener.

Grand River was great. However, Dre was completely immersed in his fantasy world. It was difficult having a conversation with him. I would go to see him every day and every day I would leave in tears as I thought he couldn't possibly come back from this. He had written all over his body and said he was going to have them made into tattoos when he got out. He wanted a book which I bought for him but when I went to give it to him in the hospital, he made me hide it as I couldn't leave it there. When he got out, he circled every third letter in the text as he was convinced it had a message for him. He was also convinced that he had the winning lottery numbers but they had to be picked in the order he had them written down not in chronological order.

He had no thoughts of his own or the recognition of reality. Finally, the medication began to work and he was allowed a 48 hour leave to come home with me to see if both he and I could cope. Thankfully, he was coming back to reality even though he was still struggling with trust issues. To help him cope I had a valise that he could put his papers etc. in and he would take this wherever we went. When he was talking fast prior to going into the hospital he said, "I can play guitar, I can play piano and I can play a flute, but I don't want to play a flute." Knowing that music was healing I found a music teacher, that to me was an angel in disguise, as he took Dre in and Dre flourished. He did go on to playing the guitar, piano and the saxophone (he didn't want to play the flute). He also went back to school after being out for 3 years. Once again, he amazed all of us as he immediately started to get 80's and 90's in some of his subjects.

Unfortunately, his psychiatrist and I thought the episode he had was brought on by PTSD as he was always dressed in suit pants and dress shirts, was excelling in school and music. Just prior to being hospitalized he had been living at a friend's place for the past 4 years. His friend kicked him out at the first of July 2021, and went to his mom's who, within 2 weeks dumped him off at his dad's as she was moving in with a man in Brampton and Dre was an inconvenience. Within 2 weeks he had an altercation with his dad and at the end of July he called me and asked if he could come and live with me.

We took a chance and weaned him off his meds. His current regiment of Olanzapine and Quetiapine was causing short term memory loss and fatigue. This was the first mistake we made.

Dre suffered a manic attack and called his dad to come and get him. After being bounced around he ended up at his mom's, in Brampton, and ultimately in the Brampton Mental Health Facility after almost being killed when he was dragged by a car. Now he was on a bit different regiment of medications but this combination caused him to gain weight rapidly with major fatigue and depression as side effects. When his mom showed up to take him, just weeks before the end of his semester, he went willingly due to the adverse affects of the medication and stopped taking them entirely. However, it wasn't long before he became manic again and she dumped him off at his dad's and Dre called me to come and get him.

Once again, he was back in the hospital and this time it was Owen Sound. This time they attempted to try Abilify as it was available in injection form that only required one injection per month. Thankfully, they started out with the pills first to see how he would react. This drug caused severe

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paranoia and the delusion that he was losing his hair. He would go from one mirror to another and then to his phone constantly checking his hair. He would bend over, so you could see the top of his head and say, "Can't you see the bald spots?" Now he had to take another medication to counteract this medication and it was back into the hospital in Owen Sound again.

After being released, I believe in some way he had lost all hope and when his dad came to get him, he went willingly as he could go off his meds again. His mom wouldn't let him come back to her house and eventually he ended up at my daughter's. He wouldn't go back to the hospital to get his medication and the video provided on this website called "Manic Moment" was the result prior to going into the hospital in Stratford this time. He had become manic and used some cannabis that was laced with other drugs and took off running in the wintertime with no coat or shoes on. When the police caught up with him, he was hyperthermic and had to be rushed to the Listowel Memorial Hospital for treatment before he was transported to the Stratford Mental facility.

A different hospital and a different regiment of medications. Only this time they refused to listen to me when they were about to administer Invega. I objected and said that would be detrimental as it was in the same family as Abilify. Dre was now over 18 and I had no say in what they did. The results were devastating as they didn't try the pill form first to see how he would react, they just went straight to the injections. After the first 7-day injection he was already becoming paranoid. The day he left the hospital they gave him a 28-day injection. That's when all hell broke loose. On the way home from the hospital he undid his seatbelt and was going to crawl to the back of my SUV to recover a RED bible that he said was giving off bad vibes and had to be thrown out. I managed to get him to stay in his seat for the hour-long drive home. When he got home, he put the RED bible in the bedroom downstairs and then put another bible outside the closed bedroom door to keep the bad vibes in the room. This was followed by the paranoia that a gang was coming to get him, take him to another country, kill him and cut him into pieces.

This time I had no problem convincing him to go to the Owen Sound hospital where he would be safe. They were trying every combination of medication they could to counteract the Invega. He was on the highest dose of Quetiapine and it wasn't having any affect in calming the paranoia. When he came home, he wouldn't go outside at first. Some days he would curl up in the fetal position with his head on my lap and would ask if I would protect him. I would sit for hours with him in this position. Eventually, he would go outside if I went with him. We started on short walks but if we met someone on the trails he would panic when he passed someone on the trails and we would have to go home. I found trails further from my home that weren't frequented, so we could take our walks. Eventually, he thought that he could go into a restaurant but when we walked through the door he looked around and said "I can't stay here" so we opted for takeout. He went outside while I ordered and then I joined him while waiting for the order. Another time we went to a restaurant whereby he started to cry but insisted on staying. He wanted to go shopping for clothes but we were only in the store for a moment when we had to almost run out of the store as he thought everyone was looking at him. This paranoid state, caused by the Invega, lasted from March 2023 to November 2023.

We moved to Tillsonburg and were fortunate enough to find a great psychiatrist and he suggested a different regiment of drugs. He took him off one medication entirely as it wasn't aiding his recovery at all. Lithium was then introduced with a low dose of Olanzapine to help him sleep. Mania and paranoia are brought on quickly if mental patients can't sleep, which is very common for them to have insomnia.

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Finally, after two and half years and 6 hospitalizations we had finally found the right medication.

Which brings us back to “Medication or Drugs.”

These tortured souls are the most vulnerable people on the planet. Once they turn 18 no one can speak for them. If their homelife is like Dre’s or worse they don’t have consistency and security in their life. Which usually means no frequent visits to their psychiatrist to ensure the medication is working. The counseling at CMHA is minimal and the waiting period takes months. For ones like Dre who suffered enough trauma that it caused “arrested development” it would take years of intense therapy with no guarantee. There is no government assistance for this and CMHA counselors don’t have the required expertise. This requires a psychologist and they charge a minimum of \$200.00/hr.

So where do you suppose, they are going to turn in time of crisis? A phone call to CMHA to tell them they can see them 3 months from now, a hospital that prescribes the wrong medication or family members who take them off their meds and supply them with drugs and alcohol. Or the ultimate sacrifice of drugs laced with Fentanyl?

In addition, where do you think they will live? The following numbers indicate that Canada shows a distinct abhorrence for people who suffer from mental health issues or why wouldn’t they be doing something to help them get off the streets and aid in the Fentanyl crisis.

As of January 2024, the poverty line in Ontario for a single person is **\$2,302 per month, or \$27,631 per year.** This is based on the federal Market Basket Measurement, which estimates the cost of a basic basket of goods and services.

Here are some other poverty-related numbers for Ontario:

- **Ontario Works:** A single person on Ontario Works receives \$733 per month, an amount that has remained frozen for five years. Which is 343.00 for all essentials and 390.00 for rent. **Per annum 8,796.00**
- **Ontario Disability Support:** A single person on Ontario Disability Support receives a maximum of \$1,308 per month. Which is 752.00 for essentials and 556.00 for rent. **Per annum 15,696.00**
- **Low-income threshold:** The low-income threshold for an individual in Ontario is an adjusted net income below \$50,000 per year.

You don’t have to be mentally ill. Statics now show that 80% of Canadians are now ONE PAYCHEQUE from being homeless. This is higher than any third world country.

What the hell is wrong with this picture!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

So, the next time you see a homeless person or someone having a manic attack, stop and ask yourself, what kind of abuse and suffering has brought them to this point.

You don’t have to ask yourself what prompted them to do drugs. You just have to ask why there are people out there willing to kill them without a second thought and certainly with no remorse.