



WORKING WITH CLIENTS ON MEDICATION

At some point, we as therapists are more likely to encounter clients who are taking prescribed Psycho-Pharmaceutical medication.

The reason for this, I believe, is two-fold:

First, mental health as a conversation in society is becoming louder, which in turn raises awareness and normalises people's distress.

Second, although there is still a lot to be done about removing the stigma which surrounds poor mental health, individuals are more likely than ever before to access help, be that medical, therapeutic or spiritual.

So, what do you need to be aware of when working with a client who is taking medication to support their mental health?

How do you engage with clients on the topic of psychopharmacology and counselling?

1. Consider your own views on medication.

This is not about your view of the world—it's about the clients. Harsh but true.

Clients may well ask your opinion about going on antidepressants, of anti-anxiety medication.

The best response to this is to **explore with the client what is informing their choice and their views about it.**

2. It is possible that a client's mood may change when starting or coming off medication.

Most competent doctors understand that medication may have **side effects** either initially or in the long term. This may include lack of appetite, loss of libido (sex drive), flattening of mood, and inability to feel deep emotions.

If a client experiences these symptoms after starting on a course of treatment, sometimes it is helpful to ask if the physician explained any symptoms connected with the medication. If they didn't, you could ask them if they have read the leaflet which comes with the medication.

3. Supporting the client to ask for a medication review.

Sometimes clients feel uncomfortable asking their GP for a review. If this is the case, be supportive and normalise the process of consulting with a doctor to review medication.

4. We practice in a mixed economy.

A lot of our clients will feel the benefit of receiving therapy *and* taking medication. This is the reality of modern practice life.

5. Be open-minded.

There are some strong views for and against medication. There are very few times in life where there is only one solution to any problem.

Part of the process of developing a balanced view is **research**.

Below are some links which may be useful:

<https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/treatments-and-wellbeing/antidepressants>

<https://www.nhs.uk/news/medication/big-new-study-confirms-antidepressants-work-better-placebo/>

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/health/news/12039952/anti-depressants-vs-counselling.html>