

Fran's Story – Sex, Lies and SSRIs

When I began taking antidepressants, it was my poor husband who suffered the worst side effects. I lost interest in sex. It's a sorry day when you have to make the choice between mental health and sexual intimacy.

When I decided to take an SSRI for my depression over a decade ago, it didn't occur to me that it would be a life long sentence. Somehow, in the chaos of raising children, working and maintaining a household, I lost sight of how important an engaged, affectionate, sexually satisfying physical life was to a healthy marriage.

Sex became a bargaining chip: I'll do things for you if you'll do things for me. Orgasm became something I could produce but not something I naturally desired. Separated from normal sexual feelings and sensations, I saw sex as just another item on my domestic drudgery list; right up there with taking out the garbage and paying the bills. I began to see my husband as a nuisance!

Fortunately, for completely different reasons, I decided to try coming off the drugs. It required a team effort involving me, my doctor, a nutritionist and my therapeutic friends at Suppers. I didn't ask for support at home. I'd played that card too many times and I was terrified of the consequences of another failure. How many times had I told my family, "This time I really mean it. This time, things will be different." I couldn't bear to see the skepticism in their eyes nor could I bear their anger and sadness if I let them down again.

Well, this time, with support from family, friends and health professionals, I did it and I am off the SSRIs! And, guess what the best side effect is when you come off antidepressants – I got my normal libido back!! A physical life and healthy sexual relationship is so important to my husband and me. When we are intimate, the household runs better. There is less conflict over the kids and money. There is no need for bargaining chips. Now, I enjoy my husband. I look forward to being with him and I don't have to pretend.

Maybe that's the best thing about being off all the drugs: it is a lot easier to be honest with myself and with others when I am more closely connected to my feelings.