Letter about the horrors of psychiatric drug withdrawal

A psychiatric survivor from Lithuania sent me this.

I was on antidepressant and antipsychotic drugs for about two years, and they really destroyed my physical and mental health. I consider myself very lucky to be able to quit all that poison, but it was a long and very painful process. Many days I just prayed to die and was very suicidal. Recently I turned forty, but I feel old and exhausted as if I'm nearly seventy years old. I'm angry at the psychiatric system, not only for destroying my health and causing years of suffering, but also for destroying my inner strength (or willpower) and causing me to degrade into such low and miserable mental states.

When I said I was lucky to get off these drugs, I really mean it. Withdrawal was agonizing at a physical level and terrible things were happening in my mind. I think many people commit suicide or lose their minds or have to go back on these drugs for the rest of their damaged lives.

Suicidal things started when I first tried to quit and began lowering doses; I had insomnia and anxiety. Only physical work and exercise lessened my anxiety, but because I couldn't rest or sleep, I got so exhausted that I wanted to end my pains, but I called my sister and she brought me to hospital. They put me on the same drugs and that didn't help at all. Soon after I was released, I experienced a suicidal psychosis, where I threw a power surge strip into a bathtub with water, but again managed to call my sister.

They switched drugs, but they gave me bad side effects; I would wake up at night with my heart beating at 140 bpm. After I was released from hospital, I began having suicidal visions for hours. They were very seductive, and I had very little inner strength. At first, when I told my psychiatrist about them, he put me on some sedatives, but he also considered putting me on strong nervous system suppressing drugs that I heard other patients were cursing.

So, I lied that suicidal things had stopped. I realized they have no idea what any new drug would cause, and they had already done enough damage to my health. I would go for a walk every time my suicidal visions started and wouldn't stop until it became better. After about 6 weeks, the visions stopped.

The worst thing happened after I stopped the drugs cold turkey. Slowly, agonizing pain on a mental and physical level built up, and I had the most dangerous suicidal experiences. It's hard to explain, but it felt like something inside me dropped down and was pressing down and I had no strength to push it back; it was really draining my inner resources. It all felt so physical. Sometimes, I would shock myself out of such states by doing painful things, but sometimes I would contemplate suicide, like a natural thing, e.g. should I go shopping today or wait till tomorrow? I was so exhausted that I didn't believe I could live for more than a month.

But my health started returning, though I would still have painful crises, which caused me to think if it was really worth it going through all this suffering. I was lucky not to have many stressful events in the outside world when my inner world had collapsed and was exhausted. My nervous system was really damaged, and weird and painful things were happening to me (much more than I write here).

Even though I had many painful experiences, I am glad I was able to get off the drugs and have compassion for those who have to live in a miserable state caused by strong drugs until their death. I don't understand how this psychiatric drug madness can continue to exist and there are very few who tell the truth about these drugs. Everyone must know how dangerous and destructive these drugs can be. Please, continue your work, it will save the health and lives of many people.