

Dawn Farm's Approach to Psychotropic Medications

Many Dawn Farm clients report symptoms of depression, anxiety or sleep disorders. Dawn Farm takes a conservative approach with diagnosing psychiatric disorders and the use of psychotropic medications for the following reasons:

- Reliable diagnosis of psychiatric disorders in addicts and alcoholics takes weeks and months, not minutes, hours and days.
- It is our anecdotal experience that psychiatric disorders are over-diagnosed in alcoholics and addicts.
- According to research, most people entering treatment are experiencing *symptoms* of a mental illness but these symptoms will improve significantly over a period of 3 to 6 weeks without any psychiatric treatment.
 - This 3 to 6 week timeframe is the same timeframe that we would expect psychotropic drugs to take effect.
 - If a newly abstinent person is placed on medication and improves in 3 to 6 weeks, we would be unable to determine whether the medication or recovery reduced the symptoms.
- Given the crises that bring people to treatment, profound sadness and anxiety are to be expected. *These responses to crisis are not signs of a disorder.* Confronting these feelings is an important task in early recovery.

(For a more detailed explanation of those reasons, please refer to *Dawn Farm's Position on Addiction and Mood Disorders.*)

As a result of the reasons outlined above, all psychiatric diagnoses and medications are reviewed. Based on this review, you may be asked to discontinue or taper some or all of your medications. This decision will be based on an assessment of your safety, symptom severity, the circumstances of prior diagnoses, response to psychiatric treatment, and your ability to participate in treatment.

If you are asked to discontinue or taper medications, this does not mean that we think any symptoms you are having are unimportant – or that we are ignoring them. We will continue to address those symptoms with other effective approaches like cognitive behavioral therapy and 12 step strategies. If your symptoms worsen or fail to improve, we will perform another review and may reconsider medications.

If this approach is recommended for you, we understand that you may feel anxious, angry, misunderstood – or unconvinced that this is the best approach. This is a common reaction, but our experience indicates that this is often the best approach. We expect that you will work with the treatment team - and that we trust each other. Of course, you have the right to request a referral to another treatment program at any time.