

“ I was originally diagnosed with depression which was triggered by things that happened early on in my life which I hadn't had time to deal with like members of my family dying and friends becoming ill. At first I was prescribed antidepressants and they helped a bit, but then it became apparent it was more complicated than that. Certainly don't think that the doctors took the decision lightly to put me on to Lithium, a mood stabiliser, as I think it has to be prescribed by a consultant because of the monitoring involved. I came off that as it can affect your kidney function and mine was displaying the warning signs, so I was changed over to a different medication and three years ago that changed to Prozac. I have found Prozac very effective and it has actually given me fewer effects than other medication. With some of the others I've felt very drowsy and sedated and quite cut off from things. I don't get that with Prozac. I feel more awake and aware. It did have a few side effects at first, like it can give you indigestion, but apart from that I haven't noticed anything else. I also think I'm more talkative than I used to be. Before it seemed like an effort to talk and I think I could be quite monosyllabic.

I take one a day in the morning because they can make you feel wide awake so it's better to take it then than just before bed. I don't know if I expect to be on it long term, but I have asked my doctor about it and there is talk about reducing it gradually but I haven't yet been given any dates for that yet. It's hard to know how difficult that will be for me as the proof is in the doing, but I think it's important first to gauge what circumstances are around you and the stresses there are in your life. It's certainly not something you can go 'cold turkey' with and it needs to be done with guidance from your GP. I'm lucky in that I've got a very good doctor and she helped me chart my moods which helped me pin point things which triggered 'down' periods. I think it's important to have medication and support as they go hand in hand, because it's not just talking about issues which could be making you depressed, but also about having space and time to talk to someone about the whole experience of having to go onto medication. You could easily get into the habit of simply picking up a repeat prescription and not having the support which can move you on. I don't think GP's have the time to offer that kind of service, but they do need to be aware of other appropriate services they can direct people to for it. Certainly

Prozac has been a good thing for me, and given in conjunction with other forms of support it can enable you to deal with things you wouldn't be able to if you didn't have it. But I know people who have described Prozac to me rather like Vallium was in its day, like something which automatically comes with a certain way of life, a happy pill, which you can take and all your problems disappear. I don't think GP's take that view, but I think from what I've read and surveys I've seen that some GP's acknowledge that it may be too readily available. But it's not a designer drug or a lifestyle choice and people taking it do need to be monitored. My advice to people is that when you see your GP inquire about what other support services are available, because there's more around now in terms of information and voluntary organisations, than there has ever been.”