

## **PE1651/HHHHH**

Anonymous submission of 21 January 2018

I am submitting an anonymous submission for the purposes of bringing to light serious emotional/psychiatric harm sustained by taking antidepressants, and the side effects that remained even after discontinuation.

I'm a 30-year-old female and I've had PSSD (Post-SSRI Sexual Dysfunction) since 2009. I have a history of severe OCD and began taking brand Zoloft when I was 16 to treat my symptoms. I had no sexual side effects at all, but ended up tapering off the medicine when I was 20 because I could no longer afford to pay for the medication. After I discontinued, the OCD thoughts came back, and three months later I was on meds again -- only now I was taking the generic sertraline, at the same dose, because that was all I could afford without insurance.

I became asexual literally overnight. I lost all genital function, had no ability to reach orgasm, no sexual attraction or fantasies whatsoever -- it was like a switch had been turned off. The prescribing psychiatrist told me this was normal, though, and to stick with the drugs, which I did for a few more months, until finally I got fed up and "cold turkeyed" off the medication. Even though there were no longer any drugs in my system, every single side effect remained. For the last nine years, I have tried almost everything I can think of to get my sex drive back. With a few, temporary exceptions, nothing has succeeded in giving it back to me.

I have taken all kinds of herbs/pills and done all kinds of exercises. I even took Bupropion XL, which delivered very inconsistent results and unfortunately gave me a seizure. Nothing has truly helped. Right now I am involved with a community of similar PSSD sufferers called the PSSD Forum trying to find answers and hope.

### **Did your Dr warn you about the withdrawal effects?**

My psychiatrist did not warn me about any side effects. After starting the medication, when I brought up the fact that I did experience side effects, he said that it was "normal" and to continue the medication. When I abruptly discontinued the medicine, the side effects remained. No one was concerned about it except for me.

Subsequent doctors and psychiatrists I visited -- including a gynecologist -- told me that it was normal for a woman to have a low sex drive, and that I shouldn't worry about it.

### **Have pharmaceutical drugs harmed you?**

The loss of sex drive has been devastating to me. I no longer feel desire, arousal, experience lubrication, or have orgasms. My genitals feel "dead." I still have OCD, but without taking the medication that harmed me, I have no way of treating it.

### **Have you had to give up work?**

I have not given up work. However, the self-loathing and lack of confidence I felt after my fallout with the medication was life-altering. I no longer felt like a woman or

someone that anyone could love. As a result, I "aimed low" in life, turning down opportunities to better myself and be happy. I avoided social situations out of shame. I also allowed friends and family to treat me badly, telling myself I deserved no better because I wasn't really human anymore. My doctors told me that it was depression and OCD that made me feel this way, not loss of sex drive. I was frequently told "there's more to life than sex" and to not worry about it, even though I was in a loving relationship with someone else, someone with a disparate (healthy) sex drive to mine, and we used to have fulfilling, uncomplicated sex on a regular basis. Nine years of PSSD have done much to tear my life and mental health apart.

Thank you for allowing me to tell my story. I hope it helps others.