

■ Advantages and disadvantages of using tranquillisers

Advantages

- ❶ Tranquillisers make you less anxious in the short term.
- ❷ They can help you to tackle difficult situations which otherwise you might avoid.
- ❸ They work quite quickly, having an effect on the nervous system in about 10 to 15 minutes.

Disadvantages

- ❶ Tranquillisers do not cure the problems of anxiety. They only mask the symptoms, and do not deal with the original causes.
- ❷ By the very act of taking a tranquilliser you are avoiding coping on your own. This erodes your self-confidence.
- ❸ There is a strong possibility that long-term use of tranquillisers will create dependency and addiction.
- ❹ Tranquillisers have physical side-effects: drowsiness, appetite changes, dry mouth, dizziness, poor coordination.

■ Advice for coming off tranquillisers

- ❶ Work out a programme of gradual reduction with your family doctor, lasting for a couple of months or even longer.
- ❷ Sometimes there are side-effects of withdrawal which are very similar to anxiety symptoms. It is important to remember that they are *not* the original anxiety symptoms returning, although the symptoms seem similar.
- ❸ Take one day at a time. Tell yourself you are coping with just the next day, or even just the next hour. Talk to yourself positively. Remind yourself that the symptoms will not last for ever, and that they are not harmful.
- ❹ Keeping active and occupied will take your mind off the stress of withdrawal. Plan pleasant distracting activities.
- ❺ Use your anxiety management skills and become more confident in controlling your anxiety.
- ❻ Identify the time of day and week when it would be easier to miss out on a tablet or a portion of a tablet; this is the best place to start.
- ❼ Don't try to come off everything all at once. Plan a gradual and even reduction.