

# ESSENTIAL PSYCHIATRIC MEDICATIONS

## Information for Counsellors

### A Two-Page Quick Reference

#### ANTIDEPRESSANTS

**Examples:** Sertraline, Escitalopram, Fluoxetine, Venlafaxine, Mirtazapine

**Used for:**

- Depression
- Anxiety disorders
- OCD
- PTSD

**Common issues clients report:**

- Nausea when starting
- Headaches
- Reduced libido/sexual difficulties
- Sleep disturbance or tiredness
- Emotional "numbness" in some people

#### ANTIPSYCHOTICS

**Examples:** Olanzapine, Quetiapine, Risperidone, Aripiprazole, Clozapine

**Used for:**

- Schizophrenia and psychosis
- Bipolar disorder
- Severe agitation

**Common issues clients report:**

- Weight gain
- Sleepiness
- Feeling slowed down
- Restlessness

#### MOOD STABILISERS

**Examples:** Lithium, Valproate, Lamotrigine

**Used for:**

- Bipolar disorder
- Mood instability

**Important point:**

- Lithium requires regular blood tests.

#### ANXIETY & SLEEP MEDICATIONS

**Examples:** Lorazepam, Diazepam

**Used for:**

- Severe anxiety
- Panic
- Acute distress

- Alcohol withdrawal

**Important point:**

- Usually intended for short-term use because dependence can occur.

**ADHD MEDICATIONS**

**Examples:** Methylphenidate, Lisdexamfetamine

**Used for:**

- ADHD

**Common issues clients report:**

- Reduced appetite
- Difficulty sleeping
- Increased alertness

**DEMENTIA MEDICATIONS**

**Examples:** Donepezil, Memantine

**Used for:**

- Alzheimer's disease and other dementias

**WHAT COUNSELLORS SHOULD REMEMBER**

**1. Medication Helps Symptoms**

Medication can reduce symptoms but rarely solves the underlying psychological, social, relational, or trauma-related issues.

**2. Never Advise Stopping Medication**

Encourage clients to discuss concerns with their prescriber.

**3. Ask Three Simple Questions**

- What medication are you taking?
- Is it helping?
- Are you experiencing any side effects?

**4. Watch for Risk**

If a client reports:

- New suicidal thoughts
- Severe agitation
- Confusion
- Mania (very high mood, little sleep, impulsivity)
- Psychotic symptoms
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Encourage urgent medical review.

**5. Counselling + Medication Often Works Best**

For many conditions, the combination of psychological therapy and medication is more effective than either alone.