

On Doctors
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Medical doctors do a lot of good in the world—get that, I’m not putting doctors down. I do have some reservations about them, however, particularly around their treatment of personal problems, and I’ll go into that here. Another disclaimer, I’m not trivializing personal/mental problems. They can be very serious and overwhelming and call for intensive medical intervention. I just finished reading a book that underscores this point—*One Friday in April* by David Antrim (W.W. Norton, 2021). So take this thought as a limited, qualified criticism of how doctors conduct their business.

Essentially, doctors do two things; cut on you with a knife and give you drugs. They are socially sanctioned drug dealers. The old saying that to a carpenter everything looks like a nail applies to doctors: to them, everything looks like a drug (that doesn’t look like knife, anyway). To every issue (except those that lend themselves to cutting on you) it’s the same: take drugs. They call them meds but they are drugs, dope, in the same category as heroin, cocaine, and crystal meth. Yes, drugs work, they make you feel better, that’s why people take them. But you pay a price for taking them. If Elvis were alive, he would testify to that—he wound up depressed, fat, constipated, and dead at forty-two.

A big problem with medical doctors is that they take over maintenance of your health and distract you from taking responsibility for it and employing non-cutting-and-drug methods to achieve optimum health—optimum health, not just absence of problems and disease. Another way to say it, they keep you from getting on your own case, making your health your job and not theirs.

Doctors believe, and sell patients on the idea, that they are qualified to diagnose and treat personal, non-medical issues. A favorite diagnosis of theirs is depression, and there’s anxiety and

stress. You may simply be unhappy with the way your life is going, and for good reason, but it's tough to work drug dealing into that state of affairs, so it's "You're depressed" and out comes the pad and "Here's the prescription to fill at a pharmacy, goodbye."

My unsolicited advice is to never mindlessly do what doctors tell you to do. Use doctors, but don't turn your life over to them. Defer to nobody. I give them credit, doctors have been very effective at putting themselves on a pedestal: they look down and you look up. You've scheduled an audience with them, to which they are late--keeping people waiting is a power move—and you get their pronouncement. You work for them, do what they dictate. My take on it is that it should be the reverse. You look down and they look up. They are your employees doing a job for you. They offer suggestions, not directives.

Don't thoughtlessly put anything into your body. Read the Wikipedia or online Mayo Clinic description of any drug. Read up on any suggested surgical procedure. I did that recently with surgery a doctor was proposing and found it had only a 50% success rate, a hell-on-earth recovery period, and a very small though still real chance of resulting in 24/7 back pain for life. None of that came up in this surgeon's description of the procedure. With a drug, know how does it alters your body to get the result it gets. What are its side-effects and potential side-effects? Every drug has them. Very likely, it's a scary list—liver problems, kidney problems, weight gain, bloating, high blood pressure, physical dependency/addiction, depression, aggressive and suicidal thoughts, and the like.

My thinking is to take as few pills as possible and get off them entirely as soon as possible. Drugs are playing with fire. These doctors/drug dealers don't bother talking about this with patients—often they don't even tell you the name of the drug they've got you on--but in time you pay a price; all dope takers pay a price.

The challenge is to rationally, wisely, use drugs. I take a drug for high blood pressure, a medical condition. I know its side-effects and I've made a conscious, considered choice to take this drug and pay the price for the benefits I get from it. I don't depend on this

drug alone. I do other things to keep my blood pressure down—nutrition, stress reduction, and weight management.

In contrast, I was prescribed a drug for a sleep problem I was having. Per usual, the doctor didn't discuss the side-effects of this drug with me. As do all sleeping pills, it produces what is what's called a rebound effect. It works one night, but it keeps the sleep problem going the next night and even worse. So another pill. Over time, the body gets used to a drug and it takes two pills to get the same effect. And then you wind up mixing the pills with alcohol to get to sleep. The pills produce depression and lethargy and a negative attitude and the quality of your life goes down.

Did the doctor pay attention to any of that? No. This pleasant, vaguely condescending guy would have written prescriptions for re-fills of this drug forever. Finally, I'd had it. It took me a month, and I went through a really tough withdrawal, but I got off those pills. I'm as proud of myself for doing this as I am for anything I have ever done in my life. I'm now sleeping great, and my attitude and energy are better and my life is better and I'm happier. Never will I take a sleeping pill again, even over-the-counter pills. Never.

Find out about ways of dealing with your issues besides cutting and drugs. Be cut on and take drugs—probably along with other things—only if you have decided it's the best thing to do.

Anxiety, to use this example, is a word. You don't have a word. You have whatever you are experiencing, all that you are experiencing. You need to get beyond words to the reality of your being. Be quiet and attend to yourself. What are you feeling right now, and I mean literally, how does your body feel? What pictures, images, are in your head? What thoughts do you have? What is going on in your life and how is it affecting you? Put words to all that, as many as it takes. What's is happening with you is far more complex than to be captured in one word, anxiety or any other.

If you are feeling distressed or off, a question to ask yourself, is there anything in my life that is different from the way things

were, say, six months or a year ago? Name it. Figure out how it affects you and how you can deal with it besides taking a pill.

Here are a couple of articles I suggest you read on managing stress and anxiety.

<https://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/stress-management>

<https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/how-to-cope-with-anxiety>

Try some of these techniques if they make sense to you. But keep in mind that doing that will take work, effort. One of the things that makes the number doctors run on people so effective and gets them so much money—they charge your insurance hundreds of dollars for a brief encounter with them--is they tell people to do things that are all but effortless to pull off. Lie there while I cut on you, take this with a glass of water.

I must admit, I'm envious of doctors. I wish I could define problems in one word— anxiety, let's say--and tell you do something that is virtually effortless like take a pill. What I see as best takes thought and effort. It takes assuming responsibility for your life, not spending a few minutes with someone and giving your life over to them. It takes keeping your mind crystal clear—pills invariably make you foggy—and going all out to fix what isn't right in your life. I'm down on using substances to prop yourself up or solve your problems—alcohol, drugs, pills, food, anything. I've lived a very long life and I've seen the great cost people have paid for using substances to make things better for a while and I don't want you paying that cost.

Learn from people who are happy and productive. They aren't leaning on substances. They aren't sitting around staring at their phones or laptop screens or television tubes. They aren't grooving on the lives of other people--celebrities, ballplayers, or internet influencers. They aren't consumed with what's wrong and grievances and resentment. They are building up their bodies, not destroying them. They are alert and alive, not numbed out. They are loving and kind and decent. They are getting good things

done. They transcend the apparent dichotomies—separations--between work and play and fun. Their work is play for them, and it is fun for them, enjoyable, a good time. In moments when they are down, they remind themselves to cheer up. And very rarely does it take a pill to do that. Most often, it just takes breaking into a smile.