

# BOOK CORNER

## The Two-Edged Sword of Psychoactive Drugs

review by Jule Klotter

### *Break Your Prescribed Addiction*

by Billie Jay Sahley, PhD, CNC, and Katherine M. Birkner, CRNA, PhD

Pain & Stress Publications, 5282 Medical Drive, Suite 160, San Antonio, Texas 78229-5379; 800-669-2256

<http://www.painstresscenter.com>

ISBN 1-889391-27-3; Softcover, c.2004, \$14.95, 255 pp.

"Prescription drug abuse is one of the most prevalent, yet *least known addictions in the US today*," authors Billie Jay Sahley, PhD, CNC, and Katherine M. Birkner, CRNA, PhD, assert in their book *Break Your Prescribed Addiction*. Tranquilizers, anti-depressants, sleeping pills, and pain relievers may be helpful temporarily, but they tend to have little therapeutic effect after four to six months of continuous use. Yet patients often continue to take the drugs, because they fear what will happen if they stop, and they mistake withdrawal reactions for a return of their symptoms. Rather than helping the body heal, pharmaceutical drugs often worsen the underlying neurotransmitter imbalance. *Break Your Prescribed Addiction* gives an overview of the amino acids, nutrients, and reduction schedules used at the Pain and Stress Center (San Antonio, Texas) to help people gradually withdraw from addictive substances. The book also profiles commonly used psychoactive drugs.

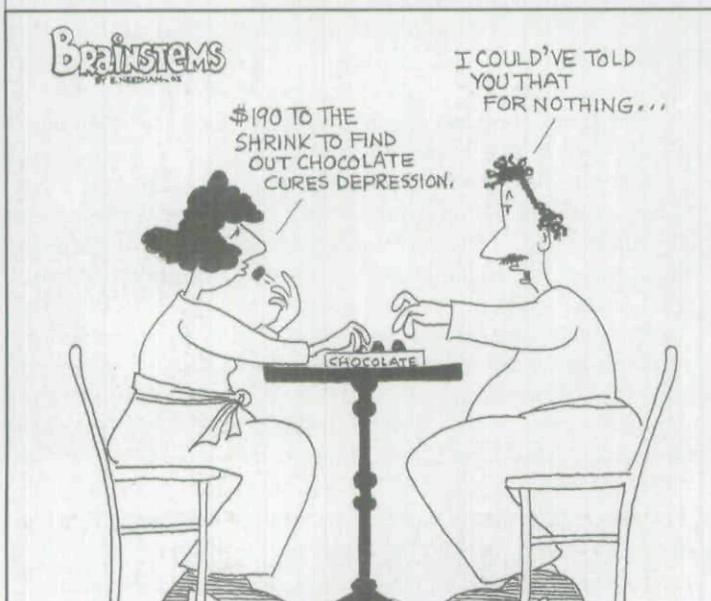
Pharmaceutical drugs usually target a single neurotransmitter, but neurotransmitters interact. "When you artificially change the levels of one neurotransmitter," the authors explain, "others change to try to regain a semblance of balance." For example, the class of drugs used as sedatives and tranquilizers, called

### PEARLS

- People who constantly experience "what-if" anxiety or anticipatory fear have empty GABA receptors in the brain. GABA (dose about 750 mg) mimics the tranquilizing effect of Valium but without heavy sedation. Too much GABA can cause an anxiety attack, numbness/tingling, and shortness of breath. Drink water and eat a little; it will pass.
- L-Theanine, found in green tea, promotes physical relaxation. It encourages the release of GABA, dopamine, and serotonin with no side effects.
- Dr. Roger Williams found that 3,000 to 4,000 milligrams of glutamine daily will stop the craving for alcohol and decrease the craving for sweets.

benzodiazepines, have an affinity for GABA receptors. GABA, an amino acid, functions as an inhibitory neurotransmitter. It slows down and blocks the firing of excitatory signals, including anxiety and panic-related messages. The body responds to benzodiazepines' artificial inhibitory effects by decreasing the number of GABA receptors as it tries to maintain a balance between its inhibitory and excitatory neurotransmitters. With long-term use, benzodiazepines reduce the body's production of all major neurotransmitters, including GABA. This decline affects more than the brain; neurotransmitters affect hormones and physiological function throughout the body. Any psychoactive substance – including alcohol, cocaine, marijuana, and prescription medications for anxiety, pain, and depression – "alters and depletes the brain of naturally occurring neuro-nutrients and neurotransmitters." An alternative to targeting a neurotransmitter deficiency with pharmaceuticals is to give the body the nutrients (amino acids, vitamins, magnesium, and essential fatty acids) needed to replenish depleted neurotransmitters. These same nutritional supplements ease withdrawal symptoms.

*Break Your Prescribed Addiction* explains how to withdraw from benzodiazepines, anti-depressants (SSRIs, MAOs, and tricyclics), sleep medications, and pain drugs. In addition to giving supplement



recommendations to support each type of addiction, the book also gives the dosage reduction schedules that are used at the Pain and Stress Center. The authors repeatedly state: "Use extreme caution when starting any drug withdrawal program. Do not begin withdrawal unless you follow a program that advises you how and what to do and what to expect. Your nutritional support program should be in place prior [at least one week] to withdrawal to restore needed brain nutrients." Knowing what kind of withdrawal symptoms may arise before beginning the program eases fear and lessens the possibility of failure. The authors urge patients to view withdrawal symptoms as a sign that the body is healing. They also recommend that people with major addiction seek the guidance of a health care practitioner, preferably one who is familiar with nutritional therapy. Substituting one drug or chemical for another, a common practice in many drug rehabilitation programs, is "the worst possible treatment," according to the authors. Too often, the drugs simply exacerbate underlying neurotransmitter imbalance. The sleeping pill Ambien, for example, also affects GABA receptors, even though it is not a benzodiazepine.

In addition to maintaining nutritional support and following a gradual reduction schedule, the authors recommend daily exercise and some form of meditation, relaxation, or deep breathing to help change brain chemistry. They also emphasize the importance of psychological support from family, friends, and professional counselors, particularly when withdrawing from benzodiazepines: "Benzodiazepines cause emotional blunting, and coming off them will allow long-suppressed feelings to emerge." Successfully withdrawing from a substance is half the battle. Staying off addictive substances also requires effort. Again, amino acid therapy can help. The authors also suggest exploring biofeedback, meditation, homeopathy, phenolics (the neutralization of toxic reactions), herbs, deep tissue massage, and acupuncture. (I would add sauna detoxification to that list.)

## BOOK CORNER

*Break Your Prescribed Addiction* is a very practical guide to ending dependence upon psychoactive prescription drugs. Like other books from Pain & Stress Publications that I've read, it educates readers about the nutrients and natural alternatives to pharmaceutical treatments. This book is also a real eye-opener for people who do not realize the negative effects of depending upon these medications.

# STRESS-ANXIETY-DOWN?



## #1 Natural Alternative for Stress/Anxiety!

Anxiety Control keeps your brain from running on empty.

Anxiety Control's patented formula restores the brain depleted by stress/anxiety. No other formula compares to Anxiety Control!

Anxiety Control provides amino acids that create neurotransmitters so you feel calm, relaxed, and in control.

*Anxiety Control is the answer to stress and anxiety.*

Anxiety Control 90 Capsules

## Put Back the Nutrients That Belong There!™

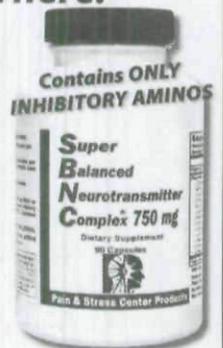
Your brain requires a constant supply of amino acids and nutrients. Low levels occur from poor diet, infection, trauma, aging, certain drugs, and biochemical imbalances.

Neurotransmitters regulate every biochemical reaction in the body and specific amino acids must be provided daily for the brain to be chemically balanced.

Super BNC provides specific inhibitory amino acids that meets the needs of our busy brains.

Super BNC supports your stressful lifestyle and helps keep your brain functioning at its peak performance. Use Super BNC with other formulas such as Anxiety Control, Mood Sync, or Teen Link.

Super BNC 90 Caps



## BREAK Your PRESCRIBED ADDICTION

A Guide To Coming Off . . .  
Tranquilizers, Antidepressants  
(S.S.R.I.s, M.A.O.s) & More  
Using Amino Acids and Nutrients

Billie Jay Sahley, Ph.D., C.N.C.  
Katherine M. Birkner, C.R.N.A., Ph.D.

Break Your Prescribed Addiction  
book \$14.95 +P&H

## THE ANXIETY EPIDEMIC

A Wounded Healer Tells  
You How to Use GABA  
and Other Amino Acids  
to Control Anxiety  
and Panic

Billie J. Sahley, Ph.D.

The Anxiety Epidemic book  
\$9.95 +P&H

## CONTROL Alcoholism with Amino Acids & Nutrients

Understand  
Why You Crave  
Alcohol And  
What Amino Acids  
You Can Take To  
Stop  
The Craving!

Billie Jay Sahley, Ph.D., C.N.C.  
Katherine M. Birkner, C.R.N.A.

Control Alcoholism with Amino  
Acids book \$8.95 +P&H



Pain & Stress Center Products

1-800-669-2256

Amino Acid Specialists for Over 25 Years

Web: [www.painstresscenter.com](http://www.painstresscenter.com)

Quantity  
Discounts  
Available

Copyright of Townsend Letter for Doctors & Patients is the property of Townsend Letter Group and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.