

## **The Secret to Getting Off Benzodiazepines Successfully:**

I worked in an alcohol and drug rehabilitation for 6 years and also have worked with people who present to me on baby doses of a benzodiazepine medicine (such as  $\frac{1}{4}$  tablet of valium, Xanax, or Klonopin) but cannot discontinue that final dose without having severe sleep problems or other withdrawal symptoms that seem without end—and then they end up frustrated and feel forced to restart the medication they were hoping to discontinue in the first place. The best way I have found to deal with this issue is to TEMPORARILY have someone take a non-addictive medication for 30 days after stopping the benzodiazepine. One option for sleep might include trazodone and another option for anxiety could be gabapentin (yes, these need to be prescribed by MD or NP). It usually takes about 30 days for the body to work through the benzodiazepine withdrawal enough so that the sleep architecture starts to normalize by that time. At that point, if a person does not have a prior history of sleep or anxiety issues, the medications can usually be discontinued without difficulty and voila. You are now benzodiazepine and medication free.