title: **Stopped Taking Meds, Lost my powers of programming**
num_comments: 32
num_up_votes: 82
upvote_ratio: 0.99

Post Text

This is probably more venting than anything else, but here it goes:TLDR; Could code well before meds, got better after starting meds, stopped taking meds and now worse at programming that I was before the meds. ​ Firstly, to start, my doc is aware and has me calling him every week with updates. I didn't just stop cold turkey. He is currently leaning to putting me back on the meds because he doesn't want this to impact my job. Anyways, before my diagnosis 6 years ago, I was already pretty decent at scripting. Automating a lot of reports with VBA or Python. After I started taking meds (first Adderall then Vyvanse - Adderall led to a lot of anxiety issues). The last 5 years of Vyvanse have been great for my job performance. I've started to expand into other languages, left VBA in the dust and never looked back, and have done a lot of things way more complex than refreshing an Excel report. But now, the last three weeks, I can't seem to focus enough to get a single line of code down. My current project is suffering now. I know what I have to do, its not the most complex thing in the world. I've done things similar before. But I am just staring at a wall of code that I wrote before I stopped the meds and don't seem to understand a thing of it. It's like the Programming Tower of Babel. I stopped the Vyvanse because I realized I was experiencing some side-effects. None of the horribly bad ones, but side effects none the less. My blood pressure had increased, but was managing with other meds. My creativity took a massive hit. I used to draw all the time and it occurred to me last month that I didn't draw anymore. In addition, I was experiencing performance problems elsewhere, if you get my meaning (meds helped there too). A week after stopping, my blood pressure was normal without meds, I was drawing (and enjoying it) and my other problems seemed to disappear. It's a conundrum that I can't seem to come to grips with. Risk my career or go back to having these very minor/manageable side effects. ​ EDIT: Wow, thank you to all. I really didn't expect to get any replies and was really just trying to bounce it out into the ether (Kind of like when I talk to my cat about the bugs in my code and suddenly I realize the problem). Anyways, all your replies gave me A LOT to think about and I really appreciate it. Talked with my Dr and am going to go back on Vyvanse for now. I realize now (and when I really think about it, by Dr did warn me of this), I went off the meds without any sort of plan to make up the difference. My diet sucks, I don't exercise (physically or mentally), my sleep ain't the greatest, etc. I went off them, telling myself "I've done this before without meds, I'll just do it again..." (yeah, that was stupid, I know :/) This time, taking your advice in mind, make a plan, build the habits I need for proper diet, exercise, mental exercises and make sure I'm better established before I try going off my meds again. I, also, now realize my biggest mistake - I didn't involve my wife in my decision to go off the meds. This little adventure in reddit reminded me that you can't go at it alone, or you will fail and fail hard. Again, Thank you all for your replies and advice!

Comments

Commenter_2
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 29
Programming for me without my ADHD meds is possible, but so much harder. I switched to Vyvanse after Concerta and then Adderall. Vyvanse has side effects as well, but for me they are so much more manageable than the other ADHD meds I tried. I need my job for so much more than for the income it brings.

Commenter_3
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 7
I would try weaning your self off instead of stopping cold turkey. Also, there are some nootropics that can help you with amphetamine withdrawal. Having taken them since I was in elementary school, bpc-157 was a game changer. Semax has also helped a ton. If you're interested, you can find a bunch of info on /r/Nootropics. Just search the sub for "amphetamine withdrawal"

OP
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2
I check that out, thanks. I didn't stop cold turkey, but have been on Vyvanse for 5 years without much break, other than the occasional weekend off.

Commenter_5
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2
I'll second this, you're likley in amphetamine withdrawal. I'd also reccomended weaning yourself off instead of going cold turkey. Probably a good idea to talk to your doctor? I have been on concerta for forever and have had good results.

Commenter_6
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 17
Stay hydrated. Get 8 hrs of sleep. Eat better.

The basics count alot towards mental sharpness.

Commenter_7
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 7
I would recommend trying out high caffeine and see if you can improve without your prescription. I only take my Vyvanse 5 days a week and clonidine all week at night. Exercise.

Commenter_8
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 7
If the issue is understanding the code, then comments help a ton (as mentioned previously). I've been professionally coding for 10+ years and I still get help from my previous self when rereading code and comments from years ago. I also leave super detailed notes in JIRAs and pull requests, because it's easy to forget the details 6 months later when the code actually gets used. Most of my coworkers love it because they don't have to spend a ton of time grocking what the code is doing. IMO the best comments focus on the why or try to summarize the code, especially if the code path is a little crazy. In a perfect world, the code is self documenting, simple, and self contained. In the real world, time and energy are limited, and everything has tradeoffs.

That said, you might be experiencing overwhelm instead. I'm kind of experiencing what you're feeling with my personal gamedev code. I know what I need to do, I've written it a dozen times before, and I could probably get it done in a few hours, but when I stare at the codebase, I feel like there's a huge wall that I can't break through. I was finally able to make a dent a few weeks ago when I just focused on making a single tiny feature (simple parallax sprite background). And then I got stuck again... I think the trick is to try and ignore the whole project and only focus on making the tiniest change, and then build up from there. In the past, I've been able to get massive features working by first getting the simplest and most important part working, and then incrementally solving all of the edge cases, one commit at a time.

Ironically, writing this out helped me figure out what I need to do. Best of luck with your code and I hope you find a way through your wall.

OP
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 3
Hey! Glad I could indirectly help you figure your thing out. It is amazing what typing or saying it out loud can do. My cat spends the work day in my office with me, so I constantly talk to her about issues in my code. She just stares me down with murderous eyes, but helps none the less.

As I mentioned in another reply, I am downright terrible at commenting, but try to make up for it with descriptive variables and type declarations, even when not required. I also do the same thing you do with JIRAs, but our company uses GitHub.

You are dead on with the overwhelming aspect of it. I do try and break it down into smaller bits, but then get overwhelmed when I try and stitch the smaller bits together. I do like the one commit at time thing though. I typically save all my commits for the end of the day. Bad practice, I know :)

Commenter_9
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 13
Ive found that Vyvanse keeps me from getting distracted, but caffeine allows me to control (aim) my hyperfocus.

Commenter_10
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 23
> caffeine allows me to control (aim) my hyperfocus

Some of the most beautiful code I've ever written, and the most productive I've ever been was when I've taken Adderall, caffeine, and listen to specific techno songs I like over and over on repeat.

This may not work for everyone.

Commenter_11
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 7
Is techno an ADHD favored genre? I cannot explain the kind of positive trance it puts me in and I've always wondered why my friends crap all over it.

Commenter_12
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2
I hadn't thought of that before, but there's definitely a decent level of correlation
(sample size = 2 or 3 people is always how you wanna run your experiments)

Commenter_13
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2
I've always been into it. Hardstyle is my favorite genre

Commenter_10
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2
I've no idea. I generally don't listen to techno. I only listen to it in specific circumstances (when I want to hack my brain to become really productive, or when I work out). And I don't listen to all of it, I have a dozen or so songs I like. I don't seek more generally.

Musically, Its repetitive and predictable - I think that has a lot to do with why it works for me. It drowns out all other nonsense and I know what is coming next, because its what came before. I don't have to expend any thought energy on it at all.

Commenter_14
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 6
Try this one and thank me later. It's not techno-y and exciting but holy balls does it get me lazer focused.

https://youtu.be/U0eLmyJkQBc

Commenter_10
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 3
So... Here is one of my gotos. I find its incredibly effective.

Musically, its not complicated, relies on repetition, is in 4/4 time, I think. seems to repeat in patterns of 4 or 8; builds on what came before it. I've heard this song so many times, I know exactly what is coming next, I don't have to think about it. It pulses. It pushes. Its relentless in its goal and purpose, and slows down for nothing.

Plus it was in that movie Hackers, which is dated now, but is still kinda fun. Plus you get to see a young hot Angelina Jolie topless.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wr_wFh46V7I

EDIT: Will this song work for you like it works for me? Probably not. Maybe. I hope it does. But I found this kind of stuff is VERY SUBJECTIVE, more so than liking food or finding things funny.

But I dunno. Hope this song helps someone, wish it helped everyone.

Commenter_12
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2
There really is nothing like a good techno song to have blasting in your ears when writing software.

Commenter_10
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 13
>I am just staring at a wall of code that I wrote before I stopped the meds and don't seem to understand a thing of it. It's like the Programming Tower of Babel.

DOCUMENT the hell out of your code. Use LOTS of comments in the code. Go crazy with spaces and big delimiters and messages custom written specifically that a future version of you will understand.

And/or document the shit out of everything (and I mean the SHIT out of everything) in a separate app. I like OneNote.

>My creativity took a massive hit. I used to draw all the time and it occurred to me last month that I didn't draw anymore.

That happened to me a little bit. The focus would be there, especially in the morning, but creativity was reduced, sometimes a lot.

But I found that creativity returned later in the evening, sometimes with an enjoyable vengeance. My brain would laugh manically at all the wonderfully inventive stuff I'd come up with.

So... Maybe your dose is too high? Try dialing that back a little?

>In addition, I was experiencing performance problems elsewhere, if you get my meaning

Yeah... well... that's why they make toys.

> It's a conundrum that I can't seem to come to grips with. Risk my career or go back to having these very

minor/manageable side effects.

I've rarely found perfect solutions to anything. There always seem to be trade offs. Hate living in a cold climate? Move south! Oh but guess what - summers are hot and sweaty as fuck and the bugs will try to eat you alive. Want to be married and have a family? Great! Guess what? Pretty much should stop having wild, drunken sex parties. Fuckin' trade offs man, they get ya every time.

> ###### OP
> ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2
> I do try to comment, but if there are too many comments, it breaks the flow for me and makes it even harder to read. Descriptive variable names and implicitly setting the types on the arguments that are passed to the function have become a bit more reliable for me in the comments realm.
>
> ​
>
> Unfortunately, my dose is where it had to be. I'm at 40 right now. Anything higher and my focus got better, but my anxiety went through the roof (still not as bad as Adderall). Anything lower on the dose and my anxiety dropped, but my focus went to crap.
>
> Like you said, trade offs get ya every time.

Commenter_15
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 5
You could try a combination treatment with intuniv or clonidine. It will certainly help with some of the stimulant side effects, like blood pressure and anxiety. However, it's definitely started to cause me some problems in other areas too.. Granted this is only my 4th day, so it may resolve itself at some point.

Unknown_User
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 4
I have this exact problem I require meds to function but at the same time I hate the side effects.

> ###### OP
> ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2
> It really is nice to know I am not alone. I knew I wasn't the only one, but there is something more tangible to it, when you specifically hear (or read) someone say they have the same problem. There are other humans in the world that understand me!

Commenter_16
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 8
Have you ever looked into your diet, food sensitivities, and gut health to see if any of that may be exacerbating your ADHD? Not saying it could eliminate it but I know when I eat something I'm sensitive to, that causes me any level of discomfort, it's harder for me to focus.

> ###### OP
> ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 5
> I will say my diet is pretty crappy. When the pandemic started I went from fast food 3 times a week to none, but over the last couple months I've ended up back in that habit.

Commenter_17
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2
Meds at strategic times (before tests to study lol) were great for getting through school for me, but I found my creative and abstract thinking was so hindered that I couldn't code as well, and certainly didn't enjoy it at all.

Commenter_18
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2
coding without meds is def hard but not impossible. try 5 hour energy/redbull ?

OP
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1
Had a bad experience with vodka redbulls in my early 20s. To this day, the smell of redbull makes me ill. I'll give 5 hour energy a shot though

Commenter_19
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1
Have you tried exercise?

OP
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1
Not recently, but I am going to dust off the treadmill that my wife uses as a clothes rack. :)

Commenter_19
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1
Exercise habits are hard to build. But once you feel their effects, it's embarrassing how we've substituted convenient medicine for them.

Commenter_20
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1
what was your dose?

Commenter_21
ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1
I quit my meds for a year and a half and honestly I couldn't do anything. It's hard to get motivated. My BP also went through the roof when I quit though because my anxiety gets so bad.

What I would say is look at yourself and ask is it the vyvanse causing the high BP or is there other factors too. A clean diet and decent exercise routine can really work wonders for lowering your BP.

I have heard vyvanse can increase BP a decent amount but I know adderall typically doesn't raise your BP more than 2-6mmHg unless you are taking a lot. For me when I'm on it my BP lowers because my anxiety is also under control as is my ADHD. It could be that your body doesn't respond well to vyvanse. It may be worth talking to your doctor to ask if you can test a different med for a month to see how it works.