



**Dr. B. Duncan McKinlay**  
Psychologist

London, ON, Canada  
email. [duncan@lifesatwitch.com](mailto:duncan@lifesatwitch.com)  
url. [www.lifesatwitch.com](http://www.lifesatwitch.com)

**Website:**  
Tourette Syndrome • OCD  
ADHD • Sensory • ODD/ 'Rage'

## **T(r)IC(k)S #3:** **Suppression or Expression? That is the Question....**

Anyone who has met me in the last few years probably knows that I am pretty positive about my TS. My belief that I am JUST FINE the way I was “built”, thank you very much, is integral to my entire approach as an individual with TS and as a speaker. Quite honestly, I don't ever want to lose my disinhibition, never mind purposely get rid of it. That's why it surprised me some weeks ago when a friend suggested I try a new, much more effective medication that is now on the market. This person of course had only my best interests in mind, but nevertheless the experience helped to remind me that, for many people, not being on medications is synonymous with not being treated. Medications absolutely are a valid and popular choice. But they are not the only available one. Other responsible, purposeful and legitimate choices do exist.

I'll explain: on a very basic level, TS and its associated problems involve disinhibitions in various parts of the brain. TS “amplifies” you. It takes all of your thoughts, feelings, actions, and impulses and brings them closer to the surface. Everything comes out quicker, more often, and BIGGER than it would if your censors were working like everyone else's. Think of yourself as a stereo, and TS is the thing that turned you up to full volume.

Now think about the choices that you have in dealing with a stereo blaring on full. One is to turn yourself down. Suppress your amplification. When a person inhibits a symptom, in essence they are trying to turn down their volume. However, conscious suppression, no matter how determined a person is, doesn't work well, and only serves to frustrate and instill the belief that you cannot control your symptoms yourself. Hence the suppression method of choice is medication. For those that prefer to turn their stereo down, medications can be a godsend, and by far the best choice to make. There may be side-effects, yes; maybe some good stuff is turned down too. But to these people the costs are more than worth the gains.

On the other hand, some people *like* loud music. These people don't have a problem with the volume at all. They just want to change their music to a better tune. People who make this choice realize that TS is not necessarily about “bad” disinhibitions, and not necessarily about “good” disinhibitions. Like any quality of oneself, disinhibition can be bad OR good depending on what you and others focus on. These people may have learned ways of using their volume to their advantage, and are likewise responsible for learning methods for changing any of their songs which are unacceptable. Albert Einstein, Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf, Howard Stern, Mozart, Robin Williams.....these guys all roar with intensity, and were in fact heard above others BECAUSE of that. There may be side-effects, yes; maybe some things that aren't turned down should be. But to these people the costs are more than worth the gains.

Basically it comes down to a choice between what I call Suppression or Expression. Whether you turn the music down, or put on a CD that everyone enjoys, you've solved the disruption. Neither route is better than the other – soft music is nice, but a great song deserves to be heard at full-blast. It would be a boring world if everyone's music was low, but it would be an annoying one if everyone spoke through 200-watt speakers.



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## **'Suppression or Expression' Continued...**

Both methods of dealing with the problem have benefits – in some situations medications might be of much more help. A person who is very young, or who is intellectually challenged, or who has insufficient supports and resources for learning coping strategies, or who needs some easy and consistent positives in his/her life to build back some esteem, or who needs a stable foundation on which to start building some strategies might fit this category. On the other hand, an individual who is capable of developing a deep knowledge of and positive attitude toward TS, or who can learn techniques like tic and rage modification, or who can learn to tap into their energy and capacity for hyper-focussing, might find that the long and difficult years these things take to perfect wind up being the grains of sand that form the oyster pearl.

Having a hard time choosing? Then don't! There is no reason why one might not find the most comfort in only turning down the volume *a little* after *slightly* changing the music, or deciding to leave some of the same music on now that it is not so deafening. In fact, some studies suggest that while medications result in some improvement and therapies result in similar improvement, combinations of both medications AND therapy might result in more improvement than either alone. Of course, that all depends on whether you define improvement as "less symptoms" or "more happiness" though, doesn't it...?

In the end, the direction you choose is, and should be, your own individual choice. A person who cannot stand the fracas of their personal stereo should not be forced to endure it, nor should a person who thrives on the beat be forced to hit "mute". My own personal preference is to keep the volume high, and to continue learning the best melody that I can. I recognize that unacceptable behaviours are unacceptable behaviours, and require change: whether that change be through therapy or Resperidone, behaviour management or Ritalin, disorder-specific strategies or Orap, the change itself is not negotiable. *As long as I can continue improving my tune*, I have bought the right to keep it cranked. Then it isn't a matter of whether the medication really works or not -- the undeniably perfect medication could exist yet still I would not take it. After all, all that medication is trying to do is turn a piece of me down. And why would I do that? I love me!

cheers!  
Duncan  
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