

Are there any remarkable recoveries you'd like to share?

Dr. Northoff:

I remember I got a 24-year-old girl — suddenly from one day to another, severe catatonia. Completely akinetic, completely mutistic, posturing, sometimes hyperkinetic episodes, short in between during the day, massive extreme. We treated her pharmacologically and all kinds of stuff, and then she developed a fever. And I don't need to tell you, fever/febrile catatonia — life threatening. If you have a fever, immediate ECT. So we did 50 sessions of ECT. And finally we could get her out of it.

You cannot imagine, I was really relieved. And now she's fine. I still have contact with her. And she never had a catatonic episode since. But of course, it was related to the meaning of a life event, which I don't want to go into further detail. So I was really happy. Trust me.

I had this woman we see, which I mentioned earlier — the patient who each time she fell in love, she developed catatonic syndrome. And then we knew, but she knew that she reacted very well to lorazepam. So what we did then, I did on my own response, I said, “Okay, you always carry some lorazepam with you. And when you have the feeling you get emotionally out of control or it's too intense or you're too happy, you take a little bit of preventive lorazepam.” And it worked. She never developed another episode, and she came to me and said, “Thank you very much for doing something which probably no other doctor would have done.” But it helped her, and she was a very responsible person, so you can work with her.