

# Disability awareness

## Bipolar Disorder

**Bipolar Disorder is a condition affecting mood – people experience episodes of both depression and mania, between which there may be periods of ‘normal’ mood. Some people have more depressive periods and other have more manic periods. There is no set pattern for an individual either. There are three main types – Bipolar I, Bipolar II and Not otherwise specified.**

Bipolar I is when you have had at least one high or manic episode, which has lasted for longer than one week. You may only have manic episodes, although most people with Bipolar I also have periods of depression. Untreated, a manic episode will generally last three to six months. Depressive episodes last rather longer – six to 12 months without treatment. Bipolar II is when you have had more than one episode of severe depression, but only have mild manic episodes – these are called ‘hypomania’.

Some people experience rapid cycling – where a person with bipolar disorder repeatedly swings from a manic to depressive quickly with no ‘normal’ period in between. And some may have mixed state – where a person with Bipolar Disorder experiences symptoms of depression and mania together; for example, overactive while feeling low mood.

### **During an episode of depression people may:**

- ⦿ Feel low, hopeless, worthless or even empty or numb
- ⦿ Lose confidence, be self-critical or feel unnecessarily guilty about things
- ⦿ Worry about the future and expect things to go wrong, or feel everything is out of control
- ⦿ Lack motivation, or lose interest and enjoyment in activities
- ⦿ Struggle with their memory and concentration, and be confused or indecisive
- ⦿ Feel tired all the time and have difficulty sleeping
- ⦿ Experience physical symptoms such as unexplained aches and pains or changes in weight, appetite or sex drive.

### **During an elated or manic phase they may:**

- ⦿ Have difficulty sleeping or have disrupted sleep
- ⦿ Feel elated, full of energy and perhaps over-confident
- ⦿ Neglect themselves – they may lose interest in eating or sleeping, or drink or smoke too much or take drugs
- ⦿ Be easily distracted, agitated or irritated

- ⦿ Make rash decisions and risky choices, and lose insight
- ⦿ Lose their inhibitions, for example, spending recklessly
- ⦿ Some people can have delusions, hallucinations or paranoia.

### **Causing issues in daily life such as:**

- ⦿ Problems with relationships – family, friends and colleagues
- ⦿ Isolation – as people may avoid social situations
- ⦿ Irritability – short temper and intolerant of others
- ⦿ Lack of interest in their own appearance and wellbeing
- ⦿ Poor decision making or reluctant to make decisions
- ⦿ Lack of energy and tiredness – making everyday tasks more difficult
- ⦿ Issues with memory and concentration affecting their ability to focus on simple tasks
- ⦿ Low confidence and self-esteem – oversensitive to comments or criticism
- ⦿ Self-doubt – needing constant reassurance from others
- ⦿ Embarrassed to disclose or discuss their condition.

## Contact us:

If you would like further information on how we can help you, please get in touch with us:

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