

WHAT IS BIPOLAR DISORDER?

Bipolar Disorder, also known as manic-depressive illness, is a serious medical illness that causes shifts in a person's mood, energy, and ability to function. Different from the normal ups and downs that everyone goes through, the symptoms of bipolar disorder are severe.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Bipolar disorder causes dramatic mood swings from overly "high" and/or irritable to sad and hopeless, and then back again, often with periods of normal mood in between. Severe changes in energy and behavior go along with these changes in mood. The periods of highs and lows are called episodes of mania and depression.

TREATMENT

Most people with bipolar disorder can achieve substantial stabilization of their mood swings and related symptoms over time with proper treatment. A strategy that combines medication and psychosocial treatment is optimal for managing the disorder over time.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF *MANIA (OR A MANIC EPISODE)* INCLUDE:

- Increased energy, activity, and restlessness
- Excessively "high," overly good, euphoric mood
- Extreme irritability
- Racing thoughts and talking very fast, jumping from one idea to another
- Distractibility, can't concentrate well
- Little sleep needed
- Unrealistic beliefs in one's abilities and powers
- Poor judgment
- Spending sprees
- A lasting period of behavior that is different from usual
- Increased sexual drive
- Abuse of drugs, particularly cocaine, alcohol, and sleeping medications
- Provocative, intrusive, or aggressive behavior
- Denial that anything is wrong

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF *DEPRESSION (OR A DEPRESSIVE EPISODE)* INCLUDE:

- Lasting sad, anxious, or empty mood
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed, including sex
- Decreased energy, a feeling of fatigue or of being "slowed down"
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions
- Restlessness or irritability
- Sleeping too much, or can't sleep
- Change in appetite and/or unintended weight loss or gain
- Chronic pain or other persistent bodily symptoms that are not caused by physical illness or injury
- Thoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attempts

KEY RECOVERY CONCEPTS

Six key concepts provide the foundation of effective recovery work. They are:

Hope. With good symptom management, it is possible to experience long periods of wellness. Believing that you can cope with your mood disorder is both accurate and essential to recovery.

Perspective. Depression and manic-depression often follow cyclical patterns. Although you may go through some painful times and it may be difficult to believe things will get better, it is important not to give up hope.

Personal Responsibility. It's up to you to take action to keep your moods stabilized. This includes asking for help from others when you need it, taking your medication as prescribed and keeping appointments with your health care providers.

Self Advocacy. Become an effective advocate for yourself so you can get the services and treatment you need, and make the life you want for yourself.

Education. Learn all you can about your illness. This allows you to make informed decisions about all aspects of your life and treatment.

Support. Working toward wellness is up to you. However, support from others is essential to maintaining your stability and enhancing the quality of your life.

WHERE DO I GO TO GET SOMEONE HELP?

There are many people on campus who you can go to if you feel someone is struggling with Bipolar Disorder and needs help:

- Student Health Services
- Wellness Advocates
- Counseling Center
- Resident Director
- Resident Assistant/Mentor

You are welcome to stop by or call to make an appointment:

131 Van Housen Hall
267-2330
8:30-4:30 pm

www.potsdam.edu/coun



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