Bipolar disorder is a condition in which a person has depressive episodes which alternate with happiness and even elation. A person with this disease does not necessarily spend one half of their time depressed and the other half elated. A person might feel depressed 99% of the time, and happy 1%, and this person would still be considered bipolar. Sometimes the depressive episodes associated with bipolar disorder have a physical component which is called psychosomatic presentations. Bipolar causes are unclear, but it is believed that there are some electrical problems in the mind and possibly chemical imbalances. It is believed the most common bipolar causes are genetic, although it is not always passed from generation to generation. When either manic or depressed, there is usually a period of “normalcy” between the two extremes. Bipolar information indicates that length of these “normal” time periods can vary. Sometimes there is no period of normalcy and the person suffering from this disease goes from depression to mania back to depression again. Bipolar disorder doesn’t just affect the person’s mood, but it also affects their energy level and ability to be active. Although the early onset of this disorder can be hard to diagnose, once the appropriate diagnosis has been made, treatment options are available which can help the ill person live a functional and happy life.

Bipolar Symptoms

The mania phase of bipolar disorder is not manifested by constantly feeling good. Although long periods of feeling extremely good, or even high can be a part of the mania phase, mania can also be exhibited by feeling jumpy and agitated for long periods. Behaviorally, a person in the manic stage might talk very quickly and have racing thoughts that are difficult to control. Someone experiencing this mania may also engage in risky spontaneous behaviors such as shopping sprees or impulsive sex. A person in a mania phase may also feel restless and may get very little sleep and rest. Another byproduct of the manic is a person might sometimes have an unrealistic belief in his own abilities. When suffering through a depressive state, a person might have long periods of feeling sad and empty. The person may not enjoy activities that normally brought them satisfaction; including sex. Bipolar symptoms also include difficulty concentrating and with memory during a depressive episode. It is not uncommon for a person who is in a depression to think often about death and even suicide.

Bipolar Treatment

The most common bipolar treatment involves mood stabilization medications. Some of the most common medications are also anti-seizure medications which go to the brain and change the way the electrical system works. One of the more common bipolar medications is Depakote which was approved by the FDA for the treatment of bipolar disorder in the mid-1990s. Lithium was one of the first bipolar medications approved and is still one of the most commonly prescribed medications available for the disease. Sometimes doctors prescribe anti-depressants to patients, almost always with mood stabilizers at the same time. Anti-depressants alone can cause someone with this disorder to spend more time in a state of extreme mania, or they may cycle between mania and depression without adding a mood stabilizer. Other treatments for the disease include behavioral therapy in which a doctor works with the patient to control negative or harmful thoughts and the doctor works with family members to support the person with the disorder. Bipolar information also indicates that although less common, electroconvulsive therapy, which used to be called shock therapy, can be used. When medication and analysis don’t work, this therapy has been found to get good results. Millions of people suffer from this disease, but treatments are helping people live normal and happy lives.

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