

What We Wish You Knew About

BIPOLAR DISORDER



by Bipolar Alliance Experience
Support Group Members

01

My Feelings Matter

02

Recognition is Essential

03

Professional Bias

04

Helpful Hints: What Can I Do?

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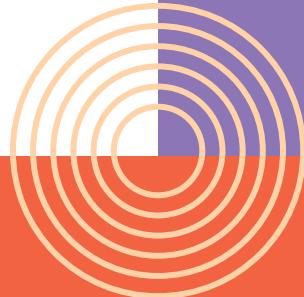


TABLE OF CONTENTS



MY FEELINGS MATTER

**"I might be crazy, but
I'm not contagious"**

I feel like a burden.

I can't control which mood I'm going to have.

It's unhelpful to ask if I'm "manic or depressed" when I'm feeling normal emotions.

My emotions are felt with an intensity that's ineffable.

I need support not criticism or critiques.

I wish you knew that sometimes I may spiral and be disorganized, but I will not hurt you.

Existing at any given moment can be an unbearably difficult task.

I mask my thoughts and feelings very well.

Pressured speech cannot be stopped with your speech.

Both my depression and mania can manifest as ANGER.

I try so hard to stop my impulsive and harmful actions.

I am just as confused by my actions and shifts as others are.

**"I cannot
survive
alone"**

Spectrum Mentality

Bipolar Disorder is a spectrum; specific types such as bipolar 1 or bipolar 2 does not define every person. Some people have different mood disorders on the spectrum.

You can experience both mania and depression at the same time.

RECOGNITION IS ESSENTIAL...



**“Bipolar people
are fighting
within our
minds
everyday-
losing has dire
consequences.”**

Breaking Stigma

People who have bipolar disorder are no more dangerous or aggressive than people in the general population”.

My mental health does not define me. I want people to see me for who I am.

People with bipolar disorder can be successful community members.

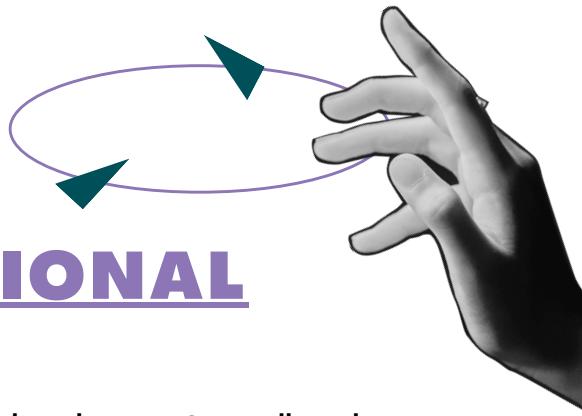


**“Bipolar disorder
isn’t curable but
it is treatable
and individuals
can live a normal
productive life.”**

**I HAVE
BIPOLAR
DISORDER,
I AM NOT
BIPOLAR.**

**MY DISORDER DOES
NOT DEFINE WHO I
AM.**





PROFESSIONAL **BIAS**

"You, as the provider, might be the only person I can talk to about Bipolar Disorder, so your bedside manner influences if I seek further support and treatment."

01.

IS IT SAFE?

When is it safe to disclose information to my providers? Sometimes I don't feel safe sharing with providers, so I don't. I am unable to know what is safe for me to share. Will they understand me?

It feels sad to be misunderstood or misdiagnosed by a professional.

**WE APPRECIATE
THE THANKLESS
WORK YOU DO.
BE HUMAN.
IT MAKES US
TRUST YOU!**

02.

WORDS MATTER

The biggest thing for me is that when I'm in a severe "low", although there is often a stimulus-the biggest help is someone listening and empathizing. Offering trite 'symptom-management' coping suggestions can sometimes exacerbate the feelings:

"you're going through a lot"
"you're doing a good job all things considered"

Those are some of the most impactful and positive things I've heard.

03. PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING

I wish you understood that I am not just the "bipolar monster" people see. My emotions are intense and unpredictable, but they don't reflect who I am and who I want to be. Sometimes, I need more time and patience than you are willing to give, but given the chance, I can be so much more.

HELPFUL HINTS:

What Can I Do?



People living with bipolar disorder experience challenges in every aspect of their lives. As professionals, we must find avenues to connect with and support these individuals. How can we do this?

- Learn to individualize their treatment plans based on the unique symptoms and experiences they present.
- Recognize the biases or narratives that hinder your ability to be objective, whether from formal education or societal stigmas.
- Provide a safe place and open communication to establish trust, which leads to medication and therapeutic compliance.
- Encourage the individual to report early warning signs of their mania or depression.
- Refrain from a quick diagnosis to pacify insurance companies or patient's requests. Take your time to assess thoroughly due to the high occurrence of misdiagnoses such as depression, anxiety, ADHD, or borderline personality disorder.
- When in doubt, consult other professionals who can provide insight and objectivity.



BIPOLAR ALLIANCE SUPPORT SYSTEM

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