

A complete guide to bipolar illness

Bipolar illness is also known as manic-depressive illness. This is the disorder that involves incidents of serious depression and mania. Bipolar illness is characterized by sudden mood sways of a person which can abruptly shift from being highly irritable to being overly sad. The change from depression to mania and vice versa can occur in a very short period of time. The mood fluctuation in bipolar illness mainly follows a pattern for a person. Analyzing this pattern will help to foresee the next behavior of a person with bipolar illness.

There are certain signs that will help recognize mania from depression. When a person is in the state of mania, bipolar illness can be recognized through the following symptoms:

1. hyperactivity which leads to restlessness and talking rapidly
2. extremely high feelings
3. excessive irritability
4. fancy belief to unrealistic powers
5. poor judgment
6. increase of sexual urges
7. abuse of alcohol, cocaine and other drugs
8. aggressive behaviors
9. denial that something is wrong with him

However, when a person is in the state of depression, bipolar illness can be recognized through the following symptoms:

1. persistent sadness or anxious mood
2. pessimism
3. uncharacterized feelings of unworthiness and guilt
4. low sex drives
5. feeling of being exhausted even without physical activities
6. decrease in energy level even to ordinary activities
7. poor judgment
8. loss of appetite
9. chronic pains that are not due to physical illness
10. suicidal tendencies

Bipolar illness generally initiates in the adolescence period which is carried

on throughout the person's life. The difficulty of this illness is that it cannot be readily recognized as an illness, rather counted on as attitude problem like hyperactivity or attention deficit disorders. Because of this, the person who has this illness suffers for a prolonged period and can even develop its complications such as drug and alcohol abuse, poor quality of job, marital break up or even suicidal tendencies. As of the records, two million Americans suffer the disruptive and distressing implications of bipolar illness.

The mood states of bipolar illness follow a spectrum. At an early stage of manic-depressive disorder, hypomania takes place. In this state, the person shows extreme level of energy that can result to reckless and impulsive behaviors. For the person suffering from bipolar illness, he is behaving rightly and will deny that anything is wrong. But for his family and friends, they can already recognize the unlikely behaviors of that person.

The early signs of bipolar illness can be mistaken to other problems such as caused by drug or alcohol abuse. In the latter process, the person can then experience full clinical depression.

There are various treatments to stabilize the mood of a person with bipolar illness.

The popularly known stabilizer is lithium. This is a helpful medication to control mania and the reoccurrence of both mania and depression episodes. In recent clinical techniques, carbamazepine and valproate are also used as anticonvulsants in cases of refractory episodes of bipolar illness. Scientists have tested the efficiency of anticonvulsant medications in the process of kindling. Kindling is the process when the brain gradually increases its sensitivity to stress, thus resulting to abnormal activities and behaviors. While lithium is found to block the kindling process in its early signs, carbamazepine and valproate work for the later stages. For the acute cases of mania, valproate drugs are recommended. These are approved treatments by the Food and Drug Administration. For those patients with severe bipolar illness and do not respond to these medications, the electroconvulsive therapy or ECT is of great value. This is an effective treatment even for severe depression mixed with frequent mania.

To counteract the effects of hyperactivity such as insomnia, benzodiazepines clonazepam and lorazepam are helpful medications. It is also important to make an analysis of the behavioral pattern of the patient as a tool in finding the right treatment to the symptoms of bipolar illness.

Bipolar illness is a mental disorder that should readily be treated before its

further complications. Otherwise, repeated depression can occur and lead to another behavioral and mental problem. And in some cases, mania can be the major problem with occurrences of sudden depression. These are indications that a long term or prophylactic treatment is highly needed.