

# BIPOLAR DISORDER

Bipolar Disorder is a mental illness characterised by mood instability. Manic behaviour is one extreme of this disorder, and depression is the other.

Bipolar Disorder occurs across a spectrum of symptoms, and many people aren't correctly diagnosed,.

Bipolar Disorder is NOT a death sentence and with effective treatment you can live an enjoyable and productive life.

## What causes Bipolar?

It is believed to be centralised around chemical imbalances in the brain. Various factors can have an influence on this chemical imbalance, namely:

- ◆ **Genetics / Hereditary** - Bipolar Disorder tends to run in families.
- ◆ **Biochemical Changes in the Brain** - Hormones and neurotransmitters
- ◆ **Psychological Stress** - A stressful life event such as a loss of a job, marital difficulties, or a death.
- ◆ **Biological Clocks** - Mania and depression are often cyclical, occurring at particular times of the year.

## What to look out for?

You should look out for alternating states of highs (mania) and lows (depression).

### 1. The depressive phase consists of:

- ◆ Sadness
- ◆ Pessimism
- ◆ Loss of appetite
- ◆ Suicidal thoughts or behaviour
- ◆ Anxiety
- ◆ Feelings of guilt
- ◆ Increased or decrease sleeping patterns
- ◆ Loss of interest in daily activities
- ◆ Concentration difficulties
- ◆ Irritability and aggression

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## Enquiries

**Student Counselling Career and  
Development Centre  
Nelson Mandela University**

<http://counselling.mandela.ac.za>

[counselling@mandela.ac.za](mailto:counselling@mandela.ac.za)



[mandela.ac.za](http://mandela.ac.za)

# Bipolar Disorder

## 2. The mania phase consists of:

- ◆ Feeling extremely high, happy and full of energy.
- ◆ Grandiose plans and beliefs, for example, believing you are unusually talented or gifted.
- ◆ Reduced need for sleep.
- ◆ Increased energy levels.
- ◆ Rapid thinking and speech.
- ◆ Lack of inhibition, for example, not being able to see the consequences of your actions and engaging in dangerous behaviour.
- ◆ Lack of insight, for example, not being able to see that your behaviour is inappropriate.

People with Bipolar Disorder can also experience normal moods in between the manic and depressive episodes.

It is important to note that everyone experiences mood swings from time to time. However, it becomes problematic when a person's mood swings interfere with his or her everyday functioning.

### Management and Lifestyle

Bipolar Disorder requires ongoing treatment, even during the periods when you feel better.

Your treatment team might consist of a psychiatrist, psychologist, social workers and psychiatric nurses.

Effective and appropriate management and lifestyle changes could include:

- ◆ **Using medication.**
- ◆ **Getting psychological counselling.**
- ◆ **Hospitalisation when needed to help you stabilize your mood.**

### How to cope with Bipolar Disorder

- ◆ **Learn about Bipolar Disorder**
- ◆ **Stay focused on your goals**
- ◆ **Join a support group**

- ◆ **Find healthy outlets** (e.g. hobbies and recreational activities)
- ◆ **Learn about relaxation and stress management**
- ◆ **Enhance mindfulness** (be aware of your body and thoughts).
- ◆ **Have a positive attitude and mind set** (improve your self-esteem with educational material and surround yourself with positive people).
- ◆ **Establish control** (think before you act)
- ◆ **Establish routines** (have a calendar to manage your time and energy).
- ◆ **Externalise Bipolar Disorder** (it is an illness and it doesn't define who you are).
- ◆ **Suicide prevention** (if you have suicidal thoughts seek immediate assistance).
- ◆ **Make a crisis plan** (this plan should include supporters, their role, telephone numbers, a list of the medication you are taking and why).

### What can family and friends do to help?

1. Become informed about the patient's illness, its causes, and its treatments.
2. Encourage the patient to stick with the treatment, see the doctor, and avoid alcohol and drugs.
3. Learn what the warning signs of suicide are and take any threats the person makes very seriously. Step in and seek help from the patient's doctor or other family members or friends. Confidentiality is important but does not stack up against the risk of suicide.
4. Put safeguards into place when the person's mood is stable.
5. Don't push too hard and allow the person to approach life at his/her own pace.

### Issues related to Bipolar Disorder

- **Reckless Behaviour** (sexual promiscuity, spending sprees and substance abuse).
- **Relationships** (Dealing with the ups and downs of bi-polar mood disorder can be stressful to the person's family, friends and significant others).

- **Suicide Risk.**
- **Psychosis** (hallucinations and delusions).

### A poem for someone with Bipolar Disorder

THEY COME, THEY GO  
PERHAPS IT IS ME WHO CHASES THEM AWAY  
I LONG FOR THEIR LOVE  
I YEARN FOR THEIR TOUCH  
THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND ME  
THEY JUST DON'T GET ME  
A SIMPLE MIND, COMPLICATED ISSUES  
I AM DIFFERENT TO THEM  
MY WORLD MIGHT NOT SEEM REAL  
I LIVE IN A DREAM  
MY SOUL AWAITS TO BE SET FREE  
THEY HAVE CHOSEN NOT TO BE PART OF MY JOURNEY  
I WILL STAND ON MY OWN AND CONTINUE TO BE

### Contact Details (Office Hours: 08:00-16:30)

#### SCCDC (Office hours 08:00 to 16:30)

South Campus: **041 504 2511**  
North Campus: **041 504 3222**  
Missionvale Campus: **041 504 1106**  
Second Avenue Campus: **041 504 3854**

#### Campus Health

South Campus: **041 504 2174**  
North Campus: **041 504 3364**  
Missionvale Campus: **041 504 1374**  
Second Avenue Campus: **041 504 3762**

#### For after hours emergencies contact

Mandela University Protection Service: **041 504 2009 or 041 504 3483**  
Provincial Hospital Casualty Department: **041 392 3911**  
Greenacres Hospital Casualty Department: **041 390 7000**  
Livingstone Hospital: **041 405 9111**  
Suicide Emergency Line: **0800 567 567 or SMS 31393 for a call back**  
Life Line (24/7 counselling): **0861 322 322**  
Ambulance: **10177** or Police: **10111**

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