

Bipolar Disorder

What is Bipolar Disorder?

Bipolar Disorder is a condition characterized by shifts in mood, energy and activity levels, which can affect one's ability to carry out daily tasks as well as one's relationships, job and school performance. Individuals suffering from Bipolar Disorder experience distinct "mood episodes" that are more extreme than the regular ups and downs that we may all experience from time to time. There are multiple types of Bipolar Disorder that differ in the types of mood episodes experienced, as well as the frequency and intensity of the symptoms. Bipolar Disorder often develops in the late teens or early adult years, but in some cases can begin in childhood or later in one's adult life. It is usually a long term illness, but there are effective treatments that can allow people to lead full and productive lives.

Symptoms to look for:

Signs of a manic episode:

- excessive happiness or excitement
- irritability
- restlessness or increased energy
- racing thoughts
- grandiosity
- impulsive or reckless

Signs of a depressive episode:

- sadness
- decreased energy or motivation
- difficulty concentrating
- hypersomnia
- appetite changes
- hopelessness

Best Practices

Often, people respond best to a combination of medication and therapy aimed at learning to manage symptoms. There are a variety of medications used to treat Bipolar Disorder and people may need to try different types before they find the one that works best for them. Mood stabilizers, anticonvulsants and antipsychotics are often used to treat this disorder. In addition, the depressive symptoms may be treated with antidepressants but are usually taken with a mood stabilizer due to the risk of triggering a manic episode. Individuals with Bipolar Disorder are also at high risk for suicide whether they are in a manic or depressive episode, so it is important to assess for this and plan for emergencies.

Resources:

National Alliance on Mental Illness

nami.org

National Institute of Mental Health

nimh.nih.gov

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

dbsalliance.org

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration

samhsa.gov



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