

# **“Bipolar Disorder & The Family – Tools to Survive & Thrive”**

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## **1. TREAT YOUR TRAUMA**

- Bipolar disorder is traumatic for the whole family. Accept that you have been victimized by the unexpected trauma of mental illness
- Seek out the support that you’re trying to get your relative to do. You promote recovery when you do this, and relapse when you don’t
- *“God grant me the serenity to change the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference”*

## **2. INTEGRATE YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

- Learn what you can about the disorder &
- Understand the subjective experience of the person – listen to their story... this is more important
- Learn the difference between the person and the disorder
- Link treatment to the person’s goals

## **3. IMPLEMENT A RECOVERY PROMOTION PLAN (FORMERLY KNOWN AS A RELAPSE PREVENTION PLAN)**

- Identify the warning signs of the illness unique to the person
- Identify the daily healthy behaviors unique to the person
- Monitor daily & make adjustments as needed

## **4. MAKE AMENDS WITH MEDS**

- Nobody likes to feel dependent → imagine what this is like through the person’s eyes & acknowledge the tradeoffs that exist in taking medication
- Sometimes the best way to deal with the medication issue is not to deal with the medication issue → focus on goals & back doors to address the issue

## **5. MANAGE THE SUPERSENSITIVITIES**

- Stress – Avoid what you can, manage the rest
- Substances – Most will use drugs or alcohol; acknowledge this as a means to seek out treatment
- Structure – Establish a healthy routine, balancing the need for activity and rest
- Support – Connect with peers and other supports, e.g., Depression & Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)

## **6. LEAP INTO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

- Listen – Reflect back to the person, conveying respect and understanding
- Empathize – with what they might be feeling
- Agree – in areas you can, and agree to disagree in others
- Partner – Identify shared goals on which you can work together.

Recommended Reading:

***The Bipolar Survival Guide: What Every Family Needs to Know*** by David Miklowitz

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