

UNDERSTANDING BIPOLAR DISORDER

MICHAEL DiPAOLO, PH.D.

Bipolar Disorder...

- A biologically based brain illness with strong genetic factors
- Characterized by mood swings – highs of mania & lows of depression
- Exists in approximately 3.5-6% of population worldwide
- Average Onset → Age 15 -30 (Average = 25; later onset in women)
- There is no cure... but there is recovery with treatment that can improve quality of life

Types...

- **Bipolar I = Depression + Mania**
 - The more classic type of the disorder
- **Bipolar II = Depression + Hypomania**
 - Milder manic symptoms, no psychosis
 - Depressions are dominant

Symptoms of Bipolar Disorder...

Mania	Depression
Euphoria or Irritability	Depressed Mood
Racing Thoughts	Lack of Interest in Pleasurable Activities
Flight of Ideas	Lack of Energy
Pressured Speech/ Talkative	Change of Appetite
Grandiose Thinking	Sleep Disturbance
Decreased Need for Sleep	Restlessness or Lethargy
Increased Energy	Inappropriate Guilt/Shame
Increased Goal Directed Activity	Hopelessness
Distractibility	Poor Concentration/ Indecision
Reckless Behavior	Suicidal Thoughts

The Costs are Deadly

- The 6th leading cause of disability worldwide (World Health Organization)
- Billions of dollars in medical care & lost productivity
- 60 -70 % of persons will have a substance abuse problem
- Up to 15 – 20% of persons with bipolar disorder will end their life in suicide

Additional Factors contribute to the puzzling picture of bipolar disorder...

- * **Mixed Features**
 - Combination of depressive and manic symptoms at the same time
- * **Rapid Cycling**
 - 4 or more full cycles of mania or hypomania and depression in one year
- * **Psychotic Features**
 - Paranoid & grandiose delusions are most common
 - Voices less common, but may be present
- * **Co-Occurring Disorders**
 - Substance Abuse
 - Personality Disorders
 - Anxiety Disorders
 - PTSD or History of Trauma
 - Medical Conditions

An Interactive Model of Understanding the Causes of Bipolar Disorder...

**Bipolar Disorder is caused by an interaction of
genetic, biological, and environmental influences**

... but you must have the genetic or biological predisposition in order for the
environmental factors to trigger the onset of the illness.
Once the illness is established, then stress alone can trigger relapse.

Resources...

- ✓ Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance – 800-826-3632 WWW.DBSALLIANCE.ORG
Support groups and information for persons with mood disorders
- ✓ National Alliance for the Mentally Ill – 800-950-6264 WWW.NAMI.ORG
Support groups, information, and advocacy for families with mental illness

Recommended Books...

- ✓ ***A Brilliant Madness*** - Patty Duke
- ✓ ***An Unquiet Mind*** - Kay Redfield Jamison
- ✓ ***The Bipolar Survival Guide*** - David Miklowitz
- ✓ ***The Bipolar Workbook: Tools for Controlling Your Mood Swings*** – Monica Ramirez Basco