# Helpful Resources for People with Bipolar Disorder

by KIKI WOODHAM

## Uesful Bipolar Resources

Being bipolar can suck sometimes, but fortunately for us all there are so many great bipolar resources these days that can really help take the edge off of even our worst days.

Both online and offline, bipolar disorder is becoming less and less stigmatized and there are myriad places to turn when you need help, advice, or just a good laugh.

While there are countless resources out there for people with bipolar disorder and their loved ones, I've compiled some of the best here just for you.

### Someone To Talk To

Being able to talk openly about your illness and the difficulties you face can be a real challenge. Whatever the reason, sometimes we just don't feel like we can talk to the people in our lives. When you need to hear a friendly, understanding, non-judgmental voice, here are some folks who can help.

If I had to choose my favorite resource for people struggling with bipolar disorder and their loved ones, it would be 7 Cups of Tea. Users can talk anonymously with well-trained volunteer listeners about absolutely anything.

The site is not specifically geared toward dealing with mental illness, but I think that the idea of being able to openly and anonymously talk to a trained listener about anything you need to is ideal for bipolar patients and their friends and families.

For times of crisis, the International Association for Suicide Prevention has a comprehensive listing of suicide hotlines all over the world, organized by continent.

### Monitoring and Assessment Tools

Your psychiatrist or therapist may have asked you to keep a mood diary already; if not, this may be the time to start one. If you're not a fan of pen and paper, or are simply looking for a different approach, there are a couple of useful apps that can help.

Mr. Mood (iOS) is an easy tool for recording mood changes and is my personal favorite. Record your mood each day with a simple finger swipe; attach a short note to a day when you like. No fuss, no complicated charts.

For more in-depth mood and medication tracking, Optimism (iOS, Mac, Windows, and web browser) can be incredibly useful. All fields are customizable and can be set to yes/no, text input, or a slider with a numerical range. This allows for detailed chronicling of moods, exercise, medication, and so much more. The app also offers the option to download and save data, which you could then email to your psychiatrist or therapist.

For evaluating moods and episodes, CREST.BD has put together a comprehensive set of self-assessment scales for mania, depression, recovery, functioning, and more.

*Next page: social media, local support and books.*

## Social Media

I was mildly surprised to find that Twitter is a fantastic place to connect with bipolar people from all around the world. Getting to know bipolar writers and activists from all walks of life will definitely inspire you as well as expand your support network.

Regular tweet chats and updates on the latest bipolar news, blogs, and events await. A few notables include @intlbipolar, @2bipolarchicks @bipolarblogger, @imillnotcrazy, @bipolarworld, and @juliebipolar.

I've also found a few excellent Facebook pages over the years. The International Bipolar Foundation, BringChange2Mind, and of course NewLifeOutlook Bipolar are great places to connect and share information.

## Localized Support

### United States

The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance has support groups all around the country.

### Canada

CREST.BD offers a series of webinars covering different topics, as well as providing other support services for bipolar patients.

### United Kingdom

SANE offers a wide range of support services for mentally ill patients, including a telephone hotline and textcare.

### International Help

For bipolar people living in some countries or regions, sometimes there are fewer localized bipolar-specific resources available. There are, however, still some invaluable websites and programs that we can take advantage of anywhere in the world.

The CREST.BD Bipolar Wellness Center offers webinars on various topics relating to bipolar quality-of-life. The organization is Canadian, but their online services are available to anyone.

The International Bipolar Foundation, while based in the US, does offer some of their support services internationally. I'm a big fan of their corporate anti-stigma campaign; everyone should convince local companies to adopt and support it.

International Bipolar Foundation will also email you a free PDF copy of their book "Healthy Living With Bipolar Disorder" if you're interested. The book is available in English, Chinese, German, Italian, Spanish, and Urdu, with some additional country-specific chapters available as well.

The International Society for Bipolar Disorders has compiled a list of international organizations dealing with mental health care and bipolar disorder. Links to Dutch, German, Italian, Russian and other various organizations are included.

## Books

Whether you're looking for inspiration to help you cope or you want to acheive a better understanding of your illness (or that of a loved one), there's a book out there for you.

One of the most notable bipolar authors is Kay Redfield Jamison. Jamison is a bipolar psychiatrist who has devoted her career to researching and writing about bipolar disorder. Her unique perspective as both a mental health professional and a patient makes for amazing reading. If you're not familiar with her work, I suggest getting your hands on a copy of "An Unquiet Mind." Her other books are equally fascinating.

Other good bipolar memoirs include Terri Cheney's "Manic" and Wendy K. Williamson's "I'm Not Crazy Just Bipolar."

**Something for Everyone**

Perhaps one of the best things about a compilation like this is that there's something – hopefully more than one something – here to suit almost anyone.

Whether you're up for some reading, hoping to connect with others or just looking for someone to talk to, there are so many amazing tools and resources in the world today for people coping with bipolar disorder.

I know I'm thrilled to see such a diverse range of offerings as compared to five or 10 years ago, and I can't wait to see what the future will bring.