A Bipolar Christmas Wishlist

by FLISS BAKER

What People With Bipolar Really Want for Christmas

Bipolar is a difficult illness and an ongoing battle, so let's let our minds think freely and our hearts open wide to imagine the most beneficial gifts we could receive this Christmas:

The Possibility of Purchasing a New Brain

OK, this isn't ever going to happen, but we all know what it's like to want to remove that complex organ in our head and replace it with something less challenging! In hospital I once went to the nurse's desk to ask if they had any new brains and everyone fell down laughing. It's important to keep our sense of humor!

A Good Night's Sleep

Some of us struggle to get quality sleep of any kind. If we're not wide awake, we're oversleeping, willing our bodies to do as they are told. The crux of the matter is we all want to close our eyes at a reasonable hour and float off into a sleep that allows us to wake up feeling wonderfully refreshed.

The Time to Practice Relaxation Regularly

We know relaxation is important to keep our bodies calm and relaxed. It is scientifically proven that if we learn diaphragmatic breathing correctly, we can calm our systems down from anxiety and panic and de-stress our bodies.

I practice relaxation techniques from phone apps every night before bed and before guest speaking in front of lots of people. I can't recommend practicing relaxation enough — it is a life saver for me.

A Set Routine

Getting up at the same time every day, getting to work early and eating breakfast, lunch and dinner before relaxing at home and going to bed is a routine we strive for. Don't we all wish our body clocks worked this way?

However, we have all been given the gift of unpredictability so this is an unrealistic ideal! We can set alarms and aim for routine but my motto is this: we can only do our best! Let's work with what we've got and accept our unique routines.

A Reversible Sign to Wear That Says "Good" or "Bad" Day

On some days I don't have the energy or inclination to explain how I'm feeling, but with these signs I wouldn't need to! Their invention would take all the pressure away and people would immediately know how to approach

us — perfect!

The Power to Ride out the Bad Times

If only we could be superheroes and protect ourselves from those torrid times. Unfortunately, the dreaded depression robs us of our strength and perseverance, which makes it incredibly hard for us to fight through it.

That's why I no longer see the dark days as spikes in my timeline, and instead a dip of a wave that will soon rise again. Our power must come from the knowledge that things will change and, although painful, we can and will get through those experiences.

Next page: the ability to accept ourselves, more self-compassion, and more things we're wishing for this Christmas.

The Ability to Accept Ourselves

We need to give ourselves the gift of acceptance for the state in which we find ourselves. We often relive the times we've behaved out of character or seemingly caused offense, only to panic about the way we might act in the future. Accepting who we are as human beings, not just focusing on ourselves as bipolar, is the key to having internal peace.

A Society That Doesn't Judge Us

It's wonderful to imagine sharing our bipolar stories over dinner, where people listen and respond sensitively before openly sharing their personal stories. How exciting to think we could be treated with the same love and care others show to those with physical injuries.

What about dreaming of people who don't stigmatize us, referring to those struggling as mental cases, psychos and weirdos? Or of a world where open mindedness isn't just required in the world of mental health, but across society as a whole? We are all unique and everyone should be accepting of that.

More Self-Compassion

Gone would be the days of beating ourselves up for being a failure, hindrance, weak and hopeless. Instead, every time we heard those thoughts fill our brain, we would embrace them and soothe ourselves by flooding our bodies with love and compassion.

The more love we give ourselves, the more our bodies take care of themselves and we can process our feelings instead of supressing them.

A Psychiatrist or Doctor Who Always Listens

How great would this be? I have had the disappointment of a psychiatrist who cuts off my sentences and treats my symptoms as textbook. I have also had the benefit of a psychiatrist who listens to me, treats me as a person, and works to find a treatment plan that is personal to me.

With a good psychiatrist, prevention, crisis and recovery can run smoother and you can rely upon them for help. A strong relationship with the person who is fundamentally running your brain with medication is paramount to treatment success! This is achieved through one very important skill — listening.

Chocolate Instead of Medication

I am currently on a complex combination of antidepressants, antipsychotics and mood stabilizers with a few extra

pills thrown in. I take my medication three times a day and can’t live without it.

I would love to look at my pill pack and instead of seeing powdery pills, seeing a variety of deliciously smooth chocolates. A milky caramel square would be much appreciated alongside a bitter dark praline.

I would run to my pill pack instead of turn my nose up at it and savor the taste of each one. How motivated would we be to take our medication?

The Warmth of Family, Friends and Partners Who Love Unconditionally

Whether we are stable or battling an episode, we all need people around us who love us no matter what. A kind word, a listening ear, and a warm hug can disperse the harshest of moods.

My family and friends have learned about my illness and I can happily say, although we clash (as anyone does with close ones), I know I can count on them to love me for me. They show understanding and patience and allow me to remember it’s OK to have a bipolar. It’s not my fault, it’s an illness and I am loved.

Have a wonderful holiday everyone. I hope you all receive the gifts you want with a sprinkle of peace, calm and happiness!