Warning Signs of Depression in Bipolar Disorder

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Warning Signs of Depression

Bipolar disorder is a mental illness characterized by periods of mania or hypomania, and depressive episodes. Manic episodes can be very tiring and detrimental to your mental health, and can often lead to feelings of depression afterwards as you struggle to cope with the outcome of what has happened.

Depression in bipolar can be different to a standard depressive illness as you may draw comparisons to your periods of normalcy hypomanic episodes, and begin to feel hopeless that you will never feel positive emotions again. You may feel as though things are never going to improve, or that you are destined to repeat this circle forever.

Depression can almost feel like the hangover to mania – an awful feeling where you take stock of your finances, what you did, and what you need to do to repair the damage done.

Symptoms of Depression in Bipolar

There are many warning signs of depression in bipolar, some of which include (but are not limited to):

- A lack of energy – you may feel more tired, and begin to sleep more, especially during the day
- Alternatively you may not be able to sleep at all, even if you are very tired and exhausted

- You may be more prone to self-destructive behaviour, and may self-harm by cutting yourself or other ways
- You may have suicidal thoughts, or exhibit behaviours such as hoarding medication or giving away possessions to loved ones
- You may feel guilty, even though there is nothing for you to feel guilty about
- If you are at school or university, you may notice a drop in your grades, and if you are in work your performance may be impacted
- You may notice a change in your appetite, and following this a change in your weight

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Symptoms of Depression in Bipolar

- You may lack interest in your normal activities, and begin to spend more time inside
- You may have outbursts of anger, or fits of crying as you are overcome with emotions that you may have difficulty processing
- You may feel numb, and as if you do not have any emotions at all
- You may be more irritable, and find you have less tolerance with those around you
- You may withdraw socially, preferring to spend time alone rather than with friends and family

- You may feel apathetic and hopeless, as if there is nothing to aim for in the future
- You may become anxious and panicky
- You may move slower, and even begin to talk slowly
- You may find it difficult to make decisions, as you may feel as though you are thinking through a fog

Coping with Depression

Depression is an incredibly difficult thing to go through, and something that should not be fought alone. There are many things you can do in order to give yourself the best chance of feeling better, and talking to those around you is a key factor. Reaching out to loved ones can not only help lessen the load of what you are feeling, it can help explain to them why you might be acting the way you are. Your friends and family are there to support you and to try and make sure you have the best prognosis.

Another way in which you might be able to alleviate the symptoms of depression is by discussing the way you are feeling with a medical professional. Whether it is a therapist, a psychiatrist, a psychologist or someone else, these sorts of people are trained to help those in situations similar to yours, and can provide valuable support and advice.

If your symptoms worsen they can provide more structured support, and if medication is necessary then this can be monitored. Medication is a difficult subject at times, as someone might feel they have been defeated if they use medication, however this is not the case. Depression and depressive episodes are caused by chemical imbalances in the brain, and medication is used to rectify this and help with the symptoms.

Next page: additional ways to cope with depression.

Coping with Depression

Keeping a diary of your moods might help to track them as it provides a visual reminder, and may also help you find out if there are any triggers for a depressive episode. Try using a scale of -5 to +5, with the low end being severely depressed, and the top end being highly manic. Under each numerical score, write a few bullet points as to what happened that day, how you were feeling, and anything that might have stressed you out. If you wanted, you could also keep a more detailed journal to give yourself a creative outlet to relieve the how you are feeling.

Creative outlets can be a valuable resource in helping to lessen feelings of depression and sadness, and it is worth a try in seeing how these could work out for you. If you play an instrument this could be one way of accessing creativity, alternatively you could try writing poetry, or drawing.

While it is vital to maintain a good sleep regime if you have bipolar disorder, try not to give in to the sleep urges that come with depression too much, as this could result in you feeling worse. Try and stick to a routine, and always have some structure to your day.

If you get urges to hurt yourself, try distracting methods such as running ice cubes along your arms, scribbling on paper, or going for a run.

Quiet time spent with yourself is valuable in helping you to recoup your thoughts and strengthening your mind. Even five minutes spent going through your thoughts can help, and will allow you to notice ways in which to think about your feelings differently. If you are religious then this can be a valuable asset in strengthening your feelings, and if you are not spiritual then you could try something like yoga or tai chi.

Conclusion

Depression can feel like there is no end in sight, or that there is no way out of the way you are feeling, but try and remember that with the right amount of help and by reaching out to your family and friends, you can overcome the way you are feeling.

Remember that if feelings become too overwhelming, or you begin to feel as though you cannot cope, that contacting medical professionals is the best route to go down as they can guide you in how best to look after yourself.