

Myths and misconceptions about bipolar disorder

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In America, bipolar disorder affects approximately 5.7 million people that are 18 or older in a given year (National Institute of Mental Health).. That is about 2.

7% of the American population, a large amount and yet many are still so ignorant to what bipolar disorder really is or how it ravages the lives of those with the disorder, and even those around the bipolar person. To start these people off, bipolar disorder is characterized by extreme swings from mania, a period of racing thoughts, delusions of grandeur, and boundless amounts of energy; to severe depression where the person may not even be able to function normally within their daily lives for weeks or months at a time. This is just one of many things you should really know about bipolar disorder.

Myth: Bipolar disorder is just another term for someone having mood swings. Of them all, this is the most common misconception about bipolar disorder. You will often hear someone call someone else bipolar if they have a simple, small mood swing or snap at you for any reason.

However these mood swings are much smaller in scale and less severe than those afflicted with bipolar disorder. For someone with bipolar disorder, these swings are extremely severe and can last months or even years. They are nowhere near the same level of normal hormonal mood swings. Bipolar swings set in in the blink of an eye and can happen for no reason at all. They are very severe, a person can jump from extreme anger or euphoria, a state of mania, to crippling emptiness and depression in a matter of seconds.

Myth: Those with bipolar disorder flip-flop between moods very often.

There is a common view that all of those with bipolar disorder will cycle between mania and depression very frequently, several times per day. This is only the case for people with a much more rare form of bipolar disorder called “ rapid-cycling” where this will happen.. What is most likely happening is that the bipolar person in question will remain in a “ mixed state” and occasionally have bouts of mania or depression, usually having more episodes of depression than mania. Now, a mixed state is a state where the person may behave or act inappropriately to certain situations. For example, someone experiencing a mixed state who had just found out that their favorite puppy had been hit by a car, may giggle rather than cry.

Myth: Bipolar only affects the mood and personality of a person. While bipolar disorder is mainly considered a mood disorder by most, it really is not. In these intense mood swings, the afflicted person will usually remain in a depression for most of their life rather than a mania. In this depression, their thoughts may sometimes feel very murky and clouded, and both their thought process and physical movement may appear to be very sluggish. This state of hindered cognition may continue as the person enters a mixed state. However in mania, and occasionally in a mixed state, the person’s cognition will become much more focused, clear, and their thoughts will approach light speed.

All of this can seriously affect the bipolar person, often going from a tired depression to an even more tiring mania that just completely zaps them of their energy. Myth: Medication used to treat Bipolar Disorder can zombify the person. The medication used to treat bipolar disorder usually consists of antidepressants, antipsychotics, and anticonvulsants which all act to stabilize
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the mood of the patient. Lithium is possibly the most popular and most well-known medication associated with the treatment of bipolar disorder and has quite a reputation for turning its patients into “zombies”. This is not an entirely undeserved reputation, however lithium side effects of zombification are known to subside within the first few months of continued use.

It is up to the patient to utilize other techniques of dealing with their illness such as talk therapy to get through these first few months in order to live a much easier and happier life. It is really only with the combination of medication and talk therapy that a bipolar person can live a much happier life than if they would not be undergoing treatment. Myth: Bipolar diagnosis means the end of living a normal life. Some might think that because of the severity of the illness and how it can consistently send your personal and social life into a complete tailspin, bipolar diagnosis may mean the end of a normal life. Of course this is not the case at all. Even though the effects of mania can sometimes meddle with successful treatment, that happy, normal life is still in within your grasp.

Anyone with bipolar disorder can achieve that normal, happy, and even relatively stable life with the support of friends and family, talk therapy, and of course medicine like mood stabilizers and antidepressants to stabilize the biology of the problem. Hopefully after reading this short article you have achieved a much better understanding of what bipolar disorder is and how it affects those with the illness, and those around the bipolar person. Perhaps you knew someone who has bipolar disorder and you didn't quite understand the problem and what they went through, so you can try to properly support

them as much as you can to help them achieve that stable and happy life that I mentioned previously.