

Bhs 420 quantitative reasoning (module 2-slp)



Running Head: BIPOLAR DISORDER Bipolar Disorder and Creative Genius:

Does Mania Drive the Art YOUR Bipolar Disorder and Creative Genius: Does Mania Drive the Art

It has been suggested that there is a connection between Bipolar Disorder, also referred to as Manic Depressive Disorder, and creative genius. Many notable names in literature and the arts have been thought to suffer from the disease: Beethoven, Ernest Hemmingway, and Vincent van Gough are just a few masters of their craft to have suffered from the disease. I am interested in this particular topic because I want to learn about how the disorder impacts creativity. Specifically, I hope to learn how (or if) the manic aspect of Bipolar Disorder assists the creative process, how (or if) the depressive element constrains the artist, and how the balance of the two phases of Bipolar Disorder contribute to artistic expression.

Does the manic cycle of Bipolar Disorder positively impact the artist? In dealing with famous, but dead, artistic masters, the disease was untreated. Current news headlines are full of instances where untreated bipolar sufferers engage in anti-social or even criminal behavior. I understand that the manic phase of the disease can cause people to engage in high-risk behavior and poor judgment, but it also induces a sense of euphoria and a feeling of invincibility. I think it is possible that the manic side of bipolar fueled much of the artistic expression; or at least the work it took to create the symphony, manuscript, or painting. It is not hard to imagine one of the three artistic geniuses noted above sitting over their work in the middle of the night fully charged with energy and passion. The modern bipolar sufferer would be medicated for insomnia—but what about the effect of having so much energy channeled into a creative act? I want to know how mania

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contributed to the process.

Does the depressive cycle constrain the artist? Similarly, the depressive cycle of bipolar can render people virtually helpless; bedridden or mentally unable to be productive at all. Yet it seems to me that the “dark” side of bipolar might have contributed to the creative process. One only has to listen to “Moonlight Sonata” to recognize a bipolar cycle; the first movement is dark and slow, the second is like a ray of sunshine on a flowered field, and the third is this combination of incredible energy fused into the dark theme. Rather than being constrained, Beethoven seemed empowered by the depression. Conversely, Hemingway would have long periods of no creativity at all—often he wrote in a drunken stupor—and then burst forth with the great American novel. I would like to understand the impact of depression on the work of artists.

What is the relationship between Bipolar Disorder and artistic expression? I am interested in how the totality of bipolar, i. e., both cycles, combine to render the complete person. I wonder if van Gogh’s “Skull with a Burning Cigarette” was inspired by the darkness of depression but painted in a manic state. It is this mixture of the dark (depression) and the energy (mania) that intrigues me. I want to understand how it all worked together in the lives of these and other master

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