

"Can You See Me?" Campaign: Bipolar Disorder Help Sheet

Understanding Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar disorder is a mental health condition characterized by extreme mood swings that include emotional highs (mania or hypomania) and lows (depression). It affects mood, energy levels, and the ability to function effectively in daily life.

Signs and Symptoms of Bipolar Disorder

1. **Manic Phase:** During a manic episode, individuals may experience:
 - Elevated mood or irritability
 - Increased energy and activity levels
 - Racing thoughts or speech
 - Decreased need for sleep
 - Impulsive or risky behavior
 - Grandiose beliefs about abilities or powers
2. **Depressive Phase:** During a depressive episode, individuals may experience:
 - Persistent sadness or hopelessness
 - Loss of interest or pleasure in activities
 - Fatigue or loss of energy
 - Changes in appetite or weight
 - Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
 - Thoughts of death or suicide

Signs of a Mixed Episode

1. **Simultaneous Symptoms:** Experience symptoms of both mania/hypomania and depression simultaneously.
2. **Increased Risk:** Higher risk of impulsive behavior, agitation, and suicide.

How Friends and Family Can Help

1. **Educate Yourself:** Learn about bipolar disorder to better understand the condition and its effects.
2. **Offer Support:** Be a listening ear and provide emotional support during both manic and depressive episodes.
3. **Encourage Treatment:** Encourage your loved one to seek professional help from a psychiatrist or therapist specializing in bipolar disorder.

4. **Help Maintain a Routine:** Assist in establishing and maintaining a regular daily routine, including sleep, exercise, and medication management.
5. **Monitor Mood Changes:** Pay attention to changes in mood and behavior, and encourage your loved one to track their symptoms.
6. **Be Patient and Non-Judgmental:** Understand that managing bipolar disorder can be challenging, and offer support without judgment.

Resources for Support and Information

1. **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):** Provides education, support groups, and resources for individuals and families affected by bipolar disorder. <https://www.nami.org/Home>
2. **Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA):** Offers peer-led support groups and educational resources for individuals living with bipolar disorder. <https://www.dbsalliance.org/>
3. **International Bipolar Foundation (IBPF):** Provides information, advocacy, and support for individuals living with bipolar disorder and their families. <https://ibpf.org/>
4. **Crisis Text Line:** Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a trained crisis counselor 24/7 for support and resources.

Remember, with proper treatment and support, individuals with bipolar disorder can lead fulfilling lives. You are not alone, and help is available.

Together, we can navigate bipolar disorder. You are seen, you are heard, and you are valued.