

What Does Bipolar Disorder Look Like?

By: Ken Jensen



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Well, to start with...

...that picture of me is from a Halloween when I was still deep in the "Forest of Mental Instability". Sure, I was wearing makeup but look at my face; the expression. That's not makeup. That's hard core, pissed off Disturbia staring straight back at you.

I was a mess.

The inner workings of my mind were nothing short of an unsupervised playground for the children of Anarchy and Despair. My thoughts were chaotic and almost totally negative at all times. The only good thing about how I thought back then was the fact that I knew not to act on many of the ideas that seeped to the surface like swamp gas.

My physical symptoms were nerve shattering or mind numbing and I was capable of feeling both at the same time. It is hard to clearly convey how distraught this makes you feel. It is a test of endurance that is biblical in scale.

Nobody but nobody should be sitting around thinking the things I thought or feeling the things I felt.

Hell, I even knew it myself but I could not turn off the thoughts. I could not turn off the pain. I could not turn off the noise of a mind running rampant in all the wrong directions.

I could not feel good.

This compilation you are about to read explains many of the symptoms a bipolar person has to contend with. I wrote these

articles to clarify for the unknowing just how dark and frightening a nightmare bipolar is and for the mentally ill to see that I really do understand.

I cover in greater detail many things that would not fit into my book "It Takes Guts To Be Me: How An Ex-Marine Beat Bipolar Disorder".

But even here, in these articles, I could not fit in all I had to say about the various topics each article covers. The material is endless and I lived it all for about eight years, six of which involved consuming heavy medication.

I felt and experienced things that no one should. Ever. And yet, others still do. I *did*. But no longer. I am well and as of the writing of this piece, I have maintained my wellness for three years with no medication.

Was I scot-free of all symptoms throughout all three years? No. It was a gradual lessening. I had to experiment with different nutrients, homeopathic substances, teachings, mental exercises, and tools, sifting the bad from the good until I found a system that worked well for me.

As I located a new item that seemed to work, it gave me the clarity and calm to search for the next piece. The first year alone was one long fight back to sanity. But the key is, *I was measurably improving the whole time!*

By the second year, any symptoms I had were sporadic and brief; much, much weaker than ever before and I began to believe I would have my life back for good.

By year three, I had whittled the symptoms list down to two items: very rare, brief, but controllable panic attacks that did not cause me much alarm and something termed "air hunger";

a need to breathe in harder than normal due to a sensation of not getting enough air in my lungs.

This proved to be controllable as well and causes me no alarm. It's just annoying as hell! It comes and goes and I feel I understand what causes it and what I have to do to rid myself of it, forever.

It's actually another psychological symptom tied to the whole ball of bipolar wax. There is no actual physical problem but it is, in itself, a problem. I feel confident it's on its way out.

Having read the very last few things I just wrote, I want you to consider the following: the articles you are about to read are **packed** with the symptoms I used to feel all the time. Packed! I am more than satisfied that I have it down to these couple of minor annoyances which, in themselves, are not very strong or constant.

On top of that, I was medicated to the gills throughout, and gaining ZERO relief from it.

Yes, I much prefer what I have now.

I am no longer anything like the guy on the cover. I am good. I am calm. I am happy. I am healthy. I am successful.

The only thing stopping you from having the same is if you are not reading my book. But please, start here and have the courage to take the next logical step once you've finished.

Take care!

Ken Jensen

12 Mar 08

Bipolar Is a Full Time Job

I spent some time on a forum for bipolar folks awhile ago. I took eight hours to go through every reply to a post regarding the symptoms involved. I wrote down every identifiable ill that was mentioned. The general public, when asked about this seem to only be aware of the mood swings; the ups and downs and maybe they are aware of the panic involved.

What they are not aware of is the intensity of the ups and downs, the mind blowing strength of the panic attacks and the host of other symptoms that are a regular part of many bipolar sufferers' days.

I was personally astonished to see that I had experienced almost every single item on that list. It was such a fight and lasted so many years that I couldn't see the forest for the trees. You see, I got out. I got my life back. But the fight was so huge that only when I read this list did I truly see how many obstacles I'd overcome. Here are a few of those obstacles I and others have faced:

- **PTSD/Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.** You have withstood all the crap you are capable of and it has now become too much. You break down. You don't need to have been in a war like I was for this to happen. I firmly believe I had PTSD from my childhood years before I went into the Marines. The Marines just put a finer point on it. I went pro, if you will.

- **Panic attacks.** The granddaddy of 'em all. You MAY have been pretty damn righteously scared at times in your life. But no matter how scary that scene may have been for you, it pales in comparison to what a good solid panic attack has to offer. It is a mind boggling amount of fear

that strips away all control from you. You just endure it and wait for death. But you lose your mind as you endure it. You can't turn it off. The fear grows rapidly and exponentially. It becomes your entire universe, all that you know, in seconds.

I used to routinely experience panic attacks that lasted for HOURS! I could write for days about how awful this is and what goes through your mind as it's happening. They can be triggered by known factors or appear randomly for no reason whatsoever. There is nothing worse. They can drive one to suicide.

- **Bullied as a kid.** I lived this like so many others. I was a stick growing up. I came out of the Marines about three times the size I was when I went in and I was psychotic. I channeled it all into lifting weights and anger. I could easily smash anyone who had picked on me as a youth and that was sweet but the damage had been done.

I believe I've been bipolar my whole life. Other kids picked up on the fact that something wasn't quite right about me. I didn't match the herd dynamic properly. Everyone knows how vicious kids can be to one another. They're heartless and merciless at times. I was singled out mentally and physically and often beat on by others as that's how bullies establish their domain. This is not specifically isolated to bipolar kids, of course. But if it was part of your youth it probably has a place in your subconscious as a bipolar adult and it's working on you, weakening you from within. Matter of fact, I guarantee it.

- **Mental illness diagnosis as a child.** This is just how it is for some kids and they really are sick but many are diagnosed as ill when the truth is the parents or school can't manage them as well as they'd like to. There's nothing actually wrong with them beyond fluctuating hormone levels or some other easily adjusted element but they cause a disturbance in their environment either at home or in the school. It's a disturbance that no one has the time, energy, manpower or will to look

into further to see what might be causing this behavior. So they're medicated into compliance.

If there truly was no real illness to begin with, you can bet the medication and treatment they will endure as children will actually install a nice, solid, ACTUAL illness as they become adults. It never would have been there if not for the earlier misdiagnosis; a totally avoidable horror.

I worked for a time in a children's home. I saw this very thing take place time and again. Warehouse them for the requisite amount of time, dope them up and keep them still until it was time to push them back out of the system. That was one of the saddest and most frustrating jobs I've ever held.

I am eternally glad I learned what I did and got my life back. And as a father of one boy, you can bet I already take steps to make sure this genetically transferrable illness never gets a foothold in my son's mind. It can be done. It's been proven to me by others and I've since proven it on my own. I can help you with your bipolar fight as well.

I Understand Your Bipolar Issues and I Can Help

People read my stuff for different reasons but I have to stay true to the main purpose: helping "normal" people understand what it means to be bipolar and helping the victims manage or overcome it.

With that said I thought I'd start a new series based solely on the symptoms involved and the issues that come in to a sufferer's life because of them.

It's tragic in a slight way. I feel really good right now but I have to write about these dark times. I have to temporarily transport myself back to a place I fought so hard to leave. I do not feel great all the time and I don't mean regarding the normal ups and downs. I'm talking about head problems beyond the norm.

I still have to go up against some stuff but it is a greatly reduced version of the painful trials I used to endure. This is what I want to help bring to the rest of you who may be suffering.

I have personally experienced almost every single thing on the list that follows. I wasn't even aware of how much I had to deal with until I went through a bipolar forum and took notes. I truly wasn't aware of how much s**t was no longer in my life. I knew I was better but I was so busy with the fight that I hadn't realized how much ground I'd covered. With that in mind, here's the list:

-Don't trust most or all people. This has many aspects to it. Due to your inability to interact properly with anyone, you have

a warped perspective of how people should be treating you. So, however they're treating you is always wrong in your eyes.

Maybe someone has hurt you in some way and due to how you are, your ability to handle emotional pain is ineffective. Any wrong done to you, no matter how minor or major, is too much in your opinion. It's ALL major. Your tolerance for abuse is completely gone. Everything is deeply personal to you.

-Paranoid, feeling manipulated at every turn. You are no longer in control of any aspect of your life. You can't make the day happen the way you'd like. It leaves you feeling weak, ineffective, defenseless. From there, when someone steps in to help or tries to tell you anything, it is perceived by you as a personal assault. Maybe the other guy really is an ass but you react too strongly. You no longer feel in control and it angers or scares you. Probably both.

-Ashamed of your illness. The whole mess feels like your fault even though it isn't. You can't "be like everyone else" and that is destroying you inside. You feel like a leper from days gone by. You "know" you are a diminished, faulty person and it hurts. You are "less than" and no one can convince you otherwise.

-You've become fully disabled, unable to function on any level. This is the end of the road. You're completely helpless. Totally reliant on the assistance of others be it the government, your family, whomever, but not yourself. You can no longer do anything for yourself. Left to your own devices you face death, insanity, or institutionalization. I personally reached this point. Nice place to be! Kinda like waking up in a hospital bed in the Twilight Zone with a hangover. You're done.

-In the fight of your life trying to get disability compensation. This is the fun filled period that precedes the

above condition. Trying to convince a judge that you are just as screwed as you know you are. If the government doesn't step in and give a hand, you'll simply change statistical categories and become a citizen of one of the three cities I mentioned in the above item.

Any of this sound like you? I was almost all of it over a period of eight years. And I'm just warming up. There are far many more symptoms to list and define. Almost all of them were my life in its entirety. But that's the key - WERE my symptoms. I got out and you can too. For your sake, please contact me.

If You're Bipolar or Depressed It Is Crucial That You Read This

I am someone who has personally defeated bipolar and depression. I was in the moderate to severe category of suffering for years. I've lived it and I have beaten it. I'm not rehashing someone else's theories or experiences. Because of that I want you to pay strict attention to what I share next.

Your nutritional needs are far beyond and above what a so called "normal" person's are. Eating right is critical but nowhere near enough on its own.

If you or someone you care about is suffering from bipolar or depression then you need (more than you could possibly know right now) to get over to www.truehope.com

I learned of this company through an article in **Discover** magazine. The science presented in the multi page article convinced me to look deeper. Not a sales ad. The science in the article. I hope you get the importance of that.

Truehope makes a nutritional supplement that specifically addresses the issues bipolar and depressed people face. The founders built the company to save their own family's lives. They are a non-profit and I make no money sending you to them.

But come in tight one more time as you read the following. They saved my life! Totally! They are the first step in my program entitled "**Survival H2O**". They are the ones who gave me my foundation back. Once I got leveled off I was able to learn the rest of the picture that I share in my book "**It Takes Guts to Be Me: How an ex Marine Beat Bipolar Disorder**".

People - if your nutrition is off, you have no hope in Hell of regaining your sanity. No chance for peace. No chance for happiness.

No counseling, no medicine, no therapy is going to hold you for long if your nutritional base is lacking. You're attempting to operate at a deficit should you try. If I was in front of you right now I'd be screaming this into your face! You must understand this one simple fact to have any hope of a sustainable healthy future.

Not just any supplement will do this either. No one vitamin, no one herb, no one nutrient is enough. As a matter of fact, you could be needing as an example, 20 items for good mental health. If you are taking optimum amounts of 19 but lacking the 20th, you're still screwed! All 20 must be present in enough quantities and working in concert with each other for you to get well. Lack in one and the rest are as good as sand to your recovery.

It is also critical that your body can absorb these nutrients. Many supplement pills and capsules pass right through you without being absorbed. They can also be processed inefficiently or rendered useless during manufacturing. None of this helps you in any way. You could eat shovels full of product and gain nothing. It's crucial that you know this and buy from a company that addresses these issues.

I could carry on in multiple directions on this one topic alone. There is so much ground to cover. And from there, the rest of your life has yet to be dealt with. The nutrition is a big huge step, but just one step. The first step, actually. I have much more to share with you from there.

But go to www.truehope.com and either join for free on the site so that the counselors can better assist you or call their help desk and ask to speak with a counselor for free. These people

want nothing but for you to be healthy and happy in this life. Please tell them that I sent you. I get no reward for this but it helps them to know how you found them.

Start there, please! You'll be amazed at the results. Then come back to me and see where the path leads next. Stability is just the beginning. I am about so much more than just steady thinking. But start there.

Bipolar Is the Gift That Keeps On Giving

There is no end to how many ways bipolar alters, disrupts and destroys the lives of those who suffer and those who try to support the sufferers.

This is my second article addressing all the fun and fanfare surrounding this disaster of an illness. If you are bipolar, then read on to see I speak the truth. I speak it from personal experience. If you are a support person then read on to gain some understanding of how your friend or loved one thinks and what they are up against

-Periods of knowing all the answers. Nobody can tell you anything. This comes with the manic side of bipolar. Your mind is running at hyper speed. You are able to come to conclusions, clearly see the path through multiple choices and arrive at an answer much quicker than is considered normal. Problem is, you often arrive at the wrong conclusions when you're in this state of mind. Not always but usually.

There is no talking you out of your decisions if you are the bipolar person. Your conviction level is too high; unshakeable. Everything you decide to do seems to be the absolute best plan you ever came up with in your life. Those around you can see otherwise and try to save you from yourself but you won't hear of it. In fact, you probably enthusiastically try to convince them of the righteousness of your plans! It's madness or maddening depending which side of the fence you're on.

- (Possibly the worst) Family and friends think you can and should "snap out of it". This is a very common complaint amongst the afflicted. The non-afflicted believe this is something in which a little will power can pull you through.

They have no clue. Can you "will" a broken arm to instantly heal? No. But that is what they are asking of you. You are a rowboat on the Indian Ocean during typhoon season. That's how much control you have over your symptoms. If the normal people only knew how insane their view on this was, they'd agree to their own "refusal to accept" therapy.

-Projecting your thoughts onto others. Assuming all around you feels the same way as you on a topic and you're not even close. Your way of seeing life is so painfully, crystal clear and obvious to you that you assume all around you can see it too. This can apply to any life situation. When the day comes that you are well again and you look back on these moments, you will be amazed at how skewed your vision of reality truly was!

-Physical ills translate into mental woes. IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome), migraines, pain with no clear cause; digestive tract controls your moods. These are all things that bipolar people contend with daily. Your mental state is affected strongly by whatever else hurts.

This is really a case of six of one or half dozen of the other. Your brain is malfunctioning so it can't modulate your bodily systems properly. Your body is breaking down and your brain is not getting the help it needs to operate properly. See what I mean? The two feed each other. You have to address both to get well again.

-Spending sprees, gambling sprees. These differ from what a normal person in the same situation would feel. These are mania induced explosions of effort in the aforementioned areas. The intended goals are all different. Your brain needs to keep firing on all cylinders to keep from collapsing under the weight of its own energy. This leads to bankruptcy but fast!

-Can't get enough sex even though you may be screwing your brains out. It's the same compulsion as mentioned above but applied to sex. It's as if your senses can not get enough stimulation. There is a yearning inside you for more, more, more! I experienced this for years. I literally bled for this sport. This can lead to a very passionate relationship with your significant other (assuming he or she can keep up) or it can lead to the next symptom.

-Variety in sexual preferences and partners. Promiscuity. Think Jeff Goldblum in "The Fly". It's just like that! Whether you're in a relationship or not, you crave endless variety pertaining to sex. It's a dangerous outpouring of your creative side. Protection and risk never even enter your thoughts as you hunt. Your energy and appetite for sex is monstrous. Usually, your inhibitions drop right out of existence and you'll pursue avenues that will lead to mind numbing guilt after the fact.

-Loss of sex drive. The other side of the bipolar sexual coin. This is bad enough but if you're in a relationship it's devastating. You might want sex but you can't perform. Or worse; you know you should want sex as a healthy person but you simply don't. You don't even miss it and you know this is bad based on principle.

This hit me at one point in my second marriage. I lost both the will and ability for a year and a half. That did wonders for the home life! And as a man it scared the crap out of me! It was a combination of stress, bipolar eating me alive, and the drugs I was on for my illness. It is a common side effect of many psychotropic medications. Not cool in my book. It played a big part in how I decided to fix myself.

So there's some more to think about and maybe enlighten you. The list continues. It will blow your mind. I have much more to share on this. Please read, learn and believe. Then you can get well or help someone to get well. It is totally possible.

Bipolar Steals Your Very Life from You

Bipolar steals your very life from you. It can sneak up in subtle fashion causing your life to crumble apart one piece at a time. It can also appear like Rip Taylor in a David Lynch setting complete with exploding confetti, sparklers, noise and lots of laughs. Something interesting to watch happen to someone else but no so hot if you're the star of the show.

However it decides to become known, be it slowly encroaching or instant nuclear detonation, it can lead to the following partial list of symptoms:

-Unable to maintain your skill set. You lose the ability to do your job. If it's with people, then you lose the ability to communicate or the patience to even want to try. If your job is technical, the ability to troubleshoot your way through a failed system or machine becomes too complex. It hurts to even attempt deciphering why your equipment failed. Maybe your job requires a high level of enthusiasm or personal energy/physical energy on your part. You may become apathetic and unable to maintain such high levels of exertion.

-Hate being defined by your illness. This one's a killer. You are that "bipolar guy" or the "girl with head problems". You're the "son with the nervous disorder". You're the "neighbor down the road who's all screwed up". You are now an illness, not a person.

-Avoiding all conflict. A debate about anything, even a good natured one, is impossible or too painful to consider no matter what the parameters. Forget about an actual hot blooded argument or a possible physical altercation. You don't even

want to consider the ramifications of making someone mad at you in traffic who's going the other way and has no chance of seeing you again. You tread lightly in all situations involving the rest of the human race. You no longer stand up for yourself even when the other party is clearly the one at fault. You embrace your meekness.

-Can't finish your projects. You develop big goals but can't ever seem to follow through on any of them. Life becomes a laundry list of uncompleted tasks. Nothing you start ever sees the light of completion. You bounce from one new interest to the next like a grasshopper in a field of possibilities. But the possibilities don't lead to conclusions, only more possibilities. You stay very busy doing nothing at all. I myself turned this skill into an art form that encompassed ten years of my life. Lotta work that led nowhere.

-Overly empathetic, unable to stay purely sympathetic. You join in and feel the pain of others as if it was your own. You consciously bring other people's misery into your life. People that deal with this become a grand shining example of "do as I say not as I do". And they never see it. The bipolar makes their lives so bad that they feel compelled to help every other citizen on the face of the planet overcome whatever issue they may be up against. Doesn't even have to have anything to do with bipolar. It's sort of a maxed out Good Samaritan angle gone horribly awry.

Folks who pursue this line of thought rarely help anyone else and least of all themselves. The best this can do is lead to codependent commiseration. You find a network of others who feel as you do, who are as dysfunctional as you are and you band together for support and confirmation that you are indeed doing all that can be done for every other single soul in peril on God's green Earth.

The only time this could be considered healthy is when it is focused in one area, on one group of people to be helped, thereby allowing some tangible good to take place. To deal with the pain of their bipolar some folks will help others in a way that really is productive and therefore take their minds off their own troubles and gain satisfaction knowing they really have helped someone. This is the difference between constructive assistance and spinning your wheels endlessly in an attempt to save everyone within reach no matter what the problem.

Any of the above symptoms can lead to massive troubles in anyone's life. But when you're bipolar you get to enjoy many of them simultaneously and at strengths that the sane simply can't comprehend. But there is a way out. These situations can be made to go away or at least reduced down to the level of minor annoyances. I know because I lived the above and so much more and I got well again. Find me.

Bipolar Is a Many Headed Hydra

Bipolar is persistent in its attack on quality of life. Like the hydra, chop off one head and two more grow back in its place. Many times the original head returns as well. It's like a mental weed that can't be killed. Or can it? For right now, see some of the following symptoms, a tiny fraction of what I was up against for eight years and millions of others still are.

- **Passion/Rage.** When we are for or against something we will support it with every fiber of our being. We have no middle ground. He who is not my friend is my enemy. Sex becomes an Olympic event. Arguing becomes Shakespearian in nature. Anger turns to hatred at the drop of a hat with violence not far behind. Violence even becomes a first response reflex. There comes a time when no buildup of anger is needed. You just explode simply because you disagree with what's happening or being said. Except for the sex part, this mindset usually got me in a lot of trouble.

However, the insatiable need for sex did help to break down my first marriage. In part, this was because my wife started feeling like a piece of meat rather than a loved partner. In some cases this is fine, depends on the couple. I've since experienced both situations but I eventually understood (after I got well again) how this used up my first wife's patience in this area.

- **Hearing voices, seeing things.** Both are hallucinatory. It is common enough amongst our tribe. I personally never had this happen without the aid of various street drugs, but then, there ya go.

- **OCD Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.** You engage in repetitious motions throughout the day. You feel compelled to do so and you will

freak out if you don't address these compulsions. I had a version of this. A line from a song would get in my head and I would hear just that line, over and over and over. All...day...long. Wouldn't stop until I went to sleep. It was maddening and it went on for about two years for me. I also could never stop tapping my fingers or twitching my hands. Never. Usually I was tapping in time with that ever present tune in my head.

-You're classified as a "dreamer". Head's in the clouds. Never addressing reality and being the responsible citizen you should be. This is a double layered bipolar problem. On one hand, at face value, it's true. You probably don't have much to show for all your daydreaming and constant creative outbursts of ideas.

I dealt with this as I tried to build business after business both online and off in an attempt to never having to be an employee ever again. But none of my plans ever worked back then and as far as results went, everyone around me was right.

On the other hand this creative ability can lead to wondrous lives and produce works of art if it can be managed properly. So don't totally eat yourself up if this is you. Address the fact that you need to find a way to be productive so that you can survive in society, learn how to tame your creative side and then put it to work for you, bringing you the life of your dreams.

-Nobody around you understands your illness, what it truly means to be bipolar. This has been the single most isolating experience of my entire life. It has isolated me from others here and there over the years but once it kicked in full bore I was truly a man alone.

It's very hard when you're ill to find the right words to express the more bizarre attributes of this disease. It's like trying to describe tripping on LSD to a person who never has. There's just no way for them to understand. That doesn't make it their

fault but it does make it hard for them to help you or fully comprehend how truly bad your nightmare of an existence is.

Bipolar is becoming much more prevalent in the media. I don't know if that's due to better detection or simply the fact that it's hitting more people due to how modern life is affecting us. I believe it is a combination of both.

What I don't believe is that there is nothing to be done about it besides eating endless amounts of medications. In my personal case, that approach utterly failed me. Thankfully, blessedly, there are other options. Those options are what I'm all about.

Bipolar Is a Bear of an Illness

Bipolar is a bear of an illness. It's assaultive. It hammers away at your underpinnings. It wears you down even when it has you charged up. The symptoms list is practically endless. I know because I've lived it. But if it's new to you or you are supporting a friend or family member who is in the fight then read on to understand it a little better.

- **Physical health deteriorates due to mental illness.** If the head's not working the body will follow suit. This works in both directions. Your mind and body are intrinsically connected. Some call it "bodymind", one word. You can develop all sorts of problems with your body just because the mind is sick.

During the heyday of my bipolarism I developed hypothyroidism, swollen lower legs, I stopped exercising due to lack of desire and my blood work went all to pieces. The bulk of these ills hit me within a span of a few months.

It goes even deeper than that. It's been proven that the body will store the memory of traumatic happenings that it cannot immediately handle as stress elsewhere. It's a form of protection that keeps you from becoming overwhelmed when too much goes wrong at once be it physical trauma or mental.

If this stress is not relieved somehow, it becomes pain, sickness, fatigue, and mental illness as it fights its way to the surface. You literally start to deteriorate from not addressing your past. It's how your back stays sore, how cancer can get a foothold, how heartburn takes root, headaches, bipolar disorder, you name it.

Granted, there are cases when you're truly damaged in some way. You're probably not going to just walk away from emphysema derived

from twenty years of two packs a day just because you found a way to dump your stress. But many times there is nothing actually wrong with you. It really is just unloaded stress. If you could find a way to relieve it, many of your physical ailments would evaporate. And there is a way.

-Stuttering. What an annoying as hell little trait this is to develop! This symptom may strike you as odd but what about bipolar is right? One day you become aware that you're stuttering on a regular basis. I lived with this for about a year. I'd never stuttered in my life but in my thirties, I suddenly couldn't NOT stutter when I spoke. It's a case of your brain misfiring and the malfunction is making its way into your speech. Like to drive me crazy all by itself!

- People don't read you right any more. You lose your connection in one on one encounters. People misinterpret your intentions. Your words sound right to you but your point is not coming across the way you want it to even when you feel fine. I had years of this. It is frustrating beyond words. You simply lose your ability to relate to others.

Most of my life, regardless of anything, I got along fine with everyone. I was always well liked or loved at all my jobs. People told me so. Co workers sometimes wept when I quit! But this skill just sort of faded away over time as my illness took charge. It leaves you feeling very isolated and alone. It's as if you started speaking a different language from your fellow citizens.

Worse, it's a generally negative response you are now getting from the world. I found people either seemed confused by my words and actions or they were wary of me while we were speaking face to face. It was plain as day to me that they were uncomfortable and I was bending over backwards in a conversation to try and relax them but no go. I was out of the loop.

This then leads to a host of new problematic situations as you start to wrongly assume what the other guy is thinking. We all know what happens when we assume, right? It snowballs into people just avoiding you if they can. Wholesale ostracization. Say that three times fast.

I make light of these things because, why not? I feel enough pitying and tear shedding has probably taken place on your part if you are the bipolar person so lighten up a little! Spit in the illness' face, so to speak.

A big part of you getting better is your attitude. It will more than likely be a big fight to even regain that simple strength if you're far enough along but it can be done. You can, in fact, have your life back. I learned how to retrieve mine. It's totally do-able.

Fighting Bipolar Makes You Eligible for a Combat Ribbon

When my bipolar disorder was active I was too busy fighting it to realize how much I was fighting. The amounts and variations of symptoms were endless it seemed. Out of curiosity I went to a bipolar forum and charted all the symptoms and life problems that the members had dealt with over time. This took me over eight hours to complete.

When I was done I was shocked to see that I had personally experienced about 90% of the items on the list. There were over 100 specific complaints and issues raised. I had lived almost every one of them. I obviously knew that my life had been harsh but I'd never mapped it out like this before. It was hideous!

What follows is a short list of just a handful of the many ills a bipolar or even severely depressed person can be up against on any given day.

- **A drain on family and friends.** This plays out in two ways. Between the depression, dissociation and similar funks, you become almost or entirely physically incapacitated. You won't cook for yourself, won't do your own laundry, won't bathe, won't care for your paperwork such as bills; won't even get out of bed. To your own self you become useless. Others are forced to care for you as if a limb was broken or you were laid up with pneumonia.

You can also become and probably already are a psychic leech. Between the need for others to keep an eye on you for your own good, your forceful center stage opinion sharing antics or your incredible neediness, you suck your family's emotional centers dry. Their mental limits are tested by you and your illness in every conceivable fashion.

I always figured if a thing was worth doing it was worth doing well, so I handed both scenarios to my family. My two wives could not keep up when either was still by my side. And my family only kept up by the skin of their teeth. Only parental love and faith that I would somehow pull out of all this kept my folks going. I am eternally grateful for their love and support as I did in fact, eventually pull out.

-Loneliness. Here's a biggie. Any major illness can isolate you from the rest of humanity, but bipolar has extra dimensions to this. Many "well" people do not believe this disease is even real. You, of course know painfully so that it not only exists but is incredibly powerful in its ability to make you feel pain and terror. These other folks think you should just "snap out of it". As if. So you're weak and it annoys people and they then avoid you.

The disorder is so mind numbingly bizarre in the feelings it creates within you that many have a hard time even finding the words to properly describe it. So they don't. They just stay alone and eat it. The same feelings show on your face even if no one can name them. But they cause the sick person to give off a bad or strange vibe. People pick up on it and again, they avoid you. Further isolation.

And finally, you are most definitely not working on any social skills as you are too busy hanging on to the remaining threads of any sanity you still have. This situation makes it to where you can't even meet and talk with other bipolar people. You now have total and utter isolation draped over you like a coat as you sit down to a big steamy bowl of Lonely. Even I can't fully describe how bad this hurts and I lived it for years.

-Scattered thinking. This one was a gem I treasured every chance I got in the Really Bad Days. My mind became capable of developing 5, 6, or 7 random unrelated thoughts simultaneously, and then pursuing each down its own avenue of development. I could track tangents in this

inner conversation down about 3 or 4 levels. I could hear all 7 conversations in my mind at the same time. It was maddening beyond comprehension.

This mental storm became the very reason I fell off the wagon more than once after I'd attained 7 years of sobriety. No drugs given to me by the psychiatrists would make this noise stop. But I knew if I drank hard enough, everything would stop. This led me to 2 more arrests, a couple of fights with civilians and one pretty decent brawl with 4 cops. I was a madman. All from a mind that fed me inane information faster than I could comfortably process it.

There are people out there now who are just like I was then. They need to know there are options for healing that they have no awareness of. People supporting the sick people need to know they too have options for their loved ones. And the ignorant people need to know this is not a make believe illness. I myself like to help all three groups but the presently sick bipolar folks are who I care for the most.

I got out. So can you.

Shut Up and Take Your Pills

I'm not against medication for bipolar disorder *per se*. But I'm against ignorance. And if you think medication is your only route to relief from bipolar then you may be ignorant of your other options. If you learn of those options from someone with proof that they work and don't investigate further? Well, now you're just being plain ignorant.

My symptoms worsened every year for almost eight years. I ate medications like I was being paid to do so. They did not work well or at all depending on the scenario. Desperation drove me to find other answers outside of the accepted norm. Not only did I find them but they also gave me my life back. I learned to address what the medication does not.

This brings me to the issues surrounding medication that bipolar people can come up against:

-You hate how your meds make you feel. I personally took so many combinations and types of meds that I think I got to experience every single side effect there is to be had. I was lethargic, numb, emotionless, impotent, groggy, too hungry, too thirsty, tired and my body malfunctioned physically from reactions to some of the meds. I dealt with all of that. I met many others who said they felt the same things over time. We all hated the side effects.

That hatred then leads you to stop taking your meds out of pain and disgust. You don't know whether you feel worse from the illness or the drugs you take to fight it. But once you stop, your really bad symptoms return with a vengeance; the symptoms that compel you to do life altering evil things. You go from lethargic to feeling shattered, frayed.

You act like a disaster and you feel like one. So you go back on your meds. The whole crappy cycle repeats.

-You stop taking your meds out of a false sense of "I'm cured!" This is the flip side to the above point. Your meds are actually doing just what they're intended to do and you feel fine. So fine in fact, that you trick yourself into thinking the illness has passed. You actually believe such a thought is valid. It's proof in itself that you are NOT healed! Quite the load of irony this disease.

I did it more than once. It's as simple as it sounds. I felt fine. No need to further medicate. No amount of talking from my family or friends could convince me otherwise. "They just don't get it", I'd think.

A few hours, days, weeks later, I'd hear the air horn blowing on that log truck of returning symptoms right before it psychically slammed back into my mind. I would then perform just the absolute worst show of mental breakdown that you'd ever care to see. Life would then become ER visits and desperate calls to doctors, maybe some cops, who knows? I used to get pretty creative in these moments.

It's painfully common for the ill to fall for their own lies this way.

-Can't afford meds. This I can't even imagine. I will say that when a Force Ten panic attack hit, it was nice to have a large jar of tranqs of some sort on hand. To not even have that safety net, I can't imagine the horror. I suffered so badly WITH medication that it's beyond me to try to envision having no help whatsoever. But that's the sad reality for many bipolar people. They're too whacked to hold a job, so no insurance. From there many have no family or if they do, the family has no money. They just tough it out. That, all by itself can go straight to full blown insanity or suicide.

I never was without access to meds but I experienced something similar. When I finally discovered what would ultimately become the first step

in my system for getting well again, I only had enough money to cover a few months of care. I had weaned off my meds and was feeling health and wellness slowly returning to me like I hadn't felt in many years. My head was clearing; my symptoms were weakening; I was becoming human again. Then I ran out of cash.

In desperation, I returned to taking meds as they were covered by the Veteran's Administration (I'm a Marine Gulf War vet) and I had to have something in there to do battle with. All my symptoms came back or returned to full strength. I was broke and on meds for six months and mentally I was a wreck like nothing had changed. My family said the transformation was a nightmare and happened almost the moment I went back on meds.

But in month seven I became flush again and returned to the more healthy practices and weaned off my meds. Almost immediately I began to improve. And from that point on I just got better and better in measurable fashion. Now let me be clear: do NOT stop taking your meds! That is a train wreck of an idea. Unless...you have an option that replaces them. These options exist and thousands have proven they work. I am but one of those thousands.

Ya Like Challenges? Be Bipolar for a Day!

Bipolar disorder tests your mettle as a human being. It takes you to the utmost limits of your psychic endurance. Oftentimes, your physical parameters are maxed out too. If you are healthy but supporting a sick person you'd do well to understand the depth of agony it brings into that sufferer's life. This is no small thing and you must respect that. You may find yourself adopting a whole new outlook in caring for your loved one. It's a "know thine enemy" kind of a thing.

Here are some aspects of that enemy:

- **Stress that cannot be measured.** This is how my really active bipolar years started out. I felt stressed. Nothing a toke of weed or a cigarette couldn't fix in the beginning. But this stress began to grow. It took less and less to annoy me. It took less and less to irritate me. My patience practically bled out before my eyes as I watched.

Every life issue in my world was a now major one to me. Chances were this was not the case prior to my illness kicking in full force. The sources were innumerable: I couldn't keep a job; I hated any job I currently held; too many bills not enough money; not enough freedom in my life; everyone on the street and in their cars was a dirty word to me; cops bothered me – just their presence.

None of my plans ever worked out; my marriage sucked; I developed health problems that compounded my negative mental state; my meds never helped so all the doctors sucked; my neighbors sucked; the world's problems felt like they were my own; my erratic behavior upset those close to me causing me even more stress.

The stuff I'd pull when manic would leave a pile of problems in its wake that I could not repair causing double stress – the problem was a

nightmare and it was all my fault so now add self hatred to the list; nobody understood me; I was arrested more than once and the legal issues and fines crushed the heart out of me and kept me terminally pissed off; my depression and dissociative symptoms stressed me as well... on and on and on.

This is just some of what your bipolar friend next to you may be feeling. It's not always visible. We're good at bottling it all up and cramming it into that little black knot in our guts. And many times the sick person is incapable of translating his or her feelings and emotions into words the non-afflicted would comprehend.

The symptoms get so weird at times that they are new even to the person feeling them. There is no way they'd ever get those around them to understand. This then adds mountains of more stress to the heap they're already carrying. They are truly alone in this fight and they know it. The isolation is stressful beyond belief. Their own mind is their prison.

- **Sleeping disorders.** These just come with the package. Panic hits in your sleep and you awaken as if in a mortar attack during war time and with just the same amount of fear. It happens night after night, sometimes more than once each night. Your sleep is never deep. You fear even going to sleep because you know the panic is waiting for you.

The massive depression that hits a bipolar person also messes up your sleep. You sleep but your mind is not reaching that REM zone it needs to repair itself. You sleep 10, 12, 14 hours a night or maybe multiple days at a time only to wake up exhausted. There is no longer any true relief to be had from a night's sleep.

Mania alone can keep you up for days. You don't feel any need for sleep or not all that much compared to normal. Your mind runs like a car in first gear with the gas pedal to the floor. You mentally eat yourself alive. Eventually you motor down and if you're lucky sleep will be had. Then again, maybe you slide the other way into depression and start working

the other side of the fence as I wrote above. At the very least, the panic is still lurking nearby. There's no way to tell. It just comes as it comes.

This then leads to sleep meds. Most of these are addictive and bring their own set of new malfunctions in the making to the mix. Many times they don't work. I went through every OTC and prescribable drug my doc was willing to give me in an attempt to get a good night's sleep. Know what happens if you eat too many (because none of them were working as in my case)? Psychosis. You and reality part ways. You're up and about doing something but nobody's manning the bridge. And you're probably not doing a something that would make you proud in your more lucid state.

I experienced this more than once as I sleepwalked through portions of my days. I was pretty damn ashamed of what my family told me I'd done later, too. I remembered nothing.

After a few months of experimentation I never ate sleeping pills again.

But I did find a way out of all this mess. It may seem impossible to you if your life right now matches what mine did then. But believe me. It's true. I know because I did it. You can too.

How Can I Hurt Thee? Let Me Count the Ways.

There are many ways bipolar disorder presents itself and a plethora of unwanted life situations that it causes. If you recognize some of them it may help in discovering if you or a loved one is possibly bipolar. The journey has to start somewhere. If I'd known way back when what I know now, I may have avoided some pains. Then again, maybe not. Everyone's situation is different.

But if you know what to look for you can get a jump on fighting it before it gets real out of hand as this illness so loves to do. Following a system like mine and doing so before your symptoms become outrageous can save you from a world of woes. See if any of this sounds familiar:

- **Eating disorders.** As your mind fails, your body follows. The severe depression that frequently comes with bipolar makes you apathetic to your hunger. You lose interest in eating. The manic side has you so charged with energy you don't even feel hungry or simply forget to eat as you rush from project to project. In the end you suffer because you're undernourished. The lack of nutrients adds to the strength of your symptoms. The hunger worsens your moods. As your body slows down your mind starts to clog with inefficiency.

There's a part two to this issue. Many of the medications prescribed for bipolar cause weight gain. It's quite common to get overweight as you medicate your head. It's a listed side effect on many psychotropics.

And there's a triple threat looming on the horizon. The disease and medication, either separately or together can both cause system failures in other areas of your body relating to food. Your thyroid can slow down. This causes the munchies to become enacted in full force. I dealt with this one. I was on so many meds for my head that my body

started to fail. I craved endless amounts of sugar, a low thyroid symptom. I gained 75 pounds. Couldn't cram enough pastries into my maw. Now the thought of eating like that nauseates me.

- **Love animals, hate people.** This goes in a few directions but basically, your tolerance for the rest of the human race evaporates. People annoy, bother and hurt you in one way or another. You lose the ability to functionally communicate or understand others. Animals are just little affection bombs that are only capable of worshipping you and they always love whatever you have to say! Not hard to see why so many bipolar folks shun the rest of the world and just hang out with their dogs or cats.

-**Symptoms activated by certain foods or presence of hunger.** This is the opposite of the above eating problems. Most people get cranky when they become hungry. That's natural. But bipolar people can launch straight into nuclear meltdown as they run low on fuel. The negative sensations brought on by hunger get massively exaggerated in us.

I was a big practitioner of this friendship builder. When I got hungry I went straight to almost total hatred for all around me. I would barely be civil to family members and I'd get a very scary demeanor to me as I lost the ability to cope with the world around me. Or maybe I'd just start to be one great big ass for no particular reason that I was aware of. I could never spot this happening. Those close to me would pick up on it and ask me when I ate last. If it had been 3 or more hours ago then I knew to calm down and eat right away. Then I was harmless again. Total personality change.

I also learned that sometimes spicy foods and definitely pizza eaten too late in the day would send me straight into a panic attack within a half hour of ingestion. Allergic to pizza. Can there be a worse fate?

When you're fighting bipolar you must track anything and everything that enters your body. If you are new to your illness or a family member trying to figure out what sets off your loved one, then start writing down all that you eat or drink. If there are issues in this area, the patterns will show themselves quite clearly. You have to be smart in your fight. The enemy is crafty and can sneak up on you unawares. You must outthink it and then you can crush it.

Bipolar can't be cured but it can be managed right out of existence and kept that way with diligence. In the case of really strong presentations it can be reduced in strength. Both can be achieved in an all natural fashion. It's something to consider if your medications don't seem to be helping. You have other options. You just need to be shown them.

Some More Samplings from the Bipolar Party Platter

Fighting against bipolar disorder is like playing a terminal game of Whack-a-Mole. You smash one symptom and another takes its place just to the side. Even that result is only if your hammer (meds) has any effect whatsoever. There are more ways to treat this than with medicine but that is the traditionally accepted route to go as the fight begins. It's the path most choose or are even aware of.

I offer a different path and the scenery is better as you travel it. But for now, let's just see what some of the symptoms and life situations look like on Planet Bipolar.

- **Mood swings.** Key symptom of course, from which the name is derived. Basically, you're up, down and all over the place emotionally. The extreme highs of mania are offset by the crushing lows of depression. One moment you are the undefeatable champion of your realm. The next, you are so filled with despair that suicide is not far from happening. It begins to sound like just the ticket for what ails you. The mania can return almost instantly. Back and forth, back and forth you go.

It's anybody's guess as to when you wake up each day whether you'll be on the mountain or down in the valley. It hardly matters. It will probably change throughout the day too. This illness goes through cycles that hold to no one rule. You can be stuck on one side for a great length of time. You may even experience both through cycles measured in years, months, days, hours or minutes.

It's a nightmare the unaffected can never truly understand. You literally lose your identity or drastically change it at a frequent rate. You are a different person at different times. You lose track of who you even are.

Worse, whoever you think you are it usually doesn't feel like a good person. You begin to not know yourself. Friends and family begin to not recognize you either. You are no longer who you were before this disease kicked in full force and nobody really cares for the new guy/girl you have become.

Through the course of my illness my cycles morphed many times. The doctors have a classification and title for each variation of how fast you bounce back and forth or if you get stuck on one side for any length of time. To me it didn't matter. The type of pills I got didn't even matter as over time, I was prescribed dozens and dozens of any pill that might apply. Didn't really seem to matter what type of bipolar I was. We just kept trying new pills as we steadily verified, the doctor and I, that nothing seemed to be working.

- **Failed relationships.** This applies to any and all in your life. When you're deep in the bipolar game very few companions can hang on for long. This is a very, very hard illness to deal with as a witnessing partner. The emotional popcorn machine that is the friend or loved one you once knew is too complex and too far gone for you to do anything with.

This applies to the boss, your significant other, close friends, coworkers, everybody. Nobody knows what to do for you and neither can they tolerate you after awhile. My attitude and quirks got me fired a few times. I lost friends who no longer knew what to make of me or I bothered them too much to keep the friendship healthy. I flat out scared many coworkers as my moods tended to lean more towards violent behavior. And my two marriages evaporated in front of the blast furnace of bipolar.

I needed those jobs. I cared for and depended on those friends. And I lamented the losing of both my wives like I'd lost limbs. The pain of divorce proved for me to be a type of despair I doubt I'll ever do justice with words. But looking back, I totally understand why each relationship

broke. I blame no one. Not even myself. That is important. Don't blame yourself for these things should they happen if you're bipolar. You are no longer the right you.

- **Hate "The Normals"**. It becomes too painful to be you and despair is so ever present that you begin to hate the normal people. They seemingly have no troubles and are capable of enjoying the simple things in life that are no longer accessible to you. Each next step, next thought, next decision no matter how small, next breath sometimes, is agony for you or too difficult to comprehend how to even begin to make happen. You want desperately to be able to go about your day with the ease and delight all around you seem capable of.

You remember how you once were able and it feels like a dream or a memory of a movie you watched someone else perform in. You mourn the loss of simply being happy and calm. This then fine tunes your perception of all the things you no longer have. Everywhere you look you see people laughing with friends; sharing tender moments with a significant other; shopping stress free; being ok in a crowd or a theater; any and all of the human interactions.

These things are as off limits to you as if you were in a prison looking through a fence. You can't do it. You have been cut free from society and life and you can't see how to change that. This hurts beyond belief.

I was or felt everything you've read above. No longer. Life is good to great most days. Even when it's bad I roll with it much better than before. I just had to figure some things out. Come find me and I'll share those things with you.

Like My Coat? 100 % Bipolar – Keeps the Joy Out!

There are layers upon layers upon layers to the thick mat of distress that makes up bipolar disorder. It's no one thing. It is a cornucopia of ills all heaped together and all interacting synergistically to bring about the ruination of a life. The better you understand what you're up against either as a sufferer or someone trying to help a sufferer, the better the chance you'll have to manage or even defeat it.

Let's take a peek at a couple of these symptoms.

- **Multiple mental illness diagnosis.** You have a clear set of distinctly individual disorders. I wonder about this one. I really do. From both what I've seen and what I've lived, I believe that the bulk of this scenario is just shades of the same color. There is one root cause or one root set of causes that if addressed, would stop all your symptoms cold.

People get labeled with OCD, ADD, sleep disorders, BD, depression, ADHD, psychotic; all at the same time! This is common and the symptoms are most definitely present and measurable. But what is also common is that many times, there is indeed a lowest common denominator. If you could find what that was you would not need endless piles of pills for each separate illness.

All those pills taken together then produce a whole new set of problems that only exist because of the pills themselves. In your fight to calm or enliven your mind, you get rewarded with a clinically produced illness thrown into the mix. Cripes, they'll even give you pills to offset that, too!

In a grossly generalized sense, this is all in your head. What I mean is there is an answer that once applied to one problem can very well wipe out, or at the very least minimize, all the other problems too.

I started out with classic bipolar then experienced almost every variety of it that they have cared to give a name to across an eight year span. In between, I gained sleeping disorders, sexual shutdown and OCD. I got pills for all of that. During this time, I was so miserable I wanted those pills. I wanted them very much! Problem was, no matter how many or what kinds of medications I took, I never got better. I never got relief. Sometimes I would, sure, but it never lasted long. And overall, I was just becoming worse. This situation is what caused me to strike out on my own and learn truths never revealed to me in a doctor's office.

I found that there most certainly are some root causes to a lot of this mental mess. As I addressed them, my symptoms lost strength and almost entirely vanished in a relatively short amount of time.

- **No longer naturally happy.** This has two sources. Depression is a huge part of bipolar. Depression is nothing but a lack of joy at its most basic. Happiness is now a distant memory whose face you no longer recognize.

Now add to that the "weirdness" that hits many of us with bipolar. It's not so much a depression as it is a malfunction. You're just off in some way or many ways. A big chunk of this is from being dissociative. You're not in synch with the rest of life. On top of it, your perception of reality is skewed similar to a bad acid trip. Think about how it feels if you consume too much Nyquil or Vicks. You're out of the loop in every way. You feel it and others can see it on your face although they can't relate. You're running on a different frequency and to others it doesn't look like a happy place to be.

It's almost like you're wrapped in cellophane but can still breathe. You can't feel what others feel while experiencing the same set of input. It wears you down physically and mentally. It makes you very unhappy. It is a Purgatory.

My mom used to be able to see it instantly in my eyes. It's a close cousin to the "thousand yard stare" that combat veterans have. She'd ask me rhetorically, "Bad day?" She already knew the answer. She knew to not even attempt to talk to me. I wouldn't respond. I couldn't. I didn't know what I was feeling other than the fact that it was bad and that I couldn't control it.

It's subtle and low key. You're not exactly sure what's real. For that matter, you can't clearly define what the term "real" even means to you. It doesn't hurt viciously but it is there, whittling away at your mind. The closest thing I could ever think to call it was "uncomfortably inert".

On those days, I'd usually sit on the porch chain-smoking Marlboros as I sat and saw nothing. My mind was working frantically but I was not part of that. I was not part of anything. I just was. It felt terrible.

I remember those days and I give thanks frequently that they are now just memories. They're no longer an active part of my day and haven't been for a couple of years now as of this writing. If you're in this fight right now then have hope. There is help to be had. Find me.

Bipolar is Not a Stand Alone Problem in Its Own Right

Bipolar is not a stand alone problem in its own right. A lot of factors go into its eventual arrival in your life. Because of this fact, treating your bipolar disorder solely with medication and calling it a day is to miss the larger point. You're managing it, which is good, but you're not fully addressing the root causes.

There are too many of these causes to list in one sitting so let's just focus on one of the more ethereal ones for now. I'll use my own experiences as examples:

- **Fear of life.** As a boy, the main authority figure in my life routinely beat me, screamed at me, punished me, threatened me and basically argued with me over anything and everything in a day. I pretty much endured my childhood.

I was already an outcast within my peer group, kids my age. I didn't see life like the rest of them and that made me the odd man out, a target. Having the kind of home life that I did weakened me in my ability to handle the trials of youth. There was no parental support for me when the chips were down. I felt isolated and alone much of the time.

The more vicious kids could sense my weakness and I got tormented quite mercilessly at times. This all led to a severe deficit of self confidence as I grew. I felt tossed about like a leaf in the wind.

Fast forward to my teen years and early twenties. I joined the Marines. Now warrior training and the backing of a strong team gave me much of the confidence I'd been lacking. But I still felt at a loss because I was contract bound to do what I was told, whether I liked it or not, for the next five years. I was strong

but not in control of my life. This made me feel weak all over again.

I chose to deal with this lack of control by drinking heavily and later, incorporating street drugs into the mix.

I also threw in a new component. I acted tougher and meaner than I felt. I showed no weakness and more so, I projected anger and menace whenever I felt it was needed. This began as an act to keep me safe against the world. But over time, I actually became this vicious, angry person. I was living the role.

This gets deeper. A part of me wanted to continue on in this vein, thereby solidifying my strength. But the better part of me knew two things: One, I didn't really want to be this mess of a person and two, I knew deep down that prison was where I was headed and I was never going to be tough enough for prison. I'd go insane or get myself killed on the inside. One or the other.

Thus began a major root cause of my bipolar disorder. This back and forth war in my mind over how to act was tearing my soul apart. It was making me sick, mentally ill. But at the time, I could not see what is so clear to me now. I only knew I was losing my mind.

I went on in life for another couple of decades, fighting this fight in which I was the enemy on both sides of the issue. I was in a raging battle against myself! And I didn't even know it!

I switched street drugs, I threw myself into dangerous activities of all kinds, I took major unnecessary risks, and I pushed myself in physical ways as hard as possible whenever I could. Much of this was fun and exciting but in a larger sense, it was really nothing more than a deflection on my part. I was keeping

busy so I wouldn't have to face the true underlying problems I'd developed.

As my bipolar became official, I was indoctrinated into the wonderful world of pharmacology. At this point I was so desperate, I went willingly. I ate every drug available for my condition and in truckload amounts. I only got worse with time. And all the medication added to my woes. It was making me even sicker in ways that had nothing to do with my bipolar.

Eventually, I developed my own system through a massive trial and error approach and I regained control of my mind. I got my health back. As I learned how to get well again, I discovered this whole Jekyll and Hyde war that had been percolating just beneath the surface of my conscious. Once I recognized it, I could see how far back it had been a part of my life, how it had decided my every move and usually for the worse. And now that the enemy had been revealed, I could attack it. I fought to be a better person. I fought to learn how to aim my life where I wanted it to go and what that even should be.

Once this part of my plan came alive, my symptoms began to melt away even faster than they already were.

It is crucial that you learn what it is that is really driving you or how you may be pursuing the wrong goals in life. You are probably playing a gigantic part in keeping your illness alive. You can rob it of a lot of its strength if you learn how to look within yourself, deeper than ever before, then act accordingly.

Driving a Vehicle as a Bipolar Person is Quite the Adventure!

Driving a vehicle as a bipolar person is quite the adventure! There are so many ways in which to malfunction during driving as to be considered ludicrous.

For comparative purposes, let's begin with Joe Normal – healthy citizen. There's not really much to say. Like any other repetitive skill Joe just drives where he wants, hardly applying any conscious thought to it at all. Outside of maybe some road rage, searching for a parking spot or an address, there is not a whole lot that Joe is actively considering as he drives.

Now let's look at how a bipolar person might be viewing his or her driving experience. As always, I'll use myself and my past as examples.

Panic. That can hit at any time but there can be clear triggers and there are many. Crossing a bridge with all that air and long drop underneath sometimes presented a problem for me. This was not so most of my life, only when I became solidly bipolar. It took great courage on my part to make it across without completely freaking out. I've known some people who couldn't do it. They'd pull over before the bridge and just stew in their fear, unable to go forward. I liked to employ the mad dash approach and luckily, I always made it across.

The wide open road can do the same. There's just too damn much ROOM man! Too much to ponder. No sense of security. I sometimes would feel as if my essence of self just wanted to escape in all directions meaning I could not contain my personage. The pending escape would be the deflation of self. I would no longer exist. I wouldn't consciously

be thinking this. It was just a feeling that only later could I put into words.

Depth perception becomes spotty. The road seems to be coming at you too fast and too close. I would dwell on the fact that only inches separated me from the asphalt that would rip me apart if something were to happen to the car. Or I would be about to hit someone who somehow was suddenly right in front of me.

Also, the angles of the road would feel wrong. I couldn't effectively foresee where the road was headed. This would become horrifying. Every turn in the road became an instantaneous life or death decision making event.

The pitch of the pavement would seem off balance and unable to keep momentum from shooting me straight into the median. I would feel very unsafe at these times, not sure what was holding me to the road.

Claustrophobia. My little bubble of personal space, to include the car itself, suddenly would feel incredibly tiny, hampering my ability to drive or even breathe. The walls were closing in. Somehow, the road and surrounding landscape would take on the feel of a confined space. Or just the traffic around me would do it. Very freaking bizarre sensation to deal with!

Overwhelming responsibility. The fact that I was controlling a thousand plus pounds of speeding metal with any number of factors affecting the thing staying where I wanted it, would become too much to contemplate. Or the intricacies of the hand/foot/eye coordination would no longer flow. I would dissect each area as I was using it and would lose the concert effect necessary to drive without thinking.

Road rage. OK. Many people can experience this but when I was sick, my violence level and accessibility to rage were huge and instantaneous. Whenever someone slighted me in traffic, I would pray that they would

want to pull over to argue about who was right or wrong. Then I would begin planning just how I was going to beat them down on the side of the road, how I was going to hurt them, how good it would feel to hear their bones break as I pounded. I'd see the whole thing in my head before anything had even happened.

Matter of fact, now that I understand that this very thing happens to people, I don't think I'd care to ever pull over and argue if I was the offending party. I don't feel rage like that anymore but thinking practically, I was always a hands-on person. Too many others carry guns. No one's bulletproof.

Cops. I mean no offense to any law officers out there but the sighting of a cop in my rear view would set my heart to hammering as if I'd done something wrong. This was probably based in a life packed with actual wrongdoings but when I was bipolar it was amplified.

And if I actually got pulled over for some infraction, the stress and anger that would descend was immense. I couldn't stop it. My eyes felt like they were going to pop out of my head from all the rage pushing from the inside. I hated authority and felt I should be allowed to fight about it, man to man. I never mishandled the few times I actually was pulled over but in retrospect, I don't know how.

Loss of impulse control. I would consider what would happen if I veered into an oncoming vehicle or just took a sharp turn into a structure. This is not the same as suicidal thoughts. The purpose was not to die and end all the pain, more one of scientific curiosity. "I wonder what that would feel or look like?" I would simply consider some psychotic move like that and then have to forcefully tear my thoughts away from it and refocus on correct thinking. Crazy, huh?

Confusion and total overwhelm just getting into the car. The anticipation of any of the above items was too much. I wouldn't even get in. I'd have to walk around a while or smoke a cigarette before being

able to do it. When my illness was in full swing, I didn't even drive for about a year. Too hard to even consider.

So if you're not bipolar, be careful out there because these are some of the things the guy next to you on the road may be dealing with. If you are bipolar this can all be a thing of your past, same as me.

Bipolar and Negative Self Talk

Negative self talk. Very destructive habit this. I was great at it myself. I spent years repeatedly confirming to myself how completely screwed my life was. And it was but I was making sure it stayed that way with all that negative reinforcement.

See, the subconscious is a tool. It takes what you tell it, verbatim, and works hard to bring you that very thing. If you think that people are generally good, you will find that strangers and friends do nice things for you on a consistent basis. If you think everyone's out to get you, you will find that you are frequently being taken advantage of and let down by others.

Your mind will bring you whatever it is you talk to it about. It doesn't know any better. It doesn't know what your intent is, what you really mean. It only processes data at its face value and then does all it can to find that very thing in your day.

You will either think the world is the way it is, even when all around you don't see it as you do, or you will bring the things into your life to literally make it the way you think it is.

You can think your way out of a bad life. Or you can think your way into one.

That's why negative self talk is so destructive. And I was a master of it. I'd complain out loud and to myself all day long about what sucked in my life. But the night, when I was trying to fall asleep, is when the tidal wave of disastrous thoughts would hit me. Without any activity to occupy or deflect my thoughts, I was free to wallow like a sow in the filth of my failed goals and disappointments.

I couldn't stop myself nor did I know for a long time that I should be trying to stop myself. I had forgotten something I once knew. In my search for life improvement I frequently came across the fact that we should not do such things to ourselves. But the bipolar really made any attempt at fixing this problem futile. It was out of my hands even though I knew I had to quit it. You are not in control of your mind when bipolar is in charge. You just aren't.

I gradually developed a system which enabled me to slowly take charge of my own thoughts. I had to focus on stopping bad thoughts as soon as I realized they were about to take place. I was unable in the beginning to replace them with good. I just constantly warred with the bad; just told myself to go somewhere else mentally.

I knew I had to begin replacing the bad with good. But that proved to be slippery. Your subconscious cannot be fooled, even as you trick yourself consciously. What I mean is this: You must think positive thoughts as soon as you detect useless bad thoughts beginning. But - you must believe what you are telling yourself. Without belief your subconscious keeps right on bringing the bad into your life. It simply doesn't know any better.

This is why I have always had a problem with affirmations. I believe they are good but too many people say them without conviction. They want to mean what they say but underneath they have already given up, even as the words fall from their lips. This nullifies the affirmation.

It's hard to gain that belief. I know. So the first thing you need to do is remove all negative words from your self talk. You can't say what you don't want. The subconscious only hears the words. If you say you don't want to be broke, you most definitely will stay broke. That was one of my most common self talk topics.

I would instead tell myself, "I'm doing the best I can and it's ridiculous to think otherwise." Or, "This is out of my hands right now so it's best that

I focus on getting well." Or as my life really did begin to slowly improve, "It's all coming together and I am patient enough for it to work."

Verb tense is important. You have to phrase everything in the present tense as if it is taking place the way you want right now.

It's a little weird to talk to yourself in such a way but give it a try. It was a big step in getting my life back. I still have to do this from time to time but I don't fall into the trap anywhere near as much as I used to. But I stay on guard. I'm better, hugely so, but I still strive to continually upgrade my position in life.

So watch what you're telling yourself in your most vulnerable moments. If you tell a kid all his life that he is no good, chances are he will become a criminal. Your subconscious is your kid. Build your kid's personality the way a proper parent would.

Bipolar Amplifies the Pain of Dreams Unfulfilled

One of the causes of bipolar disorder is the unmet desires within one's heart. This may sound a bit too New Age for some but it is a very real issue with powerful consequences if not addressed.

Bipolar is not something that goes away with a pill. And if it does, although I am happy you have found relief, you are only forestalling the reemergence of the disease at a later date. Even if you find contentment within your medicated lifestyle, you are still missing the bigger point.

The point is: your mind snapped because it was struggling, in vain, to get you to live at your best; to perform at your optimum level; to utilize the very best parts of you in a way that would bring enrichment to your life in amounts you'd hardly believe possible.

Your heart and your subconscious brain know what you are capable of. The part of your mind that you control and are aware of, does not know these things. Since it is the part that speaks to you the clearest and the loudest, you mistakenly follow it down the wrong path in life. You follow a path that you assume is correct based on various beliefs you hold and mindless habit-formed reflex actions.

You believe you're doing your best.

If you are bipolar, there is a strong chance that the wiser part of you is trying desperately to alert the rest of you to a better way. The real you is not happy with how life is or is not going. This subliminal part knows where you should be headed if only it could get the cognizant part to listen.

The longer you deny this quiet part of you the more substantial your bipolar becomes. Many people can live a less than fulfilling life and never really suffer greatly for it. They adapt or learn to accept their fate as they see it and no great harm comes of it. They are sleepwalking and don't know it. Their tolerance for such things is high. They're basically ok. They will never become sick from leading a subpar life; never acting on their inner greatness.

Bipolar disorder is one way you can tell that you are not one of those people. You demand more from life whether you are conscious of it or not. And your mind is breaking down from being ignored and from the strain of both trying to wake up the rest of you and attempting to settle for an unsatisfactory life situation.

This, of course, is not the basis of all bipolar and probably is not the biggest reason why you are even sick. Most of you. But some of us are not so lucky. We can do better and some part of us knows it. As we skirt this issue out of complacency, fear of leaving our comfort zones, or trying to do better but doing the wrong things, we get sick.

This is one reason why no medication, regardless of type or amount, could help me. I was actually aware that I wanted more out of life and I was not getting any closer to it. I spent years avoiding this inner noise by staying drunk or high. I'm talking decades. This abuse eventually pushed my illness to the surface and I was forced to behave. I rapidly became so sick I needed meds to be able to function at all in society.

I then began trying so hard to go where I wanted but I was choosing the wrong programs, the wrong friends, the wrong partners, the wrong vehicles, the wrong jobs. Everything just seemed to be wrong. I was working furiously to succeed but it only seemed to speed up my failures.

So I just kept getting sicker.

Maybe this is you? Again, there is much more to treating this disease than blithely following your heart down the Yellow Brick Road but all the same, get to trottin'. Ignore your heart's desires, ignore your best qualities be it out of stubbornness or ignorance, and the result will be the same. You will drive yourself crazy.

And if you rely solely on medication as an answer, you are denying yourself the life you should really have; the life you deserve; the life that will allow you to be a help to all around you. Meds make it ok to settle for "less than". They're tragic.

When I finally found what the number one best thing to pursue was for me, my health improved even faster. I had already learned some key steps to shut down my symptoms and I was healing. Now, as I continually get more proficient in this new realm of experience and meet fantastic people I never would have associated with in the past, my wellness gets cemented further.

I not only feel better but I feel better than I ever have. I foresee a future bigger than I ever could have imagined. I have both hope and a plan to make me feel that hope will be justified.

Your ultimate, overriding goal will be different than mine but you can have the same results I am obtaining. I can show you how.

Even in the Worst of Tragedies Lies the Seed for Opportunity

I am the living, breathing example of this tenet brought to life.

My existence has been packed with wrong choices, bad judgement, and a masochistic attitude of "**** it" that bordered on annihilation. If a situation could be handled in such a way as to bring either massive immediate pain and suffering or lay the groundwork for future same, well, that's how I'd do it.

Drinking and drugs brought me to my knees. And my own mind would simply not allow me to flow with the status quo. This resistance within me caused me to take the rebellious path wherever possible and helped lay in the foundation for my future bipolar disorder.

It all tied together.

When the bipolar hit and then consumed eight years of my life, I suffered horrors of the mind and body that I would not have wished on my worst enemy. I had no idea of the brain's capacity to generate baseless terror in amounts that defied comprehension.

I was forced to find my own way out of this while acknowledging the fact that all the experts said there was no way! But the rebellious part of me (the Marine war vet part) finally came to good use. I did find a way. I made it back to sanity and upgraded my entire life to a level I'd never achieved prior to becoming sick.

A lifetime lived wrong and the illness that almost killed me, forced me into becoming what I always should have been. A source of help for others. A source of strength, which I'd always had but misused, that others could rely on when they were faced with the same hopeless scenarios I was.

In a nutshell, I took the absolute foulest beast of a lemon and made lemonade.

I laugh as I type this! I have this odd ability to find humor in the darkest of situations. I never lost my sense of irony or my appreciation for the absurd. Another strength as far as I'm concerned.

I found my seed and it has grown into a source of life enriching opportunity that just blows me away.

You too, can peer into your pain and find the lesson that is just waiting to change your life for the better. No need to go to Parris Island to learn how, either! I can show you.

Now then!

If you received this booklet with my main book as a bonus, your next step is to simply read "It Takes Guts" and follow the steps within.

If you came across this material all by its lonesome then please do yourself a solid by going to my site:

www.ittakesgutstobeme.com

and ordering a copy of my book.

You can also sign up for my free newsletter, regardless of why you're here or how you found me, thereby staying on top of all the work I do from here on out.

You can directly view my blog here:

<http://ittakesgutstobeme.com/blog>

And please, I'd love to know if my work has helped you in any way or if you're displeased by something. I'd prefer a **testimonial** from you to add to my site if you're happy with what I wrote but I also read and consider criticism. You're nothing in this world if not open-minded:

Send either one to:

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