

Extreme Highs and Lows:

UNDERSTANDING BIPOLAR DISORDER

陪我講 SHALL WE TALK



What is bipolar disorder?

- Bipolar disorder (formerly known as manic-depressive illness or manic depression) is a serious mental disorder.
- Persons with bipolar disorder commonly experience two distinct moods and undergo radical changes in mood, namely manic / hypomanic episode(s) (an abnormally elevated mood) and depressive episode(s) (persistent depressed mood). However, it is possible to experience only manic episode(s), or mixed symptoms of manic / hypomanic and depressive in an episode. There are also periods of relatively stable mood.
- Bipolar disorder impairs the persons' daily life, work, study or interpersonal relationships, so that they will become distressed easily.
- Some people may experience psychotic features of delusions and / or hallucinations and lose the reality testing. Bipolar disorder may increase the risk of suicide.

What are the symptoms of bipolar disorder?

The persons usually encounter manic / hypomanic and depressive episodes that may cause drastic changes in their usual mood, cognition, sleep, energy and activity levels, as well as behaviours.

Common symptoms under severe condition include:

Manic episode



Emotional

- Abnormal and persistent elevated, expansive or irritable mood
- Inflated self-esteem, grandiosity and overestimated of own abilities

Major depressive episode



Emotional

- Persistent depressed mood and increased irritability
- Diminished interests or pleasure in things and activities



Cognitive

- Racing thoughts with abrupt shifts from one discussion topic to another
- Devise numerous unrealistic ideas or plans
- Easily distracted



Physical

- Decreased need for sleep but do not feel tired
- Feel energetic, engage in activities continuously as if the person cannot stop



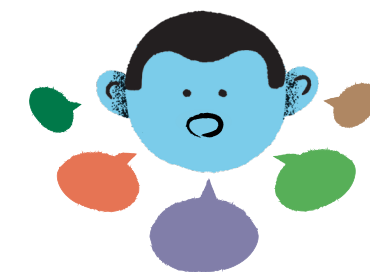
Cognitive

- Become pessimistic and negative
- Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt
- Diminished ability to think and concentrate, or indecisiveness
- Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide



Physical

- Insomnia or hypersomnia
- Sustained tiredness and loss of energy
- Marked changes in appetite and body weight



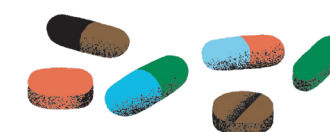
Behavioural

- Rapid speech, more talkative than usual or even talk endlessly
- Engage in risky behaviours or reckless activities, such as speeding, indiscriminate investment, spending sprees



If you are experiencing similar conditions, please consult a doctor or clinical psychologist for professional assessments and to receive appropriate treatment as soon as possible. Early treatment can improve the conditions and prevent the problems from getting worse.

How to treat bipolar disorder?



A Medication

Medication is very crucial to bipolar disorder treatment. Common prescribed medications include mood stabilisers (e.g. lithium), antidepressants and antipsychotics. They are effective in relieving symptoms and managing the disorder.



B Psychological treatment

Psychological treatment is usually received alongside with medication. Common psychological interventions include psychoeducation to the person and his family about the knowledge and skills to cope with the disorder, monitoring of mood and symptom changes for early identification of relapse, establishing daily routines and maintaining a regular sleep schedule, and managing stress to prevent relapse, better manage the disorder and improve the person's quality of life.



Behavioural

- Psychomotor agitation or retardation

You may help the person by:



Encourage or accompany the person to seek medical help and receive treatment



Listen to and care for the person



Avoid blaming the person for his behaviours during the episode(s) and their consequences. Be considerate and supportive to him



Observe the person's mood changes for early identification of the warning signs of an approaching manic or major depressive episode

For more information:



Consult your doctor



Call the following hotlines:
18111 Mental Health Support Hotline
18111
Hospital Authority Mental Health Direct
2466 7350



Visit shallwetalk.hk



Understanding Bipolar Disorder

精神健康諮詢委員會
Advisory Committee on Mental Health



Department of Health

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