

‘My Depression...How I cope on a Daily Basis’

(Random scribbling on Bipolar Disorder)

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20:20 Hindsight-Monday November 19, 2007

1 Since I was about 17 years old I’ve known that there was
2 something a little bit different with me, but I never thought for a
3 second that it was bipolar disorder. Bipolar people are crazy
4 aren’t they? It’s amazing how our perception and understanding
5 is shaped by stigmas and ignorance. What did I actually know
6 about bipolar disorder until I was diagnosed? nothing. I knew it
7 was an illness that affected the mind, but I had no idea what it
8 looked like, or more importantly, how it felt.

9 I went through my highs and lows year after year without a clue. I
10 knew that when my mood was low that I was depressed, but I
11 thought that when my mood was high that this was me, my
12 normal state. I felt great when I was high. People loved being
13 around me. I was full of energy and I had a never ending desire to
14 experience life. I was wild and didn’t care about anything. I
15 wanted to be everywhere at all times. I didn’t want to miss
16 anything. This was the person I wanted to be all the time and I
17 was convinced that it was me, until the low mood would
18 eventually kick in. This is where my excited, energetic self would
19 fizzle away and I would be left feeling empty and detached from
20 the world. I would disappear for four to six months of the year.

21 No contact with friends, no going out, no laughter and no energy.
22 The only thing I desired was being alone.
23 This cyclical pattern of highs and lows would continue year after
24 year, and each year the intensity of my highs and lows appeared
25 to increase. My highs would bring on dangerous erratic,
26 impulsive behaviour, and my lows would leave me feeling
27 hopelessly empty and detached. I thought this was just me. This
28 was my personality. It wasn't until I lost all my friends and began
29 seriously damaging my marriage and family life that I realised
30 that there was something wrong with me. I was out of control.

31 **Becoming the Ups and Downs ----- Monday November 19, 2007**

32 Looking back on my up phases usually leaves me feeling confused,
33 regretful and ashamed. It honestly feels like I'm looking back on a
34 person who wasn't me, the me that is now. I was reckless,
35 irresponsible and dangerous. I remember the situations, the
36 intense excitement, my inexhaustible hunger for constant never-
37 ending experiences. The drive behind my impulsive decisions and
38 actions, the endless nights of random confrontations with the
39 unknown. I could never get enough to fulfil the thrill-seeking
40 energy that was bursting out of every pore in my body. All of
41 those stupid choices I made. The one's I now regret, the one's
42 that haunt me.

43 It really leaves me asking myself, who am I really? The personality
44 that exists with each phase of mood is so different that these
45 personalities appear to belong to completely different people.
46 When I'm up I can't personally relate to my down, and when I'm
47 down I can't personally relate to my up. I become my mood, and
48 my mood transforms everything in my life to reflect it's current
49 state. From bright wonderful days to dark lonely emptiness, my
50 sense of self shifts and my personality becomes a temporary
51 notch in a cycle of ups and downs.

52 **Dark Winter Days ---- February 2009**

53 You never see these (dark) periods coming when they come.
54 Overwhelming sensations flood your mind from every direction as
55 you try your hardest to stand firm and continue functioning as
56 usual and try not to drown in the onslaught of normal
57 responsibilities that have now transformed into giant weights that
58 are holding your head under water and preventing you from
59 breathing . You try your hardest, but what was once an easy task
60 has become an impossibility.

61 The naturalness of your character and associated behaviours have
62 become dislodged, distorted and broken, and you are vividly
63 aware of how lost you feel as you desperately try to find
64 something that you recognise yourself that will bring you back.
65 There is a hopelessness that envelops your existence. Thoughts

66 flood your mind about how you are incapable of continuing like
67 you have for so long. You ask yourself what you are going to do,
68 but this question just piles more pressure on you as you slowly
69 retract into yourself.

70 Indecisiveness takes over and even small decisions feel like they
71 are impossible to make. The mental paralysis toward decision
72 making is excruciating and quickly becomes a form of physical
73 paralysis as you give up on decision making and instead sit and
74 watch time pass moment by moment, until it is once again time to
75 sleep. All I can do now is sit and wait for that morning when
76 everything suddenly lifts and my mind returns to its non
77 depressed state and my relationship to the contents of my mind
78 changes once again.

79 **Stress : Our worst enemy ----February 2008**

80 It's so easy to trace your mind backward from a mental
81 breakdown and to see how it so easily got the best of you. How
82 your now slumped-over, hopeless, aching body and tear-filled
83 eyes stemmed from a simple negative thought that got out of
84 control. You're left with a chicken and egg question about what
85 came first, the thought or the feeling. How did I end up here?
86 Why did I act that way? Why did I say those things? Why did I
87 have those thoughts? Was that really me? You see how easy it is
88 to lose yourself in a runaway mood. How easy it is for your mind

to get stuck in an infinite loop of negativity, agitation, frustration,
anger and hopelessness. A downward spiral into hell.

Finding Sense in it all ----May 2008

It's sometimes so difficult to see what is real and what is not
when your mind is possessed by your mood. Mood is like the light
that illuminates objects and thoughts, and when it becomes
distorted, so do the objects and thoughts that it illuminates. You
change and so does your world. The difficulty in all of this is how
real your mood-driven behaviour and thoughts become. You
don't see them as mood-driven behaviour or thoughts as you
become them and you can't see their influence because you
become the influence. It's not until your mood shifts along the
spectrum and pauses somewhere where a different perspective
can take place that you realise that you've been deluded once
again. The scary thing though is that most of the behaviour that
happens during these mood-driven phases is far from passive and
usually has far reaching impacts on your life and the people close
to you. This inevitably increases your stress and anxiety once
you've realised that you lost control once again and have to deal
with the consequences, which usually sets you off once again.

My behaviour and thoughts don't make sense all the time in a
logical linear fashion. They don't always neatly add up in a rational
way. My behaviour and thoughts are filled with contradictions

112 and opposing viewpoints. One month the world will reveal itself in
113 one way and i will attempt to derive conclusions and insights from
114 it. The next month it will appear in another way that opposes the
115 conclusions and insights formed the month before. I never really
116 know which viewpoint best represents the world around me
117 because the feelings behind the viewpoints keep changing so
118 dramatically. I can only imagine how confusing it must be for the
119 people in my life to comprehend and predict who I am.

120 **The Mind's Sense of Freedom ----June 2008**

121 The influence of inconsistent moods and the opposing realities
122 they attempt to create and then perpetuate with a single mind
123 are daunting. Identity becomes a confusing mess of contradictions
124 played back in memory, and your vision of the future continually
125 shifts as your inconsistent mood continues to influence the
126 atmosphere of your mind. Freedom begins to haunt you as you
127 begin to realise your only life choice is to continue choosing while
128 not fully trusting your judgement, even though in every moment
129 that judgement feels right.

130 Identity becomes split into three models of functioning: manic,
131 normal and depressed. You identify differently with each identity,
132 and although your overall identity remains the same, each
133 different mood transforms you into something far different than
134 the other. Parts of your life can't function properly together and

135 things start to become a mess and fall apart. You do things in one
136 mood that you would never do in the other and you have to
137 somehow find a way to reconcile this conflict during one of your
138 fleeting moments of stability.

139 Left alone to your sense of freedom, you see the world around
140 you happening and you try to understand how you fit into it. You
141 find things to surround yourself which tell you who you are, to
142 reassure your insecurities that inevitably present themselves in
143 every choice you make so that you think you understand the
144 reasoning behind your choices. But as time goes by the things you
145 surround yourselves with lose their effect and influence and
146 you're lost once again to your sense of freedom and the
147 unpredictability of who you will be in months to come.

148 **Consistency is Key -----February 2008**

149 It sometimes seems like the world isn't made for us. Like we don't
150 fit the mould of what a human being should be. Employers don't
151 want workers who will suffer uncontrollable bouts of depression
152 or mania and exhibit associated behaviours. Friends don't want
153 the unpredictability of friends who one moment are filled with
154 energy and excitement and the next moment won't leave their
155 house or walk or talk to anyone because they are so depressed.
156 They want reliability. They want to know that who you are now, is
157 who you will be tomorrow and six months time from now.

158 The fact is that we would love to have this consistency as much as
159 everyone else wants it from us, but evolution and chance have
160 given us a set of cards that are a little bit more difficult to play.
161 Like any minority that doesn't fit the bill of the majority, we face
162 our challenges, but for us these challenges are more than just
163 fitting into a social/cultural structure. For us it means dealing with
164 our social/cultural structure as well as dealing with our internal
165 struggles for self-survival. Our simple existence is a challenge for
166 us at times and especially during an episode of mania or
167 depression. We feel the normal struggles of daily life along with
168 you but we also feel the struggle of convincing ourselves that this
169 life is actually worth living and losing so much control of our
170 ability to properly judge and reason that we end up risking it all ---
171 both outcomes unfortunately having a bad conclusion. In our
172 extremes things can seem to be unbearable for all involved but
173 much of our time is spent in milder forms of the disorder's
174 expressions and at other times we appear to be like everyone
175 else. We live play and work among you and although you may not
176 easily see us we are there. (Lecroy and Holschuh 2012, p.97

Reference:

**Lecroy, C.W, and Hoschuh, J. (2012) *First Person accounts of Mental
Illness and Recovery*, New Jersey, John Wiley and sons.**