

## **Bipolar Disorder**

Imagine having boundless energy. You see yourself as gifted, creative and powerful. Everyday events and objects take on special meaning for you alone. During this intense period, thoughts race through your mind. You start numerous projects in an attempt to keep up with all of your brilliant ideas.

You feel great during these manic episodes, which have happened a few times before. But they end with huge credit card bills and a trail of unfinished projects. After the last episode, you received sales calls from vendors whom you had told you were launching a new business. They didn't understand your reluctance to talk to them. Feeling sheepish, you go about picking up the pieces of your life. A few months later, you begin to spiral into depression.

Your despair is painful. The thought of "never waking up" becomes an attractive option. Getting through the day takes more effort and energy than you have. Your appetite is gone; you have no interest in any activities.

Finally, your friends and family express concern. You agree to see your doctor, who refers you to a psychiatrist. As you describe your manic episodes and depressions, he asks, "Have you ever heard of bipolar disorder?"

Bipolar disorder is a psychiatric illness in which people experience both extremes, or "poles," of feelings—mania and depression—in destructive ways. Those with bipolar disorder may also have periods of normal function, in which they are neither manic nor depressed. The contrast between dysfunctional episodes and periods of normal function is a remarkable aspect of bipolar disorder.

The good news is that effective treatment is available for bipolar disorder. Such treatment greatly reduces the suffering caused by bipolar disorder and enables sufferers to lead normal, productive lives.

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