

Understanding Bipolar Affective Disorder

WORKPLACE
TRAINING
& SUPPORT
SERVICE

What is Bipolar Affective Disorder?
Symptoms of Bipolar Affective Disorder
Treating Bipolar Affective Disorder

What is Bipolar Affective Disorder?

Everyone experiences times where they feel ups and downs in their mood. It is normal and healthy to experience a full range of emotions; including anger, sadness and happiness. Some days we may feel irritable; while other days we may be happy and excited.

Bipolar Affective disorder on the other hand, describes a group of mental illnesses which are characterized by extreme shifts in mood, thoughts, energy and behaviour. Bipolar Affective disorder typically consists of three states; a high state (mania or hypomania); a low state (depression); and a well state (normal functioning). During the 'manic' state people usually feel on top of the world, or on edge; while during the 'depression' state they feel low, sad or hopeless.

The pattern of mood swings are unique to each individual, with some people having manic episodes once a decade, while others may have daily mood swings.

Depression

- Depressed mood
- Anger, irritability, worry, agitation, and/or anxiety
- Hopelessness, pessimism, indifference
- Feeling guilty, worthless, hopeless
- Loss of interest in pleasurable activities, including sex
- Changes in appetite, sleep and other habits
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering and making decisions.
- Thoughts of death or suicide.

Symptoms of Bipolar Affective Disorder



Treatment of Bipolar Affective

Treatment for Bipolar Affective disorder is critical for recovery. Treatment includes a combination of medication and psychotherapy.

It is also of great benefit to have support from family, friends and/or employer (peers).

Mania

- Extreme 'high' or euphoric feeling
- Grandiose thoughts and inflated sense of self-importance
- Increased energy and restlessness
- Decreased need for sleep without experiencing fatigue
- Racing speech/thought
- Impulsiveness, poor judgment, loss of inhibitions, risk taking
- Increased goal-directed activity or starting new projects.
- Delusions/hallucinations (in some instances)