

Mental Health Insider

What is Bipolar Disorder?

More than 2 million Americans suffer from bipolar disorder.

Bipolar disorder, also known as manic depression, is an illness involving one or more episodes of serious mania and depression. The illness causes a person’s mood to swing from excessively “high” and/or irritable to sad and hopeless, with periods of a normal mood in between.

Bipolar disorder typically begins in adolescence or early adulthood and continues throughout life. It is often not recognized as an illness and people who have it may suffer needlessly for years. Bipolar disorder can be extremely distressing and disruptive for those who have this disease, their spouses, family members, friends and employers.

Although there is no known cure, bipolar disorder is treatable, and recovery is possible. Individuals with bipolar disorder have successful relationships and meaningful jobs. The combination of medications and psychotherapy helps the vast majority of people return to productive, fulfilling lives.

What causes bipolar disorder?

Although a specific genetic link to bipolar disorder has not been found, studies show that 80 to 90 percent of those who suffer from bipolar disorder have relatives with some form of depression.

It is also possible that people may inherit a tendency to develop the illness, which can then be triggered by environmental factors such as distressing life events (loss of job, end of a relationship, trauma, personal crisis, etc.).

The presence of bipolar disorder indicates a biochemical imbalance that alters a person’s moods. This imbalance is thought to be caused by irregular hormone production or a problem with certain chemicals in the brain, called neurotransmitters, that act as messengers to our nerve cells.

What are the symptoms of bipolar disorder?

Bipolar disorder is often difficult to recognize and diagnose. It causes a person to have a high level of energy, unrealistically expansive thoughts or ideas, and impulsive or reckless behavior. These



symptoms may feel good to a person, which may lead to denial that there is a problem.

Another reason bipolar disorder is difficult to diagnose is that its symptoms may appear to be part of another illness or attributed to other problems such as substance abuse, poor school performance, or trouble in the workplace.

Symptoms of mania

The symptoms of mania, which can last up to three months if untreated, include:

- * Excessive energy, activity, restlessness, racing thoughts and rapid talking.
- * Denial that anything is wrong.
- * Extreme “high” or euphoric feelings -- a person may feel “on top of the world” and nothing, including bad

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Mental Health America
in Allen County

Help is Available

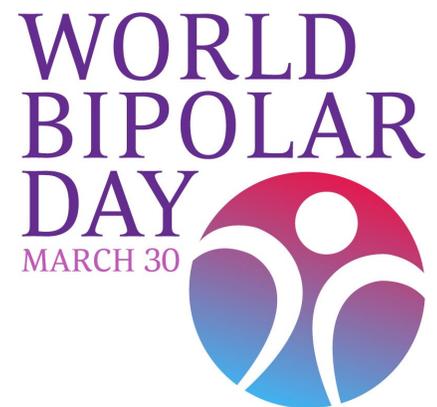
Contact Mental Health America in Allen County at (260) 422-6441 for help with finding local mental health providers and other resources in your area.

Go to our website at mentalhealthallencounty.org

Since 1954, Mental Health America in Allen County has been providing education, advocacy and support to help those individuals struggling with mental illness.



Help. Education. Hope.



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Walking Home Walk 2015



Here at Mental Health America in Allen County (MHAAC), we are honored to highlight the various local agencies who are participating in the annual Walking Home Walk on April 26, 2015. The walk starts at 12:00 PM at Headwaters Park.

The agencies that will benefit from this wonderful event are: **Cedars Hope**, Genesis Outreach, the Homeless Coalition of Fort Wayne, Hope House, Just Neighbors Interfaith Homeless Network, Redemption House Ministries, Vincent Village, Whittington Homes and Services, and the Women’s Bureau. All of these agencies work hard in their mission to help the homeless in Fort Wayne by providing shelter and food,

offering affordable housing options, educating the community, and supporting the homeless so that they can become more independent, productive, and healthy individuals.

“Awareness is key to helping the homeless in our community lead more independent and productive lives. This is a great opportunity for the community to support agencies in the area working to advocate for and aid the homeless,” according to Lisa Smith, MHAAC executive director.

The Walking Home Walk fundraiser has raised more than \$500,000 since its inception in 2001. “It would be of great benefit to these local agencies and

the homeless men, women, and children that they help to keep going with this trend. They can’t do it on their own, however; community support is crucial to keep this fundraiser successful,” says Smith.

To learn more about the walk and how to register a walk team or donate, visit their website at walking-home.com.



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A special person

Written by Julie Kintz, Staff

I would like to introduce you to one of the amazing women living at Cedars HOPE. Jackie is a lively, outgoing young woman. Her favorite color is purple; she collects Tinker Bell and peace signs. Jackie also likes to do arts and crafts and play cards with fellow residents. Mental health issues have played a significant factor in Jackie’s life. She has experienced 52 different placements since the age of 12. Jackie shared with me that her favorite placement, by far, is Cedar HOPE; “I have come

a long way since I started living here three years ago. I have built a really good support system with the other residents and the staff. They have been there for me through thick and thin.”

Jackie’s favorite part of Cedars is that her support system is with her at all times. Her second favorite thing about living here is that she is around people; she is not by herself like she would be if she lived independently. However, her dream is to someday live independently. She feels that this goal will take a long time to achieve. The steps she feels she needs to do to

work towards the goal of independence are to stay stable and stay out of the hospital. “I can accomplish this by no self-harm, take medication as prescribed, follow the rules here, and do my volunteer work.”

When asked if there is something Jackie would like to do in her life that she has not yet done, she answered, “I would like to build better relationships.” According to Jackie, the safe and caring environment of Cedars HOPE has and will continue to encourage her to thrive and achieve whatever goals she sets for herself.

Since 2014, Mental Health America in Allen County and Cedars HOPE are working together to provide permanent housing for homeless women living with mental illness. Learn more at cedarshope.org.



Bipolar continued ...

news or tragic events, can change this "happiness".

- * Easily irritated or distracted.
- * Decreased need for sleep -- an individual may last for days with little or no sleep without feeling tired.
- * Unrealistic beliefs in one's ability and powers -- a person may experience feelings of exaggerated confidence or unwarranted optimism. This can lead to over ambitious work plans and the belief that nothing can stop him or her from accomplishing any task.
- * Uncharacteristically poor judgment -- a person may make poor decisions which may lead to unrealistic involvement in activities, meetings and deadlines, reckless driving, spending sprees and foolish business ventures.
- * Sustained period of behavior that is different from usual -- a person may dress and/or act differently than he or she usually does, become a collector of various items, become indifferent to personal grooming, become obsessed with writing, or experience delusions.
- * Abuse of drugs, particularly cocaine,

"Bipolar disorder is treatable, and recovery is possible."

- alcohol or sleeping medications
- * Provocative, intrusive, or aggressive behavior -- a person may become enraged or paranoid if his or her grand ideas are stopped or excessive social plans are refused.

Symptoms of Depression

Some people experience periods of normal mood and behavior following a manic phase; however, the depressive phase will eventually appear. Symptoms of depression include:

- * Persistent sad, anxious, or empty mood
- * Sleeping too much or too little, middle-of-the-night or early morning waking
- * Reduced appetite and weight loss or increased appetite and weight gain
- * Loss of interest or pleasure in activities
- * Irritability or restlessness
- * Difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions.
- * Fatigue or loss of energy
- * Persistent physical symptoms that don't respond to treatment (such as chronic pain or digestive disorders)
- * Thoughts of death or suicide, including suicide attempts

- * Feeling guilty, hopeless or worthless

Treatment

Treatment is critical for recovery. A combination of medication, professional help and support from family, friends and peers help individuals with bipolar disorder stabilize their emotions and behavior.

Most people diagnosed with bipolar disorder can be treated with medication. It's critical that a person seek help from a mental health professional if symptoms are present and persistent.

Also, it is important that those diagnosed with bipolar disorder receive guidance, education and support from a mental health professional to help deal with personal relationships, maintain a healthy self-image and ensure compliance with his or her treatment.

Support and self-help groups are also an invaluable resource for learning coping skills, feeling acceptance and avoiding social isolation. Friends and family may consider joining a support group to better understand the illness so that they can continue to offer encouragement and support to their loved ones.



Contact **Mental Health America in Allen County** at (260) 422-6441 for assistance and information about local resources. Also, go to MentalHealthAllenCounty.org to find mental health screening tools.

Other Resources

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)

730 N. Franklin Street, Suite 501
 Chicago, IL 60610-7204
 Phone Number: (312) 642-0049
 Toll-Free Number: (800) 826-3632
 Website URL: www.dbsalliance.org

National Institute of Mental Health

Phone Number: 301-443-4513
 Toll Free Number: 1-866-615-6464
 Website URL: www.nimh.nih.gov



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DATE**

Removing the Mask Gala: Revealing the True Face of Mental Illness

10/17/2015

Please join us for the 4th annual gala on October 17, 2015 at 6:00 p.m.
The event includes a prime rib dinner, silent auction, and dancing to the
sound of The Primetime Band.

Contact us about sponsorship opportunities at (260) 422-6441.

Tickets are \$85 per person or \$150 per couple. Order your tickets now at
MentalHealthAllenCounty.org.

The Landmark Centre, 6222 Ellison Road, Fort Wayne, IN 46804