

The Most Important Thing To Know During Bipolar Episodes

By Tom Wootton



Bipolar disorder is an incredibly complex condition. It can be approached from so many angles that you might specialize in any one of them. Unfortunately, most of the specialized approaches will do you no good when in the throes of an intense mania or depression. The only thing that matters at that point is whether your specialty is knowing how to function during the state.

I find many of the points of view about bipolar disorder to be immensely interesting. The biological aspects are fascinating; the research that has looked at the inner workings of the brain, the electrical and chemical reactions within it, and the influence of external substances is fascinating. Researchers have found some truly amazing things through that approach and it has made a huge difference in many people's lives. But there are so many other approaches that I find just as interesting and have proven equally fruitful.

Many people have devoted their lives to finding the causes of mania and depression that are outside of the neurological aspects. They focus on the triggers, both internal and external, that have a tendency to bring on episodes. This work has been a tremendous benefit in helping people to avoid the things that create the states in the first place.

Others have chosen to focus on the cognitive thought processes that are apparently disordered during episodes of mania and depression. Their idea is that if we could just think right we would not be

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having the episode in the first place. These cognitive therapies have proven very effective at reducing symptoms when they occur and helping to keep them from recurring as frequently.

And there are so many more things that we can know. We can study nutrition, exercise, sleep, and any of the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, social, and career/financial aspects of the bipolar condition. A better understanding in any of these areas can lead to longer periods of remission and faster recovery from even the most intense periods of mania and depression.

But none of these types of understanding have successfully kept mania and depression from happening. And what's worse, they have often lead to a misunderstanding about our ability to actually function during those states. Far too often, a little understanding about the chemicals in the brain have led to a justification of the false notion that it is impossible to function during intense periods of mania and depression.

There is one specialized type of knowledge that trumps all of the others during states of mania and depression, knowing how to function while in the state. While all the other types of knowledge are interesting, knowing how to function can literally be the difference between life and death. Unfortunately, due to justifications like the one in the previous paragraph, this type of knowledge is not generally taught and is therefore in short supply. It is truly a case of the things that you do know getting in the way of the more important things that you should know.

I am not saying that we should stop pursuing knowledge in all of the other fields. Such knowledge has clearly proven beneficial. It's just that it has never been able to produce the outcomes that knowledge about how to function during states has. Those who hold such knowledge have been able to function well in states that people without such knowledge think is impossible.

Although I cherish learning more about every approach to bipolar disorder, I would much rather understand how to function during states even if it meant I knew nothing about the other aspects. Learning how to function during states should be the first thing we teach those who experience them. We should be recognizing those of us who do know how to function as the real experts in the field and make that expertise the most important criteria when we hold people up as examples to listen to.

Those who develop an advanced understanding of other aspects without having the ability to function during their own states should be dedicating their efforts toward learning this more important aspect <http://blogs.psychcentral.com/bipolar-advantage/2015/04/the-most-important-thing-to-know-during-bipolar-episodes/>

instead of using their limited expertise to justify their incorrect assumptions about what is possible. Those who cannot function when in states of mania and depression should be learning how instead of quoting those who cannot as justification for refusing to try.

Are you ready to learn how to function during mania and depression? Or have you convinced yourself it is not possible based on partial knowledge?

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