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Bi-polar Affective Disorder



WPA

Bi-polar affective disorder is characterised by extreme swings of mood between high and low. We all experience a kind of cycle in our moods, but bi-polar is much more severe than this. Anyone, from any ethnic group, age or background, can develop bi-polar. Often the condition first occurs when the pressures of life such as work, study, family or relationships are at their greatest. In women it may begin after childbirth or during the menopause.

Bi-polar is episodic – goes in phases. Sufferers may remain entirely well for long periods. However, if left untreated a severe episode of the condition may become very damaging for the sufferer and for those around him or her, but an early diagnosis and treatment by way of self-management, therapy and medication can help, and sufferers can enjoy a good quality of life.

Mania (high)

The person going through a manic episode may not realise that it is happening. A manic episode may be characterised by incoherent, rapid or disjointed thinking and the sufferer may become easily distracted. Paranoia and / or visual, auditory or perceptual hallucinations may also occur. The person may demonstrate grandiose delusions with a distorted sense of self and identity. Such severe symptoms are sometimes referred to as psychosis, or losing touch with reality.

Depression (low)

If someone has bi-polar affective disorder it is more than likely that they will go through a severe depression at some time. Normally this follows a manic episode and the trauma involved in the mania can sometimes add to the depression. Some bi-polar people find that the low mood is more likely to take over during the winter.

Symptoms often described include feeling empty and worthless (not just sad), a loss of energy and motivation for ordinary everyday activities, feeling pessimistic and negative about most things, or indeed about everything. During a depressive episode the person may think a lot about death and suicide. The sufferer may find all of this very difficult to talk about.

Hypomania

This is a less serious kind of mania. Someone in a hypomanic state may seem very self-confident and happy but can react with sudden anger or impatience, or become irritable at the slightest thing.

The person may be more creative, more productive, may work harder or seem unusually busy, but is unlikely to be able to focus on anything for very long, or to slow down and relax. Reckless behaviour is not uncommon in hypomania, possibly resulting in mistakes at work or damage to relationships. Other possible features of hypomania include an increase in talkativeness or challenging behaviour.

Causes and treatment

Much progress has been made in understanding bi-polar affective disorder and managing it but there is still no consensus on either cause or cure. If you suspect that you may be suffering from this condition then you should visit your GP to talk about possible medication. In addition, counselling may help.

Bipolar UK - Other Resources

Telephone : 0333 323 3880

Email : info@bipolaruk.org

Web: <http://bipolaruk.org/>

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