

## **Bipolar Disorder Self Help**

### *50 Natural Ways to Manage and Overcome Symptoms of Bipolar Disorder*

If you believe that you can diminish the symptoms of bipolar disorder and recover, then you are much more likely to work hard to make changes which will result in a less intense symptoms profile, with a lifestyle conducive to good mental health. Take heart! Many who have been diagnosed with bipolar disorder have been "cured" and haven't had to resign themselves to a life of strong pharmaceutical drugs. Bipolar disorder is currently the most misdiagnosed disorder with more than an estimated 50% of BD diagnoses reportedly inaccurate.

That being the case, always be sure to get a second opinion. What's more, one medical source indicates that you can experience a 30% decrease in symptoms by giving attention to diet, nutrition, exercise, as well as quitting smoking and abstaining from alcohol. (Wes Burgess, M.D., Ph.D. *The Bipolar Handbook*). All of these steps are described in more detail on this page.

By giving attention to other lifestyle changes, and be acquiring an arsenal of coping skills, you may find yourself "cured," that is, out of the range of an diagnosable mental health disorder. If you bring your symptoms profile down 30-50%, that might just be the case.

As far as the success ratio of treating bipolar disorder through drug treatment along with psychotherapy, the most thorough long-term study (covering two years) every conducted on this point concluded that 50% treated with the best evidence-based treatment for bipolar disorder (drug and psychological therapy), achieved remission. However there was a 50% relapse rate. (DePaulo, Raymond, M.D., 2006). It was noted that not all receive the best treatment, but treatment "as usual". Therefore, the actual success rate is much lower than the 50% of 50%, or 25% rate recorded.

One can conclude, then, that whether you choose to use drug treatment for bipolar disorder or not, educating yourself on self-help methods will be of value and is strongly encouraged. Full recovery and remission is possible.

## **1. Walk, bike ride, hike and swim.**

Regular exercise such as brisk walking can be a great stress-reliever and is one of the best strategies for overcoming depression. It contributes to a healthy chemical balance in the brain, naturally releasing endorphins, a natural opiate, in the brain, giving you a sense of well being, balance, and of moving forward in life.

Regular exercise such as brisk walking or jogging, at least 30 minutes to an hour a day, at least four times a week, can be part of a very effective bipolar disorder self-help lifestyle plan.

Exercise such as walking, biking, running or swimming, can be low impact, easy on the body, and good for the mind. It can be a primary way of moving head if you have symptoms of bipolar disorder. For exercise to be effective, you should have a routine of exercise at least four times per week.

Exercise pumps the blood through your veins and is good for your weight and self-esteem.

Even if you feel like you are accomplishing little in life at the present time, brisk walking every day makes you feel like you are accomplishing something, moving swiftly forward for those 45 minutes or so is something to look forward to each day. It gets an A+ in the psychologists bag of tricks and is pretty much free, with the exception of the occasional pair of sneakers and socks.

Walking has proven to be better than medicine (says Duke University) for mild to moderate depression, and also helps in for major depression and bipolar disorder. For bipolar disorder, walking and other forms of exercise can help level out the highs and lows in mood.

If you live within a 45 minute walk to work, why not walk to or/and from work each day. If you are too rushed in the morning, think about walking home after work. It burns off stress, clears your mind of worries and anxieties and does wonders for your overall mood. (all of the above applies also to biking).

Please, take a walk!

## 2. Take Up Art

The peace and solitude that doing artwork brings can help to develop self control and to stop the racing thoughts associated with manic episodes.

One person suffering with mental health problems said that it felt like someone was wringing his brain like you wring out a washcloth. In bipolar disorder, one's mood is fluctuating between ecstatic highs and plunging lows, either over longer periods of time or more rapidly.

The mind and mood needs to stabilize, calm down, quiet down. the constant stimulation that we often get from the media and media violence, including violence on the news, needs to turn off. What to do get some serious quiet.

Art is a natural mood stabilizer. It has the added advantage of being, generally, side-effect free. It is good therapy for both ADHD and bipolar disorder, as well as OCD. Those with anorexia and bulimia also can benefit from some time spent with art. It fills the need for visual stimulation, and it can fill they eye and mind with peaceful, soothing images.

Sketching and drawing can help one to develop powers of concentration and strengthens the mind. Oil painting, is especially soothing, but painting in acrylics can also accomplish the same thing. When one takes a little time every week or even daily, with art, developing one's latent abilities, it can contribute to stability in one's mood. It is a useful therapy that has been successfully used by some therapists. Learning to do portraits is an especially fine form of art to develop, because one is generally painting human subjects (or pets, wild animals), which can help one cultivate compassion and personal interest in others.

Art also has the added advantage of contributing to self-esteem. As one develops a skill, a talent, perhaps that one never thought they had, sees visual evidence of one's work and talent, it helps a person to develop self-esteem.

***Professional art therapy is also a viable option***

### **3. Unplug- Movies, Video Games, T.V.**

Along with developing interest in art is some thought to unplugging the TV, as well as cutting way back on movies as well as video games. If you want to talk about some unnatural ways to stimulate your mind, we can start with these three things, adding overuse of the Internet to boot. TV is generally very fast-paced. It stimulates the mind through rapid paced programs and commercials. News programs capture our attention to acts of violence and TV in general caters to one's self-indulgence and a sense of instant gratification.

ADHD most likely, is at least in part, accentuated, if not caused in some cases, by overexposure to TV. Movies can send our minds to highs and lows as well in unnatural ways at times. Action movies, like a roller-coaster, effect our chemical balance by contributing to the release of both adrenaline and dopamine in our brain. Video Games do much of the same. Cutting back or cutting out TV, video games, and yes, movies, as a major source of entertainment and time, can help one's mind to recover its proper balance and help to put one's life on track.

Movies are powerful tools of emotional stimulus, for excitement or, on the other side of the coin, for depression, or both in one movie. It is taking your mind to highs and to lows that your mind was not necessarily designed for. The Internet can similarly become a preoccupation and addicting, contributing to an addictive type of personality. Some of us with compulsive or addictive personalities, might do better without the Internet in the house, where it is constantly accessible and instead choose to use the Internet in the local library or at a local Internet café. This might help to make its use a little more planned rather than compulsive or excessive. This can be true also for children and teens.

There has been much written about teens and the Internet, but proper parental controls and supervision, and having the Internet in a public place in the home, are of a necessity, as are filtering systems. Both are needed. This is true in the school system as well, and some public school systems don't control the Internet as much as parents might expect, and children and teens have pretty much free access to everything, with the exception of blatant or hard-core porn. Children and teens, then, need to not only have limits at home, but also need to be educated.

#### **4. Read**

Reading strengthens the mind and can help to focus the mind in a way that TV cannot. It stimulates the mind's own ability for imagination. Reading positive material, reading magazines of interest, nature, for adults or children.

Reading is gentler on the mind than watching television and movies and has therapeutic value.

Reading on spiritual subjects, as well as Bible reading, can all contribute to a stronger mind, stronger spirituality and more insight into current events, than does watching the news nightly. It bridges the gap between passive viewing and participating in what one is reading about.

Reading takes more mental effort than watching TV or a movie, without overwhelming the mind. Therefore, it is the mode of choice for persons suffering with bipolar disorder for both news and as a form of recreation.

#### **5. Diet**

Good nutrition and a healthy diet is also an important self-help measure for bipolar disorder. Abstinence from coffee and alcohol, along with a diet low in refined carbohydrates and sugar can benefit persons endeavoring to overcome symptoms of bipolar disorder. Eat a balanced portion of fruits for dessert rather than sweets.

Eating whole grain foods such as whole wheat bread, brown rice, whole grain cereals or oatmeal for breakfast, as well as eating breakfast daily, not skipping meals, cutting back on unhealthy snacks and sugar, as well as cutting out alcohol completely, cutting out coffee completely both caffeinated and decaffeinated, can help to stabilize the body-mind relationship as it relates to highs and lows that may be nutritionally-related or chemically induced through metabolism.

Dr. Nate Lebowitz a cardiologist from Fort Lee NJ, states about diet, which applies equally in the field of mental health, as it does in that of our physical bodies,

"It does take some work and willpower. Being very aggressive when it comes to prevention, takes an effort on every front..., stopping smoking, getting regular exercise, maintaining a healthy diet and body weight, and some form of mind-body exercise (a hobby, keeping a journal, psychotherapy, massage, art, [prayer and Bible reading.] ) The earlier we start in life, the easier it

is, but it is never too late. We need to be just as powerful [as the disease]. It takes partnership and communication between doctor and patient-rare commodities these days."

## **Social Strategies:**

### **6. Don't Isolate Yourself**

*Mental Health America, a mental health activist group encourages 10 basic principles for managing life's pressures and for preventive medicine. They are listed here as follows:*

1. Connect with others
2. Relax you mind
3. Exercise
4. Get enough rest
5. Help others
6. Know you limits
7. Keep a journal
8. Watch your negative self-talk
9. Get involved in spiritual activities
10. Write down three good things that happen to you each day for a week.

Some of these thoughts are elaborated on in this text. In respects to connecting with others, the Mental Health America information flyer states, "You don't have to cope with stress or other issues on your own. Talking to a trusted friend, family member, support group or counselor can make you feel better. Spending time with positive, loving people you care about and trust can ease stress and improve your mood. Similarly, under the subheading, Get involved in spiritual activities, MHA states,

"Studies have shown that religious involvement and spirituality are associated with better health outcomes, such as greater coping skills, less anxiety and a lower risk of depression. Spirituality may also provide a sense of hope, meaning and purpose in life, a way to understand suffering and illness, and a connection with others."

"Don't stand alone, you might turn to stone," said a famous rocker. We need others. We need association, encouragement, people to rub shoulders with, bounce ideas off of, and for

companionship. If we have upbuilding association and develop positive friendships, it is of value in our mental health.

Avoid isolation, take time for family, develop friendships and give of yourself in a balanced way to help others.

## **7. Family Life**

Working hard to maintain a peaceful and stable family life is also of help in good mental health. Giving and forgiving are two keys in maintaining healthy relationships in the family.

## **8. Consider Your Choice in Work**

One's choice in work can make a difference in our mental health. If we are involved in work that is purposeless, repetitive or isolating, it might contribute to negative thought patterns that could contribute to mental health difficulties.

At times a switch in work or in professions, working with people, working with children, something with a higher purpose can be of value. For some, work that involves working with one's hands or work in designing, illustrating, art or architecture, might be of value, in that it is work that is mentally and visually challenging and fulfilling, it creates a sense of peace throughout the work day as well as being an outlet for creativity, that is conducive to both positive and stable, balanced, thought patterns.

## **9. Pornography and its effects**

Avoiding pornography is of much value in controlling such disorders as depression and bipolar disorder. While some psychologists have condoned pornography as a healthy outlet for sexual desires, it has been noted that addiction to pornography can be as strong as that of any drug, and that it can lead to depression. Additionally, for some, it might be a contributing factor for some of the symptoms of bipolar disorder, and serve to destabilize and isolate a person. Since pornography is being viewed by even many pre-teens, as it has become more easily accessible by Internet and television, then, children and teens experiencing mental health disorders might need counseling in this area.

Love is the greatest single factor in maintaining good mental health, and pornography has been described as being "anti-love" teaching one to satisfy their sexual desires at the expense of others

and teaching an unbalanced view of sex, to view others as sex-objects of one's personal selfish desires. Learning to avoid pornography and finding positive pursuits with which one can occupy his free time, can be of value in overcoming the symptoms of bipolar disorder for some.

## Physical Strategies

### 10. Alcohol

For many the avoidance of alcohol is a necessity when they have been diagnosed with depression or bipolar disorder. The lows and highs of mood can be accentuated through alcohol use.

### 11. Smoking

Dr. Nate Lebowitz states about smoking: *"It's imperative to talk about smoking first. It is an incredible killer, far worse than I was even taught in my medical training. If heart disease kills on in every two men and women, then smoking accounts for approximately half of those deaths. That's staggering!!!"*

*Research strongly suggests that it is not a question of if, but when and how smoking will cause death or disability. After the staggering risk of cardiovascular disease, cancers linked to or caused by smoking now number in the double digits. Finally, emphysema is a terrible disease- a progressive inability to breathe as the lungs are slowly destroyed from within. Of all the quitting methods-hypnosis, drugs, acupuncture-there is one method shown to be one hundred times more effective.*

*A frank conversation between the patient and a trusted personal physician is by far the most successful of the smoking cessation methods. It is important that the doctor not treat you as a second-class citizen for being a smoker."*

Smoking may constrict blood vessels in the brain and that can contribute to mental health difficulties and the addiction of smoking can be destabilizing. Work hard to overcome addiction to smoking.

## Spiritual Strategies:

### **14. Get involved with spiritual activities and pray regularly.**

Find times to regularly pray. Talk to God. Self-Management Strategies Used by 'High Functioning' Individuals with Bipolar Disorder: From Research to Clinical Practice, by Greg Murray, Faculty of Life and Social Sciences, Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, Australia et al., lists "Reflective and Meditative Practices," [which includes] journaling, inspirational reading, exploring their spirituality and praying, as one of the keys to recovery in bipolar disorder.

Mental Health America, A U.S. non-profit focused on education and activism in the arena of mental health, states,

*"Studies have shown that religious involvement and spirituality are associated with better health outcomes, such as greater coping skills, less anxiety and a lower risk of depression. Spirituality may also provide a sense of hope, meaning and purpose in life, a way to understand suffering and illness, and a connection with others."*

**15. Relaxation** - Commit to periods of daily relaxation. Experiment until you find the relaxation mode that is right for you. You should take at least 20 minutes per day to wind down, in addition to active reflection periods such as in journaling or prayer.

Relaxation can include quiet walking (as opposed to exercise), time with nature, or breathing, muscle tension, or visualization exercises. This involves taking deep breaths while concentrating on your breathing; or it can involve tensing, then relaxing muscle groups one by one, from toes to head. Another relaxation technique is to actively visualize a calm, safe and stress-free place, building details in your mind.

### **16. Read the Bible-Psalms/Gospels.**

This can prove to be something that is calming and anchoring. A regular routine gives one stability. Reading daily gives strength and stability.

**17. Consider carefully Your Spiritual Choices** and don't go to spiritual extremes. Participation in faith-based services which emphasize emotionalism over rationalism might be destabilizing for some.

### **18. Balance**

Try to find balance in work, spirituality, family life, recreation and realize that as much as you would like to, you can't do everything. We all have limits and we have to learn to live within them. Being reasonable with ourselves can help us to avoid the extremes of mania.

### **19. Avoid the supernatural, spiritism, occult.**

For some this can prove to be a destabilizing influence, especially children, or for those who delve heavily into such types of films and activities.

## **Practical Strategies:**

**20. Don't take on too much.** When you are up, the tendency can be to try to take on too much. Sometime this can be a way of attempting to overcompensate for previous failings. Keeping a balanced, slow, steady pace accomplishes more than trying to do everything that comes into your mind. Eat the elephant one bite at a time, says an African proverb.

### **21. Financial-Debts/organize/get help.**

Owing money you are not paying back or living in dire poverty can be destabilizing and demoralizing. Try to get a handle on your finances. Get practical assistance if possible. This is easier said than done, but it can contribute to greater stability all the way around. Getting rid of your credit cards can be of help in controlling unregulated over-spending binges, which can be typical for some with bipolar disorder.

### **22. Work, self-sufficiency and balance in work.**

Try to keep a steady work schedule and daily/weekly routine. Structure is an important factor for anyone struggling with bipolar disorder. Be deliberate in your choices and decisions. Write down your ideas, go over them with someone you respect before taking action. Hiring a life-coach might be a good investment, someone who is steady, practical and stabilizing who can help keep you on track with the practical things in life.

### **23. Avoid faddish/miracle cures.**

While putting faith in a cure might temporarily inspire hope, the letdown when fringe medical theories don't come through in the long-term, can do more to perpetuate the cycle of mania and depression. Try to stay away from unproven fringe medical solutions.

**24. Organize:** Keep a schedule/appointment book - Maintain a regular daily schedule and structure. Eat and sleep at regular times. Keep a neat and orderly home, room and car. This can contribute towards stabilization and a feeling of being in control. Hiring a coach, coach, less costly than a therapist, can help in the area of organization, and prove to be a valuable part of your support team.

### **25. Keep a daily diary, journal or blog.**

A diary can help you to organize your thoughts, help you find an outlet for your emotions, and also to keep organized. Additionally, some have used a diary to look back to find a pattern in anything that might be triggering a manic or depressive episode.

What is more, writing has proven to be an effective therapy and catharsis for many. One source states that studies in 2006 and 2008 found that when people with depression engage in expressive writing, it forces them to focus on their troubles and results in a shorter recovery period. The same can be said for bipolar disorder. With bipolar disorder, the effects of writing can be even more positive in that it helps you gain insight, as well as to unburden yourself and organize your thoughts. While keeping a journal, you are able to analyze yourself, analyze your own small victories and mistakes during the day, and make positive deliberate choices for the next day or future.

### **26. Cleanliness and personal hygiene** are an essential part of a balanced and orderly mind.

Cleanliness is next to godliness, goes the saying. Keeping your home, car, personal belongings clean and orderly can contribute to an orderly and balanced mind. Strive to keep organized. Get help if you need to and can.

Cleanliness, orderliness and personal hygiene also can enable you to be able to rest better at home and to get a better night's sleep, contributing to have a more stable life. This can be true for

you personal, or for your children, mate or teen who is experiencing mental health difficulties such as bipolar disorder.

## **Attitude: & Lifestyle**

### **27. Give to Others**

Finding ways to give to others helps us to find happiness and purpose in life. This contributes to more stable mental health.

### **28. Keep an Active Mind**

Reading and developing interests, learning a new language, playing a musical instrument, finding mentally challenging activities of value and substance, contribute to a stronger mind and can help one to overcome mental health difficulties. Passive activities such as TV and movies, tend to weaken the mind, while stimulating, it takes the effort, our mental stimulation is always something that we are reliant on others to provide for us.

Developing non-passive interests can help us to develop a strong mind which can contribute to mental stability.

### **29. Exercise of any kind is of value**

Swimming, walking, running, hiking, biking, can all help to adjust chemical activity in our mind, and lead to a positive attitude, as well as burn off tension and balance out the high's and lows that lead to manic and depressive episodes. Exercise can be more effective than medication for most depression.

### **30. Do Without a Car**

If it is possible where you live, doing without a car can lead to more exercise, as you walk to your destination rather than drive. Some studies indicate that those who walk rather than drive tend to be healthier and less overweight, which can have all around health benefits. It can also take off some financial stress for some.

### **31. Mental health and spirituality: Realize that God values you**

Life is not all or nothing. There are varying degrees of good and bad. Anyone that has some good can grow and the vast majority of us fall into that category. Realizing that God views us mercifully can help us to have a balanced view of our successes and failures. It also adds to our value in life and can help us pull back from any tendencies toward a self-destructive lifestyle.

*Knowing there is a higher purpose in life helps us to keep going even if we feel like giving up. That our life matters to God can help us to overcome suicidal thoughts and to keep trying.*

### **32. Look forward not Past**

We can't change the past, but we can work towards a better future. Any serious problems from the past in our childhood, any type of abuse, we need to get out in the open, talk about them with an appropriate counselor, teacher, mate, pastor or minister, and then work through any of these problems.

Anyone can be successful despite their past. Once we have done that, don't look too long in the rear-view mirror, try to go forward and realize that everyone has things from the past that they might regret or that are unfortunate. You can be successful if you try and the past is only good so long as it helps us adjust for the future.

Look forward, not past; pursue realistic goals; realize that it is not all or nothing; be honest; build hope; be patient with yourself.

### **33. Pursue Realistic Goals**

You may not become the next president, but there are realistic and attainable short range goals that can help one to be forward looking.

### **34. It is not All or Nothing**

None of us are all bad, none are all good. We all have different degrees of success and failure. Goodness in any degree is of value and can grow.

### **35. Character Education: Be Honest**

Honesty is a key to good mental health. Lying solves one problem and creates three others. Learn to be honest. Don't lie. It is a hard habit to develop, but it has positive points in the way of mental health.

### **36. Build Hope**

Don't give up. Things do get better in time. Progress might be slow, but it doesn't have to be "like this" forever. Associate with positive, supportive people.

### **37. Be Patient with Yourself**

Rome wasn't built in a day, and bipolar disorder won't be conquered in a day. Those looking for a "quick fix," are often at their wits end, and want it fixed now! They go for medications which, at one time, promised something of a miracle cure, but as it is, there is no quick fix for bipolar disorder.

It takes hard work and effort, determination and patience to make significant gains, but it can be done. In the long-term, if one works hard and is diligent, builds up a good support system, over the course of a couple of years, one can significantly reduce the symptom profile of bipolar disorder, to the point of remission, but this takes patience. Don't be discouraged by setbacks, and keep going forward. Long-term goals can be reached with small, incremental steps.

### **38. The Role of Media Violence**

Watching violence of any kind, in movies, video games, television or the Internet, as well as the news, as well as overindulgent in violent sports, can effect the chemical balance of our minds, specifically the dopamine level, the same neurotransmitter involved with cocaine.

If we over-indulge in these forms of entertainment, it can have an effect on the high's and low's of bipolar disorder. We are putting our mind in roller-coaster mode, from which it has a hard time turning off. This is true of young children as well as teens and adults.

Substituting time spent with violent entertainment with time spent outdoors, doing creative artwork, or helping others, can help to contribute to a positive mental health profile.

### **39. Morals**

Nothing is more destabilizing than promiscuity. Developing good morals contributes to a more balanced and stable life.

#### **40. Read the newspaper and magazines for News & Current Events**

The news can be both depressing and violent. Reading to keep up with world events is more gentle on the mind and more strengthening for the mind. Also, one can be more selective in what they read than what might appear nightly on the news. TV is not a necessity but is a 20th and 21st Century luxury that if we can learn to do without, for some, it can make a big difference in one's mental health.

### **Therapies & Support:**

#### **40. Build a Support Base**

"Many hands make the work light." If we build a good support base, positive and balanced friends and friendships, persons we can go to when we need to talk, family, ministers, professionals, etc., it can give us the support we need to be successful and keep on track.

#### **41. Coaching**

Coaching is an excellent option for persons with mental health difficulties. It is less expensive than therapy and can work in conjunction with therapy.

There are life coaches as well as coaches who focus specifically in the area of mental health. If you have hard time finding a coach who is strong in the area of bipolar disorder, a coach who is trained for ADHD can also work well, as many of the things that a coach will deal with are applicable to both ADHD and bipolar disorder. For children and youths, an after school tutor is also of much value. A coach for youths is of much value as well and should be a part of first-line defense, if it is possible.

#### **42. Cognitive-behavioral therapy**

Cognitive-behavioral therapy is found to be as effective for most than medication in both the short-term and especially the long-term. It does not have to be used with medication, but can be effective without medication.

Cognitive therapy can help one to change one's way of thinking as well as give regular, non-judgmental support. Behavioral therapy can help one to make changes in behavior and lifestyle and to develop strategies to incrementally challenge false beliefs about oneself through experimentation in real life situations. Cognitive-behavioral therapy is proving to be one effective way of dealing with even major mental health disorders for many.

#### **43. Neurofeedback and Bio-Feedback**

Neurofeedback has been used effectively in the treatment of ADHD, bipolar disorder, OCD and other mental health disorders. It helps one to develop powers of self-control and concentration. It strengthens the mind, which is an essential part of recovery. It gives needed support from professionals as well, and for some it can part of a recovery program for bipolar disorder or other mental health disorders and difficulties. The downside is that it is costly, and one would have to refer to his insurance to see if it is covered.

Neurofeedback is considered to be an effective professional therapy in the mental health community. If neurofeedback is used in conjunction with cognitive-behavioral therapy, and/or lifestyle changes, it can be an effective technique for some. The use of neurofeedback in mental health treatment demonstrates that professional treatment for mental health disorders does not need to be pharmaceutical, although pharmaceutical treatment has become the status-quo, largely because of its convenience and profitability.

#### **44. Openly and Honestly Communicate**

Honestly talking about whatever needs to be discussed from the present or past with a minister, friend or professional can be of value. Not everyone needs to discuss the past, and not everyone needs years of psychotherapy, but some have found mental stability after talking about past abuse or other issues from childhood and others have found stability discussing present fears and concerns openly with a non-judgmental counselor.

#### **45. Coming off Medications**

For most, coming off gradually rather than abruptly is the course of wisdom. Don't go on and off medications. Find a doctor you feel comfortable with and who will work with you if medication is somehow an issue.

Research has shown that adding an anti-depressant to stabilizers is not effective nor does it improve one's symptom profile. The common use of multiple prescriptions, two to six different medications at a time, has not been proven to be effective in clinical studies. It is a practice that is both controversial in the medical community, and can lead to potential long-term complications.

The use of multiple prescriptions raises both the side-effect profile, as well as the dangers that are always present in the use of psychiatric medications, exponentially, with the addition of each new medication. There are doctors out there who prescribe significantly more in the way of prescription drugs than other doctors.

Therefore, if one has a choice in which doctor they will choose for themselves or their children, one can carefully screen a potential "p-doctor" to make sure he or she is not a "pill-pusher," but has a balanced view of prescription medications.

The marketing and sales efforts of pharmaceutical companies does influence doctors choices in recommending treatment, so one need not assume that doctors are totally unbiased in their recommendations.

#### **46. Music (and Art) as therapy**

**Art therapy** is a professional therapy which can give a client support from a qualified therapist, as well as a creative outlet to express one's feelings in a professional setting. It can help one to develop one's interest in art, and is a positive, viable treatment option for many, which can help a client forgo the need for pharmaceutical treatments, when used along with other self-help options or professional support.

Soft gentle music helps to heal the mind. Depressing or emotionally charged, hard, driving music similarly is known to effect the chemical balance in our mind in a way that is not beneficial. Overdoing it with any type of music can be detrimental. Music can be a blessing or curse depending on how we go about it and what type of music we choose. Music definitely plays a role in both depression and bipolar disorder today.

#### **47. Learning to play an instrument**

*It strengthens the mind, it helps build self-esteem, and helps to fill vacant hours with a positive activity. It can also prove to be a link for social contacts, which is also of value.*

## **Other Strategies for Success**

### **48. Watch for Relapses**

**Self-monitor yourself.** Catch yourself before full blown mania sets in. Watch out for burnout and make adjustments if you see it happening. By keeping a diary, one can see what preceded a relapse and make needed adjustments.

### **49. Don't Accept the Label**

If you accept the label of any type of mental illness, it might make it difficult to find the strength to fight your way out of the quicksand. Resignation takes away our self will and determination. No one "is" cancer. No one "is" bipolar, as if they defines who you are. We need to work hard at our mental health and in regaining our mental balance. It takes time, but persons can recover from the symptoms which have become defined as bipolar disorder. One can gradually develop coping strategies and new lifestyles so that the symptoms of bipolar no longer manifest themselves. The body can heal and the mind can similarly heal.

Bipolar Disorder Overdiagnosed reaffirms a recent study by Zimmerman, associate professor of psychiatry at Rhode Island University.

### **50. Persevere. Don't give up**

There are not fast cures and there are no miracle drugs. No drug will answer one's problems of that of one's children. It takes time and perseverance, hard work and often times, the help of others to overcome bipolar disorder or any other mental health disorder.

If one has thoughts of suicide, often times talking it out with someone you trust can be of help. Prayer, activity, and communication can all be of value. If you talk to a minister, a friend, teacher, or professional, this can help to keep you going and get through the crisis. Don't isolate and don't keep it to yourself.

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3. Self Help in Mental Health: 10 Healthy Ideas to Manage Life's Pressures. *Mental Health America*. [http://www.winmentalhealth.com/self\\_help\\_mental\\_health\\_treatment.php](http://www.winmentalhealth.com/self_help_mental_health_treatment.php)

## Other Resources (off-site):

How to Overcome Bipolar Disorder Through Self-Help Methods. [http://www.ehow.com/how\\_6876369\\_overcome-disorder-through-self\\_help-methods.html#ixzz23i6Nlt00](http://www.ehow.com/how_6876369_overcome-disorder-through-self_help-methods.html#ixzz23i6Nlt00)

**STRESS: COPING WITH EVERYDAY PROBLEMS.** (2012). *Mental Health America*. <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/index.cfm?objectid=7F15EDBD-1372-4D20-C8D89C37A853E3CB>