



10 TIPS

Knowledge is Power

These tips are designed to help you find hope, understand, learn about and deal with mental health issues everyday.

Bipolar Disorder - Tips for Recovery

1. *Participate in your treatment.* You are the expert about yourself. Be actively involved in setting your individual goals and your treatment plan. Your treatment should be based on your needs and goals. Complete homework you are given. Practice helps when learning new skills.

2. *Ask questions.* Ask your Care Coordinator or medication prescriber to explain your diagnosis, treatment alternatives and his/her recommendations. If you don't understand something, ask again. Or ask a friend or family member to attend a session with you. Write down questions ahead of time and bring them to the session.

3. *Treat suicidal thoughts seriously.* Talk openly about any suicidal thoughts you are having with your Care Coordinator, prescriber, or a nurse. If needed, get immediate help by calling 911 or going to the nearest hospital emergency room.

4. *Be alert to early symptoms. Ask your family and friends to help you with this.* Symptoms of bipolar illness can return. Seek treatment as soon as possible. Ask your Care Coordinator about your developing a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) and a crisis plan. Share your plans with your family and friends.

5. *Create support* through family, friends, and peer support groups. Ask your Care Coordinator or the Office of Consumer and Family Affairs (303-432-5955) for information about peer support groups in the community.

6. *Care about yourself.* Establish a healthy lifestyle. Have a routine to make sure you get adequate sleep and some physical activity. Try to do some things you enjoy with other people. Remember that alcohol and illegal drugs can worsen bipolar symptoms. If you do use alcohol, use only in moderation. Try to get some natural sunlight for a few minutes every day, especially in the fall and winter.

7. *Take bipolar medications regularly,* even if you are feeling better. Call your prescriber or the nurse if you have any questions or if you have uncomfortable side effects. Ask about other medications which may have fewer side effects.

8. *Keep your appointments.* This is your time - use it effectively. Call ahead if you need to change an appointment.

9. *Be hopeful. Set personal goals.* People with bipolar illness can and do recover and live full and productive lives.

10. *Learn about bipolar disorder* and how people recover from mental illness. Ask for written materials, read information on the internet or from the library. Two places to start are the National Institute of Mental Health (1-800-421-4211) or www.nimh.nih.gov, www.jcmh.org, and www.fbhcolorado.org.