

Introduction

I wrote this book with the intent of helping those who are suffering from bipolar disorder, as well as to help myself. Bipolar disorder is a condition that cannot be ignored or underestimated. The implications are simply too serious: suicide or living a crippled, limited life, reckless or violent behavior, financial problems, personal and professional relationships undermined, loss of self-respect, and sometimes most tragically, giving up on your dreams.

The first step is accepting that you aren't alone. Consider this list of many notable individuals who have survived and thrived with symptoms of bipolar disorder. Note that they are listed in alphabetical order because bipolar disorder doesn't discriminate based on gender, race, income or upbringing:

Ludwig Van Beethoven; Russell Brand; Drew Carey; Jim Carrey; Dick Cavett; Winston Churchill; Kurt Cobain; Salvador Dali; Jean-Claude Van Damme; John Denver; Charles Dickens; DMX; Richard Dreyfuss; Patty Duke; Carrie Fisher; Larry Flynt; Harrison Ford; Vincent Van Gogh; Halsey; Ernest Hemingway; Kay Jamison; Billy Joel; Meriwether Lewis; Abraham Lincoln; Kristy McNichol; Marilyn Monroe; Isaac Newton; Florence Nightingale; Jane Pauley; Edgar Allan Poe; Theodore Roosevelt; Brooke Shields; Ben Stiller; Sting; Ted Turner; Mark Twain; Mike Wallace; Robin Williams; Owen Wilson; Virginia Woolf; and Catherine Zeta-Jones (Bhandari, 2020), (Bhatia, 2018), (Bailey, 2019).

Remember that these are only some of the people who are brave enough to admit that they are bipolar or are known to have coped with symptoms of bipolar disorder. Millions suffer daily. Struggling alone, oftentimes afraid to confess to others or confront their condition, too many go unnoticed and untreated until it's too late.

Unfortunately, I must include myself in this list. I am bipolar, having struggled since 1993 and I am all too aware of what it takes to confront and battle this illness. I have survived three major episodes, which have resulted in three separate visits to psychiatric hospitals, one due to a suicide attempt. All the while, I maintained a career in engineering, obtained a master's degree, and currently work as an aerospace engineer. I am also the proud parent of four awesome kids, and blessed with two grandchildren. This goes far beyond me, though.

The idea of creating a bipolar battle plan began after I attempted suicide in 2007. I almost succeeded. Afterward, I promised myself I would do anything and everything I could to keep it from happening again. I realized I had to make major changes in the way I was managing the illness, in my treatment plan, and in the way I was living my life.

With hopes to help others, I have had to confront my darkest thoughts and demons in order to write this book, which has not been easy. I actually attempted to take my own life. Today I have found balance and achieved security by creating a battle plan to overcome bipolar illness. I have successfully used the plan over time to remain episode free and advance toward achieving my dreams.

Everyone is different, but this disorder and how it affects us is predominantly consistent. We experience ups and downs sometimes so severe that feeling utterly average would be welcome. Good days, waking without that uninvited guest lurking, waiting to pounce—sometimes seem so rare. It is a struggle to gain the trust and respect of others, but most of all, to trust that things will get better, that this episode will pass, yet there will be another battle in the future. There are no quick fixes. Accept that this is a lifelong struggle requiring immediate attention and long-term remedies.

The book you are holding in your hands promises one thing: to provide you the weapons and training to fight bipolar illness strategically, intelligently, and as a warrior. Equipped with a battle plan to combat bipolar disorder you will be well-armed to achieve victory. This is your life – you don't get another!

Resources:

1. The final pages of the book can be used as a journal to jot down personal notes on ideas and emotions that may pop into your head while reading. Fill these pages with any questions or concerns that arise, and they will become invaluable to revisit over time as well as provide a tangible way of tracking how your battle plan has evolved and changed you and your life.
2. Always remember there are help lines with people on call at all times. Some examples include the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255), the Mental Health Hot Line (1-844-549-4266), and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Helpline (1-800-662-4357). There is also the Crisis Text Line (Text 'HOME' to 741741). Most importantly, if you are in trouble and your life is on the line, dial 911.
3. Most of you have a cell phone, tablet, or computer. There are a number of available Apps for battling bipolar disorder that you may find to be helpful. For example, “The Best Bipolar Disorder Apps for 2019” can be found at the website:

<https://www.healthline.com/health/bipolar-disorder/top-iphone-android-apps#imoodjournal>