Bipolar Disorder
or Manic Depression
By KSU Counseling Services Staff

Preview Points
- Bipolar disorder leads to sharp changes in moods, from very high highs to very low feelings of hopelessness. A person may veer from mania (highs) to depression (lows). Elevated mood levels are a common feature of bipolar disorder.
- Bipolar disorder may result in difficult relationships and difficulties functioning in work and school lives.
- Bipolar disorder, also known as manic depression, may also lead to suicide.
- People with bipolar disorder may also experience sudden rage or irritability.

Contents
Bipolar disorder, a brain disorder, affects a person’s “mood, energy, and ability to function.” It may lead a person to grandiose delusions, with people imagining that they have “special connections with God, celebrities, or political leaders” (American Psychiatric Association, 2005, n.p.).

Mania: The manic phase of this condition may also lead people to think that they have invincible or overly capable. These beliefs may lead to risk-taking. Manic depression may result in hyperactivity or the inability to relax. Some may experience uncontrollable racing thoughts and rapid speech. Others may find less of a need for sleep.

Depression: In the depressed phase, the person may feel “helpless, hopeless, and worthless.” They lose energy and feel fatigued. They no longer find former interests that enjoyable. They may sleep a lot, or they may not sleep at all. They may experience sharp changes in their eating habits, with a jump in appetite and weight gain, or a decline in appetite and a substantial weight loss. They may not be able to concentrate clearly. They may have thoughts of death or suicide.

The Wikipedia entry reads: “Signs and symptoms of the depressive phase of bipolar disorder include persistent feelings of sadness, anxiety, guilt, anger, isolation, or hopelessness; disturbances in sleep and appetite; fatigue and loss of interest in usually enjoyed activities; problems concentrating; loneliness, self-loathing, apathy or indifference; depersonalization; loss of interest in sexual activity; shyness or social anxiety; irritability, chronic pain (with or without a known cause); lack of motivation; and morbid suicidal ideation[1] In severe cases, the individual may become psychotic, a condition also known as severe bipolar depression with psychotic features” (“Bipolar disorder,” Dec. 5, 2008, n.p.)

Some people who suffer from bipolar disorder may experience psychotic symptoms, including hallucinations (seeing or hearing phenomena that do not exist in reality) and delusions (false beliefs that do not originate from logical reasoning).

A fifth of all patients with bipolar disorder have their first episode during adolescence.
The causes of bipolar are multiple causes. Extreme stress, sleep disruption, and drugs and alcohol may be environmental factors that contribute to manic depression. Treatment is possible under the care of licensed, mental health professionals.

Concluding Points

- Bipolar affects people’s energy levels, by either giving them a sense of extremely high or extremely low energy.
- The manic phase involves hyperactivity; the depressive phase involves a sense of energy loss and fatigue.
- Bipolar disorder affects people’s decision-making and their sense of the world.
- Bipolar disorder or manic depression is treatable by professionals.

References

n.p.