

A Woman with Bipolar Asks: Does Anyone Fully Understand?

Jacquelin Bliss

BEFORE YOU READ: *Manic depression* is when you have periods of *mania* and periods of *depression*. Look at the chart on the right and discuss.

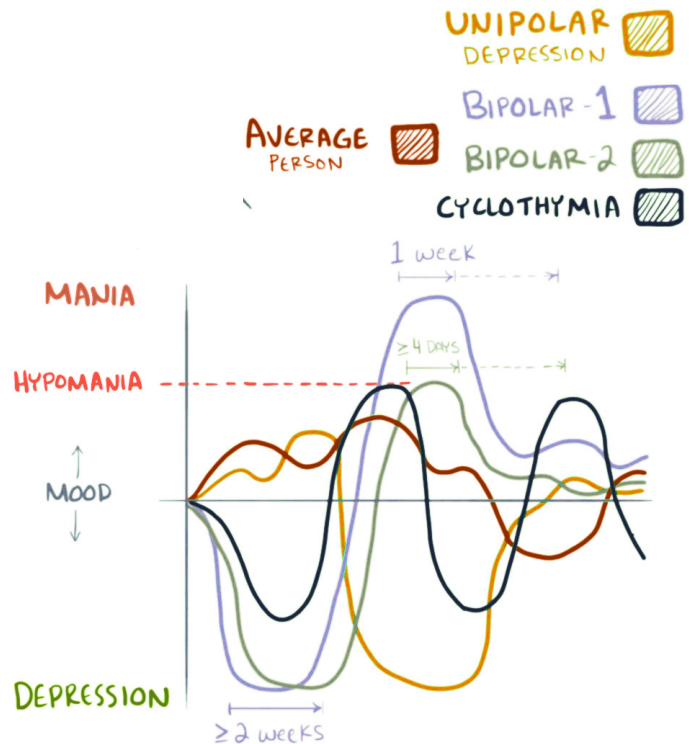
Growing up was tough. I could never figure out why I wasn't like other kids. I wasn't diagnosed until 10 years ago when I was in my early twenties. I have Bipolar type 1, which is sometimes known as *manic depression*. Mental illness can be very traumatic for a person and their family.

In school, I had trouble remembering what my teachers taught me. I got frustrated and this led to "flip-out episodes" and even self-harm. Then I felt mad at myself for not being able to control myself. I would talk down to myself and blame myself. Math was very hard for me. It got to the point where I would think about not living because I couldn't understand math like other students could. It was really sad because all I ever wanted was to be "normal" like everybody else.

No one knew what was wrong with me. My parents thought I was just acting out. I went to numerous counselors. Doctors put me on and off medication. Some medication made me feel more depressed to the point where I stopped talking. Other medications made me feel hyper.

Finally, they found the right medications for me. Thank God! Today, if I miss taking my medication or I miss a session with my therapist, I am pretty much a *train wreck*. I can't focus. I get distracted. My anxiety gets worse. My depression makes me feel like I cannot get out of bed.

Now, as an adult, I can pretty much handle my episodes or outbursts. Of course, I need to be on my medication. Some days are worse than others, but I get through them now just fine because I know my own red flags and triggers. Help and good support keeps me grounded.



Describe what you see in the chart above. Source: <https://www.togrowanotherday.com/general-overview>

However, to this day, I don't think my family fully understands what it's like to have a mental illness. But they do try and they do support me, and that's what counts the most.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. According to the author, what helps her manage her mental health today?
2. What does the author mean when she says she is a train wreck? (See p. 9 for more information on metaphors and similes.)

Jacquelin Bliss is a student at Westbay Community Action Adult Education Academy in Warwick, RI. She loves to inspire people and be outgoing. She is a talented illustrator, and she would love to work as a clothing designer.

