BIPOLAR

Teacher Guide
Key



Lessons in Mental Health

- **Name of Mental Health Disorder:**
  - **Bipolar Disorder**
- **DSM-5 Classification:**
  - **Bipolar and Related Disorders**
    (This category includes subtypes like Bipolar I, Bipolar II, and Cyclothymic Disorder.)
- **Prevalence:**
  - Bipolar disorder affects approximately 1%–2% of the global population.
  - In the U.S., the lifetime prevalence is about 2.8%.
- **Average Age of Onset:**
  - Late teens to early 20s, although it can vary. The average age is 25 years old.
- **Symptoms:**

  Manic Symptoms:

  - **Elevated Mood:** Individuals in a manic episode often experience an abnormally elevated or euphoric mood. They may feel elated, invincible, or excessively happy.
  - **Increased Energy**: Manic individuals have a surplus of energy and may feel restless or agitated. They may engage in excessive physical activity, have a high level of stamina, and find it difficult to sit still.
  - **Rapid Speech:** Manic episodes are often marked by fast and pressured speech. Individuals may talk excessively, jump from topic to topic, and have difficulty keeping up with their own thoughts.
  - **Racing Thoughts:** Mania is characterized by a constant stream of racing thoughts. These thoughts may be disjointed, random, and difficult to control.
  - **Decreased Need for Sleep**: Manic individuals typically require less sleep than usual, sometimes going for days with very little rest without feeling fatigued.
  - **Grandiosity**: Individuals in a manic state may have an inflated sense of self-importance or grandiosity. They might believe they have special powers, talents, or abilities.
  - **Impulsivity**: Mania often leads to impulsive and risky behaviors, such as excessive spending, reckless driving, substance abuse, or engaging in risky sexual activity.
  - **Poor Judgment**: Manic individuals may have impaired judgment, leading them to make decisions without considering the consequences or risks involved.
  - **Increased Goal-Directed Activity:** During a manic episode, people may engage in numerous activities simultaneously, often with a heightened sense of purpose and determination.

- **Irritability**: In some cases, mania can manifest as extreme irritability or anger rather than a euphoric mood.
- **Distractibility:** Manic individuals may have difficulty concentrating or staying focused on tasks due to their racing thoughts and impulsivity.
- **Overconfidence:** They may have an unwarranted sense of self-assurance and may take on tasks or projects that are beyond their capabilities.

Depressive Symptoms:

- **Persistent Sadness**: Individuals with bipolar depression often experience prolonged and intense feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or emptiness.
- **Loss of Interest:** They may lose interest or pleasure in activities and hobbies they once enjoyed, a condition known as anhedonia.
- **Appetite and Weight Changes:** Depressive episodes can lead to changes in appetite, resulting in either significant weight gain or weight loss.
- **Sleep Disturbances:** Sleep patterns may be disrupted, with individuals experiencing insomnia (difficulty falling or staying asleep) or hypersomnia (excessive sleep).
- **Fatigue:** Bipolar depression is frequently associated with a persistent sense of fatigue and low energy levels.
- **Feelings of Worthlessness or Guilt:** Individuals may experience excessive feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or self-blame, even for minor mistakes or perceived shortcomings.
- **Difficulty Concentrating:** Concentration and cognitive functioning may be impaired, making it challenging to focus on tasks or make decisions.
- **Psychomotor Retardation:** Depressive episodes can lead to a slowing down of physical and mental processes, resulting in reduced movement and speech.
- **Withdrawal:** People with bipolar depression may withdraw from social interactions, preferring isolation and avoiding contact with friends and loved ones.
- **Suicidal Thoughts:** In severe cases, individuals may have thoughts of death or suicide and may engage in self-harming behaviors.
- **Physical Symptoms:** Some individuals with bipolar depression may experience physical symptoms such as aches, pains, headaches, or digestive issues.

Rapid Cycling:

- Rapid cycling is defined as experiencing 4 or more mood episodes (manic, hypomanic, or depressive) within a 12-month period.
- The average length of cycle in bipolar between mania and depression varies but it is generally between 4 and 12 months. This means that a person with bipolar disorder may experience a manic episode, followed by a depressive episode, and then a period of normal mood over a period of 4 to 12 months.

- **Risk Factors:**
  - Family history of bipolar disorder or other mood disorders
  - High levels of **stress or trauma** (especially early childhood trauma)
  - Substance use (alcohol or drug abuse can trigger or worsen symptoms)
  - Neurochemical imbalances in the brain
  - Major life changes (divorce, job loss, loss of a loved one)

- **Recommended Treatment Options:**
  - **Medications:**
    - Mood stabilizers (e.g., ***lithium***)
    - Anticonvulsants (e.g., valproate)
    - Antipsychotics (e.g., olanzapine)
  - **Therapies:**
    - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
    - Interpersonal and Social Rhythm Therapy (IPSRT)
    - Family-focused therapy