

the
bipolar workbook
for teens

dbt skills to help you
control **mood swings**

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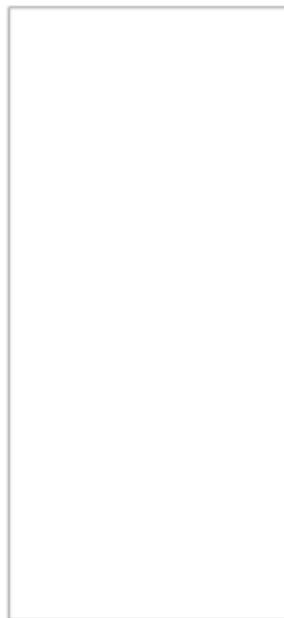
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introduction

Dear Reader,

If you bought or were given this book, you either have bipolar disorder or have been experiencing troublesome mood swings. Mood swings can have a severe impact on your life, preventing you from reaching long-term goals and having a negative effect on your relationships. There are skills you can learn to help you cope with your symptoms and have more control over your emotions. Working through this book can help you learn them.

The activities in this workbook are largely based on a treatment called dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), which was developed by Dr. Marsha Linehan, a psychologist and professor at the University of Washington, and is presented in her book *Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder* (New York: Guilford Press, 1993).

These activities will help you gain insight into your life and teach you skills that will help with your symptoms, but it's up to you to put those skills into practice. As you do each activity, give yourself time to really think about it and to learn each skill before moving on to the next.

This book is not meant to replace professional help. If your mood swings are quite troublesome and impact your ability to function—perhaps you stop going to school at times, or use substances or other less helpful coping skills to avoid your problems—you still need to seek help from a doctor and a psychotherapist. If you have bipolar disorder, you have likely been prescribed medications, and it's important that you remain on them and follow your doctor's instructions. If you have thoughts of suicide, please tell someone you trust immediately so that you can get the help you need.

Learning skills to help you manage your emotions and be more effective in your life is hard work. It means recognizing that some things you currently do aren't working very well, and looking at ways you can change those things. Some people have a tendency to be hard on themselves when they have trouble making changes or when they fall back on old patterns even after they've been learning and practicing new ones. But remember: change is always hard! So as you go through this workbook,

* introduction

make sure you regularly give yourself a pat on the back for the hard work you are doing, and congratulate yourself for taking the steps to live a healthier, happier life.

a look at your bipolar symptoms

1

for you to know

Bipolar disorder is a very unpredictable condition that makes your mood go up and down a lot. Sometimes you might feel really down or depressed, and at other times you might feel incredibly good about yourself, like you could do anything you set your mind to. At still other times, you might feel like you have a lot of energy but can't sit still and often feel angry or annoyed.

When he was thirteen, Jamie began to have periods of time when he felt so down that he withdrew from his family and friends. He would hide away in his bedroom whenever he could. Although he still went to school, getting up in the morning became really hard, and he had no energy at the end of the day to do homework or even to do fun things that he used to enjoy, like playing video games. Concentrating was also really hard, and before long, Jamie's grades were falling and his parents were getting phone calls from the school. When his parents tried to talk to him about it, Jamie would get so angry that he could barely think straight. He would end up yelling at them and sometimes even throwing things. Later, he would feel so guilty and ashamed of his behavior that he would have thoughts of killing himself. His emotional pain was so strong that he just didn't want to be there anymore. Jamie's story shows some of the effects of depression.

Lindsay had been feeling really good for a few weeks; her energy level was high, and she was needing much less sleep than usual, which meant she was able to get a lot more stuff done. At school one day, she began to think about how much smarter she was than her teachers—she already knew what they were teaching her and thought she could do a better job than they were. She told her math teacher that and ended up with a detention after school. When Lindsay got home late, her mother asked her why. She responded that she didn't think she had to go to school anymore; she wasn't getting anything out of it that she didn't already know and she thought she'd speak to her guidance counselor about graduating early. When her mother questioned this, Lindsay became really angry and left the house in a rage. Lindsay's story is an example of a manic episode.

activity 1 * a look at your bipolar symptoms

Camille had stopped taking her medication because she hated the numb feeling and other side effects it gave her. After a few days, she noticed that she was sleeping a bit less than usual and snapping more easily at little things that usually wouldn't bother her. She felt jumpy and kind of agitated, like she just couldn't sit still. She had all of this pent-up energy and didn't know what to do with it. On top of that, she was starting to feel depressed and to have thoughts about hurting herself. These thoughts frightened Camille enough that she admitted to her mom that she had stopped taking her meds, and they were able to get her help. Camille was experiencing a mixed episode, or symptoms of depression and mania at the same time.

The stories of Jamie, Lindsay, and Camille are examples of how depression, mania, and mixed episodes can affect you. Some manic episodes are full-blown and some are mild; mild episodes are known as hypomania. Throughout this book, we will use “mania” to refer to both types of episodes.

The symptoms of bipolar disorder are different for different people, and your own symptoms will vary from episode to episode. It's very important for you to get to know the symptoms you can experience during a bipolar episode. By noticing these symptoms as they appear, you'll be able to tell when you might be entering one of these states.

for you to do

The first list includes symptoms that a lot of people have when they feel depressed, and the second includes common symptoms of mania. Some of these symptoms can occur whether you're feeling depressed or manic, and, if you have mixed episodes, you might have symptoms of depression and mania at the same time. Check off any of the symptoms that you've had and use the blank lines to write down any others not on the list.

Symptoms of Depression

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> feeling very sad | <input type="checkbox"/> eating more or less than usual |
| <input type="checkbox"/> feeling like you don't matter | <input type="checkbox"/> feeling angry a lot |
| <input type="checkbox"/> changes in your sleep | <input type="checkbox"/> weight changes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> feeling "empty" | <input type="checkbox"/> snapping at people more often |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hiding away from people | <input type="checkbox"/> problems concentrating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> difficulty remembering things | <input type="checkbox"/> thoughts of suicide |
| <input type="checkbox"/> decrease in energy | <input type="checkbox"/> lack of interest in doing things |
| <input type="checkbox"/> feeling hopeless | <input type="checkbox"/> feeling helpless |
| <input type="checkbox"/> feeling restless | <input type="checkbox"/> crying a lot |
| <input type="checkbox"/> difficulty making decisions | <input type="checkbox"/> not liking yourself |
| <input type="checkbox"/> thoughts of hurting yourself | <input type="checkbox"/> feeling guilty |
| <input type="checkbox"/> loss of enjoyment in activities you used to like | |

Other changes you notice about yourself when you're feeling depressed:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

activity 1 * a look at your bipolar symptoms

Symptoms of Mania

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> rapid, unpredictable emotional changes | <input type="checkbox"/> less need for sleep |
| <input type="checkbox"/> scattered, confusing thoughts | <input type="checkbox"/> having a lot more energy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> doing many more activities than usual | <input type="checkbox"/> feeling really happy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> feeling really good about yourself | <input type="checkbox"/> feeling irritable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> spending more money than usual | <input type="checkbox"/> driving fast or dangerously |
| <input type="checkbox"/> having a lot more sexual feelings than usual | <input type="checkbox"/> having a hard time relaxing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> talking very fast | <input type="checkbox"/> using drugs or alcohol |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ignoring responsibilities (e.g., work, school) | <input type="checkbox"/> lack of control |
| <input type="checkbox"/> feeling paranoid | <input type="checkbox"/> shoplifting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> eating less | <input type="checkbox"/> agitation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> poor judgment | <input type="checkbox"/> feeling really anxious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> thinking you can do things better than others | <input type="checkbox"/> having intense nightmares |

Other symptoms of mania you've experienced:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

activity 1 * a look at your bipolar symptoms

Are there any symptoms you checked off that you weren't aware of before reading these lists? Write them here:

Did you check off symptoms that you were aware of but didn't know were related to your bipolar disorder? If so, what were they?

Every day this week, pull out both lists and review them. Notice if you are currently experiencing any of the symptoms you checked and if you need to check off others.