

# SELF-CARE WITH BIPOLAR DISORDER

## WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MYSELF?

While medication and therapy can be key components of your treatment plan, there are a number of lifestyle changes you can make that may help manage your symptoms.



### Education

The first step in helping to manage your symptoms is learning to recognize them, so take the time to get educated about your condition. You might also want to read up on your new medications, so you can be aware of any potential interactions with foods, over-the-counter and other prescription medications, or herbal supplements. Talk to your healthcare provider about potential side effects you may experience so that you can address them if they appear.



### Substance Use

Limiting consumption of alcoholic beverages and avoiding mind-altering drugs can also help to keep your symptoms in check. These substances may not only make your symptoms worse, but they can also interact dangerously with your prescribed medication(s).



### Healthy Diet

Healthy eating can go a long way in helping you feel your best. While there is no specific diet for bipolar disorder, a well-balanced diet packed with whole foods may be beneficial. Skipping that morning coffee and minimizing caffeine intake is also worth a try. To get more suggestions about the right eating plan for you, talk to your healthcare provider.



### Sleep Hygiene

A regular sleep schedule is another healthy habit to add to the list. Going to bed at the same time every night and creating a routine to help you wind down successfully are small changes that may make a big difference. You might also want to try keeping a log to track how well you are sleeping, as sleeping more than normal or being unable to sleep can both be early signs of a new mood episode.



### Exercise

Regular exercise can have both emotional and physical benefits. Aerobic exercise, which is anything that gets your heart pumping faster, is thought to be especially beneficial in individuals with bipolar disorder. If aerobic exercise is not for you, brainstorm other activities that will get you moving like gardening or dancing.



### Routines

Keeping a regular daily schedule creates structure, which may help you to manage potential stressors and reduce your risk of relapse. Building in time for rest and relaxation in addition to periods of activity is key. Don't have a job or enough to do? Volunteer work or a new hobby may fill your time and help give you the purpose and structure you're looking for.



### Budgeting

You may find yourself making poor financial decisions during periods of mania. Using budget calculators and setting up automatic bill pay, daily spending limits, and purchase notifications can help you to stay on top of your finances. Asking a trusted friend or family member to help monitor your spending through formal (eg, power of attorney) or informal methods may also be helpful.



### Symptom Tracking

Tracking symptoms, stressors, and treatment effects in a journal or log can help you plan better for the future and implement coping strategies when you need them. Daily mood charts that you share with your healthcare provider may also help to you to identify any patterns in your behavior and prevent new episodes from occurring.



### Family and Friends

Emotional support from family and friends can help you in your recovery journey. Make sure you identify people who you trust and who are willing to learn more about bipolar disorder. You might also consider joining a peer support group. Sharing strategies, questions, and concerns with others who have the same condition can be extremely helpful.



### Planning for the Future

Don't wait until a crisis arises to make an action plan! Make a short list for your wallet or phone with important phone numbers, including supportive friends and family, healthcare providers, and crisis hotlines. Having a plan already in place can help reduce any unnecessary stress or anxiety.

People with bipolar disorder can be at a greater risk for suicide. If you are thinking about suicide or making a plan, the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** network is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week across the United States.

- **English:** 1-800-273-8255
- **For deaf and hard of hearing:** 1-800-799-4889
- **Para Español:** 1-888-628-9454
- **Veterans crisis line:** 1-800-273-8255

For text messaging, text the word "HOME" to 741741. The **Crisis Text Line** connects you to trained crisis counselors for free 24/7 support.

This handout is intended for your education and does not replace proper medical care. Please talk to your healthcare provider with any questions or concerns you might have. Patient quotes reflect each patient's unique experience with bipolar disorder and are not intended to provide advice.



"Bipolar disorder doesn't define me. There are also many good qualities that I have. I am passionate. I am adventurous. I am inquisitive. I am empathic. I am creative. Most importantly, I am strong"

– Personal story from a person with bipolar disorder.  
<https://www.nami.org/Personal-Stories/How-Invalidating-My-Bipolar-Disorder-Invalidates-M>

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## MY WELLNESS TOOLBOX

Whenever you encounter a trigger and start to feel off, it's important to take action. Don't wait for a full-blown episode to occur to initiate self-care! The next time you spot a warning sign, try one of the coping strategies below. There are also some blank spaces for you to fill in your own go-to activities and people you can call in times of crisis. Not sure where to start? Bring this list to your next appointment and ask your healthcare provider for help!

### When I'm stressed, I can:

- Call/text my therapist or healthcare provider
- Attend a support group meeting
- Write in my journal
- Go for a nature walk
- Do something creative, like coloring or painting
- Listen to my favorite music
- Take five deep breaths
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### If I need to talk to someone, I can call:

_____	_____
My healthcare provider	Number
_____	_____
Name	Number
_____	_____
Name	Number
_____	_____
Name	Number
_____	_____
Name	Number

Like these tips? Keep this in your pocket or wallet so it's with you whenever you need it!

“I'm living proof that a bipolar disorder diagnosis is not a death sentence. I haven't just survived, I've thrived. And while I've had many professional achievements, I'm most proud of my recovery.”

- Personal story from a person with bipolar disorder writing for [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)



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