

# BeyondBipolar

*clarity and hope  
for those challenged  
by bipolar* **Newsletter**

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Welcome to *BeyondBipolar*, a *Newsletter* focused on mental wellness for those who experience bipolar personally and in their families.

## ***Hope Is Where the Health Is***

In the midst of the challenges of bipolar, hope is elusive. But beginning to nurture hope is the first step in finding mental wellness. A diagnosis of bipolar can be frightening. Our experiences can be confounding. But hope can take us in the direction away from our fears since hope is where the health is.

Life with a diagnosis of bipolar can become an endless cycle of taking medicines and staving off the next episode of depression, mania, hypomania or mixed mood. Or it can become a life of building the three-legged stool of mental wellness in order to manage the challenges of bipolar.

Medications, psychotherapy, education—these form the three legs of the stool of mental wellness. Recovery principles and skills—these form the seat of the stool. But

the glue that holds the legs and the seat together is hope.

Hope is truly where the health is because hope is the glue that enables us to put together the three-legged stool of mental wellness in spite of a diagnosis of bipolar.

Where do we find hope? We beg, borrow or steal it wherever we can! Here are three ways to get started:

- Look for hope in the fact that bipolar, like other psychiatric diagnoses, are highly treatable with an 80-90% success rate for those who stay in treatment. Think you are in the 10-20%? (I used to think I was!) Think again. What evidence do you have that you can't get better? Hope can take you beyond the place you are right now. It can help glue together the stool of mental wellness.
- Find hope in those around you. Persist in seeking hopeful people to relate to. Quit listening to and believing those (including yourself) who say you are lazy or a failure, that you are too wild and your successes are

insignificant compared to bipolar. Instead, stay in treatment and nurture that inner voice of hope. Seek those who believe in your potential for recovery. Start accepting their encouragement.

- Search for peer support. Those who are living well with bipolar are all over the globe. They are all over the Internet and they are also in your community. Don't know where to get started? Look for resources in my book, *Bipolar Disorder: Insights for Recovery*.

Hope is where the health is! Persist in finding hope and glue the stool of mental wellness together in your own life. Put together the legs of treatment and the seat of recovery with the glue of hope. Then use your stool of mental wellness.

Sit on it when you are tired and discouraged. Pull it out when you want to dream and plan. Use it to climb higher when you have goals to reach. Offer it to others to rest on when they are building their own stools. Show it with pride so others can see how you have crafted a stool of mental wellness.

Yes, hope is where the health is. It's the place to begin in treatment and recovery. Keep looking for it because it is the glue you need.

For more about recovery and bipolar, return to the homepage at [www.beyondbipolar.com](http://www.beyondbipolar.com).

### **For Family & Friends**

Become a hope-carrier for the people you love who have a diagnosis of bipolar. Realize that bipolar has challenges that are difficult to face without hope. Here are some ways to be a hope carrier:

- Above all, take care of yourself first. Neglecting yourself in order to "help" the person you

love brings only discouragement. Putting all your focus on a person with a health challenge causes too much pressure for you and that person. Take good care of yourself. Doing so means having fun, crying, getting therapy when needed, making friends outside the circle of those who are privy to your friend or family's challenge.

- View bipolar as a health challenge, not as laziness or over-enthusiasm. A health challenge of any kind requires education and active problem solving. It requires persistence.
- Express hope, but validate the challenges of bipolar. Challenges are real and intense. Ignoring them will never make them go away. Hope says, "I see that things are difficult for you right now. I hope that things will be better soon." Hope doesn't set goals for another's health. Hope is patient and gentle but persists even in the darkest experiences.

For other ways to find hope, read my book, *Bipolar Disorder: Insights for Recovery*. It's a great resource to get started.

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*Jane Mountain, MD, is a retired physician who faces the challenges of bipolar in her own life. She is the author of *Bipolar Disorder: Insights for Recovery* and *Beyond Bipolar: Principles for Recovery*. Many of her articles about recovery and mental health issues can be found on her website at [www.beyondbipolar.com](http://www.beyondbipolar.com).*

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