

Club News

The Lithium Club Summer Garden Party

The annual Garden Party on Saturday 3rd June was a great success. Over seventy people attended. The weather was wonderful and the good food and music were very much appreciated.

Concert

This will take place at Birdbrook Church followed by refreshments at Moyns Park house on September 30th. Tickets are now on sale from our office and can be reserved by telephoning 01440 785 727.

Committee

David Cutmore is retiring as our treasurer after several years of kind work for the charity. We are therefore now asking if there is anyone willing to help by replacing him. There is only one formal committee meeting a year to attend and the accounting work is to run a profit and loss account once a year from the records provided. All expenses will be paid. Please telephone 01440 785 727 or write to us if you are able to help.

Soothing the Senses

Music

Music can be very relaxing, especially when it follows a rhythm of 60 to 70 beats per minute, according to researchers. But what is relaxing to one person may be irritating to you. If you prefer classical to New Age music or New Age to classical, stick with your preference, to get the most benefits out of it.

People in my study have said the following about how music affects them:

Music makes me feel like I am in another world, floating away from the things around me. It lets me be me. I can do what I feel to the music, act like a teenager or whatever.

I love opera. Leo Delibes' Lakme is my favourite piece. It brings me peace. I also listen to Native American flute music tapes with birds singing and loons calling. My latest tape purchase was called Migration and all you hear are the sounds of migrating birds.

I love the symphony – I love music. I participate in the chorus. I borrow records and tapes from the library. I take courses in music appreciation. Music keeps me going.

Go through your record collection and make a note of those pieces that make you feel more relaxed and peaceful. You may want to combine these selections on one tape, which you can play when you are feeling down or harried.

*Living Without Depression & Manic Depression
Mary Ellen Copeland, M.S.*

Learn to cope with the impact of Bipolar disorder on your life

In addition to dealing with symptoms of mania and depression you will have to deal with the lasting effects of the tensions and disruptions that remain in your life. You will need to find ways to cope with the consequences of your behaviour and to plan strategies that might lessen the damage if illness returns.

During mania, the anger, unpredictability and irresponsible behaviour that occur can hurt marriages, devastate children and lead to loss of employment. Remorse and guilt are common (and probably appropriate) response to such behaviour, although such emotions can get blown out of proportion if subsequent depression develops. You need strategies to help you move past the regrets and get on with rebuilding your life. Do not expect to fix things too quickly; it takes time to regain trust and to let painful memories fade. Identify realistic goals, particularly if it appears that some of the damage to your life cannot be repaired soon.

Financial problems often need a more long-term strategy. You may want to take steps to lessen the financial risk if a manic or depressive episode recurs, such as cancelling credit, appointing trustees or co-signatories, or transferring ownership of property to your spouse. A good financial advisor may be a crucial part of your recovery team.

Most of the damage arising from episodes of mania comes from over action. With depression, on the other hand, most of the damage comes from a lack of action. Because depression robs you of energy or the ability to think and act clearly, relationships may wither, employers may lose their patience and financial difficulties may arise. As with mania, you must give others time to adjust to changes in your behaviour and style. Your spouse may find it difficult to resume sharing responsibilities with you after having been forced to run a home and family alone. You may have to settle for a lower level job for a while until you get the opportunity to prove your abilities and regain your self confidence.

Understanding Bipolar Disorder and Addiction
Dennis C Daley, Ph.D. & Roger F Haskett, M.D.

How can I discriminate between a normal and abnormal mood swing?

Detecting when your mood is beginning to swing is a formidable but not impossible task. Patients who have lived with bipolar disorder for many years often become quite sensitive to their moods. Other patients who are not as aware of their moods may have to depend on their support network of family members and friends to help them, especially at first. If you live with your parents or a spouse, they will soon become, if they are not already, very aware of your mood shifts and behavioural changes. Patients who live alone may have a harder time finding someone to help detect alterations in mood. Setting up a system of regular visits and phone calls from doctors, social workers, family members and friends is one option. It may be necessary to inform your boss or a colleague at work about your illness so they can catch early warning signs.

Educating yourself about some of the behavioural changes that occur when moods shift is a way to become more self-reliant. However, if you suspect a change in your mood, call someone. It can be difficult to pinpoint identifying factors, because many common emotions span several mood states, including euthymia (feeling good), depression and hypomania. Signs of an incipient change may include the sudden appearance of irritability and anger or a disrupted night's sleep. Discussing how you feel and your recent activities with others may help you forestall the adverse effects of a full-blown mood swing. Do not make any changes in medication or therapy schedules yourself, even if you suspect it will help a mood swing.

Keep in mind that everyone's moods vary to some extent. It is a sustained change in mood over time – days and weeks, for example – that is critical to track.

Why am I up, why am I down?
Roger Granet, M.D. & Elizabeth Ferber.

Colour

Many people find that colour – whether it's the décor, their clothing or personal possessions – have quite an affect on their moods. I know that I find a very light shade of pink, almost a white with just a little red colouring added to it, very soothing. I painted all the walls this colour in an apartment I rented. It felt great. Others have reported a similar experience with a light shade of pink. However, some people reported that other colours had a better effect on their mood.

Choice of colour is very personal. Statements from many participants of my research validate this fact. One woman said: 'I can't wear red when I feel really down. I wear vibrant colours (red in particular) to brighten my attitude. I love purple, it makes me feel good.' Another woman said: 'I tried a yellow room once but it didn't lift my mood like it was supposed to. I find blue or green to be soothing.' Another said: 'I like bright colours. If I couldn't have bright colours around me I would probably be depressed.'

When you are buying yourself new clothes, focus on these colours. When you are having a day when you feel down, wear clothes in these colours. It will help perk you up. Every time you look in the mirror it will give you a lift.

When decorating your own space, use these colours. If you are living in a space where the colours make you feel down, yet you can't afford to redecorate, try some inexpensive alternatives. A can of paint for a wall or two, a coverlet from a rummage sale can make a big difference. If your workspace is being redecorated make your colour preferences known. Let your employer know the colours that make you feel best.

Living Without Depression & Manic Depression
Mary Ellen Copeland, M.S.

Augmenting Genius

According to tradition, creative individuals must suffer beyond what ordinary mortals endure on the assumption that suffering is essential to creativity. The poet de Musset insisted: "Those who afford us our highest intellectual pleasures and our sweetest consolations appear doomed to weariness and melancholy." Some have held, as did the Goncourt brothers, that the suffering caused by mental illness is the price one must pay for creativity. "Talent," the Goncourts said, "exists only at the cost of our nervous conditions." Manic-depression can give immense advantages to the creative person, but not when the disorder is in its more intense phases. Then it not only causes suffering, but the pathological behaviour and the other problems it produces also tend to reduce both the quantity and quality of creative work. These problems can be mitigated or avoided if creative manic-depressives are spared the more intense states of the disorder. Some creative manic-depressives could become more productive were they to spend more of their lives within milder limits of mania and depression.

Manic Depression and Creativity
D. Jablow Hershman & Julian Lieb, M.D.

We love to hear from patients, carers or other supporters of our charity on any topic relating to either the newsletter or matters concerning the work we do. So please do take part in our competition as well as writing to us on any topic that particularly interests you. We are always happy to publish articles sent into us when requested to do so by the author.

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