What is bipolar mood disorder?

Bipolar mood disorder is a medical condition that affects a person's moods. The term “bipolar” comes from the idea of moods swinging from one extreme to the other. It is also sometimes called manic-depressive disorder.

What does it mean to have bipolar disorder?

A person with bipolar disorder will go through episodes of mania (highs) and at other times episodes of [depression](http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/mental_health/depression.html) (lows). A mixed episode has both manic and depressive symptoms. These aren't the normal feelings of happiness and sadness that everyone has from time to time. Instead, the episodes are intense and swing back and forth.

People having a manic (high) episode may:

* Feel very “up” or “high,” “jumpy” or “wired”
* Talk really fast about a lot of different things
* Get angry easily
* Not feel the need to sleep
* Do risky things, like spend a lot of money or have reckless sex

People having a depressive (low) episode may:

Reference: National Institute of Mental Health, Bipolar Disorder. Retrieved June 25, 2019.   
<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/bipolar-disorder/index.shtml>

* Feel very “down” or sad, tired or slowed down
* Feel worried and have trouble concentrating
* Eat much more or much less than usual
* Lose interest in fun activities and pull away from friends
* Have trouble sleeping
* Think about death or suicide

Are there other problems from bipolar disorder?

Yes. Some people with bipolar disorder use alcohol and drugs because they feel better when they're high. But using alcohol and drugs can actually make things worse.

How can I help myself if I have bipolar disorder?

While in Job Corps, our goal is to help you understand and manage your condition so you can move toward finding employment. It may include medication, brief therapy, and participation in groups and activities.

* Talk to your counselor and health and wellness staff
* Ask for reasonable accommodations, if needed
* Stay on your medication, if prescribed
* If your medication is making you feel strange or bad, contact health and wellness staff
* Keep good eating habits
* Make sure you get enough sleep
* Be aware of your mood swings (keep a mood chart/journal)
* Ask a close friend to help you stick with your treatment
* Be patient about your symptoms; improvement takes time

I know someone who has bipolar mood disorder. What can I do?

* If they are thinking about hurting them self or someone else get help immediately
* Do not leave the person alone
* Let the nearest Job Corps staff member know NOW!
* If not able to find a Job Corps staff member quickly, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room
* Access the Job Corps Safety Hotline (844-JC1-SAFE) via text, email, phone, mobile app or web site
* Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline  
  (800) 273-TALK (8255)  
  TTY: (800) 799-4TTY (4889)