

**B**i**p**o**L**ar

Friend

**on**

Relationships  
Dating & Divorce

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# **SAMPLE PREVIEW CHAPTERS**

## **Bipolar Friend on Relationships, Dating & Divorce**

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# Foreword

Bipolar affects 5.7 million American adults. It is a disease that has its DNA permanently embedded in its host. Bipolar is not curable at this time, however the disease is highly treatable with proper management. People with bipolar can and do lead abundant lives. The first step to understanding a bipolar life is becoming educated. Look no further for this book is filled with advice, strategies, comprehension, and tips for managing your bipolar health and relationships thereto. This book offers heartfelt true life experiences. A must read for every person who has bipolar, has it in their family genetics, and especially for those who have relationships with bipolar partners, relatives and friends.

# **CHAPTERS**

**(HYPERLINKED)**

**ENVIRONMENTAL BIPOLAR**

**BIPOLAR STIGMAS**

**DATING WITH BIPOLAR**

**BIPOLAR COMMUNICATION BASICS**

**A BIPOLAR DIVORCE**

**DECREE EPILOGUE**

**FINAL THOUGHTS**

# **Bipolar Friend on Relationships, Dating & Divorce**

Let's start by examining communication paradigms in partnerships with bipolar significant others. Bipolar personalities can create unique challenging environments. This guide provides tools to cope that will enable better interpersonal interactions. Topics are written for both the bipolar person and their partners, friends and relations to give perspective, empathy, and understanding. Due to the diversity of bipolar, this information is not a one size fits all, but rather an education in awareness to encourage healthy exchanges.



## ENVIRONMENTAL BIPOLAR

Once, when my late Father was counseled by his Psychiatrist, he was told: *If he had married someone other than my Mother, quite possibly, he would not have the harsh mood swings that he had endured. That my mother was just as responsible for his mental health condition!* In other words, my Dad's bipolar was triggered by my Mother's incapacity for communicating her displeasure, wishes, and desires in their marriage. So together they co-created an imperfect, unhealthy relationship environment. This truth had

merit. Yet, I never understood the concept fully until my own marriage fell to the same folly.

My parents were married for 29 years. Their marriage was fraught with dysfunction on both sides to which bipolar contributed its fair share. For years I witnessed how my Mom manipulated my Father's illness to make herself out to be the victim and the hero all while saving face. These trip points would set my Father off. I explained my observations to Mom, yet she did not understand. Her behavior was so ingrained into who she was and how she operated. On the other hand Dad had Type I bipolar which was quite severe when left un-managed. He was no picnic to live with. Eventually their issues faded away, primarily due to their divorce. In the end my parents remained friends spending many holidays together.

Fast forward to 35 years later. My own marriage ended. At my request. When I asked my husband how he felt about my decision to divorce, he put the final nail in our coffin. His statement, professed like it was not a question replied, "You know why you want a divorce!?"

# Heal Your Environment, Heal Yourself

There are three primary triggers for bipolar DNA to engage and alter our body chemistry. First, we must inherit the bipolar genes. Second, bipolar onsets are enabled by hormone changes, or other body chemistry upsets. Last, the stresses in our environment can and will trigger bipolar mood swings.

Environmental stress in today's society is a given. No one is without pressure. Jobs, families, social situations, health and money conditions present stress to our mind and body. Eliminate the stresses and you will alleviate bipolar symptoms. This is the easy anecdote. But in our society you cannot live in a bubble for very long.

Acknowledging stress to our bodies *and* recognizing the source can be difficult because as humans we get conditioned to our environment. We fall into habits, routines, and patterns that can create discomfort to our lives. By choice and circumstance we allow ourselves to become entrenched inside familiar relationship



dynamics that do not benefit us. Unhealthy situations, particularly combative communication is caustic to us bipolar folks.

Most people with bipolar are typically hyper-sensitive to their environments. When social situations pit you against your intuition and better judgment it causes stress. An unhealthy relationship can be one that stagnates growth and awareness; one that is void of empathy and understanding; one that triangulates you against others; or one that uses a bipolar diagnosis against you. Relationship challenges come in all shapes and sizes. If the paradigm becomes crippling to you, your health, and your bipolar is in constant turmoil, it maybe time for a complete change.

Bipolar symptoms are quite telling. Listen to your body talk. Often there are signals telling you that you are off balance. Pay attention to what is going on in your environment that is affecting you.

Only you know whats good for your health. Taking a good long look at uncomfortable patterns and how these shape your bipolar mood swings is the first step towards awareness. Next, if you have taken action to heal or change your relationship with your spouse or partner, and these attempts have failed, a reassessment

is in order.

Healing relationships starts with you. There are a number of ways to attain good health for your body and your mind. Counseling, mediation, honest reciprocal communication, along with healthy eating habits and exercise all help heal. But, if the stress is unending, you will need to take the initiative to step away.

Environments can help cure, or they can kill. Make your choice a conscious one.



## **Bipolar Children**

Do you have a bipolar parents or grandparents? Then, yes, you too may well have—or get bipolar when the conditions are ripe. Bipolar will birth at a given point in time when enough factors are present to explode those dormant genes into full force.

A little known fact: Fathers pass the gene to their daughters and Mothers to their sons. HOWEVER, there are no guarantees for how DNA crosses in the genetic pool. Generally speaking if one parent has the bipolar gene their child will be prone to receiving it, along with its benefits and drawbacks. Or, the gene may sprout

up in the next generation; the grand children. There are many, too many factors in the genetic pool. It is best to educate yourself to increase your awareness of bipolar if it's in your heritage.

Don't sweat it. There are worse scenarios. At least bipolar can be treated and most the times with just lithium, or another medication that is not so uncommon. Bipolar is easier to live with than (in my opinion) polio, diabetes, heart conditions, and kidney failure. Any and every health issue takes monitoring. Of course it depends on your attitude towards it too. Plus, don't forget that bipolar folks are intelligent, creative, witty, independent, energetic, and compassionate. Many famous writers, poets, musicians, and scientists have the bipolar brilliance.

If you are a bipolar child in waiting don't fret. Bipolar may pass you by. And be thankful you are born in this era of medication and support. Just take responsibility for your health and enjoy living your life!

# BIPOLAR STIGMAS

Do you know how many stigmas are attached to everyday things in this life? The bipolar stigma does not stand alone. Uneducated people may label the bipolar stigma as a big deal because bipolar is—was known as the crazy-mind disease. But anymore most stuff is crazy, and most everything has a label—or a stigma attached to it. Lots of 'crazy' people are NOT bipolar. They are just messed up from dysfunctional lives. So they ACT bipolar!

Really all stigmas are, are learned behaviors instilled from your family of origin, the media, friends, and other outside yourself influences. Everyone just thinks they have to have a label for how someone behaves.

Do these other opinions mean you have to buy into their beliefs? NO! You have a brain and free will to make up your own mind. You can buy into their idea of a stigma, or not. It's your choice.



## Stigma Bipolar Style

A *stigma* according to the thesaurus, is a brand, a stain, a blemish, or defect.

Bipolar has a long history of being branded as *insanity*. Viewed as an unbalanced crazy, the chosen were blemished for life. Most folks shy away from people with this affliction out of fear.

Because somehow bipolar is contagious. And, associating with a bipolar person, you may be interpreted as unstable as well.

Stigmas around the manic-depressives still hold out today. It was not that long ago that BIPOLAR was given its name. Formerly, it was and still is referred to as MANIC-DEPRESSION. Lithium was not widely known or used until the 1970s. Just 20 years

earlier bipolar people were classified as insane and as such were locked away in mental wards. It takes a culture a long time to get over stigmas.

Do you know how many bipolar people are walking around in the U.S.A? Look it up. The number will astound you. Bipolar itself is not a bad thing. Although left untreated it can become a menacing pest.

So why the bad rap? Severe bipolar mood swings, can leave everyone including the impaired in a state of dysfunction. Erratic behaviors are challenging. And due to bipolar's historically horrendous treatment plans, the consequence of the stigma stuck.

Are you bipolar? Do you want to remove the stigma? Here are some best practices . . .

- Do nothing. Live your life responsibly and the stigma won't attach itself to you.
- If a teaching moment arises, use your knowledge to educate others.

- Harassed by others? Ignore the less fortunate. Don't waste your energy.
- If possible, shift people's misinformed perspectives with education.
- Show the world that a bipolar person can live their life to the fullest.
- Contribute to humanity wherever and whenever possible.

Like most fads that come and go, stigmas have their time. A few years ago drug therapies were taboo. Now they are sought after as designer drugs become vogue. Bipolar stigmas have faded and in certain circles have become fad! As the majority become aware of bipolar characteristics and its manageable treatments, it will be viewed as no different than the common cold.





# DATING WITH BIPOLAR

Being bipolar brings on different challenges when thrown into the dating world. New partners either come with preconceived ideas around bipolar—or none at all. Many are clueless about bipolar because they may have never had an occasion to interact with a person of bipolar propensities.

Whether to bring the subject up of your bipolar on a first, or second, or third date depends upon many factors. The primary consideration is how serious are you going to be with your other, and how soon. If you are on a first or second date with NO potential, don't waste talking about your bipolar. The urgency of telling a new partner about your bipolar heritage depends upon trust, commitment, honesty, and intimacy.

After my divorce, I had an array of dates. It was only fair to tell my suitors about my bipolar upfront. Particularly if there was an ongoing interest from both sides. And so I did. To my surprise none reacted in a negative manner. Well one did. Never saw him

again. My advice: when you find someone you like a lot— provide full disclosure. And within the first few dates. It is not fair to waste their time, or yours. Especially if your suitor has beliefs around bipolar they can't or won't shake.

Most of us bipolar folks agree telling a potential long-term partner about your heritage is better done sooner than later. Being bipolar should not be kept a secret. Having an open dialogue will set the stage for future honest interactions.

Of course, your other may decide to bow out in which case they are doing you a favor. Life is too precious to waste playing games or avoiding obvious truths. Or, trying to convince someone that your bipolar will not affect them. If another steps away from your invitation for a relationship after your disclosure, it is a kind deed. You want someone who has the grit to stand by you in difficult times. Someone who has the compassion and understanding to go the distance. And someone who will love you regardless.

Some of my dates admitted they had intimate associations with previous bipolar partners. That bipolar was not the issue for their

breakups. All were pragmatic in their assessment of their own relationships. Their honest dialogue showed integrity. How refreshing!

Honest communication is key to starting, building and maintaining a relationship, be it a friendship or more. Listen for cues and tip offs in your discussions for healthy or unhealthy biases. You are off to a good start dating someone who is open to discussions, questions to understand, and learns from other viewpoints. On the other hand, if your date is subtly demeaning, shows passive-aggressive tendencies, and has preconceived unwavering notions: RUN!

# **BIPOLAR**

## **COMMUNICATION BASICS**

***FOR EVERYONE, BIPOLAR & NOT***

Communication is essential for preserving relationships for the long haul. Verbal and non-verbal communication permeates every facet of our lives. It does not matter if you are bipolar, diabetic, disabled, healthy, grouchy, dysfunctional, disease ridden, arrogant, wise or witty. Everyone needs to learn how to communicate.

If you have an issue, such as bipolar which might impair your abilities to reason, or be heard, communication skills play an important part in recovery and treatment– or for just getting along reasonably well. This section has helpful hints and suggestions for communicating ease, bipolar or not!

# Healthy Boundaries Help Heal

Boundaries dictate to another person what is and is not acceptable. Strong guidelines set expectations that allows an agreeable resolve. It lets your companion know your limits. It is your responsibility to make your wishes known ahead of- or during a time of conflict.

When someone is having a bipolar episode, either depression or mania, it is especially important to set boundaries to help enable a smooth recovery. Boundaries seem obvious, but are often overlooked, much less talked about. Whether you have bipolar, or have relations with one who is, here are a few boundaries that you may wish to discuss with each other:

- Communication around procedures, medicine, doctor and or hospital visits, care, comfort, help and welfare is essential. Having a frank conversation upfront about your care will alleviate guessing games during tough times.
- When to commit or not to commit. Sticky, tricky subject, but one that needs to be addressed. No one likes to be committed, but caregivers will need to know what is

appropriate and when, especially if you are displaying signs of not being able to care for yourself. Or threatening harm to others—or yourself.

- Discuss and set expectations around how to use the term *bipolar* in transactions of conversations such as in gist, play, during fights, and normal discussions. What is acceptable- or not acceptable? How sensitive are you to how the word bipolar is used? Syntax can make or break communication lines.
- Learn to evaluate whether you are actually helping, or playing the rescuer. Honest helping will see patient progress. If you are rescuing a bipolar person then neither of you have proper boundaries. Rescuing conduct enables both sides to keep playing their roles of taking no responsibility. A rescuer needs to rescue themselves first. Become educated to this cycle. Change the dynamics. Heal beliefs to find resolve.
- Bipolar is NO excuse for bad behavior. Set acceptable conduct limits and stick to them.



## **A BIPOLAR DIVORCE**

These “Divorce” essays were compiled into this array of topics as they were experienced. Make no mistake this was MY very real divorce concerns as they accumulated. No way could I make up these spins and turns of events. These essays were written cavalierly—with a serious sarcasm only to mast the absurd naked truths I observed. Candidly offered are caveats, strong opinions, and advice for getting beyond one of life's most traumatic moments. Especially under the influence of bipolar. If you are bipolar, suggestions for remaining well balanced and healthy

during this period are included. This section was left written in the present tense as it happened.



## Children of Divorce

What is the worse casualty of divorce? The children. No matter what their age. Marital affairs are nobody's business. And it is the responsibility of the divorcing parties to protect this privacy and their children from mental harm. But as we all know children often become pawns. Used to leverage false claims and positions.

I would have never believed it. When I politely requested a divorce, my ex totally surprised me. He promised and actually



said, *“If you make me get a divorce those kids are going to hate you!”* I thought: *Wow! Some goal to aim for!?* But, his promise was made good.

We had formerly talked about keeping a low profile. Keeping the kids out of the drama. Yet immediately he involved the kids by venting to them. Private financials were inappropriately shared. The rest won't be told. I elected to not cross that boundary. One where marriage affairs stay put. However, keeping quiet destined me to being guilty for not sharing.

Suffice to say, my ADULT kids chose sides. They will not talk to me. It has gotten quite ugly. I'm not sure how much time this will take to heal, if it ever does. It looks doubtful at this time.

The divorce proceedings were one thing. But manipulating our adult children about put me in the bipolar loony bin. So far the ex got the house, got me kicked out, and got the kids in his back pocket. Things you can replace. Tarnished relationships you can't. I don't wish this hell on anybody. Especially my kids who were victims of an ultimate abuse: a parent who victimized their love for his own motives.

**Thank YOU for Previewing**



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Patty Ann is a life-long educator who has taught college, high school, and was an Instructional Designer who wrote training for corporate development. Now Patty authors a variety of genres. From fiction and non-fiction, to real life use-it-now lesson books.

Patty is an avid animal lover. All her book proceeds benefit animal welfare through her **Patty Ann's Pet Project** a 501(c)(3). View more thought provoking books and/or contact Patty through her website at **PattyAnn.net**. Thank you!

