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Steering the Roller Coaster: Tips for Managing Mania

Mania, in its first stages, can give a person with bipolar illness thrilling and exciting feelings. Creativity, confidence and feelings of power are heightened. But there comes a time when excitement and thrills give way to fear, depression and despair. Learning to manage bipolar illness can keep life in balance.

Self help techniques can help you during an episode, or can lessen the negative effect it will have on your life.

To prevent an episode, or to keep an episode from ending in hospitalization, you might want to keep the following things in mind:

Drinking or drugging is the absolute worst activity you can get involved in. Learn to say "no," to yourself and to others. If you find you can't say "no," attend a 12 step or other support group.

Avoid negative people. Find positive and supportive people to be around. They can do wonders for your mood.

Attend a support group. Support groups can offer you real care and concern. Many people who attend support groups have experienced mental illness first hand. You may be able to learn new coping techniques from someone who has been there. **Learn what your**

triggers are. Triggers are situations or events that cause a drastic change in your mood. Work with your therapist, your support group, or even write in a journal to gain understanding about your triggers and how to avoid them.

Avoid over-stimulation when feeling manic. Stay away from stimulating places such as bars and malls. Even stimulating music can affect you. Listen to soothing music. It can help you calm down.

Stay away from TV and movies that are over-stimulating, violent or gloomy. Programs that affect your mood can be a trigger.

Exercise and eat right. Exercise has physical as well as psychological benefits. Just taking a walk can be helpful. Eat balanced meals because your diet affects how well your body absorbs medication. Drastic changes in your diet can also cause problems.

Plan your day. Having your day planned can give you a sense of stability when you are feeling unstable. Many people have also found that setting small daily goals is helpful. It keeps them focused and gives a sense of achievement when things get done.

Manage your medication. Medication can be a life-saver for a person with bipolar illness. Work

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with your doctor and pharmacist to determine which medication and what dosage works for you. Make sure you keep all your appointments to have your blood levels taken. Be sure to ask plenty of questions so you can learn all you can about your medication.

Keep important telephone numbers in your billfold or purse. If the police pick you up or you get lost, your parents, a family member or a special friend can be called.

Wear a med-alert necklace or bracelet. Wearing one can give others valuable information if you get picked up or lost. If a person is delusional enough to get picked up by the police, they need to be in the hospital, not a jail cell. A med-alert bracelet will let the authorities know.

Let your friends and family members know the warning signs. Let those closest to you know what to look for when you start to become manic. By using your family as support, you can avoid problems. They may be able to help you take action before you need hospitalization.

If you sense yourself becoming manic, whether alone or with friends, call your therapist, community mental health center, or the Access to Care Line. Mania is caused by chemical changes in the brain, and can't always be controlled despite your best efforts.

For more information, we recommend Mary Ellen Copeland's book *Living Without Depression and Manic Depression: A Guide to Maintaining Mood Stability*. Also, talk with your doctor, therapist, or call our Customer Service Line at **1-888-251-7511**.



1-888-251-5711

ValueOptions New Mexico believes that people can and do recovery from mental illness. That is why we created *Tools for Recovery*. *Tools for Recovery* is a series of tip sheets that are written by and for consumers about issues, opportunities and obstacles people face in their recovery from mental illness. Other tip sheets in the series "Managing Mania," "Dealing with Depression," and "Handling Anxiety." These tip sheets are available through your mental health center or by calling the ValueOptions New Mexico Customer Service Line at 1-888-251-7511.