

# MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

## Mental Health & Wellbeing

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# Bipolar Disorder

Individuals diagnosed with bipolar disorder often experience manic episodes and depressive episodes which can involve changes in mood (low, elevated), energy, activity levels and concentration. How we feel will often affect our thinking and behaviours, and this disorder can affect our ways of thinking that aren't necessarily related to mood. The episodes can range from mild to severe, and they can last for a full day or longer periods ranging from several days to weeks. Sometimes, individuals can experience a mixture of these episodes. This can be caused by genetics or life stress, but it is important to remember that people with bi-polar disorder can manage it through proper treatment and good coping strategies.

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## What is bipolar disorder?

There are various types of bipolar disorder:

- ▶ Bipolar I disorder
- ▶ Bipolar II disorder
- ▶ Cyclothymic disorder
- ▶ Others

More information can be found [here](#). (Note that a proper diagnosis can only be made by trained mental health professional)

People with bipolar disorder will often experience dysregulation of mood with recurrent manic and major depressive episodes. It is linked to medical and psychological comorbidities, a poor response to currently available pharmaceutical medications, and is prevalent in many individuals. While the initial manic or hypomanic episode may occur years later during the condition, the index event is frequently depressive, delaying diagnosis and resulting in the adoption of ineffective treatment methods.

More information can be found [here](#).

### **Manic and hypomanic episodes may include some of the following changes in how we think, feel and act:**

- ▶ Feeling upbeat, jumpy, or wired
- ▶ Increased activity, energy, or agitation
- ▶ Exaggerated sense of well-being and self-confidence (often referred to as euphoria)
- ▶ Decreased need for sleep
- ▶ Unusual talkativeness
- ▶ Racing thoughts
- ▶ Feeling more distracted

### **Major depressive episodes may include:**

- ▶ Depressed mood, such as feeling sad, empty, hopeless, or tearful
- ▶ Marked loss of interest or feeling no pleasure in most of the activities
- ▶ Significant weight loss when not dieting, weight gain, or decrease or increase in appetite
- ▶ Either insomnia or sleeping too much
- ▶ Either restlessness or slowed behaviour

- ▶ Fatigue or loss of energy
- ▶ Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt
- ▶ Decreased ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness
- ▶ Thinking about, planning, or attempting suicide

## Strategies to manage bipolar disorder

Coping with bipolar disorder can be a challenge, but some ways can make things easier for you and the people around you.

- ▶ **Seeking treatment to address your needs:** It may be helpful to speak to someone professional, particularly someone who will hold an objective lens to your situation. Attending a counselling session can encourage a safe space to talk about managing bipolar disorder and your studies. It is the best way to start feeling better, but it takes time for manage it
- ▶ **Keeping a sleep diary:** Monitoring your sleep cycle in a diary or an app can be useful information as it becomes data that can be shared with a health professional. This is important data as sleep disturbance is a core behavioural change with bipolar disorder.
- ▶ **Track your mood:** Mood monitoring is very important as changes in mood happens often with bipolar disorder. An online worksheet provided by the Centre for Clinical Interventions can be found [here](#).
- ▶ **Seek help from people around you:** Having supportive people in your life is helpful when managing bipolar disorder. This may mean reaching out to your existing network or confiding in a family member or distant friend can provide you with the [social support](#) you need. Good social support can help you through these difficult times. There is always someone who will be willing to talk to you whenever you need it.

## Bipolar disorder and my studies

Bipolar disorder can make it hard to manage due dates, stay organised, avoid procrastination and focus on assignments, all of which can make doing well at university harder. However, there are lots of strategies you can try to help support you in your studies, you just need to find the right ones that work for you.

- ▶ **Set reminders:** Becoming familiar with your mode of organisation, whether it be your calendar or reminders app on your phone, ensure you set reminders (recurring if necessary) can really help you stay on top of due dates and manage time effectively

- ▶ **Create a sense of routine:** It helps you stay focused on your goals and provides structure. Creating a routine around study deadlines and assignments can help you achieve your academic goals in a timely manner.
- ▶ **Adopt habits that focus on your self-care:** Engaging in regular physical activity can help you feel better during depressive episodes, Maintenance of regular eating and sleeping patterns can also contribute to lowering the risk of recurrence of bipolar disorder.
- ▶ **Avoid drugs and alcohol**

## University Support

WSU resources:

If you want support to optimise your study then the WSU [Counselling Service](#), [Disability Service](#), or [Student Welfare Service](#) may be able to help.

- ▶ **WSU [Counselling Service](#).**

Students can access free, short term, confidential counselling services. Face to face, Zoom or telephone appointments can be made by telephoning 1300 668 370 or sending an email to [counselling@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:counselling@westernsydney.edu.au). Our office hours are Monday to Friday 9.00am - 4:30 pm.

- ▶ **WSU [Disability Service](#).**

The Disability Service is free to access with Disability Advisors assisting students to meet their full potential. If you have a diagnosed physical, psychological or medical condition that impacts on your studies, you may be eligible for an [Academic Integration Plan \(AIP\)](#), developed by the Disability Service. Contact the Disability Service on 1300 668 370, email [disability@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:disability@westernsydney.edu.au) or make contact via [WesternNow](#).

- ▶ **WSU [Student Welfare Service](#).**

Academic, Personal and Financial Hardship, International Support and Accommodation: 1300 668 370 or via [WesternNow](#).

- ▶ **Multifaith [Chaplaincy](#)**

Multifaith Chaplaincy can provide confidential conversation and care, support for stress management and anxiety with links to religious groups and faith communities. For more information, please call Daniel Jantos on 0402771543 or email [d.jantos@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:d.jantos@westernsydney.edu.au).

▶ **WesternLife**

[WesternLife](#) - Join thousands of students at Your Virtual Community to share experiences, learn new things, connect with new friends, and engage with events or discussions that interest you!

▶ **Disruption to Studies**

Consider applying for [Disruption to Studies](#) and [Requests for Extension](#) if you feel as though your studies have been significantly impacted.

▶ **Deferred Exam**

[Deferred Exam](#) – You can apply for a Deferred Exam no later than 5.00 pm on the second working day after your scheduled exam if you are unable to attend a final exam due to serious illness, misadventure or other exceptional circumstances beyond your control. Submit a [Student Form](#) and attach supporting documents online for application.

▶ **Withdraw Without Academic Penalty**

[Withdrawal Without Academic Penalty](#) is an option available after the Census Date of the teaching term provided that you meet eligibility.

▶ **Leave of Absence**

A [Leave of Absence](#) is a temporary break from studying. Once you have completed one or more subjects in your enrolled program, you can apply for a Leave of Absence. A Leave of Absence can be taken as either six or twelve months. The maximum amount of leave you can take during your program is twelve months. Please note, you must submit your application before the relevant census date

If you are considering any of these options, please reach out to the counselling service for support and guidance. If you are an international student, please make sure you seek advice

particularly if you are considering withdrawing without penalty or taking a leave of absence as these may have [implications for your visa conditions](#).

## Community Support

### Community resources:

- ▶ [Lifeline](#) (24 hours crisis counselling) - **13 11 14**  
If you are really struggling during the night when completing assessments or feel most alone, contact Lifeline SMS Counselling Service - between 6pm- Midnight you can text **0477 13 11 14** and somebody will text you back!
- ▶ **Mental Health Telephone Access Line**  
[Mental Health Telephone Access Line](#) - 1800 011 511  
This Mental Health Line is staffed by mental health professionals that can help and provide you advice about your needs and discuss referrals to local mental health services. It is available to everyone in NSW and operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- ▶ [Beyondblue](#) can be contacted by telephone at 1300 22 4636 or you can try their [online chat](#).
- ▶ [Head to Health](#) – Australian Government online mental health resources
- ▶ [Sane Australia](#) – Information about mental illness, treatments, where to go for support and help carers.
- ▶ [Blackdog Institute](#) – It is a research, clinical, educational, and community-oriented facility for people with bipolar disorder
- ▶ [Service Directory](#) – It is a search engine of [Bipolar Australia](#) to help you find and access the resources near you about bipolar disorder.

### Online Treatment Programs:

- ▶ [This Way Up](#) - Self-paced online programs that teach clinically proven strategies to help you improve the way you feel.
- ▶ [My Compass](#) – This free online treatment program has been developed by the Black Dog Institute to help people better self-manage mild-to-moderate symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress.
- ▶ [Online worksheets](#) are provided by the Centre for Clinical Interventions about Bipolar Disorder.

# Resources

- ▶ [Podcasts](#)
- ▶ [Videos](#)
- ▶ [Apps](#)

## Podcasts

### **“The Bipolar Battle”**

John Poehler is a blogger, author, and a mental health advocate, diagnosed with type 1 bipolar disorder. Through this podcast, he strives in empowering “bipolar warriors” to live the life they deserve.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-bipolar-battle/id1509136159>

<https://open.spotify.com/show/2jf46FSmKTGCfOJv9HJb8o>

### **“Understanding Bipolar Disorder”**

The Psychology Sisters bring light to what bipolar disorder is, including the types and the symptoms, and discuss what living with the disorder is like.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/au/podcast/understanding-bipolar-disorder/id1463750699?i=1000487316485>

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/0Vq8p5NJcZsQJSKyMK7tUb>

## Videos

### **What is bipolar disorder? - Helen M. Farrell**

## Finding balance in bipolar | Ellen Forney | TEDxSeattle

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gR4-ittuZi8&ab\\_channel=TEDxTalks](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gR4-ittuZi8&ab_channel=TEDxTalks)

### Apps

- ▶ **eMoods** ( [iOS](#) / [Android](#) )
  - Free with in-app purchases
  - This is a mood tracker built for people with bipolar disorder. It helps capture your daily highs and lows. Prompts you to track different symptoms and uses a colour-coded system to give you an easy snapshot of your mood changes.
- ▶ **CBT thought diary** ( [iOS](#) / [Android](#) )
  - Free with in-app purchases
  - This app helps you record what you thought each day, so you can reflect on how you choose to respond. The app hence helps you change any negative or destructive patterns that may be keeping you from achieving your goals.
- ▶ **Daylio Journal** ( [iOS](#) / [Android](#) )
  - Free with in-app purchases
  - This app provides a wide range of moods, activities, icons, and other daily mental health milestones to maintain in a digital notebook, as well as the opportunity to jot down your ideas throughout the day. The app also tracks your moods and thoughts over time so you can better understand the context of your moods, behaviours, and habits.
- ▶ **MoodMission** ( [iOS](#) / [Android](#) )
  - AUD 7.99 with in -app purchases
  - Tell MoodMission how you're feeling, and it will give you a tailored list of 5 Mental health strategies that can help you feel better and improve your wellbeing.

### Still struggling?

If you are still struggling, reach out to the WSU counselling team for support and advice. If you prefer to seek support from a service outside of the university, it may be helpful to speak to your General Practitioner regarding a [Mental Health Care Plan](#) and referral to a psychologist, or you can speak to a counsellor or other health professional. Remember you are not alone and there will always be someone out there who is willing to stay with you through your hard times.



**View a PDF version of this webpage [here](#).**

References:

[Western Sydney University- Disruption to Studies Policy](#)

[Western Sydney University- Withdrawing without academic penalty](#)

[Western Sydney University- Counselling Service](#)

[Western Sydney University- Student Welfare Service](#)

[Western Sydney University- WesternNow](#)

[Western Sydney University- Chaplaincy](#)

[Western Sydney University- TalkCampus](#)

[Beyond Blue- Online chat](#)

[CCI Bipolar Information Sheet](#)

[CCI Mood and Symptom Monitoring](#)

[Blackdog Institute](#)

[Staging Models in Bipolar Disorder: A Systematic Review of the Literature](#)

[5 Ways to Wellbeing](#)

[Very Well Mind – Stress and Social Support Research](#)