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## Bipolar Insights: Seventeen Years

By Marcia Rose

It all began with an idea when someone said to me that individuals with bipolar disorder need to be together, because they feel alone. At the time, it was inconceivable that such an idea would become an educational center for training individuals, families, psychiatrists, therapists, students and the community.

This year Bipolar Insights celebrates 17 years of service. Weekly classes are held in two locations where not just mental health needs are discussed but also deep-seated emotional and situational wounds that are part of each individual's life are talked about.

In the past it was thought that mental illness was not manageable and there were only two medications individuals were prescribed. Some people were placed in a state hospital and suffered for a lifetime.

By 1998 state hospitals were closed. More medications became available but with severe side effects. Scientists concluded there was an environmental component and claimed the individual or his family had some responsibility for their mental illness.

From the very beginning, I questioned such findings and I continue to do so.

Why would I question the findings of such experts? For 17 years, I have had the privilege of meeting with individuals who have bipolar disorder. I have watched the process as they became educated, uplifted and then began to manage their illness. I celebrated with them as they achieved their goals, returned to college, found employment and reconciled with their families.

No psychiatric hospitalizations, no suicide attempts and no arrests were involved in the process. All in all we proved the experts wrong. We now know bipolar disorder is genetic.

With education and medication an individual can live a managed, productive life. Numerous members in our weekly meetings are a testament to that reality.

So today, 17 years after Bipolar Insights began, I would like to offer some informative insights:

Bipolar disorder is genetic.

Bipolar disorder is what you have, not who you are. It is not your fault. There is no cure (yet).

Bipolar disorder has definite symptoms. Behaviors are not symptoms. Medications will control symptoms. An “episode” refers to being in one extreme or another. Extremely high moods means the person is in mania and extremely low moods can move into depression. When “in episode” the individual has lost control.

Bipolar disorder has cycles and patterns. A cycle involves movements between mania and depression. A pattern is when those movements have a pattern. Other mental or physical illnesses do not cycle.

Bipolar disorder is not dysfunctional behavior. There are three types of bipolar disorder: bipolar — mania and depression; bipolar 1 — mostly mania, little depression; Bipolar 2 — mostly depression, little mania; mixed state and rapid cycling are both symptoms of mania. Mixed state, feeling both manic and depressed at the same time. Rapid cycling — movement from mania to depression several times in a day, week or month.

There are five types of medication used for bipolar disorder: anti-psychotic, mood stabilizer, antidepressant, anti-anxiety and sleep aids. A combination of medications with appropriate doses based on one’s type of bipolar disorder and personal variables will lead to balance.

To achieve and maintain balance you must take a combination of medications, journal, be self-aware and attend an educational group regularly.

I hope this is helpful to better understand bipolar disorder.

Go to [bipolarinsights.com](http://bipolarinsights.com) for information and to purchase a 2015 calendar/journal.

Become a fan of Bipolar Insights on [Facebook.com/bipolarinsights](https://www.facebook.com/bipolarinsights). All are welcome. Make sure to check the website for closures.

The co-founder and facilitator of Bipolar Insights, Marcia Rose, can be reached at [trust@bipolarinsights.com](mailto:trust@bipolarinsights.com). Weekly classes start at 7 p.m. on Sundays at Marshall Medical Health Conference Room 207/208, 681 Main St. in Placerville and on Mondays, in Room 304, Green Valley Church, 3500 Missouri Flat Road in Placerville, The fee is \$5 per person. Check [bipolarinsights.com](http://bipolarinsights.com) for complete details and further information.