



TIPS FOR YOUR PATIENTS WITH BIPOLAR DURING THE HOLIDAYS

For your patients with Bipolar, life's challenges can feel like an uphill battle. During the festive season this becomes more compounded, with:

- The pressure to always be jolly
- To interact with difficult family members
- Disruptions to access to doctors and medicine
- More drinking than normal by those around you

This is where extra support and guidance will help them through the season, making all the difference.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS FROM PEOPLE WITH BIPOLAR FOR HELPING YOUR PATIENTS MANAGE THE FESTIVE SEASON

MEDICATION

- **Take your medication religiously:** The festive season can make it easy to lose track of time

and miss your medication. Set reminders on your phone and give yourself visual cues such as post-it notes stuck around the house.

- **Filling your prescription:** Access to doctors and pharmacies may be limited and subject to unusual hours, so make sure you have this information. Count the days until your medication will run out and ensure your script is filled in advance and you won't run out.

FESTIVITIES

- **It's okay to skip out on/leave celebrations:** The festive season brings with it a lot of pressure to be festive and social, but if you're feeling overwhelmed or if you can't face another party, remember it's okay to say no.
- **Shopping:** Festive season shopping can be a trigger. Try to do your shopping before the

rush. This will prevent you from experiencing that last-minute anxiety and the overcrowding of shopping malls. Avoid sales, as this is where you can end up buying things you don't need. Setting a budget beforehand can also be a helpful way to alleviate the pressure.

- **Alcohol:** Don't abuse any substances. The holidays are a time where most people drink alcohol and it can be easy to lose track of how much you've had. Remember that drinking can affect your mood. Ask yourself if over-indulging is worth two or three bad days. Consider a non-alcoholic or 'lite' version of your favourite drink.

MANAGING YOUR MOOD

- **Avoid situations that may trigger you:** If you know that a particular person, conversation or event is a potential trigger, stay clear.

The holidays are ripe for political and ideological arguments, do not engage.

- **Remember that you know best what you can and can't get involved in:** Don't let others pressure you into attending events or partaking in activities that may be harmful to your mental health. You're the one who must deal with the consequences.

SELF-CARE

- **Routine:** As tempting as it can be to lose track of what day of the week it is, don't stop your routines. These can make all the difference. Try to go to bed and wake up as usual. Maintain your grooming and other daily rituals that keep you feeling balanced. If you fall off track, don't beat yourself up, but remember to pick yourself up and carry on.

- **Sleep:** Just as important as taking your medication! The holidays are characterised by late nights and parties that last till the early hours. While it may feel like you're missing out, getting enough sleep is vital to maintaining your well-being. Again, weigh up the pros and cons of each situation and ask yourself what it's worth.
- **Take time off:** The holidays can be packed with activities, social gatherings and other things that can leave you feeling drained. It's okay to take some time off from these and people as well. It's normal to need a recharge, so when you feel yourself overdoing it take a step back.

BOUNDARIES

- **Others' expectations:** Most people will understand when you state your boundaries like

saying no to an event, leaving early etc., but not everyone will, and that's also okay. Remember that you can't please everybody and it's not always important to. Your boundaries are vital and shouldn't be compromised to the detriment of your health.

- **Your expectations:** It's easy to forget that sometimes the biggest pressure we feel during the holidays stems from ourselves. Of course, you'd like the festive season to be festive, but remember that it's okay if it's not. What's most important is that your health and well-being are maintained and that you don't push yourself too far. There is no right way to be during the festive season, so try to let go of that pressure.

