

## Heads Up – Bipolar Disorder

### What helps? – Self-Management

An important way of managing a problem is to begin with a thorough understanding of it. It is only after understanding the problem that we can then begin to tackle it. Many people find that educating themselves about the condition and how it affects them, increases their sense of control.

Self management is not the same as having to deal with all of your difficulties on your own. Most people who experience symptoms of bipolar disorder engage in self management alongside ongoing contact and support from mental health services, family and other supports.

Self-management involves taking a more active role in understanding and recognising your own 'warning signs' of relapse and controlling and managing symptom changes. At first, some aspects of self-management can sound overwhelming or daunting. However, skills can be developed gradually and have the potential to increase a person's sense of control over the management of symptoms.

### Pros and Cons of Self Management

There are degrees of severity of bipolar mood swings. Sometimes people regard hypomanic periods as something they have found useful, productive or enjoyable. If this is the case for you, it might make you uncertain about seeking help or using the self-management techniques below. It might be useful for you to consider both the advantages and disadvantages of hypomania using the table below. It may help for you to ask a trusted friend / family member to see what other people see as the advantages or disadvantages of hypomania. You can then weigh up if you would benefit from addressing any issues, and making sure you don't have a 'rose-tinted' (overly positive) view of these periods.

Hypomania	Advantages	Disadvantages
Short term		
Long-term		

### Life Events - Triggers to mood episodes

Developing an understanding and awareness of typical triggers to depression and mania is an important and helpful step in self management.

Depression is often triggered by loss, sense of failure, or feeling trapped in a difficult situation. Elated mood patterns can emerge with positive life events, such as success, exciting possibilities, and becoming highly driven to achieve a positive personal goal.

