

## Myths and Facts about Depression and Bipolar Disorder

Depression and bipolar disorder are just states of mind. A person just needs to “think positive” and they will go away.

**MYTH**

Depression and bipolar disorder (also known as manic depression) are real, treatable illnesses that affect the brain. They can’t be overcome by “snapping out of it.” Asking someone to “think positive” is like asking someone with diabetes to change his or her blood sugar level by thinking about it. People with mood disorders can feel better with the right treatment.

**FACT**

Treatment is a cop-out for people who are too weak to cope with day-to-day life.

**MYTH**

Seeking treatment is a smart choice that takes strength. Mood disorders are *not* flaws or weaknesses. Seeking treatment means a person has the courage to look for a way to feel better.

**FACT**

Talk therapy is just whining about problems. It doesn’t help.

**MYTH**

Talk therapy has been tested clinically and found to be effective. In some cases it works as well as medication. Good talk therapy helps change behaviors that can make a person’s moods less stable.

**FACT**

Medications that treat mood disorders are habit-forming. They can change a person’s personality. A person can’t be “clean and sober” while taking medication.

**MYTH**

When properly prescribed and used, medications are not addictive and do not change a person’s true personality. Medications help a person’s mood become more stable and even. They are not “happy pills” and should not be compared to street drugs. They do not cloud a person’s judgment or give a false sense of courage.

**FACT**

People with mood disorders can not get better.

**MYTH**

When correctly diagnosed and treated, a person with depression or bipolar disorder can live a stable and healthy life. Millions of people already do.

**FACT**

Symptoms of depression or bipolar disorder in young children or elderly adults are normal. They are just a part of growing up or growing old.

**MYTH**

Severe mood changes in young children or older adults should be taken seriously. Recent studies have shown that children may be affected by mood disorders as young as infancy. Older adults are also at a high risk for depression. Younger and older people should be given complete physical examinations and treated according to their individual needs.

**FACT**

People with bipolar disorder or depression are dangerous.

**MYTH**

Research shows that people with mental illness do not commit significantly more violent acts than people in the general population. However, people with mental illness are twice as likely to be victims of violence.

**FACT**

People with depression or bipolar disorder should not have children.

**MYTH**

People who have been treated for mood disorders can parent as well as anyone else. They are also more likely to recognize symptoms, treat their children early, and understand their children’s struggles if their children have mood disorders.

**FACT**

People with depression or bipolar disorder are not stable enough to hold positions of authority in fields like law enforcement or government.

**MYTH**

People with mood disorders can and do hold positions of authority everywhere. When properly treated, a person’s mood disorder does not have to affect job performance.

**FACT**

Suicide is not a problem in the United States. Only a small number of people take their own lives.

**MYTH**

Suicide is a significant problem that needs to be addressed. Suicide deaths in the U.S. outnumber homicide deaths three to two. Each year, over 30,000 people in the U.S. take their own lives. More than 90% of these people are believed to have had a mental disorder.

**FACT**