

The Highs & Lows of Spring

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In the northern hemisphere, spring, a season of rebirth, rejuvenation, renewal, resurrection, and regrowth conjures up images of colorful flowers, blue, sunny skies, chirping birds and butterflies flitting about the tulip beds. Spring also means longer days with almost 12 glorious hours of daylight.

For some, however, spring is not always met with feelings of new beginnings and hope. This may be especially true for those who deal with depression or bipolar disorder. In fact, approximately 1/5 of those with bipolar disorder, and especially bipolar II, find that their symptoms change with the seasons.

These seasonal influences, temperature and light, may contribute to exacerbating a depressed state. Add to that others around you are rejoicing in the warm spring air, you might feel further depressed, wondering why you aren't just as happy as they with the onset of spring.

Some individuals, on the other hand, may experience a heightened mood. With extra daylight, 'springing forward' (day light savings lifts), the absence of cold, dark winter days, and the joy that comes with sitting outside in the freshly mowed grass, so too comes hypomania. This hypomania or mania for some, does not necessarily equate to happiness. The manic episode can be experienced as irritability, inflated sense of self and a feeling of spinning out of control.

So, what to do during the change in seasons? As you begin to understand and track your moods, not only daily and weekly, but monthly, it will become increasingly easier to be proactive and "head off" any anticipated periods of depression or mania. Keeping a diary or using a mood chart can help. For children, it may be easier to use a color-coded mood chart like the one below. For adults, we recommend using MoodWatch, a smart phone app. These tools can be shared with your treatment team and help you identify when your mood is changing.

You and your health care providers, including family members and your support group, should have a plan in place to address these potential pitfalls BEFORE they occur. Treatment strategies can be revised, medications added or doses adjusted, and external supports increased. In fact, according to Dr. Papolos, author of *The Bipolar Child*, levels of medications that previously produced stabilisation may not be as effective during periods of change in the light/dark cycle.

If you are proactive, learn about your mood changes, engage the team and enlist support from friends and family, you can better manage your illness and spring can be a season of rejuvenation and renewal for you as well.

Color Mood Chart

ENERGY JOY ALERT	CALM RELAXED CONFIDENCE	SAD TIRED CONFUSED	NORMAL SAFETY HEALING
Yellow	Blue	Red	Green
STRESSED TENSE WORRY	HAPPY ENERGIZED PEACEFUL	ENTHUSIASM EXCITED CREATIVITY	NERVOUS ANXIOUS IRRITATED
Black	Purple	Orange	Gray



This chart can be found in our free book, *Healthy Living with Bipolar Disorder*. For copies, please contact Ashley:
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