

Bipolar in Order Case Study - Becky

SUMMARY

Five years after hospitalizations and a bipolar diagnosis, Becky was struggling to regain control of her life. She participated in Bipolar in Order and has seen remarkable success in meeting and even exceeding her personal mental health goals.

CHALLENGES—Becky’s Story

“After my first hospitalization and diagnosis of bipolar disorder I was really in a state of shock. My life was a mess and I couldn’t see how it got that way, and certainly didn’t know how to fix it. Everyone around me—family, friends, doctors, therapists—told me to follow the protocol to stem the chaos. But even once things settled down enough that I was considered stable, I didn’t feel stable.”

“To keep me even-keeled I was on a series of medications and relieved of virtually any responsibilities to avoid stress. Through support groups, books, and therapies I was learning that to survive I needed to lower my expectations about what I would do and who I could be in my life. I was told to go on disability because my career was simply over. I was learning to mourn the life I had planned on. After a while the hopelessness I felt increased as I realized that going through life like this was not really living.”

“I began looking for practical ways to improve my state of mind, to give voice to my needs and wants, including the need to contribute to the world around me. I was especially motivated to care for my children. The general consensus was that I should just let other people raise them, for their own good. I knew deep down I could handle life and as I looked for a new approach to managing my illness I came across Bipolar in Order.”

HOW IT HELPED

“The step-by-step process of raising self-awareness and practicing steps to take control of my state were attractive to me because it gave me a plan of action. There is a method, a clear process, that gave me a sense of control over my diagnosis for the first time. As I practiced the steps of the program in earnest I gained more and more confidence that I could do more than just survive bipolar, that I could learn to thrive with it. This realization was key to giving me the confidence to continue the hard work of righting my life and planning for the future.”

RESULTS

Becky has participated in the program for three years and has found tremendous success. She returned to her career, finished a graduate degree, and cares for her children with self-sufficiency. She takes minimal medication and has not been in crisis for more than 2 years. This does not mean she is in remission and not having symptoms. She still has periods of depression and mania, but they no longer control her life nor make her suffer.

This result is hard for people to understand as different from those who say they have not had a crisis in some time because they have not been depressed or manic. The difference is huge; it means Becky learned how to

function in all states and is therefore free of worry that what will happen next time depression returns. Since she functions during depression she experiences it completely different although the 'symptoms' are the same.

WHAT IT TAKES

“The first time I took the course I wasn't expecting any real result but was really interested in applying the exercises and learning from other participants. I found tremendous value in the group sessions, especially how Tom facilitated conversations among us that got us to share our experiences, but keep the tone and focus really hopeful. This was a stark contrast to most other groups I had been part of that felt like a class on giving up.

After another 6 months, and working through the course again, I began to see that the careful, consistent work of practicing the steps was working. Learning healthy introspection, and then what to do with the things I was learning from that introspection, gave me the tools I needed to turn things around. I shared my progress with my therapist and psychiatrist, friends and family. There was certainly some skepticism on their parts, but eventually my undeniable progress garnered their support.

It has been three years since I first took the course and I continue to use the things I learned on a daily basis. Perseverance, patience and hard work are essential to my continued success and this course supports me in all of these aspects.”