

Is it possible to predict a bipolar episode?

You are being invited to take part in a new study on bipolar disorders at the University of Edinburgh!

The research aims to identify factors that may be helpful in predicting and monitoring mood states in adults diagnosed with the disorder.

The study is based on four short questionnaires that are available online. Participation should not take more than 20-25 minutes and is completely anonymous. If you are interested in sharing your views, all you need to do is visit the website below to get more information on the project and access the surveys: www.surveymonkey.com/s/bipolarresearch
Your help is very much appreciated! Should you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Melanie Suettmann via email: m.suettmann@smk.ac.uk or phone: 07512370169

Research is always voluntary. You may withdraw at any point without stating any reason.



Mental Health and Employability



If employability is an issue for you, you might want to get hold of a copy of a new DVD called "Mental Health and Employment" from the Glasgow Employability Peer Support Development Group. It is described as a toolbox which people can dip into for help, advice and guidance as they recover and consider their options in relation to employability and support. To obtain a copy contact Margaret Park at park.m2@hotmail.co.uk

Glasgow Group Update

We had a great meeting on Monday 28th Feb with Lisa Gadon. She gave a brief run down on her research project and then we had a Q & A that just went on and on. A good night for the Glasgow group that proved to me that big numbers are not always what makes a good meeting - we only had eight. Roll on the next speaker!

George Cairns Facilitator

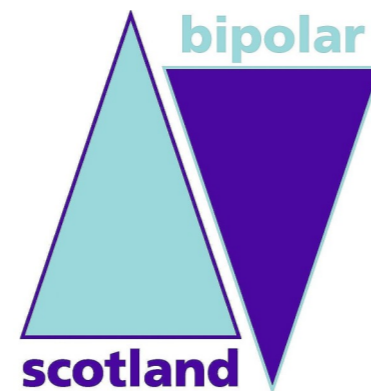


Please send any articles, poems, pictures or ideas to Aileen at:

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with you through the highs & lows

www.bipolarscotland.org.uk

Issue 8

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Hello from Bipolar Scotland

Hello and welcome to the 8th edition of Connexions Magazine - keeping groups in touch with Bipolar Scotland. It's quite a varied issue this time but there does seem to be a lot about research and surveys - including our own at Bipolar Scotland! Remember this is your newsletter and we want to hear from you! Please submit any articles, poems, pictures etc. to the address on the back page. Thanks to George of the Glasgow Group for doing just that. His update is on the back page. I hope after the harsh winter we will all be enjoying a pleasant spring. I'll be out and about at groups and hope to see you all soon.

Aileen



Spotlight interview:

Louise Harold
Irvine Group Co-Facilitator



Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

I am 25 and live in Troon. I'm currently in 3rd Year at university studying to become a Speech and Language Therapist, and hope to find a job in the NHS once I graduate. I just have one more year at uni to go.

How did you first become involved with the group?

I was a group member of the Self-Help group that ran in Ayr, and as there was a need for a facilitator I thought I would go for it, so I went on the Facilitator Training in 2010 and helped out at the Ayr group while that was still running. The Irvine group has been up and running since the end of 2010, and I have been involved with it since the start.

What do you find most rewarding as a group facilitator?

The most rewarding thing about being a group facilitator is when group members say they got something out of the meeting and when I see that they have an opportunity to share ideas, for example, about coping strategies to deal with the symptoms of bipolar.

How do you spend your spare time?

When I'm not going to uni classes or studying I regularly see my friends, I enjoy a coffee and a catch up! I also enjoy hill-walking, going to the gym and I have recently started indoor climbing, a good challenge! (Sometimes the challenge is fitting it all in!)

What interesting little known fact about yourself can you share with Connexions readers?

My family are avid Manchester United fans and I met Ryan Giggs and David Beckham, earlier on in their careers, at the United training ground. I've still got the autographs!

BIPOLAR SCOTLAND

CONNEXIONS

Tell us what you really think!

This year at Bipolar Scotland we are trying to find out what people really think of the self help groups. Our feedback to date has always been positive but we want to ensure that, as groups grow and develop and more groups are set up, they will meet people's needs and perhaps avoid or eliminate the things that turn people off. We also hope to unearth good ideas. To this end we have designed a survey on survey monkey. If you want to take part in the survey the link is on our website at www.bipolarscotland.org.uk and go to the news section. Alternatively you can complete the copy in this edition of Connexions and return it to us freepost at the given address.

Either way, there is nothing to identify you to us, so be honest and please take part if you can. The best way to improve our service to you is by listening to what you say to us and designing the service around your needs. In these cash strapped times evaluation also helps when we seek funding.

We're really looking forward to reading your responses and maybe unearthing a few surprises! There will be a report published at the end of the survey which will be available for you to read then.



We need your stories!

One of the priorities of Bipolar Scotland at present is to raise awareness of bipolar disorder and the organisation and what we can offer in support. We are working with someone who has relevant contacts to get stories out there for the public to see. The aim is to make more people aware of the condition, of the fact the organisation and our support groups are there, to bring more members into the organisation to strengthen the effect we can have and the services we can offer. To do this we need your stories! Jill Brown, who is working on publicity and awareness raising needs people to contact her with their stories to inspire others, or to encourage others to seek help. Do you have a story you would be willing to share? Jill will work with you and seek the best way of publicising this. We started big, with Michelle from the Lothian Group featuring on STV's "The Hour". We have someone writing an article for The Herald just now, another member has been interviewed for "Pick Me Up" magazine, and yet another for a local paper.

If you would be willing to explore this further either contact us at the Bipolar Scotland office or contact Jill Brown direct on 07786 927203 or jill@jillbrownmedia.co.uk

Alison Cairns



Any good reads?

Often when groups get a little money together one of the first things they do is establish a group library. While the Bipolar Scotland website has a recommended reading list, there is nothing like personal recommendations. We'd like to hear from you whether as a group or an individual on what have been the best books you have read about bipolar disorder or mental health. This could be a self help manual, a personal journey story, creative writing or a general text book. What made it a great book?

Recommendations will help groups who are buying or adding to a library to decide what to go for. We'll publish the best in the next edition of Connexions but we'll only be able to do this if we hear from you. If you'd like to write a book review for the next edition we'll include that too.

So, time to get your thinking caps on and help groups build up the best possible library!



Beating Bipolar

Dr Danny Smith, Senior Lecturer in Psychiatry, University of Cardiff, has developed an online programme called Beating Bipolar.

Beating Bipolar is an innovative web-based service which provides state of the art information on the diagnosis and management of bipolar disorder. It has been tested in a clinical trial and feedback on its use has so far been very positive. Beating Bipolar is part of Dr Smith's Postdoctoral Fellowship and is funded by the National Institute of Health Research.

Beating Bipolar is being made available free to members of Bipolar Scotland for a limited period from January 2011. If you would like to access this material, then please send your e-mail address (also state that you are a member of Bipolar Scotland) to Helen Davies at davieshj@cardiff.ac.uk Helen will then provide you with a password for the programme.

If you do try it, let us know how you got on. We'd love to hear your experiences.



Dr Danny Smith

Interesting Websites

The Living Life to the Full website has an online Cognitive Behavioural Therapy course available free of charge. Visit www.lltff.com for more details.

Healthy Working Lives has an advice line 0800 0192211 and a website for further information www.healthyworkinglives.com for free occupational health and safety advice.

Martin Lewis and the team at MoneySavingExpert.com have produced a Guide to Mental Health and Debt. It has help, info advice, guidance and support for individuals and carers. Download it free at www.moneysavingexpert.com/mentalhealth.

If sleep is an issue for you, take a look at these websites:

www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/sleep - Mental Health Foundation's Sleep Matters campaign.

www.howdidiyou.sleep.org - includes a downloadable pocket sleep guide "Sleep Well" and a sleep relaxation mp3 download.

www.sleepio.com - includes The Great British Sleep Survey



Group Funding

It is becoming increasingly more difficult to obtain funding for groups due to the cuts but despite this we have had some success of late. Some groups are very successful at fundraising and others are able to manage with limited funds. Before you consider how to go about raising funds, you need to be clear how much you need and what for. Some aims will be compatible with a grant application while others will best be served by the group's own fundraising efforts. Should your group have an interest in raising funds, contact Aileen at the office to discuss options. We don't guarantee success but we will do our very best to help.

