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BIPOLAR DISORDER AND ADHD

Flourishing Women LLC
Coaching Community and Courses for ADHD Women

Is it ADHD or BPD?

Understanding the Overlap and Co-Occurrence of ADHD and BD

ADHD and Bipolar Disorder both can cause people to have trouble paying attention and to be energetic or impulsive. However, they also have some differences that help doctors figure out which one a person might have.

Differences in Symptom Presentation

Bipolar disorder (BD) is a mood disorder characterized by episodes of mania or hypomania and depression, while Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is neurodevelopmental and involves symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity.

- **Sleep:**
  - ADHD people might find it hard to fall or stay asleep because their thoughts are racing.
  - People with Bipolar Disorder might sleep too little when feeling very energetic (manic) and too much when feeling very down (depressive).
- **Attention:**
  - ADHD people can get easily distracted and have trouble focusing.
  - People with Bipolar Disorder may have attention problems, but this happens mostly when their mood is unstable.
- Seeing or Hearing Things:
  - People with Bipolar Disorder might sometimes see or hear things that aren't there (hallucinations), but this doesn't usually happen for ADHD people.
- **Interest in Sex:**
  - People with Bipolar Disorder might have a much higher interest in sex when feeling manic, which doesn't typically happen in ADHD people during “episodes”.



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- **Self-Importance:**
  - People with Bipolar Disorder might feel extremely important or unique when feeling manic, which isn't common in ADHD people.

- **Mood:**
  - People with Bipolar Disorder go through periods of feeling very high or very low.
  - While people with ADHD might have mood swings, it's not a main feature of the condition.

These are just a few differences, and some symptoms can be similar in both conditions. Talking to a healthcare provider can help in understanding and managing these conditions better.



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Having Both ADHD and Bipolar Disorder

You can have both ADHD and BPD.

ADHD and BPD occur together at rates ranging from 10% to 20%. If you show symptoms of BPD early or are diagnosed with ADHD early, you are more likely to have both.

Having both ADHD and Bipolar Disorder can make things more challenging, as it may affect your well-being and make you more likely to face other mental health struggles or substance abuse compared to having just one of these conditions.

Treatment for Co-Occurring ADHD and BD

People with both ADHD and Bipolar Disorder:

Treatment Steps:
First, the focus is on helping you feel more stable and balanced.
After that, if you still find it hard to focus, additional medications might be added.

Medication Concerns:
1. Some medications (stimulants) for focus, like Adderall, can sometimes make people feel too excited or energetic, but this is rare if you're feeling stable first.
2. There is a medicine, Atomoxetine, that usually doesn't cause this excited feeling and can be taken with others to help balance your mood.
3. Another medication, called Vyvanse, has shown it can help with both focus and feelings sadness without causing any problems.



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Bipolar Terms Mania and Hypomania

Mania and hypomania are mood states related to Bipolar Disorder. They have some similarities but differ in how strong they are and how much they affect daily life.

Mania:

- **Mood**: Feeling extremely happy or very irritable.
- **Energy**: Having a lot of energy and feeling restless.
- **Impulsive Actions**: Making quick decisions that might be risky, like spending a lot or being reckless.
- **Talking Fast**: Jumping quickly from one idea to another while talking.
- **Sleep**: Feeling okay even with very little sleep.
- **Confidence**: Feeling unbeatable or overly confident.
- **Focus**: Getting easily distracted.
- **Unreal Experiences**: In severe cases, believing things that aren't true or seeing/hearing things others don't.

Hypomania (a milder form of Mania):

- **Mood**: Feeling happier than usual but not overly so.
- **Productivity**: Feeling more energetic and getting more done.
- **Impulsive Actions**: Might still make quick decisions but they're usually less risky.
- **Talking Fast**: Talking quickly but not as scattered as in mania.
- **Sleep**: Feeling fine with a bit less sleep.
- **Good Mood**: Feeling good but without causing problems.

Key Differences:

- **Severity**: Mania is stronger and can cause problems in daily life, while hypomania is milder.
- **Duration**: Mania usually lasts at least a week and might need medical help, while hypomania lasts at least four days and might go away on its own.
- **How Others See It**: Mania is usually very noticeable and concerning to others, while hypomania might just seem like the person is in a really good mood.

Recognizing these states is important for managing and treating Bipolar Disorder.

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Critical Difference ADHD VS Bipolar State Versus Traits

Nature of Experiences:

ADHD: The experiences associated with ADHD, such as attention regulation differences and impulsivity, are **generally stable and persistent.**

Bipolar Disorder: The experiences associated with bipolar disorder, such as mood swings from depression to mania or hypomania, are **episodic** and **can change over time.**

Onset and Duration:

ADHD: Usually recognized in childhood and often continues into adulthood. Of course, women often don't get diagnosed until adulthood or mid-adulthood.

Bipolar Disorder: Can be recognized in late adolescence or adulthood, and is characterized by episodic mood changes.

Management and Support:

ADHD: Support typically involves stimulants and strategies and accommodations to support executive functions and living in a mainly neurotypically-centric world.

Bipolar Disorder: Support may involve mood stabilizers, therapy, and adapting strategies based on the current mood state.

Recognizing these conditions as variations in neurotype can contribute to a more inclusive and empathetic understanding of diverse mental experiences.