

Living healthy lives by managing bipolar symptoms

Mike: I did have anger, but there was something else that was building up inside of me, and I felt like I was on a roller-coaster going back and forth. And I would have high-ups and I'd have high-downs and I ended up drinking a lot. That was the only way to get everything to stop that was going on in my head.

Shannan: I've been diagnosed with bipolar disorder, and a part of what led to, I think, that diagnosis, is an extreme depression.

Ambrosia: I mean, at least it had a name and we kind of figured out where we needed to go. It was kind of-- at the time it was, "Well, okay, I have this illness and I have to take care of it".

Randy: It's physical. There is something in your brain. Just cause you're having a blue day, that doesn't mean you can just say I am going to make myself better. No, no, there's tricks of the trade, and the only way to learn those tricks is to go to a psychiatrist, therapist.

Shannan: I check in with the VA on a quarterly basis. They definitely want to keep tabs on me to make sure everything is running smooth.

Ambrosia: I've been with the same doctor at the VA since I moved here about a year and a half ago. And, we have kind of figured out, "Okay, when I start going one way then let's take an extra pill of this medication." Or if I start going down and start sleeping a lot and start not wanting to do anything then, "Okay, I am going to take a certain dosage of this other medication." And then call him and say, "Hey, I need to come in and just double check with you because I had to add this medication in."

Mike: The biggest thing is making sure that the medicine that they give you is actually working and speaking up and telling them. It's an adjustment phase, but you need to speak up for yourself and know what's right for yourself. And you also have to listen and check your ego at the door, and actually listen to people that are healthy for you.

Ambrosia: I really rely on my husband and my mom to look for red flags because a lot of times, I won't see them until it's too late. And then, so, what I'll do is I'll have my husband write a letter to my psychiatrist whenever I go see him so that my husband can say, "This is what I am seeing." So that way, I'm getting an outside perspective and that's the best way to control it, is to have a supportive family that can look out for you and know sometimes before you do.

Mike: I thought I was going to die, and now I'm looking forward to doing better things in life. You know, growing old, having grandkids, and being a positive influence with them. So that's probably one of the bigger things. I look more towards the future, and a happy future, instead of seeing a darkness and a, "what if."

Shannan: Whatever service we're in, you get trained on how if you become overrun, or if you have to — you know, in a position you have to retreat, you call in for back-up, you know? So whether that's air support or field artillery support, when you feel overwhelmed, or when you feel like you're about to succumb to the stresses of life and the struggles that are there, calling in for back-up could literally change your life, you know, and help get you back on track.



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