



Bipolar Course

Centre for Clinical Interventions

What is Bipolar Disorder?

Bipolar Disorder is characterised by the experience of abnormal moods or exaggerated mood swings. This involves the experience of extremely 'high' moods where a person becomes extremely euphoric or elated, and the experience of extremely 'low' moods where a person becomes extremely sad and finds it difficult to experience pleasure.

The persistent low moods are called depressive episodes. These episodes can range from mild to severe. Symptoms of depression include:

- ▶ Excessive tiredness and fatigue
- ▶ Low motivation
- ▶ Lack of interest in things
- ▶ Sleep and appetite disturbances.

The high moods are called hypomanic or manic episodes (depending on severity). These episodes can range from mild to severe. Symptoms include:

- ▶ Irritability
- ▶ Decreased need for sleep
- ▶ Rapid flow of ideas.

People may experience different patterns associated with their disorder. For example, some people may have more problems with depression, while others have more difficulty with mania. For some people episodes occur very frequently, whereas other people may have long gaps between episodes.

Bipolar group treatment at CCI

There can be many difficulties in, and stressful aspects of, having Bipolar Disorder that are not addressed by medical treatment. The CCI Bipolar Course equips people with relevant knowledge

and skills to help them manage Bipolar Disorder in combination with their medication. Recent research indicates that group psychological treatment can be a helpful addition to medication.

The CCI Bipolar Course is a structured group treatment that helps you with practical skills and strategies to manage Bipolar Disorder. This includes:

- ▶ Education about Bipolar Disorder
- ▶ Learning to monitor mood and sleep to help predict mood changes
- ▶ A pharmacist providing general information about medications and answering questions
- ▶ Learning to identify and respond to early warning signs of mood changes
- ▶ Identifying activities that give a sense of pleasure or achievement, and working to include these in regular routines
- ▶ Learning to break down overwhelming tasks into manageable steps
- ▶ Cognitive therapy (identifying, challenging and replacing unhelpful thoughts)
- ▶ Learning how to actively cope with problems.



Why group treatment?

Many people find the prospect of group treatment a bit daunting. Some people are used to keeping their difficulties private, so the thought of talking about difficulties in front of a group of unfamiliar people can be anxiety provoking.

We offer group therapy because research has shown it is effective. Group therapy provides an opportunity to learn that other people struggle with similar issues and this alone can be very validating. In addition, group therapy allows the opportunity to learn from the experiences of other people who are working on similar problems.

After completing the Bipolar Course, people often report that they were initially nervous about attending the course, but ultimately found the group very supportive and helpful.

Practical information

Each Bipolar Course runs for ten weekly sessions of two hours, with a follow-up session three months after the last session.

All appointments take place during normal business hours (Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm).

The Bipolar Course is held at our clinic in Northbridge. As CCI forms part of the public mental health system, the service we offer is free of charge.

Further information

If you are uncertain whether this is a relevant course for you, it may be helpful to talk things over with your psychiatrist or GP.

You can also find more information by reading the 'Keeping Your Balance' modules, which are freely available on the CCI website.

Referral

If you are interested in seeking treatment at CCI, please ask your psychiatrist to refer you to our service. Our referral form is available on the CCI website:

www.cci.health.wa.gov.au

Contact details

t: 08 9227 4399

e: info.cci@health.wa.gov.au

f: 08 9328 5911



Centre for Clinical Interventions
223 James Street, Northbridge WA 6003
Telephone: (08) 9227 4399
www.cci.health.wa.gov.au

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