

Bipolar Disorder

Natalie notices that her best friend Jean has been exhibiting unusual, uncharacteristic behavior since the start of summer vacation. For the first two weeks of break, Jean smoked marijuana and drank alcohol every single day. She was always distracted and hyper during conversation. When she wasn't drinking or smoking, she went out on huge shopping sprees. For this entire past week however, Natalie has barely seen Jean out. Jean has been spending most of her days sleeping. When Natalie visited her one afternoon, Jean did not even get out of bed. Jean appeared anxious and depressed.

Someone with **bipolar disorder** may have an experience like Jean.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, “bipolar disorder is a chronic illness with recurring episodes of mania and depression that can last from one day to months. This mental illness causes unusual and dramatic shifts in mood, energy and the ability to think clearly. Cycles of high (manic) and low (depressive) moods may follow an irregular pattern that differs from the typical ups and downs experienced by most people.”¹

According to the Mayo Clinic, **signs and symptoms** of the **manic phase** of bipolar disorder can include:

- Intense happiness
- Inflated self-esteem
- Rapid speech, racing thoughts
- Aggressive behavior
- Becoming easily irritated or angered
- Risky behavior
- Unwise financial choices
- Increased sex drive
- Decreased need for sleep
- Easily distracted
- Dangerous use of drugs or alcohol
- Delusions or a break from reality (psychosis)²

According to the Mayo Clinic, **signs and symptoms** of the **depressive phase** of bipolar disorder can include:

- Sadness
- Hopelessness
- Suicidal thoughts or behavior
- Anxiety
- Guilt
- Sleep problems
- Low appetite or increased appetite
- Fatigue
- Loss of interest in activities that were once enjoyable
- Problems concentrating

- Irritability
- Chronic pain without a known cause²

Bibliography

¹ National Alliance on Mental Illness, "What is Bipolar Disorder?." Accessed July 25, 2013. http://www.nami.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Mental_Illnesses/Bipolar1/Home_-_What_is_Bipolar_Disorder_.htm.

² Mayo Clinic, "Bipolar disorder: Symptoms." Last modified January 18, 2012. Accessed July 25, 2013. <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/bipolar-disorder/DS00356/DSECTION=symptoms>.
