

## Speaking from Experience Living with Bipolar Disorder USA

### Transcript for Chapter 6 of 9: Management: Healthy living

**Todd –**

In conjunction with my doctor who is an amazing person, we did a lot of research into what diet can do. Things like yogurt and vitamin D as far as how they affect the serotonin receptors.

**Avonelle –**

I found out that I am very sensitive to caffeine and chocolate. I don't sleep. If I have a cup of coffee after 12, I will not sleep that night and that also can trigger a mania. And so just looking at the type of foods that I eat and what not to eat and if I have coffee...I'm choosing to have coffee and understanding, "Ok, you had a cup of coffee today, what do you need to do to sleep tonight?"

**Nadine –**

A healthy living pattern... I try to make sure that I get up at about the same time every day, that I go to sleep at about the same time every night, that I don't allow myself overwhelming amounts of stress.

**Todd –**

For the better part of 25 years I got 3 to 5 hours of sleep and generally it wasn't more than 4. For the last 17 months, I've been getting 6 to 8 hours sleep and I can't tell you how much I love sleep now. Sleep's really important because it gives you a chance...your brain and your body a chance to regroup and restart and then hit the next day fresh.

**Tom –**

When I talk to people about how to deal with these disorders, I say, "Pull out all the stops." There's a number of ways that you can manage these disorders. Medication is one, therapy is another. For me, exercise has been extremely important. I try to exercise daily. I feel that when I exercise it's a mood elevator and I also know it's good for my physical health and I know that there is a biological component to these disorders and the better I feel physically, the better I feel mentally. I would even go so far as saying things like doing yoga, listening to music, aromatherapy, anything that can take your mind away from maybe some stress or a pressing issue that you have, I think is valuable.

**Nadine –**

Exercise definitely plays a big role in this. I have a dog and so I walk twice a day with my dog for a minimum of 30 minutes. Yea, exercise is a very, very important part of my managing my bipolar.

**Todd –**

The exercise is really important and it depends on what's going on during the day but getting the endorphins and the adrenaline to rush, but not to rush too much sets the tone for the whole day, at least it does for me.

**Tom –**

I can go to a gym and workout, within 15 minutes I can start feeling better if I ride a bicycle or something like that and there's a theory out there that exercise is every bit as important as taking medication and I would subscribe to that theory also.

**Jan –**

For me it's meditative, ya know for running, I can empty my mind. It helps give me a goal. I mean, when I was really... first got diagnosed and was so down and just physically ill, my goal was to walk to the mailbox and back and that way I at least got out. So that really helped and now I've done marathons.

**Nadine –**

Really to have a life goal made a very big difference for me and I couldn't actually allow myself to have a goal until I knew what was wrong and knew that I could do something. So managing has also been because I had something to focus on... school, I went to school...to focus on that helped me to actually maintain myself. It's a good measure if I

have to be somewhere every day and do certain things. When I find it difficult to do those things, then I know that I need to start paying attention...maybe we need to tweak the meds, maybe I haven't been getting enough rest, maybe I need to do some more walking with the dog.

**Todd –**

Meditation is a huge part of my life because it helps me be present. Which, when you're bipolar, 10 to 1...you tend to trip on the past or the future and with me it was always more so the future...but mediation helps keep you in that moment and then, kind of like sleep, it helps you go fresh from when you're done.

**Alexandra & Thomas –**

It really calms me down and that's the biggest help there is.

**Todd –**

Finding a structure that works for you every day and for the most part, sticking with it. You always have to allow for life to happen and spontaneity, but for the most part sticking with some sort of routine is the biggest part of...at least my recovery and the people that I know of... it's the most important factor because it ties everything together.