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Bipolar Disorder and Addiction - Dual Diagnosis

Bipolar disorder and **addiction** often go together. As many as 60 percent of people with **bipolar disorder** will have some form of substance abuse during their lifetime, and research is underway to better understand this **"dual diagnosis"** — the term used for the combination of **addiction** and a mental disorder. Both of these disorders tend to first emerge during the teenage years, says Ken Duckworth, MD, medical director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), and studies have found that teens with **bipolar disorder** are more likely to experiment with drugs and alcohol.

Those with **bipolar** may turn to depressants — such as alcohol or pain pills — to try to manage their mania, or to stimulants — such as cocaine or methamphetamines — to cope with depression. In both cases, the usual result is that the substance abuse kicks the **bipolar disorder** into the opposite state — depression or mania — rather than fixing anything. "Short term, drugs and alcohol do change how you feel," notes Duckworth. "But long-term it tends to be very counterproductive."

Bipolar disorder and Addiction: Getting Help

If you have **bipolar disorder** and think you may have a problem with drugs or alcohol, says Duckworth, both issues should be addressed together — in fact, he believes that anyone with substance-abuse issues should be screened for **bipolar disorder** or other mood disorders. Mood-stabilizing medications won't fix the struggles with addiction, but they may reduce the drive toward it once the mania and depression are addressed.

Jacqueline Castine is living proof of this approach. Although she continues to struggle with managing the ups and down caused by her bipolar disorder, she believes it is now mostly under control. Today, at age 68, Castine has rebuilt her financial life, has written several books about her experiences (including Recovery From Rescuing and I Wish I Could Fix It, But…), and has a career she's passionate about: She works as a community education specialist to raise awareness of mental-health issues and as a spokesperson for the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance.

More information on **bipolar disorder**, including information about **bipolar disorder and addiction** , **living with bipolar disorder** , alternative bipolar treatment treatment options , support groups, advocacy, resources, and educational programs and events, can be found at the South African Depression and Anxiety Group.

What Is a Dual Diagnosis program?

The abuse of substances is sometimes associated with psychiatric diagnoses such as depression, anxiety and bipolar disorder. When choosing a treatment centre , it is vital to make sure that they are able to deal with dual diagnosis addiction.

Unfortunately, many centres in South Afrfica are not able to do so and even discriminate against

dual diagnosis patients by withholding their medication.

For more information on dual diagnosis treatment, contact us here