

HOW TO MAKE MANIC DEPRESSION WORK FOR YOU

We manic depressives all too easily hide our disability behind a cloak of guilt and shame. I want to suggest that in many areas we have everything to gain by facing up to MD and by allowing our friends and associates to become aware of our problem and so to understand it.

For instance, manic depressives can afford to have faults : people make allowances once they know you are MD. The things you do wrong get blamed on your condition, not on you.

Conversely, your achievements look all the more commendable to people who know you are contending with MD.

Side effects are respectable. If you need to drink more, this becomes acceptable. Make a virtue out of necessity and develop your own (principally non-alcoholic !) drinking pattern, a structure that supports your day.

It has been suggested that lithium boosts the immune system. Some takers seem to experience fewer colds, 'flu bugs and so on.

MD offers us the chance to develop a self discipline which we might never have found elsewhere. If we know that it can strike at any time without notice, we learn to keep our affairs up to date and in order so that damage is minimal when it does. For instance,

we pay our bills,
we answer our letters,
we do the housework and odd jobs.

Some find it helpful to keep a 'do' list of outstanding tasks, crossing them off with great satisfaction as each is completed.

Not having a secret to hide reduces tension. Hiding MD means putting up a front of normality, being misunderstood until we collapse with no one any the wiser or in a position to help.

Facing up to MD within ourselves means we can start to live easily with ourselves. As we seek to build up our inner resources we embark upon a voyage of self discovery. We may begin to consider how to complete self-descriptions such as, "I am an MD who ...", or "I am a ... who is also MD". Or, "Because I am MD I can ...". Or, "My personal methods for conquering MD are ...". We ask and answer questions that non-MDs seldom face. And we end up all the richer.

Are you making the most of being MD ?

Martin Mosse, 13th May 1994.