

HOW TO SURVIVE AS A MANIC DEPRESSIVE

There are many things we can do or learn which can enable us to live a purposeful, successful life as a manic depressive. They include the following :

(1) **Medication.** Grapple as hard as you like with your psychiatrist, but having once reached agreement on your dosage stick to it until you see him/her again.

(2) **Support Group.** One by one assemble a support team whom you trust and who know you well. The list will vary from person to person; yours may include

- Family
- Friends (good listeners)
- Psychiatrist
- GP
- Nurse
- Psychotherapist / counsellor
- Chemist (homoeopathic?)
- Someone at work (colleague? manager? company doctor?)
- Samaritan (The Samaritans give their services free and will talk to anyone, not only potential suicides; you can find them in the telephone book)
- Church minister
- Spiritual director

When you are well, share with them as much as you can of yourself.
When you need a safety net, they will be there.

(3) **Creativity.** Seek to explore your creative gifts when you are well. Can you

- write poetry?
- music?
- letters?
- articles?
- a book?
- computer software?
- make models?
- toys?
- clothes?
- create collections of stamps?
 - coins?
 - books?
- do woodwork?
- metalwork?
- upholstery?
- draw?
- paint?
- sculpt?
- take photographs?
- mend things?
- arrange flowers?
- knit?
- garden?

There must be many more. Whatever you choose, keep on lovingly polishing and refining your creation until you are wholly satisfied with it. The idea is to surround yourself with a world of beautiful things of your own making. When you are depressed they will lift you up. If you manage to sell, publish or market your products to someone else, you will discover a double bonus.

(4) **Structure.** Seek to build into your life patterns of regularity - routines, things you do or enjoy frequently, often at particular times, which require no special mental effort. For instance

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A favourite radio or television programme on a particular night
A walk
A bicycle ride
A weekly game of tennis or squash with a friend
The housework; tidying
A cup of tea or coffee at elevenses
Shopping
A particular meal
Making bread or cakes
Attendance at a regular gathering eg in the pub
church
W.I.
Routine gardening eg weeding
Favourite music
picture
book
strip cartoon
Tending your pets

Most of these are things you can continue to do when low or befogged. They require very little creativity but provide you with tramlines to follow until you feel better. The feeling of familiarity - the absence of threat - will help to keep you going.

(5) **Journal Time.** Once or twice a day keep an appointment with yourself and your journal. Choose a nice smart volume and spend time sitting with it. Be still. As thoughts well up and crystallise in your mind, write them down, so making place for further thoughts, and so on. Put the date. Try entering

dreams
drawings
photos
cuttings
quotations
poems (your own or someone else's)

- anything that describes where you are and how you feel.

Periodically re-read what you have written. As you do, see how you can turn it into an object of creativity in its own right. Adorn it with

comments in different colours
cross-references
titles and subtitles
an index
etc

Note which of your fears proved justified after the event, and which not. At all times be *totally honest* with yourself in what you put down. Over the years you will be amazed at how far you have come. Your family must understand that no one is allowed to see it without your permission, if at all.

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These principles will not abolish our up times and our down times, but they should help to make them manageable. A purposeful life is within the grasp of all of us.

Martin Mosse, 9th January 1994.

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