

MEMO TO A LITHIUM PATIENT

WHEN DEPRESSED

- (1) Recognise that this state is only temporary, just as it was last time and the time before that.
- (2) Be honest about it with your friends and family.
- (3) Do not go on making excuses for yourself (especially false ones) to other people, who will only misunderstand.
- (4) Do not do anything out of PANIC. There is enough time in 24 hours to do what *really* has to be done.
- (5) Avoid as far as possible taking any important decisions until you are yourself again; your judgement could well be distorted.
- (6) Don't be afraid of doing nothing. Doing nothing may actually be what is best for you.
- (7) Be prepared to start slowly. Starting a recovery is always the hardest part.
- (8) As you *accept* your present state imagine yourself to be like a boat which has become beached. At the right time the sea flows back and of its own accord simply lifts that boat up off the sand. The lowest ebb is the turn of the tide.

WHEN ELATED

- (1) Don't assume that this state will go on forever either. In your heart of hearts you know it won't.
- (2) Therefore don't say things to other people face to face or by letter - particularly about your current plans and ambitions - which will only embarrass you when the bubble bursts.
- (3) Don't deal in half-truths. They will only come back and bite.
- (4) Don't make claims for yourself which are incompatible with basic humility.
- (5) Discipline yourself so as to avoid getting angry with other people. Instead, always be courteous; you will be glad later on.
- (6) Likewise, do not succumb to hatred. Think twice before taking up cudgels.
- (7) Go on taking your medication. You owe it to those who are looking after you.

WHEN NORMAL

- (1) Do the things you can do easily while you have the opportunity to do so. Move from one such to the next.
- (2) Tie up your loose ends. Knowing that depression can strike at any time, prepare yourself by being ready and by having the most pressing duties done. In time you will find that this becomes a most valuable discipline.
- (3) Deepen your relationships with your friends and family. Enable them to understand you. When you need help, they will have more to offer.
- (4) Make sure you get enough sleep. Not to can be a danger sign.

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(5) Try keeping a notebook or journal of all the happy things that happen to you. If you are a photographer, keep a photographic record too. It will bring you cheer when you need it.

(6) Introduce structure into your life - pattern, regularity, routine. It will keep you going when you are down and catch you when you fall.

Martin Mosse, 18.12.87

"Pendulum", Winter 1990.**