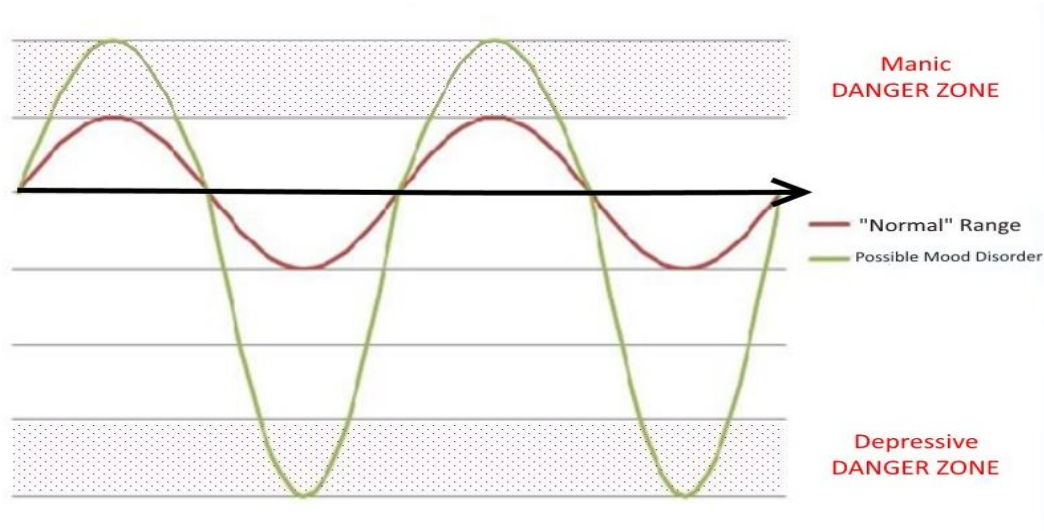




## Mood Swings

### Background Information: Everyone has “Ups” and “Downs”

Just because someone may have occasional highs and lows with their moods, thankfully that does not automatically indicate a mood disorder. There is what is considered to be a “normal” range for our moods. Mood disorders (such as Bipolar Disorder) involve mood swings that go to higher and lower extremes than what would be considered to be “normal”. See below:



The “Danger Zones” in the above diagram are characterized by problematic, potentially life-altering highs and lows that often coincide with intense emotions and at times regrettable behaviors.

**The Manic Danger Zone** (Mania/Hypomania) – This is characterized by an elevated mood state that is beyond just being excited or happy. The following is a list of some of the symptoms someone in this state may experience, however, the way individuals experience these mood swings can be different for each person. Therefore people often experience some of these symptoms but not others:

- **Intense feelings of excitement and enthusiasm**
- **Increased energy**
- **Decreased need for sleep.** (Staying up all night without getting tired)
- **Increased confidence** Which at times can progress toward:
  - **Grandiosity** – An unrealistic sense of superiority or an exaggerated sense of importance.
- **Increase in pleasure-seeking activity** – Someone in a manic state may find themselves engaging in increased sexual behavior, spending, drug/alcohol use
- **Reckless decision making** – For example, going into questionable business deals or taking other risks that you would not normally take because of being in an elevated mood state
- **Agitation** – Irritability and in some cases intense anger or even rage
- **Psychosis** – In more extreme cases, a prolonged manic state can result in losing touch with reality and for a limited number of people, hallucinations and delusional thinking

**The Depressive Danger Zone** – Depressed mood in excess of “normal” sadness or dejection. Some symptoms:

- **Prolonged feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, or worthlessness**
- **Sleep disturbance** – Hypersomnia (too much sleep) or insomnia (Inability to fall asleep or early awakening).
- **Fatigue**
- **Loss of interest in pleasurable activities**
- **Loss of motivation and enthusiasm** – Decrease in concern for responsibilities
- **Suicidal Thoughts** - Always take these seriously and seek help



Most people are familiar with **Bipolar Disorder**.

**Bipolar Disorder**, also known as manic-depressive illness, is a brain **disorder** that causes unusual shifts in mood, energy, and ability to function. These are not the normal ups and downs; the symptoms of **bipolar disorder** are severe. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/conditions/bipolar-disorder>

However, not everyone who experiences mood swings has bipolar disorder. In today's fast-paced, often stressful world, many people need help with coping with mood swings to varying degrees.

### Coping with Mood Swings: A Basic Skills List

The following list may be painfully obvious however it can be helpful to review for anyone who needs help managing mood swings:

1. **Do what you can to regulate stress** – Stress can be one of the most common triggers for mood swings. Learning to relax, to manage emotions, and to avoid overreacting to stress can be critical in managing moods
2. **Increase structure and maintain a schedule** – If you are susceptible to mood swings, chaos can be your enemy. Keeping things simple, regular, and orderly can help you avoid turmoil, trouble and confusion causing mood swings
3. **Self-Care** – Exercise, avoiding excessive caffeine and nicotine, abstaining from substance abuse, working toward maintaining regular sleep and eating patterns, and taking time for healthy personal refreshment (such as taking a bath or a walk, hobbies, or spending time talking with positive people) all are extremely helpful with mood regulation
4. **Rule out other physical and mental health conditions** – There are conditions that can cause mood swings such as thyroid problems, hormonal imbalance, Borderline Personality Disorder, ADHD. In such cases, consider consulting an appropriate qualified professional or physician
5. **Avoid Making Important Decisions During a Mood Swing** – Whether you are in a high or a low, your ability to make wise choices can be compromised. For example, things like starting or ending a relationship, quitting your job, investing money, etc., should not be made while in a manic or depressive state because it is very likely you may feel differently when you are more stable
6. **Seek Professional Help** – If mood swings are impairing your functioning, especially if you are putting your safety or the safety of others at risk, consult a psychiatrist to learn about treatment options.



**Severe mania**

**Hypomania (mild to moderate mania)**

**Normal/balanced mood**

**Mild to moderate depression**

**Severe depression**



**Mood Swings - Questions for Discussion** – If this is done in a group setting, first write the numbers 1 through 20 somewhere visible to everyone. Then take turns picking a number then the counselor or group leader will read the question that corresponds to each number. Cross off each number as questions are answered until complete.

1. **Do you think you have a problem with mood swings? Explain why or why not**
2. **What is poor decision that you made while you were in a bad mood?**
3. **Give an example of a situation that can trigger a mood swing for you.**
4. **Who is someone whose mood tends to be stable and calm, that you admire? (Someone in this group?)**
5. **What is a situation that can get you hyper or manic?**
6. **Who or what helps you to calm down when you are getting out of control? (Besides getting high)**
7. **Who or what can help lift you up from feeling depressed?**
8. **Do you have anyone in your life who is like an anchor who keeps you grounded? If so, who?**
9. **When it comes to moods, do you spend most of your life at highs (manic), lows (depressed), or in the middle?**
10. **If you suffer from mood swings, do you cycle rapidly (changing from one mood to another frequently) or do you tend to be stuck in one mood for a long time period. (If you don't suffer from mood swings at all, skip)**
11. **What advice would you give to someone who has issues with mood swings?**
12. **Is there anyone in your life who would describe you as moody? If so, who? Do you agree or disagree?**
13. **How does substance use affect your moods? What about in the long term?**
14. **What would you say is one thing you could do in order to increase structure and stability in your life?**
15. **When you experiencing some kind of mood swing, what are some thoughts that might come into your mind?**
16. **Is there anything from your past (that you are willing to share) that can put you in a bad mood when you think about it?**
17. **Is there anything from your past that you think about to try to put yourself in a good mood?**
18. **Laughter can often lift someone out of a bad mood. What is one thing that makes you laugh?**
19. **Is there something that you look forward to in your life that helps you stay in a positive mood?**
20. **What is one thing that you make sure to do in order to take care of your mental and emotional health?**