



Close to Home Study Guide

Dealing with Bipolar Disorder

1. Opening (1 minute) ¹

Most people experience emotional highs and lows. But our capacity for emotional stability can be affected by life circumstances, environment, relationships, physical and mental health. In this study, we will learn about bi-polar disorder (manic-depressive illness), and the journey toward wholeness that is possible.

Pray: *Lord, we lift our eyes to the hills, knowing our help is from you. Grant us peace in time of the storm. You are the source of our strength. You are the strength of our life. We lift our hands in praise to you. Amen.* ²

2. Story-telling (8 minutes)

Invite someone to read aloud the opening story, **Choosing Life** (p. 2).

- How do the participants connect with Ingrid's story?
- Do they know someone who has bi-polar disorder?
- Do they have it themselves?
- Or do they identify a well-known person or a movie character that is bi-polar?

Note the key scripture verse that guides Ingrid's life: Deuteronomy 30:19b-20.

3. Review of pamphlet (6 minutes)

Highlight the description, symptoms of and relationship of suicide to bipolar disorder as found in the brochure, pages 5 and 7.

4. Reading of Scripture text (15 minutes)

Read John 9:1-5 (p. 6). Summarize the rest of the story (vv. 6-41) of the blind man's encounter with Jesus and the Pharisees. Make sure each person has a Bible to refer to this story.

Discuss:

- What is the contrast between Jesus and the disciples' understandings of the cause for the man's blindness?
- What stood in the way of the Pharisees' willingness to "choose life" in this situation?
- How could the ending of this story have been very different?

¹The suggested time frames are for a 45-minute session. With more discussion and storytelling, you will need to adjust upward, and possibly extend to a second session.

²This and the closing prayer are adapted from Richard Smallwood's song "Total Praise." © 1996, Universal Music Publishing Group.

5. Steps toward healing (14 minutes)

Ask another person to read the sidebar, **The role of the church community** (p. 11).

If persons in your group live with bi-polar disorder, ask them to share how they “choose life”. How can others strengthen their ability to “choose life”?

Invite the group to scan **Steps toward healing** (p. 8). What next step makes sense for them personally, either as a person with bipolar disorder or as one providing support to someone else with bipolar disorder?

Invite each person to choose one of the resources listed under **For further awareness** (p. 10) that they will research in the next week.

6. Closing (1 minute)

Pray: *Loving God, you knew us before we were born. You are the source of our strength. You are the strength of our life. Empower us to choose the abundant life you have promised so that God's works might be revealed. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

If appropriate, invite the group to stand in a circle and share a “group hug.” Look at one another and declare together, “We will choose life!”



This study guide is written by Linda Gehman Peachey, Director for Women's Advocacy in the Peace and Justice Ministries section of Mennonite Central Committee US. It is one of a series of free downloadable study guides for the Close to Home pamphlets, which can be ordered from the Mennonite Publishing Network of the Mennonite Church (see www.mpn.net/closetohome) or the Mennonite Brethren Kindred Productions (www.kindredproductions.com/closetohome).