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# BECOMING YOUR BEST

## Stories Of Hope And Encouragement About Individuals With Disabilities

# Becoming Your Best Newsletter

Greetings,

This issue will focus on a mental illness that impacts many individuals and families on a daily basis—it is bipolar disorder. Evidence indicates that bipolar disorder may be as common among youths as among adults.

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry reported up to one third of the 3.4 million children and adolescents with depression in the U.S. may actually be experiencing the early onset of bipolar disorder. Some 20% of adolescents with major depression develop bipolar disorder within 5 years of the onset of depression.

According to the National Advisory Mental Health Council, although there is no cure for bipolar disorder, it is a highly treatable disease. It has a treatment success rate of approximately 80%. The key is to diagnose the disease early and follow through with treatment consistently.

This issue will focus upon the stories of famous people who have been diagnosed with bipolar disorder. You will see how the high's and low's of the disorder can be so devastating, and how bad things can get if a person does not seek treatment and follow through with it.

More importantly, you will see how individuals with bipolar disorder can be so creative and successful. It helps give hope to those on their way to "Becoming Your Best."

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Submit your inspirational stories to the following e-mail address:

[stories@becomingyourbest.com](mailto:stories@becomingyourbest.com).

Subscribe to our FREE newsletter by sending an e-mail to:

[newsletter@becomingyourbest.com](mailto:newsletter@becomingyourbest.com).

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The photograph is by Bob Sumners—see more at [www.shootthebeach.com](http://www.shootthebeach.com).

[WE ARE NOW ON FACEBOOK—BECOME A FAN.](#)

Mission:

We are dedicated to presenting inspiring stories of hope and encouragement about individuals with disabilities.

These stories of success are meant to provide support and the keys to "Becoming Your Best!"

Thank you for your stories and your support!

George M. Graham Jr.

## "FAMOUS PEOPLE WITH BIPOLAR DISORDER" BY GEORGE M. GRAHAM JR.

Recently in the news, Catherine Zeta-Jones made the headlines as being diagnosed with bipolar II disorder. Bipolar II is a psychiatric disorder that is characterized by mood swings from states of hypomania to depression. Even though bipolar II does not involve manic states, it may create greater states of depression or anxiety which may cause a greater risk of suicide than bipolar I.

In a publication released by the National Institute on Mental Health (NIMH), bipolar disorder is, "...also known as manic-depressive illness, is a brain disorder that causes unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, and the ability to carry out day-to-day tasks." The article goes on to say, "Like diabetes or heart disease, bipolar disorder is a long-term illness that must be carefully managed throughout a person's life."

According to NIMH, stress can be a trigger for bipolar disorder. The actress went through high levels of stress over the last year. Her husband, actor Michael Douglas, was diagnosed with stage IV throat cancer. They have also gone through a difficult lawsuit with Michael's first wife, Diandra.

A publicist for Ms. Zeta-Jones said in a statement, "After dealing with the stress of the past year, Catherine made the decision to check into a mental health facility for a brief stay to treat her bipolar II disorder." In an interview with People magazine, Ms. Zeta-Jones said, "This is a disorder that affects millions of people and I am one of them. If my revelation of having bipolar II has encouraged one person to seek help, then it is worth it. There is no need to suffer silently and there is no shame in seeking help."



Catherine Zeta-Jones, 41 year old actress and singer, was diagnosed with bipolar disorder II.



A Welsh-born actress and singer, Ms. Zeta-Jones has appeared in a number of stage productions and movies since the early 1990's. She is most often recognized for her performance in [The Mask of Zorro](#) (1998) and [The Legend of Zorro](#) (2005). All reports are that Ms. Zeta-Jones is feeling much better and is ready to begin working on her two new movies.

NIMH provides information for parents in their publication on bipolar disorder stating, "Symptoms of bipolar disorder are not like the normal changes in mood and energy that everyone has now and then. Bipolar symptoms are more extreme and tend to last for most of the day, nearly every day, for at least one week. Also, depressive or manic episodes include moods very different from a child's normal mood. Sometimes the symptoms of bipolar disorder are so severe that the child needs to be treated in a hospital. It's normal for almost every child or teen to have some of these symptoms sometimes. These passing changes should not be confused with bipolar disorder."

The most common treatment for bipolar disorder incorporates a regime of medication and therapy. The first big step is seeking treatment. The second step to follow through consistently with treatment under the care of the appropriate medical personnel.

For more information, go to the NIMH website to view [Bipolar Disorder in Children and Teens: A Parent's Guide](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/bipolar-disorder-in-children-and-teens-a-parents-guide/complete_index.shtml), [www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/bipolar-disorder-in-children-and-teens-a-parents-guide/complete\\_index.shtml](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/bipolar-disorder-in-children-and-teens-a-parents-guide/complete_index.shtml).

## "FAMOUS PEOPLE WITH BIPOLAR DISORDER "... CONTINUED.

It is estimated that approximately 5.7 million American adults are affected by bipolar disorder. It has been found equally in men and women, as well as in all ages, races, ethnic groups and social classes. It is the sixth leading cause of disability in the world, according to the World Health Organization.

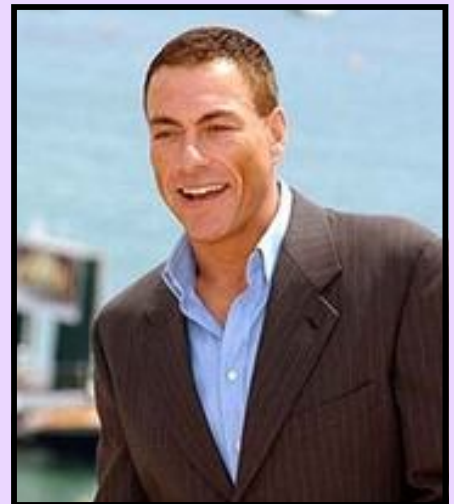
Bipolar disorder has been referred to as the "curse of the celebrities" because so many creative and talented people have been diagnosed with this mental illness. Many famous people throughout history were thought to have been bipolar or were diagnosed with it.

The list includes such famous people as Abraham Lincoln, Charles Dickens, Isaac Newton, Ludwig Van Beethoven, Winston Churchill, Vincent Van Gogh, Linda Hamilton, Tim Burton, Ben Stiller, Britney Spears, Ozzy Osbourne, Robin Williams, and Sting.

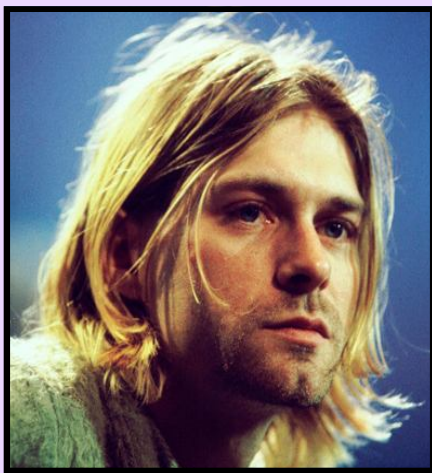
The Belgian-born actor, Jean-Claude Van Damme, who became well known in the mid-80's due to the success of his movies such as Bloodsport, KickBoxer, and Lionheart, was diagnosed with bipolar disorder in the mid-90's. He came close to committing suicide after filming the movie Knockoff. The actor speaks of dealing with teenage depression by working out by way of physical endeavors such as karate and ballet. He said he was compensating by physical training. He goes on to say, "When I didn't train for a couple of days, I felt so low and nothing could make me happy."

Van Damme started a treatment with a bipolar medication sodium evaporate to help stabilize his mood. About the medication, he is quoted as saying, "You just have to take a little salt, and since I'm doing that it's like, BOOM! In one week, I felt it kick in. All the commotion around me, all the water around me, moving left and right around me, became like a lake."

Making a comeback in recent years, Van Damme has several film projects coming up in 2011-2012. He is also making a return to fighting and is scheduled to fight former boxing Olympic gold-medalist Somluck Kamsing in November 2011.



Jean-Claude Van Damme is well known for his Karate and Kickboxing career as well as for his acting in numerous movies.



Talented singer, artist, songwriter, Kurt Cobain played with Nirvana.

Unfortunately, some stories do not turn out as well. They are typically a result of what can happen if bipolar disorder is left untreated or the treatment is not carried out consistently.

Lead singer and guitarist for the grunge band Nirvana, Kurt Cobain, was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. He was a talented singer, songwriter, and artist. *Time* magazine included him in a 2002 list of "manic geniuses" who made great contributions to music, art, or literature. *Rolling Stone* listed him as the 12th greatest guitarist and 45th greatest singer of all time.

Cobain reportedly had some other medical issues from a early childhood. His family had a history of mental illness, alcoholism, and suicide. He self-medicated and abused alcohol and drugs, which eventually contributed to his committing suicide in April of 1994. Ironically, one of Nirvana's hit songs is titled "Lithium," which is also a mood stabilizer used in the treatment of bipolar disorder.

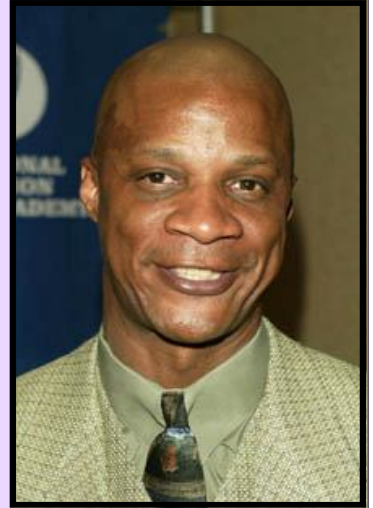
## "FAMOUS PEOPLE WITH BIPOLAR DISORDER "... CONTINUED.

A famous person in the sport's world with a bipolar disorder is Hall of Fame baseball player, Daryl Strawberry. He played 17 years in the major leagues and held a New York Mets' record for most runs batted in and most hits. He also received honors as Rookie of the Year.

Strawberry, a very gifted athlete, has had numerous problems throughout his life and career with substance abuse, marital problems, financial problems, and cancer. Later in life he is quoting as saying, "When I look in the mirror, I look at the enemy. There is no one to blame for this but myself. I should have bought myself a mirror a long time ago."

After receiving help and making changes in his life, Strawberry has retired and has begun the Daryl Strawberry Foundation "Fight for Autism." You can find out more information about this foundation at <http://www.fightforautism.org/>

He now endeavors to make a difference in the life of others. He says, "The time we spend with parents witnessing their pain, frustration and fears of not being able to secure proper care and services for their loved ones is heartbreaking and has motivated us to action."



Daryl Strawberry is a Hall of Fame baseball player.



Ms. Fisher played Princess Leia in the original Star Wars trilogy.

And who can forget Carrie Fisher, who portrayed Princess Leia in the original Star Wars trilogy? Not only is Fisher an actress, but she is also a novelist, screenwriter, and lecturer. She is the daughter of singer Eddie Fisher and actress Debbie Reynolds.

Fisher has publicly talked about her struggle with bipolar disorder. She admits to problems with alcohol, drugs and overcoming an addiction to prescription medication. Surviving an overdose, she said, "Slowly I realized I was doing a bit more drugs than other people and losing my choice in the matter."

Fisher published her autobiography in 2008 titled Wishful Drinking. She talks candidly about her life, her addictions, and dealing with mental breakdowns. She even describes how she went through electroshock therapy for her manic depression.

Fisher's official website can be seen at <http://carriefisher.com/>. Her biography on her website describes Fisher in this way: "Her experiences with addiction and bipolar disorder—and her willingness to speak honestly about them—have made her a sought-after speaker and respected advocate for these communities."

Wikianswers.com states, in response to the question, "What is the success rate of bipolar people staying on their medication?" "Unfortunately, many bipolar patients do not stay on their medications. When they start feeling good, in the mania phase, they often feel that they don't need medicine. Mania occurs when they tend to be the most illogical, and it's hard for them to remember how bad they felt when they started the medication."

All photos and information for this newsletter are from various resources on the internet.

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