



# **Thriving on the Bipolar Roller Coaster**



## **Thriving on the Bipolar Roller Coaster**

How To Succeed  
With Bipolar Disorder

Phyllis Elliott, LCSW-R

*Thriving on the Bipolar Roller Coaster* Is a Realistic, Upbeat and User-friendly Guide for Success Following a Life-Altering Mental Health Diagnosis Written by a Licensed Clinical Social Worker Living with Bipolar Disorder, The Book is a Manual for Patients, their Families, Friends and Social Workers



Dear Editors and Reporters:

Licensed Clinical Social Worker Phyllis Elliott was no stranger to the symptoms of bipolar disorder when she began to have sleepless nights and racing thoughts at age 44. As a counselor for mentally ill adults at a residential program, she was teaching practical daily living skills to clients, including some who also experienced the mood swings from depression to mania that characterize bipolar disorder.

After initially denying to herself what she knew to be true – that she too had bipolar disorder – Elliott sought professional help. Her new book *Thriving on the Bipolar Roller Coaster: How To Succeed With Bipolar Disorder* details her journey from wife, mother, student and counselor to patient and the recovery that brought her back to her former roles.

*Thriving on the Bipolar Roller Coaster* provides advice, examples and anecdotes for managing life with bipolar disorder. The practical, proven suggestions are based on Elliott's own struggles, her work with her patients and the lessons learned from family members who also struggled with mental illness.

The 76-page handbook also includes symptoms checklists, ways to chart your strengths and goals, tools for the families of children and teens with bipolar disorder, questions to ask when choosing a mental health professional, coping strategies for the family of the person with bipolar disorder, and even a few words for the professionals who treat them.

Elliott went on to earn her master's degree in social work from Fordham University after being diagnosed with bipolar disorder. She has 10 years of experience in private practice and is the manager of a resource center for families with children who have social, emotional and behavioral challenges. Now 57, she lives in New York State with her husband and is the mother of three children and the grandmother of four.

Phyllis Elliott is available for interviews and speaking engagements. She can be reached via e-mail through her Web site, [www.thrivingonthebipolarrollercoaster.com](http://www.thrivingonthebipolarrollercoaster.com).

***Thriving on the Bipolar Roller Coaster***  
**Is a Realistic, Upbeat and User-friendly Guide for Success**  
**Following a Life-Altering Mental Health Diagnosis**  
**Written by a Licensed Clinical Social Worker Living with Bipolar Disorder,**  
**The Book is a Manual for Patients, their Families, Friends and Social Workers**

**New York** – When she was diagnosed with bipolar disorder at age 44, Licensed Clinical Social Worker Phyllis Elliott was well aware of the challenges ahead. She had spent years advising patients with mental illnesses, including bipolar disorder, an illness characterized by extreme mood swings from mania to depression.

Now it was time to take charge of her own recovery.

In her new book, *Thriving on the Bipolar Roller Coaster: How To Succeed With Bipolar Disorder*, Elliott offers hope for the future and dispenses practical, proven advice based on what has worked for her and her clients.

“My purpose in writing this book is to let everyone know that having this illness makes life more challenging but it doesn’t make it impossible,” she writes in the user-friendly 76-page handbook. “It is my valentine to the people with bipolar disorder that courageously seek to live their dreams, the families that support them and the professionals that continue to try over and over to help.”

Despite her diagnosis, Elliott never let bipolar disorder stop her from reaching her goals. With the help of doctors and therapists who worked with her to find the right combination of medication and therapy and the love and support of her family and friends, Elliott started – and finished – graduate school, earning her master’s degree in social work. She had been accepted to Fordham University just prior to her diagnosis.

Through a wealth of experiences as a therapist, a patient and even a family member of others with mental illness, Elliott brings a unique perspective to the recovery process. Her goal is to help those with bipolar disorder re-evaluate what they can achieve, to provide family members with hope and coping skills and to encourage professionals to remember to see the person before the illness.

“The most important thing to know is that recovery is possible and you have a right to expect it,” Elliott tells readers. She points out, however, that recovery takes time and isn’t easy. She also reminds them that it takes determination, vision and a team of professionals, family and friends to help make it happen.

Elliott’s book provides readers with symptoms checklists for both mania and depression and outlines the pros and cons of using medication to treat bipolar disorder. She details the coping skills she has found successful when she feels herself becoming depressed or manic, even though she remains on medication. She also delves into the importance of educating oneself about the illness and being an advocate for yourself or your loved one.

The book also includes worksheets, which patients or their families can use to assess their strengths and list their goals; questions to ask when choosing a professional; tips and tools for the families of children and teens with bipolar disorder and strategies for life for the families of those living with the disorder.

**About the Author:**

Phyllis Elliott, LCSW-R, holds a master’s degree in social work from Fordham University and has 10 years experience in private practice. She is the manager of a resource center for families with children who have social, emotional and behavioral challenges. A member of the National Association of Social Workers and the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, Elliott lives in New York State with her husband and is the mother of three and grandmother of four. She was diagnosed with bipolar disorder at age 44.

**About *Thriving on the Bipolar Roller Coaster*:** *How to Succeed With Bipolar Disorder*:

Elliott’s handbook is an easy-to-use, step-by-step guide to help patients get the lives back on track after a devastating diagnosis. Intended for patients, their families and their therapists, the book offers hope and practical advice for using the diagnosis of bipolar disorder as a starting point, rather than an ending. Elliott can be reached via e-mail through her Web site, [www.thrivingonthebipolarrollercoaster.com](http://www.thrivingonthebipolarrollercoaster.com). Her book is available on [iUniverse.com](http://iUniverse.com), [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) and [bn.com](http://bn.com), or by calling 1-800AUTHORS.





## About the Author



Phyllis Elliott, LCSW-R, is the author of *Thriving on the Bipolar Roller Coaster: How To Succeed With Bipolar Disorder*. A Licensed Clinical Social Worker in New York State for the past ten years, she was a mental health counselor on the brink of entering graduate school when she was diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

Ms. Elliott graduated from Fordham University in 1997 with a master's degree in social work. She is a member of the National Association of Social Workers and the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill.

She serves as a Program Development Manager for Family Ties of Westchester, Inc. in Peekskill, New York, where she manages a resource center offering support, education and advocacy to families with children who have social, emotional and behavioral challenges for Family Ties. In addition, Ms. Elliott has a private counseling practice, which includes patients with bipolar disorder and their families.

She has been a speaker at numerous conferences around the country, using her experience and clinical knowledge to bring coping skills and hope to people facing a variety of challenges.

Ms. Elliott has been involved with families dealing with various disorders and behavioral problems for more than a decade, working as an Intensive Case Manager and a Family Resource Specialist before becoming a Program Development Manager. She began her career as a counselor at a community residence for mentally ill adults and has worked steadily in her field since 1992.

Since her diagnosis at age 44, she has been dedicated to finding ways to help people with bipolar disorder progress in life.

As a patient, Ms. Elliott learned firsthand how difficult it can be to navigate the challenges and the ups and downs presented by bipolar disorder. As a family member, she can understand how heartbreaking it is to want to help but not know how. In her role as a licensed therapist, she has been able to successfully treat patients using a variety of concrete strategies.

These experiences – as a patient, a mental health professional and family member of others with mental illness – have made Ms. Elliott uniquely qualified to write and speak about succeeding in the face of bipolar disorder.

Ms. Elliott lives in New York State with her husband and is the mother of three children and grandmother of four. She can be reached at 845-234-3928 or [pe46@comcast.net](mailto:pe46@comcast.net).

### What is bipolar disorder?

- Bipolar disorder is a treatable mental illness.
- Treatment is required, not optional, for management of the illness.
- Left untreated, bipolar disorder causes physical changes to the brain.
- Using a combination of treatment, coping skills, determination, vision and the help of family, friends and professionals, a diagnosis of bipolar disorder can be a new beginning, rather than an ending.

### What are the symptoms of bipolar disorder?

- Depression
- Mania

### What are the symptoms of depression?

- A sad, anxious or empty feeling lasting for at least two weeks
- Feeling hopeless or pessimistic
- Feeling guilty, worthless and helpless
- Having no pleasure in activities you usually enjoy
- Decreased energy, feeling slowed down
- Difficulty concentrating and remembering
- Difficulty making decisions
- Sleeping too much or not enough
- Restlessness and irritability
- Change in appetite
- Chronic pain or aches not related to a physical condition
- Thoughts of suicide, death or focusing on losses

### What are the symptoms of mania?


- Sudden increased energy, activity and restlessness
- Overly euphoric mood
- Extreme irritability
- Racing thoughts and inability to concentrate
- Talking very fast or very loudly
- Not sleeping
- Unrealistic belief in one's abilities or powers
- Poor judgement
- Spending sprees
- Risky behaviors
- Increased use of drugs or alcohol

### What are the tips to ask when choosing a professional?

- Have you treated many people with bipolar disorder?
- What is the course of treatment?
- How effective do you think this treatment will be?
- Will you get to know me before you give me medication?
- Can you take the time to explain about my illness, treatment and medication?
- Do you have backup coverage when you are not available?
- How much time will each session be?
- How can I reach you in a crisis?
- What is your philosophy about good outcomes for people with bipolar disorder?
- Will you help me find ways to manage my symptoms?



## Suggested Story Ideas:



Licensed Clinical Social Worker Phyllis Elliott can speak to all of the following story ideas and more through her unique perspective as a therapist, a patient being treated for bipolar disorder – characterized by mood swings from depression to mania -- and a family member of someone with mental illness. Ms. Elliott is the author of *Thriving on the Bipolar Roller Coaster: How To Succeed With Bipolar Disorder*. In it, she explains how the right kinds of treatment, coping skills, persistence and hard work, along with the support of family, friends and professionals have helped her and her clients succeed.



### Getting on with Life!

How does someone who has been diagnosed with bipolar disorder get past the illness and continue on with life? How can the right kinds of treatment, coping skills, persistence and hard work, along with the support of family, friends and professionals help a person faced with this life-altering diagnosis succeed?



### About that Label!

What does it really mean to be diagnosed with bipolar disorder? What are the common misconceptions about this mental illness, which is characterized by moods swings from depression to mania? What are the best ways of combating those mistaken beliefs?



### Is it Really Bipolar Disorder?

How do you know whether it's really bipolar disorder? What do the symptoms of bipolar disorder feel like? What does the depression that accompanies the illness feel like, and how does it feel to have the racing thoughts that accompany the manic side of the illness? How do you get out of bed when you are depressed, and what do you do when you are in a manic state?



### Practical Tips for Family Members

How can children and teens and their families deal with a diagnosis of bipolar disorder? What are some practical tips and tools specifically geared toward children and teens and their families to help them keep their lives on track?



### Who does it Effect?

A diagnosis of bipolar disorder affects both the person with the illness and family members. What kinds of strategies can family members use to help a loved one who has been diagnosed with bipolar disorder cope and thrive? How can they also help themselves?



### Treat me Right!

What kinds of treatments are right for people diagnosed with bipolar disorder? What are the pros and cons of medication? How does a patient or a family select the right therapist? Is a combination of treatments the best option?