

ask



Dr Roshan Jain

Your *mental and emotional health* questions answered

Q My son was recently diagnosed with bipolar disorder and started on multiple medications. He is emotional, easily angered and depressed from time to time; at others, he is elated and ecstatic. Please advise us on this illness. How may we help our son? Is it a lifelong condition?

Bipolar Disorder or Bipolar Affective Disorder is a mood disorder characterised by disturbances in mood and activity levels. As you have mentioned, on occasions the disturbance is an elevated mood swing and increased energy and activity (hypomania or mania) and on others, it is low or depressed mood swings and decreased energy and activity (depression). Either way, there may be considerable distress and disruption, aggression, and impulsivity. Mania is a severe form of hypomania.

Bipolar disorder falls in the group of "affective disorders", just as clinical depression. It affects about one percent of the adult population. Unlike depression, which affects mostly women, bipolar disorder affects men and women equally. Unfortunately, it can be a life long illness and there is no known cure. Affected individuals suffer multiple episodes of illness and there can be significant disruption of life.

What gives hope is that the condition can be managed effectively with mood stabilising medication and supportive psychotherapy (talking therapy). It is more so, because your son and any such patients can be fully engaged in their individualised treatment. Being consistent with the intake of medicines is important. It protects the patient by

reducing the frequency, intensity and duration of further episodes. I know many bipolar patients who recovered from very painful episodes to go on and claim a good life and success for themselves. Rest assured in hope. Do write to us if you have any further questions about your son's difficulties.

Q We have been married for three years, yet our relationship lacks intimacy. My husband avoided having intercourse throughout the first year of marriage, as we were not keen on having a child immediately. Thereafter, he appears to have lost confidence in his ability to perform and worries about losing erection. He masturbates when alone, but avoids any physical contact with me. I am very worried. Should we see a psychiatrist or a urologist?

Your husband appears to have psychological erectile dysfunction or ED. It is a sexual problem characterised by the inability to develop or maintain the erection of penis during sexual performance. I base this on the information that he does have erection and is able to ejaculate. He seems to suffer from performance anxiety, consequently engaging in avoidance behaviour. It is important that his general health and wellbeing is explored medically. Perhaps he may have had erectile problems soon after or even before marriage. Erectile dysfunction is an awkward condition associated with personal distress, unwarranted guilt and embarrassment. Psychological problems like stress, anxiety, and depression may contribute and worsen ED.

Ideally, a professional consultation can help you both in openly exploring these issues and tackling it as a couple. Not many people are aware that in several cases it is physical rather than psychological causes that are responsible for ED. It is important that you also look into physical causes like smoking, alcohol, high cholesterol, medication - antidepressants, kidney and bladder/prostate issues, nerve or spinal cord damage, low testosterone levels and age.

Your husband requires a consultation with a urologist or andrologist, who will evaluate his health status and conduct routine blood tests for sugar, kidney, thyroid and liver problems, besides hormone profile and penile doppler to assess blood flow.

ED's negative psychological impact on the individual psyche is also enormous. Therefore, irrespective of the cause of your husband's disorder, the involvement of a psychiatrist in the detailed assessment and treatment of his condition is important.

Our doctors will answer all queries on emotional and mental health. Got mind trouble of your own? Drop us a mail at bpositiveQA@apollolife.com

Or write to

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