

WE R SIK: Cyclothymia



Julio Domínguez
Trash Vibes iss. 3

1 I admit it

It's me. I've been given a pre-diagnosis of cyclothymia, which means I'm likely on the bipolar disorder spectrum. I'm not "sick" or broken, but I've gotta maintain myself carefully. Otherwise, in the most extreme cases, I could end up committed by the state or hospitalized. Life can be tough at times, but with experience, understanding, and training, I'm able to manage.

I've mostly kept this information hidden from public view since 2010. I guess I was embarrassed and worried it could hurt my professional career and personal relationships. I guess I was also scared of medication.

I don't feel that way anymore.

Now I wonder, *"why haven't I been more forthright?"* I've been living with this as an assumed reality since it was brought to my attention. These days I find myself using tools and techniques to cope, but I also see people around me who don't know what's going on or what to do with me sometimes. That's when they become uneasy and start to drift away. That part makes me sad.

I don't blame people for being reactionary. I believe if we were more open about our struggles, others could find compassion. I have faith that we can all learn how to handle difficult people and situations.

I'm guilty of not being compassionate enough when someone else was having an episode. I've thought to myself, "*F*** that guy,*" and dismissed people when I should've been thinking, "*This person is having an episode and needs help from the community. What can I and those around me do?*" When the training kicks in, I can express compassion to others. It's amazing how simple it is, and how little it takes, to coax people's compassion and see them change. A reactionary response may be useful for animal survival, but I believe the human heart craves love and understanding.

I know mine does. For others, for you, and for myself. Maybe you do too. Maybe that's why you're reading this zine.

2 70hrs of Julio

Things don't just suddenly occur, it's often a slow roll, triggered by external and internal stimuli that builds momentum, and, without help, gets out of control.

I left my long term partner this past October after the relationship went stale. It was difficult and undermined the stability in my life. I didn't re-adjust well. I slipped into a hypomanic/depressed cycle that drove me to become productive but tenuous. I began struggling with interpersonal relationships and distinguishing between ideas and delusions of reference. Maybe call it "prodromal" or "subclinical" psychosis.

A runaway manic state culminated into acute insomnia. I never fell asleep, not even for a second. The whole while, my physical body wore to the bone and my mental state fell to pieces.

After 70hrs, in bed, consumed with tremendous pain and fear, I finally asked a friend to rush me to the ER where I was put to sleep medically. The following days were tough, but gradually I got a full nights rest and was faced with what'd just happened.

I don't take mood stabilizers or anti-psychotics because I've tried some and don't like em. That being said, I'm not in formal therapy either, not that I'm against it. Mostly, I'm critical of the state, the healthcare system, and the profit incentives surrounding suffering.

So now what? I'm a few days out of the emergency room, the delusions have begun to fade, my body is mostly rejuvenated, but my mood is, again, elevated far above my stable baseline and my friends are worrying. "F***" is what I was thinking - I lost my footing and slipped pretty hard.

* It's here that I'm again reminded that nothing is really my own, and that the individual separated from the whole of humanity, is an illusion. What happened to me happened to everyone around me. It happened to the city. It happened to the world too.

Following all that, I saw a therapist and took 3 weeks off work for vacation to sit mostly in Square

Mug Cafe making art pieces and working on zines in prep for Tally Zine Fest. Within two weeks of my time off, the State Troopers in Georgia killed my comrade and fellow volunteer. The news felt like a bomb went off over my heart and our community garden. It was sudden, unexpected, and eerie. Then the TZF organizers canceled their major event with no explanation or public appeal for help. That was hard for me... I went from excited to crushed. I felt I lost precious time. It still feels that way.

Upon reflection, I accepted the limits of my capacity to handle these life events. I pulled back from some commitments, spoke with fewer people, and reached out to my Friend, [REDACTED], for help working through grief. Together, that all helped immensely.

Gradually, I have come down to my baseline elated mind. I have voluntarily submitted myself for a long-term psychological evaluation, just to make sure I'm ok. Given the elapsed time since this episode, I feel confident in my perception and judgment. However, manic episodes that result in hospitalization are unhealthy and should be taken seriously. Stress can cause permanent changes in body chemistry or brain function, and individuals with cyclothymia are at risk of transitioning into Bipolar Disorder I.

3 Risks of life

For obvious reasons, I feel tremendous kinship and worry about mentally ill people on the streets. I see what we do to them, and I wonder if I'll lose it

one day and end up in the gutter. Or worse, it could be my children, friends, or family. It's a strange mirror to look in. It churns the stomach and makes me want to throw up - or write. I'm not so sure which.

People on the bipolar disorder spectrum face a very serious obstacle, society. These otherwise beautiful people live in a precarity that is only dulled by our collective compassion and access to material resources. And... it only takes one episode for there to be irreversible damage. It's a shame that second chances, professional care, and medical services don't grow on trees.

Without means, those lacking a certain minimum capacity and disposition often find they can't care for themselves. They are discarded to the street. The dark and ever-present threat, the same threat against the vulnerable and posterity, is that any of us could be cast out and left to die because we inconvenience the fake reality that America and its *"good people"* try to live in.

Collectively, it's true. WE R SIK. And we prove it every day.

I curse America, now, in kindness. If you continue to accept poverty, then let your career, dreams, and fulfillment always feel hollow. And in those moments when you try to forget or whitewash the inequality and widespread suffering, may more people like me disrupt your trash vibes.

I pray for America, now, in kindness. May the window of your mind open enough for you to feel the breeze of love and life on your face. Let yourself be drawn to the window, and then out to the community garden, to sow seeds for tomorrow.

4 The New Future

A new future must be had. The current one, where we are boxed in by a career, by mortgages and rent, by the superficial, and by inequality -is a dead dream. That old bulls*** future that works for a tiny amount of the most boring and coddled people on Earth, is not worth saving. We need a new future that is grounded in Life and the Universe, alongside the Sacred.

There are endless paths to get there, but it's up to us to envision and push forward. If we have faith in the project of Life, then it's obvious that we've already achieved. That so much of the hard work is behind us, and that the new beautiful future is already on the tips of our collective nervous system. Listen and you can feel it.

We need only move to get there. Necessity and the Universe will prod us in the right direction. We've been led along so far, haven't we?

Love,

XOXO -Julio



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