

June 2022

BIPOLAR DISORDER:

SEE JUSTIS.

UPS

JAIYA DEVI

Have there been any upsides to being diagnosed with bipolar disorder?

JUSTIS

I would say that there have definitely been upsides. Normally I don't get tired. I have a lot of energy. I'm pretty happy. I'd say that my mind moves a thousand miles a minute, although sometimes that's gotten me into trouble in school. And I would say that just overall knowing and learning about bipolar disorder since my diagnosis has greatly improved my quality of life. They say knowledge is power and I believe that. And I think that knowing what's happening in my brain has helped me manage my brain that much better.

JAIYA DEVI

What do you think is most misunderstood about people diagnosed with bipolar disorder?

JUSTIS

I think the way that it presents, I think that oftentimes we portray bipolar disorder as like this explosive anger from a person, when in reality, bipolar disorder is much more of a spectrum, where there's so many different ways that it presents along the spectrum, that it's almost laughable to look at one part of that spectrum and be like, that's it, you know.

When you're told that your emotions are a function of this other thing that you've been unfamiliar with your whole life, coming to terms with that is kind of a lot, but over time I found a lot of different things to help me manage it, as well as to educate myself and the others around me about my condition. Yeah.

JAIYA DEVI

What has been your biggest struggle?

JUSTIS

Definitely staying on my meds consistently, I'd say, has been my biggest struggle. The meds don't always make you feel the greatest, even though they are necessary in many cases. And so I'd say for me, definitely like to stay on the meds consistently, because the meds will definitely just dull out your feelings in general. Or at least they did for me, I won't say that's always the case for everybody but for me at first that's what it was until we could find a better balance for my way of life.

JAIYA DEVI

What has it been like for you going from mental health advocate to navigating your own mental health and bipolar disorder diagnosis?

JUSTIS

Let's see. Well, I was, I grew up advocating for mental health specifically as it pertains to, especially as it pertains to youth and teen suicide prevention. Then I got diagnosed back in June of 2022, myself with bipolar disorder type 1, and I definitely feel as though that work previously equipped me with a lot of tools in navigating my own mental health challenges, as well as gave me a really new empathetic look towards other people, both with bipolar disorder and other mental illnesses as well.

DOWNNS

JAIYA DEVI

Has knowing about it made life and relationships better or easier?

JUSTIS

I would say that it's made life easier. I'd say both. Because I think that it just overall changes the way that you interact. Like when you know better, you do better. And knowing yourself better than anybody else really helps. And I'd say as far as my relationships go, it definitely helps me communicate better with my friends, my partner, my family, and I think that's a beautiful thing too.

JAIYA DEVI

Have you ever felt angry about being diagnosed with bipolar disorder?

JUSTIS

I would say definitely. Like any diagnosis or many diagnoses, I should say, bipolar disorder for me changed my way of life. It changed the way that I could communicate, the way that I knew how to communicate, the ways, I mean, honestly, everything, right?

JAIYA DEVI

For you, what has been the toughest part of navigating or adjusting to your diagnosis?

JUSTIS

I think the revelation that protecting my energy as it pertains to my headspace is as important as protecting and maintaining my physical well-being as both personally and in my circles and my relationships. So, whereas, you know, say you're an athlete, right, that might mean that you eat good food so that you can stay athletic. For me, it looks like making sure that my relationships are healthy, making sure that I'm doing healthy things, making sure that I'm doing healthy things, and holding myself accountable when I'm not.

JAIYA DEVI

What does the path forward look like for Justis?

JUSTIS

I think the path forward for me started with my diagnosis and coming to learn what I could about my diagnosis and bipolar disorder and then taking that information and figuring out how to best use it to improve my quality of life. Like I said previously, that's helped me with my relationships, it's helped me with school, so that's a huge part of it, finishing up my degree here at the University of New Mexico, here, my degree in pre-law philosophy with the intention of going on to law school and using the law as a means to change the world. And as I'm on that path, I'm also thinking in the next five years, I want music to be a big part of that. Music is very much a huge part of who I am and a big part of the impact that I have on the community.

And not just in playing music, but finding unique and creative ways to use music to change the world around me and my community for the better. And so I have a company, The "Artists at Work Collective", and we do a lot of work to that end, finding creative ways to use music and art to help the community. And so I'm really excited to be able to give back to the kids, give back to the youth, and even help other people understand more about bipolar disorder, more about music, more about the things I'm passionate about. And then my final thing for the five years, right now I am about to start filming a new TV show that we have been blessed with. And so I think that will somehow factor in. I don't know that I'll still have a TV show in five years, but maybe, I'm sure it will be something beautiful nonetheless, whatever that turns into in five years.

ROAD AHEAD

When it comes to bipolar disorder, you can learn about it, but then you really have to do some introspection. You have to look inside yourself, because nobody knows you better than you do. And that can be kind of foreign, right? When you have somebody who might have a degree telling you that you're one thing that might cause you to change whatever you think you might know about yourself. It's still true that you know yourself better than anyone. And with that new information, you just get to know yourself even more. And with that information, you get to do what you want with it. **And so, what I would say to those people is, don't give up.** Because, though it might be hard now, or it might be hard at first, or it might even be hard towards the end, the only way path is, the only path forward is through. And with that information, you really can use it to change your life. And so, yeah.

JAIYA DEVI

How do you want people to see Justis?

JUSTIS

I think that I want people to see me for the human that I am and all the things that I do. So that's a musical person, that's a creative person, that's a philanthropic person giving back to the community. That's in law, somebody who is very passionate about the law. I guess all in all, I want people to see me as I am, as a human, Justis Daniels, who happens to have bipolar disorder.

ADVICE

JAIYA DEVI

What do you want to say to people who are struggling with their mental health or bipolar disorder diagnosis?

JUSTIS

I would say that it's hard, first and foremost, like there's no getting around that. So many different things we deal with on a daily basis are hard, but when it comes to mental health, both because of the societal stigma that we often times face and the confusion that we often times face with a new diagnosis. It's hard. There's no getting around that. But the only way path is forward. And the first step is acceptance, realization, right? It's that learning. That learning of your specific disorder, maybe that's not bipolar disorder, maybe that's something else. But it still starts with that first step of acceptance and acknowledgment. And then you can learn.