

PCOS Mental Health Challenges

PCOS Challenge's 2014



Introduction/Why?!

- Mind/body are inseparable
- PCOS is systemic
- Mental health issues are often overlooked
- Being a proactive patient is imperative
- Quick overview and focus on three hot topics



Potential Mental Health Symptoms

- Forgetfulness, “brain fog”
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Relationship problems
- Irritability
- Lethargy
- Sleep problems
- Eating disordered behavior
- Hypersexuality (high sex drive)
- Hyposexuality (low sex drive)
- Bipolar disorder



What are the labels?

- Diagnoses may include:
 - Depression/Dysthymia
 - Anxiety Disorders
 - Eating Disorders
 - Sleep Disorders
 - Partner Relational Problems
 - Bipolar Disorder
 - Substance Abuse
 - Sexual Desire Disorders



Problem: Relationships

- When to disclose illness(es)
- Sexuality
- Fertility/Infertility
- Financial aspects of health care
- Time management
- Feelings of shame, embarrassment, failure
- Body image issues
- Moodiness



Relationships: What Doesn't Work

- Ignoring the issue
- Lying
- Faking it
- Not including your partner/spouse
- Skipping exercise
- Bad diet
- Poor self-care
- Not seeking help



Relationships: What Works

- Honesty
- Including your spouse/partner
- Practicing a healthy lifestyle together
 - Exercise burns fat, reduces insulin resistance, relieves anxiety, elevates mood, reduces the amount of adrenal hormones release in response to stress, and raises the endorphins in the brain.
- Giving each other space
- Couples counseling



Problem: Level of Sexual Desire

- AKA, “I’m too horny for my honey.”
- Or...”Sex? Who cares?”
- Body Image and Cultural Demoralization
- Feeling Unfeminine
- Mixed-Up Roles



Sex: What Doesn't Work

- Suppressing/sublimating desire
- Cheating
- Threatening
- Manipulating
- Not talking to a doctor or therapist
- Giving up



Sex: What Works

- Managing expectations
- Communication
- Masturbation
- Getting hormones balanced
- Psychotherapy
- Adapting to changes over time



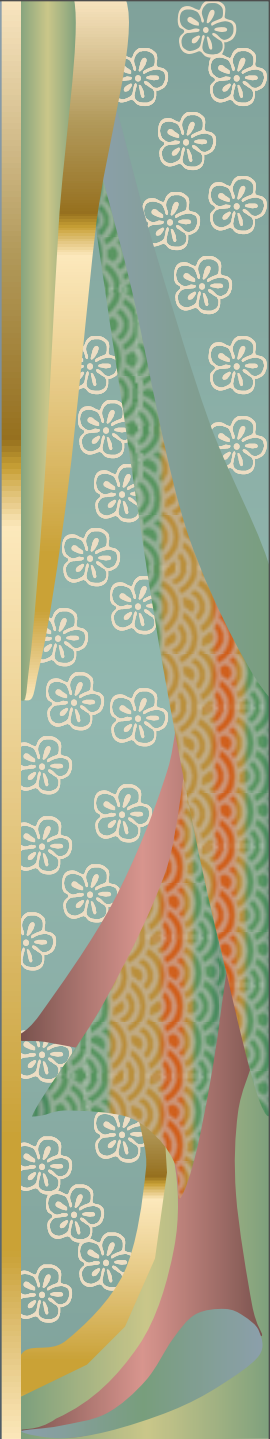
Problem: Bipolar Disorder

- Severe mood swings
- Mania/hypomania feels good
- Feeling suicidal/potentially fatal
- Mis-use of the terminology
 - Is it actually “just” depression?



Bipolar: What Doesn't Work

- Self-diagnosis
- Self-treatment
- Failure to see a licensed psychotherapist and psychiatrist for diagnosis and treatment
- Not taking suicidal feelings seriously
- Skipping medication when you feel better
- Shame



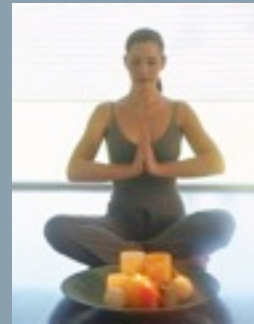
Bipolar: What Works

- Psychotherapy
- Psychotropic medications
- Enlisting support
- Boosting self-care practices
- Committing to the long-haul



What Works for Everything:

- Personal responsibility and advocacy
- Stress-reduction techniques
 - Mindfulness
 - Meditation
 - Mind/Body Techniques
- Individual/group/couples psychotherapy
- Exercise/healthy diet



And how to learn more...



Recommended Reading



- *The PCOS Workbook: Your Guide to Complete Physical and Emotional Health*, by Angela Grassi, MS, RD, LDN and Stephanie Mattei, Psy.D.
- *Natural Highs: Feel Good All the Time*, by Hyla Cass, MD and Patrick Holford
- *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom*, by Christiane Northrup, MD
- *The Cyster's Guide to PCOS: Managing the Mental Health Challenges of Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome*, Gretchen Kubacky, Psy.D. (COMING SOON!)



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