8.1: Introduction

Learning Objectives

• Apply the nursing process to clients with bipolar disorders
• Describe nursing assessments related to bipolar disorders
• Identify common nursing problems/diagnoses related to bipolar disorders
• Establish a safe environment
• Apply evidence-based practice when planning and implementing nursing care
• Describe common treatments for bipolar disorders
• Identify appropriate referrals to community resources
• Evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
• Provide patient education to clients and their family members

Bipolar disorder is a mental illness that causes dramatic shifts in a person’s mood, energy, and ability to think clearly. Moods shift from abnormally elevated moods called manic episodes to abnormal low moods of depression. See Figure 8.1[1] for a depiction of the shifts in mood that occur with bipolar disorder. Severe bipolar episodes of mania can also include hallucinations or delusions, which can be confused with symptoms of schizophrenia.[2] This chapter will discuss the signs, symptoms, and treatments for bipolar disorder and explain how to apply the nursing process when caring for clients with bipolar disorder.
Figure 8.1 Bipolar Disorder

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