

# CASE STUDY OF THE SYMPTOMS OF BIPOLAR DISORDER

Australian psychologist and writer, Margo Orum, is a leading researcher and counsellor for people with bipolar disorder. She has also herself been a sufferer of the disorder. In her autobiography, *Fairytales in Reality*, Orum (1996) describes the depths of despair she has experienced during times of depression and the sense of being full of drive, energy, ideas, and confidence during episodes of mania.

*I was 31 when the first episode of bipolar disorder blew away my comfortable assumptions about life and what I could expect from it. Until my late 20s, I had been the very model of a happy, uncomplicated girl-next-door, with a recently completed degree in communication and bright dreams of becoming a journalist. But in the following three years, I lost sight of those dreams and depression entered my life. It had installed itself so subtly within my psyche that I had no inkling it had taken over my perceptions and was in fact directing all my emotional traffic. All I knew was that, for some inexplicable reason, my usual resilience and courage had vaporised and even the simplest things seemed impossible.*

*Then I started to believe that I was a genius, teetering on the edge of a yawning abyss of madness. Over the next four days, the psychosis continued to play havoc with my thoughts and emotions. I couldn't concentrate and paced back and forth, lost in fascination, mesmerised with the sudden outpouring of new ideas and interpretations, which tumbled and percolated through my consciousness like a river gushing through a gorge. I thought that nothing could be more addictive than the high of a manic euphoria. Once I had tasted that soaring, exhilarating, invincible, phantasmagorical feeling IT'S GREAT TO BE ME! I CAN DO ANYTHING, once I had experienced the rush of my mind in overdrive, the creativity pouring through it, the connectivity of burgeoning lateral thinking, the ridiculous ease of witty repartee, the unutterable knowledge of my own immensity, my own infinity, then life without another mania was a dreary prospect indeed.*

*In the 15 years since that first epoch, I have had only one episode, which was brought under control within a couple of days. The difference is that now I have learned*

*how to keep myself well and these days I teach others to do the same (personal communication, 4 April 2007).*