



MANAGING YOUR BIPOLAR DISORDER

Living with bipolar disorder can feel overwhelming, but there are things you can do every day to help stabilize your mood and reduce the risk of manic, hypomanic, and depressive episodes.

While medication plays a key role, structured lifestyle changes can significantly support symptom management and improve your overall quality of life ([McIntyre et al., 2022](#)).

Here are some helpful strategies to help you stay on track.

How to Keep Your Episodes in Check

1. LOCK IN YOUR SLEEP ROUTINE

- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day without exceptions.
- Aim for 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night.
- If your sleep schedule is off, adjust it slowly by shifting bedtime 30 minutes earlier each week.
- Sleep disruptions can trigger mood swings ([Nierenberg et al., 2023](#)).



2. GET SUNLIGHT FIRST THING IN THE MORNING

- Step outside in the morning to soak up natural light.
- Use a dawn simulator to mimic sunrise and sunset (look for options available locally or online).
- Light therapy may help regulate mood in bipolar disorder, but should be used cautiously and ideally with professional guidance, as it can trigger manic or hypomanic episodes in some people (Bauer, 2022).

3. CREATE A NIGHTTIME WIND-DOWN ROUTINE

- Dim the lights, take a warm shower, read, or meditate.
- Avoid screens and intense workouts before bed.
- Keep your bed reserved for sleep, not for work, TV, or phone use.
- Research shows that good bedtime habits help prevent insomnia and stabilize mood ([McIntyre et al., 2022](#)).



4. STICK TO A DAILY RHYTHM

- Wake up, eat, move, and check in with people at the same times every day.
- Routines help regulate your brain and reduce mood swings.
- Keeping a structured daily routine is linked to fewer bipolar episodes ([Nierenberg et al., 2023](#)).

5. MOVE YOUR BODY

- Exercise can help prevent depressive episodes and keep your mood stable.
- A 2023 study found that regular aerobic exercise is linked to fewer mood swings ([Beunders et al., 2023](#)).



6. CUT OUT MOOD WRECKERS

- Reduce or avoid caffeine, alcohol, and drugs.
- Make time for hobbies and activities you enjoy to relieve stress.
- Substance use can make bipolar symptoms worse and increase episode frequency ([Warner et al., 2023](#)).

What to Do If You Feel a Manic or Hypomanic Episode Coming On

1. REDUCE STIMULATION

- Cut back on responsibilities and tasks.
- Avoid crowds, loud places, and social events.
- Find a quiet and calm space to relax.
- Lowering environmental stimulation can help reduce manic symptoms ([Bauer, 2022](#)).

2. LEAN ON YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM

- Ask someone you trust to hold onto your debit card to prevent impulse spending.
- Check in with your therapist or provider.
- Early intervention with a professional can make a big difference ([McIntyre et al., 2022](#)).

3. STICK TO YOUR ROUTINE

- Keep your daily structure consistent with meals, showers, and sleep.
- Avoid caffeine and stimulants.
- Wear blue light glasses to minimize the impact of light exposure on your mood.
- Sticking to a set schedule helps prevent mood episodes from escalating ([Beunders et al., 2023](#)).

4. TRY DARK THERAPY

- From 6 PM to 8 AM, stay in a dark and quiet space. Some evidence suggests this may help reduce manic symptoms, but this strategy should be discussed with your provider before use, especially during an active episode.
- Dark therapy has been shown to shorten manic episodes ([Bauer, 2022](#)).

Managing bipolar disorder can be tough, but the right daily habits can make a huge difference. Prioritizing sleep, sunlight, movement, and stress management can help you feel more in control. If things start feeling off, do not hesitate to reach out for help. You are not alone.

Bottom line:

You do not have to be perfect. The more you stick to what works for you, the more stable and manageable life with bipolar disorder can be.