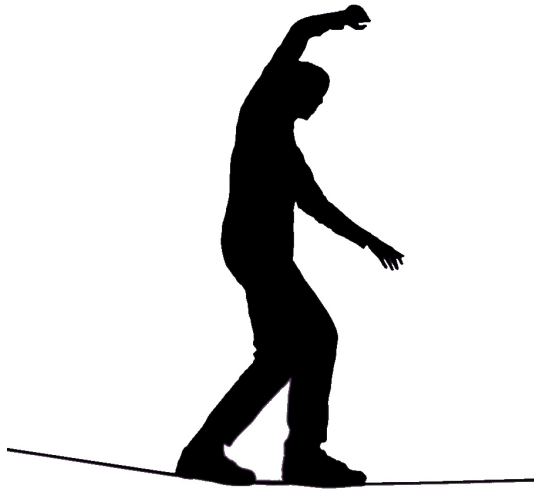


Excerpt from *Bipolar Disorder Demystified*

By Lana Castle

Welcome to the Tightrope



LIVING WITH BIPOLAR DISORDER is much like living your life on a tightrope — not because you choose to walk that tightrope but because *it's the only available surface upon which you can walk*. One false step, one impulsive moment, could easily end your life. Imagine being destined to walk that rope forever — either romping ecstatically across it or fighting a force that's pulling you down, and rarely achieving that elusive level ground.

This is the experience of bipolar disorder (formerly called manic depression).

Sometimes it feels *great* to be up on that rope. Incredible surges of energy and power make you think you're invincible. You believe wholeheartedly that you can pull off any trick you try. You know with certainty that you'll walk away unscathed.

Other times, you'll find you've fallen from your rope. You may lie tangled in the net or stuck in a dark abyss below. Or the tightrope you've been walking may now bind your body and threaten to cut you in half.

Untreated, bipolar disorder can put you one story or even five stories up when you're high and one story or even five stories down when you're low. If you're lucky, you may experience balance for a while. But you can never fully trust your next step. You can never fully trust your own mind.