

Welcome To Being Bipolar

There's just the vacuum of a life you used to have, a name you used to claim, a person you used to know, now depleted of everything you used to be and have—as if all the planets, stars, and light itself were sucked into a black hole in an endless abandoned universe.

This condition is usually referred to as an illness or disorder. But that's like calling WWII a spat or the Inquisition bullying. Bipolar depression is a monster. All the horror stories you used to know as a child are combined into one blazing entity that actually burns through your consciousness and comes to live inside you. It takes over...in the form of emptiness. Then, all that's left is the smoldering.

Schooled

Being depressed at home is one thing, but being depressed at work is quite another. As an elementary school social worker, there were times I would drive halfway to work and then back home again when I was depressed because I couldn't face the faces—especially the children. Most of them smiled, giggled and expected good humor from me in return. I either had to avoid them by taking another stairway or force a smile out of thin air. It works unless the principal comes hunting you down.

It's the "Principle"

That's just what happened to me. It was a Magnet school where the staff was expected to work twice as hard as others in the district, regardless of task or activity. Our school had an outstanding reputation for superior teaching and learning in a community, with most schools failing national academic standards.

One day, I was at school and feeling particularly comatose. Despite my warped brain chemistry daring me to make it to the end of the school day, I had a ton of paperwork to do. It happened to be Halloween, when all the children wore costumes for their annual parade down the halls. Teachers, specials, and parents applauded and waved as each "whatever-they-were" passed by.

I suddenly heard the echo of footsteps coming down the hall as a feeling of dread overtook me. In addition to having to deal with my already vulnerable emotional state, my intuition told me things were about to get worse. And they did.