Increased physical and mental activity and energy
Heightened mood, exaggerated optimism and self-confidence
Excessive irritability, aggressive behavior
Decreased need for sleep with or without experiencing fatigue
Grandiose delusions, inflated sense of self-importance

Bipolar Disorder
More than a Mood Swing
Bipolar disorder is a treatable medical illness marked by extreme changes in mood, thought, energy and behavior. It is also known as manic depression because a person's mood can alternate betweenmania and depression. This change in mood (or "mood swing") can last for hours, days, weeks or even months.

How to Recognize Mania
Unlike people with depression, most people with bipolar disorder talk about experiencing the "highs" and "lows" of the illness. The "highs" are periods of mania or intense bursts of energy or euphoria, which include some or all of the following symptoms:

- Manic episodes last at least one week or result in hospitalization.
- Manic episodes cannot be explained by substance use.
- Restlessness, irritability or grandiosity.
- Inflated sense of self-importance.
- Decreased need for sleep.
- Excessive psychomotor agitation or flight of ideas.

Bipolar disorder affects close to six million American adults. Like depression and other serious illnesses, bipolar disorder can also have an impact on spouses, family members, friends and coworkers. It usually begins in late adolescence (often appearing as depression during teenage years), although it can start in early childhood or as late as the 40s and 50s. An equal number of men and women develop this illness, and it is found among all ages, races, ethnic groups and social classes. The illness tends to run in families.

Mood swings that come with bipolar disorder can be severe, ranging from extremes in energy to deep despair. The severity of the mood swings and the way they disrupt normal activities are what make bipolar mood episodes different from ordinary mood changes.

Treatment
Sometimes it’s hard to ask for help. If you or someone you know has a mood disorder, you may be feeling especially vulnerable, and talking to someone about it may be the last thing you want to do. But finding the right treatment is the first step in becoming an active manager of an illness like depression or bipolar disorder. Finding the right treatment starts with finding the right mental health professional.

Psychotherapy
Psychotherapy or “talk therapy” is an important part of treatment for many people. It can sometimes work alone in cases of mild to moderate depression. A good therapist can help you modify behavioral or emotional patterns that contribute to your illness. People with bipolar disorder and/or chronic depression usually benefit from a combination of medication and talk therapy.

Medication
The choice to take medication is entirely yours, but know that many people with mood disorders have significantly improved their lives because they’ve followed a treatment plan that includes medication. Though medication does not guarantee that all your problems will be solved, the right one can improve your ability to cope with life’s problems and restore your sense of judgment.

Alternative Treatments
DBSA recognizes that dietary supplements and other alternative treatments that are advertised to have a positive effect on depression or bipolar disorder regularly enter the marketplace. DBSA does not endorse or discourage the use of these treatments. However, be aware that alternative treatments may have side effects or interact with prescribed medications, so read labels carefully and discuss them with your doctor or pharmacist before taking them.

Living with Depression or Bipolar Disorder
As with other chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease or asthma, people with mood disorders should see themselves as managers of their illness. Depression and bipolar disorder are treatable, but they are not yet curable. For many people, depression and bipolar disorder are chronic illnesses. If severe depressive and/or manic episodes reappear at some point in your life, don’t panic. Your experience with previous episodes puts you one giant step ahead in the process of recognizing symptoms and getting help. By continuing your treatment plan, you can greatly reduce your chances of having symptoms recur.

The Value of DBSA Support Groups
Along with proper diagnosis and treatment, the support of others is vital to a lifetime of wellness. DBSA’s grassroots network of nearly 400 chapters offer over 1,000 peer-led support groups across the United States, so that no one with depression or bipolar disorder needs to feel alone. The support groups are volunteer-facilitated and provide people living with depression or bipolar disorder the opportunity to find comfort and direction in a confidential and supportive setting. Participants report that DBSA support groups:

- Give you the opportunity to reach out to others and benefit from the experience of those who have “been there.”
- Motivate you to follow your treatment/wellness plan.
- Help you understand that a mood disorder does not define who you are.
- Help you rediscover strengths and humor you may have thought you had lost.
- Provide a forum for mutual acceptance, understanding and self-discovery.

Take the next step toward wellness for you or someone you love. Visit www.DBSAlliance.org/findsupport or call (800) 826-3632 to find the group nearest you. If there’s not a support group in your community, DBSA can help you start one.

If you or someone you know has thoughts of death or suicide, contact a medical professional, clergy member, loved one or friend immediately.

If you experience five or more of these symptoms for more than two weeks, or if any of these symptoms interfere with work or family activities, contact your doctor for a thorough examination. This includes a complete physical exam and a review of your family’s history of illness. Do not try to diagnose yourself. Only a health care professional can determine if you have depression.
Tell your mental health professional immediately.
Attend a local DBSA support group regularly.
Avoid drugs and alcohol.
Tell a trusted family member, friend or other support person.
Record your thoughts and feelings in a journal.
Change the stimulation in your environment.
Share talking and listening time with a friend.
Allow yourself to be exposed to light.
Create a daily planning calendar.
For help in a crisis, call the National Hopeline Network.
Regularly schedule health care appointments.
Do exercises that help you relax, focus and reduce stress.
Participate in fun, affirming and creative activities.
Regularly talk to your counselor, doctor or other health care professional.
Share talking and listening time with a friend.
Do exercises that help you relax, focus and reduce stress.
Record your thoughts and feelings in a journal.
Create a daily planning calendar.
Avoid drugs and alcohol.
Allow yourself to be exposed to light.
Improve your diet. Avoid caffeine, sugar and heavily salted foods.
Change the stimulation in your environment.
Attend a local DBSA support group regularly.

Suicide Prevention
If you are having suicidal thoughts, it is important to recognize these thoughts for what they are: expressions of a treatable medical illness. Don’t let embarrassment stand in the way of vital communication with your doctor, family and friends; take immediate action. You can take important first steps to manage these symptoms:

Tell your mental health professional immediately.
Tell a trusted family member, friend or other support person.
Regularly schedule health care appointments.
Instruct a close support provider to take your credit cards, checkbook and car keys when suicidal feelings become persistent.

Make sure guns, other weapons and old medications are not available.
Keep pictures of your favorite people visible at all times.
For help in a crisis, call the National Hopeline Network at (800) 442-HOPE.

Develop a Wellness Lifestyle
Keep the following in mind as you discover your own ways to reduce symptoms and maintain wellness:

Recognize symptoms; share them responsibly.
In the way of vital communication with your doctor, family and friends;
Seek professional help when you need it.
In memory of/in honor of (circle one)
I have enclosed my company’s matching gift form.
Please send me information on including DBSA in my will.
Please send me          donation envelopes to share.
I wish my gift to remain anonymous.
I have enclosed my company’s matching gift form.
If any questions, please contact the DBSA Helpline at (800) 442-HOPE.
Please do not mail this form.

We've been there. We can help.