

Mental Health Meltdown

By Paul Leon Samuels and Arlene Bridges Samuels

Prologue

“When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don’t throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the engineer.” —Dutch Author Corrie ten Boom

Our book features brave storytellers who share their journeys with bipolar and other mental illnesses, accompanied by stories from their friends and families. They have faced dark tunnels while living in a culture that often perceives them as those who may never see the light ahead. Our book is a traveling companion through the darkness, piercing it with the hope of reducing stigmas by adding insights through these pages. Mental illness lives in the shadows of conversation, often discussed only in whispers. The presence of bipolar, clinical depression, PTSD, and other differently wired brains traps folks into silence. Fearing rejection, shame, and stigmas affects not only those of us with a mental illness but also how we are viewed by people who do not have mental illness. Hearts and minds open when conversations take place with kindness and safety. Just as no one chooses a lifetime of physical disability, no one chooses to have a mental illness.

Stepping into the light, those with brain disorders educate others and help compel cultural changes. An equality of understanding and acceptance emerges for those with mental or physical challenges. We invite you to ride our train through this tunnel, to sit with us in conversation by reading *Mental Health Meltdown*: illuminating the voices of bipolar and other mental illnesses. These inside looks from those who share their stories anonymously xx | *Mental Health Meltdown* and others who identify themselves anticipate that voicing their wide-ranging life experiences with a mental illness will help you gain understanding about differently wired brains. The seen physical and unseen brain diseases can blend into a win-win for everyone. Thank you for traveling into our world. —Paul and Arlene

Chapter 1

Helping Others Hold On to Hope by Bravely Telling Their Stories

When Paul felt compelled in the autumn of 2023 to write our book featuring others' stories, he set up a private Facebook group called The Voices of Bipolar. That was our title at the time. We first focused only on bipolar because that is Paul's diagnosis. Since then, with suggestions from our publisher, we changed our title to Mental Health Meltdown. Reading each story submitted, it grew into a collection of varied faiths, ethnicities, and stories from Gen Z to senior citizens and all ages in between, both single and married. Their stories are quite different, yet with common themes of struggles, sorrows, and successes!

"His Diagnosis Set Off an Unexpected Nightmare!" —Michelle, 38, married, one child My husband of fifteen years was diagnosed with bipolar 1 with psychotic features in his mid-thirties. Looking back, we recognize that the symptoms were there. They just grew in severity over the years. Being his high school sweetheart, I watched over the years as his fuse became shorter. His moods were more erratic, his emotions volatile, and his grasp on reality was loosening. There were low moments—sudden exits from jobs and violent behavior that he wouldn't remember afterward. But there were also breaks and pauses of peace, which felt like bliss. Each time, I hoped it wouldn't get bad again and that we would live in that state of peace. I now know that I can attribute that to the cyclical nature of the disease. The night my husband was diagnosed was the worst night of my life. He suffered a psychotic episode and thought he was talking directly to God. His voice did not sound like his own. His eyes were black. He was suicidal and threatening towards our son and me. I am grateful for the response of our mental health police unit and credit them for keeping all three of us alive. As devastating as this event was, I am grateful for it. It lifted the fog I had been living in for so many years. I often liken my husband's progression of symptoms to the "frog in boiling water" analogy. It took a shocking event for us all to realize something was very wrong. As my husband completed an inpatient hospital stay, I had time to reflect. If you had asked me then if our marriage and family could survive, I would have told you no. But I read everything I could find on bipolar disorder. I came to understand that my lifelong best friend was under the grip of disease, and he was not himself. It gave me hope that the real him could reappear with time. Things did not get better quickly. It took over a year for me to recognize my husband again, to

see glimpses of the person that I'd married. But, with medicine, therapy (for us all), regular exercise, and good sleep, we are getting a handle on it. I know now that it's completely possible to live a good life with bipolar. Bipolar is still a factor, but it's becoming less of a main character and more like an occasional guest that we can kick out after a few days. This improvement has happened because of my husband's faithfulness in managing his bipolar. I view him taking his mood stabilizers as a daily gift, a love letter to our family. It's a blessing to help my husband live the best quality of life that he can. A lot of people with bipolar disorder need someone(s) to be their North Star, to notice as their cycle ebbs and flows. They need someone, or ideally, many someone(s), to remind them that it's all temporary when things get hard. It's an honor to be that person for someone. As for me, I appreciate and enjoy the good times more. I will never take a peaceful day for granted again! I'm also learning to weather the tough times with grace and let them remind me of this important lesson: "If you don't have your health, you don't have anything."

5.0 out of 5 stars A Guide

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The age-old adage 'health is wealth' rings true, but it's equally important to acknowledge that true wellness encompasses a healthy mind. *Mental Health Meltdown: illuminating the voice of bipolar and other mental illnesses* by Paul and Arlene Samuels offers a comprehensive exploration of bipolar disorder and effective solutions for managing its impact. This insightful manuscript serves as a vital guide for individuals navigating mental health struggles, providing valuable tools to overcome and triumph over adversity. *Mental Health Meltdown* compiles 35 plus powerful testimonies, including the authors', offering a candid look at mental health struggles and resilience. The stories help shatter stigmas and spark their confidence in managing their mental illnesses.

I am deeply impressed by the courageous and thought-provoking personal stories shared by the Samuels in this book. These relatable accounts challenge societal stereotypes, captivate readers, and offer transformative solutions, fostering a deeper understanding of mental health.

The authors have thoughtfully included a comprehensive resource section, pointing readers to trusted medical sources for continued learning. This valuable guide provides tangible next steps, enabling readers to navigate the complex medical landscape surrounding mental health.

One of the book's greatest strengths lies in the author's thoughtful tone and carefully chosen words, which strike a delicate balance between sensitivity and clarity. By avoiding jargon and technical terms, the author ensures that complex mental health concepts are accessible to all readers, regardless of their background knowledge. This approachable writing style, combined with empathetic tone, fosters a sense of safety and understanding.

As I delved into the pages of Mental Health Meltdown, I was impressed by the authors' exceptional craftsmanship. I didn't encounter any error in the book. The seamless narrative flow, clarity, and precision of language attest to the authors' dedication to quality. The overall reading experience was enhanced by the meticulous attention to detail. Professionally edited, therefore, I am giving the book 5 stars out of five stars.

I recommend this book to people facing mental health challenges, especially individuals living with Bipolar disorder. This inspiring and informative book provides essential insights, practical advice, and reassurance, helping readers overcome the darkness and find hope.

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