

King of The World Parent/Guardian STUDY GUIDE

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FROM THE PRODUCER

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Are you aware that roughly half of all lifetime mental health disorders begin to manifest themselves during the early to mid-teen years? At a time when students are learning to navigate the challenges associated with adolescence a number are confronted with the further challenge of managing a chronic mental health condition. It's widely accepted that the teen years are beset with mood swings. However, bipolar disorder is a mental health condition that causes unusual and extreme shifts in mood, energy, and activity levels that goes far beyond what most teens feel. The fear and stigma of mental illness often lead teens and their families to be embarrassed to acknowledge bipolar disorder or other mental health conditions and seek help. The objective of *King of the World* is to develop awareness and remove barriers that often may lead to individuals not seeking health and support they need to cope with their mental health challenges.

Glowmedia films are intended to destigmatize challenges that can make teens feel isolated and worry that they are different from their peers. When the adolescents in the films struggle, students viewing the films will feel less alone, less stigmatized by their personal issues. Our films emphasize the importance of getting support and learning coping strategies. Through our educational series, schools can present our films and start discussions, raising the chances that young people will feel valued despite the challenges they face.

King of the World, based on a true story, aims to reach students on their own level. With contemporary music and modern situations, the film follows high school students from different racial, ethnic and class backgrounds as they navigate a typical week in high school. In this film, we see the main character grapple with intense mood swings relating to bipolar disorder. The students are kind and respectful to one another and support each other through difficult times. Students watching *King of the World* will learn that struggling with bipolar disorder or other chronic mental illnesses can be extremely difficult, but that there is hope and support to live a productive and full life. Not only will this help students to cope with their own challenges, but it should also heighten their sensitivity and empathy to other students who may be struggling. Classroom discussions of the film can help to develop awareness, teach tolerance, and build community, as well as provide guidance when to seek help for themselves or others.

This guide includes resource materials and information about bipolar disorder, as well as guiding questions and assignments your student will experience in the classroom. It is our hope that discussion of bipolar disorder and mental health conditions may continue in the home in addition to the classroom activities. Our films and resources for other mental health challenges are available for you online. We encourage you to visit our website at glowmedia.org.

Sincerely,

Trish Glowacki
Executive Director, the glowmedia project
Executive Producer, *King of the World*
Publish Date March 2020

EPISODE SYNOPSIS

C. J., a senior in high school, was diagnosed with bipolar disorder a year ago. He has been managing well with daily medications and lifestyle modifications. After being cast in the leading role for a short school movie production, he begins to cycle into a manic phase. His friends become worried and try to help.

Guiding Questions

Accompanies the Lesson Plan

1. When the episode begins, C.J. gets a “Take Meds” reminder on his phone soon after he wakes up. He picks up a pill bottle but puts it back down again without taking his pills. He receives an additional reminder during the day but does not take his medication.
 - a. Why do you think he doesn’t take his medications?
 - b. How would you feel if you needed to take medication twice-a-day, every day? Would you want to receive repeated reminders from your phone or parents?

2. C.J.’s friend Hailey is aware that he has been diagnosed with bipolar disorder and tells him that she was worried that he “might be getting depressed again.”
 - a. Would you be embarrassed to tell your close friends that you were suffering from a mental disorder such as bipolar disorder? How would it be different from telling someone that you have asthma and need to use your inhaler?
 - b. What would be your response if your friend says to you:
 - i. “I’ve been feeling out of sorts lately and can’t seem to control my different moods. My parents think I should see a counselor.”

3. The first day of filming for the school production is going well with the cast and crew working well together. When it’s over C.J. and Nora share their thoughts and dreams of going to film school and pursuing acting as a career. C.J. stays up all night on the computer searching for a talent agent and forgets about a calculus test. He sends Hailey a text message at 5 am.
 - a. Have you ever stayed up late because you were excited about something that may happen? (new ideas about what you want to be? Making plans for college or something that you really were looking forward to doing?) What about it was the same as what CJ did? What was different?

4. When Hailey says she’s worried about him, C.J.’s feelings get hurt. He invites her to visit the set and watch the filming. That day on the film set, C.J. seems to be improvising and going “off script.” Even though it’s late and he’s missed dinner, he seems to have boundless energy. Nora and

- Hailey express concern about C.J.'s behavior and decide to visit C.J.'s parents.
- a. What unusual behaviors is C.J. exhibiting that raise concern with his friends?
 - b. Would you feel comfortable discussing a friend's behavior with his parents? Why or why not?
 - c. If you weren't close to a friend's family, who else could you discuss a friend's unusual behavior with? What would you say?
 - d. Is talking about a friend's unusual behavior to an adult "ratting him out?" What's different about this situation?
5. When Hailey and Nora meet with C. J.'s parents, they discuss his behavior and how it has changed.
 - a. What are some of the behaviors that suggest C.J. may be entering a manic phase? How is this different than just being excited?
 - b. What behaviors would C.J exhibit if he was in a depressive phase?
 6. While visiting with Tyler, C.J. thinks he's missed phone calls from a talent agent Bruce Shallows and takes off to meet him. (Question here? Maybe about Tyler knowing something is off but not knowing what to do?)
 7. C.J. drives to the city to meet Mr. Shallows. Who does he meet instead? Describe the interaction. What happens when C.J realizes the person he's speaking with is not a talent agent? What behavior draws the attention of an adult?
 8. What do you think is going on with C.J at this moment? What does the adult do to be helpful?
 9. The film shows C.J. sitting in the lobby safe with the woman, while his parents are coming to pick him up and then jumps to three weeks later with C.J. back with his friends at school. What do you think has happened during those three weeks? Where do you think C.J. has been?
 10. C.J. doesn't just "have bipolar disorder" but is "living with bipolar disorder." Does this mean he won't be able to "follow his dreams?" What does he (or anyone else) need to do with any mental disorder to manage his or her life? Make a list of life management skills that might help C. J.?
 11. While you may not know anyone with bipolar disorder, what can you learn about mental health from this film?

ADDITIONAL OR EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

ALTERNATE EXERCISE 1 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

End of Day 1:

Divide the class into two groups.

Group 1:

Compose a stream of consciousness essay, poem, or rap song lyrics describing how someone undergoing a manic episode might be thinking or feeling during a manic episode.

Group 2:

Compose a stream of consciousness essay, poem, or rap song lyrics describing how someone undergoing a manic episode might be thinking or feeling during a depressive episode.

Day 2:

Next class:

Ask for volunteers to read their essays. Explore and discuss common threads for manic episodes (risky behaviors, flight of ideas, inability to sleep) and depressive episodes (little energy, feelings of sadness, little interest in fun activities).

ALTERNATE EXERCISE 2 ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Teens, as well as many adults, are embarrassed to let people know that they are having emotional difficulties due to the stigma associated with mental illness. They may feel out of control and are embarrassed, feel it is a sign of personal weakness and are fearful of what others may think. There are many derogatory words that we use that perpetuates the stigma and shame of mental illness, such as crazy or nutty person,. (Not sure I'd use the stigma words for addiction here. What are some other common words we use that can be hurtful to someone with a mental disorder?
- How else can we describe someone who experiences mental health challenges and exhibits unusual or unexpected behavior?

- Is there a difference in telling someone that you have a chronic illness such as asthma or diabetes than a mental health disorder such as depression or bipolar disorder? Why is that?
- Is there a difference in needing to take a medication for a mental health disorder rather than using an inhaler or taking Insulin? Why or why not?

ALTERNATE EXERCISE 3 ROLE PLAYING SCENARIOS

Divide the class into small groups of at least four students. Have two students volunteer to role play the teens in the following scenarios. The other students in the group can suggest other dialogue when they are finished.

Scenario 1

What would be your response if your friend from the sports team says to you:

- “I’ve been feeling out of sorts lately and can’t seem to control my different moods. My parents think I should see a counselor.”

Scenario 2

A close friend’s behavior seems to be out-of-control lately. He’s just all over the place, texting in the middle of the night and never seems to sleep. He’s thinking of quitting school and just starting his own computer software business. After all, when he’s rich and living in a big mansion, who would care if he never finished high school! You’ve been working with him on developing a dating software application, as well as a new navigation application. He says to you...

- “Don’t be such a stick-in-the mud! Can’t you see we’ve done something no one else has been able to do? Let’s just take the day and go see James Smith. I looked online and he’s the new guy at the new Google offices that opened downtown.”
- You don’t know his family very well and have never met his parents. What are some options open to you if you’re concerned about his erratic behavior?

FACT SHEET

BIPOLAR DISORDER FACT SHEET

What is a mental illness?

Mental illness:

- Affects a person's thinking, feeling, mood or behavior
 - Examples include depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia.
- May be occasional or long-lasting (chronic)
- May affect someone's ability to relate to others and function daily.

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm>)

What is bipolar disorder?

Bipolar disorder:

- Is also known as manic-depressive illness
- Is a brain disorder that causes unusual shifts in mood, energy and activity levels
- May impact the ability to carry out day-to-day tasks.
- There are different types of bipolar disorder
 - All of them involve clear changes in mood, energy, and activity levels.
 - Moods range from periods of extremely "up," elated, and energized behavior (known as manic episodes) to very sad, "down," or hopeless periods (known as depressive episodes).
 - Less severe manic periods are known as hypomanic episodes.

(National Institute of Mental Health. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/bipolar-disorder/index.shtml>)

How does bipolar disorder differ from the usual ups and downs that teenagers may have?

Bipolar disorder is not the same as the normal ups and downs every teen goes through!

- Bipolar disorder symptoms are more powerful and extreme
 - They may include changes in sleep, energy level, and the ability to think clearly.
- They can make it hard for a child to do well in school or get along with friends and family members.
- The illness can also be dangerous. Judgment can be significantly impaired during manic episodes. Some young people with bipolar disorder try to hurt themselves or attempt suicide.
- Children and teens with bipolar disorder should get treatment. With help, they can manage their symptoms and lead successful lives.

(National Institute of Mental Health. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/bipolar-disorder-in-children-and-teens/index.shtml>)

How common is this disorder?

Data from the National Comorbidity Survey shows

- The rate of bipolar disorder is in the range of 3.1 to 7.0 percent in 15-to 29-year-olds Substance Abuse and the Mental Health Services Association.
<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Understanding-Bipolar-Disorder-Young-Adult-Get-the-Facts/sma16-5008>)

What do teens having a manic episode look like?

Teens having a manic episode may:

- Feel very happy or act silly in a way that's unusual for them and other teens their age
- Have a very short temper
- Talk really fast about a lot of different things
- Have trouble sleeping but not feel tired
- Have trouble staying focused
- Talk and think about sex more often
- Have delusions and do risky things

(National Institute of Mental Health. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/bipolar-disorder-in-children-and-teens/index.shtml>)

What do teens having a depressive episode look like?

Children and teens having a depressive episode may:

- Feel very sad
- Complain about pain a lot, such as stomachaches and headaches
- Sleep too little or too much
- Feel guilty and worthless
- Eat too little or too much
- Have little energy and no interest in fun activities
- Think about death or suicide

(National Institute of Mental Health. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/bipolar-disorder-in-children-and-teens/index.shtml>)

How is bipolar disorder treated?

There is no cure for bipolar disorder.

- Doctors often treat teens who have the illness in much the same way they treat adults.
- Treatment can help control symptoms. Steady, dependable treatment works better than treatment that starts and stops.
- Treatment options include medications, psychotherapy (talk therapy), and lifestyle management.

(National Institute of Mental Health. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/bipolar-disorder-in-children-and-teens/index.shtml>)

What is lifestyle management?

Someone with a mental illness needs to take good care of themselves by doing the following:

- Eat a healthy diet, exercise and get adequate sleep.
- Abstain from alcohol and illicit drugs.
- Take medications as prescribed
- Meet regularly with their health care provider
- Learn to avoid personal triggers such as overly stressful situations that may initiate an episode.

Bipolar Disorder

Facts versus Myths

MYTH	FACT
People with mental illness are violent	People with mental illness are no more likely to be violent than anyone else. They are more often victims of violent crime.
Mental illness is a sign of individual weakness.	Mental illness is caused by many different factors including genetics, stressful or traumatic life events, as well as some chronic health conditions.
Bipolar disorder is just normal mood swings.	Manic and depressive episodes can be debilitating and can last for months. Bipolar is a real diagnosis that has real consequences if left untreated.
Taking medications interferes with creativity	People who experience serious mood shifts often lose the ability to think clearly and to organize their thoughts and ideas. Creativity takes a certain level of calmness to discover and implement new ideas.
It's not possible to lead a normal life with bipolar disorder.	Though you may need to make certain changes in your life, you can lead a productive life, have significant relationships, and achieve your goals. Several celebrities live with bipolar disorder and openly talk about it.

Individuals with bipolar disorder can lead happy and productive lives!

Celebrities with bipolar disorder include:

- Mariah Carey (Singer)
- Bebe Rexha (Singer, Songwriter)
- Demi Lovato (Singer, Actress)
- Jane Pauley (TV Anchor & Journalist)
- Russell Brand (British Comedian & Actor)
- Winston Churchill (British Prime Minister during World War II)
- Abraham Lincoln (16th President of the U.S.)

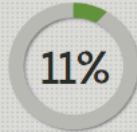
Mental Health Facts

CHILDREN & TEENS

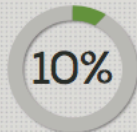
Fact: 1 in 5 children ages 13-18 have, or will have a serious mental illness.¹



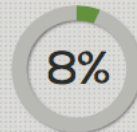
20% of youth ages 13-18 live with a mental health condition¹



11% of youth have a mood disorder¹



10% of youth have a behavior or conduct disorder¹



8% of youth have an anxiety disorder¹

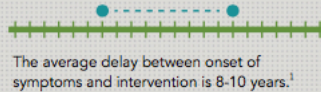
Impact



50%

50% of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14 and 75% by age 24.¹

10 yrs



37%



37% of students with a mental health condition age 14 and older drop out of school—the highest dropout rate of any disability group.¹

70%



70% of youth in state and local juvenile justice systems have a mental illness.¹

Suicide



3rd

Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death in youth ages 10 - 24.¹



90%

90% of those who died by suicide had an underlying mental illness.¹

Warning Signs

- ⚠ Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than 2 weeks (e.g., crying regularly, feeling fatigued, feeling unmotivated).
- ⚠ Severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships.
- ⚠ Trying to harm or kill oneself or making plans to do so.
- ⚠ Repeated use of drugs or alcohol.
- ⚠ Out-of-control, risk-taking behaviors that can cause harm to self or others.
- ⚠ Drastic changes in behavior, personality or sleeping habits (e.g., waking up early and acting agitated).
- ⚠ Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart, physical discomfort or fast breathing.
- ⚠ Extreme difficulty in concentrating or staying still that can lead to failure in school.
- ⚠ Not eating, throwing up or using laxatives to lose weight; significant weight loss or gain.
- ⚠ Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities like hanging out with friends or going to classes.

4 Things Parents Can Do



Talk with your pediatrician



Get a referral to a mental health specialist



Work with the school



Connect with other families

¹ This document cites statistics provided by the National Institute of Mental Health. www.nimh.nih.gov

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Text HELLO to 741741

Free, 24/7, Confidential

TO CONNECT WITH A CRISIS COUNSELOR AT CRISIS TEXT LINE

TEXT "HELLO" TO 741741

FREE, 24/7, CONFIDENTIAL.

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
 - 1-800-273-8255 (24/7) Press 1 for Veterans line