

# Can Bipolar Disorder be good for you?

## 1. Background

- Bipolar disorder (BD) is a type of psychosis with harmful outcomes as much to the suffering individual as to her closest environment (Goodwin, Jamison, 1990).
- Complex and episodic nature of BD situates suffering people on a wide spectrum of moods – from deep depression to psychotic mania.
- BD makes people far more likely to commit suicide than any other psychiatric or medical risk group, including schizophrenia (Guze, Robins, 1970).
- BD has been associated with remarkable stigma (Hayward et al., 2002; Proudfoot et al., 2009) – suffering people have to handle not only their own illness but also wounding attitudes towards them.

## 2. Objectives

- Challenge the traditional clinical harm-focused approach.
- Investigate whether there might be any positive sides to BD.
- Provide an alternative view of BD incorporating both its costs and its benefits.
- Contribute to battling the social stigma associated with BD.

## 3. Methodology

- Identify potential benefits of BD in the psychological literature and clinical reports.
- Examine first person descriptions from my clinical practice.
- Identify areas for further empirical research.

## 4. Questions

- Are there any positive characteristics of BD?
- What kind of benefits are they?
- How would appreciating benefits in BD help battle the social stigma?



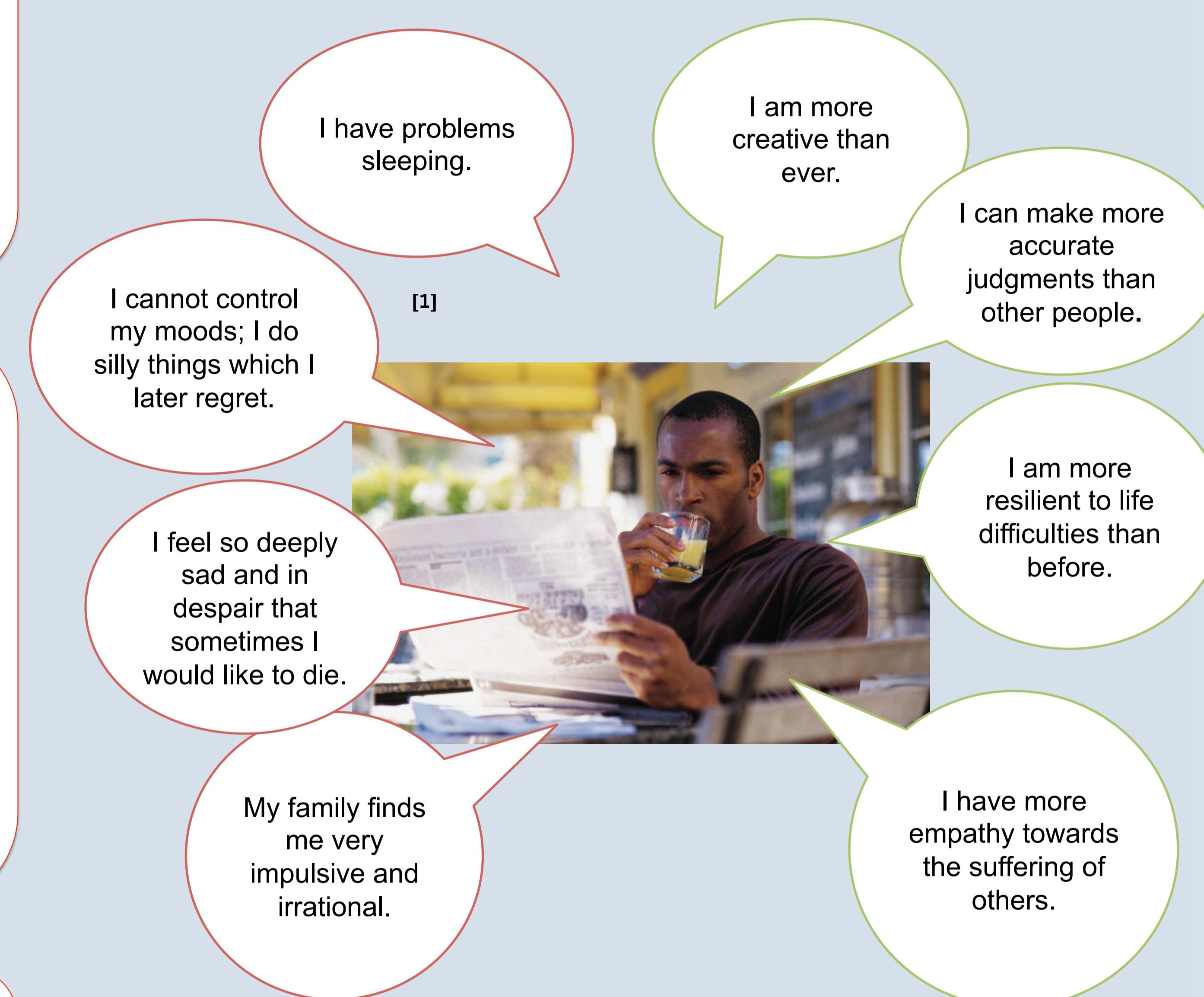
## 5. Provisional findings

**There are at least 4 cognitive and emotional benefits related to BD:**

- Enhanced creativity
- Increased accuracy of judgments ('Depressive Realism')
- Deeper empathy
- Stronger resilience

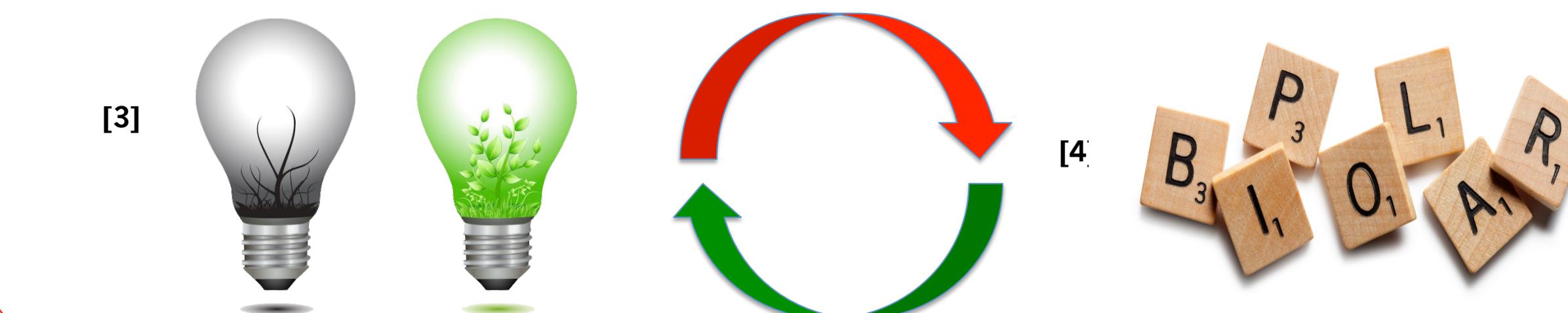
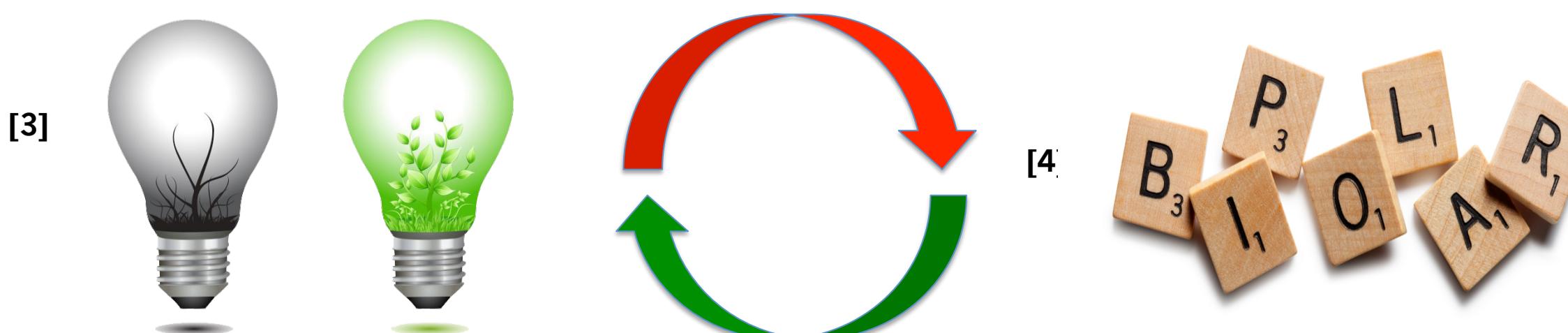
These characteristics may co-exist with harmful clinical symptoms and constitute psychological, pragmatic or epistemic benefits.

Acquired benefits are rather long distant than immediate; they may play an important role in person's recovery.



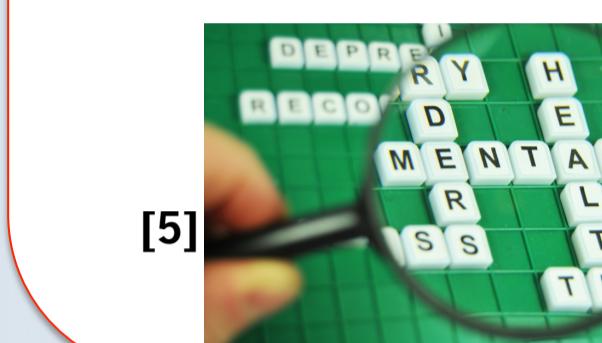
## 6. Conclusions

- To fully understand the nature of BD, both its costs and benefits ought to be taken into consideration.
- Psychological benefits found in BD relate to specific episodes from the wide manic-depressive spectrum.
- Further research is necessary to understand and appreciate the role, which benefits may play in the process and outcome of BD.

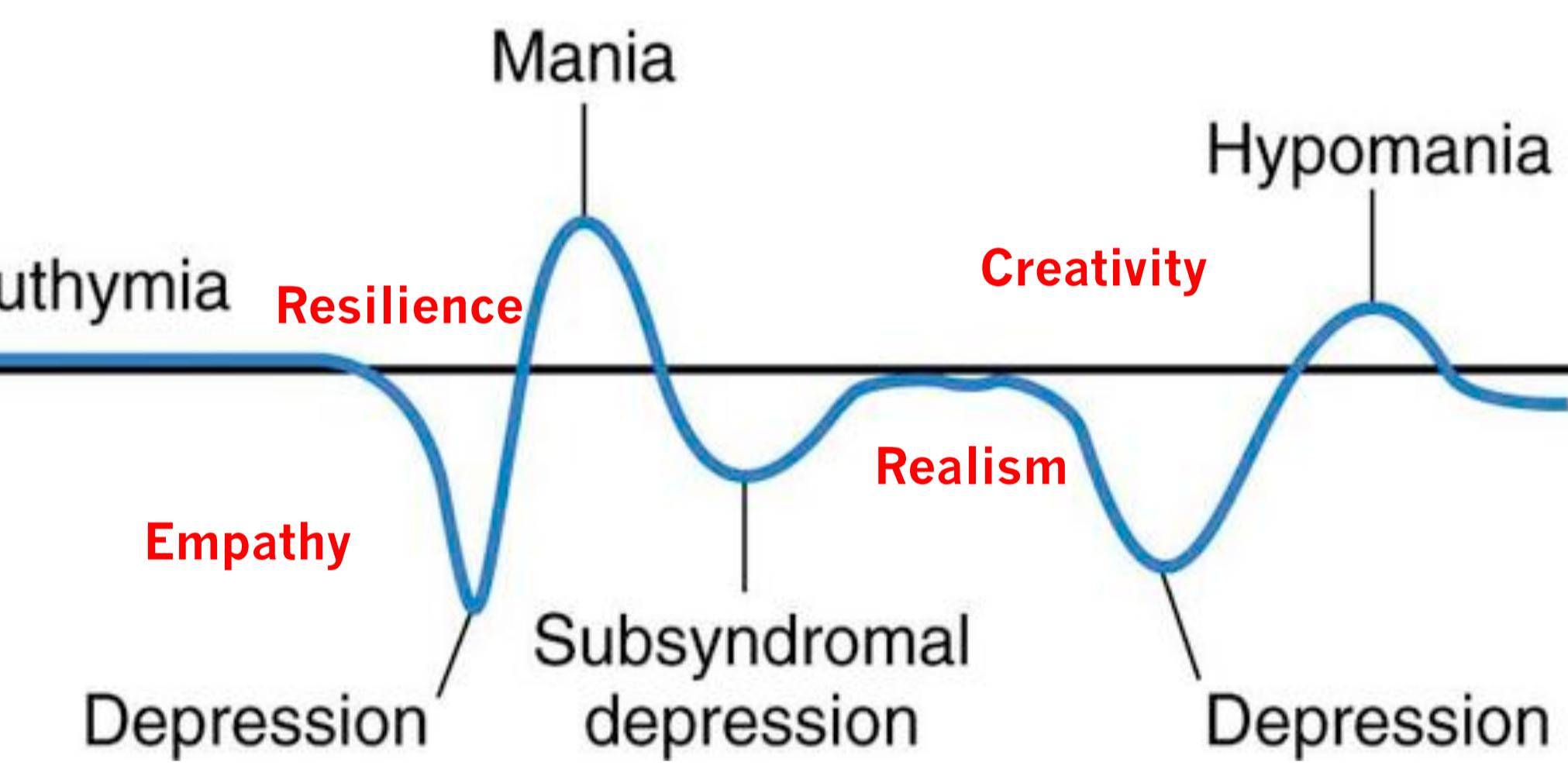


## 7. Next Steps:

- More empirical research is needed to investigate the complexity of mental disorders.
- A more in-depth analysis of psychiatric, psychological and philosophical literature is needed.



## 8.



## 9. References:

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- Proudfoot, J.G., Parker, G.B., Benoit, M., Manicavasagar, V., Smith, M., Gayed, A., (2009). **What happens after diagnosis? Understanding the experiences of patients with newly-diagnosed bipolar disorder.** *Health Expect.* 12: 120-129.

## Images:

- [1] [7] Power Point ClipArt Gallery
- [2] [5] [6] Royalty-free images from iStock and Dreamstime databases
- [3] <http://phoenixroofingteam.com/phoenix-roofing/costs-and-benefits-of-tile-foam-shingle-and-metal-roofing/>
- [4] <http://theagenda.tvo.org/sites/default/files/bipolar.jpg>

## 10. Acknowledgments

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