



The Sibling's Guide

✿ BIPOLAR

Your sibling and bipolar

A warm, plain-language guide for the brother or sister of someone who lives with big mood swings: understand the load you carry, separate the illness from the person, and know where to get help, for them and for you.

Who this is for: the brother or sister of someone who lives with big mood swings.

Cited: NICE, peer-reviewed research, and Tele-MANAS.

Languages: English, Hindi, Marathi, and Kannada.

Read it free at weave.clinic/family

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✿ WHEN THE HOUSE TILTS

When the house tilts

✿ IN SHORT

When a brother or sister lives with big mood swings, the whole family quietly reorganises around them. If your home feels tilted, that feeling is accurate. Naming it is the first step to standing up straight inside it.

When a brother or sister lives with big mood swings, the whole family quietly bends around them. Plans shift with the good weeks and the hard weeks. A lot of the family's attention flows one way, and a lot of the worry lands in the same place too. You may not remember anyone deciding this. It just happened, slowly, until it became the normal shape of home.

Somewhere in that shape, you may have slipped into a role without anyone choosing it for you. The calm one. The helper. The one who does not add problems. That role is real work, even when nobody names it. You learned to read the weather in the house and to keep yourself easy to manage, so there was one less thing for everyone to hold.

Mood swings this big are not the same as the normal ups and downs everyone has. There can be a low, heavy side and a high, sped-up side, and the swing between them is part of an illness, not a choice your sibling is making at you. Only a doctor can say what your sibling actually has. This booklet puts no label on them. It is here to help you understand what you are living through, and what you have been carrying.

 REMEMBER

If your home feels tilted, that feeling is not you being dramatic. It is accurate. Naming it plainly, even just to yourself, is the first step to standing up straight inside it.

2

✿ IT IS WIRING, NOT CHOICE

It is wiring, not choice

✿ IN SHORT

Your sibling did not pick this, and you did not cause it. It runs in the brain and in the family line. The behaviour is the illness, not a message about how much they love you.

Your sibling did not choose this, and you did not cause it. It runs in the brain and in the family line, a little like height or eyesight can run in a family. The behaviour you see is the illness, not a message about how much they love you. Once you can hold that apart, a lot of the hurt loosens.

On the low side, your sibling may sleep too much, go quiet, or lose interest in everything, even in you. That pulling-away is the illness pulling them in, not them rejecting you. On the high side, they may talk fast, sleep very little, spend or promise big, or feel unstoppable. It can look exciting or it can be frightening, and it is still the illness, not their real settled self.

figure

label

Not destiny

raised chance, not a sentence

Two sides

a heavy low and a sped-up high

Because it runs in families, you might quietly wonder about your own chances. That is a fair thing to wonder, and here is the honest answer: raised chance is not destiny. Most brothers and sisters of someone with this do not develop it, and if worry ever grows in you, a doctor can help early rather than late.



*The day I understood it was his wiring
and not a choice, I could stay angry at
the illness and still love my brother. Both
were allowed to be true.*

a sister, 24

Separating the condition from your sibling is what lets both of those live together. You can be angry at the illness for what it takes from your family, and still love the person underneath it. You do not have to pick one.

3

✿ THE LOAD YOU CARRY

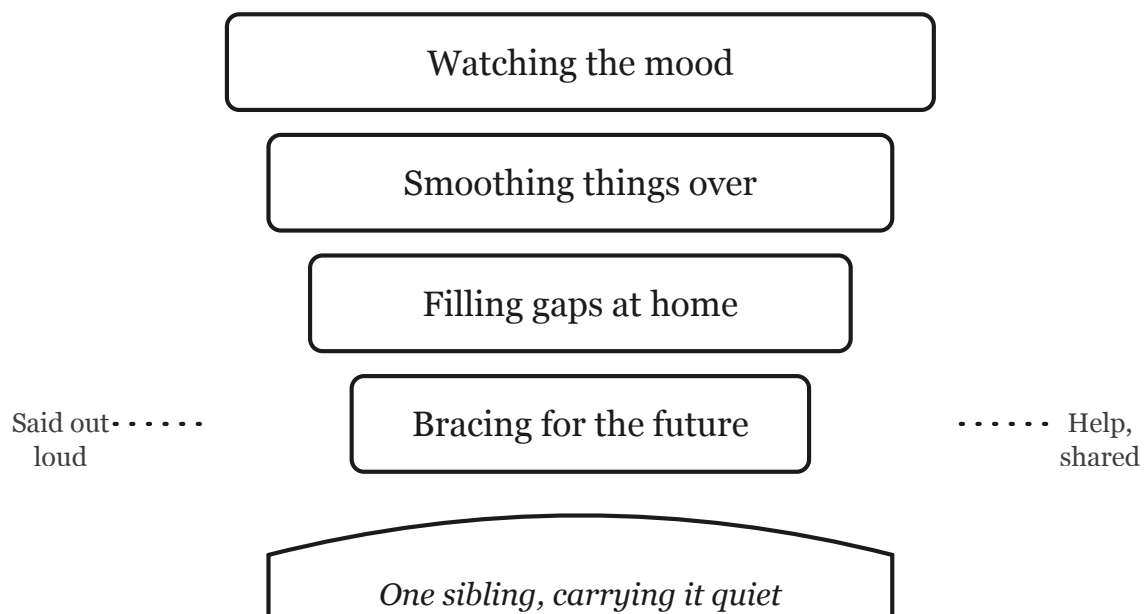
The load you carry

✿ IN SHORT

Siblings often carry a hidden load: watching the mood, smoothing things over, filling gaps, and bracing for the next hard patch. A load carried in silence gets heavier. Saying it out loud takes some of the weight off.

Siblings often carry a hidden load. You watch the mood for the first sign of a turn. You smooth things over before they get big. You fill the gaps at home that someone has to fill, and you brace, quietly, for the next hard patch. Research finds that brothers and sisters can feel this strain even more sharply than parents do. It is a real weight, and most people never see you carrying it.

You may have grown up faster than your friends, taking on jobs at home that were never meant to be yours. This has a name, and it is a real thing that happens to siblings, not you being soft. There is the comparison too: feeling like the easy one, the invisible one, the one who must never need anything so that the family has less to handle.



The hidden load a sibling carries, and the weight that lifts when it is said out loud and shared.

Watching the mood, smoothing conflict, filling the gaps: work nobody sees.

Bracing for the future is the heaviest layer, and the most silent.

One sibling should not be the whole floor the family stands on.

Said out loud, and shared, the same load gets lighter to carry.

You may also brace for something further off: who will look after your sibling later, when parents cannot, and whether that will quietly land on you. It is okay to think about this honestly rather than pretend it away. Pretending does not make it lighter. It just makes you carry it alone and in the dark.

 IN YOUR CORNER

A load carried in silence gets heavier. Saying it out loud, even to one safe person, takes some of the weight off your chest. You do not have to name it perfectly. You just have to stop carrying it completely alone.

4

✿ YOUR FEELINGS COUNT TOO

Your feelings count too

✿ IN SHORT

Love, worry, guilt, resentment, embarrassment, and grief can all live in you at the same time. None of them make you a bad sibling. They make you a person in a hard situation.

Love, worry, guilt, resentment, embarrassment, and grief can all live in you at the same time, sometimes in the same hour. None of them make you a bad sibling. They make you a person in a hard situation. Feelings are not facts to act on blindly, but they are real and worth listening to.

Guilt for being the well one, or for wanting your own life, is extremely common. Wanting a normal day is not a betrayal of your sibling. Resentment when the household bends around them again is normal too. The resentment is information about what you need, not proof that you are selfish.

All at once

love and anger can share one heart

You can love the person and resent the illness in the same moment. Both are allowed, and neither cancels the other.

There can be a quiet grief in you too: grief for the ordinary brother or sister bond you expected, or for the family you thought you would have. Grief like this is allowed, even while your sibling is still here and still loved. It is not disloyal to miss the easier version of your family that never arrived.

Pushing feelings down does not make them smaller. It just moves them somewhere harder to reach, where they leak out sideways as short temper, distance, or a tiredness you cannot explain. Naming them, even privately, is how you take their power back.

5

✿ BEING THERE WITHOUT LOSING YOURSELF

Being there without losing yourself

✿ IN SHORT

You are the sibling, not the doctor, the nurse, or the carer of last resort. You can care deeply and still not be the one holding everything together.

You are the sibling. You are not the doctor, the nurse, or the carer of last resort. You can care deeply and still not be the one holding everything together, alone, forever. Holding it all is not love. It is a fast road to burning out, and a burnt-out sibling helps no one.

Boundaries are not cruelty. Saying no to some things, or stepping back when you are drained, is exactly what lets you keep showing up over years instead of collapsing in months. You are allowed your own life: friends, studies, work, rest, your own plans. Protecting your own oxygen is not stealing from your sibling. It is what keeps you strong enough to help.

Care, do not carry it all.

You can love your sibling without becoming the person who holds every part of the illness together.

Boundaries keep you steady.

Saying no to some things is what lets you keep saying yes for years.

Steady beats winning.

Do not argue with a high mood in the moment or reason a low mood away. Stay calm, stay kind.

Share the weight.

Get other adults and a doctor involved rather than carrying it solo. Support works best when it is spread.

Support works best when it is shared, not stacked on one person. Steady routines, calm instead of argument, and one shared early-warning plan the family watches together carry more than any single person can alone. When a high mood is running or a low mood is heavy, do not try to argue or reason it away in the moment. Stay steady, stay kind, and bring in other adults and a doctor rather than facing it by yourself.

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✿ GETTING HELP, FOR THEM AND FOR YOU

Getting help, for them and for you

✿ IN SHORT

Your sibling deserves proper care, and family support genuinely changes the course. Help is also for you. You are allowed to be looked after too, not only to look after.

Your sibling deserves proper care, and family support genuinely changes how things go. When families learn about the illness and how to respond, relapses drop and the whole family, including you, does better. Getting help is not a last resort or an admission of failure. It is the thing that most reliably makes the hard parts less hard.

Watch for warning signs that need a doctor soon: not sleeping for days, risky spending or driving, talk of being invincible, or a deep low with heavy hopelessness and pulling away from everyone. If your sibling ever talks about not wanting to be alive, about hurting themselves, or starts giving away their things, take it seriously. Do not leave them alone, reduce easy access to anything they could use to harm themselves, and get help the same day.

 ONE NUMBER TO KEEP

In India you can call or text **Tele-MANAS on 14416**, any time, day or night. It is free, in your own language, and it is for you or your sibling. In an emergency, go to the nearest hospital or call for help straight away.

Help is also for you, not only for your sibling. Talking to a counsellor, a trusted adult, or a support group is not weakness, and it is not taking care away from them. You are allowed to be looked after too. A sibling who is steady and supported is far more able to keep showing up for the brother or sister they love.



*You are allowed to be looked after too,
not only to look after.*

WHERE THIS COMES FROM

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FURTHER READING

- NICE: Bipolar disorder, information for families and carers
- Tele-MANAS: National Tele Mental Health Programme, India (call or text 14416)

This guide helps you recognise and understand. It is not a diagnosis. For that, see a professional.

● Feeling like it is all too much? **Read the crisis card.** Help is one page away.