



## EPISODE 21: WHEN ALL IS OVERWHELMING

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) You Are Listening to the bipolar now podcast, episode 21.
- Speaker 2: [00:04](#) All right. Welcome to bipolar Now, the weekly podcast for doing life on your terms, not the illness. And now here's a host of your show, Mike Lardi.
- Speaker 1: [00:18](#) Hey, hey. Hey, welcome Mike here with you. I'm so excited. This week coming up, at the time of this recording, I've got a four day vacation, a beach vacation right in front of me. I'll be headed up the coast. I'm going to Santa Barbara, California. It's a, a little Mediterranean climate town. Everything there is just amazing all year round. It's beautiful. It's right on the coast. It's kind of old California, you know, quintessential, Spanish style buildings. Just amazing, breathtaking, beautiful. So I get to spend four days up there and I'm really looking forward to that. And I'm also gonna get some live video recordings for a course membership that's coming up. Be telling you about that in the next few episodes. That'll be released pretty soon. So I'm excited and I'm, I'm just can't wait to see my sister, my brother in law and spend some time, um, just relaxing in the sunshine and taking a few trips to the beach and walking around town and ah, it's just incredible.
- Speaker 1: [01:24](#) So what I love is that, you know, on this show and in the live casts that we do on every week on Saturday afternoons, we have a livecast in the podcast group, for this show is I get to talk about, you know, just opening up and, and saying, hey, you know, I've got issues, I've got problems just like you and I am trying my best to deal with them and take my own teaching and apply it. And, I just love, you know, the, the real life examples that I get to share of all the difficulties that I experience. And, and I love the amount of encouragement that I received from you guys. So thank you so much for showing up in there and for just letting me know that this makes a difference in your life. Just being able to listen to all of these issues being aired out.
- Speaker 1: [02:12](#) And I'm trying to do my best to provide workable solutions to everything that we talk about. So I just, I thank you, especially if you're in that group and if you're not in that group, maybe think about joining. It's the bipolar now podcast group on Facebook. All you have to do is pop in over there and ask to join and all approve you and get you in there and we'll get rolling together. So this week we've got a topic that is, um, kind of difficult to take apart and examine. And that topic is the topic of overwhelm. And by overwhelm, what I mean is the moments in life where you feel like you can't make it any farther. Um, these know problems arise and sometimes they gang up together on us and they cause us to feel like we don't have the power to fight back and we don't have the power to stand any longer or to take even take steps forward.

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- Speaker 1: [03:12](#) You know, let alone take steps forward. We can barely stand. So overwhelm creeps into life from all different sources. But the thing I want you to remember about overwhelm is all these sources of overwhelm. They're just their typical, they get recycled. You've heard me say this over and over again on the show. You've heard me say that bipolar is an illness that loves to recycle. It rehashes the same things over and over again. And until we get smart enough to figure it out, which just takes experience. So definitely don't beat yourself up. If you're in the middle of, you know, an overwhelming situation and you're like, you know what, I've been here before. Don't beat yourself up for that. It takes time to learn the patterns and the typical sources of stress. But you know, if they, if they gang up and pile up and they're left unattended and undealt with, then that can lead to shut down.
- Speaker 1: [04:05](#) You know what I'm talking about? Like mental illness accelerates our path to a breakdown. You know, if we're working a job, if we're trying to raise kids, if we're going to marriage, uh, if we're trying to go to school and better ourselves in some way and it's difficult, it becomes overwhelming. You know that having a mental illness accelerates your path to a breakdown. It might take someone else years if ever, to reach a breakdown with the same circumstances as you. But because of the illness and because of what it does and how it affects us, you know, it just breaks us down quicker. I like to think of life as a hike. Think of life as like a long hike through the mountains and all the seasons of life are like stretches of path along this hike from one end to the other. And we're out there with a backpack and other people are on the trail with us.
- Speaker 1: [05:02](#) And what can happen in life is that we have this backpack and we have our essentials, we have our necessities and we're on our hike. But along the way, other things wind up in our packs and sometimes we put them there and sometimes other people put them there. And I like to think of these as rocks and these rocks get added to our packs. And then of course, what happens over time, more rocks, more weight, harder trail. It's harder to keep putting one foot in front of the other. And if we don't manage our backpack, then we can accelerate a breakdown and we'll never get to where we wanted to go. So in the season of life that you're in right now, what I want to take this episode to do is to look at the rocks in your backpack and maybe get you to think about starting to subtract some rocks.
- Speaker 1: [05:58](#) So I'll tell a story. I had some serious rocks pile up. When I was at this job. I worked for a local real estate magazine. It was called homes and land and I was about 20 years old. Um, I was a recent college dropout. Um, I had a breakdown, uh, the about a year and a half before I had this job. I had a breakdown my

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freshman year in college and that was my first ever severe depression where I felt like life just wasn't worth living. And it was too painful and I just, I couldn't even think about, I couldn't even think about planning for anything worthwhile anymore. And so I had a breakdown and it caused me to drop out of school and I got this job, uh, coming, trying to get myself out of the funk and try to come back to reality again. I got a job at this homes and land magazine and the publisher, the owner of had just taken over this magazine and he was a great guy.

Speaker 1: [06:52](#) His name was bill and he hired me and he didn't, he didn't know what I'd been through and that it wasn't willing to tell him, but, um, everything started off great there. And you know, I, I was working, doing photography. I would take pictures of all the homes that were for sale and then I would input them in the computer and help build out all the advertisements and page spreads. And there was other people that were doing production there and they were getting the magazine, you know, off in print it on time every month. And so things started off great until a coworker, a staff member, left the magazine to start a competitive magazine with this magazine. So he started another real estate magazine in the same market, in the same town, and this drove bill up a wall. And so anything this guy tried to do to improve upon our magazine, Bill would fire back and say, well, we're going to do that better.

Speaker 1: [07:45](#) And so it was kind of this like just back and forth like what's he doing? What's he doing? What's he doing? We're going to do it better. And it turned into a big game of people pleasing. Now I don't know how, I mean jobs you've had where this takes place, but we had clients and it was bill's like sole mission to make sure that everybody stayed super happy all the time, loved everything about it, and felt like we were the superior magazine and they had no business taking their business to Greg. And so we started this like downward spiral of people pleasing. So what that means is, you know, for work that was on my plate, all of a sudden I was given additional things to do. And then all of a sudden we were letting advertisers, you know, lacks on their deadlines and then the, the lax to deadlines would lead to me working later hours because people were submitting their ads later.

Speaker 1: [08:39](#) And then that led to me making mistakes and then that led to people being angry. And I'd have to pick up the phone in the morning and happen, have an irate, you know, voicemail come across calling me inept and then, you know, all these late ads be me being a napped and then the magazine getting out the door, you know, barely on time with me working at two o'clock in the morning on production weeks. Like it just got crazier and crazier and crazier. And I started to get panic attacks, thinking about

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having to answer the phone in the morning, not knowing who was going to be upset about their ad and the mistakes that I had made. And so all of these rocks, you know, eventually brought me to a breaking point. Like there were so many dead rocks in my backpack that had been put there by someone else, that my backpack became unmanageable.

Speaker 1: [09:30](#) And that led me to become weak in the knees. And it finally broke me to where I couldn't hike my path anymore. You know, I'm still using this analogy of like life and the seasons that we're in as being, you know, a path on a mountain. And, and I broke down and that was my second major breakdown and it was nearly fatal. I mean, that depression that was so heart-pounding like I was so in that zone of thinking like, okay, this needs to end. I don't know how to end it. And I don't want to go there if you know what I'm talking about. But I didn't know where else to turn or what to do. And it just like, I tapped out. I literally couldn't even go to work anymore. And I spent the next three weeks holed up in my room at home because there were just so many rocks in my backpack that I, I literally, I waited way too long to manage my backpack. So, you know, think about your situation.

Speaker 1: [10:28](#) Have you ever considered like, I have weight in my backpack that doesn't belong there? I need to hike my trail. I need to get to where I want to go. I need to be a finisher. But are there rocks in your backpack? Now, rocks are different from the necessities and the necessities. They do take up space in your pack and the necessities do way something. So you're always going to have resistance. You know, the question is how many rocks are in your pack? I've been reading this book recently, I just finished it. It's called atomic habits. It's by James Clear, highly recommended. If you want to make some changes in your life, just small changes that add up to a big difference. Um, it's called atomic at it's, and it got me thinking, not necessarily about the rocks, like this is just my language for my understanding of overwhelm.

Speaker 1: [11:24](#) Right now, but James started talking about how we need some resistance in our pax so things can be easy. And then on the other side of the grass, things can be impossible. And so I went from easy at that job at the magazine, I went from easy all the way to impossible. In the course of, you know, about a year, it was really fast. What James is saying is we need a little bit of weight in our packs to feel the resistance. And what he talked about is this 4% that's been researched, and I'll try and explain this the best I can without a visual in front of you. But he said that having about 4% resistance, that means between easy and impossible on that line, if you picture online between easy at

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one side and impossible on the other side, there is challenge in the middle and that's what he calls resistance.

Speaker 1: [12:26](#) And he says there's this razor thin line of resistance where you operate the best, and that's at 4% resistance. Now how these researchers come up with that in the human psyche to be able to quantify 4% between easy and impossible. Um, I really don't know how they do that, but okay. It's just a mental picture that it's not much, you know, 4% in the scheme of things is not much. So a good challenge as far as you being able to improve yourself, being able to grow. You know, it's, it's a, it's a 4% resistance. And, and if you keep in this resistance zone, then you'll be happy and you'll be moving forward. There'll be just enough weight in your pack and you'll have all the essentials. Now of course, life is a balance between easy and impossible because sometimes we veer way into the easy and we camp out there and this is where it gets dangerous because we get bored.

Speaker 1: [13:28](#) And when we get bored, we lax in our self care and we stop managing our pacs. And then it's easy for rocks to creep in and we don't even notice it. Over time, all of a sudden there's so many rocks that were over in the impossible zone. And you don't want that because that's breakdown land, but somewhere in between is this challenge where you are feeling of healthy resistance. Like, okay, I'm doing this work. I'm doing this thing, I'm working on this part of me. I'm working on my relationship or I'm working on my parenting. Like all of these areas of life where we feel a little bit of resistance because it's just a little bit challenging 4% you know the shows up in school you, you learn at an incredible rate when you're in about the 4% resistance between what you know and what you don't know between the easy and the impossible.

Speaker 1: [14:24](#) The same thing happens at work. We should always be growing and developing at work. If you have a job that is just dead end, like there's really no way up, no way out, and even if you improve yourself, you're only going to be the most amazing cashier. Like that's, that's not living in challenge. So I would really highly encourage you to begin to look for work, look for a role, look for something you can do that allows you to stay in that improvement zone because that's where you're going to flourish. That's where time at work is going to vanish, right? Cause if it's too easy, how often are you looking at the clock? And if it feels impossible, like it is so beyond your ability, it feels impossible, then how are you looking at the clock? Then it's the same thing, right? But somewhere in the middle is just the right amount of challenge and we're always trying to dance right around that line.

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- Speaker 1: [15:18](#) As close as we can at work. Think about in love, how are you developing? How are you improving? How are you growing in your relationship with the one you love? How about raising good kids? Right? It's easy to let your kids do whatever they want. You know, I don't have kids, but I watch my friends and some of them let their kids do whatever they want and it's kind of a mess. And some of them are really good at being with their kids and pushing into the areas of their life where they need help. They need guidance, they need direction, they need love, they need encouragement. They need your presence like the, it's, it's tough to do that as a parent, but it's like they're not living an impossible land where their kids are overwhelming them all the time. So you see what I'm saying?
- Speaker 1: [16:00](#) Like in all these different areas of life, think about money, think about how hard it is to save versus spend. All right, there's a little bit of resistance. The little bit of challenge that you gotta be working with. Like I know it's going to be so hard to set aside \$100 when I'm not making that much money, but I'm going to set it aside and I'm not going to worry about the rest. I'll be taken care of. I'll get groceries, rent's going to be paid, you know, it's gonna be all right. Gas is going to be in the car, but I'm just going to put \$100 away just to start. Like that's resistance. You feel like tension and that's a good thing. Remember, it's always good to feel tension because that's where growth happens and when growth happens, amazing things can happen in your mental health.
- Speaker 1: [16:47](#) Things like you're not being overwhelmed. So I think about just the stages of growth that I've gone through. You know, when I first became mentally ill, like my whole life unraveled, I had no structures in place. I had no discipline anymore. I was completely left to the whims of my moods and I had checked out on so many things in my life. I felt irresponsible. I felt absolutely miserable because the life I knew had evaporated and what replaced it was just this overwhelming sense of sorrow and inability and irresponsibility and I just couldn't cope with it. And then I said enough and I entered into this first, you know, stage of growth where I just start to work on improving little things in my life that are going to allow me to get back on track. That's where I started to think to myself, alright, I know I need to get back to work again.
- Speaker 1: [17:47](#) I know I have to do this. And eventually after many failed attempts, I got a small job and I've told you about it before in previous episodes, you've heard me talk about the gym. You've heard Daniel and I talk about how that was such a silly job, you know, for me to take it 30 years old. But I took it and it was such an incredible propeller. It was such an accelerator of my growth and for my health that it literally moved me into the next stage

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where, yeah, I was still kind of a hot mess. I was still, you know, not really sure of myself. I was still processing all of the hurts and all of the new baggage that had come along with my most recent breakdown. But I was in a new stage where I was ready to try new things and eventually you know, you, you begin to grow and grow and grow because you stay in the land of challenge.

Speaker 1: [18:39](#) You stay in the land of resistance. It's somewhere between easy and impossible. I was not comfortable working at that gym and interacting with all those people, but it forced me to care about people again to get involved, to be on a team and then physically it was just great to have a place to come and work on all the weight that I had accumulated. You know, it was so amazing to just shed pounds month after month after month and watch my body in the mirror come back to normal. I mean that that alone was so confidence building. I had entered into a different stage. You know, people do this all the time. People like you and I who have mental illness, like it doesn't really affect their ability, you know, to do things that matter to them. I know people who have come so far in their mental health and the managing of their bipolar disorder that they were able to foster kids and to adopt.

Speaker 1: [19:37](#) I know people that have come so far that they're able to take high level jobs. A friend of mine is a professor at a university and he's just amazing. He teaches English and he has several books that he's published like just cause you have, bipolar doesn't disqualify you from doing those things. It doesn't disqualify people from hiring. You doesn't disqualify schools from admitting you. It doesn't disqualify your spouse from forgiving you. It doesn't disqualify you from reconnecting with your kids. Like all of these things that happened for so many people, they can happen for you to, you know, this is one area where I'm just different. I'm not like the other voices in mental illness that maybe you've heard from time to time or, or maybe you love and appreciate like I know I'm completely different in this area because I want you to get stronger and I want to show you the ways that I've gotten stronger and maybe in hopes that you could take away some very basic things that you could do to get started.

Speaker 1: [20:40](#) I'm different. I'm a different voice. I'd like to think that I'm actually a little more fun and because I'm fun because I'm looking for the fun factor in all of these areas of growth. Like all the things I desire to grow in and I'm encouraging you to do the same. Like it's different to be fun in this space because this space is so full with seriousness and like heaviness and oh my gosh, this mental illness is crushing me and I'll never get my life back. And it's like, no, like change that around, get stronger and

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you'll have more fun. Like th there's so many things that are just waiting for you to, to do and to experience and for you to have joy and having mental illness. You know, once you manage it well, once you start getting your backpack in order, once you start identifying the necessities and I'm here to show you what those essentials are, you know with this show, every episode I'm trying to show you one more dimension, one more piece, one more little, you know, thing that needs to go in your pack and everything else is a rock.

Speaker 1: [21:43](#) Everything else is a weight. And you don't have to accept other people's rocks, you know, getting stronger, getting more resilient, becoming more confident. Like that really comes from me saying to myself, I am a solution. I said that early on and my very first job, you know, I was washing dishes at a restaurant. As a teenager. I looked around and I said, I am the solution to reliable, hardworking help. And that's who I was there. And that's why I grew there. And that's why I came out of my shell, you know? And then I, I, I still see to this day my success is wrapped up in the fact that I'm different because I'm the solution. Like the things that I'm doing today are so different because I say I have the chance to influence. I have the ability to change somebody's mind about their situation.

Speaker 1: [22:46](#) I am the solution to all the trouble with mental health and mental illness. Like today I'm developing the trainings that I'm developing. You know, I've got a course membership on the way. I've never even done that before. I've never done online business, but I'm learning from people who have and they're showing me you can be the solution. You know, there's um, there's so much, yes, that comes with being the solution. And this is hard because the trouble with yes is that yes is easy and yes means I just say like, okay, that's cool, I'll do that. If I'm the solution, I'll take care of that. If I'm the business, like I'll do it, I'll get it done. And there's a lot of trouble with yes because yes, it's easy and yes is where the rocks get thrown into the pack. One thing I've had to concentrate on, especially over this last summer with my job loss and my income being unpredictable, working random jobs and trying to make ends meet in the midst of building out a, you know, know a training program, like all of these things, there's so much trouble and I have to really defend my best work with the ability to say no.

Speaker 1: [23:56](#) So if a rock comes my way, I'm identifying it right away and I just say no. I literally wrote on my wall on a piece of paper over my office. I said, this is the week of no. So when something comes along or someone comes along and they need something and it's outside of what's absolutely essential for me to get through this stretch of the hike, for me to get through this stretch of the path on the mountain, if it, if it doesn't get me farther down

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that path, if it doesn't help me in some way, then it's a no. So think about your own situation. How many yeses have piled up and are you able to concentrate on your best work? Are you able to concentrate on improving, on growth, on moving into the new stage of mental health? Like can so many yeses turn into rocks?

- Speaker 1: [24:52](#) You know, you've got to continually monitor for these things, monitor for the rocks, because when you go to rest, you know you have too many rocks when you can't even get a break. And this is, this is what overwhelm is. Even when you're resting, you're worrying, that's overwhelmed. You never catch a break. So you've really got to monitor for rocks. While you're on your path and you really got gotta monitor and a great way to tell is like, am I getting true rest? Am I falling to sleep? Okay? Do I feel recuperated in the morning when I go throughout my day? Am I able to take breaks and not think about all that has to be done? You know, things got out of control for me the last two months I lost my way in some things that I was working on in business and it was starting to creep into other areas of my life.
- Speaker 1: [25:49](#) It was starting to steal my joy and that's when I noticed something has to change. There are rocks in my backpack, and not only that, I'm on the trail, but I'm not even looking to where the trail is going in front of me. Now I'm at risk for getting lost. I caught it early enough, but honestly, I don't know that I would have even caught it had I not thought to reach out to my mentors. Mentors are critical people in your life. The reason they're critical is because they have a clickable and timely wisdom. Just for your situation. Applicable means it's something that you can take and use right now, right in this circumstance and timely means that it was perfectly placed in your life to get you unstuck. So I consulted my mentors and here's what they did. They helped me make some adjustments.
- Speaker 1: [26:51](#) They said, Mike, okay, this is what you're up to right now. This is where you're busy. This is what you're spending your time on, but you need to change that and go in a slightly different direction and here's that direction. And they just flat out laid it out in front of me and I was absolutely stunned because it didn't mean that I had to completely redo what I was working on. It just means that I had to come at it from a different angle. So they gave me literally a shift in my mindset to where I was thinking, okay, now I'm not at a time. I'm actually doing all right. I can change some things around. I'm going to move these pieces, I'm going to do this different. I still have just about the same amount of work, so I didn't have a ton of rocks that were in my backpack to take out, but I took out a few.

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- Speaker 1: [27:39](#) But now that my pack is a little lighter, I feel completely different because I'm facing the right direction. Again, I know where I'm going on the path and I'll just end it right here. When you have a mental illness, when mental health is a struggle and a challenge, you just have to stay in motion. So I stayed productive even though I wasn't getting things done, things done the way I wanted them to get done. Uh, and they didn't feel like they were being very effective. I was still in motion and I waited too long. Honestly, I waited too long to consult my mentors. It had been months since we talked. I was taking action on all of their wisdom, but they gave me a clickable and timely new wisdom to help me make the adjustment. And now I'm in motion and I'm facing the right direction and it feels so good to hike the hike that I was meant to hike in this season of my life. So just stay in motion and take one rock out at a time. Remember, it's up to you to make your pack manageable.
- Speaker 2: [28:50](#) Yeah,
- Speaker 1: [29:01](#) overwhelm is one of those things that will absolutely rob you of sparkle and drive and just a sensation of being healthy in mind. Your joy will just evaporate. The more Roxy put in your pack or the more rocks that are added to you, so really get good at examining the weight. Really get good at subtracting those rocks and I want you to think about not doing this alone. I mentioned this earlier in the show as I was opening, but we have a group, it's the bipolar now podcast group and it's on Facebook and that's where a bunch of your peers and myself, we're all in there and we're learning to become happy hikers. We're all on this path of life. We all know what season we're in and what stretch we have to get through. Some are going through harder times than others, but we all support one another and it's just a truly incredible place to feel like you're not alone and that you can get some real guidance on how to go forward.
- Speaker 1: [30:08](#) So I highly encourage you connect with me in that place. It's the bipolar now podcast group, and it's on Facebook. Next week is an episode that's basically the opposite of today, and that is the sensation that we can all feel when things are going well, when bipolar seems to be magically out of the picture, we can become in our minds a little bit invincible. So I'm going to spend an entire episode talking through that, what to do about it and how to keep it from ruining a good thing. So that's next episode. We will see you here. Same time, same place. Adios.
- Speaker 2: [30:53](#) [inaudible].
- Speaker 3: [30:58](#) Thanks for listening to the Bipolar Now Podcast, at [www.MikeLardi.com](http://www.MikeLardi.com).

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