



EPISODE 37: WHEN IT COMES TO ALCOHOL

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) What's up real quick, I have to give a medical disclaimer. The information in this program is not intended or implied to be a substitute for medical diagnosis, treatment, or advice. You are encouraged to confirm any information obtained from this program or through this program regarding any medical condition or any treatments with your physician. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay seeking treatment because of something you have heard or accessed through this program. You're listening to the bipolar now podcast, episode 37
- Speaker 2: [00:41](#) welcome to bipolar now, the weekly podcast for doing life on your terms, not the illness. And now here's the host of your show, Mike Lardi.
- Speaker 1: [00:53](#) Well, Hey there. Welcome to today's episode. It's Mike here with you. This show is all about how to do life and how to Uncomplicate life when there's a bipolar disorder. So we examined some piece of that with every single show. And one of my favorite things about this podcast is the excitement of meeting new people. I absolutely love it. And so today I am joined by Michael Wellington. Michael, thank you for being on the show.
- Speaker 3: [01:25](#) Mike. It is my pleasure to be on your podcast.
- Speaker 1: [01:27](#) I'm pumped on you guy. This is so exciting. Michael is a professional golfer. Yes. He's also a published author. He is a mental health activist. He is a mentor. He is the founder and the chairman of birdies for bipolar.org so major wow factor there. You guys raise awareness and funding for mental illness, right?
- Speaker 3: [01:53](#) That is correct. Everything you said is spot on.
- Speaker 1: [01:55](#) Excellent. So Hey, we talked about you being an author. This is huge. Let's just go ahead and start today's show off with the book. The book is called birdies, bogeys and bipolar disorder. And Michael, help us understand these words, birdies and bogeys where, where do those words come from?
- Speaker 3: [02:16](#) Well Mike, those are golf terms, um, for anyway, that's familiar with golf. They would know that when you score a birdie that is equal to one stroke under par, and that's what we want. We always want a lot of birdies and in the world of professional golf or even if you're just a casual golfer, but then the word bogey is a, it's not quite as exciting. It's a one N equals one stroke over par. So you want to avoid a, yeah, you want to, you want to avoid bogeys and you want to accumulate birdies and uh, the

EPIISODE 37: WHEN IT COMES TO ALCOHOL

more birdies you can accumulate, that's going to help your score be as low as possible, which is what you're looking for on a golf course.

Speaker 1: [02:52](#)

Wow. Wow. And so being a pro at golf means that you're just doing it on a whole other level. This is not like you guys, this is not like Michael is out there. Just, you know, swinging and whacking balls on a Sunday afternoon off the driving range I guess is a little bit more involved for you. Right?

Speaker 3: [03:10](#)

Yeah. I mean, it is a, an all encompassing endeavor. I mean, playing professional golf, you know, I try to tell people that, uh, I think the, the, the misinformation about professional golf is that it's a, uh, white collar game and, and I can assure you that it truly is a blue collar sport in the sense that it's a, it's a 60 to 70 hour a week job. I mean, you know, especially in today's game, you know, I, I don't play quite as much as I did, um, you know, say from 2002, uh, 2015 but, um, you know, if you're going to play at the highest level, you know, you're going to have to spend time each day, uh, at the gym, you know, lifting weights, working out, working on flexibility, working on strength, you're going to have to spend time at the golf course. You've got to spend time with the nutritionist learning, you know, what are the best foods for your body, uh, what's the best way to hydrate, which is something obviously in common with, with having bipolar disorder, you want to hydrate the best way you can. And, uh, you want to be able to find the best caddies, the best instructors, um, the best places to play, uh, when the weather is, um, cold in the winter. Like, are you going to go there a zone in the winter, you're going to go to Southern California in the winter, you're going to go to Florida in the winter. Um, so yeah, golf at the professional level is, uh, it's mind boggling how much time and effort it really takes to, uh, at a high level.

Speaker 1: [04:37](#)

Absolutely. You are an elite athlete at that point. And so playing at that level means you gotta be all in. You know, I've got a quick story before we get into yours about where this all started. I got brought out to a driving range by my buddy Austin. He's one of my lifers. So if you've listened to this show, you know that I have three lifers who are nonfamily, they're just good, good buddies and they're all, you know, just driven leaders in their own rights. And so Austin maybe six years ago took up golf and Austin and I like together we have this history of, you know, like extreme sports. So he would always push me into those things. But when he got into golf cause he had an injury that didn't allow him to snowboard anymore and he got into golf and I swear he was like, he was obsessed with taking golf to the highest level and he was like trying to work his way up the, you know, in the amateur,

EPISODE 37: WHEN IT COMES TO ALCOHOL

you know, rounds like, like a lot of what I'm hearing you describing in your book, Austin did all that stuff.

Speaker 1: [05:34](#)

And so my buddies who golf with him, all of them say like this guy is growing and improving and like doing his game, like just incrementally growing better and better and better at the game. Like growing at a rate that we've never even seen before. And so, you know, as soon as we started talking Michael, you and I got on the phone a few times, I knew you'd be one of my buddies. I just get your mentality like I have that from Austin. That's like his gift to me is giving me that sense of drive and that sense of taking yourself seriously and like doing whatever it takes to stay in the game and play at a high level. So I just appreciate that about you. I'm so excited. Uh, another buddy of mine who's a lifer is Philip. And you've heard him on episodes eight and nine and also 13.

Speaker 1: [06:21](#)

And Phillip used to be one of the course pros here in the mountains. So I've got golf surrounding me. And then when they, when they bring me out to the driving range and they, they help, you know, with my swing and everything, you know, obviously I don't own any gear. I'd never get out there. I'm not naturally, you know, gifted athletically like they are. But I'll tell you what, there's something amazing about like whacking and making that solid connection and hearing that sound as you send the ball down the fairway. It's just incredible. So I want to, I want to just let you know that I have a very, a minor understanding of the game, but I know that it is extremely difficult to get good at.

Speaker 3: [06:59](#)

Well, I mean what you're describing Mike is, is there's a certain level of addiction that comes along with golf. And I don't care if you play golf at a high level or if you're more of a beginner like yourself. You know, being outside and having your mind work in a fashion that, that makes you hit a golf ball or chip a golf ball or caught a golf ball. That's why I think golf is so great for people that struggle with mental illness specifically that people that struggle with depression because golf makes your mind work in a way that is very unique as opposed to every other sport. And the beautiful thing about it is like you just said, you can be outside. It gives you an opportunity for true recreational therapy. And some of the work that, uh, that I've done with my foundation, with birdies for bipolar that I'm most proud about is, is we get out with a lot of veterans, uh, around my hometown in st Louis, Missouri and over in Southern Illinois, close to st Louis, st Louis, um, just across the Mississippi river. And we get these veterans who all struggle with PTSD and depression out in the golf course, and it just improves their mood and it enables

EPIISODE 37: WHEN IT COMES TO ALCOHOL

them to not only enjoy the comradery of golf, uh, with each other, uh, but also to have their mind work in a new and fresh way to keeps your mind busy. And we all know that, you know, I know for me that Austin so great for me having bipolar disorder because, uh, it keeps my mind focused on something other than the disorder.

Speaker 1: [08:26](#) The focus is absolutely the critical piece there. So let's go ahead and let's just tee off. Where did your story of bipolar disorder, where did it all start for you?

Speaker 3: [08:37](#) Great question. My story began in January of 2001. I had graduated college. I had had some pretty good success in college. As a golfer. I, I had want to go, I'd want a big golf tournament. I had made the all American team. And you know, I think even before I got to college, I knew that I wanted to, uh, try and play professional golf and, and uh, you know, make an effort to, to make it to the PGA tour. And, um, so I, I've finished, um, I finished college. I stayed for four and a half years. So I actually finished in December of the year 2000. So, um, just after January 1st of 2001, I moved to Fort Myers, Florida. Uh, and I, I began, you know, practicing and working out and kind of all the things I already mentioned about, you know, trying to get myself in shape and get my game to a place where I could turn professional.

Speaker 3: [09:35](#) At that point, I was still an amateur. Um, but about three weeks into living to Fort Myers, my behavior became very erratic. I was, uh, making a lot of, kind of farfetched phone calls to friends of mine coming up with grandiose ideas like that I was going to have season tickets to the Lakers even though I had never been to Los Angeles, that I was, uh, I remember I called my mom during that time and I told her that I had cancer and I thought I had cancer, but you know, I didn't have cancer. There was no cancer anywhere near me. And I had also experienced this terrible paranoia, um, around that time where I've thought people were looking in my windows and that they were out to get me and do me in and do harm to me. And so at that particular time, um, my parents came down to Florida and [inaudible] and they brought me to a doctor down there.

Speaker 3: [10:37](#) And when they brought me in to see this doctor that this man gave me a eight and a half by 11 piece of paper that it had a list of all of the traits of a bipolar person, you know, like trouble sleeping and going on kind of odd spending sprees. And, um, just kind of all the things that you talk about so elegantly, eloquently in your podcast. Uh, and I, you know, I knew right away, like I was the lucky thing about my situation, Mike, was

EPISODE 37: WHEN IT COMES TO ALCOHOL

that I, I was never in denial that I had bipolar. I think that's a lot of a lot of people struggle with being in denial. Yeah. I mean, but I was lucky in the sense that I was an educated person. I saw this list and I looked at these, these details of the list of the doctor gave me and I thought, well, you know, I've got this, I've got this.

Speaker 3: [11:25](#)

I had all these traits and going on in my life. Yeah, exactly. So I was like, you know what, I definitely have this, but my major issue at that particular time, and it really lasted for the first five years that I live with the disorder from, uh, the beginning of 2001 all the way to 2006 was I thought, well, you know, because I was such a great athlete and in college and I was, uh, you know, had success collegiately on the golf course, but, you know, I don't need to take medication. You know, I don't, I made it through college and did well without taking medication. Why would I need to take medication? So of course that doctor prescribed me lithium and, um, my parents, uh, they, they, they just assumed that I was going to take the lithium and I of course lie to them and told them that I was going to, well, about three weeks after that diagnosis and that, uh, prescribing in my lithium happened, I, I skipped my meds the whole time.

Speaker 3: [12:24](#)

And after three weeks had passed, I had slipped into an even deeper Wilder mania. And I had kind of in what I call an accidental overdose in the sense that, you know, I think unfortunately a lot of the people that have bipolar, they experience, uh, situations with suicide. And my particular situation in my mind, it was never a suicide attempt. What I did was after, after my mania, grown to a place that was so out of control, I raced into my bathroom in my apartment in Fort Myers, Florida. And I, in my mind, I thought to myself, well, if I take two or three weeks worth of the lithium that I had been skipping, that I could somehow catch up to the place where I needed to be in order to be feeling better and have that paranoia go away. And then I was also having terrible and found me at that time, I just, I could not sleep, I could not sit still.

Speaker 3: [13:25](#)

And so I went ahead and I found that bottle of pills and I took a handful of pills. And then after I took the pills, I sat down on my bed and I thought, you know what, that was really a stupid idea. And I, uh, obviously, and that goes without saying, but I went out to my roommate who is out in the, uh, living area and I, I didn't exactly tell him what happened because I was a little frantic because I thought that, you know, I, because I took these pills, I was going to die. And he, he was smart enough to know that he needed to call a, uh, an ambulance and an ambulance got there and they got me to the Fort Myers hospital where, uh, they pumped my stomach. And luckily they got, uh, all the

EPISODE 37: WHEN IT COMES TO ALCOHOL

lithium out of my system. And you know, I, right after that I was brought a little bit North of Fort Myers, uh, to Sarasota, Florida, where I was put into my first hospital stay, um, on a mental, um, well not a mental illness, but just on a psych ward, I guess you'd say.

Speaker 3: [14:24](#) Um, and so I was there for, uh, four or five days before my dad, you know, came down to Florida and, and basically somehow talked to these people at the hospital into letting him, letting me leave with him. And, and so that was my introduction to bipolar, you know, I didn't know really what it was. I didn't know what it was capable of doing. Uh, I had, uh, I had a pretty, uh, aggressive crash course from what I was diagnosed in January of 2001. It lasted all the way to 2006. Uh, and so I pretty much had to learn the hard way.

Speaker 1: [15:01](#) Yeah. And a lot of that shows up in the book, which I actually have the book right here in front of me. And, um, uh, I'm, I'm always admiring the way you chose to lay out the cover. You know, your artists put all these different elements in there from your story, uh, from where it began to where, where it took you. And so I see, you know, we've got a stack of Benjamins here, we got some golf paraphernalia, these scorecards and things like that. There's a bunch of pills falling out of a bottle here. Is that, uh, in the lower right hand corner of the book cover, is that a, is that like a glass of whiskey?

Speaker 3: [15:36](#) Yeah, I mean I struggled with alcohol, you know, all the things on the cover of that book, which, and frankly I felt like the publisher Greenleaf book group out of Austin, Texas, they, uh, they did a really good job with that cover. They sent me about three covers to choose from. And that was easily the one I wanted the most. So yeah, there's a, there's a glass of whiskey that's on the bottom right corner of the, of the cover. And I struggled, you know, alcohol was a big catalyst for a lot of the issues that I had. Um, with my bipolar. I mean, I, I stopped drinking in 2011. I had been sober since then, but being a person who grew up in st Louis, Missouri, which is as everybody would probably know, it's the home of Budweiser. Uh, I was, you know, kinda trick from an early age into thinking that drinking was a cool thing to do.

Speaker 3: [16:31](#) And, you know, when I was in high school, even before high school, I think I started drinking when I was about 14 or 15 years old. You know, we would always kind of, uh, my friends and I, we would make our way on our bikes through different neighborhoods and, you know, swipe beer out of people's garages, you know, a six pack here, a six pack there. And because drinking was glorified in st Louis, it was something that

EPIISODE 37: WHEN IT COMES TO ALCOHOL

was viewed like it was just normal and it was okay. And it was, that's what people did. So, um, you know, in high school that's all we tried to do on the weekends was get our hands on as much beer as we could. And then, uh, by the time I went to college in mobile, Alabama, so I graduated naturally from drinking a lot of beer in high school to drinking whiskey down there in the South.

Speaker 3: [17:15](#) And, um, you know, that's, uh, that's something that, you know, Mike, if I could go back and do anything, if I could only do one thing differently with my history because of my health issues with bipolar disorder, it would be to not drink. Uh, I think that if I could have taken alcohol out of my equation from day one, I don't think I would've had, I, I certainly would've had some challenges with bipolar, but alcohol certainly exacerbated a lot of those issues and made them worse. And, uh, they made them worse the evenings that I would drink and they definitely made them worse, uh, the day after what the hangovers, you know, hangovers for. Uh, the hangover, frankly, that for hangovers are what made me stop drinking. You know, I stopped drinking, um, in October of 2011 and, and really the last straw that I had with drinking was that I went to a wedding.

Speaker 3: [18:10](#) I was actually in Florida at the time and nothing, nothing wild happened at the wedding at all. It was actually a very, very fun time. And the next day I was hung over so badly that I was really, I was in a suicidal depression and I just had had enough. I was like, you know what, I felt this feeling so many times. And the reason this feeling happens is because of alcohol. And as I'm sure you've covered many times, and I talk about this in a lot of speeches that I give and when I talked to young people about, you know, alcohol and bipolar disorder, alcohol is a natural depressant. So when you have a condition like bipolar disorder, which you know, has a large element of depression within it, that's going to make your depression even worse. And it just took me a long time to figure that out.

Speaker 3: [18:59](#) And I, you know, not only was I not real bright about it, but I was kind of stubborn and I thought it was cool to drink. And, uh, but I, you know what, I though probably one of the most, the things I'm most proud about, about getting to a healthy place is that I, I just stopped drinking cold Turkey. You know, I didn't go to a 30 day or a 60 day treatment center. I've never been, I've never gone to an AA meeting. I just thought it just, yeah, and I'm not, I'm certainly not bashing those treatment options, but I just felt like, you know, what, if I was going to get sober and keep drinking out of my life, problems from happening from drinking, I just needed to make up my mind and just stop. And luckily I

EPISODE 37: WHEN IT COMES TO ALCOHOL

did. And uh, you know, my life certainly became so much more productive when I quit drinking. I mean, I, I quit drinking and I began writing the book within, you know, a few weeks of each other and uh, then started our, our foundation, um, maybe just a year after that. So, um, taking alcohol out of the equation for me, I was just an essential move and then I'm happy that I did that.

Speaker 1: [20:11](#) Now you talk about how you launched into new projects like the book and you'd launched into this forming the foundation, getting that off the ground. Is that like a replacement technique that people talk about? Like, do you, when you discuss alcoholism with people and how to make themselves sober? Like I've, I've actually had people tell me that it's all about replacement. Like you, you used to go to the drink but now you go to something that actually is worth doing or building or you know, it's a project of some kind. It's going to take you a long time and a lot of focus, which you can't focused when you're drunk obviously, you know, like does that, does that fit your situation? Like you had a replacement?

Speaker 3: [20:54](#) Um, I, for my particular case, I don't think that was exactly, um, what my situation was. I think that however, in my research in getting health, ever since that time, I stopped drinking the replacement thing. It makes a ton of sense. You know, like, you know, I have a good friend of mine in st Louis here who, uh, I've known since high school and he was a very serious alcoholic for many years. And he actually about a couple of years ago, he was able to get sober and he replaced, uh, his time that from his drinking time in the wintertime and st Louis, it's very cold. So he replaced his drinking time with the sport of squash. And in the, in the warmer months, in the spring and the summer he replaced his drinking time with golf. So I have seen what you're talking about happened with many people, close friends of mine included. But my situation was not replaced.

Speaker 3: [21:56](#) I didn't replace my drinking with say, writing, you know, for the book. Um, the weird thing was, and I, I, I feel like I'm a little bit in the minority. However, I do think it is possible for people. I continue to go out with my friends to places where absolutely. Like I had one, I have one close friend that, yeah, I have one close friend that was actually running a bar and I would go down to his bar and this is, you know, just, uh, like a month or two after I quit drinking and I would hang out, I would eat food and we would watch bad college basketball games and, um, you know, everybody in the whole place is obviously drinking, whether it's the patrons or the bartenders or whoever. But I

EPISODE 37: WHEN IT COMES TO ALCOHOL

dunno, I just was able to kind of cut it off without any real, um, replacement.

- Speaker 3: [22:46](#) I do think a replacement is a smart thing to do. You know, if you can find another hobby to replace that, you know, some people I think will, will, uh, find fitness, you know, working out at the gym as, as, as something as for a replacement, a strategy for taking booze or drugs out of your, out of your life. Um, but I, my life kind of stayed the same except for, I added the writing of the book. And then after about a year of writing, uh, I had a good friend of mine who actually now sits on my charity board. We were just, I was, I was, I was, I finished about, I'd say 80% of the writing and we were just kicking around some ideas one night. And I said, well, what do we do now that the book's almost finished? And he said, well, we need to start, you know, an organization and you already have golf as a, as a major piece.
- Speaker 3: [23:33](#) You could have golf events that will raise awareness and raise funds for different things. And I said, yeah, that actually makes a lot of sense. So, um, you know, it was kind of an easy transition. It was really just an, it was a subtraction of drinking in addition of writing. But I don't think, you know, I don't think so. For me, no, I don't think it was that intention. No. Cause I can remember, I mean I can specifically and vividly remember being in the process of writing my book and then going out at night with friends of mine and I'd get home at no joke. I'd get home and one in one or two in the morning. And in the past when I would come home drunk, you know, I pass out or go to sleep. Right. But now when I was sober, I would write, I would, sometimes I would write and I might only write for 30 minutes when I got home right.
- Speaker 3: [24:25](#) At two in the morning. But I also might write, yeah. But I also might write for two hours. But, um, yeah, my transition into so variety was, um, was a little bit different. But when I look back on all of it now, um, you know, certainly there was things that I could have maybe done even a little bit better. But, uh, as long as I could get alcohol out of my recipe, I knew it was going to be helpful because I had had so many, like wild and crazy things happen because of alcohol adding on top of the bipolar. So, um, it was, it was essential for me to, I can't, I would guess, and I mean, you can never really totally predict this, but if I continued drinking from 2011 until now, almost the end of 2019, I got to feel like I wouldn't be here talking to you, you know?
- Speaker 3: [25:18](#) Absolutely. I just would've, I would've rated her either of the dream would have gotten out of hand right now. I wasn't a person to be clear. I wasn't a person who drank every single day.

EPIISODE 37: WHEN IT COMES TO ALCOHOL

Right. I was a binge drinking weekend guy. Like Thursday night I was gonna get drunk and Friday and Saturday night I was going to get smashed and then on Sunday I was going to be hung over and I was gonna, you know, gamble on sports all day. Um, and just feel hung over and eat pizza. And that was the other thing. Another thing that helped me kind of get to healthier places. I quit gambling. Uh, I guess I quit drinking eight years ago and I quit gambling six years ago. And so those were two, you know, big pieces for me because I don't know if you've ever gambled Mike, but wait, one of the problems with gambling is that it takes up your entire attention and your entire day. Um, cause you're trying to figure out, yeah, yeah. Like you're trying to figure out

Speaker 1: [26:14](#)

date. Yeah,

Speaker 3: [26:15](#)

exactly. Yeah, exactly. So taking those two pieces out, uh, really benefited me. Now I will lie to you, you know, life isn't quite as exciting without those things, but it's definitely healthier. There's no question.

Speaker 1: [26:30](#)

Yeah, absolutely. Well, I, I have barely explored this notion because I'm, I'm like you, I went cold Turkey. Um, it was an environmental decision when, when I got diagnosed, um, after my massive wipe out, like I got sent home, I had nowhere to live. I had no money, no job, no car, nothing. I like, I owned a couple of DVDs and some clothes in a laptop. That was my life. And so starting over from scratch, um, meant that I get to choose what goes back in. And, you know, Jose Cuervo and Jack Daniels weren't invited and like that was, but, but the reason that happened was because I was living with mom and dad, you know, am I going to stash like whiskey and mom's cupboard? Like, am I really gonna do that? And so that, you know, recovering from home probably like you said, saved me from making some foolish mistakes or even fatal mistakes because when I was getting drunk day after day after day, it like, it was a, it was a, it was a way to combat the depression because for me, alcohol, especially hard liquor triggers my mania and my mania gives me a sense of like wellbeing and power and aggression and all the things that I'm not, when I'm spending all day trying to get work done in a depressed, you know, mind, uh, from my bipolar disorder.

Speaker 1: [27:47](#)

And so when I would rush home all day long thinking about how I was going to, you know, just down, down, down some drink like that was, that came with, that was the sense of like, I know I'm going to feel up again, I'm going to feel strong, I'm going to feel like I can tell anybody anything I want. Like that was

EPISODE 37: WHEN IT COMES TO ALCOHOL

honestly, that was like the weirdest, the weirdest thing for me to look at looking back because like you said, alcohol is a depressant. And so it was hard to, um, it was hard to live with myself knowing that like I might be an alcoholic. Like I think about it when I go to the store, I look at it, I crave it. There's waves of desire that come over me. Um, but I'm like you like I can, I can go out. Like we can go to a restaurant where there's a bar, I can sit in the bar, you know, like I don't go to those places when I'm craving obviously, but like if I want to go and celebrate some milestone and there's a special drink that I've always enjoyed since, you know, since college then like, you know, I, I'm not advocating obviously on this show, I'm not advocating that you go out and drink while you're actively taking medications for bipolar disorder cause they don't mix.

Speaker 1: [28:53](#)

Like they clearly do not mix my, I can tell as I get buzzed that it's not a normal buzz, but I still like I'm not, I'm not a sober person and I don't really know what to do with that other than to just continue to keep it at arms length, never keep it in the house. You know, when I go out it's just one and done or none at all. And definitely don't go out when I'm craving. Like it's, it's a weird, um, survival technique that I've developed. And some people would say that, I'm not like, I'm sure people that go to weekly meetings would say that I'm not a true alcoholic. So I don't know. Where does that sit with you? Have you explored this?

Speaker 3: [29:31](#)

Yeah, I mean the thing that keeps jumping into my head as you're talking about your situation is that, let's be honest, isn't alcohol, bipolar itself? And what I mean by that is that, you know, if you go out at 7:00 PM with your girlfriend or your wife or your friends or whoever and you have a cocktail and then you know, things gravitate or things grow and you start gravitating towards, uh, you know, maybe a shot or two. And before you know it you've had five or six drinks in a shot or whatever the combination might be. And that gives you, like you just mentioned Mike, that manic high, you know, that buzz that we all talk about. You know, I mean, uh, that's what it does for that particular evening. And then, you know, you have a fun kind of buzzed up evening and then you go home and you go to sleep.

Speaker 3: [30:24](#)

And then the next day, what does it do? It's the depressed side. Okay. And that to me, that is bipolar. You have, you have a perfect representation of both of those details, right? You have the up, the upper of the buzz at the bar at night, and then the next day, you know, you feel terrible because you put too much alcohol in your body. My situation for the alcohol, whether I'm an alcoholic or not, I mean I probably am, I've got it all over my

EPISODE 37: WHEN IT COMES TO ALCOHOL

family. Um, you know, as I mentioned, you know, I wasn't a person that needed to have it every day. I don't know if I, I can't say if I ever necessarily craved it. Right. But I knew that I was one of those people that when I continue to drink in an evening, I wouldn't really want to stop. I wouldn't, I couldn't, I mean, most of the times I went out, I couldn't just have a beer, you know, I wanted to have, you know, back when I was in my real heyday, let's say I would want to have, I start off with a couple of beers and then I, you know, I, I in college I learned to get into like crown and Cokes and, um, you know, Jim beam and Coke being in the South and then, um, you know, shots.

Speaker 3: [31:38](#)

And then I lived in Colorado where we, over the summertime where we used to go to the sushi places, we'd have Saki bombs. So I, yeah. So I, uh, I liked, I liked those and I started liking Sapporo beer because of it. Um, so I just knew, I mean, I was, I knew enough about myself to know that, you know, I could get off the rails when I would go out at night. And especially like if maybe if I was trying to impress a girl or, you know, um, I was trying to impress the people I was with. I mean, the beer was the alcohol in general would give me, you know, beer muscles, what I like to call it. And it would inflate your ego and make you think you were tougher than you were better than you were. And you know, I, you know, I'm not gonna lie.

Speaker 3: [32:26](#)

I mean, when I was younger and I still struggle with it lately, I've been reading a Ryan Holiday's book called ego is the enemy. Um, you know, with, with bipolar being an ego driven illness and then alcohol on top of that can make an ego out of control. I mean, um, when I was younger, my ego was absolutely on the loose and it was something that at the time I had no idea about. But when I looked back on it, um, I realized that alcohol enhanced my ego being in a place that it didn't need to be. Plus on top of all that, I could play golf at a high level. So that made me think I was more important than I was. So, you know, it was all kind of all those things working together. And then you throw in the, the graphicness of something like bipolar and that just that added with alcohol is just a terrible combination. And so, you know, yeah, I mean I'm glad that I don't drink anymore.

Speaker 1: [33:29](#)

Good. Well you know, it's something you can erase from your past, but it definitely factors into your story. And before we get going today I want to circle back around to the book itself because what I've discovered, I talked to a lot of people, people messaged me online, people email me and I like, I love that so many people are encouraged by what I'm doing as sort of an impetus for them to share their story and not just to share it, but to capture it in written form. And so a book is obviously

EPISODE 37: WHEN IT COMES TO ALCOHOL

what they're looking at. And these are young people from what I can tell, like these are young people. They've, you know, they've been through the twenties mid twenties late twenties and they're looking back and they're saying, I don't want to lose that story is, you know, as frightening and up and down as it span. I want that story, you know, to, to have a purpose. And so I'm looking at young people like what would you say, Michael, what would you say to a person, listen to this show? Like how would you share with them your experience of actually sitting down and writing the book and getting published?

Speaker 3: [34:33](#)

Well, whether you get published or not, I truly believe that writing, whether that's in a journal or on a blog or in a notebook, a diary, whatever outlet you choose to write in, is a tremendous tool to end. Can be cathartic for anybody that deals, not just with bipolar, but with any situation in life that they're trying to, you know, improve or get better with, um, the, the, the book publishing process. I mean, it's tough. It's not, it's, it's, um, it's something that, um, you know, you really have to be patient and persistent and you have to, you know, be willing to understand that when you do get to a publisher, they're probably gonna take, they're gonna take away a lot of your work. Just to give you an example. So I think my book is like 220 pages or somewhere that the original, the original copy of my writing was like 400 and 430 pages or something like that.

Speaker 3: [35:46](#)

And so now granted I think that, uh, the editors at Greenleaf did a great job of, you know, cutting all the fat off of my writing. And I had some good advice from a fiction writer before I wrote my book. He said, you know, if you're going to write something, write every possible detail in every possible word you can because it's always easier to edit and take things away out of yeah. Than it is to add to it. And so when I kept that in mind, and that's why my first draft was so long, um, but I felt like the editors get a great job, but it's a, it's a serious profit. It took me, I think it only took me 10 months to write the book and then it took us a year and a half to find the right publisher. Um, and then another, I think six to eight months for the publisher to edit. And then we picked out the cover cause you've mentioned, and I, uh, I got a wonderful man from a golf world named David ferry to write the forward, which is really probably the thing that's, to me is the coolest thing about the book. David ferry. It's a,

Speaker 1: [36:56](#)

he has such a unique voice, so my gosh.

Speaker 3: [36:59](#)

Yeah. So David is a, David is a very, very gifted storyteller and he's a, he's a host on the golf channel and he does, uh,

EPISODE 37: WHEN IT COMES TO ALCOHOL

OnCourse commentary for NBC sports. And you know, I had a chance to be around him a couple of times before. Um, he wrote the forward and, uh, he, what he wrote was brilliant and funny and interesting and right on because he also lives with bipolar disorder and you know, so the process of it was really something. I mean, I always knew that I could write a little bit. I was the editor of my college newspaper and I had written for the college newspaper and my high school newspaper. So, you know, writing was always something that I could do. And then when it, when it came to talking about the golf stuff that came pretty easy cause I was telling stories that had come from my own golf, uh, you know, rounds and tournaments and things like that.

Speaker 3: [37:57](#)

And um, I had had a friend of mine, um, who encouraged me to write the book. You probably more so than I had encouraged myself because he knew he had been there as a great friend. Um, and washed my story on full. He had helped me a lot of times, you know, get to hospitals and he'd help kind of pull me out of bad places. So he knew the story and he thought it would be something that could help a lot of people. And it has, I mean, the book is something that has, has aided a lot of people with understand, not just people that have bipolar, but I think the family members and the support system of people as well. Because it tells you what you're in for, what to expect, what it's capable of, what it's, and it's, you know, I, I decided that I was going to be very raw. You know, there's, um, you know, there's a lot of things that some people might deem in the book to be embarrassing. You know, I don't, golf is embarrassed me so much that I don't, I don't think my book was ever going to embarrass me. And some of the stories, you know, cause

Speaker 1: [39:06](#)

[inaudible] factories. Yeah, yeah.

Speaker 3: [39:11](#)

Golf has golf had embarrassed me to a level that nothing else could ever embarrass me more than golf. So, uh, I was able to be candid and raw with my writing in the book and just kind of, Hey, look, tell people this is what it is. This is what it's done to me. Like this isn't the coolest thing that's ever happened to me, but this is truly what happened. And I had to, you know, figure out a way to, um, move forward and, and, you know, kind of put some of the bad situations behind me. But the, uh, the process of writing was relatively easy as far as just the writing part, that the challenge was to find a publisher. And then the other challenge was to, uh, handle the constructive criticism from the editors at the publishing house the right way. I mean, um, I don't think you can ever get any better in any walk of life without constructive criticism.

EPISODE 37: WHEN IT COMES TO ALCOHOL

- Speaker 3: [40:09](#) And even though like I was, I was like fired up because I wanted to be finished with the editing cause we could get the book out cause I wanted it to be finished with it. But when I look back on it, the public, the, uh, the editors of the publishing house handled it correctly in the sense that, Hey, we need to go, we went through it. I mean, we must've gone through true, it's five times, um, maybe five different editing sessions and just, you know, making sure everything was the way I needed to be to tell the story the right way. So, um,
- Speaker 1: [40:39](#) you're right. Hang up.
- Speaker 3: [40:41](#) Yeah, exactly. Another, another example of ego. A writing a book. The writing part is easy, but I mean, to be honest with you, Mike, I don't think, I mean a lot of people want to write a book and that's great. And I would never tell anybody not to, but I would also encourage people if they like to write, use all these other outlets today, like a blog or um, you know, a newsletter or, you know, social media, just, just a Facebook post or um, you know, a Twitter post or I'm not much into Instagram, but, um,
- Speaker 1: [41:15](#) yeah, yeah, I mean I can storytell yeah,
- Speaker 3: [41:19](#) I posted some things, some writings on Facebook, um, when in talking about some of our events and some of the things that have happened to me, uh, just shared some of this stuff. And you know, that writing can help people if you can show your story, whether it's bipolar or anything else, any other mental illness. People out there today need to know about real stories that happen to people with mental illness because it helps them understand that, Hey, I'm not alone in this back.
- Speaker 1: [41:49](#) Yeah, yeah, absolutely. So what I'm hearing you say is find some place to exercise your story, to put it down, to get creative with it, to let it, let it live somewhere outside of your mind and your memory. Because like honestly, this podcast, Michael, this podcast functions as like my journey, you know, like the things that I get to do, the, these kinds of conversations, these kinds of guests topics, people are asking me for direction, guidance, things like that. Like you'd be surprised, like I go back and listen to the show and I'm like, wow, that actually is useful. And so just the process of putting it out there and allowing yourself to be vulnerable and not worrying about your ego. Like I see nothing but like just upward potential for helping others to come to terms. Like you wouldn't believe how many people say, Oh my gosh, like I'm finally coming to terms with something that I've been shoving to the side, you know, for 10 years. You know,

EPISODE 37: WHEN IT COMES TO ALCOHOL

- Speaker 3: [42:51](#) you're uh, yeah, you're, you're exactly right. And there's, there's a couple parts to it too. So there's the first part of you or the person, whoever is of actually writing the details of a story that happened to them, right? And there's that part that's helpful and cathartic, right? That that's going to help someone. And then when you share it out there where other people can see it, you're going to end up helping those people whose eyeballs are on it. And maybe then they share it with other people that they know this would relate to. And then you'll get the feedback back knowing that what you did and what you wrote not only helped you, but it helps other people understand themselves better and not feel like they're all alone. And uh, yeah, there's nothing, there's nothing more powerful, I don't believe. And sharing a real story, um, to help people say, Hey look, I'm not perfect. This is what happened to me. You know, don't feel so bad that these things, these things are going on all over the place. And so it's, there's a, there's a step by step process and kind of a trickle down effect after you, you know, put yourself out there and like you said, be a little vulnerable and just be honest people. Uh, people love that. People love honesty.
- Speaker 1: [44:04](#) Yeah. And it comes back to us too. Well, let's just say that this is an extremely good book to read, especially for those of you, and I know who you're out there. You've talked to me before that you are athletically gifted. This is a great book for you to dive into. It's called birdies, bogeys and bipolar disorder. The subtitle is that this is the fight against mental illness on and off the green. It's by Michael Wellington. He's been my guest today. Michael, thank you so much for being here.
- Speaker 3: [44:32](#) Well, Mike, uh, you know, I can't thank you enough, uh, for having me on it. And there was one more thing I wanted to mention it. If I have a couple more minutes here. You know, I, I've only known you for about a month, but I just, I started following you because you know, of the work that you're doing, which I believe to be sensational. I mean, I don't think there is, I don't, I know there's not another, uh, bipolar warrior out there doing what you're doing to help people understand the illness and just giving people information that they can sink their teeth into. And I know sometimes that, you know, you may receive some feedback that isn't always positive, but, um, I got to tell you that what, what's your, don't ever let that feedback deter you because what you're doing absolutely is needed and necessary, um, in this world and it's going to help so many people, uh, battle certainly the depressive side of the disorder. Um, but you know, I just, I just want you to keep doing this work and continue your podcast and, uh, I think you're going to end up, you know, reaching so many people. And, and this is, this is

EPISODE 37: WHEN IT COMES TO ALCOHOL

- really, really important because bipolar disorder has the ability to make people feel isolated and you are, you know, shining a light on something that, um, frankly, uh, more people need to be doing this kind of work. So, uh, don't, uh, don't let the haters bother you. I call him the media.
- Speaker 1: [46:03](#) Yeah.
- Speaker 3: [46:04](#) Uh, have any effect on you. Um, so I just want you to make sure that you keep up this work and, um, you know, I'll be listening all the time and hopefully I can come back on and we can talk more in the future.
- Speaker 1: [46:17](#) Absolutely. This will not be the last of our conversations. All right. Well, I, I do receive those words 100%, and my heart just grows warm knowing that what I'm doing is actually starting to make an impact. And so, uh, it's, it's relationships like this, friendships, it's all these things, uh, me seeing the, just the immediate impact, like that keeps me going. And definitely, um, you guys, those of you listening, this is, this is still just the beginning. I'm only 37 episodes into this journey. So Michael, I just want to thank you for the encouragement and, we will certainly talk again, thanks for being here.
- Speaker 3: [46:54](#) Thanks for having me on, Mike.
- Speaker 1: [46:55](#) All right, bye for now. So next week on next week's show, we're going to build on some of the things that Michael and I touched on today, and we're going to take things such as alcohol and we're going to look at the different ways that we self sabotage. And all that means is that I am the person who gets in my own way most of the time. So we're gonna look at self sabotage. That's going to be next week. You definitely don't want to miss it, and I will see you here. Same time, same place. Adios.
- Speaker 4: [47:41](#) [inaudible]
- Speaker 5: [47:47](#) thanks for listening to the bipolar now podcast at [www dot mike lardi dot com](http://www.dotmikelardi.com)
- Speaker 2: [47:53](#) [inaudible].