Has Robbie Williams Increased Self-Diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder?

April 2, 2010 By David Evans

A new article in the British psychological journal, The Psychiatrist, speculates on an apparent increase in the number of people in London who have given themselves the diagnosis of bipolar disorder and posits that the trend could be due to an uptick in celebrities coming out of the closet about their mental illnesses.

Full disclosure, I haven't read the actual journal article (it costs 15 bucks), but the title is "I want to be bipolar'... a new phenomenon."

According to a press release about the article on the publisher's website, "Dr Diana Chan and Dr Lester Sireling believe the trend is linked to increased public awareness of the disorder, as well as the willingness of celebrities such as Stephen Fry, Robbie Williams and Carrie Fisher to talk about their personal experiences of mood disorders."

Given how some people respond when I tell them I have bipolar--a slight glaze of the eyes lasting a split second, which I suspect indicates a rapid internal conversation that goes something like, "Oh crap. He's crazy. I hope he doesn't freak out on me..."--I find it hard to believe that most people actually want to be bipolar.

Granted. If somebody isn't actually bipolar, it would really suck if they ended up on meds they don't need. Meds that can sometimes sap most of the zest out of your psyche and cause you to gain weight, not to speak of the more serious side effects. I doubt, however, that revelations about Robbie Williams' psych problems or rumors about Britney Spears' or Lindsay Lohan's mental status have caused busloads of young women to show up at their local psychiatrist demanding meds.

Rather, what the authors of this study apparently think is a problem--an increase in the number of people who think they might be bipolar--actually sounds like good news to me. The National Institutes of Mental Health says that they suspect the actual rate of the disorder is probably higher in the United States than their own estimate of 1 to 2 percent, and a commonly repeated stat is that it takes about ten years for the average bipolar person to get a proper diagnosis.

If getting celebs to talk about their mental illness causes people to seek psychological help, I say

bring ’em on!

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.sanemag.com/blog/robbie-williams-increased-selfdiagnosis-bipolar-disorder