

## Cannabis and Psilocybin for Bipolar Disorder

by anonymous

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I am a 35-year-old Caucasian male from North Carolina. I am an IT Network Engineer. I had issues with irritability and anger as a child and teenager. I was later diagnosed with high functioning bipolar disorder at the age of 29.

My biological father died at age 54 of heart disease and was a heavy alcoholic. My older brother is also a heavy alcoholic and has suffered numerous strokes and is also diagnosed with bi-polar disorder. I never abused alcohol like my father and brother did. I did however begin smoking Cannabis at around the age of 17. It was initially recreationally and no more than once a month.

As time went on and I graduated from high school and became more independent from my parents, I began using more often. I am a talented person, and found myself in the retail hustle earning minimum wage so I sought to somehow gain some desirable credentials but I could not afford college and full-time job simultaneously.

I joined the Navy at age 25. I gave up my Cannabis use to join the navy. Prior to this point, I had suffered extremely mild symptoms of bipolar disorder. No public outbursts or fights, only internalized frustration and intimate arguments with close friends, and was extremely rare. When I abstained from my Cannabis use to join the Military, I did suffer some initial psychological withdrawals and became extremely irritated while in boot camp. I didn't act out however, I manage to keep my composure and complete boot camp. As the 9 weeks of abstinence went by, I found the initial psychological withdrawals from Cannabis subsided to manageable levels. I reported to my command and performed 4 years of duty there. In that time I attempted suicide once, and could be classified as ideation, I made superficial cuts into my arm out of frustration.

My wife and I were in constant battles with each other, daily. My mood swings were extremely rapid, cycling weekly, sometimes daily. I sought help from Navy medical but I did not receive proper treatment, only 10 days worth of an anti-depressant and a threat that if my condition persisted I could risk a medical discharge. I kept the rest of my symptoms to myself for the entire 4 years, just wanting to complete a honorable term, which I managed to do so successfully. This resulted in an ugly divorce.

When I got out of the Navy, age 29, I promptly visited a civilian doctor to discuss my psychological symptoms. This was the first time I had an honest conversation with a doctor about my psychological issues. I was then diagnosed as bi-polar disorder and given, over time, many medications. I also began consuming cannabis again but only occasionally as I did in my younger years. The medications I ended up taking for 3 consistent years, that showed some efficacy, were:

- 800 mg Seroquel XR
- 200 mg Lamictil

- 200 mg lithium (twice/day)
- Xanax (as needed)

These combinations of medications were effective in regulating my mood better. This reduced my occurrences of mood swings and irritability. I did not like the mental cloudiness the Seroquel gave me, and I felt completely unmotivated to do anything while under its extended psychoactive effects. My close friends and family even commented on how I seemed less connected to reality. I felt less connected. It was extremely difficult for me to wake up in the mornings, and very often I experienced morning vomiting, diabetic symptoms of low blood sugar, passing out randomly, all were adverse reactions of Seroquel.

After being on this combination for 3 years, I started to research a little more into what I was putting in my body and found some very scary risky adverse effects of all the meds I was on, most notably the Seroquel. I was terrified at the risks. I wanted something different, less aggressive but still effective.

This was around the year 2007, and a lot of information regarding Cannabis relative safety and uses started hitting the mainstream internet and media. I started to realize Cannabis uses for dealing with anxiety and depression. I also stumbled on information regarding psychedelic substances and anxiety from a study John Hopkins performed. What led me to this was the research into my condition, the meds the Doctors gave me, and what part of my body they were affecting.

I realized the meds I was on worked primarily on my serotonin 5HT receptors. After digging more, I noticed the medications I was prescribe were all antagonists of the 5HT receptors while psychedelics were agonists. This interested me greatly, so I started researching further into psychedelics and homed in on psilocybin specifically, because it seems to act primarily on the 5HT2a subtype, which is also where Seroquel acted primarily, but as a “blocking” antagonist. As I read the scientific data on this, I also reviewed people’s experiences with psychedelics and I saw a consistent theme of “openness” and “anxiety reduction” and the stereo-typical hippy nice guys everywhere. This provoked some thoughts, if this substances helps these people be happy and open, then I want that too.

It stood to reason, that if the substance does has the ability to influence people into more introspection, awareness and sensitivity towards others, ultimately helping one become anxiety free and a more loving person, then it could possibly help control some of the anxiety and irritability I experience. Also because I realized that Seroquel as an antagonist was blocking the receipt of serotonin into the receptacle, and works to control my symptoms but overall deadens my senses, then maybe a drug with the opposite mechanical effect would give me a different overall effect while still addressing my symptoms. This in combination with myself slowly becoming aware of the corruption in the pharmaceutical industry and the level of dependence I would have on pharmacies and medical insurance disheartened me greatly, and I want nothing more to do with that kind of dependency on such a dangerous substance and sociopathic industry.

I decided to manufacture my own psilocybin mushrooms to see if I could control my symptoms. I stopped taking all of my medications cold turkey and began smoking more Cannabis on a daily basis. This does great for controlling my irritability, but because of prohibition, acquiring this substance for regular dosing is unreliable, risky, and expensive. Initially I did some dosage experiments and focuses on acquiring my therapeutic dose which is approx. 3.5g – 5g dried psilocybin cubensis. I dose by marinating crushed mushrooms in lemon juice in an attempt to dephosphorylate the psilocybin into psilocin. Also it's easier to eat this way. I don't know if this is a placebo effect, but using the lemon juice method eliminates almost all anxiety from my actual experience. After a therapeutic dose of mushrooms I will have an "afterglow" for approx. 6-7 days where I feel absolutely no anxiety at all. Then after the 7<sup>th</sup> day, the afterglow goes away but I remain mentally calm and able to regulate any sporadic anxiety I may experience. After 3 weeks the anxiety and irritability relieving effects that I perceive as physical will return very slowly and slightly over time, but I continue feeding from the experience mentally which gives me some amount of mental control.

Overall using psilocybin mushrooms has reduced my occurrences of uncontrollable irritability from once a month to 2-3 times a year. It is not perfect, but I am experiencing less occurrences of symptoms from my disorder by using mushrooms and cannabis than I did on prescription meds. I cannot dose consistently and attribute my occurrences of symptoms currently to prohibition making it difficult to obtain for regular administration.

In conclusion, I have to mention that the best thing to control my symptoms so far seems to be using Cannabis daily, but it's unreliability and often unavailability of product causes me problems, and will often experience severe irritability and mood swings during the "dry periods" but while I'm using daily, I experience exactly 0 symptoms. For most of my life I always assumed my irritability after running out of Cannabis was because of the drug, but it took a decade before I realized, I had these issues long before I even began using Cannabis and the symptoms persisted for 4 years severely after I had abstained for that entire period. I am still speculative that Cannabis does make the symptoms worse when I abstain, but isn't that true for any psychoactive drugs, even the prescription ones? Mushrooms do help tremendously as well, but I have not been able to use them as regularly as one would expect from a medication so my data remains extremely anecdotal and insubstantial, again from the same unreliability and availability issues of the substances. When I do have product to use, I experience great reduction in symptoms, I only wish I had regular access to them on a medicinal basis. I try to defend my choices by comparing this to an anti-depressant, but it's quickly starting to sound like a crappy excuse. "One wouldn't take people off anti-depressants cold turkey and expect them to be fine would you?"

I want to add also, that I am a highly responsible adult with no criminal record and no history of violence and no other drug use other than psychedelics and cannabis, however I used to smoke cigarettes but am currently an ex-smoker for several years now. Even when using Cannabis daily, it never demotivated me, in reality I feel more motivated while under its psychoactive effects. I have not experienced the stereo-typical laziness and lack of intelligence commonly (mistakenly) associated with Cannabis use. I am an extremely intelligent person who has self-educated myself my whole life since high school. I am currently the Senior Network Engineer in an IT dept without a single 0 hours of classroom time and 0 certifications, yet I am the most

technically capable and motivated person on my team who consistently receives recognition. I just wanted to provide some context on my lifestyle compared to my substance use.