

# Research redefines 'recovery' in bipolar disorder

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(Medical Xpress)—Researchers have developed the first accurate tool for measuring bipolar recovery which takes into account the personal experiences of people living with the disorder.

The Lancaster University-led research team worked with people with bipolar disorder and [clinicians](#) to develop the 36 item bipolar recovery questionnaire (BRQ) to reflect changing attitudes to what counts as 'recovery' in a severe mental illness such as bipolar.

The questionnaire, which was then tested by 60 people with bipolar, focusses on personal definitions of recovery rather than symptom reduction and relapse prevention. It is the first self-report tool specifically designed to capture the subjective experience of recovery in individuals with bipolar disorder.

In tests it has proved to be a reliable tool, higher BRQ recovery scores were associated with lower depression and mania scores as well as higher wellbeing, better functioning, better mental health quality of life and personal growth.

The results of the study are published this month in the [Journal of Affective Disorders](#).

Professor Steven Jones of Lancaster University's Spectrum Centre - a bipolar research centre dedicated to research which can improve the day to day lives of people living with this condition - - led the work.

He said: "The importance of personal recovery, rather than recovery as defined by an expert, in mental health is increasingly widely recognised.

"But until now there has been no measure available to assess recovery experiences in individuals with a diagnosis of [bipolar disorder](#).

"For some people recovery means getting back into the gym for the first time in five years, for others it is rebuilding [successful relationships](#) with family or getting back into paid work.

"These things are highly valued experiences and individuals with bipolar frequently report that they consider them to be a measure of recovery – even if they are accompanied by ups and downs associated with a degree of symptom relapse which in clinical terms would not be classed as [recovery](#).

"This questionnaire has the potential to be very widely used. There is nothing else like it available at the moment."

Provided by Lancaster University

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