

Latuda
(lurasidone HCl) tablets
20mg | 40mg | 60mg | 80mg | 120mg

Please see Important Safety Information,
including Boxed Warning,
and full Prescribing information.

Is **LATUDA**
right for you?

Learn More

LAT989-13 12/13

bp
MAGAZINE

Welcome to **bphope!**
.com
HOPE AND HARMONY FOR PEOPLE WITH BIPOLAR

Subscribe >

Community >

Newsletter >

Bipolar Books >

SoundOFF! >

Digital Access >

RSS (?)

SPRING FEVER Taming Seasonal **MANIA**



TACKLING BIPOLAR KEITH O'NEIL
A Super Bowl champ lays it all on the line

Returning to WORK
OLDER with BIPOLAR
LESSON PLAN: A parent's path to HOPE
TRAVEL: Keep symptoms packed away

Steering your way through DEPRESSION
TO TELL THE TRUTH? Dare to DISCLOSE
and more at bphope.com

subscribe!

bipolar in depth

write to bp

blog

forum

back issues

in this issue

Keith O'Neil: Game plan

 Tweet { 19 }  { 3 }  Share { 52 }  PRINT  EMAIL

For former NFL linebacker Keith O'Neil, bipolar was too big to tackle alone

By Chrissy Carew

Chrissy Carew is the author of *Insightful Player: Football Pros Lead a Bold Movement of Hope*.

[excerpt]

As an All-American linebacker in college and a pro with the National Football League, Keith O'Neil was a champ at bringing down the other team's players. He won a Super Bowl ring in his second season with the Indianapolis Colts, playing under celebrated coach Tony Dungy.

Blocking and tackling enormous athletes came naturally to him—but an opponent he couldn't bring down lived inside his own mind. In fact, symptoms of his undiagnosed bipolar disorder kept him out of his first game with the team in September 2005.

"I was very excited to play for Coach Dungy and be part of such a great organization," he says. "But the stress and change proved to be a very negative trigger for my mental health."

For the most part, O'Neil tried to mask his debilitating fears and other issues. But as the Colts prepared for their season opener against the Baltimore Ravens, O'Neil realized he was in no shape to play.

"I'd gone four nights without sleep and I was frantic and desperate," O'Neil recalls. "I finally went to Coach Dungy and said, 'I need help.'"

The depth of caring, empathy, and emotional generosity with which the coach responded still amazes O'Neil. Over the years, the older man has become a source of hope, a mentor, and a role model.

"The only reason I'm able to talk about what I went through is because of Coach Dungy," O'Neil says now.

At the time, O'Neil says, Dungy listened with his full attention, then pulled in the team doctor, trainer and general manager. The doctor prescribed medications to combat his anxiety and help him sleep.

O'Neil was able to join the Colts for their next game. Several weeks later, he was selected as a team captain.

Dungy's intervention was just one instance of the helping hands that kept O'Neil moving forward and, ultimately, put him on the path to wellness.

PRESSURE COOKER

Sleepless nights and anxiety were nothing new for O'Neil. He remembers lying awake as young as 8 or 9, plagued by racing thoughts and ideas of suicide. But neither was success a stranger: He was a standout linebacker at his high school in western New York and a four-year letterman at Northern Arizona University. (Football runs in the family: His father is former NFL linebacker and college coach Ed O'Neil.)

Off the field, however, he began to buckle under the pressure to do well at the college level. Looking back, he thinks being so far from home was also a factor. He began drinking heavily, partly as a coping mechanism and partly as a result of the poor impulse control typical of bipolar.

On the plus side, O'Neil made fast friends with his teammate and roommate Kaaina Keawe. In his darkest days, that friendship would become a sustaining force in his life. O'Neil now calls Keawe his spiritual mentor, and the two still talk on the phone regularly.

Starting his NFL career with the Dallas Cowboys in 2003 meant even bigger changes and bigger pressures. Playing in front of 60,000 fans brought on acute anxiety. O'Neil worried that he would forget the playbook. He was reckless in games.

When he mustered the courage to approach Coach Bill Parcells about his anxiety and sleeping problems, O'Neil says, he found empathy and encouragement.

 your cart

digital subscriber access

Find us on Facebook



BP Magazine fc


14,685 people like BP Magazine



Latuda
(lurasidone HCl) tablets
20mg | 40mg | 60mg | 80mg | 120mg

Please see Important Safety Information,
including Boxed Warning,
and full Prescribing information.

Is **LATUDA**
right for you?

Learn More

LAT989-13 12/13



Web2PDF

converted by Web2PDFConvert.com

"He sat me down and we talked for some time. We had a great discussion and he helped me through it," O'Neil recalls. "I saw a different side of him through that experience that most people don't see."

While support from his coaches in moments of crisis helped O'Neil continue playing, he never dug down into the root of his problems. When he decided to retire from the NFL in 2008, it all began to catch up with him. **[end of excerpt]**

Chrissy Carew is the author of [Insightful Player: Football Pros Lead a Bold Movement of Hope](#). She is the founder of [Insightful Player, LLC](#). Insightful Player® is a bold movement of hope dedicated to empowering youth by sharing inspiring stories and uplifting programs that feature NFL role models. [Insightful Player®](#) is an approved partner of the NFL Players Association (NFLPA). For more information visit www.insightfulplayer.com

Author: Chrissy Carew



SUBSCRIBE!
PRINT or DIGITAL

bphopeblog

the BEST bipolar BLOG

read, comment & become part of the bphope community!

[» click here «](#)

e-newsletter
all about
HOPE
Sign up today!

depression magazine

- men & depression
- workplace stress
- celebrity profiles
- Sunday night anxiety
- and much more...

[click here to learn more](#)