



Service Dog Psychological/Psychiatric Disorders

Psychological/Psychiatric Service Dogs (Bipolar, Anxiety disorders, PTSD)

Mental Illness comes in many forms with many symptoms and signs. Individuals with mood disorders such as bipolar can experience uncontrollable mood swings. These highs and lows are not a choice the individual makes but a consequence of a chemical imbalance within the brain. The mood swings may result in compulsive behavior such as gambling or drinking or may render the person bed-ridden and unable to complete daily tasks.

Medications are highly effective in treating mood disorders, however the roller coaster of emotions and social, financial and health consequences of these experiences can lead to feelings of shame, fear and paranoia. These

feelings, combined with neurologically impaired mood swings, and medication side effects often leave the sufferer isolated, anxious and depressed. Service dogs offer a unique, non-judgmental, ever present comfort. More importantly they serve as an early alert system to mood swings and emotional changes so the individual can engage in positive coping strategies.



Anxiety disorders (phobias, PTSD, panic attacks) can be extremely debilitating to the sufferer. High and persistent levels of anxiety or even panic attacks can be brought on by anything, situation or environment that the individual is sensitive to. Sometimes it may be crowds, loud sounds or emotional situations. During such episodes the individual's respirations and heart rate increase, they begin to sweat, their eyes dilate

and they may even vomit. Some anxiety disorders stem from a history of abuse, others however are "organic" which means that they are a result of a chemical and processing imbalance in the brain. These disorders respond well to medication and also have a success rate with "rescue medication" which can be taken at the onset of and episode. For the individual, the constant fear of such episodes, in public or private, and the uncertainty of when they may encounter a "trigger" can leave them isolated and feeling hopeless. Service dogs can lessen the severity of these symptoms by offering a variety of calming behaviors. The consistency of the service dog also eases fear of the unknown, because the service dog is always available to go for assist or possibly rescue medication.

Animals Deserve Better, Inc., Service Dogs for psychological and psychiatric conditions provide key coping strategies to aid in the disabling symptoms associated with Mental Illness.

Symptom	Service Dog Response
Anxiety	Deep pressure, alert to behavioral changes, grounding
Mood Swings	Alert to behavior changes, distraction
Apathy	Tactile stimulation, play, walks
Self-Mutilation	Interrupt behavior, deep calming pressure, grounding
Hypersomnia	Wake handler up
Memory Loss	Remind medications, routine prompts, find lost items
Social Withdrawal	Initiate interactions, routine encourager, social ice breaker