

ANDREA

NICKNAME: Bipolar Babe. I came up with the idea of a stigma-stomping superhero for a friend's project to create funny T-shirts about mental health, and the name stuck.

FAVORITE BOOK: *Hidden Lives: Coming Out on Mental Illness*, a powerful anthology written by people with lived experience. (I'm included, hence I might be a bit biased!)

FAVORITE FOOD: Chia seeds soaked in coconut milk overnight and eaten with berries, hemp hearts, and cinnamon.

ON TOP OF MY PLAYLIST: House music [electronic dance music] of any sort. It's my go-to when I am down, irritated, or tired.

BEST LINE ON MY RÉSUMÉ: Winner of the 2013 Mentorship Award from the U.S. National Council for Behavioral Health and 2013 Mel Cooper Citizen of the Year Award in Victoria, British Columbia.

TO DESTRESS I: Have a basket of items that help me self-soothe by stimulating my senses. For example: sweet-smelling perfume, fuzzy slippers, candles, and bubble bath.

BIGGEST ADVENTURE I'VE HAD: After my diagnosis and two serious hospitalizations, I taught English in South Korea for two years. I was the only white, English-speaking woman in a town of 100,000!

ON MY TO-DO LIST: Finishing up a memoir I'm calling *My Cursed Gift*. I plan to write for 45 minutes every morning. The littlest efforts can have such a significant impact.

I WISH I WERE BETTER AT: Being in the moment! I once lost an avocado I had cut up for a salad. I tossed it in the garbage without knowing it.

I'M INSPIRED BY: The young people in my Teens2Twenties support group and in classrooms where we do presentations.

MOST VALUABLE COPING STRATEGY: I listen to self-guided meditation videos on YouTube before I go to sleep at night, especially if I am feeling wired and stressed.

GREATEST LESSON I'VE LEARNED: I do not control anything. I can only manage the best I can and trust that all things will unravel as they are meant.

Occupation: Executive Director of the Bipolar Disorder Society of British Columbia

Age: 37 • **Diagnosis:** Bipolar I • **Year Diagnosed:** 2004