

## GUEST POST:

Interview with **Lukas Klessig**, coauthor of  
*Words With My Father, A Bipolar Journey Through Turbulent Times.*

### Could you tell us what the book is about?

I'd love to! *Words With My Father* tells the story of how bipolar disorder contributed to drama and danger in my Dad's young adulthood, how it caused and affected his activism in the Civil Rights, Peace and Conservation Movements and how he tried to find ways to prevent it from derailing his life. The lifestyle and life direction strategies he trial-and-errored can help you improve your mental well-being, especially if you have bipolar disorder, clinical depression or anxiety...but even if you don't.

### Why should readers pick it up?

Three reasons:

1. It provides treatment ideas beyond the typical therapist and meds framework we want to rely on as a cure-all. You'll probably recognize some remedies in the story but you probably haven't considered some of the other methods or different implementations of those you know.
2. It's a damn good story with a brisk pace, expert craft and entertaining but believable drama. The narrative will draw you in and place you wholly in the scene.
3. It offers insight into the societal shifts and culture of midcentury America through events and figures most are familiar with. Still, the story lets us ponder how those turbulent times affected the worldview and identity of young people becoming adults in an age of racial violence, distrust of institutions and environmental awakening. Seems to me like those issues couldn't be more relevant today.

### Intriguing. What else sets it apart?

To use one of our taglines:

"*Words With My Father* differs from some other great books dealing with bipolar disorder (and mental illness in general) in that it promotes agency over victimhood and purpose over pity." This book does not center on the travails of a *bipolar patient*. It shows how a man *with* serious bipolar disorder attempts to find his path through resilience and experimentation.

### Something that really and repeatedly struck me while reading *WWNF* was the nuanced and questioning (and sometimes critical) portrayal of your father that your "Reflections" paint? How intentionally did you include his faults into your depiction?

I'm very glad that you picked up on that duality so astutely. This story is *not* a hagiography. Stories that don't include significant tension, conflict and failure never really capture us. We don't learn from them.

My father led an imperfect life. Mine has even more flaws. Our relationship often strained under the burden of unaligned values. To quote my introduction: "(we are all) a collection of contradictions."

### Does that tension and dialogue relate to the title?

Yes, obviously the two-voice structure contains *words* with my *father*: my father's words and, in tandem, my words in reflection - sort of a beyond-the-grave dialogue. But what I think you're hinting at is that, when you "have words with" someone, that phrase signals some level of disagreement or tension. And that regularly applied to our interactions.

### Could you please tell us more about what happened in your father's life and journey with bipolar after the events which the book ends on?

Here's all I'll say about that: "Always leave the reader wanting more."

### Where can we learn more?

I'd love for people to visit <https://wordswithmyfather.com> which will show you what we've been up to and how you can connect with me. Here's, also, the Amazon page of the book for good measure: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0BXFN7B49>

### Any closing thoughts?

I do hope and believe our words will connect with many people's lives and work and enhance their understanding and outlook. You don't need a diagnosis or direct experience of bipolar disorder to benefit and grow through this story. If you do give it a go, please let others know what you think through reviews/ratings/comments.

Thank YOU.