Famous People with Mental Illness
Abraham Lincoln

The revered sixteenth President of the United States suffered from severe and incapacitating depressions that occasionally led to thoughts of suicide, as documented in numerous biographies by Carl Sandburg.
Virginia Woolf

The British Novelist who wrote *To the Lighthouse* and *Orlando* experienced the mood swings of bipolar disorder characterized by feverish periods of writing and weeks immersed in gloom. Her story is discussed in *The Dynamics of Creation* by Anthony Storr.
Lionel Aldridge

A defensive end for Vince Lombardi’s legendary Green Bay Packers of the 1960’s, Aldridge played in two Super Bowls. In the 1970’s, he suffered from schizophrenia and was homeless from two and a half years. Until his death in 1988, he gave inspirational talks on his battle against paranoid schizophrenia. His story is the story of numerous newspaper articles.
Ludwig van Beethoven
The brilliant composer experienced bipolar disorder, as documented in *The Key to Genius: Manic Depression and the Creative Life* by D. Jablow Hershman and Julian Lieb.
Eugene O’Neill

The famous playwright, author of *A Long Day’s Journey* and *Ah! Wilderness!*, suffered from clinical depression, as documented in *Eugene O’Neill* by Olivia Coolidge.
Gaetano Donizetti

The famous opera singer suffered from bipolar disorder, as documented in *Donizetti and the World Opera in Italy, Paris, and Vienna in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* by Herbert Weinstock.
Leo Tolstoy

Author of *War and Peace*, Tolstoy revealed the extent of his own mental illness in the memoir *Confession*. His experiences is also discussed in *The Dynamics of Creation* by Anthony Storr, and *The Inner World of Mental Illness: A Series of First Accounts of What It Was Like* by Bert Kaplan.
Vaslav Nijinsky

The dancers battle with schizophrenia is documented in his autobiography, *The Diary of Vaslov Nijinsky*.
John Keats

The renowned poet’s mental illness is documented in *The Dynamics of Creation* by Anthony Storr and *The Broken Brain: The Biological Revolution in Psychiatry* by Nancy Andreasen, M.D.
The playwright gave a personal account of his struggle with clinical depression in his own Memoirs. His experience is also documented in *Five O'clock Angel: Letters of Tennessee Williams to Maria St. Just, 1948-1982; The Kindness of Strangers: The Life of Tennessee Williams* by Donald Spoto, and *Tennessee: Cry of the Heart* by Dotson.
Vincent Van Gogh

The celebrated artist’s bipolar disorder is discussed in *The Key to Genius: Manic Depression and the Creative Life* by D. Jablow Hershman and Julian Lieb and *Dear Theo, The Autobiography of Van Gogh.*
Isaac Newton

The scientist’s mental illness is discussed in *The Dynamics of Creation* by Anthony Storr and the *Key to Genius: Manic Depression and the Creative Life* by D. Jablow Hershman and Julian Lieb.
John Nash
Nobel Prize Winner in mathematics, has faced a lifelong battle with schizophrenia. He was known as the “Phantom of Fine Hall” at Princeton where his reclusive, ghost like figure could be seen roaming around, leaving messages of his mathematical genus on the boards of empty classrooms. His struggle was well documented in the book "A Beautiful Mind," by Sylvia Nasar which was later made into a movie by the same name.
Ernest Hemmingway

The Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist’s suicidal depression is examined in the True Gen: An Intimate Portrait of Ernest Hemmingway by Those Who Know Him by Dennis Brian.
Sylvia Plath
The poet and novelist ended her lifelong struggle with clinical depression by taking her own life, as reported in *A Closer Look at Ariel: A Memory of Sylvia Plath* by Nancy Hunter-Steiner.
Michelangelo

The mental illness of one of the world’s greatest artistic geniuses is discussed in *The Dynamics of Creation*, by Anthony Storr.
“Had he been a stable and equable man, he could never have inspired the nation. In 1940, when all the odds were against Britain, a leader of sober judgment might well have concluded that we were finished,” wrote Anthony Storr about Churchill’s bipolar disorder in *Churchill’s Black Dog, Kafka’s Mice, and Other Phenomena of the Human Mind*. 
Vivien Leigh
The Gone with the Wind star suffered from mental illness, as documented in *Vivien Leigh: A Biography* by Ann Edwards
Patty Duke
The Academy Award-winning actress told of her bipolar disorder in her autobiography and made-for-TV movie *Call me Anna* and *A Brilliant Madness: Living with Manic-Depressive Illness*, co-authored by Gloria Hochman.
Charles Dickens

One of the greatest authors in the English language suffered from clinical depression, as documented in *The Key to Genius: Manic Depression and the Creative Life* by D. Jablow Hershman and Julian Lieb, and *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph* by Edgar Johnson.
Jazz great Thelonious Monk struggled with mental illness during much of his later career. This pianist and composer was at the forefront of the bebop movement in the 1940s and 50s. Though his highly individual style was at first unpopular, he contributed a long list of standards to the jazz repertoire, including Straight, No Chaser and 'Round Midnight. His recordings, which often coincided with erratic behavior, influenced a new generation of legends such as Miles Davis and Sonny Rollins. And in the 1960s his work at last became popular with mainstream fans, earning him the cover of Time magazine in 1964.
Jimmy Piersall
The baseball player for the Boston Red Sox who suffered from bipolar depression detailed his experience in The Truth Hurts.
Jane Pauley

NBC newsbroadcaster, since the age of 25, talks candidly about her depression and bipolar illnesses. In her new book, "Skywriting: A Life Out of the Blue." she tells about her childhood and family problems, and how she discovered her need for medication to control mood swings.
Linda Hamilton
Actress, has gone public with her diagnosis of bi-polar disorder diagnosed at a young age. Hamilton, well known for her part with Arnold Schwarzenegger in "The Terminator" movies explains how helpful medication has been for her and that she understands she will have to be on medication for the rest of her life.
Shawn Colvin

Winner of two Grammys in music, talked about her struggle with depression. Colvin has suffered from major depressive disorder for more than 20 years. "During the worst times, I shut the world out, refusing to get out of bed. Even the smallest tasks were overwhelming."
Judy Collins

Singer and songwriter, has written a book titled "Sanity and Grace: A Journey of Suicide, Survival and Strength," (2003). The book chronicles her journey as a survivor of depression after the suicide of her 33-year-old son in 1992. She states that her own spiritual life and practice have been a strength for her as she battles with her illness.
Dr. Kay Redfield Jamison
Professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, author of many books on mental illness. Dr. Jamison has bipolar illness herself and has attempted suicide. Her book "Touched With Fire," lists and describes many famous persons whose lives have been changed by bipolar illness.
Maurice Bernard
Portraying Sonny Corinthos on "General Hospital" weekdays on ABC, tells the National Mental Health Association that he suffered from bi-polar disorder for many years before he was diagnosed and given medication to bring his illness under control.
Brooke Shields talked about her disabling Post Partum Depression in her newly published book "Down Came the Rain: My Journey Through Postpartum Depression." Shields reported she first had difficulty bonding with her baby and later thought of hurting it and even killing herself. She was able to gain a significant improvement in her mood through medication.
Carrie Fisher

the child of two Hollywood stars (Debbie Reynolds and Eddie Fisher) and actress, in her own right, played Princess Leia in "Star Wars" movies. Early in the 70’s she says she started using cocaine. Her experiences with drug addiction led to her first best selling book, *Postcards From the Edge*. The book was made into a film in 1990 starring Meryl Streep. Her illness comes from her mother’s side of the family.
Ruth Graham
(daughter of Ruth and Billy Graham) writes about her many years of suffering with depression, drugs, eating disorders and thoughts of suicide in her 2004 book "In Every Pew Sits A Broken Heart."
Mike Wallace
Television Journalist suffers from depression.
Tracy Ullman
Actress suffers from Bi-polar disorder.
Theodore Roosevelt
President of the United States of America,
Roosevelt suffered from Bi-polar disorder.
References:

