

[00:00:00]

John Moe: Got a little comedy clip for you.

Clip:

Cameron Esposito (*Four Pills*): I love my brain meds, because nothing that I take do I take for the reason it was developed.

(Laughter.)

Like, it's all like, “We originally created this to treat foot fungus, but we have found that it will prevent you from killing your parents.”

(Laughter.)

When?! How'd you find that out? When did that come up in the clinical trial? What was the situation?!

John Moe: That's Cameron Esposito in a clip from her new standup special, *Four Pills*. It's on the streaming service Dropout.

Cameron is a veteran standup, actor, writer, all-around very funny comedy person. She starred in the sitcom *Take My Wife* with her then-spouse, River Butcher. She's hosted the podcast *Queery*, acted in *Brooklyn Nine Nine*, *Adventure Time*, and the ABC program *A Million Little Things*—among many other credits to her name—headlined comedy clubs all over for years. Her special, *Four Pills*, which she also directed is very funny. And it gets personal. It goes to some places you won't often hear comedians go to. The title, *Four Pills*, refers to the psychiatric meds Cameron is now on.

In the special, she opens up about her fairly recent diagnosis of bipolar disorder, which she received after checking herself into a rehab facility when things weren't going very well for her, mentally. She explores how that diagnosis connects to a lot of different elements of her life over the years. That includes her marriages and relationships, her career, her comedy. She's on a mental health journey. We all are, and it's good to listen to each other. That's one of the reasons that we gather here.

It's *Depresh Mode*. I'm John Moe. I'm glad you're here.

Transition: Spirited acoustic guitar.

John Moe: Cameron Esposito, welcome to *Depresh Mode*.

Cameron Esposito: Hi, John. I haven't seen you in a minute. How are you?

John Moe: I am doing okay. How are you doing?

Cameron Esposito: I am good, except for I think I might need to get a new laptop.

(They laugh.)

So, that's all fine.

John Moe: Okay. Well, we're here to—yeah, we're here to talk about how you're doing, because it is the subject of your new special, *Four Pills*.

Cameron Esposito: Yeah!

John Moe: Maybe the place to start is to back up to before you went into rehab and maybe the conditions and the circumstances that guided you into that place.

Cameron Esposito: Right. I was living in Vancouver at the time. I was working on a TV show. It was called *A Million Little Things*. It was like an ABC drama, which was new for me. I had never had like a major role on a network drama. So, there was like a learning curve going on, is the reason I mention that. And also, it was still COVID times. Like, to be on the show, you had to wear masks, and visors—these plastic visors that medical professionals wear—and had to be tested constantly.

And because I was there to do a job, I didn't necessarily feel safe at first to go out into Vancouver and like hang and spend some time. Although that eventually changed, 'cause I was just—I couldn't deal with living in a hotel room and then on set. And because of COVID, there were some restrictions on my coming home. It was hard to leave Canada, and it was hard to return. I say all this because I was really amped up by the job, which was really fun job. And it was so new. And then I was also pretty isolated because of just the circumstances that happened to be what was going on in the world at the time.

And... I think the way that I dealt with that—some of the ways I dealt with that were, you know, trying to just release some energy that was going on in my body. But I couldn't stop building up energy. Have you ever heard somebody describe mania to you? Have you had that experience?

John Moe: I have, but I would like to hear you describe it.

Cameron Esposito: Yeah. One of the things I read—when I was at rehab and they said, “We think you should be evaluated for bipolar disorder,” between the gap—you know, 'cause it's actually—you have to wait a second to see a psychiatrist, because there's long lines. Which, we love. *(Sarcastically.)* There should always be a long line to get mental healthcare. *(Laughs.)*

John Moe: Well, it's good that people are seeking it. Maybe if it was more available, that'd be good.

Cameron Esposito: Wouldn't that be great?! Yeah. And if it was timely, because maybe you're having a crisis? Whatever. But I did find a great psychiatrist that I was referred to by my rehab facility.

[00:05:00]

And there was not that long of a wait, just a month. Sometimes it's way longer for some people. And in that time I was reading up on what might—like, why did people at rehab see this in me? And one thing that I read that I didn't, at the time, understand—but has made so much more sense to me since—is the phrase— Or it's like a sentence, I guess. “Goes through life as if driven by a motor.”

And when I first heard that, I didn't really understand what that meant, because I had never not felt that way. But now being medicated, I'm like, “Oh yeah, that's one of the best ways to describe it.” It's like being a passenger in your own body, and your mind is so flooded by chemicals that there's like the clarity of the calm me—you know, the part of me that exists in being able to be consistent, things like that. And then there's the part of me that has a zillion ideas and a lot of energy and no need to sleep. And during mania, that part completely takes over. And it's like being on a rollercoaster, and you can't get off. Which is actually—it's sort of fun. Right? Rollercoasters are sort of fun until it's like the 75th time, and then it really does feel like a horror movie.

John Moe: Then it's just a bunch of screaming.

Cameron Esposito: Yeah! (*Laughs.*) Exactly. And like takes a toll on the body, you know?

John Moe: Yes, yes. So, how was that showing up in behavior for you? What did that look like?

Cameron Esposito: I think what it looked like— So, I've done some of my most creative work while in maybe minor manic episodes. And that's been really positive.

John Moe: Hypomanic?

Cameron Esposito: Yeah, there's a ton of people who are really successful. Like, of the mental illnesses, this is the one where people are business leaders and politicians and really successful artists, because there is a part of that hypomania that's like really helpful. And then above that is this feeling of not being able to get off a rollercoaster and that building of tension and pain in the body. I mean, I literally felt it in my chest, like right around my breastbone. And what I started to do was grab. Grab for anything that could help me.

I think prior to this, when I'd had experiences like that, I'd been around friends and family, or I'd had some access to the things that were normal in my life. And so, I sort of masked some of these extreme symptoms, because I could still dip into friendships and, you know, go for a

walk to places I knew, or over-rely on a partner to co-regulate. But alone in a hotel room I couldn't do any of those things. And so, I took up a bunch of hobbies, or I did a bunch of research, or I made a bunch of Instagram videos.

And I also started to—I've never been like a big drinker or drug user, even though in my job you can literally be paid in those things, but those are things that I reached for, just to try to regulate, absent medication or identification. It was like anything. I was grabbing for anything that could help.

John Moe: And so, you do the job; you do the job with the TV show, and then do you head back to LA when that's done with this same frame of mind still going?

Cameron Esposito: Well, I was working on this show for almost two years, so I was in this situation—

John Moe: It's a long time in a hotel by yourself.

Cameron Esposito: Yes, it is. So, I would come home sometimes, but I was also there in this situation for a long period of time. And I went to rehab sort of like midway through the second season that I was on that show, during Thanksgiving break, and really kind of flew in, went to rehab the following day, and then basically went straight back to set from the airport. Because I wanted to complete my job. I was really happy to be there, and also I was contracted to complete my job. So, it was a twofold thing.

[00:10:00]

Wanted to be there and needed to be there.

John Moe: I want to get into what happened in rehab in a minute, but tell me about that decision that you made to go straight to rehab from the time you landed in Los Angeles. Like, what prompted that?

Cameron Esposito: Yeah, some of this is like kind of a spoiler for *Four Pills*. But hey, it's just the truth. I got home from Vancouver, and my wife had moved out of our house. This was one of my trips home, and I think what I identified is—'cause she had been telling me she was scared because of the decisions I was reporting making to her, like flying in small planes or like swimming in the open ocean and then doing drugs. Like, just things that were actually dangerous. And she, from a self-preservation perspective, didn't feel like she could be around that. Because I also was having a, you know, intense time regulating my mood. So, she would tell me she was worried, and I really didn't understand where she was coming from, and it would make me feel very defensive.

And so, I think she was also on the rollercoaster with me and just needed some space. And for me, I guess what I'll say is that that moment broke through. I don't particularly know why. I mean, I love my wife, like to the end of the world, to the end of the earth. And also, I don't particularly know why that is the thing that made the difference, you know? Because it's like it could be anything, or it could be nothing. Right? I mean, I think maybe what I realized is,

“Oh, I'm gonna lose my whole life.” Because all of the dreams that I had were related to, you know, building a life with her and having our friends and my friends and having stability in Los Angeles. And I think it just really shed light on the fact that I had to choose, you know, which life I wanted.

John Moe: So, you go into the facility. What do you say?

Cameron Esposito: I said that I didn't know what was going on, but that I knew I needed help. And the place that I went supports folks who are dealing with addiction, active addiction, and it also supports folks who are dealing with mental health crises. So, I didn't really need to say more than that. And they had a space available. And so, I went the next day, which was awesome actually. I'm so grateful. And you know, kind of spent that day—like, I got home in the morning, and I called my insurance, called my therapist, called Comedy Gives Back—this amazing organization that folks should donate to that provides a safety net for comics. Because we might not have that. You know, we don't have like an HR department. And so, I called those folks, and I got myself set up. And then, yeah, they picked me up to go to rehab the next day.

Transition: Spirited acoustic guitar.

John Moe: Coming up, Cameron checks into an inpatient facility. What happens next?

Transition: Gentle acoustic guitar.

John Moe: Back with comedian and actor Cameron Esposito. When we left off, she had checked into a rehab facility for her mental health.

And so, then you're in rehab, and then what happens? What do you find out? What experiences do you go through? What happens?

Cameron Esposito: Well. I gotta say, rehab is kind of awesome. (*Chuckling.*) Have you had the chance to go, John?

John Moe: I have not!

Cameron Esposito: Honestly, rehab is awesome. I really will say that I didn't know what to expect. And the main thing in my experience is that like the whole point is to try to calm you down so that your body can reregulate, as you might be going through withdrawal, or you might be ramping onto meds for the first time, whatever it is. The point is for folks to provide a supportive environment, so that you don't—basically, so you don't freak out. And so, what that looks like is, yeah, like therapeutic support. They take your phone, and you have like minimal items with you. You know, you have like a few clothes, a few like items of clothing. You have like minimal toiletries and some of that is—and everything is—you know, there's stuff that you can't bring in, because it might have alcohol in it, or like hair product, things like that.

[00:15:00]

So, you're really in a pared down situation, and there's a schedule. Nobody's banging down your door to make sure that you go to the schedule—at least at my rehab facility—but people went to almost all the sessions. And they are everything from like music therapy to horse therapy to mental health classes, almost—and addiction classes to understand biochemistry, so there's like an understanding of what's going on. And then individualized therapeutic support.

I was so lucky I got to go to therapy with actually the person who ran the rehab facility. And she was pretty great. But I also had some other therapists that supported some more specific subsets of why I was there. Like, she was a generalized therapist. And I still see somebody that I met while I was there, which is really amazing, for some more specific support.

John Moe: And when you're there, are you thinking, “Is this a substance use disorder? Is this—?” Were you thinking it could be bipolar disorder? Were you—?

Cameron Esposito: (*Laughs.*) No, I basically had no idea what bipolar disorder was. What I will say is that I was like, “I do not even do substances!” But then I just definitely failed a drug test after that.

(*They laugh.*)

So, sometimes you find things out about yourself. But that really isn't— There's something called comorbidity. And that means that folks who might have one thing have a tendency to do something else. And so, what I'll say is that substances alone are not my issue. Like, in a space where I feel calm, I don't have that craving or that allergy that people talk about in, you know, 12 Step Recovery or other frameworks for substance addiction.

But I will say that it is a symptom for me. You know, there's like a set of symptoms to watch out for that indicate a mental state. And some of them are behaviors—like for instance, using drugs and alcohol, which does tend to make mania worse. Because you make riskier and riskier choices when it's like you already have— Part of mania is having an inability to predict long-term consequences and lowered impulse control. And so, then obviously you're drinking a bunch of tequila that also does those things. And yeah. But you know, there's other symptoms too that have nothing to do with something like that. You know, like for instance, dilated pupils or quickened speech or, you know, a flight of ideas. And so, for me it's more like—you know—I avoid drugs and alcohol, because I understand them as a symptom. Does that make sense?

John Moe: Yeah. Yeah. So, then how long were you in rehab before you got this diagnosis?

Cameron Esposito: So, I had two weeks to be able to be there. That's the amount of time that I was there. And part of why I chose my particular rehab facility is that they could accommodate for that; that's a shortened stay. A lot of people go for like four weeks or six weeks. And this particular facility is awesome, because it helps to accommodate people who work in the entertainment industry who might not be able to take time off in a sort of traditional sick days or leave of absence way. So, that's the amount of time I was able to be there, and they were really accommodating around allowing for that.

John Moe: And then how did the diagnosis come about?

Cameron Esposito: I went to see that psychiatrist, like I said, maybe a month or six weeks later. And I really like my psychiatrist is the first thing I'll say. 'Cause I know not everybody has had that experience. He is a really good listener and has worked with me on my medication. And one thing that has been really helpful, again, is that he sees people in the entertainment industry. And the reason I mention that is because some of the medication that I'm on is specifically—

[00:20:00]

—at the intersection of maintaining some creativity and also treating the more manic side of things, which is the side that I tend toward. So, that's pretty awesome, actually. Because there is a—one of the possible symptoms is like a mental cloudiness. And I'm not saying other people don't need mental clarity, but I think when you're a standup comic or a writer and all these things I am, mental clarity is really important. And his accommodating for that means that I am more likely to stay on my meds.

That was a digression. But (*laughs*) the first time I saw him, it was like a 45-minute evaluation. And it—like, even just the questions he was asking were—like, I wasn't confused when I got off the call. (*Laughs.*) You know? Like, it wasn't like I was like, “I wonder what he is gonna say.” I just felt like, “Oh yeah. Okay.”

Do you know people with bipolar disorder?

John Moe: Yeah. Yeah. I know some with bipolar one and some with bipolar two.

Cameron Esposito: Yeah, I have two and—yeah. Which means that—the big differentiation in symptoms is that one can include psychosis. So, that means like losing touch with reality. And two doesn't usually include losing touch with reality.

John Moe: Two is harder to detect. Because like you said, it has that hypomania that can be mistaken for “Everything's going great,” even though it kind of reveals that something below is not going so great.

Cameron Esposito: That's right. Yeah, absolutely. I mean, you know, I think you're exactly right. I think psychosis might be something that friends and family might notice in a different way. And really to describe what that is, it's like—you know, that's that thing where somebody might be out to get you that is like from the government or something like that. It's like that quality of losing touch with reality. It doesn't mean I wasn't losing touch with reality in my own way, (*chuckles*) but it's a different version of that.

I have so much compassion for those folks, by the way. I think that—I know what it's like to be carried away by your mind, and I think that, like you said, it's harder to detect. And it also—bipolar two I think is easier to bring into, I mean, the American dream. Which obviously, right now is completely fucked, but you know. Like, you have all this energy; you have all these ideas. That's actually rewarded.

John Moe: Was it earthshattering to get the news that you're bipolar?

Cameron Esposito: No, it wasn't. It was awesome. It was helpful. I actually—prior to this I had wondered if I might be on the autism spectrum, because I'm very sensitive to stimulus like sound and lights. And I also have a bit of a hard time blending and being in the middle of groups or culture. I often put myself in like a leadership position. You know. I mean, being on stage is like leading the room.

John Moe: Yeah, I was gonna say, that's commanding a room full of people.

Cameron Esposito: Yeah. There's a bit of a separation that I think is just about not always knowing how to interact with people one-on-one before I had the kind of mental clarity that medication is affording me. And yeah, I don't know. Maybe that's enough.

Transition: Spirited acoustic guitar.

John Moe: More with Cameron Esposito in a moment.

Promo:

Music: Playful, thumpy string music.

Jesse Thorn: Hi, is this Kelly?

Kelly: Yes, this is Kelly.

Jesse Thorn: Hi, Kelly. This is Jesse Thorn, co-host of *Jordan, Jesse, Go!*.

Kelly: Hi, Jesse.

Jesse Thorn: I'm calling because you were just named MaxFun Fun's member of the month for April.

Kelly: Oh wow! (*Laughs.*) This is so surreal.

Jesse Thorn: How long have you been a *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* listener?

Kelly: Probably eight years. I actually saw you guys at the Bellhouse in Brooklyn in 2019.

Jesse Thorn: Was seeing us the reason that you started listening to the show?

Kelly: (*Laughs.*) No, I had been listening for a while.

Jesse Thorn: Why did you end up becoming a member?

Kelly: It's really just been such a dependable source of laughter and joy and comfort. I just appreciated that, and I didn't wanna take it for granted. So, I want to contribute and show my support.

[00:25:00]

Because I don't want it to ever end.

Jesse Thorn: Kelly, thank you so much for talking with me, and thank you so much for being a member of MaxFun.

Kelly: Absolutely. It's my pleasure. It's totally worth it.

Speaker: If you're a MaxFun member, you can become the next MaxFun member of the month. Support us at MaximumFun.org/join.

(Music ends.)

Promo:

Music: Playful, retro rock music.

Narrator: This season on *The Adventure Zone, Abnimals!* Get ready for a brand-new crime fighting trio, here to protect the anthropomorphic, muscular animal citizens of River City. Featuring Justin McElroy as Ax-o-Lyle, the firefighting axolotl. Clint McElroy as Roger Moore, the debonair cow of mystery. Griffin McElroy as Navy Seal, the raw seal that has never served in the Armed Forces. And Travis McElroy as every other swole critter in River City. This swear-free, Saturday morning cartoon inspired story airs every Thursday on MaximumFun.org or wherever you get your podcasts.

(Music fades out.)

Transition: Gentle acoustic guitar.

John Moe: We are back talking with comedian Cameron Esposito.

So, then you get the diagnosis. You take that in. And what do they say about what your options are going forward? Do they immediately talk about meds, or is it a talk therapy solution? Or what happens?

Cameron Esposito: Well, I've been in talk therapy for a long time. And yeah, I mean—I would say that medication, that's what was brought up. But it didn't feel, you know, like it was pushed on me or anything. I was looking for—I mean, I was really looking for help. And I have a ton of friends that are on, you know, brain meds, psychotropic medications, for all the other things that they might deal with, like depression. And so, I don't really have a particular aversion to that. I just had no experience with it. And I think my biggest thing was that I was unclear if it would help. And I also felt— And ramping onto meds is pretty difficult. That's the other thing. So.

John Moe: It can be. So, did they recommend meds? And did you go for that?

Cameron Esposito: Yeah. Yes. Yeah. That's why I mentioned the psychiatrist part, because that's the kind of person that can prescribe meds. And you know, the talk therapists that I've had who've been supportive, that's not really their role—nor are they legally allowed to. *(Laughs.)*

John Moe: How has that—? Let's go broad on this one. How has either the diagnosis or the treatment for the condition changed who you are or changed your life?

Cameron Esposito: Mm! Well, I don't think it's changed who I am. Are you on brain meds?

John Moe: Yeah. Yeah, depression, anxiety.

Cameron Esposito: Yeah. Well, then you know. Or I mean, I don't know what your experience is, but what my experience is that I don't think it's changed who I am. I think it has increased my ability to achieve the long-term goals that I would like in my life. One thing that has really happened because of bipolar disorder is I've had a—I mean, I've achieved kind of an insane number of short-term goals. Like, I work, and then the thing kind of happens where I sell the project or whatever. Sometimes within, you know, a year or a matter of months. But that doesn't mean that you can like own a house or have a successful marriage or start a family, you know? 'Cause those things are longer term. *(Laughs.)*

And I think that's the biggest change is I can stay focused on that. And there is still the part of my brain that can ramp on that short term creativity, which I feel grateful for. So, those are the positive changes. And one thing that's just hard to... I think the biggest thing that's difficult to deal with is I have like short-term memory loss. Actually, it just happened, to be honest, when I was like, "I think that's enough that I'm gonna say." It's like I am talking, and I have like no idea what I'm talking about. But it doesn't happen all the time. But it does happen sometimes.

John Moe: Is that from the meds?

Cameron Esposito: Yeah. Yeah. It's like a side effect of the combo of meds, and that is very weird.

[00:30:00]

I will say, onstage I have coped with it by just literally asking the audience like, “What was I talking about?” (*Laughs.*) And actually people kinda love it, because they feel like it is like this interactive moment, and it's really cute. Like, it usually goes well. But because my mind has worked so fast my whole life, I've never lost my train of thought. Like, literally ever. And it's a pretty big shift.

John Moe: Yeah. I was gonna ask how that impacts comedy, because it is so much about those sustained thoughts and is— It seems like that might be a challenge. Besides asking the audience where you left off, how has it affected your career as a comedian?

Cameron Esposito: Well, I mean there's kind of two different questions there. One is, how's it affected my comedy? And actually I kind of think—as a standup, I actually think I'm better. It doesn't feel as good, because I can't like get jacked up to the same level. Because my brain is limited on releasing all the chemicals that it used to release during a manic state. And being on stage is actually triggering a bipolar cycle mini. So, like there's the presence of mind and the excitement on stage, and then the— I mean, I don't know if you've—well, you've been in a zillion green rooms after a show. Everybody is like... not in a good mood. (*Laughs.*) You know what I mean? A green room can be a dark place, especially for standups.

John Moe: It can be a hard place. Yeah.

Cameron Esposito: So, I think I was having mini cycles. I'm not having that same experience. And so, standup isn't really about—it's like not a drug for me anymore. And that's a loss, because it's fun to have that level of excitement triggered by your job. But I'll also say it's the—the level of joy and presence is different. And I actually think that there's like a softness and an interaction with the audience that's happening because I'm not jacked up on chemicals that's like pretty amazing.

Like, when I was taping the special—and we didn't end up using this to the degree that happened—but there's like a certain part where I talk about the loss of mental clarity and this loss of that heightened emotion. And both times that I was talking about it in the room as we were taping two different sets, two different shows, I cried. Like, I cried in like a really earnest way, and I never would've been able to do that. And it's actually kind of awesome. Because I think people go see standup 'cause they wanna relate to the person on stage and—you know, some comics are talking about like their dog, you know, or like whatever's on television. Like, there's different degrees. And for me, it's always been emotional, and now I'm more emotionally present.

But the second question about how it's affected my career is that, if I'm not addicted to standup, then I don't need it as much. And so, what the fuck am I supposed to do with that? (*Laughing.*) Like, I just—it's a big shift to go from like—

John Moe: Yeah, you don't have a hole to fill anymore.

Cameron Esposito: Yeah. And like that will make you do three to five shows a night, you know? And now I'm just like, "I think I'd like to see my friends." And I'm not saying that has—it's just weird. Like, it's just—you know, I think I spent like the first 15 years of my career really needing to be a big, powerful thing. And then I've spent like the last 8 years of my career—for different reasons—wanting to be happy. And you know, happiness is (*giggling*) the enemy of the standup comic! So, I'm still working that out. But it's going well!

I mean, I think people like it. It is just a big shift, like to not be pissed to not be up there, because you feel like shit about yourself? I mean, not to—you know—blow up everybody's spot, but standup comics are often the saddest boys in the world. (*Laughs.*)

John Moe: Yes! When I was like 22, I was fresh outta college, and I went and did an open mic night in Seattle just to see what that was like. And I met all these comics. And I figured it would just be a bunch of people like me just there on a lark, you know, signing up for an open mic. But I met all these comics in their 30s and 40s, you know, who'd been doing this for years. And it was such a frighteningly sad group of people that I was like—

[00:35:00]

"I don't think I wanna be a comic. I don't think I want to turn into one of these guys."

Cameron Esposito: (*Laughs.*) Yeah, for sure. Well, you know what's funny is like—so, yeah, I started doing comedy in college. I did improv first, and then I got my first job the day after I graduated from college. And so, I was like immediately working in this field. And so, it's a kind of—you know, I've had other jobs, but I haven't had other careers. And it's been such a huge part of my life. When you're baked in it, you don't even necessarily notice what you're talking about. You're like, "I guess everybody's really struggling with life," you know?

And then I think when I was 29—which was about 10 years later. You can do math; you know the difference between 19 and 29. That's when I moved to LA. I was already, you know, pretty far along in Chicago. And I just remember feeling like, "I really hope someday I can afford a couch." 'Cause like even being far along in Chicago, (*laughs*) it doesn't mean money's there, you know?

And I moved to LA and, again, was pretty successful immediately. And I think the next thing that I wanted was a TV show. And I had that for a period of time. And then I think the next thing I wanted—and that I want now—is to sit on that couch. Like, I wanted the couch, then I wanted to never sit on that couch. And now I think I'd like to actually use it.

(*They chuckle.*)

John Moe: Where do you think the next 15 years are gonna go with your career?

Cameron Esposito: Oh, that's a good question. Well, I'm really excited about the special, because I also directed it, and I think it's pretty creative and unusual. And I got a lot of

support from Dropout, who's producing and releasing it, and got to do, really, like exactly what I wanted to do. And I feel like, actually, MaxFun listeners—I feel like there's probably like a big crossover of people who love Dropout. Because it's got this really intense fanbase around like—like, there's like some nerdiness and some in-depth knowledge on things. I mean, I had a long-term podcast on MaxFun, so I get it! And I'm in that group too.

So, yeah, I'm excited to see how that plays out, because I think there are— You know, I think I'll always do standup, but there are some things that involve working with other people, not being alone in a hotel room forever. You know, I'd like to have another show. I'd like to direct. I'd like to be a worker among workers. And I do think I'm setting myself up for that. And yeah, if that's what I wanted, it would be that. But it would also be career balance. And I have awesome friends and hobbies and a real connection in my marriage.

John Moe: Here's a crass question, but one that might be on somebody's mind.

Cameron Esposito: Hell yeah!

John Moe: Are you as funny now as you were before you got diagnosed and treated for bipolar?

Cameron Esposito: I know it hasn't come out yet; have you had a—did somebody send you a screener?

John Moe: Yeah, I've seen it.

Cameron Esposito: Oh, you saw it?

(John confirms.)

Yeah! Hell yeah! Okay. Did you enjoy *Four Pills*?

John Moe: *(Laughs.)* Very much so!

Cameron Esposito: Yeah. So, now you know what I'm talking about—

John Moe: I thought you were very funny.

Cameron Esposito: Aw, thank you! Now you know what I'm talking about in terms of like the directing specifically, that it's a bit unusual. There's like some—it's meant to be an experiential—like, a visual medium to add to the jokes. So, I hope people enjoy that and get a little bit more of a sense of what I'm talking about with media and then medication. It's meant to feel that way as you're watching. Yeah. I mean, listen, I actually think that— Well, I think I'm the same degree funny, but I do think... I think I'm bringing the audience in more. And I've always been really good at talking to the audience.

And I'm like kind. Like, I'm not shitting on the audience, 'cause it's just not my personality. But I think that I— Like, I had a big foot injury this last year, and so I'm sitting on a stool for the first time doing standup. And so, even just the change there between like being on the edge of the stage sort of shouting at people and like sitting on a stool and, you know, asking people what I've been talking about, things like that. It's a different... I think there's like a sweetness. And that doesn't make things less funny. And I think that's a good thing.

[00:40:00]

John Moe: What advice would you have for somebody who maybe just got diagnosed with your condition or is thinking they might have it? How would you guide them?

Cameron Esposito: Well. I mean, I think the first thing I would say is congratulations on your diagnosis, (*chuckles*) because I think that it's been one of the most helpful things in my life. And maybe you work another job that's not standup comedy, and you can't talk about it as openly, or your coworkers or your partner or your family are less able to process it. Like, I'm so lucky, right? 'Cause I can just talk about this openly, and not everybody can. So, I think what I'll say is that even if you can't talk about it openly, you're in an awesome position right now to take charge of your life, and I'm really happy for you. That's the first thing I would say.

And I also would speak to like friends and family of people who've recently been diagnosed and say, again, I hope this feels positive to you. I now see the amount of pressure that this put on my wife, and my—

John Moe: And you're back together with your wife, I understand.

Cameron Esposito: Yeah. Yes! Doing better than ever. We're, I mean, super happy. And a lot of that is just me staying in my own lane and working on myself. Like, I didn't try to win her back. I just took care of myself. And then she felt safe again or is working on feeling safe again. So, I'm super. I mean, this is—it's a good dream come true to have this experience of understanding myself better.

And so, yeah, to the wives and girlfriends and partners and husbands and everybody, maybe try to stay out of the way so that it's not on you to fix things, but know that things might get a lot better.

Music: “Building Wings” by Rhett Miller, an up-tempo acoustic guitar song. The music continues quietly under the dialogue.

John Moe: The special is *Four Pills*. Cameron Esposito, thank you so much, and please enjoy your couch,

Cameron Esposito: (*Laughs.*) Aw, John, thank you! It's so good to talk to you again. Yeah. And have a great day.

John Moe: Thanks.

Let's go out on a little more from Cameron Esposito's special, *Four Pills*, now streaming on Dropout. We have a link to that on our show page, actually—also at MaximumFun.org.

Clip:

Cameron Esposito: Well also, just so you know, bipolar disorder—honestly?—top mental illness one can have. Because the symptoms mirror the American dream. Like, there are more politicians, business leaders, successful artists that have bipolar disorder than like any other mental illness. Because are you kidding?! Like, unrelenting confidence? A million ideas? Like, no need to sleep?

I mean, that—(*triumphant cackle*)! That can really work! I mean, throughout even history, we have changed the world so much. You know who had bipolar disorder? Van Gogh. You ever heard of painting?

(*Laughter.*)

You know who else? Sir Isaac Newton! Have you ever been affected by, uh, gravity?!

(*Laughter.*)

John Moe: Be sure to hit subscribe. Give us five stars, write rave reviews. That gets the show out into the world. We also always need your help in making sure that this show keeps happening. We love making it. We love that it goes out into the world, helps people feel more comforted, more understood, maybe learn a few things. It does cost money to make. So, we ask you to join us, making a contribution. You can join for as little as \$5 a month at MaximumFun.org/join.

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline can be reached in the US and Canada by calling or texting 988. It's free. It's available 24/7.

We are on BlueSky at [@DepreshMode](https://bsky.app/profile/depreshmode). Our Instagram is [@DepreshPod](https://www.instagram.com/depreshpod). Our *Depresh Mode* newsletter is available on Substack. You can search up John Moe on Substack. You'll find it. I'm on BlueSky and Instagram at [@JohnMoe](https://bsky.app/profile/johnmoe). Also, join our Preshies group over on Facebook. A lot of good discussion happening over there—people discovering things and helping each other out, supporting each other, talking about the show, talking about life. It's a good hang.

Hi, credits listeners. I like you. Please use our electric mail address; it's DepreshMode@MaximumFun.org.

Depresh Mode is made possible by your contributions. Our production team includes Ragu Manavalan, Kevin Ferguson, and me. We get booking help from Mara Davis. Rhett Miller wrote and performed our theme song, “Building Wings”. *Depresh Mode* is a production of Maximum Fun and Poputchik. I'm John Moe. Bye now.

Music: “Building Wings” by Rhett Miller.

I'm always falling off of cliffs now

Building wings on the way down.

[00:45:00]

I am figuring things out

Building wings, building wings, building wings

No one knows the reason, maybe there's no reason

I just keep believing

No one knows the answer, maybe there's no answer

I just keep on dancing

Tom: Hi, I'm Tom from Ottawa. Let's be depression buddies.

(Music fades out.)

Transition: Cheerful ukulele chord.

Speaker 1: Maximum Fun.

Speaker 2: A worker-owned network.

Speaker 3: Of artist owned shows.

Speaker 4: Supported—

Speaker 5: —directly—

Speaker 6: —by you!