

# Book review



## Bi-Polar Expedition

An unlikely lifetime journey

**Category:** Book Reviews / Personal Stories

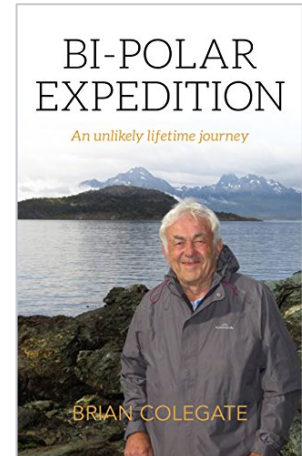
**Author:** Brian Colegate

**Year:** 2016

**Publisher:** Self-published, NZ

**Audience:** For Community

**Summary:** A memoir about a mental health journey and about family



This autobiography was gifted to the Mental Health Foundation's library and is quite an interesting read as Colegate writes well. The book follows his immigration to New Zealand in the 1960s and the journey of his family as they support each other through periods of mental unwellness. Colegate's mother and son both experienced schizophrenia, and Colegate himself was diagnosed with bipolar in his mid-twenties.

He writes in more detail about his mother and son than his own mental health journey, but it would have been nice to know more about his experience with bipolar. However, you do get to know about him through his storytelling and you learn what's important to him, which I assume are the same things which aided his recovery and kept him well. Threads that emerge include; humour, curiosity, being with family, connecting with people, whakapapa, travel and adventure. The book is sprinkled with family photos from the family album, eulogies and insights from his children and you get a real sense of the unity of his family despite some difficult times.

Colegate describes his wife Ann as the rock of the household through difficult times and we learn she also brought this strength to community work for which she received a Civic Award for her contribution to the Like Minds, Like Mine public awareness programme.

Even though this is more a memoir than a book about bipolar, that in itself shows that mental illness does not need to define you or limit your ability to lead a rich life. My understanding is Colegate is in his eighties and still giving presentations and advocating that people talk about mental health issues and seek help. I'm sure the work Colegate and his family have done over the years to advocate and encourage others as a result of their life experiences has impacted positively on many.

**Reviewed by Kim Higginson, Information & Resource Specialist at the Mental Health Foundation**

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