

THE BIPOLAR CHILD

By Kimberly Read

I highly recommend *The Bipolar Child: The Definitive and Reassuring Guide to Childhood's Most Misunderstood Disorder* by Dimitri Papolos, M.D. and Janice Papolos. This is an absolutely fantastic book for those who have a child with early onset bipolar disorder, who suspect it in their child, or who work with bipolar children. As a matter of fact, it is much more than just a book. It is the shot heard round the psychiatric world calling for allies in this war which is devastating families. It is a toolbox weighted with resources for these families. It is a support group at your fingertips filled with encouraging words from those intimately acquainted with this battle.

Are their members of your family with bipolar disorder, depression or alcoholism and you are beginning to wonder about your teen? Your first grader has been diagnosed with ADHD, but you just don't think the symptoms adequately describe his behavior? Your daughter's psychiatrist says she too young to be diagnosed, but you know that you need help soon? You are not alone! In *The Bipolar Child*, the authors have eloquently united the voices of parents and kids which previously seemed to echo alone. Read firsthand accounts from these parents and children. Review the compiled lists of common symptoms. Compare information about other disorders which bipolar disorder often overlaps or for which it is mistaken. Join those who now demand that psychiatry recognize the reality of and reevaluate the diagnostic criteria for early onset bipolar disorder.

Do you feel daunted by the rainbow of pills and liquids, the miasma of side effects your child faces? Your child's psychiatrist wants you to chart your son's behavior and moods, but you don't even know where to start? Are you ready to scream because of the endless meetings with your daughter's school? This book is the toolbox for you! Scan through pages of well organized, easy to understand presentations of the various medication classification and specific drugs used to treat this disorder in children. Find examples of mood charts and explanations of how to use them, as well as resources for purchasing them. Discover a wealth of information, including an actual Individual Education Plan (IEP), for helping your child be a successful student.

Do you feel as if you have been living in hiding because your family and friends do not understand the behavior of your son? Has your child's psychiatrist written a new prescription yet again? Have you come to the conclusion that your teen is going to just sleep through the next ten years? Dimitri and Janice Papolos have interviewed countless parents and kids who share your frustrations! The poignancy of those who contributed their thoughts, experiences, successes and failures offers a wonderful source of support. Cry as you read a child describe feeling so out of control. Laugh at the humor of a mother who refuses to buckle under the pressure. Rejoice as you see your thoughts and concerns echoed by another.

Bottom line: This is a must-read. Kudos to the authors!

RED FLAGS: Symptoms of Bipolar Disorder in Children

By Kimberly Read

Randy is an endearing five-year old boy with an engaging smile. And yet, he has a history of tempestuous behavior that has followed him since infancy. He is bright, articulate, a fast learner – and as unpredictable as a tornado. From the time he cut his first tooth, he began biting – often drawing blood. At one and a half years old, Randy was dismissed from pre-school for aggressive behavior. He consistently scores high marks for academics, but has a string of “needs improvement” comments in all areas of behavior. He is loving, cuddling, wanting to be held one minute; screaming and raging with veins bulging from his neck the next.

Randy’s parents are exasperated. They have attended many a parenting class, read plethora of books, and tried every means of discipline suggested by family, friends, teachers and doctors.

Some say, “Randy is just all boy. He will grow out of it.” Others suggest, “Randy has Attention Deficit Disorder. Ask your doctor for Ritalin.” A few point their fingers at the parents: “You need to take a firm hand with Randy. A good spanking is what that boy needs.”

Many whisper, Can you believe that boy Randy? I would never allow a child of mine to behave like that.”

No one seems willing to consider the idea that Randy may have early-onset Bipolar Disorder. His mother has struggled with depression most of her life. His father has Bipolar Disorder. Randy is a prime candidate for a mood disorder.

A study conducted by Demitri Papolos, MD and Janice Papolos indicates that over 80% of children who have Bipolar Disorder came from families with a history of mood disorders and/or alcoholism on both sides of the family. And yet, even when a strong family history of this is present, professionals rarely consider early-onset Bipolar Disorder. Many children who actually have Bipolar Disorder have been diagnosed with ADHD. Why? Because the official guidelines for diagnosing Bipolar Disorder found in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV) outline criteria based on classic adult symptoms. When the last edition of the DSM was published, very little was known about how Bipolar Disorder presents itself in children.

A great deal more is now known about Bipolar Disorder in children. Demitri and Janice Papolos have written a well-researched book entitled *The Bipolar Child: The Definitive and Reassuring Guide to Childhood's Most Misunderstood Disorder*. I was thrilled to review such a wonderful book. We applaud Demitri and Janice for providing this much needed, insightful resource! Below is an excerpt from their work (reprinted with permission), which lists those symptoms common to children who have early-onset Bipolar Disorder.

Very Common

- Separation Anxiety
- Rages & Explosive Temper Tantrums (lasting up to several hours)
- Marked Irritability
- Oppositional Behavior
- Frequent Mood Swings
- Distractibility
- Hyperactivity
- Impulsivity
- Restlessness/ Fidgetiness
- Silliness, Goofiness, Giddiness
- Racing Thoughts
- Aggressive Behavior
- Grandiosity
- Carbohydrate Cravings
- Risk-Taking Behaviors
- Depressed Mood
- Lethargy
- Low Self-Esteem
- Difficulty Getting Up in the Morning
- Social Anxiety
- Oversensitivity to Emotional or Environmental Triggers

Common

- Bed-Wetting (especially in boys)
- Night Terrors
- Rapid or Pressured Speech
- Obsessional Behavior
- Excessive Daydreaming
- Compulsive Behavior
- Motor & Vocal Tics
- Learning Disabilities
- Poor Short-Term Memory
- Lack of Organization
- Fascination with Gore or Morbid Topics
- Hypersexuality
- Manipulative Behavior
- Bossiness
- Lying
- Suicidal Thoughts
- Destruction of Property
- Paranoia
- Hallucinations & Delusions

Less Common

- Migraine Headaches
- Bingeing

- Self-Mutilating Behaviors
- Cruelty to Animals

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Managing a manic episode in a child or adolescent

From Healthwise

The more you know about bipolar disorder, the better you will be able to help your child or adolescent cope with this lifelong illness. There are many steps your child can take to help avoid manic episodes and to recognize and deal with an episode when symptoms begin. Your child should:

- Exercise, eat a balanced diet, get a good night's sleep, and keep a consistent schedule to reduce minor mood swings that often lead to more severe episodes of mania.
- Take medications according to the doctor's instructions to help reduce the number of manic episodes.
- Avoid triggers such as caffeine, alcohol and drug use, and stress to help prevent manic episodes.
- Learn the warning signs and seek early treatment to avoid more severe, prolonged manic episodes.
- Have a plan of action in place and a support system to help follow the plan when symptoms of a manic episode start.
- Have certain people at school or at home who know how to help during a manic episode.

Managing a manic episode in a child or adolescent

From Healthwise

Your child with bipolar disorder may have unique manic behaviors that are identifiable. Family and friends can help to identify manic behaviors, especially if they know ahead of time what to watch for. General behaviors associated with a manic episode include:

- Abnormal happiness (euphoria).
- Extreme irritability or silliness.
- Long-lasting or intense outbursts or tantrums.
- Unrealistic feelings of self-importance (delusions of grandeur).
- Intense energy levels maintained for a long period of time.
- A decreased need for sleep.

- Increased talkativeness that is difficult to interrupt.
- Racing thoughts and distractibility—attention constantly moving from one thing to the next.
- An intense focus on sexual thoughts, feelings, or behaviors (hypersexuality); use of explicit sexual language.
- An intense focus on reaching a goal.
- Dangerous or reckless behavior. For example, a young child may think he or she can fly and jump off a roof. A teen may drive too fast, spend money unwisely, or have unprotected sex.
- Extreme behavior that causes problems on the job, at school, in social situations, or at home.
- Symptoms of psychosis (detachment from reality), such as hearing voices or being paranoid.

Managing a manic episode in a child or adolescent

From Healthwise

Now that you understand the importance of having a solid plan in place to prevent and manage your child's manic episodes, you are ready to take the following steps:

- Establish daily routines and healthy lifestyle choices that help prevent manic episodes.
- Learn how to identify a developing manic episode and how to eliminate or reduce the factors that may be triggering it or making it worse. Recording mood changes and possible triggers in a calendar or notebook can be helpful in identifying patterns.
- Develop a support network of adults who understand how to help your child during a manic episode.
- Make sure your child continues to follow his or her treatment program, such as taking medications exactly as prescribed and attending counseling sessions.
- Communicate with your doctor about how to prevent manic episodes and cope with them when they occur.

Managing a manic episode in a child or adolescent

From Healthwise

The best way to manage a manic episode is to help your child avoid triggers that can cause mood swings and conditions that might make manic feelings more intense. Some simple lifestyle adjustments can help. Work with your child to:

- Maintain a stable sleep pattern. Your child should go to bed around the same time each night and awaken around the same time each morning. Changing sleep patterns can cause chemical changes in the body that trigger mood episodes.
- Maintain a regular daily routine. Your child should follow a routine of trying to do the same things every day at about the same time.
- Set realistic goals. Setting high goals and focusing too hard on achieving them can trigger a manic episode.
- Avoid alcohol and illegal drugs. It may be tempting for your child to use alcohol or drugs to help get through a manic episode. However, this will make the mood changes worse. Even small amounts can interfere with sleep, mood, or medications used to treat bipolar disorder. Nonprescription medications for a cold, allergies, or pain can also trigger a change in mood.
- Get help from family and friends. Your child will sometimes need help getting through a manic episode, especially if he or she loses touch with reality. Having a plan in place before any mood changes occur will assist family members and friends in getting the needed help. However, remember that these mood changes can sometimes be upsetting to loved ones and that these people may also need to seek support.
- Reduce stress at home and at school or work. Your child should try to keep regular hours at school and at work. Doing a good job is important, but avoiding a depressive or manic mood episode is more important. Communicate with your child's teachers and guidance counselor about your child's needs. Academic adjustments or a plan such as an individualized education program (IEP) may be helpful.
- Learn to recognize the early warning signs of a new manic episode. This is one of the most important ways to avoid a full-blown manic episode. If you catch the episode in its early stages, your child may be able to avoid an intense manic episode by avoiding triggers that are causing the new mood change. You may want to keep a chart to record your child's mood changes and the activities that may trigger those changes.
- Continue treatment. It may be tempting for your child to discontinue treatment because he or she feels better or enjoys the euphoric feeling of a manic episode. However, it is very important to continue treatment as prescribed to avoid the unpleasant consequences associated with mania. If you have concerns about treatment or the side effects of your child's medications, talk with your doctor; do not adjust the medication on your own.