

## How Parents can help their Bipolar Child

Children/adolescents with Bipolar Disorder that are brought for psychological treatment are often angry; confused and are exhibiting acting out behaviors. Their parents are often overwhelmed; frustrated at what to do next and are often unaware of exactly what the problem is. Obtaining an accurate diagnosis is very important and your child should be evaluated by a child psychiatrist or a child psychologist who is able to diagnosis accurately. Most likely the child has presented with significant mood swings that are interfering with their relationships at home and school and their school work is likely suffering. Bipolar Disorder, is a mood disorder that is identified by mood swings, elevated moods, changes in energy levels, and behavioral problems. Parents often are unaware of what to do and need help and guidance on how to handle their child's behavior and how to alleviate their symptoms in order for their child to be successful. Here are a number of ways that parents can help their child be successful in treating Bipolar Disorder and working through the behaviors and problems associated with it:

If your child is on medication, please follow the medication schedule as the doctor or psychiatrist prescribes it. Help your child to remember to take their medication. Medication is not helpful if it is taken haphazardly, which often seems to be the case

Check to make sure your child is not experiencing side effects from the medication/s. If your child is experiencing problems with the medications take them back to their health care provider that is prescribing the medication

Use your child's school and teachers as a resource. Treatment is much more successful if everyone that is involved in your child's life is aware of the problem and working to help him/her. If your child's curriculum at school needs to be changed at school in order for him/her to be successful then work with the school in order to make this happen. Often times an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) needs to be developed by the school with the parent's input

Take them for mental health treatment with a qualified mental health professional that knows how to work with children with Bipolar Disorder. A therapist/counselor can help the family work through problems with behavior, communication, and is a good source of information

Keep a log or journal of their mood shifts, this is particularly helpful if your child is in therapy, in order to identify what triggers the mood swings and exacerbates symptoms. Also, keep a routine for your child, chaos or lack of consistency brings about anxiety in children

Be patient with your child and encourage him/her to talk about how they are feeling. Also, encourage them to seek help and discuss treatment in a positive way. Bipolar Disorder affects everyone in the family and is not only stressful on the child, but stressful on everyone. Family therapy is very useful in understanding how Bipolar affects the entire family unit and helps everyone involved deal with the issues that Bipolar Disorder presents to a family.

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