



UNDERSTANDING PEDIATRIC BIPOLAR DISORDER

What Is Bipolar Disorder?

- Bipolar disorder is marked by bouts of extreme and impairing changes in mood, energy, thinking, and behavior.
- Bipolar disorder does not affect every child in the same way.
- The frequency, intensity, and duration of a child's symptoms and the child's response to treatment vary dramatically.

Children With Bipolar Disorder May Exhibit The Following Symptoms:

- Severe and recurring depression.
- Explosive, destructive or lengthy rages, especially after the age of four.
- Extreme sadness or lack of interest in play.
- Severe separation anxiety.
- Suicidal or homicidal thoughts.
- Dangerous behaviors, such as trying to jump from a fast moving car or a roof.
- Grandiose belief in their own abilities that defy the laws of logic, such as believing they can fly.
- Sexualized behavior unusual for their age.
- Impulsive aggression.
- Delusional beliefs or hallucinations, such as hearing voices telling them to do something harmful.
- Extreme hostility.
- Extreme or persistent irritability.
- Bossing adults and other authority figures around.
- Creativity that seems driven or compulsive.
- Excessive involvement in multiple projects and activities.
- Compulsive craving for certain objects or foods.
- Racing thoughts or pressure to keep talking.
- Sleep disturbances, especially violent dreams.
- Drawings or stories with extremely graphic violence.

Treatments:

- There is presently no cure for bipolar disorder.
- Psychotherapy and psychiatric medications are the most effective forms of treatment.

Resources:

- *The Bipolar Child* by Demetri Papolos and Janice Papolos
- *The Explosive Child: A New Approach for Understanding and Parenting Easily Frustrated, Chronically Inflexible Children* by Ross W. Greene.
- Child and Adolescent Bipolar Foundation – www.bpkids.org
- National Alliance on Mental Health – www.nami.org
- The Bipolar Child – www.bipolarchild.com