

## Common Symptoms and Features of Child Bipolar Disorder

(Derived from Demetri Papolos' Core Phenotype for Pediatric-Onset Bipolar Disorder)

### **A. Episodic and abrupt transitions in mood states accompanied by rapid alternations in levels of arousal, emotional excitability, sensory sensitivity, and motor activity.**

#### **Manic or Hypomanic Episodes, which may include**

- Rapid and excessive speech
- Having several ideas at the same time
- Subjective experience of thoughts racing
- Distractibility
- Diminished need for sleep
- Relentlessly pursues own needs (mission mode)
- Heightened interest, enjoyment, and enthusiasm for usual activities
- Excessive involvement in pleasurable activities that have a high potential for painful consequences
- Overestimation of resources and abilities
- Over-valuation of self or others
- Bossy toward others

#### **Depressive Episodes, which may include**

- Depressed mood
- Irritable mood states
- Loss of interest and pleasure in previously enjoyed activities
- Complaints of feeling bored
- Excessive stimulation-seeking behaviors
- Periods of self-doubt and poor self-esteem
- Slowed speech
- Difficulty putting thoughts into words
- Increased need for sleep or disturbed sleep
- Loss or increase in appetite
- Decrease or loss of energy
- Difficulty sustaining attention
- Diminished ability to concentrate or indecisiveness
- Moves slowly
- Loss of initiative and motivation
- Underestimation of resources and abilities
- Devaluation of self or others
- Negative interpretation of events and misattribution of other's behaviors
- Recurrent thoughts of death
- Recurrent suicidal ideation

**B. Poor modulation of drives (aggressive, sexual, appetitive, acquisitive) resulting in behaviors that are excessive for age and/or context.**

- **Aggressive/fight-based behaviors** (critical, sarcastic, demanding, oppositional, overbearing, bossy, easily enraged, prone to violent outbursts)
- **Self-directed aggression** (head-banging, skin-picking, cutting, suicide)
- **Premature and intense sexual feelings and behaviors** (precocious curiosity about sex and premature expression of sexual impulses, as well as inappropriate public displays)
- **Difficulty controlling appetite** (excessive craving for carbohydrates and sweets, binge eating, purging, and anorexia)
- **Poor control over acquisitive impulses** (relentless pursuit of needs, buying excessively, and hoarding)

**C. Excessive anger and oppositional/aggressive responses to situations that elicit frustration.**

- Protracted, explosive temper tantrums and/or aggressive behavior, often followed by sullen withdrawal and expressions of remorse
- Inability to delay gratification
- Easily angered in response to limit-setting
- Difficulty having to wait his or her turn
- Becomes upset with changes in plans or routines
- Is willful and refuses to be subordinated by others
- Defies or refuses to comply with rules
- Argues with adults
- Curses viciously, uses foul language in anger
- Intentionally destroys property
- Blames others for his or her mistakes

**D. Poor self-esteem regulation.**

- At times, is overly optimistic, defiant, arrogant, filled with bravado, and prone to self-aggrandizement, exaggeration of abilities, and has feelings of omnipotence
- Alternatively, is overly pessimistic, self-critical, and overly sensitive to criticism or rejection, often responding to criticism with intense feelings of humiliation and shame.
- Frequent expression of feelings of insecurity and worthlessness
- Rapid and intense idealization and/or devaluation of self and others

**E. Sleep/wake cycle disturbances.**

- **Sleep discontinuity** (initial insomnia, middle insomnia, early morning awakening, oversleeping)

- **Sleep arousal disorders** (night terrors and nightmares, sleep-walking, enuresis)

## **F. Low threshold for anxiety.**

### **A tendency to react with excessive anxiety and fearfulness in response to**

- New or stressful situations
- Transitions of context, loss, separation, or the anticipation of loss or separation from attachment objects
- Loss of social status
- Fears of harm to self in the form of anger, rejection, criticism, or ostracism
- Fear that he or she will harm others or self

## **G. Disturbance in the capacity to habituate to sensory stimuli often when exposed to novel, repetitive or monotonous sensory stimulation.**

- Is extremely sensitive to textures of clothes, labels, and tightness of fit of shoes or socks
- Exhibits extreme sensitivity to loud or unexpected sounds
- Complains of body temperature extremes or feeling hot despite neutral ambient temperature
- Complains about the way that things smell and taste

## **H. Executive Function Deficits**

### **Mental Inflexibility**

- Difficulty shifting cognitive set
- Difficulty planning ahead
- Unrealistic estimates of energy resources and time requirements for the accomplishment of tasks
- Difficulty giving up an idea or desire, no matter how unrealistic or unfeasible
- Difficulty starting and completing school assignments without a great deal of prompting
- Often gets caught up on small details of an assignment and misses the big picture
- Deficits in working memory
- Problems making transitions from one context to another
- Poor organizational skills
- Distractibility and excessive daydreaming
- Performance deficits in school, particularly in the organization of thought for written expression

### **Emotional Inflexibility**

- Impulsive, acts before thinking
- Overreacts to small events
- Rapidly shifts emotional state
- Can demonstrate sudden anger, resentment, and/or rage for greater than 15 minutes that is unresponsive to reason, discussion, or soothing (meltdowns)
- Can become progressively unrestrained or silly
- Does not appear to gain pleasure from mastering a skill

### **Inflexibility of Motor Activity**

- The initiation of movement directed at the accomplishment of motor tasks is effortful (e.g., has difficulty starting activities in the morning and requires help in initiating any activity)
- Is often restless and fidgety
- Handwriting is poor
- Has difficulty initiating and completing written assignments