

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