

Therapies for Bipolar Disorder

There are a variety of therapies for Bipolar Disorder, however almost all treatment for childhood bipolar disorder includes some type of medication. Medication when combined with therapy can be quite effective and there are a number of different models that can be used in treating childhood Bipolar Disorder. Therapy helps children engage in changing their behaviors whether they are in a manic or a depressive phase and it helps to manage their routine when they are in the different phases of Bipolar Disorder. Almost all types of therapy for Bipolar Disorder include the child with the family members, in order for treatment to be truly successful everyone should be on board.

Cognitive-behavioral therapy- is often used to treat childhood bipolar disorder. This type of therapy focuses on changing behaviors by changing the way you think. Works on the premise that all thoughts and cognition are amenable to behavioral change by utilizing specific techniques in treatment.

Cognitive therapy- an approach that involves learning to identify the thoughts that trigger the shifts in their moods. Remember children with Bipolar Disorder have mood swings and seem to be “all over the place”, I coined this from one of my children’s parents whose child comes to see me for treatment of Bipolar Disorder

Behavioral therapy-focuses on a child’s particular behaviors that will help to decrease their stress level. Often utilizes a behavioral management plan with the help of the child’s parents

Interpersonal therapy-involves the stressors or conflicts that are in the child’s family in order to lower the child’s stress level. Stress exacerbates or triggers mood shifts and strains the family relationship

Family-focused therapy-a therapy that was developed more recently by David Miklowitz, Ph.D. and his colleagues, which consists of very intensive; nine-month psycho-educational program which utilizes the family in intensive treatment and also educates the child and the family about the diagnosis. The sessions consist of educating the family about the treatment options as well as working on developing communication amongst the family members and developing problem-solving skills.

While each therapist utilizes different treatment methods to treat a child with Bipolar Disorder, most approaches are multi-disciplinary in nature and medication is usually used to stabilize the child in order for therapy to be more effective. Of utmost importance, is the family’s role in treatment and through mental health treatment and communication and clear cut boundaries, treatment of Bipolar Disorder will help your child reach their full potential. Early detection, diagnosis, and consistent treatment is the key to a child’s success.

Kara T. Tamanini, M.S., LMHC
Author and Therapist
Founder of Kids Awareness Series
www.KidsAwarenessSeries.com