

Bi-polar Disorder: Ten + Resources

I entered the field of adoption 14 years ago as a worker recruiting families to adopt children from the foster care system. At that time, almost every “waiting” child had a diagnosis of [Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder](#). Today, I provide post-placement services to adoptees and their families and Bi-polar Disorder is the “hot” diagnosis. Certainly, a significant number of adoptees present with a continuum of mental health issues. However, various diagnoses are over-used. Quite alarming also is that younger and younger children are assigned a diagnosis without obtaining a complete picture of the child at present as well as a review of available background information.

This is particularly concerning as diagnosis implies a course of treatment. For example, if you go to your medical doctor and are informed you have diabetes—diet, exercise and insulin are likely to follow as these are the elements of the treatment for this medical condition. Mental health disorders operate in the same manner. A Bi-polar diagnosis is treated with medication and therapy. If the diagnosis is inaccurate, children and teens wind up taking medications which are ineffective and unnecessary! They participate in a therapy unlikely to alleviate the real problem!

Previously posted was [What is All this Alphabet Soup?: Understanding Children’s Mental Health Diagnosis](#). The purpose of this blog was to overview factors that contribute to the accuracy (or inaccuracy) of mental health diagnoses. Today’s blog about Bi-polar Disorder is the first in a series of posts designed to put forth information about specific mental health disorders (i.e., Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Reactive Attachment Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, etc.) and other conditions such as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Sensory Integration Dysfunction, Auditory Processing Disorder and so on. Armed with information, parents can educate themselves to signs and symptoms reflective of such disorders. Thus, parents will have the knowledge to communicate effectively with teachers, psychiatrists, physicians, psychologists, social workers and other professionals with whom they and their child come in contact. Knowledge equals more accurate diagnosis! Knowledge equals more effective treatment!

Following are an array of resources designed to help parents, teens and children more fully understand Bi-polar Disorder:

Websites

[The National Institute of Mental Health \(NIHM\)](#) provides a comprehensive description of all children’s mental health diagnoses. Their booklet titled, [Bi-polar Disorder in Children and Teens](#) is a wonderful starting place for anyone wanting to learn about Bi-polar Disorder in youth. The publication answers the questions, What is Bi-polar Disorder? Who develops Bi-polar Disorder? What are the symptoms of Bi-polar Disorder? How is Bi-polar Diagnosed? How is Bi-polar Treated? How can I help my child or teen? Where do I go for help?, etc.

The [American Academy of Child and Adolescents Psychiatry \(AACAP\)](#) is a non-profit, professional medical association dedicated to promoting mentally healthy children, adolescents and families through research, training, advocacy, prevention, comprehensive diagnosis and treatment, peer support and collaboration. AACAP is another organization that provides in-depth coverage of each mental health diagnosis a child can receive. [Their information about Bi-polar](#) includes an overview of symptoms and treatment. This website also provides articles about medication and the types of therapies available to children.

The [National Alliance for Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#) is a national organization with [local branches](#) all over the country. So, in addition to providing information about all types of mental health disorders, NAMI offers training and education, support groups, walks, advocacy and so on right in your own community. Go to their website today and find help near your home!

Books for Adults, Young Adults and Adolescents

[The Bi-polar Child: The Definitive and Reassuring Guide to Childhood's Most Misunderstood Disorder](#) by Demetri Papolos and Janice Papolos has been a best seller since its arrival. The book is now in its third edition—most recently updated in 2007. It is easy to see why it is the “definitive” resource—it covers everything from symptoms and causes, through out-patient and in-patient treatment, insurance coverage and coping with the disorder for the afflicted person and for each member of the family. The stories of those suffering from Bi-polar as well as family members are interspersed throughout the content.

Several other important books which cover Bi-polar Disorder well include [Bi-polar Kids: Helping Your Child Find Calm in the Mood Storm](#) by Rosalie Green berg, [Parenting a Bi-polar Child: What to Do and Why](#) by Gianni Faedda and Nancy Austin, [The Ups and Downs of Raising a Bi-polar Child: A Survival Guide for Parents](#) by Judith Lederman and Candida Fink and [The Bi-polar Teen: What You can do to Help Your Child and Your Family](#) by David Miklowitz and Elizabeth George.

If you prefer personal accounts then you want to check out [Intense Minds: Through the Eyes of Young People with Bi-polar Disorder](#) authored by Tracy Anglada and [Mind Race: A Firsthand Account of One Teenager's Experience with Bi-polar Disorder](#) by Patrick Jamieson and Moira Lynn. These books would also make great reading for a teen or young adult struggling with this serious mental health condition.

Also, regarding teens and young adults, [Behind Happy Faces: Taking Charge of Your Mental Health—A Guide for Young Adults](#) by Ross Szabo and Melanie Hall is designed to help empower those from grade 7 and up to live life defined as a person instead of by their disorder.

Books for Children

There are even books for kids! [Turbo Max: A Story for Siblings and Friends of Children with Bi-polar Disorder](#) by Tracy Anglada, [Anger Mountain](#) by Bryna Hebert, [Brandon and the Bi-polar Bear: A Story for Children with Bi-polar Disorder](#) by Tracy Anglada and Jennifer Taylor and [My Bi-polar, Roller Coaster, Feelings Book](#) by Bryna Hebert will go a long way to help children understand themselves or a brother or sister diagnosed with this disorder.

Blogs, Twitter, Facebook

If social media is the way you like to obtain information, NAMI, NIHM and AACAP all mentioned above are on [twitter](#) and [facebook](#) as well as being available via their websites. Thanks to PsychCentral you can check out the [Top 10 Bi-polar blogs](#).

In conclusion, becoming the parent to a child who experienced abuse, neglect, abandonment or institutionalization prior to the arrival in the family means that the child may enter your home with an existing Bi-polar diagnosis. Or, due to genetics and/or the stress of early trauma, the child may grow into a mental health diagnosis post-placement. In any event, the more informed the parent, the sooner the child receives the most beneficial course of treatment. This, in turn, facilitates the well-being of each member of the adoptive family!

Related Blogs:

[What is All this Alphabet Soup?: Understanding Children's Mental Health Diagnoses](#)

[Finding a Pediatrician for Your Adopted Child](#)

[The Development of Realistic Expectations Pre-Adoption: Myth or Actuality?](#)

[This is Not the Brother or Sister I Expected!: The Need to Prepare the Typical Children](#)