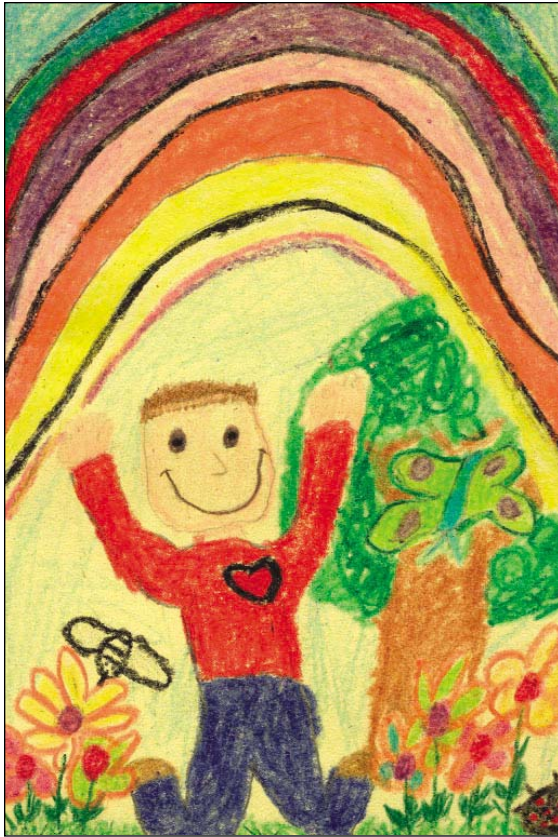


The Storm in my Brain



Kids and Mood Disorders
(Bipolar Disorder and Depression)



“The Up Side” by Aaron, age 7

What is a mood disorder?

Everyone feels sad, excited or angry sometimes. When kids feel too good, too mad, or too sad, they might have a mood disorder.

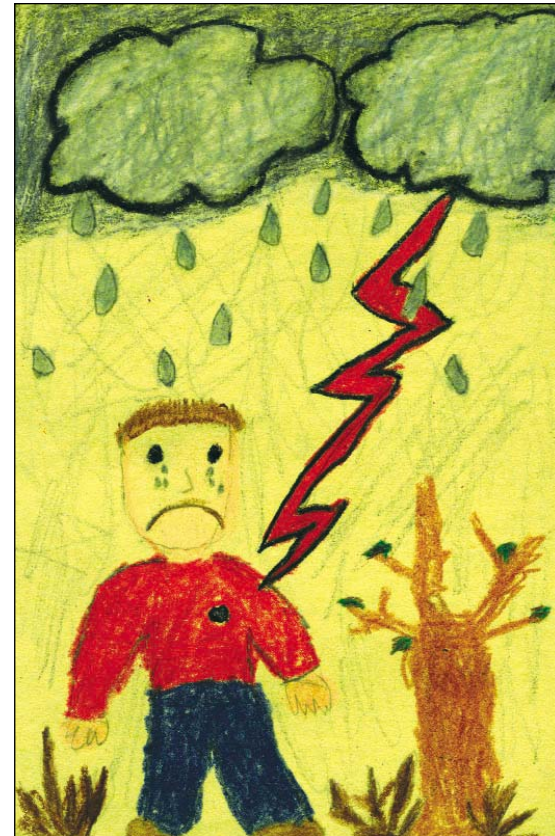
A mood disorder is an illness of the brain.

The feelings, thoughts and behaviors of mood disorders can cause problems in a kid’s life.

Cover Art: “Bliss Concealed” by Jackie, age 16

A mood disorder

- Feels as strong as a flood, a tornado, or even a hurricane.
- Can trap a kid in one mood for weeks or months, or flip a kid quickly from one feeling or thought to another without any reason.
- Keeps kids from enjoying things like going to school or playing with other kids.
- Causes kids to act in ways they know are wrong, or ways that hurt them or someone else.



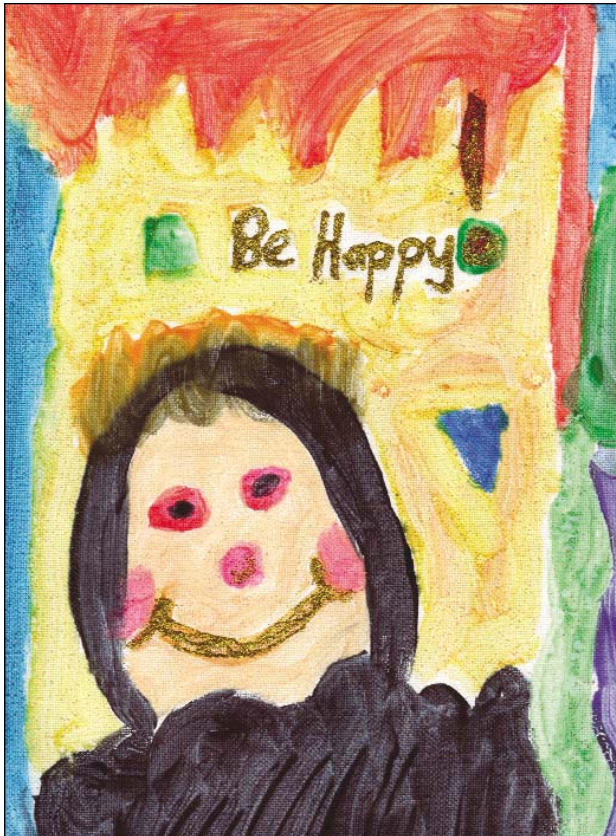
"The Down Side" by Aaron, age 7

How do kids feel when they learn they have a mood disorder?

- Afraid, embarrassed, or angry—“Why me?”
- Sad—Because their brains are not working like other kids’.
- Scared—Wondering if they will get better.
- Thankful—To know what is wrong and that there is help and hope.



“BP Me” by Kareem, age 13



“Making One Whole” by Gabriel, age 8

Can I feel better?

Yes. With help from your family, friends and doctor, you can feel better.

- Your doctor might give you medicine to treat the illness in your brain.
- Sometimes you need to take more than one kind of medicine, or try different kinds to see what works best.
- Special doctors may talk with you to help you feel better.
- Other kids with mood disorders and their families (a support group) can help you and your family.

**Does this mean
I am a bad person?**

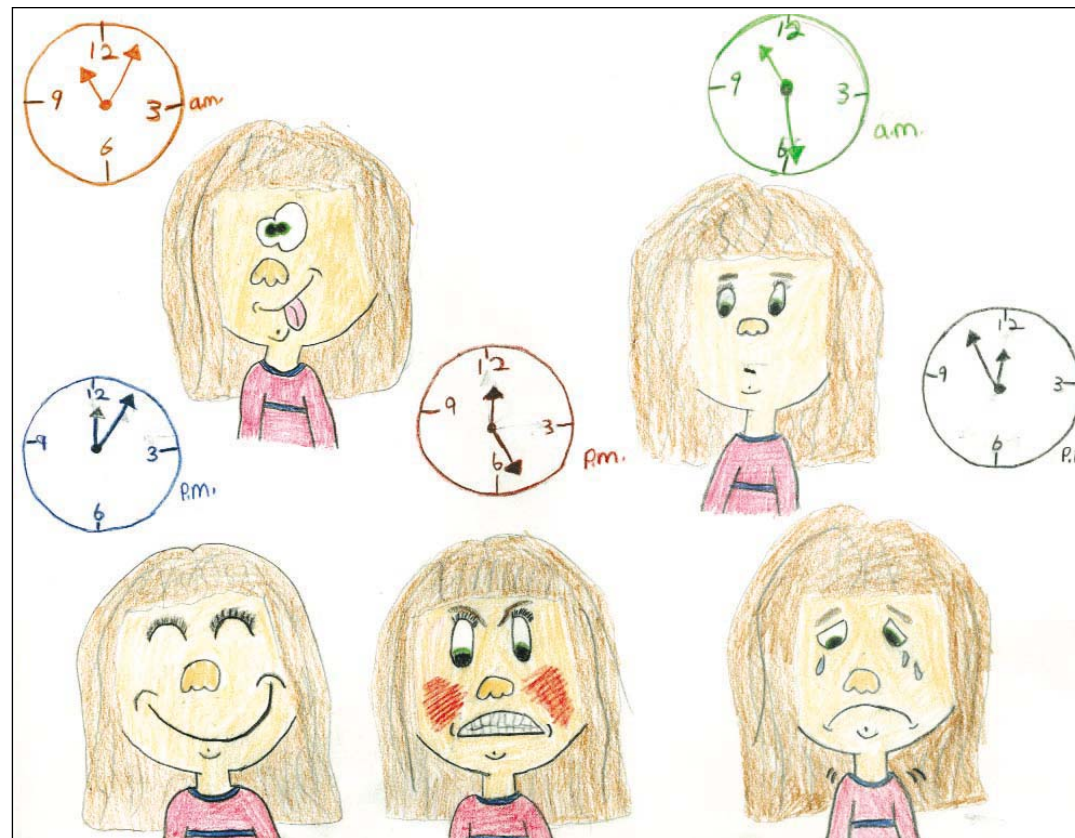
No, you are not a bad person. You did not cause this illness. It is not your fault.



"Am I Normal?" by Chelsea, age 11

Sometimes,
the illness may
make you do
something you
know is wrong.

It helps to say
you're sorry
and that you'll
try not to do
it again.



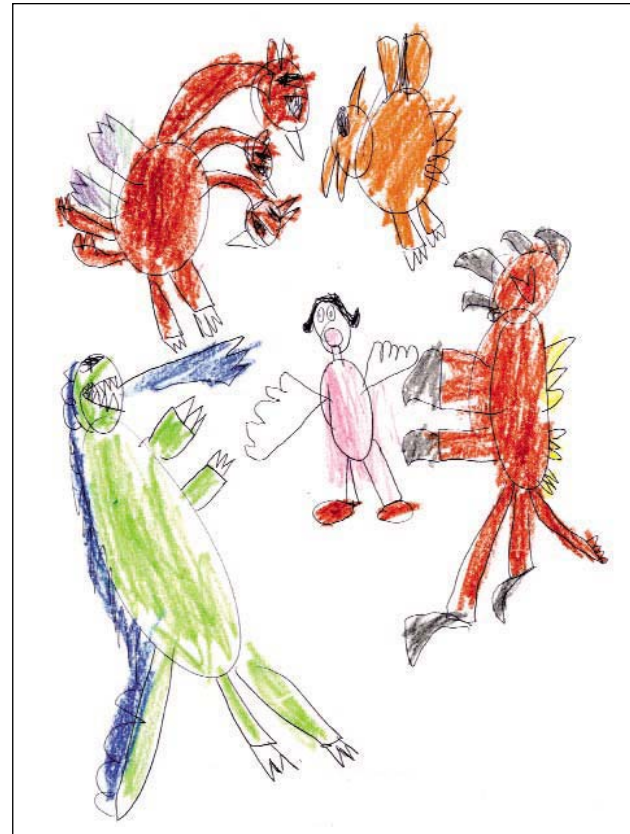
"Silly... Serious... Happy... Angry... Sad"

by Samantha, age 13

What is mania and how does it feel?

Mania is a very excited or angry mood with high energy. It is one part of bipolar disorder, also called manic depression.

In bipolar disorder, moods change between mania (excited or angry) and depression (sad or crabby). Or, both can happen at the same time. This is called a mixed state.



"Like Monsters" by Jordan, age 6



“Not Fitting in this Universe” by Rachel, age 16

During mania you might

- Feel happy or mad about things that don't make most people happy or mad. You may not be able to stop laughing at something no one else thinks is funny or be mad at something that doesn't make anyone else mad.
- Feel like you have special powers—like you could fly off the roof or run your school.
- Have too many thoughts in your head, or thoughts that come too quickly.

- Not be able to keep your mind on what you are doing.
- Not be able to sit still.
- Not want to sleep very much, or want to stay up all night doing things.
- Talk faster or louder than everyone else and get mad if someone stops you.
- Do dangerous things.
- Not be able to stop thinking about bodies or touching your private parts.
- Hear voices telling you to do something, or see people or things that are not really there.

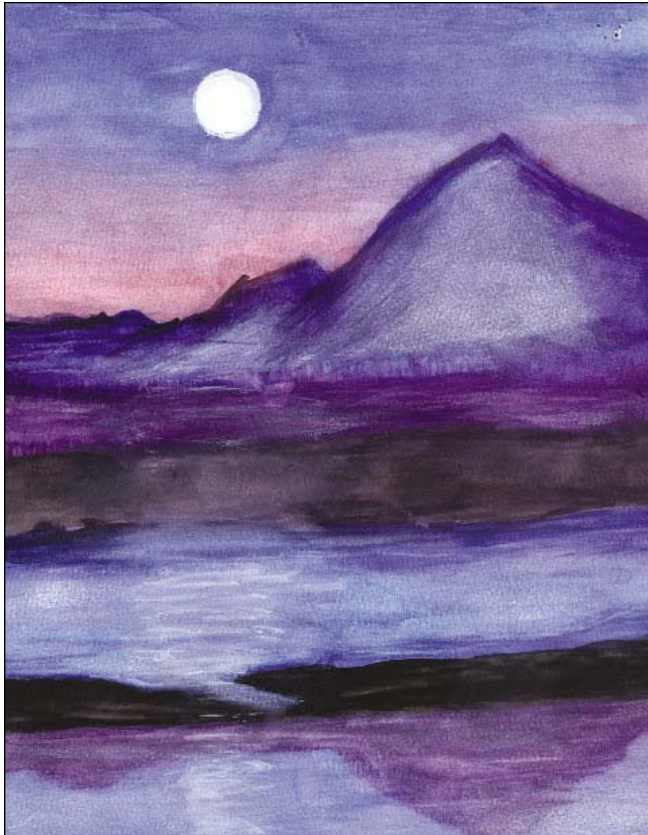
What is depression and how does it feel?

Depression is feeling very sad or crabby for a long time. During depression you might

- Not enjoy anything—even things that used to be fun.
- Feel sad a lot or cry a lot.
- Feel angry.
- Think or talk about wanting to be dead.
- Feel lonely, like no one cares about you.
- Get upset easily.



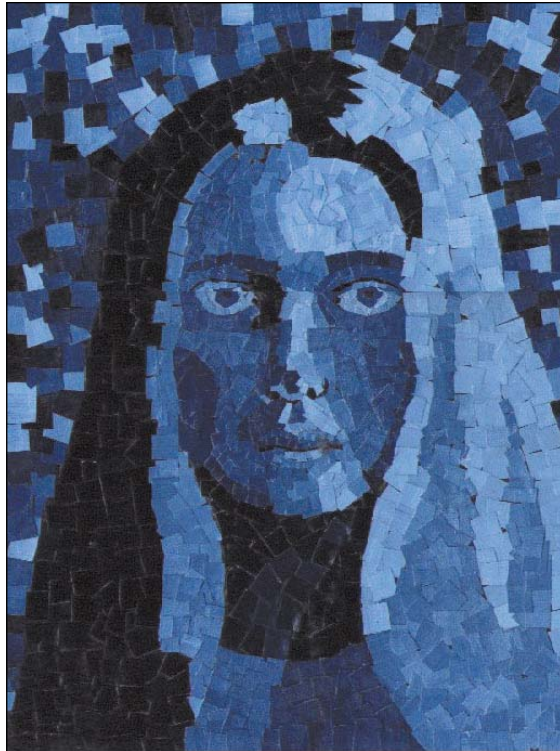
"Self Portrait" by Lauren, age 9



“Untitled” by Samantha, age 13

- Not be able to sleep or sleep too much.
- Not want to eat, or be hungry all the time.
- Have a hard time paying attention.
- Feel that your body is so heavy you can barely move or talk.
- Not feel like seeing friends or talking on the phone.
- Have a headache or stomachache.

What if I feel like hurting or killing myself?



“What Am I?” by Mary, age 15

These thoughts or feelings are caused by the illness, and will go away when you feel better. Be sure to tell your parents and your doctor when you have these feelings.

- Tell an adult right away. If you don't want to talk to your mom or dad, tell an aunt, uncle, family friend or teacher. If there isn't anyone to talk to, call the Hopeline: 1-800-442-HOPE (800-442-4673).
- Don't use alcohol, drugs, or pills that are not meant for you.
- Don't be alone—find someone you can talk to or sit quietly with.

What can I do to stay well?

- Follow your doctor's instructions about taking medicine.
- Remember, it may take awhile before you start to feel better.
- Find out what the illness makes you do or say or think. Tell your parents and your doctor if those things come back so you can get help right away.
- Draw pictures or write about how you feel.
- Talk with other kids who have the same illness.
- Tell your parents or teachers if you are worried about things that happen at school or with friends.
- Take a walk, ride your bike, go for a swim.
- Eat healthy foods, exercise, and get plenty of sleep.
- If you feel depressed, tell someone.

- Go outside in the sunshine or watch funny movies.
- Go to bed and get up at same time every day.
- If your illness gets worse, remember that you can feel better.
- Never give up hope.



Tips for parents

Things you can do for your child

- Learn about mood disorders and the treatments for depression, bipolar disorder, and other illnesses your child may have.
- Keep a daily diary of your child's mood, energy, behavior, statements of concern, treatment response and sleep. Share these with the doctor.
- Have your child evaluated by a child psychiatrist with experience in early onset mood disorders.
- Have a neuropsychologist or educational psychologist evaluate your child for hidden learning difficulties that may cause stress at school.
- Prioritize symptoms and address them in order of severity.
- Help your child maintain a routine for sleep, mealtimes, and activities.
- Anticipate or avoid stressful situations, limit frightening movies and TV shows, and be prepared to leave events early as necessary.
- Avoid bright lights, noise, large stores and groups, which can be over-stimulating.

- Never give your child other medications (prescribed, over-the-counter or “natural”/herbal) without checking with your child's doctor first.
- Use gentle music, relaxation tapes, dim lights, warm baths and massage to help with falling asleep.
- Learn more about the therapeutic value of pets.

Things to do for yourself

- Remember that you did not cause your child's mood disorder.
- Ignore critical comments by well-meaning friends, relatives and strangers.
- Take care of yourself—exercise, eat right, get enough sleep.
- Seek help if you can't eat or sleep, or if you develop anxiety or mood symptoms (many parents do).
- Trust your instincts—get a second or third opinion if a professional's advice doesn't make sense to you.
- Maintain hope—find spiritual solace and creative outlets.
- Join a support group and find other parents of children with mood disorders (more information on page 19 and back cover).

Tips for teachers

Mood disorders and medications used to treat them can affect a child's:

- Attendance
- Alertness and concentration
- Sensitivity to light, noise and stress
- Motivation and energy available for learning

A child's functioning can vary greatly at different times during the day, season, and school year. Flexibility is crucial.

Some helpful strategies:

- Educate yourself—Learn about mood disorders and the side effects of treatments prescribed for your student(s).
- Identify and reduce stressors: sensory overload, boredom, bullying, homework, competition.
- Suggest psychoeducational testing.
- Identify a person and place at school where the child can go if symptoms become overwhelming.
- Excuse tardiness and absences due to fatigue, anxiety, depression, and other symptoms.

- Request in-service training on strategies to help students with mood disorders.
- Remember that low voices and a calm demeanor are more effective than confrontation.
- Facilitate frequent communication between home and school with a back-and-forth notebook, phone calls, or e-mail.
- Provide unlimited access to drinking water and bathroom.
- Encourage expression and learning through art, music and creative writing.
- Be flexible with assignments, homework, and testing techniques.
- For smoother transitions, allow extra time and give advance notice prior to each change in staffing or routine.
- Allow physical movement and frequent breaks per student needs.
- Be aware of changes that signal relapse—ask parents and doctors what to watch for and how you can help.
- Talk about mood disorders with all of your students. Don't allow teasing, taunting or name-calling.

About the Child & Adolescent Bipolar Foundation

The Child & Adolescent Bipolar Foundation is a parent-led, not-for-profit, web-based membership organization of families raising children diagnosed with, or at risk for, early-onset bipolar disorder. Its Professional Advisory Council includes many of the leading researchers in childhood mood disorders.

Mission

The Child & Adolescent Bipolar Foundation educates families, professionals, and the public about early-onset bipolar disorders; supports families to maximize the well-being of the child while minimizing the adverse impact of bipolar disorders on the family; and advocates for increased services to families and research on the nature, causes, and treatment of bipolar disorders in the young.

Visit www.bpkids.org for an online bookstore, parent message boards, family stories, scientific articles, interactive chats, and much more.

About the Artwork in this Book

All artwork in this booklet was done by young people living with depression or bipolar disorder. These works were selected from over 100 entries to a national contest sponsored by DBSA and CABF. All artists who entered the contest received a prize.

About the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) is the leading patient-directed national organization focusing on the most prevalent mental illnesses. The organization fosters an environment of understanding about the impact and management of these life-threatening illnesses by providing up-to-date, scientifically-based tools and information written in language the general public can understand. DBSA supports research to promote more timely diagnosis, develop more effective and tolerable treatments and discover a cure. The organization works to ensure that people living with mood disorders are treated equitably.

Assisted by a Scientific Advisory Board comprised of the leading researchers and clinicians in the field of mood disorders, DBSA has more than 1,000 peer-run support groups across the country. Nearly two million people request and receive information and assistance each year.

Mission

The mission of the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance is to improve the lives of people living with mood disorders.

Visit www.DBSAAlliance.org for mood disorder information, mental health news, local chapter connections, advocacy help and much more.

CABF and DBSA do not endorse or recommend the use of any specific treatments or medications for mood disorders. For information about specific treatments or medications, parents should consult their physicians and/or mental health professionals.



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Depression and Bipolar
Support Alliance

We've been there.
We can help.

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