

Examine Your Classroom Environment

Children with bipolar disorder are frequently very sensitive to their environment. Adjusting the classroom environment to avoid over-stimulation can help your student be more successful in your class.

Noise

Is there one part of your room that is noisier than another?	Yes	No
Does the air conditioner make noise?	Yes	No
Is there a pencil sharpener for classroom use that makes noise?	Yes	No
Are there one or two students who perpetually tap their pencils?	Yes	No
Is there a different class that has a quieter group of children?		

Solutions: Seat your student with bipolar disorder away from the noisier areas of the room. If this does not block enough noise try a desk carrel or noise canceling head phones. If the class that he is in is particularly noisy try rearranging his schedule so that he is part of a quieter group. Set aside 5 minutes in the beginning of class for all pencil sharpening to be done or provide sharpened pencils in exchange for dull ones.

Lighting

Does your room have overhead fluorescent lighting?	Yes	No
Does the sun shine brightly through the windows in a particular area?	Yes	No
Do you use an overhead projector that is bright to look at?	Yes	No

Solutions: Make one area of your classroom a calming area by turning off the fluorescent lighting in that portion and using indirect lighting such as a lamp. Allow students with strong sensitivities to wear a visor or tinted glasses. If you use an overhead projector give your student a copy of notes so that he does not have to look at the overhead projection for a lengthy period of time.

Temperature

Are you able to control the temperature in your room?	Yes	No
Does the temperature fluctuate?	Yes	No
Is one area of the room warmer/colder than another?	Yes	No

Solutions: Children with bipolar disorder have a difficult time regulating their internal temperatures. Keeping the temperature in the room as consistent as possible and encouraging your student to dress in layers can help.

Odors

Do you or your students wear strong cologne or perfume?	Yes	No
Is there a musty odor in the classroom?	Yes	No
Is there a cleaner used in the classroom that leaves a strong smell behind?	Yes	No
Do you use air fresheners?	Yes	No

Solutions: If the room has a musty smell ask to have the carpets cleaned. Wear minimal perfume/cologne if any at all. Use air neutralizers to remove odors instead of air fresheners which may leave a scent behind. Try switching to milder smelling cleaners if possible.