

### Section 3: *Make a Difference*



**Interventions  
and  
Strategies  
for your  
Classroom**

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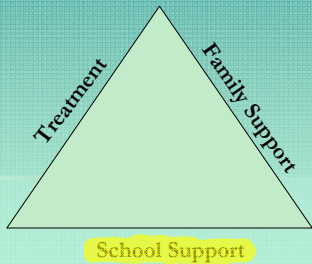
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### *The Treatment Triangle*



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### *How Children with Bp Can Get Help in School*

- 80% of bp kids ages 8-11 are served through special education through IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).
  - Most appropriate category?? Other Health Impaired
- Section 504 (Civil Rights Rehabilitation Act)
- Refer to services if not already in place.

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## *The Classroom*

- Routine
- Flexibility
- Collaboration
- Warm Expression
- Willingness to Accommodate
- Willingness to Learn
- Small Class Size

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## *Physical Environment*

- Noise
- Lighting
- Temperature
- Odors

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## *How Teachers Can Help*



- Know your student / know his illness
- Reduce stress
- Show respect / compassion
- Ask the student what he needs
- Look for teachable moments
- Model appropriate behavior
- Understand when the illness is to blame
- Avoid confrontations and power struggles
- Use positive remarks about your student
- Celebrate milestones (even baby ones)
- Forgive your student/ Forgive yourself

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## Example Accommodations

Johnny's Difficulty	Possible Accommodations
Trouble paying attention in class due to external stimulation/noise.	Reduced class size Seating near the front Headphones to block out noise
Easily overwhelmed and frustrated. Shuts down when presented with large amounts of work.	Present worksheets one at a time vs large packets of work. Reduce the amount of work.
Frequent mood swings which cause both slow and lethargic or loud and energetic behaviors.	Ignore minor behaviors during mood swings. Allow Johnny to run outside in order to expend energy. Extended time on assignments.
Numerous physical complaints such as headaches, stomach aches and back aches.	Allowed to go to the nurse when he feels ill. The nurse will have instructions from child's doctor regarding what interventions are necessary (ibuprofen, Tylenol, crackers, ginger ale, 5 minute rest, etc)

Handout

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## Example Accommodations

Johnny's Difficulty	Possible Accommodations
Dry mouth and increased thirst due to medication.	Allowed to have a water bottle in class.
Medication causes frequent urination.	Allowed to use the bathroom as needed.
Significant writing disability and hand tremors from medication.	Allowed to dictate answers to the teacher. Reduced writing assignments. Receive a copy of all classroom notes. Occupational therapy for handwriting issues. Use word processor to type.
Obsesses over the safety of family members.	Allowed to call home
Difficulty with social interaction.	Involved in a social skills group with the behavioral specialist
Behaviors such as crying in class or angry outbursts.	Emergency card or private signal to teacher for escape from the classroom before a meltdown and safe contact person to go to.

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## 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.

<b>Level of Stability</b>	<b>Concern</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Flexibility in School</b>
Severely ill	Completely unstable - concerned for the safety and well-being of your student or others.	1) Maintain safety. All other concerns are inconsequential. No other learning goals can be achieved without basic safety.	May need to be on homebound instruction or in a therapeutic environment.
Critically ill	Recuperating from severe illness or is very fragile with frequent and severe mood swings. He does not function well in the outside world or at home.	1) Prevent further deterioration of health. 2) Promote recuperation. 3) Maintain a safe environment.	May need partial school day. Will need low stress levels, low workload and no homework.
Moderately ill	Frequent mood swings but is functioning to some degree in the outside world or at home. The student may do well in one environment and not another.	1) Gradually help student build on his functioning. 2) Learn to identify mood states and triggers.	May be able to attend all day with multiple supports in place. Maintain low stress, reduce work load and reduce homework.
Mildly ill/ Partially stable	Minor mood instability but is functioning fairly well both in the outside world and at home. Stress may still induce an exaggerated response but he recuperates quickly and is able to resume activities.	1) Identify areas that could solidify your student's stability. 2) Help student learn skills that could not be mastered during instability.	Should be able to attend most days with multiple supports in place. Student may be able to handle more work but be careful not to overload. Identifying additional challenges such as learning disabilities may help the child move toward wellness.
Wellness/ Stability	Your student is mood stable and currently functioning well in the outside world and at home.	1) Optimize the length of this period of stability. 2) Monitor for early warning signs of setbacks. 3) Strengthen areas of weakness. 4) Understand any limitations that result from the illness.	Should be able to attend school with support. May be able to handle more work. Will still have unavoidable effects that should be taken into consideration. Backup plans should be in place in case of destabilization.

## **Sample Accommodations for Students with Bipolar Disorder**

<b>Johnny's Difficulty</b>	<b>Possible Accommodations</b>
Trouble paying attention in class due to external stimulation/noise.	Reduced class size Seating near the front Headphones to block out noise
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