



The High Jacked House: Three Patterns to Avoid if Your Child Has Bipolar Disorder

by [Julie A. Fast](#)

Bipolar disorder is a tenacious illness that grabs ahold of your family and won't let go. It's the unwanted guest you must ask to leave or it will completely take over your life.

Over my many years of coaching parents of adult children with bipolar disorder, I've discovered three common behavioral patterns shared by most families affected by the illness. These patterns are unintentional and often invisible, but they always cause havoc, pain and disruption if they are not recognized and quickly changed. The three patterns are below. See if one or all of them resonate with you.

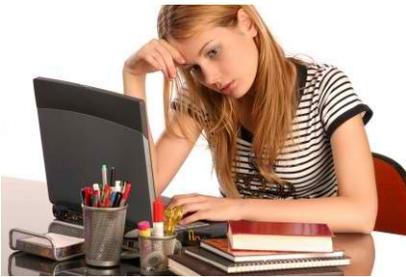


1. The Child has High Jacked the House. In this scenario, you emotionally and financially support an adult child living at home and yet there are no expectations as to how the child should behave. The child may yell, cuss, scream and even threaten you if the topic of bipolar disorder is brought up. Some refuse treatment or go on and off meds. Others may stay in bed all

day due to depression or play video games all night due to mania. Some are too ill to work and some would rather smoke pot and text friends than help you around the house. And yet they go where they want and often do what they want while you are paying all of the bills. This negatively affects siblings as well. For you, the battle between worrying about your child and the feeling that you're being walked on can take up much of your energy.

There are two reasons a house gets high jacked. First, you are too scared to enforce rules as the child may leave and you would then worry desperately about their safety. This is a very realistic concern. Secondly, you simply don't know how to deal with the situation. Change is so stressful, it's often easier to do nothing at all. Sound familiar?





2. School and Work Expectations are Set too High: Children who are ill with bipolar disorder *will* have trouble working and going to school until the illness is under control. It takes many, many months for a child to recover from a massive manic episode or a suicide attempt. I always say it's as though the manic person has run 20 marathons and the depressed person just used all of their reserves

simply to stay alive. If you try to get your child back into the 'real world' too early, they *will* get sick again. It's often the child who wants to go back too soon as it's hard for them to see reason. Luckily, this is not forever. People do go back to school and do work. It just has to be planned around bipolar disorder.

3. Unacceptable Behaviors are Minimized: This is the #1 problem I see with parents. It's easy to become immune to very unacceptable behaviors from your child when the behavior has been going on a long time. If a person heard about certain situations from the outside, they would be absolutely shocked at what you go through. I've listened to stories during



my coaching calls where the parent describes something horrific as though it were a movie review. I stop them and say, "Wait. Did you hear what you just said?" It's easy to become immune to a child screaming, staying in bed for months due to depression, daily fear of suicide, leaving the house at 2AM without a note, smoking pot in the house, walking around like an irritable bear, saying everything is your fault, getting aggressive towards you or punching a wall and so much



more. This is also where psychosis is often missed and very bizarre behaviors are tolerated.

In this pattern, awareness has to be re-introduced so that the situations can be seen clearly and then managed. I find that parents catch onto this concept and can change very quickly when they imagine what the behavior looks like from the outside. It becomes much more easy for them to say, "This is not acceptable and it will not be tolerated in our house."

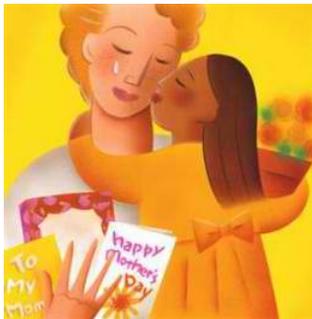




I have a question. If you are a parent, who or what do you think is responsible for the three patterns? Your child? You? The answer is neither. *Unmanaged bipolar disorder is responsible.* This is why the patterns are the same from family to family and across families all over the world. If it's time for a change in your life, start by examining the three patterns and determine where you need to change. This is the first step to taking your life back from the unwelcome bipolar disorder guest.

(Thank you parents. You mean the world to us. You are not alone.)

Julie A. Fast



Julie A Fast is the bestselling author of Loving Someone with Bipolar Disorder, Take Charge of Bipolar Disorder, Get it Done When You're Depressed, Bipolar Happens! and The Health Cards Treatment System for Bipolar Disorder. For ten years, Julie lived with a partner who has bipolar disorder I. Julie was diagnosed with ultra rapid cycling bipolar II with psychotic features in 1995. She also has a close relative with bipolar disorder. Julie works as a coach for partners and family members. The above article gives an idea of the topics she covers. Please visit <http://www.juliefast.com/family-coaching/> to read more about Julie's family work. You can also write bp@speakeasy.net with any questions you may have.

