

## “Media Coverage of Bipolar Disorder: A Teenager’s Perspective”

by Ciara, age 16

Have you ever heard of bipolar disorder? Most people have. There has been intense media coverage lately from newspapers to news broadcasts. Unfortunately, the media is more concerned with putting out a good story rather than publishing the truth of the matter. The newspapers and news broadcasts have been harshly criticizing parents who have children with bipolar, jumping to conclusions about their parenting skills and accusing them of wrongdoing. But, I ask, what wrongdoing? Is it wrong to love your child so much that you want only the best for them? Is it wrong to care enough about your child’s well being to seek help? Is it wrong to want your child to live a normal life? Every loving parent wants those same things for their own children whether your child has bipolar disorder or not.

Seeking help for your child is not what the media calls “a quick fix” or a “fad.” On the contrary, getting treated for bipolar disorder is a life-long process. And as far as the increasing number of children diagnosed with bipolar disorder, it only means doctors and parents are recognizing the disorder at an earlier age. Rather than ignoring the problem hoping it will go away they are caring enough to seek treatment for their child giving them the chance to live a normal, stable life.

So instead of looking down on parents who have children with bipolar and judging them by what the media tells you they are doing, and by what you think they should be doing, look again. Look at the whole picture. The parents are only half the picture. The children are the other half. Think of how these children are suffering from a serious disorder. No one would question a parent with a terminally ill child. They would support them and help them through their hard times. Untreated children with bipolar disorder are terminally ill. If left untreated the results will be tragic. So instead of using caring parents as another negative media debate, applaud them, praise them, and support them in their time of need. If you do, I promise you, the outcome will be far more positive for the parent and child.