

Raising a Moody Child: How to Cope with Depression and Bipolar Disorder.

Mary A. Fristad & Jill S. Goldberg Arnold. New York: Guilford Press (www.guilford.com).
2004, 260 pp., \$16.95 (softcover).

Parenting a child with a mood disorder can be a lonely journey fraught with frustration, fear, and self-doubt. *Raising a Moody Child: How to Cope with Depression and Bipolar Disorder* is an excellent book that provides parents with thoughtful guidance on how best to navigate this difficult terrain. The text is timely as both parents and clinicians are becoming better informed of the extent of mood disorders in children and adolescents, including the startling number of depressed youth who go undiagnosed. However, few resources present the problem and the solutions as clearly and sensitively as Fristad and Goldberg-Arnold's book.

The book is organized into four parts: Understanding Your Child's Problems, Treatment, Helping Your Child Cope, and Helping Your Family Live with a Mood Disorder. The authors also include an extensive list of resources and references.

Part I of the book describes the challenges of raising a moody child and the importance of an early and accurate diagnosis. The authors take pains to support rather than blame parents who are already feeling the burden of their child's suffering. They coach parents to become even better informed experts on their child and carefully step parents through the types of mood disorders in youth using clear language and simple figures. They include many helpful vignettes to describe the key signs and symptoms of mood disorders in youth, as well as the important distinctions between mood disorders in children and adults. The authors encourage monitoring of the particulars of their child's mood and behavior to assist them and the mental health professionals with whom they are encouraged to consult. The book includes simple and straightforward mood monitoring forms for that purpose.

Part II of the book reviews the treatment options available to children and adolescents with mood disorders, from dietary interventions to electroconvulsive therapy, and the many treatments in between. The book describes for parents what they can expect from each treatment option, as well as what the treatment might look like so that parents can ask informed questions of the mental health professionals who might be working with them and their child. The authors believe that youth are best served by well-informed parents and they coach them to prepare well for their meetings with mental health professionals, including a list of typical questions to ask. The authors recognize that children with mood disorders typically require a mental health team, which might include teachers, school psychologist, psychiatrist, family therapist, and individual therapist. Also, the authors provide useful advice on putting together and working with a treatment team. Medications are carefully reviewed as they are often, if not always, included in the treatment plan for youth with mood disorders. The authors do an excellent job of presenting the benefits of medication without unduly alarming parents about the dangers inherent in the misuse of psychotropic medications to treat children with mood disorders.

Part III of the book presents many practical strategies for parents to assist their child cope and function better at home, at school, and in general. The authors begin this section with "Ten Principles for Managing a Mood Disorder," which are useful principles for all parents to follow. The principles include being realistic about what to expect from your child, not over- or under-regulating your child's behavior, being flexible, and taking a problem-solving approach to your child's moodiness. The authors present a "tool kit" which includes a variety of useful coping strategies and activities. The tool kit is divided among four activities (creative, physical, social, and R & R) and the authors use thoughtful vignettes of when and how to use these

strategies with children of different ages and in different situations. As children spend much of each day in school, the book describes the kinds of problems children with mood disorders encounter in school, including the impact of medication side effects on their child's academic and social functioning. The authors encourage parents to take an active, but non-adversarial approach to working with school personnel, but to not shy away from assertively requesting that the school personnel provide what they are legally responsible to provide. To that end, the authors review the federal laws dictating how educational services are managed within school systems, as well as offering guidance on how best to wend their way through the labyrinth of obtaining special educational resources and services for their child. The last chapter in this section advises parents to prepare for the crises that many, but not all, children with mood disorders can experience. The authors offer solid guidelines for managing out-of-control behavior and extreme manic or depressive symptoms.

Part IV of the book takes up the longer term consequences of parenting a child with a mood disorder, such as the impact on family functioning and development, as well as the impact on younger and older siblings. While these consequences on the family are no less important than their child's day-to-day manic or depressive episodes, they are often overlooked in favor of just getting through each day. The authors offer sage counsel on helping the siblings of the child with a mood disorder, as they are often the targets of aggression or the benefactors of benign neglect. In addition, the authors counsel the parents to take care of themselves and offer sound advice presented in a clear and supportive tone.

Raising a Moody Child: How to Cope with Depression and Bipolar Disorder offers a clear and comprehensive guide for parents struggling with the difficult task of parenting their moody child. Although the book is written for parents, mental health professionals will find the information in this book useful too, particularly those not experienced in the treatment of childhood mood disorders. The authors have written a book of uncommon wisdom for the real heroes in this difficult journey – the parents who love and care for their moody child.

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