

## Bipolar Disorder and Depression: Acquainted with the Night (Non-Fiction) Est. Time: 2 Weeks Reading/45 Minutes Class

### Objective

Gain a better understanding of some of the challenges faced by individuals with mental health issues and their families.

### Synopsis

Paul Raeburn's account describes his painful journey to find diagnoses and treatment for his son and daughter. He experienced initial relief when his children were correctly diagnosed, his son with bipolar disorder and his daughter with depression. However, Raeburn soon found himself in an uphill battle when he began seeking appropriate mental health treatments for his children. This calamity filled memoir exposes the realities of mental illness.

### Activity

Read the following book and be prepared to discuss the questions below in class.

Title: *Acquainted with the Night: A Parent's Quest To Understand Depression and Bipolar Disorder in His Children* (2004)

Author: Paul Raeburn

Publisher: Broadway Books • New York

#### For Your Information

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the law that guarantees services and supports to students with disabilities if their school performance is adversely affected by their disability. Some mental health issues, such as bipolar disorder and depression, may be categorized as one of two disability categories defined by IDEA: emotional disturbance or other health impaired. To learn more about bipolar disorder and depression, visit:

- [Bipolar Disorder in Children and Teens](#) (National Institute of Mental Health)
- [Depression](#) (National Institute of Mental Health)
- [Signs of Depression at Different Ages](#) (Understood)

## Bipolar Disorder and Depression: Acquainted with the Night (Non-Fiction)

### Questions/Discussion Topics

1. What diagnoses were finally given to the children? What was Alex's original diagnosis?
2. How many children and adolescents are diagnosed each year with a mental health issue?
3. Discuss the effect that Alex and Alicia's illnesses had on their home life.
4. What changes in their home life do you think would have been helpful?
5. What qualities did the author and his wife possess that were helpful to Alex and Alicia?
6. Why do you think there is such a stigma attached to mental illness?
7. Think about how the mental health system responded to Paul's children.
  - a. Evaluate the effectiveness of the system's response.
  - b. What could have been done differently?