

DBSA Chapter Functions

DBSA Chapter Fundamentals

DBSA Chapter Outcomes

DBSA Chapters exist *to improve the lives of people living with mood disorders* on a local level. These chapters engage in four major functions to achieve this mission:

- **Advocacy**
The chapter actively advocates for legislation, policy and legal actions that improve the lives of people living with mood disorders.
- **Community Outreach**
The chapters receive and actively reach out to community members in need of chapter services. The chapter publicizes community and chapter illness-related opportunities, and maintains communication lines for interested parties.
- **Education**
The chapter provides scientifically sound, illness-based educational programs and resources to community patients, and does not promote a specific medication, business, treatment or provider.
- **Support**
The chapter offers consistent, comfortable, welcoming peer-led support services to their community that help people successfully manage their disease.

Through the four chapter functions, the exemplification of our chapter principles, and the dedication to our mission, policies and guidelines, we, as DBSA chapters, work toward the following outcomes:

- Help people successfully manage their disease.
- Provide emotional support and the wisdom of experience to patients, families and friends.
- Build self-esteem and empower participants to actively improve their life, and the lives of others affected by depression or bipolar disorder.
- Eliminate discrimination and stigma related to depression and bipolar disorder.
- Reach all individuals in the community affected by depression or bipolar disorder with opportunities for support and empowerment
- Educate chapter participants and the public -- through programs and resources -- about mood disorders.
- Help participants rediscover strength and humor they may have thought they had lost



DBSA Chapter Principles

- **Focus on self-help**
Each person has the ability to help themselves. Together we all know more than one of us alone. Everyone has value and something to add to the group process. Each of us is the authority on what we need.
- **Peer-leadership**
We are all equals. Our chapters are governed by our participants, and our support groups are led by patients or friends/family of patients.
- **Confidentiality**
No one may publicly reveal information about the people attending chapter activities, or what is said during a support group meeting. Exceptions to this policy are made only when the safety of an individual is in danger.
- **Safety and Acceptance**
Chapter activities and support groups are welcoming to all, and foster a nurturing atmosphere.
- **Consistency**
Chapter services are offered at consistent times and places for the comfort of participants.
- **Accessibility**
Support groups are free of charge, and all activities are accessible to anyone who can benefit from them.

DBSA Support Group Guidelines

DBSA Chapters engage in four functions, one of which is to run peer-led support groups

- **Share the air**
Everyone who wishes to share has an opportunity to do so. No one person should monopolize group time.
- **One person speaks at a time**
Each person should be allowed to speak free from interruption and side conversations.
- **What is said here stays here**
This is the essential principle of confidentiality, and MUST be respected by all.
- **Differences of opinion are o.k.**
We are ALL entitled to our own point of view.
- **We are all equal**
Accept cultural, linguistic, social and racial differences and promote their acceptance.
- **Use "I" language**
Because we do not participate in support groups as credentialed professionals, *We do not INSTRUCT or ADVISE*. We however do share from our own personal experiences. We are unique individuals, and only we know what is best for our own health (along with our doctor's recommendations). Example: "In my experience, I have found..."
- **It's o.k. not to share**
People do not have to share if they do not wish to.
- **It's everyone's responsibility to make the discussion groups a safe place to share.**
We respect confidentiality, treat each other with respect and kindness, and show compassion.