



Conflict Management in DBSA Chapters

Communication is Key

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

Question: What is Conflict Management?

Answer: The art of using the means available to you to address the disharmony between opposing viewpoints...

con·flict (kɒnˈflɪkt) *n.*
A state of disharmony between incompatible or antithetical persons, ideas, or interests; a clash.

man·age·ment (mænɪdʒ-mənt) *n.*
Judicious use of means to accomplish an end; conduct directed by art or address; skillful treatment; cunning practice.

DBSA Chapters will inevitably face conflict among chapter leaders, chapter participants, and even people unaffiliated with DBSA. No matter a person’s affiliation, conflict is part of everyday life. The important thing, however, is that you have the knowledge, skills and mindset to be able to effectively *manage conflict* when it arises.

Expertly managing conflict would mean that a person understands themselves completely, as well as the very nature of human interaction. That is a big order to fill, but the good news is that even non-experts can learn the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to manage their personal conflicts effectively.

Is Conflict Good or Bad?

The word “conflict” almost always conjures negative, angry, problematic thoughts. Much of your past experience with conflicts may have resulted in sadness, lost-friendships, or even violence. However, if you use a conflict management technique called “re-framing” (explained later; essentially looking at a situation from another perspective) you can see the concept of “conflict” from a different perspective.

Imagine you’re involved in a conflict, but the person who is disagreeing with you is raising valid questions. It actually may *benefit* everyone to address the issues they are presenting (however, many people will see this as a negative situation). Using this “re-framing” idea with conflict management, you will find that conflict can be a welcome tool for healthy organizations. When there are opposing viewpoints, often better solutions are the result.

Conflict, if managed appropriately, can be a valuable tool in the development of any DBSA chapter.

The Stages of Group Development

Groups (like DBSA chapters) have a normal pattern of development. From the day they start, to long into their existence, groups of people can be observed traversing this pattern of development, and experiencing four stages of growth. Not all of the stages are easy, but they are normal, and include the necessity to manage conflict. In fact, you'll notice that conflict is *expected*.

Groups that Work

In an article entitled, "Groups that Work," Gerard M. Blair explains the four stages of group development.

It is common to view the development of a group as having four stages:

- **Forming**
- **Storming**
- **Norming**
- **Performing**

Forming is the stage when the group first comes together. Everybody is very polite and very dull. Conflict is seldom voiced directly, mainly personal and definitely destructive. Since the grouping is new, the individuals will be guarded in their own opinions and generally reserved. This is particularly so in terms of the more nervous and/or subordinate members who may never recover. The group tends to defer to a large extent to those who emerge as leaders.

Storming is the next stage, when chaos breaks loose and the leaders are seemingly attacked. Factions form, personalities clash, no-one concedes a single point without first fighting tooth and nail. Most importantly, very little communication occurs since no one is listening and some are still unwilling to talk openly. True, this battle ground may seem a little extreme for the groups to which you belong - but if you look beneath the veil of civility at the seething sarcasm, invective and innuendo, perhaps the picture come more into focus.

Then comes the Norming. At this stage the sub-groups begin to recognize the merits of working together and the in-fighting subsides. Since a new spirit of co-operation is evident, every member begins to feel secure in expressing their own view points and these are discussed openly with the whole group. The most significant improvement is that people start to listen to each other. Work methods become established and recognized by the group as a whole.

And finally: Performing. This is the culmination, when the group has settled on a system which allows free and frank exchange of views and a high degree of support by the group for each other and its own decisions.

In terms of performance, the group starts at a level slightly below the sum of the individuals' levels and then drops abruptly to its nadir until it climbs during Norming to a new level of Performing which is (hopefully) well above the start. It is this elevated level of performance which is the main justification for struggling through the group process..

Adapted from: <http://www.see.ed.ac.uk/~gerard/Management/art0.html> Gerard M Blair is a Senior Lecturer in VLSI Design at the Department of Electrical Engineering, The University of Edinburgh.

A note on conflict and mood disorders...

Depression and bipolar disorder are illnesses that could potentially challenge the conflict management process. That is only true, however, if we choose to “frame” them in that way. When trying to manage conflict, there are countless outside factors to consider that can be challenging; including:

- *Mood disorders*
- *Personalities*
- *Cultural backgrounds*
- *History between individuals*
- *Formal titles/roles*
- *Language barriers*
- *Physical illnesses that divert concentration*
- *Environmental factors that divert concentration*
- *Listening skills*
- *Etc.*

While all of these factors can be challenging, the reality is that they exist for *everyone* who manages conflict.

Therefore, mood disorders, while they are one challenge that you may face, are only a small factor in conflict management.

The good news is that you can still effectively manage conflict whether or not you or the people you are working with are affected by mood disorders.

“People who want to move things forward and don’t expect conflict are expecting rain without thunder.”
-Zen Master

10 Tips for Preventing Conflict

The first step in successfully managing conflict is working to prevent it altogether. Here are ten tips to remember to help you prevent the challenges of conflict before they arise.

1. Gossip: Just say no

No one trusts a gossip. Gossiping is a great way to signal to your group members that you're not caring or professional, and more importantly may violate the rules of group confidentiality.

2. Praise: Always in short supply

If you use someone's idea or work product, grant them credit. Announce their contributions publicly. You'd hope for the same courtesy from them.

3. Don't burn bridges

Everyone gets angry or occasionally says something they wish they had not. When this happens to you, go back the next day and apologize. It takes courage to apologize. Also, accept an apology when offered.

4. Communicate

Be open. Be honest. Rumors feed on themselves in the absence of reliable information. Regularly communicating with co-leaders and group members about what you're working on is the key to preventing people from jumping to the wrong conclusion when, say, you need to miss a meeting.

5. Forego public shame and blame

It's amazing how many otherwise smart people think that public humiliation is a good way to force another into more productive habits. People will make mistakes and do appreciate discussing concerns in private.

6. Talk to everyone

Cliques form quickly. It's okay to have a select group of people you talk to most often, but be careful not to close out others. Involving everyone is so important, especially in the self-help arena.

7. Include the group in group decisions

A democratic process in DBSA chapters has proven to be an effective manner with which to govern the group's decisions. Not many things can cause more conflict than *one person* making all of the decisions for others. Sometimes it may seem as though you are being helpful by taking "responsibility" for a decision. Always make sure that all stakeholders are considered and included in the decision-making process

8. Give constructive feedback often

This tip is similar to tip # 2, above, but deals more with feedback that might not be full of praise. *Constructive feedback* means more than telling someone when they've done something wrong. It means making positive suggestions that are future oriented. Stop conflicts before they start by providing constructive feedback along the way.

9. Intentionally seek participants outside the "inner circle"

Most groups, including DBSA chapters, have an "inner circle" of participants that are always there, always volunteer, and everyone knows. If you are a part of this "inner circle" you may sometimes find that you never leave that small group of people in social interaction. Avoid conflict by intentionally seeking out those participants that are beyond that "inner circle" of leaders, and grow your relationships with them.

10. Have agreed upon policies for conflict management in place

Every chapter should have an agreed upon policy in place for:

- A. Removing a disruptive participant from chapter activities
- B. Removing a member of the board/leadership of the chapter

If these policies are in place beforehand, conflicts that arise can be much easier to manage. (see "Policies that Solve Problems" later in this document)

5 Ways People Deal with Conflict

(This section adapted from an article entitled, Conflict - An Essential Ingredient For Growth by Susan Pilgrim, Ph.D.)

Individuals use a variety of styles in conflict situations. When looking at conflict management, the persons involved, the importance of the issue, emotional states, and desired outcomes may all come into play. Managing conflict has to do with one's willingness to be cooperative (helping others get what they want) and one's assertiveness (getting what they want). Everyone uses, to some degree, five styles when dealing with conflict.

1. **Avoiding** - When individuals avoid conflict, they often withdraw and detach themselves from the issue. They are not willing to assert their own wants nor do they want to help others get what they want. For example, they tend to "mind their own business" and look the other way when other individuals are discussing chapter politics or ways to equalize the work load.

2. **Accommodating** - When your chapter participants accommodate others in order to avoid conflict, they will do whatever they can to help the other person get what they want, often to their own detriment. They give in to demands, even unreasonable ones, to avoid disagreement. For example, a chapter volunteer may choose to do someone else's job rather than suggest that the responsible person complete it.

3. **Competing** - When your chapter participants compete to "be right," their primary interest is in resolving the conflict *their* way. They have no interest in helping others get what they want. They become very defensive of their position and have difficulty understanding the reasons others don't see things *their* way. A "competing" person may insist that everyone else drop what they're doing so *their* project can be completed in *their* time frame. Those who compete often take advantage of those who accommodate others.

4. **Compromising** - When chapter participants compromise in order to resolve a conflict, they are willing to "give and take" with the others. They want both parties to be either satisfied or dissatisfied with the outcome. Compromising is frequently used because it is expedient and both parties make concessions. For example, a chapter volunteer designing a newsletter may want the newsletter printed on blue paper, while another is adamant about printing on yellow. So they both may give up their first choices and select a second color that they both marginally agree to use.

5. **Collaborating** - When chapter participants collaborate, they are interested in seeing that everyone's wants and needs are met fully. These volunteers tend to consider themselves a team. They work creatively and are solution-oriented. The outcome of the conflict often leads to one that neither party expected was possible prior to the collaboration.

The 4 *REAL* Enemies in Conflict

(This section adapted from a chapter entitled, *Chapter 13 -- Conflict Management Skills* by Gregorio Billikopf Encina of The University of California Agricultural Issues Center, 2001.)

When thinking about conflict management, it is easy to see the person or persons that you are interacting with in a conflict situation as “foes” or “enemies.” It is easy to fall into this trap. The real “enemies” in a conflict are not the people we are interacting with however; the four *real* “enemies” are listed below

1. Our first enemy is the natural need to want to explain our side first. After all, we reason, if they understand our perspective, they will come to the same conclusions we did.
2. Our second enemy is our ineffectiveness as listeners. Listening is much more than being quiet so we can have our turn. It involves a real effort to understand another person's perspective.
3. Our third enemy is fear. Fear that we will not get our way. Fear of losing something we cherish. Fear we will be made to look foolish or lose face. Fear of the truth ... that we may be wrong.
4. Our fourth enemy is the assumption that one of us has to lose if the other is going to win; that differences can only be solved competitively.

-Gregorio Billikopf Encina, The University of California Agricultural Issues Center

Remember that people are *not* the enemy in conflict situations – re-frame that assumption, using the 4 enemies listed above, and you are on your way to resolving any conflict.

***“If the only tool you have
is a hammer, everything
looks like a nail.”***
-Unknown

***“Our tempers are what get us
into trouble. Our pride is what
keeps us in it.”***
-Mark Twain

How to Manage a Conflict

If you are ever faced with a conflict as a DBSA Chapter Leader, it helps to have a plan. Below is a suggested pattern to follow when you are challenged by a situation that needs conflict management.

There are three essential elements to effectively managing a conflict. Those three elements are:

1. The Right Attitude
2. The Right Words
3. The Right Results

The Right Attitude

“Attitude is everything,” someone once said. Indeed, in conflict management it is the first necessary element to getting positive results. You must enter into any conflict with the right state of mind, the right expectations, and the right motivation for mutual success and satisfaction.

Earlier you read about the 5 Ways People Deal with Conflict. The fifth on that list, “Collaboration,” is the result that this how-to section can achieve. Approach a conflict with the attitude that expects collaboration and mutual satisfaction once the conflict is past.

- ***Welcome Conflict (Re-Frame the situation)***

Re-framing happens when you choose to set aside your current perspective (or lens that you see the world through), and re-frame the situation. Imagine a panoramic painting of a rural American landscape. This large painting includes an open field of wheat waving in the breeze along the right hand side. In the sky along that same right-hand side of the painting, the sun shines brightly down upon the flowing stalks. Along the left side, there is a farmhouse and red barn, with trees lining the furthest left edge of the painting. Moving in from the left edge of the landscape are dark storm clouds that threaten severe weather.

Now, imagine the only picture frame that you have is half the size of the painting. Depending on where you place the frame the displayed portion of the painting tells a very different story. Where is your frame?

Conflict is both inevitable in a DBSA chapter, and it is a sign of a healthy DBSA chapter. If a conflict arises, enjoy the opportunity to

exchange creative ideas, and practice your conflict management skills. Choose to re-frame your assumptions that conflict is necessarily negative. Conflict is the only way anything has ever been changed for the better.

- ***“Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”***

This phrase was coined by Stephen Covey in his book The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. It is the first (and possibly most important) tactic that you should employ when working to manage a conflict. Stopping to listen to the concerns or needs of the other person, and then digging deeper to get a thorough understanding of their wants and needs before you blurt out your side is an important skill to learn. This takes having an attitude of understanding and genuine concern for the other person. You both have needs and wants, and you both want to be understood.

- ***Focus on needs rather than positions***

Often in conflicts people take “positions.” It is like their views are founded in concrete, and their ears turn off. They have a *position*, and they are sticking to it. If we focus on our respective positions, it can be hard to get anything accomplished. Instead, have the attitude of wanting to fulfill needs, not pre-determined positions. Both parties have needs, and the way to manage any conflict is find a way to fulfill everyone’s needs.

- ***“Think Win/Win”***

This is another phrase made popular by Covey in The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. This phrase encapsulates the attitude of collaboration. Many people enter into conflicts assuming that it must end up with one person “winning,” and the other person “losing.” If you understand that there is another option – win/win – then you will have an attitude that can be highly effective.

The Right Words

Attitude is the first element to effectively managing conflict, but knowing what to say can be the hardest part. The following suggestions are not meant to be a script for dealing with a conflict situation, instead they are guidelines for you to incorporate into your own language. Using the right words in a conflict management situation takes practice. Keep these guidelines in mind, and you

will find that using the right words is important to maintaining positive, healthy, collaborative relationships

- **Use “I” Language**

Just as in support group settings, “I” language is the way that you should communicate in a conflict management setting. Using the word “You” can lead to blame and a lack of focus on needs. Be sure to keep the conflict about the issue, and not the person. You can do this by saying things like, “I feel ...,” “I think...,” “I want...” This is preferable to saying, “You make me angry when you...” Blaming, and making it about the *person* can be counter-productive.

- **Ask Open Ended Questions**

Again, it is important to get a full understanding of the other person’s needs and wants before moving on, so asking powerful, open ended questions in a positive, helpful tone is crucial. Here are some questions that may be helpful to ask: *What do you think about...? How does that affect you? I understand, tell me more about that... I’m very interested in your concern, how can I help? How do you feel about...?*

- **Never Interrupt**

Often times conflicts arise simply because a person needs to feel like someone is listening to them. There is no better way to make a conflict worse than to interrupt someone when they are trying to be understood. Resist the urge to interrupt when faced with a conflict. Again, seek first to understand, then to be understood.

- **Check your Understanding by Affirming and Restating**

Verify that you're accurately hearing each other. When they are done speaking, affirm that you think you understand them, and ask the other person to let you rephrase (uninterrupted) what you are hearing to ensure that you are hearing them correctly. To understand them more, ask more open-ended questions. Avoid "why" questions -- those questions often make people feel defensive. Make sure you are 100% sure that you understand their concerns and needs.

**The most important rule of
human interaction:
“Always make the other
person feel important.”
-Dale Carnegie**

- ***Turn it Around***

“What would make this situation better?” “How can we improve this situation in a way you believe we can both accept?” “I feel like we both understand each other, now how do you think we can find a way to fill both of our needs?” Saying something like this, can turn this conflict around and place the responsibility for solution in both of your hands. Often conflict continues because we focus on the problem, and not on finding solutions.

The Right Results

Once you have entered into a conflict management situation with the right attitude, and you have used positive, affirming, solution-oriented language, then you can move toward results that are positive for all parties involved.

- ***Agree to Disagree***

Acknowledge the fact that conflict exists. “It seems like we have two different viewpoints, so let’s work together for both of our needs.” Again, conflict isn’t necessarily a bad thing if it is framed appropriately. Agree with the other party that you both have different perspectives, and what is important is that you try to accomplish both of your objectives without sacrificing anything on the way there.

- ***Brainstorm Multiple Solutions***

Many people enter into a conflict situation with an assumption that there is one right solution, and one wrong solution. To move forward, take some time to constructively brainstorm ALL of the possible ways to resolve the conflict. All ideas are good ideas; some will be better than others. Write them all down, don’t judge the ideas, and you’ll find that there are more solutions than either of you ever imagined. Working together to find all of the possibilities can create dramatic results.

- ***Find points of Agreement to Build Upon***

After brainstorming, find something that you both agree upon (even the smallest thing), and work together from that starting point. Even if it is the minutest detail, use that point of agreement as a place to begin building your agreement together.

- **Build a Plan Together to Move Forward**

The best resolutions to conflicts are those that are built together. Sit down and talk about ways to address both of your concerns. Build a plan, a timeline, and goals; whatever it takes to build consensus and resolution.

Communication – The engine that drives conflict management

(This section is adapted from a web article entitled "Communication Skills" by Norman Schultz, a Research Assistant with the Conflict Research Consortium at The University of Colorado. The article was extracted from http://www.crimo.org/ck_essays/ck_communication_skills.cfm)

Effectively managing conflicts really boils down to using sound communication practices. Basic communication skills and a basic understanding of the communication process can be extremely helpful when managing conflicts in your life.

Non-Verbal Communication Tips

- **Body Position**

Be certain that your body is in a listening posture. Lean in to the speaker slightly, to indicate your interest. Sit or stand facing the person directly to indicate that you are open to what they have to say.

- **Smile Sincerely**

There is no better tool in the world than a sincere smile. Enter into a conflict situation with outward signs of your positive, solution-oriented frame of mind. Smile because you know that you're going to meet the needs of everyone involved without sacrificing anything along the way.

- **Eye Contact**

Look people in the eye. Show respect for the speaker by offering your full attention and focus. (Some cultures actually regard eye contact as *disrespectful*, so be sure to use this technique with appropriate audiences.)

- **Nod with affirmation**

Physically indicate that you are listening and hearing what the other person is saying. Nod your head affirmatively (but don't over do it.)

- **Pause to think before talking**

Silence for a moment can be an indicator that you are thoughtfully considering the other person's point of view. It can also serve as a great opportunity for you to formulate your thoughts.

- **No crosses**

Crossed arms and legs indicate a *closed* mind. Keep a listening posture, and welcome the thoughts of the other person.

More on Communication

Norman Schultz, a Research Assistant with the Conflict Research Consortium at The University of Colorado says, "Communication problems in a conflict situation can form an escalating cycle: poor communication exacerbates conflict, and conflict subsequently diminishes the quality of communication."

Schultz suggests that people learn and exercise good communication skills, which can be broken down into five main areas of concern.

5 Communication Areas of Concern *From Norman Schultz*

1. ***The Communicator:*** The one actually doing the communication is responsible for making themselves clear, avoiding hostile, misleading, or ambiguous content. Of course, this assumes the person actually wants to give their listeners access to the real message - deception is sometimes chosen as a means to mislead and manipulate others, though that seldom is a constructive way to resolve a conflict.
2. ***The Receiver:*** A communicator's best efforts are foiled when those on the receiving end don't listen well. Poor listening may be caused by an overly competitive attitude, holding content-coloring prejudices, preconceptions, or bias, or simply giving in to the tendency to hear only what one wants to hear. In the current age of information overload, we all tend to "tune out" to others from time to time. Therefore, in reality, nearly all of us can work on being better listeners, all the more so if we become involved in a conflict.
3. ***The Message:*** The content of the message can directly relate to how easily it is communicated and how accurately it might be received. Great care must be taken when the content is technically complex, when it is an idea that is being introduced for the first time, or when it has controversial, emotionally charged implications. Where language barriers exist, care must also be taken to make sure subtleties are captured to the greatest possible extent - a difficult challenge considering that sometimes things just don't translate well between languages.

4. ***The Means of Communication:*** The medium of communication is more important than might be recognized at first. For example, most of us have used e-mail: you might have noticed (perhaps by paying the price of accidentally offending someone) that emotions and subtleties such as sarcasm or irony don't come through well via e-mail. Most would agree that face-to-face communication is the most comprehensive, including the important factors of voice inflection and body language. Yet face-to-face communication isn't always practical. Sometimes it might not even be desirable, especially where a violent exchange threatens. Letters may seem a bit formal, but they also might take the "sting" out of an otherwise inflammatory communication. When any means is used, the limitations must be taken into account.

5. ***The Communicating Environment:*** When people are engaged in a calm and rational exchange, one's environment seems to be taken for granted. Yet when the mood is heated, where hostilities and mistrust are apparent, these take their toll on communication. It can be quite important to change the way we communicate, or even what we communicate, depending on the environment in which it is presented. Sometimes it might be better to wait until the group's collective mood changes, especially when offering controversial ideas.

Policies that Solve Problems

As suggested in an earlier section, having policies in place before conflict arises is a great way to ease the frustration that can potentially be caused by conflicts. These policies should be created and agreed upon by the whole group, so that when they need to be enforced, everyone understands the expectations, processes and consequences.

Sample Policy for the Suspension of a Support Group Participant

Here is an example of a policy (on the next 2 pages) for coping with problematic situations originally written by the DBSA Gold Coast chapter (who adapted it from MDDA Boston). This is only one example of a policy that you could write. Below this sample policy is an excerpt from the "Sample By-Laws" that DBSA provides chapters when they affiliate.

GOLD COAST DSBA

COPING WITH PROBLEM SITUATIONS DURING SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

by Pamela Ames

It is important to be aware that some obnoxious, disruptive behaviors are symptomatic of depression and bipolar disorder, such as denial, irritability, paranoia, feelings of persecution, frustration, rage, fear, and negativity. To some degree GCDBSA facilitators must be able to deal with this disruptive behavior, but there is a point when the behavior of one person is too disruptive to others to be tolerated.

Gold Coast Support Groups are not helpful to all people all the time. Often disruptive behavior is episodic and will pass. The individual could become an asset to GCDBSA. We encourage candid speech and try to provide a safe place to deal with feelings, but it's a fact that some people are too ill to be able to participate. As long as they do no harm, no action will be taken. This topic for discussion is directed to the few people whose behavior has proven to be unacceptable or intolerable. (Excerpted from MDDA Boston Share-Care Facilitators Guidelines.)

Following are some problem situations and suggested interventions:

MONOPOLIZING THE MEETING

After a reasonable amount of time talking, interrupt the member to clarify the focus of the topic or request comments or sharing of similar experiences from other Group members. Remind the Group that time is limited for each person to enable all members to participate. Ignore members who repeatedly raise their hands to speak. You may need to directly explain to a member that they have had an opportunity to express their views and that others need time to do so.

ARGUMENTS BETWEEN MEMBERS

Intervene before the argument escalates or is too intense. Try to maintain neutrality. Emphasize the right to disagree and/or the need to compromise.

CRYING MEMBER

Allow the expression of emotion with a matter of fact attitude. Don't imply that crying is inappropriate or disruptive. Don't ignore the obvious need for support. Provide an empathetic response, a tissue and sometimes a touch on the person's hand or shoulder. Be patient to allow

the person to collect his/her thoughts in case he wants to continue sharing his/her thoughts or experience. It may also be appropriate to encourage others to share other times when they felt in despair.

SOMEONE LEAVES THE GROUP IN ANGER

Assess the need for an immediate response. If indicated, ask someone to accompany the person to inquire if there is something that will help. If you don't feel comfortable asking anyone in the Group to help, excuse yourself and ask the Group to continue until your return or turn the Group over to a back-up facilitator.

DISRUPTIVE MEMBER

If a member is acting out physical or verbal aggression, it may be frightening to other Group members. Confront the member and set limits or boundaries for the person's behavior. As a last resort, ask the member to leave the Group temporarily until he can better control him/herself. If necessary, ask another facilitator to accompany him/her from the meeting or call Security.

GOSSIPING OR VIOLATING CONFIDENTIALITY GUIDELINES

If this occurs during Group, interrupt the discussion and restate the Guideline. Outside the Group, discuss the problem in private with the member.

ABUSE OF TELEPHONE LISTS

Abuse of telephone lists occurs when calls are made at inappropriate times or a member refuses to stop phoning people who have asked them not to be called. Emphasize the appropriate use of the List in the Group. Confront the member in private about complaints made by others. If necessary, tell the member to stop calling.

Excerpt from "Sample By-Laws" provided by DBSA

Article IV, Section 4. Termination of Membership. The members by an affirmative vote of the board of directors may expel a member for cause after notice and an appropriate hearing.

Policy for the Removal of a Board Member (Chapter Leader)

Another policy to consider including in your chapter's official documentation is one that allows the chapter (collectively) to remove a chapter leader if that chapter leader is excessively problematic. Every organization deals, at one time or another, with a board member or elected/appointed chapter leader that is not fulfilling their responsibility. Planning beforehand for such an occurrence can help your chapter hold yourselves and your leaders accountable for their responsibility.

Through all of this, it is important to maintain a compassionate, understanding, helping attitude. Remember, all of us have difficulties at one time or another. Support combined with accountability can be a fine line to walk, but it is a goal for your chapter to shoot for.

Below is an article from BOARD CAFÉ, published by CompassPoint Nonprofit Services, in partnership with the Volunteer Consulting Group (of New York). The article addresses removing a board member from the leadership of a non-profit organization. It is provided as a reference for you to consider.

REMOVING A BOARD MEMBER

Occasionally, a board member needs to be removed from the board. In some cases, a conflict of interest or unethical behavior may be grounds to remove an individual from the board. In other cases, the behavior of a board member may become so obstructive that the board is prevented from functioning effectively.

Strongly felt disagreements and passionate arguments are often elements of the most effective boards (and genuine debate); and arguing for an unpopular viewpoint is not grounds for board dismissal. But if a board member consistently disrupts meetings or prevents the organization from working well, it may be appropriate to consider removing the individual from the board.

Although board member removal is rare, organizations should provide for such removal in their by-laws. The following three strategies can be used to remove troublesome board members:

- *Personal Intervention:*

One-to-one intervention by the board president or other board leadership is a less formal solution to managing problem board members. If a board member has failed to attend several meetings in a row, or has become an impediment to the board's work, board presidents can meet informally with the board member in question. In person or on the telephone, the board president can request a resignation. Examples: "I respect your strong opinion that we have

made the wrong hiring decision. But we can't continue debating the issue. If you don't feel you can wholeheartedly help us try to make the decision a success, I'd like you to consider leaving the board." "I'm having a hard time managing board meetings with your frequent interruptions and I am worried about losing board members due to the kinds of criticisms you make of them in meetings. I think it would be best if you would take a break from the board . . . you could resign now, and later, when there's a different board president, talk with him or her about your re-joining the board."

- *Leave of absence:*

Make it possible for individuals to take a leave of absence from the board if they have health, work, or other reasons why they cannot participate fully during the current term. A board member can maintain formal membership (but not, for example, be included for purposes of determining a quorum) if he or she is "on disability leave" or "taking a six months leave." Suggesting a leave of absence to a board member who is, for example, failing to do tasks he or she agreed to do offers a gracious exit and allows the board to assign tasks elsewhere.

- *Term Limits:*

Many boards establish not only board terms but also term limits, such as two-year terms with a limit of three consecutive terms. In such a situation, a board member cannot serve more than six consecutive years without a "break" from the board. After a year off the board, an individual can once again be elected to the board. Proponents feel that term limits provide a non-confrontational way to ease ineffective board members off the board. Opponents of term limits believe that, with proper board leadership, errant board members can be guided toward either improving their behavior or quietly resigning from the board.

- *Impeachment:*

Organizational by-laws should describe a process by which a board member can be removed by vote, if necessary. For example, in some organizations a board member can be removed by a two-thirds vote of the board at a regularly scheduled board meeting.

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 values, 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.