

Rochester, Henrietta, Brockport, Webster, Canandaigua, Clifton Springs, and more locations anticipated soon...

Welcome

We want you to feel comfortable when you come to one of our meetings, so let us tell you about the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance of the Rochester, NY region.

Our local support groups are made up of people who experience symptoms of depression or bipolar disorder (formerly known as manic depression) and their supporters. We have been meeting in the Rochester area since 1989. We find strength in sharing our experiences.

Purpose

Our main purpose is to create a safe environment to share our experiences and offer support to each other.

We provide educational information and offer peer support. We advocate for people with all forms of mental illnesses to increase acceptance, promote general understanding, and reduce stigma.

National DBSA

Our meetings are independent affiliates of the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance headquartered in Chicago, Illinois. For more information or free literature, call DBSA headquarters at 1-800-826-3632 or visit DBSA on the web: www.dbsalliance.org.

Medical Advice/Advisors

Because we are peers, we do not offer medical advice. Rather, we encourage those who attend our meetings to seek medical attention from qualified mental health professionals who can offer a plan of treatment. Many hospitals, doctors, therapists and clinics refer people to our support groups as a supplement to medical care.

Our support groups are not “group therapy” and we do not follow a 12 step program. Rather, our support groups are led by peers who guide the group in a format that allows those who come to the group to share with and learn from each other.

Our groups each have a medical advisor who can be contacted to answer questions. If you want to speak to one of our medical advisors, ask one of the facilitators for the evening for the contact information.

Cost

Our meetings are free and there is no membership fee to be a member. At some of our locations we do, however, pass an envelope and ask for a voluntary donation to pay for meeting spaces, our website, and other expenses.

Format

In general, our support groups follow this format:

- Welcome (general information about DBSA)
- Announcements and/or educational presentation
- Support Group (we often divide into smaller groups)
 - Check-in
 - Individual Sharing
- Wrap-up (positive ending) and collect donations

We strive to create an environment for people to feel safe to share deeply private experiences, so whatever is shared must be kept confidential. We show respect by paying attention without interrupting, cross-examining, or carrying on side conversations when someone is sharing. We try to give everyone time to share (without monopolizing) and we care for each other by responding with compassion, recognizing that each person's experience is unique.

Facilitators

Our facilitators are peers who have been trained to follow our National Association's guidelines to lead meetings. They receive ongoing support. They are all volunteers.

After you have attended a few meetings, we encourage you to participate in whatever way you feel comfortable. For example, you could greet new members, set up or put away literature, provide refreshments, take phone calls between meetings from people who have questions, or take steps toward becoming a facilitator yourself.

Keep Coming Back

You have taken a big step. It may take a while to become comfortable with the group, but keep an open mind. We care about you and we encourage you to let us know if we can help in any way. Please talk with one of the facilitators after the meeting if you have any questions or concerns. Stick with us and remember, “**You are not alone!**”

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.