

DBSA West Hill and Valley Newsletter: December, 2010

Our Holiday Party was a success!

We all had fun! Over 50 attendees enjoyed great food, good music, sparkling conversation, and the opportunity to meet new people. Special thanks goes to Norma "Christmas Elf" Wimunc for her wonderful decorating for the event, and to Bernadette "Vanna White" Knudsen for her assistance with the raffle.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

Bank Account Balances

Checking Account Balance	\$ 775
Emergency Medical Fund:	\$5,119

Newsletter Distribution

Email Recipients	197
Hardcopy Recipients	57
Total Recipients	254
Last Email Date	12/8/10
Last USPS Mailing Date	12/9/10

Dues Paying Members

Individual Members	17
Family Members	11
Total Members	28

Last Board of Directors Mtg	11/7/10
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This Issue's Article: Handling the Holidays – Part 2 (thanks to WebMD)

Facing Holiday Parties

For a lot of people with bipolar disorder, it's the holiday get-togethers -- family dinners, office parties, neighborhood caroling expeditions -- that cause the most anxiety. Here are some tips for getting through them unscathed.

- **Say "no" sometimes.** Don't overbook yourself. Most of us have more holiday obligations than we can handle. Decide which ones are most important and which aren't. Some events may simply be overwhelming. It's okay to say "no".
- **Have an ally.** If going to a party is making you anxious, go with a friend, relative, or co-worker. Arrive and depart together. And your partner could watch your back, helping you avoid alcohol and other temptations.
- **Leave early.** Going to a party doesn't mean you have to stay all night. Decide beforehand when you'd like to leave and stick to it. Even stopping in for just a few minutes is okay. Having a getaway plan may relieve a lot of anxiety.
- **Stick to your schedule.** If you're having fun, of course you don't want to leave a party to make your bedtime. But you need to follow your regular non-holiday schedule as closely as possible. And make sure to keep up your normal exercise routine too -- or at least get out for quick walks.
- **Try not to overindulge.** It's hard, but you really must stay away from alcohol, especially if you've had problems with it in the past. And despite the allure of all those sweets, try to stick to your normal diet.
- **Weigh the pros and cons.** Even if it makes you anxious, it's generally a good idea to try going to your family's holiday dinner. But there are exceptions. If you have a really stormy family history, and seeing your family tends to trigger problems, then staying away could be the right move. Make this decision carefully. Weigh the benefits and the risks. Can you handle the guilt of not going? Most importantly, make sure you have something else planned. Don't say no and then spend the holidays alone.

Bipolar Disorder & Shopping Sensibly

It's very easy to get caught up in the frenzy of the season and become fixated on finding everyone the perfect gift. But again, you need to stay in control -- especially if you're prone to unhealthy buying sprees. Some suggestions:

- **Keep perspective.** Don't get too caught up in finding the best gift for everyone. It's not worth the anxiety -- and besides, your nephew would probably be happy with a check anyway.
- **Stick to a budget.** If you have a problem with overspending, come up with an explicit budget well before the holidays arrive. You may want the aid of a friend or family member to help you stick to it.
- **Spread out the shopping.** Try to shop ahead. The sooner, the better.
- **Shop online.** If you have access to the Internet, online shopping is a low-stress way to avoid the mall's hassles. For a little extra, some sites may even gift wrap.
- **Go for gift certificates.** Just about everyone loves a gift certificate. And they don't have to be impersonal. Choose one that fits the person: get your sister one from her favorite boutique and your uncle one from a restaurant he likes.

Caring for Yourself

The holidays are a time when we're encouraged to think about other people instead of ourselves. That's fine, **to a point**. But if you focus so much on other people that you neglect yourself, you're at higher risk of mania or **depression**. That's not good for anyone. Your first order of business during the holidays has to be taking care of yourself. If you don't, all sorts of bad things can happen.

So this holiday season, **plan ahead, keep to your schedule, and scale back your expectations**. If you do, you can beat holiday depression, mania, anxiety, and hassles -- and enjoy the season. That's good for you as a person living with bipolar disorder -- and for your loved ones too.

POETRY BY Blair J. Eliassen

Do Not Enumerate Me

I am not defined by my Social Security number.

I am not leveraged by my line of credit.

I am not legitimized by a driver's license.

I am not trapped by my birth date.

They are but various digits.

Some random, some sequential, some earned, some lost.

They facilitate purchasing widgets.

Some crucial, some vain, some valuable, some squandered.

Do not enumerate me by my possessions.

Do not make a cookie-cutter impression.

Do not enumerate me into filing order.

Do not construct an arbitrary border.

Look beyond the formula; judge me by my conduct and my soul.

Getting to know your Board of Directors: This month we feature our Treasurer, Mary Paganoni.

Mary and her husband, Mike and I have been married 33 years. They have five children (four daughters and one son) and eight grandchildren! Mary retired from Electro Motive in June of 2004 with 31 years of service. She is active in her retiree's chapter of local union 719 U.A.W. where she holds the position of financial secretary. Mary stays busy babysitting the grandchildren, and volunteering at Saret's Treasure of Hope in Glen Ellyn.

Please help DBSA West by becoming a dues-paying member.

DBSA is an all-volunteer organization dedicated to improving the lives of people living with mood disorders and their loved ones. Our primary focus is on providing support groups for persons dealing with depression and bipolar disorder and their friends and families.

We are constantly looking for ways to make people aware of our group, which means we spend money on postage, printing and distribution of our information. When you become a member of DBSA, your \$20 individual and \$30 family annual dues payments help us pay for the production and mailing costs of our newsletters and brochures. Please see the sign up form at the end of this newsletter.

Our Officers:

President: Bernadette Knudsen, beesnees1@sbcglobal.net

Vice President: Norma Wimunc, nwimunc25@earthlink.net

Treasurer: Mary Paganoni, marypaganoni@aol.com

Secretary: Bob Steinmetz, bob@steinmetzmail.com

Our Support Group Facilitators:

Sunday: Bernadette Knudsen, beesnees1@sbcglobal.net

Sunday: Linda Dougherty

Wednesday: Norma Wimunc, nwimunc25@earthlink.net

Thursday: Bob Steinmetz, bob@steinmetzmail.com

Support groups meet at Good Samaritan Hospital, 3815 Highland Ave in Downers Grove.

In December:

- **Patient Support Groups** are held in the Red Oak Room on the first floor in the main wing of the hospital on Sundays from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm, and on Wednesdays in the White Oak room from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm.
- **Caregiver Support Groups** are held in the White Oak Room on Thursdays from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm. NOTE: On December 9, the caregiver meeting will be held in the CEC conference room, on the ground floor of the North Pavilion.

Check for last minute changes at www.dbsawest.org

DBSA West

WE'VE BEEN THERE. WE CAN HELP

The Chicago Western Suburbs Chapter of the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance.

BECOME A MEMBER: Print this form and mail it with your check to the address below.

Your annual dues (\$20 for an individual, and \$30 for a family) will help us in our mission to provide support, friendship, hope and information for individuals with depression or bipolar disorder and their families.

In addition to helping to financially support our organization, you will receive our monthly newsletter, either by mail or Email.

Type of membership: Family (\$30): Individual (\$20):

Type of Newsletter: US Mail: Email:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Email Address: _____

Make checks payable to: **DBSA West**

Mail Checks to: **DBSA West
PO Box 4646
Naperville, IL 60567**

Thank you for your generous support!