

DBSA West Hill and Valley Newsletter: March, 2011

16-25 Support Group

Our new teen and young adult support group is off to a very slow start. So far, we have only had two attendees. Alex is showing up faithfully each Sunday afternoon at 1:00pm. If you know anybody between 16 and 25 who would benefit from a support group, please encourage them to attend.

MONTHLY BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

Bank Account Balances		Newsletter Distribution	
Checking Account Balance	\$ 950	Email Recipients	237
Emergency Medical Fund:	\$5,132	Hardcopy Recipients	60
Dues Paying Members		Total Recipients	297
Individual Members	18	Last Email Date	3/6/11
Family Members	17	Last USPS Mailing Date	3/8/11
Total Members	35	Last Board of Directors Mtg	1/16/2011

On February 13th, Rebecca Steinmetz MSW presented her thoughts on important aspects of the relationship between therapist and client. This month's article is abstracted from her recent presentation. We thank Rebecca for a very educational and interesting presentation.

Hiring / Firing a Therapist

When selecting a therapist, first, make time to write down exactly why you are seeking therapy. Having a clear idea of your purpose for therapy will help both you and the therapist. Next, you will need to select a therapist. In the selection process, there are two opportunities for you to gather the information you need to make a decision on selecting a therapist: the initial phone call, and the intake appointment. The initial phone call you make to a therapist's office is likely to last only 5 minutes or less, so there is not a lot of time to ask questions. However, there are a few that you should ask:

1. How much will the appointments cost? (Also, do they take your insurance)
2. Is the therapist experienced in working with people with mood disorders?
3. Is the therapist willing to work with your psychiatrist on medication management?
4. Is the therapist available for appointments at a time that matches your schedule?
5. Any other "deal-breaker" question(s) that you may have.

If the therapist is too expensive, or answers no to questions 2-5, stop and look for another therapist. After the initial phone call, you will be scheduled for an intake appointment. People may think of these appointments as a time for the therapist to gather information about the client. However, it is also an important time for the client to gather information about the therapist. Make a list of questions that address issues that are important to you before the intake appointment. These will vary greatly, depending on the person searching for a therapist. Here are some potential questions that you can use as a guide for making your own, personalized list:

- Do you (the therapist) believe a mood disorder can be cured? If so, why?
- Do you have strong opinions against using psychiatric medication?
- What do you consider the most important factors in managing a mood disorder?
- Do you have any specialized training, like working with survivors of sexual abuse, mourning, substance abuse, art therapy, couples counseling.

- Are you comfortable discussing the impact my illness and/or medication has had on my sexuality?
- How do you feel about non-monogamy and casual sex?
- How do you feel about clients with a background of divorce, substance abuse, or incarceration?
- Are you comfortable talking about religious beliefs or spirituality?
- How do you handle problems in the therapy relationship? (Such as when a therapist and client have an argument or a client insults the therapist.)
- Do you view clients with past suicide attempts differently than clients without that history? If so, how?
- Do you feel that tattoos, piercings or other unconventional choices are always signs of destructive behavior or can they be valid forms of self-expression?
- Are you available for emergency appointments or can you be paged outside of office hours?

Note: the above list is not an exhaustive list, but is a list that you can start from.

“Green Flags” (the opposite of Red Flags)

Here are some positive things you may learn in the intake appointment that would lead you to “hire” a therapist:

- You feel safe with the therapist.
- The therapist is willing to acknowledge when they don’t know something.
- The therapist is willing to seek out additional information to help you in therapy.
- The therapist talks about having clear boundaries with clients such as:
 - not having a friendship with you outside of counseling.
 - not talking about their own personal problems.
 - not having a sexual relationship with you, now or ever in the future

Red Flags

Sometimes, despite your best efforts to find a therapist who is right for you, situations arise that make it very difficult to have a proper relationship with your therapist. You should be ready to fire the therapist if he or she:

- pushes you towards converting to a particular religion.
- does not fully respect your feelings (grief, anger, rage, sadness, despair, joy).
- minimizes or is dismissive of your experience and the pain it’s caused you.
- makes physical contact with you besides a handshake.
- discusses other patients with you. This would be a breach of confidentiality.
- talks about his/her problems.
- discloses lots of personal information about themselves.
- makes fun of problems or fears that you are struggling with.
- will not apologize or even acknowledge if they make a mistake.

Terminating the Relationship

You don’t owe the therapist a long discussion if you want to switch to another therapist. You can end the relationship over the phone with a call that says: “I have decided to go in another direction for my therapy, and I will not be scheduling any more appointments with you. Please send me a copy of my records so I can share them with therapists I may work with in the future.”

That's it. No big discussion, no arguing, no justifying reasons for the change. You may choose to expand the discussion, but you really don't "owe" the therapist more than the above.

Note: Obtain your records as soon as possible. If you can, pick them up in person, so you have them as quickly as possible. Bring your records with you the next time you seek therapy

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
Sunday (young adult): Alex Steinmetz, alexsteinm@gmail.com
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. Here is our schedule for March and April at the time of printing this newsletter. Always refer to www.dbsawest.org for the most current information regarding room assignments.

Date	Day	Time (pm)	Location	Group
Wednesday	9-Mar	7:00-9:00	Birch Rm	Patient
Thursday	10-Mar	7:00-8:30	White Oak Rm	Friends and Family
Sunday	13-Mar	1:00-3:00	Blue Oak Rm	Patient
Sunday	13-Mar	1:00-3:00	Black Oak Rm	Teen / Young Adult
Wednesday	16-Mar	7:00-9:00	White Oak Rm	Patient
Thursday	17-Mar	7:00-8:30	White Oak Rm	Friends and Family
Sunday	20-Mar	1:00-3:00	Red Oak Rm	Patient
Sunday	20-Mar	1:00-3:00	Black Oak Rm	Teen / Young Adult
Wednesday	23-Mar	7:00-9:00	White Oak Rm	Patient
Thursday	24-Mar	7:00-8:30	White Oak Rm	Friends and Family
Sunday	27-Mar	1:00-3:00	Red Oak Rm	Patient
Sunday	27-Mar	1:00-3:00	Black Oak Rm	Teen / Young Adult
Wednesday	30-Mar	7:00-9:00	White Oak Rm	Patient
Thursday	31-Mar	7:00-8:30	White Oak Rm	Friends and Family
Sunday	3-Apr	1:00-3:00	Red Oak Rm	Patient
Sunday	3-Apr	1:00-3:00	Black Oak Rm	Teen / Young Adult
Wednesday	6-Apr	7:00-9:00	White Oak Rm	Patient
Thursday	7-Apr	7:00-8:30	White Oak Rm	Friends and Family
Sunday	10-Apr	1:00-3:00	Red Oak Rm	Patient
Sunday	10-Apr	1:00-3:00	Black Oak Rm	Teen / Young Adult
Wednesday	13-Apr	7:00-9:00	White Oak Rm	Patient
Thursday	14-Apr	7:00-8:30	White Oak Rm	Friends and Family
Sunday	17-Apr	1:00-3:00	Red Oak Rm	Patient
Sunday	17-Apr	1:00-3:00	Black Oak Rm	Teen / Young Adult
Wednesday	20-Apr	7:00-9:00	White Oak Rm	Patient
Thursday	21-Apr	7:00-8:30	White Oak Rm	Friends and Family
Sunday	24-Apr	1:00-3:00	Red Oak Rm	Patient
Sunday	24-Apr	1:00-3:00	Black Oak Rm	Teen / Young Adult
Wednesday	27-Apr	7:00-9:00	White Oak Rm	Patient
Thursday	28-Apr	7:00-8:30	White Oak Rm	Friends and Family

DBSA West – Suburban Chicago

We've been there. We can help.

BECOME A DUES-PAYING 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 to their friends and families.

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

Type of newsletter: US Mail: Email

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

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!
