



Depression and Bipolar
Support Alliance
DBSA Central Florida

How Our Support Groups Work

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance Central Florida offers support groups facilitated by dedicated and passionate facilitators. **You do not need to register or call ahead, just show up at the time and place listed.** Our meetings last an hour and a half. Please arrive as early as possible after the start time to minimize disruptions.

What happens at a DBSA support group meeting?

- **Self-help:** DBSA support group meetings focus on mutual aid and strategies for living the fullest life possible. Participants continually seek to provide hope, reassurance and encouragement to one another. By sharing experiences, insights and ideas, people get peer-to-peer support from others who have “been there”.
- **Acceptance and safety:** Participants make the group a safe place by fostering a supportive, trustworthy, respectful, nonjudgmental atmosphere. All those attending have opportunity to share strategies, tips and experiences that can help others cope successfully with mood disorders. Participants have the common goal of wanting to live successfully with their illness and do not criticize the choices other group members make. Rather they encourage each other to learn from the experiences shared and make their own informed decisions.
- **Confidentiality:** What happens at a DBSA Support group stays within the group. No one may reveal information about the people attending the group or what is said during the meeting. **Exceptions to this policy are made only when the safety of an individual is in danger.**
- **Peer leadership:** Each support group meeting is facilitated by someone with a mood disorder or a family member. The facilitator guides discussion, provides focus to the group and helps ensure that group principles/rules are followed. Facilitators receive guidance and resources from DBSA staff and have the opportunity to attend leadership training sponsored by DBSA.

What does not happen at a DBSA support group meeting?

- **Therapy or treatment:** Group participation is a valuable supplement to professional care (whether that care includes medication, talk therapy or other treatment methods) but it is **not** a substitute for it. Group members do not seek to diagnose one another, and DBSA and its support groups do not endorse or recommend the use of any specific treatments or medications. Each individual should work with his or her own health care professional(s) to determine his or her best possible treatment plan.
- **A lecture by an expert:** Although some meetings feature guest speakers or special lectures, most DBSA groups are of the “share/care” variety, in which all are encouraged to share, if they wish to.
- **A religious meeting or a 12 step group:** Group participants are not compelled to accept any particular set of beliefs or to follow any particular list of “steps”. It is understood that each person’s path toward wellness is unique.
- **A “pity party”:** While participants often share the challenges of their lives and the feelings of hopelessness that accompany mood disorders, groups focus on day-by-day coping, not on self-pity.

Disclaimer: Please note our support groups are not a substitute for treatment and therapy under the care of a professional. We provide an avenue for sharing and caring that supports professional care.