

## **DBSA FAQ**

Q: Can you tell me about the support group?

A: The Centreville support meeting is a peer to peer lead support group for adults diagnosed with bipolar or depression. A facilitator runs the meeting. There are introductions then time for everyone to share their personal experiences or ask questions of the people in the group. As a support group, we do not provide counseling or therapy services, but the insight you can get from the others is often invaluable and often unavailable in other settings. While the group cannot replace the care of a professional, it can prove to be a very helpful addition to a treatment plan. The best way to learn about the group is to come.

Q: Can you tell me about the format of the meeting?

A: The meeting generally opens with going around the room for introductions. Then a facilitator will open the floor for anyone that wants to talk. People that would like to talk are welcome. Discussions will often include questions about medications, doctors, healthcare, treatments, behaviors, and personal interactions. But there is really no limit.

Q: Is this support group similar in format to AA meetings where everyone shares their own experience, joins hands at the end and passes out coins?

A: The group encourages everyone to share their experiences, but is not structured like an AA meeting. This is not a recovery group and does not follow a 12-steps model. There is no spiritual component and there is no specific progress to track with coins, pins, certificates, etc.

Q: The meetings are held in a church, are they religious based?

A: The Centreville United Methodist Church has extended the use of their facility as a good neighbor in the community. The meetings are not religious or associated with any religious organization. Members of the group hold many different beliefs and are welcome to share their life experiences respectfully.

Q: I have some experience where \_\_\_ (fill in the blank), is this normal?

A: The most common question from first time attendees is, "Is this normal?" And in almost all cases the answer is, "Yes." Come, ask, and get insights from others who share experiences similar to yours.

Q: How big is the support group?

A: The size of the group ranges by week from 8-18. We make every effort for all who wish to share each week.

Q: Do I have to share?

A: Nobody is expected or forced to share. Everyone is given the opportunity, but If you want to sit and listen your absolutely welcome.

Q: How do I join the group?

A: There is no membership or signing up. You are welcome to come and participate.

Q: Are the sessions overseen or guided by a mental health professional?

A: There are no therapists, psychiatrists, or other credentialed persons acting in an official capacity. If they participate, it will be as part of their own personal treatment. Members, regardless of their experience or profession, provide insights based on personal experience and do not give advice.

Q: Is this a support group for the family?

A: This is not a loved ones support group. The group is open to persons diagnosed with bipolar disorder or major depression over the age of 18. Others are not allowed in the meeting, this fosters a feeling of openness for attendees. A loved ones support group does exist. More information can be found at <http://www.dbsanova.org/lovedones.html>.

Q: I am a graduate student studying mental health counseling and one of my current assignments is to observe a support group in my area for any type of mental illness. Is it possible to observe the DBSA Support Group?

A: We realize the need for practical experience in education, however, the group is only open to persons over the age of 18 who are diagnosed with bipolar disorder or major depression. Others are not allowed in the meeting, this fosters a feeling of openness for attendees. You may check with other organizations such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) groups at <http://www.nami.org> to see if they can accommodate your needs.

Q: Is your support group appropriate for my child.

A: The group is open to persons over the age of 18 diagnosed who are diagnosed with bipolar disorder or major depression and would not be appropriate for a child . A teen group exists and information can be found at <http://www.dbsanova.org/teens.html>. For younger children, please seek the advice of a mental health professional as to what groups exist that might provide the best support.

Q: Do you have a mailing list or other way to contact members?

A: There is a Google Group (DBSA-NOVA) that allows you to get messages to members of the group. Like the Centreville group it is for group members only. Please send an email to [centreville@dbsanova.org](mailto:centreville@dbsanova.org) to request to be added to the list. Because the list is closed there is no spam to fill your inbox.

Q: Should I notify somebody if I cannot attend a meeting?

A: There is no need to notify anyone if you cannot attend. Although members will often post on the Google group that they are okay, but won't be there.

Q: How do I make a donation to DBSA Northern Virginia?

We appreciate your interest in donating to the Depression Bipolar Support Alliance of Northern Virginia. Your donations will be used to continue our outreach efforts to help Bipolar and Depressed persons and their families to cope with the difficulties that these diseases bring to their lives.

Donations made by check can be mailed to:

DBSA Northern Virginia  
PO Box 10207  
Manassas, VA 20108

Donations can now also be made through PayPal at the following link:

[https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=\\_s-xclick&hosted\\_button\\_id=68864GWC8WYGL](https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_s-xclick&hosted_button_id=68864GWC8WYGL)