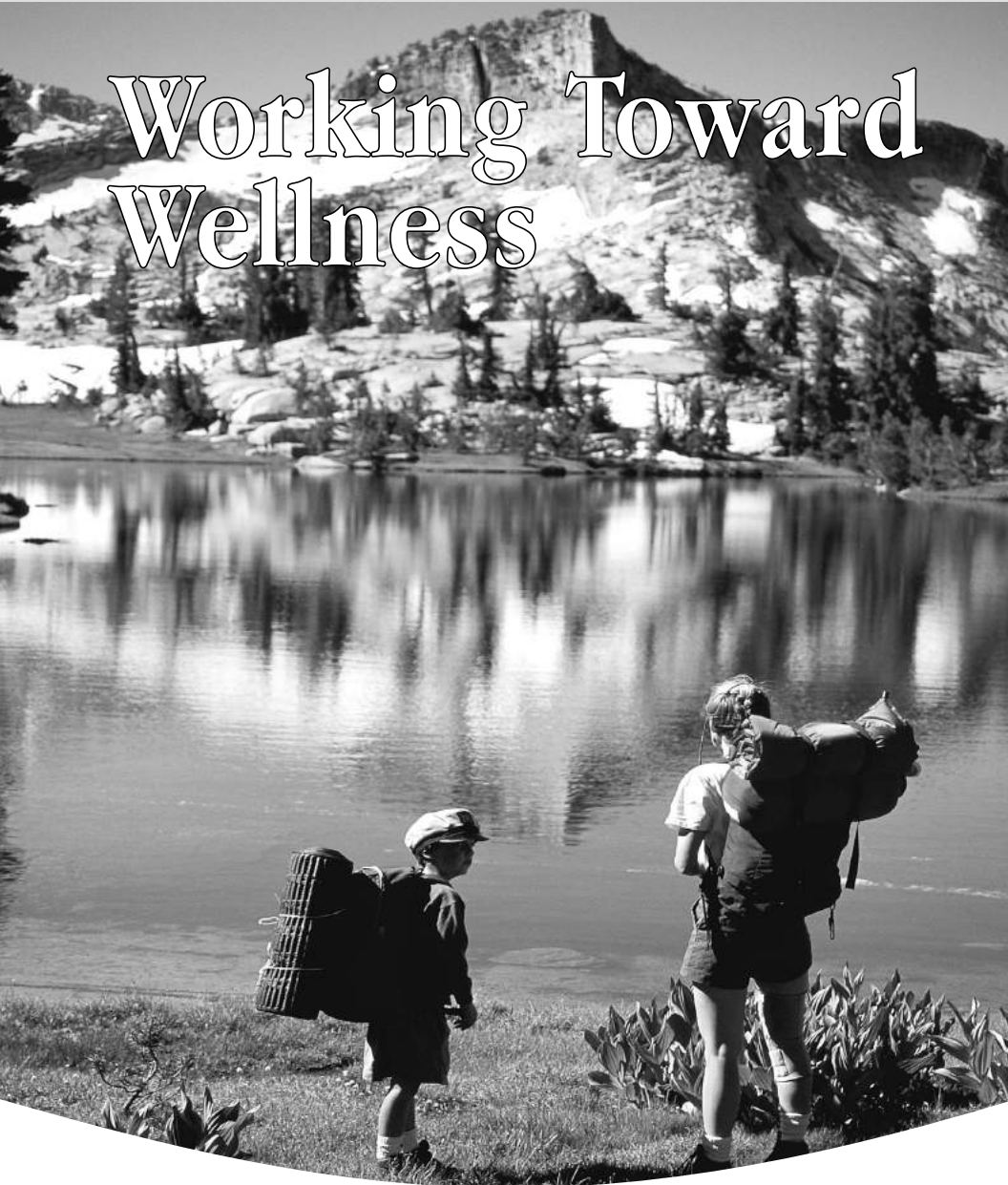


Working Toward Wellness



Depression and Bipolar
Support Alliance

We've been there. We can help.

THIS WORKBOOK IS ABOUT YOU.

Each person takes a different path toward wellness. This booklet can help you look at your lifestyle choices, track your progress, recognize patterns and put together a wellness plan that fits you.

The first thing you can do is educate yourself about your illness.

Check with your health care providers, the library or web sites like www.DBSAlliance.org.

Everything in this booklet is a suggestion. Your wellness journey will happen step-by-step, not all at once. As you look back, it may surprise you how far you've come.

NAME PHONE(S)

ADDRESS

HEALTH CARE PROVIDER PHONE(S)

ADDRESS

HEALTH CARE PROVIDER PHONE(S)

ADDRESS

PHARMACY

ADDRESS PHONE

MEDICATION ALLERGIES

(More medication information can be found starting on page 16.)

LOCAL CRISIS/HELP LINE

National Hopeline Network **Phone: (800) SUICIDE (800-784-2433)**

HEALTH INSURANCE COMPANY/HMO/MEDICAID PROVIDER

POLICY NUMBER PHONE

SYMPTOMS

One of the ways to measure your wellness is to check for symptoms and how much they keep you from doing the things you want to do. Rate your symptoms using these charts each week or after each health care appointment.

Put a star by the symptoms that are most troublesome.

Take action as soon as you spot them.

Don't wait for a crisis.

Depression

SYMPTOM

HOW MUCH DOES THIS
AFFECT MY LIFE?
(1=NOT AT ALL/10=A LOT)

Sad, empty, irritable or tearful mood most of the day, nearly every day

No interest in or pleasure from activities once enjoyed

Major changes in appetite or body weight

Insomnia or sleeping too much

Feelings of restlessness or being slowed down

Fatigue, exhaustion, lack of energy

Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt

Inability to concentrate or make decisions

Thoughts of death or suicide



If you or someone you know has thoughts of death or suicide, contact a medical professional, clergy member, loved one, friend, or crisis line for help right away.

K

knowing which symptoms affect your life

can help you prepare for and cope with them.

Mania

SYMPTOM

HOW MUCH DOES THIS
AFFECT MY LIFE?
(1=NOT AT ALL/10=A LOT)

Feeling overly energetic, “high,” “better than good,”
or unusually irritable for at least one week

Very high self-esteem, feeling like you can do anything

Decreased need for sleep without feeling tired

Talking more than usual, feeling pressure to keep talking

Racing thoughts, many ideas coming all at once

Distracted easily, thoughts or statements jumping topic-to-topic

Increase in goal-directed activity, restlessness

Excessive pursuit of pleasure (e.g., financial or sexual)
without thought of consequences

Other Symptoms

SYMPTOM

HOW MUCH DOES THIS
AFFECT MY LIFE?
(1=NOT AT ALL/10=A LOT)

Drinking/using substances

Overeating

Obsessions

Anxiety

Panic attack

Delusions (strange or bizarre thoughts)

Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things)

TALK THERAPY

A good therapist can help you explore and change patterns of behavior or emotions that contribute to your illness. Therapy is a safe place where you can be honest about your thoughts, feelings and actions, and discuss ways to help your moods become more stable. If you aren't able to see your therapist every week, talk about things you can do to help yourself between appointments.

Topics to work on in therapy

Example Unstable relationships

Goal Learn what I can do to prevent fights and conflicts in my life. Work on being more patient, considerate or trusting.

1.

Goal

2.

Goal

3.

Goal

P EER SUPPORT


Support from people who understand is another important part of treatment. There are many ways to get this support. Become part of one of the more than 1,000 DBSA support groups across North America, or visit the interactive forums and chat rooms at www.DBSAlliance.org. You might also choose to join a support group that addresses another illness you have, such as alcoholism.

SUPPORT GROUP NAME—CONTACT NAME—CONTACT PHONE(S)

LOCATION

MEETING TIME(S)

Goals for support group



*S*tarting a DBSA support group can help you and others.
Contact DBSA's chapter team at (800) 826-3632
to get started.

Exercise

Exercise doesn't have to be exhausting or expensive. Even a short walk several times a week can help you feel better. You can also work more physical activity into your daily routine. For example, take the stairs instead of the elevator, get off the bus before your stop and walk, or park your car at the far end of the parking lot.



Talk to your doctor before beginning any exercise program. Have regular physical exams.

ACTIVITY

TIMES PER WEEK MINUTES

ACTIVITY

TIMES PER WEEK MINUTES

ACTIVITY

TIMES PER WEEK MINUTES

ACTIVITY

TIMES PER WEEK MINUTES

ACTIVITY

TIMES PER WEEK MINUTES



Check with your local park district or community center for information about team sports, swimming, aerobics, bicycle paths and other activities you might enjoy.

Relaxation, comfort, leisure and self-expression

Make a commitment to set aside time to relax. Start with a method that is easy to remember and simple to do. This can be especially helpful if you have symptoms of irritability, anxiety, or racing thoughts.

Spend some time doing things that make you feel good. If you are creative, don't hold back because you think that what you write or draw or sing isn't good enough. If it makes you feel better, it's good enough.

Relaxation:

Listening to music, meditation, yoga, a long bath, deep breathing, muscle tension exercises

Comfort:

Pets, gardening, cooking, crafts, spending time in a quiet place, spirituality, religious study

Leisure:

Reading, watching sports, volunteering, crossword puzzles, movies, talking with a friend or family member

Self-expression:

Writing, drawing, painting, singing, playing an instrument.

ACTIVITY

TIMES PER WEEK MINUTES

ACTIVITY

TIMES PER WEEK MINUTES

ACTIVITY

TIMES PER WEEK MINUTES

ACTIVITY

TIMES PER WEEK MINUTES

R ELATIONSHIPS

If you have had trouble in relationships with family and friends, you are not alone. You can overcome this, one person at a time. Do your best to reach out to others and ask how they are doing. Be aware of the needs of those around you. Let others know your needs. Try to find ways to meet new people, or re-connect to people you've lost touch with. Educate others about mood disorders.

How does my illness affect my relationships?

In these relationships, are there things I'm doing that I can change to improve things? If so, what?

Are there relationships that are hurting me that I may need to end?

M

OOD TRACKING

Tracking your activities such as eating, sleeping and relaxing can help you see how much of an impact these things have on your moods. The charts on the next pages can help you see patterns. Take a few minutes each evening to fill them out. Make copies or draw your own, so you can use them every month. Share them with your health care provider(s).

MEDICATIONS

It may take some time for you and your doctor to find the right medication(s) for you. It can also take several weeks for your medication to fully work. You might feel some side effects of your medication before you feel the benefits – that doesn't mean the medication doesn't work. Sometimes it's hard to tell if something (such as sleepiness, anxiety or headache) is a side effect or a symptom of your illness. Many side effects will go away as your body gets used to the medication.

Keep track of your side effects and talk about them with your doctor. He or she may prescribe an additional medication, adjust your dosage or change your medication.

Don't stop taking your medication, change your dosage or add any kind of medication without first talking with your doctor.

SIDE EFFECT	WHEN & HOW SEVERE (1= NOT VERY/ 5 = EXTREMELY)	SUGGESTIONS FOR COPING
Lack of energy/ fatigue/ sleepiness	_____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Change time of day medication is taken. ■ Exercise. ■ Change diet.
Dry mouth	_____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Drink water. ■ Take care of teeth and mouth.
Weight gain	_____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Eat low fat foods. ■ Reduce food portions. ■ Avoid junk food. ■ Increase physical activity.
Irritability	_____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ask doctor about adding a mood stabilizer and/or changing dosage. ■ Work on coping skills in therapy.

SIDE EFFECT	WHEN & HOW SEVERE (1= NOT VERY/ 5 = EXTREMELY)	SUGGESTIONS FOR COPING
Anxiety	_____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ask doctor about taking an anti-anxiety medication or a mood stabilizer. ■ Find out about breathing and relaxation exercises, meditation, yoga or biofeedback.
Insomnia	_____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Change time of day take medication is taken. ■ Go to sleep and wake up at the same time every day.
Headaches/ blurred vision	_____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ask doctor about changing dosage, spacing smaller dosages throughout the day, changing or adding medication.
Shaking/trembling	_____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ask doctor about changing dosage, spacing smaller dosages throughout the day, or adding a medication.
Constipation	_____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ask doctor about adding a medication or taking over-the-counter medication. ■ Drink lots of water. ■ Change diet.
Diarrhea	_____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Take medication 30 minutes after meals, on a full stomach. ■ Make sure it is not a symptom of another physical illness. ■ Use over-the-counter medications.
Nausea/vomiting	_____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ask doctor about adjusting the dosage or spacing smaller dosages throughout the day. ■ Take medication 30 minutes after meals on a full stomach.

TALKING TO HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

You should see yourself as a partner with all of your health care providers. Don't feel intimidated by your providers or think that you are wasting their time with questions. Communicate your symptoms, feelings and needs. Write things down or bring someone with you to appointments to help you remember things.

QUESTION/CONCERN	ANSWER/COMMENT/SOLUTION
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How long will it take to feel better and what can I do to improve my wellness/response to treatment?

Are there any foods or medications (including over-the-counter and "natural"/herbal) I need to avoid?

What should I do if I forget to take my medication?

Is there someone (such as a nurse) I can talk to if you aren't available?
Can I e-mail you?

What should I do in an emergency if I can't reach you at your office?

TALKING TO OTHERS ABOUT MY ILLNESS

It is your choice whether or not to tell others about your illness. Some people will be more understanding than others. It might be helpful to give some educational materials from DBSA to loved ones, or to refer them to DBSA's web site.

WHAT PEOPLE ASK ME

HOW I RESPOND

Can't you just snap out of it?

Mood disorders are real physical illness like diabetes. Can a person snap out of low blood sugar?

What's the difference between your medication and street drugs?

My medication balances my brain chemicals. It is not addictive and does not make me crave more the way street drugs do. It has been tested and found to be safe.

You have so many things to be happy about. Why are you depressed?

I have an illness that interferes with my ability to be happy. I am working on getting well so I can enjoy my life.

STICKING WITH TREATMENT

Write down some of the things that might be standing in the way of your getting well. If you aren't going to your support groups or health care appointments or taking medications as prescribed, ask yourself why not, and if there's anything you can do to change that.

CHALLENGE	IDEAS
I don't like my support group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Look for another group.■ Start a new group.■ Keep going and try to find something to like about it.■ Try to reach out and help someone else in the group.■ Look for other support resources.
I forget to take my medication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Use a weekly pillbox/calendar.■ Take them at the same time every day.■ Put them where I can see them.■ Take them with a meal.■ Have someone remind me.
Treatment is too expensive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Ask doctor if I can get free medication samples.■ Space out therapy visits and develop coping skills to use between visits.■ Use community services.
I feel better so I stop my treatment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Remember that treatment is what helps me stay better.
I don't feel better.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Talk to my doctor/Change doctors.■ Don't give up.■ Go to support groups.■ Learn all I can about my illness and my treatment.

C

CRISIS PLANNING

Friends and family members who can help in a crisis

NAME PHONE(S)

NAME PHONE(S)

NAME PHONE(S)

What they need to know

WHAT I MIGHT DO **HOW THEY SHOULD RESPOND**

Talk about hurting or killing myself

Remind me my life is worthwhile and things will change. Take away my keys and hold my medications. Stay with me. Call 911 or take me to the emergency room if necessary.

Talk faster than usual – say I have the answers to everything

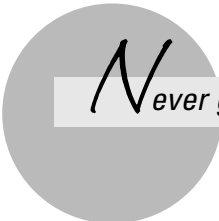
Stay calm. Stay with me. Make sure I'm taking medication. Call my doctor.

Being prepared can be very helpful if a crisis arises. It can ease the stress on your loved ones and help you get the assistance you need quickly.

What do the doctors and emergency personnel need to know?

What can people say that helps me calm down?

Why is my life worthwhile?



Never give up hope.

Depression and bipolar disorder have symptoms that can seem unbearable. Though it may be difficult to have patience, keep in mind that things will always change. Your mood will change; your situation will change; and the treatments available will change. Even if you don't feel better right away, keep going to your health care appointments and support group meetings, and stick with your wellness and lifestyle choices. **You can feel better.**



Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

We've been there. We can help.

The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) is the leading patient-directed national organization focusing on the most prevalent mental illnesses. The organization fosters an environment of understanding about the impact and management of these life-threatening illnesses by providing up-to-date, scientifically-based tools and information written in language the general public can understand. DBSA supports research to promote more timely diagnosis, develop more effective and tolerable treatments and discover a cure. The organization works to ensure that people living with mood disorders are treated equitably.

Assisted by a Scientific Advisory Board comprised of the leading researchers and clinicians in the field of mood disorders, DBSA has more than 1,000 peer-run support groups across the country. Three million people request and receive information and assistance each year. DBSA's mission is to improve the lives of people living with mood disorders.

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

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Fax: (312) 642-7243
Web site: www.DBSAlliance.org

Visit our updated, interactive website for important information, breaking news, chapter connections, advocacy help and much more.

This brochure was reviewed by DBSA Scientific Advisory Board Member Eric Nestler, MD, Professor and Chairman at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center Department of Psychiatry, and by Ken Heideman of DBSA Boston, MA.

DBSA does not endorse or recommend the use of any specific treatment or medication for mood disorders. For advice about specific treatments or medications, individuals should consult their physicians and/or mental health care providers.