

# DBSA-Boston Membership Agreement

DBSA-Boston brings us together to offer each other what we have learned about living with affective disorders. In these circles of trust, we share our feelings, our experiences and our coping strategies. We do not give advice, particularly about medication. Our support groups are not therapy groups. Our facilitators are not therapists, but DBSA-Boston members trained in peer group facilitation. To make everyone feel safe and welcome, our groups are governed by certain guidelines. In particular, we recognize that everything shared within groups (a much revealed one-to-one) must be kept confidential for people to feel safe enough to participate. We also use “I” statements and speak from our own experience; and when differences arise, we refrain from judging one another and instead seek understanding. DBSA-Boston members in good standing are entitled to the following privileges:

- A safe and empathetic environment to aid in their personal growth
- Receipt of our quarterly newsletter via 1st class mail (in discreet envelopes)
- Participation in our Share/Care groups, daytime drop-ins and twice-monthly lectures
- Group functions including the summer picnic and holiday party
- Opportunities to “give back” to others by serving as a group facilitator, running for the Board of Directors or working on committees
- The right to vote in DBSA-Boston elections

DBSA-Boston has established clear guidelines for the security and well-being of all members participating in our organization. Because disruptive behavior is often a symptom of bipolar and depressive illnesses, it must be accommodated to some degree. Beyond a certain point, however, it cannot be tolerated as it jeopardizes the work or even the existence of a group dedicated to helping people transform their lives. We list here some examples of behavior that, if it persists, can lead to a review of an individual’s group participation privileges, and possibly to that individual’s removal from the organization by the Board of Directors.

1. Discrimination against any individual or group based on age, gender, race, creed, nation of origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, or any other characteristic protected by the laws of the United States.
2. Physical or verbal aggression
3. Suggestive remarks or other forms of sexual harassment
4. Violating confidentiality of support group meetings or individual members
5. Disrupting groups by coming in late habitually, wandering in and out, or refusing to cooperate with a group facilitator in following established DBSA-Boston guidelines.
6. Abuse of the telephone or email lists by making calls at inappropriate times or by refusing to stop contacting those who have asked not to be contacted
7. The use of cell phones during groups, including texting, Web access, and photos
8. Harassing or stalking individuals who have asked not to be contacted
9. Inappropriate or illegal behavior in contexts where members are viewed as representatives of DBSA-Boston, such as at McLean Hospital, local restaurants, or other public places
10. Bringing pets other than service animals to group meetings
11. Attending DBSA-Boston meetings or functions while under the influence of alcohol or other recreational drugs
12. Repeatedly violating the smoking policies of a facility where a DBSA-Boston group is meeting

**Your cooperation and commitment are what keeps DBSA-Boston alive and well. Thank you!**