

# MOODS

Serving People with Unipolar and Bi-polar Illness, Their Families and Friends, since 1981

January 2019

## A Case for Friends and Family Group

By Dr. Li Faustino PhD

**At MDSG, we are devoting new energy to our Family and Friends support group.**

MDSG has been offering support groups for people with mood disorders in NYC since 1981. Many groups sprouted up throughout the country since then, but few are as large and consistent as our chapter. One of the many ways that MDSG-NY stands apart from the other organizations is the existence of the Friends and Family group. Many sites do not have this valuable group or they do not run it separate from their other groups. Why is this group important and why is it important that it is its own group?

When somebody has bipolar illness or Major Depressive Disorder, their family members have unique needs. When family members seek out our support groups, they are often in crises. Their loved one has just been overtaken by a clinical depression or bipolar illness and, for the most part, are probably acting like a completely different person. While some family members are very well-informed about mood disorders, some are not. And sometimes their loved one is willing and eager to get treatment; others are very opposed. Every circumstance is different, but there is always a big change in the

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## Welcome To Our New Facilitator Trainees

MDSG is very pleased to welcome 11 new peer facilitator trainees to our illustrious facilitator roster. Thank you all for choosing to dedicate yourselves to the extraordinary mission of helping others improve their lives through peer group support, as your lives were improved.

There is no greater gift than being in a position to “pay it forward” by stepping into the role of creating a supportive and safe environment that empowers and inspires attendees to help themselves and each other through shared stories, experiences and successful recovery strategies. As a peer facilitator you help to provide a critical alternative to feelings of hopelessness and isolation by cultivating a sense of belonging, self-acceptance and renewed self-respect.

The groups you run foster a sense of hope and belief that a

meaningful recovery is a reachable goal. Hope is the fuel that inspires individuals to want to fight for themselves and find a path to emotional health. Without you, this important work could not continue.

We can't thank you enough for taking on this sacred work. Welcome aboard!

Colleen F.

Katherina Sara T.

Allen S.

Juan P.

Bonnie W.

Berengere H.

Sarva Thomas L.

Andre P.

Jared G.

Oliver L.

## Ask the Doctor with Dr. David Hellerstein

### **What can I do holistically to reduce anxiety and depression?**

These eight holistic actions should be part of an integrated approach to treatment with professionals.

**Exercise:** Exercise elevates mood and reduces symptoms of depression. Increased physical activity, such a yoga, tai chi, and qigong, improve symptoms of anxiety. And walking 30 minutes a day can reduce your risk for major chronic

diseases. Exercise works because the body is stimulated to produce serotonin and endorphins. These are chemicals in the brain that reduce depression.

**Diet:** Eat a healthy diet—fresh, whole foods; drink lots of water; get enough calcium; and keep trans-fats low. Take care of your gut by taking probiotics and eating foods such as yogurt and miso. Reduce sweetened beverage such as

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## A Case for Friends and Family Group

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family and often that comes with major turmoil including arguing, fear, sometimes financial problems, school and work problems, and so on. Family members need fast and practical help. This is where support groups come in. Other families that have experienced this unique turmoil can be richly helpful to those going through it.

Additionally, family members often become completely consumed by attempting to care for their loved one with the illness and often they cease taking care of themselves. Family members often face as many health problems as those with the disorder. Support groups can help people learn how to carve out time for themselves so they know how to help themselves and be better for the rest of their family.

Lastly, family members need support. Everyone in the family has strong emotions about mood disorders and it is important that both individuals with mood disorders and family members each get their own support space to vent and talk about those feelings *without the other around*.

At MDSG, we are devoting new energy to our Family and Friends support group. We are in the process of giving updated training to the special facilitators who run that group. And we are ensuring that the group runs regularly every week. If you have a mood disorder and you think your family members could benefit from a support group, please give them our information. If you are a family member, come check out some groups.

*Dr. Faustino is chair of the MDSG Board.*

## Ask the Doctor with Dr. David Hellerstein

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tea, soda, and fruit punch that have been sweetened.

**Alcohol:** Stop drinking alcohol. Depressed individuals are at risk for using alcohol to self-medicate.

**Sleep:** Get adequate sleep in both length and quality each night. Poor sleep effects mood because the neurotransmitters that support mood are replenished with sleep.

**Thoughts and Emotions:** Negative thoughts and feelings upset the body's hormone balance. Try meditation or positive thinking to increase calmness and happiness.

**Stress:** Identify what creates stress and learn relaxation techniques.

**Social Support:** Regularly contact friends and family; join a class or support group; volunteer; or have a pet.

**Purpose:** Have a strong sense of purpose, which helps to handle the ups and downs of life.

### What are the major risk factors for bipolar disorder?

There are five major risk factors:  
 Blood relatives much as a parent or sibling with bipolar disorder.  
 Periods of high stress.  
 Drug or alcohol abuse.  
 Major life changes, such as the death of a loved one.  
 Being in your early 20s.

### Ask the Doctor

Send your questions about depression and bi-polar illness to [newsletter@mdsg.org](mailto:newsletter@mdsg.org) Questions will be answered by a psychiatrist or psychologist as appropriate.

## Books of Interest

Bullmore, Edward. [The Inflamed Mind: A Radical New Approach to Depression](#). Picador, 2018. 256p.

The author asserts the root cause of depression is inflammation of brain tissue (inflammation is also responsible for arthritis, gum disease, and some digestive complaints).

Morton, Kati. [Are u ok? A Guide to Caring for Your Mental Health; How To Know If You Need Help and Where To Find It](#). Lifelong: Da Capo, 2018. 256p.

A beginner's guide to breaking through the stigma of mental illness. Discusses the realities of specific conditions, the different kinds of assistance available, and how to receive proper care.

Mood Disorders Support Group  
 New York  
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