

MOODS

Serving people with depression and manic depression, their families and friends since 1981.

We CAN Reclaim Our Lives: A Personal Journey to Hope and Recovery

Larry Fricks

VP of Peer Services, Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance; Founder : Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network, Georgia Peer Specialist Training and Certification Program, and Georgia Peer Support Institute

Speaker: December 1, 2009



Need a dose of hope and inspiration? Meet Larry Fricks. In a sense his life story is painfully familiar: a happily married journalist and entrepreneur who descended into Bipolar hell and lost it all. Hospitaliza-

tions, frenetic mood swings, lapses in judgment, substance abuse, a broken marriage and ruined career – you name it, he’s known it.

But when Larry’s downward spiral finally reached bottom, he didn’t just lie there stunned and broken. He looked around. He determined to do whatever he could do to make his life better. And he asked questions. *How much of where I am is due to Bipolar? How much is within my control? Who’s in charge here: me, or the disease?* On the slow, painful journey back from the depths, Larry discovered some essential truths about what it takes to live successfully with Bipolar Disorder.

Today Larry Fricks is one of the nation’s most impassioned advocates for the mentally ill. He believes that a meaningful recovery is possible for each and every one of us. And Larry has lots of pointers on ways we can battle stigma, become healthier, and take charge of our lives.

Larry Fricks is the kind of speaker whose belief in

... continued on page 5

Recent Research on Panic Attacks and Anxiety

Donald Klein, M.D.

Research Professor, NYU; Professor of Psychiatry Emeritus, Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons

Lecture: January 12, 2010



Anxiety’s been around since Adam and Eve discovered they needed fig leaves. But panic attacks and severe anxiety are debilitating problems with a more-than-average incidence in the Bipolar population.

Dr. Donald Klein is a prodigious and hugely respected researcher who has written almost 500 journal articles. A popular speaker at MDSG in years past, he rejoins us on January 12 to talk about the latest studies on panic attacks and anxiety, and what they tell us about possible treatments for the future.

DBT & CBT: What are They, and Why are They all the Rage Today?

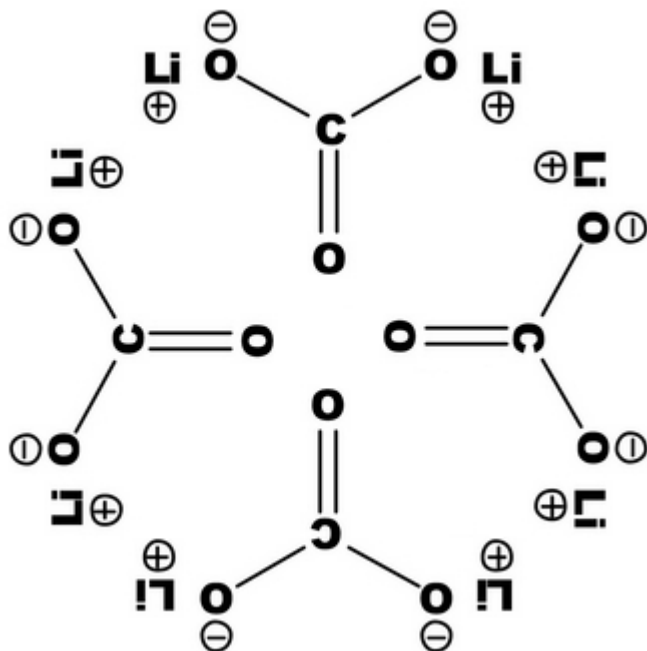
Susan Foertsch, PhD.

Faculty, Dept of Psychology in Psychiatry, Columbia Medical School

Lecture: February 2, 2010

In the alphabet soup of therapies, DBT (Dialectical Behavioral Therapy) and CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) stand out as having real value for people with depression, bipolar, and borderline personality disorder. How and why do they work? What’s the difference between them? Which one is right for you? Come and find out on February 2.

Your Very Own Cut-n-Paste Lithium Snowflake (copy, trim, and decorate)



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The \$5 contribution for meetings doesn't cover anywhere near all of MDSG's expenses for the more than 600 individual support groups we run each year, or for our distinguished lecture series, our telephone information service, our website, and this newsletter.

Our annual membership is \$45 for individuals and \$65 for families. Your membership card gives you **free admission to support groups**, and it gives you a **discount on lectures**, too!

Send your check, **payable to MDSG, Inc.** to:
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\$45 Individual Annual Membership

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Name _____

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Mood Disorders Support Group
New York
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All information in this newsletter is intended for general knowledge only and is not a substitute for medical or legal advice or treatment for a specific medical condition.

Have a question for one of our lecturers? Email it in advance.

Our lecturers have always fielded questions from the audience, but now you can e-mail your questions in advance. Send questions (50 words or less) to:

lecture_questions@mdsg.org.

Please indicate at which lecture you would like your question asked. Speakers will answer as many questions as possible, pending time restrictions.

Ask the Doctor

Ivan K. Goldberg, M.D., Psychopharmacologist



What is Vagus Nerve Stimulation (VNS)?

The vagus nerve is responsible for regulating many body functions such as heart rate, sweating, and the muscles involved in speech. Vagus Nerve Stimulation (VNS) is a therapy which involves the surgical implantation of a pacemaker-like device that stimulates the vagus nerve. It has been successfully used for two decades to treat people with treatment-resistant epilepsy. In recent years, studies have shown that VNS may also be helpful for people with treatment-resistant depression. A year-long study found that 40% of patients with treatment-resistant depression experienced at least a 50% reduction in the severity of their depression. While only 17% of the patients were considered depression-free after 3 months of VNS treatment, this percentage increased to 27% after a year of treatment. During a second year of treatment even more depressed individuals may improve.

My doctor tells me that now that I'm on Tegretol I should no longer use oral contraceptives. She wants me to use a barrier method instead. What's the reason for this?

Several anticonvulsant mood stabilizers, including Tegretol, Topamax, Trileptal and Felbatol reduce the effectiveness of oral contraceptives, putting users at higher risk of having an unintended pregnancy. Barrier methods are a more effective method of birth control if you are taking one of these medications.

I went away for the weekend and forgot to bring my Effexor. By the second day I was extremely anxious, and had tremors and dizziness. Could just missing two doses of Effexor cause this?

Unfortunately, yes. Some antidepressants, like Venlafaxine (Effexor) and paroxetine (Paxil), do not remain in the body very long. Missing one or more doses causes a precipitous drop in the level of the drug in the blood, causing withdrawal symptoms to appear. The most frequent symptoms of missing SSRI doses are:

- Dizziness
- Lightning-like sensations in the head
- Nausea/vomiting
- Headaches
- Lethargy
- Anxiety/agitation
- Tingling or numbness
- Tremors
- Sweating
- Insomnia irritability
- Diarrhea

Resuming your regular dose should rapidly eliminate these symptoms.

Which mood stabilizers are most likely to cause weight gain?

In order of worst offenders on down:

Divalproex (Depakote)
Lithium (Eskalith, Lithobid, etc)
Gabapentin (Neurontin)
Lamotrigine (Lamictal)
Levetiracetam (Keppra)
Zonisamide (Zongran)
Topiramate (topamax)



The Reader's Corner with Betsy Naylor

The Mindful Way through Depression: Freeing Yourself from Chronic Unhappiness

by Mark Williams, John Teasdale, Zindel Segal, and Jon Kabot-Zinn
Guilford Press. \$19.95, 274 pages

During the 70's and 80's, I went to a therapist who used Eastern philosophies in her work. After analysts who gave me a diagnosis and focused on my defects, my Buddhist therapist was a breath of fresh air. She introduced me to the possibility of living in the present, and to seeing what was in my mind without judging it. She said that we already have the capacity to experience peace and happiness. We just have to get out of our own way!

The Mindful Way Through Depression outlines a similar technique, called mindful awareness. This book describes what one needs to do, where it leads, and why it makes a difference. It also includes a short program on how to meditate. Deeper than a self-help guide, *The Mindful Way Through Depression* will teach you a lot.

The practice dates back thousands of years, probably ever since human beings have had to cope with *being* human beings. It's a frame of mind which changes how we perceive our experiences. This is particularly important for depressed people, who may be trapped in a pattern of obnoxious thoughts and feelings. What mindful awareness does is to help us see the perpetually painful *why me?* questions or the *my mother didn't like me!* memories in new and possibly healing ways.

The practice asks that we focus on our thoughts without judging anything that comes into our minds. Thoughts and feelings will float through our minds like the bubbles children blow: *Worried about work* – pop! – *today's going to waste, too* – pop! – *I'm hungry* – pop! If we are focusing clearly

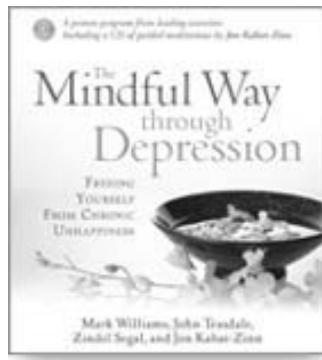
we will see both healthy and not-so-healthy patterns.

The goal is to set aside our ideas of how things 'should' be or how we want them to be, and to see them as accurately as possible. Paying attention makes a difference: Take one raisin, really look at it in your hand, put it in your mouth to feel the texture, bite down and chew slowly, and really taste it. It's a different food, eaten with this mindset. We can miss a lot when we don't pay attention.

Mood is strongly shaped by thoughts and our interpretation of them. Imagine that someone shadowed you and kept up a constant stream of criticism, the way you criticize yourself. How horrifying! Mindful awareness helps us realize that the source of much of our pain lies within ourselves. Bring yourself some compassion!

Although mindful awareness is not meant to lead to a relaxed state, focusing on the contents of our minds is often easier during the quiet of meditation. Our authors say we can sit on the floor or a chair, stand, walk, or lie down. Fortunately, they have included a CD with several guided meditations to help us out.

I think the program described in this book would be hard to begin alone, but the CD is helpful. The authors note that the conscientious practice of mindful awareness can prevent relapse into depression. Many MDSG members have some experience with this, and have talked about how helpful the technique is helpful. They find it a good path to travel in their struggle with depression.



Larry Fricks, continued from page 1...

you brings you to a deeper belief in yourself. His inspiring December 1 talk will fire you with renewed determination – and ideas – for living life fully. Be there.

P.S. Larry's story is featured in the *NY Times* best-seller *Strong at the Broken Places: Voices of an Illness, A Chorus Of Hope* by Richard M. Cohen. Mr. Cohen has graciously agreed to join us at the December 1 lecture.



Giving²

Buying a gift for a friend or relative through Amazon? You can give a free gift to MDSG at the same time! We get a commission on everything you purchase – tchotchkas for grandma, awful movies for your nephew, oven mitts for Aunt Millie – when you enter Amazon through the MDSG web site. Here's how it works:

1. Go to MDSG.org
2. Click on this icon →
3. Shop!



It's that simple. Nothing special to do at check-out, no secret codes to enter. Free to you, and a gift to MDSG. Everything you buy includes an automatic gift to MDSG.

Ask the Lawyer: Marc A. Strauss, Esq

I'm still employed, but worry that some day I might need Social Security Disability. Is there anything I should be doing now to prepare for if and when that day comes?

Keep good medical records! To make a successful claim, you need to show that your illness keeps you from being able to hold a job that provides substantial and gainful income. The more medical care you can show, the better. Keep a record of hospitalizations (when and where), doctors you have seen, and medications you have taken.

I collected unemployment after I lost my job. Someone told me this could cause trouble with my application for Social Security Disability. Will it?

In order to collect unemployment, you have to certify that you're actively looking for a job. Some (but not all) judges feel this is contrary to claiming you have a disability that prevents you from ever being employed. Others understand that it's possible to look for a job that fits within your limitations, only to end up realizing that no such job exists.

My general practitioner prescribes Zoloft for my persistent depression. If I apply for SSD, is this enough proof that I'm under medical care?

Probably not. Your case will be considered, but you'd be in a much stronger position if you were seeing a psychiatrist. You'd be even better off if you were seeing both a psychiatrist and a psychologist.

I wasn't under medical care, and lost my job due to Bipolar-related issues. For the past six months I have been seeing a psychiatrist regularly. Will my medical records be sufficient to make a disability claim?

The fact that you are now getting consistent care counts for a lot, and may be enough to document your illness. Keep going! Social Security won't accept an application until you've been out of work at least six months, anyway.

Holiday Checklist

Based on an article on holiday—related depression by the Mayo Clinic.

- Make regular exercise and adequate sleep a priority.** Don't let these two key tools in your battle against depression take a back seat to chores and errands.
- Plan ahead.** If you're facing the holidays alone, remember you have a "chosen family" of friends and acquaintances, and make plans to spend time with them.
- Have realistic expectations of others.** Holiday stress can affect everyone. Try to be forgiving if people aren't at their thoughtful best.
- Make a budget and stick to it.** Don't try to buy happiness. You can't.
- Be mindful of what you eat and drink.** Try to stay healthy! Alcohol can make your meds less effective.
- Keep a watchful eye on your symptoms.** For some people, stress is a trigger for mania or depression. Get help quickly if you notice changes in your pattern of behavior.

Midwinter Medication Matchup

Ever wonder how drug companies come up with those mystifying monikers for your medications? They claim to put a lot of research into it, but perhaps you can do just as well. Choose any word from column A, add a middle from column B, and finish with a suffix from column C to create your own brand!

<u>Column A</u>	<u>Column B</u>	<u>Column C</u>
Candle	li	pram
Snow	xi	line
Dreidel	za	tol
Gift	que	lium
Valentine	gre	pil
Ice	ac	rexa
Santa	mi	fan

Archived Lectures Available

Recordings of past lectures are available on CD through the mail. Our most recent lectures are listed below. Please see our website, mdsg.org, for a listing of earlier lectures.

CD #

- 87 Laura Bernay, M.D.
The History of Melancholia and Mania: How is it Relevant Today?
- 86 Sanjay J. Mathew, M.D.
Cutting-Edge Treatments for Those Problem Depressions That Won't Go Away
- 84 Ivan Goldberg, M.D.
Ask the Doctor ... Anything!
- 82 Michael Ostacher M.D.
Do a Few Drinks Really Matter? The Impact of Drugs and Alcohol in Bipolar Disorder

Lectures are \$13 each, \$25 for two, or \$35 for three (includes postage and handling). To order, send your requested lecture numbers and a check payable to *MDSG Inc.* to:

**Lecture Recordings, c/o MDSG
P.O. Box 30377
NY, NY 10011**

Mood Disorders Support Groups and Lectures

Winter 2009-10

Support Groups

Manhattan – West Side
Every Wednesday

St. Luke's Roosevelt Adult Outpatient Psychiatric Clinic
411 West 114th Street
(between Amsterdam and Morningside)
Doors open at 7:00 p.m.; groups begin at 7:30 p.m.

Manhattan – East Side/Downtown
Every Friday

Beth Israel Medical Center, Bernstein Pavilion
2nd floor, Enter on Nathan Perlman Place
(between 15th & 16th streets, First & Second Avenues)
Doors open at 7:00 p.m.; groups begin at 7:30 p.m.

Support groups enable participants to share personal experiences, thoughts, and feelings in small, confidential gatherings. Separate groups are available for newcomers, unipolar (depressive), bipolar (manic depressive), family members, and friends. At both locations, groups meet at the same time, including the under-30 group. Support groups are free for members, and a \$5 contribution is suggested for nonmembers.

Upcoming Lectures

Held at the Podell Auditorium, Bernstein Pavilion, Beth Israel Medical Center
Enter at Nathan Perlman Place between First and Second Avenues and 15th and 16th Street

Dec 1
Tuesday
7:30 p.m.

Larry Fricks
VP of Peer Services, Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance; Founder : Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network

We CAN Reclaim Our Lives: A Personal Journey to Hope and Recovery An inspiring talk with practical tips on how to live a rich life with bipolar disorder.

Jan 12
Tuesday
7:30 p.m.

Donald Klein, M.D.
Research Professor, NYU; Professor of Psychiatry Emeritus, Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons

Recent Research on Panic Attacks and Anxiety An expert researcher explains the difference between panic and anxiety, and what new studies tell us about the causes behind panic.

Feb 2
Tuesday
7:30 p.m.

Susan Foertsch, PhD.
Faculty, Dept of Psychology in Psychiatry, Columbia Medical School

DBT & CBT: What are They, and Why are They all the Rage Today? These powerful therapies have proven to be helpful for many people with bipolar disorder. Find out why, and which might work for you.

Lectures are usually held on **Tuesdays** (call 212-533-MDSG and listen to message for last-minute changes). Doors open at 7:00 p.m., lectures begin at 7:30 p.m. Lectures are \$4 for members and \$8 for non-members.

Contact us for more information and a copy of our newsletter.

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STAY HEALTHY, KEEP MDSG HEALTHY

We all know it takes a huge amount of work to keep ourselves stable and healthy. MDSG plays a key role in supporting us in those efforts. Everything this great organization does is built from the time and energy of hard-working volunteers. Your financial support is crucial. Please give what you can.

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUPPORT MDSG

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