



Depression and Bipolar
Support Alliance

DBSA 2005 “Road To Recovery” Conference Wellness Strategies Breakout Session III Supplemental Information

Presenters:

Barbara A. Hylard, Constituency Relations Director
Matthew Mattson, Chapter Relations Manager

Top Twenty Wellness Tips

In honor of DBSA’s 20th anniversary, here are the top 20 wellness tips voted on by recent conference attendees. Set a goal to try one or two you haven’t used yet.

- 1. Support groups** are safe, welcoming, confidential, understanding gatherings. Visit www.DBSAAlliance.org to find a group near you.
- 2. Music** has the power to help us calm down or motivate, whether we are listening or performing.
- 3. Healthy eating.** Avoiding fats, sugars, cholesterol and salt; drinking water and balancing our food groups can help improve mood.
- 4. Exercise/walking/movement** can get us through depression or use up extra energy if mania seems close at hand.
- 5. Pet therapy.** Our pets offer us unconditional love, a shoulder to cry on when needed, and they never get tired of us.
- 6. Journaling.** Setting aside time each day to think through what has occurred and write about it can help us look for patterns and better understand ourselves.
- 7. Sleep.** It’s impossible to overestimate how important regular sleep and wake times can be for people living with mood disorders.
- 8. Creative writing and poetry** allow us to process information in artistic ways that can be healing and safe.
- 9. Meditation** can help us become more calm and focused. It isn’t complicated; just sit quietly and do your best to clear your mind. It gets easier with practice.
- 10. Arts and crafts** can help us explore issues non-verbally. Pick your favorite and try it out. Don’t worry about the end result.
- 11. Mood tracking.** Taking 60 seconds a day to track our moods can alert us of problems earlier and help us address them.
- 12. Friends and family** can be our shelter from the storm.
- 13. Work.** Having a job that forces us to get out of bed every day helps our self-esteem and self-discipline.
- 14. Education** about our illness empowers us to make decisions with our health care providers, so we can say, “Don’t work on me, work with me”.
- 15. Spirituality.** Belief in and reliance on something more powerful than yourself is an important aspect of wellness for many people.
- 16. Volunteering.** Whether you are working or not, adding a volunteer job helps you to give back as a part of your recovery journey.
- 17. Yoga.** Combining the benefits of exercise and meditation, yoga is a beneficial wellness tool for many.
- 18. No drinking/substance use.** Getting clean and/or sober can work wonders on your moods and treatment effectiveness.
- 19. Gardening.** The combination of exercise, beauty and being outdoors makes this wellness strategy irresistible to many of us.
- 20. Tracking triggers** (predictable actions or situations that destabilize moods) and preparing for them can help us avoid severe mood episodes. Consider download DBSA’s personal calendar, as found on the website.

Spirituality and Health

Outreach Summer 2004

Along with mental and physical health, our spiritual lives play a part in our wellness. Everyone has a unique and personal way of approaching spirituality.

Some of us may have reservations about spirituality because we equate it with religion. We might have difficulty with spirituality after enduring personal tragedies and setbacks. On the other hand, getting through difficult times can also make us more spiritual. “The place I have really found faith is through help in the midst of suffering,” explains Kathy Erdman-Lawson, an artist and musician from Kentucky.

Spirituality is not religion; it is a way of looking at life. It may or may not include membership in a religious group. It may mean finding your own concept of strength, hope, love and healing. Your own spiritual path might include helping others. It might involve working on something such as writing, art or music that gives you satisfaction. Your concept of spirituality may be as simple as believing that you or a loved one can and will feel better.

Spiritual beliefs can also help when you’re struggling with self-stigma or self-blame. “Mental illness is not a failure of faith,” says past DBSA Board Member Adrian Mosley. “My spiritual belief emphasizes a divine and compassionate power that loves us and wants us to be well.”

You might choose to meditate or pray. This doesn’t require any special knowledge or technique, though it may require some practice. It simply means clearing your mind, focusing on the present moment and filling your consciousness with a sense of peace and balance.

“The spirit tools help us weather the storms of a mood disorder and allow us to heal – not in a clinical sense, but in a sense of acceptance and forgiveness that allows us to turn weaknesses into strengths,” explains writer and online publisher John McManamy. “Mind, body and spirit are all interconnected. What is good for one affects the other two. For example, exercise works against depression, getting the body in shape, but also lifting spirits. Treatment, even when only partially effective, can be effective enough to get a person out of bed and put mind and spirit tools into play. Support groups help give me the tools to work on all three.”

“Developing my spiritual life gave me inner strength and a stronger determination to get well.” says Jacqueline Mahrley of DBSA Orange County.

How do you seek spirituality? How does it help you with wellness of mind and body?

Exercise and Mental Health

By Ellen Frank, Ph.D. Chair, DBSA Scientific Advisory Board

Outreach Winter 2005

Here’s something you might not want to hear about: exercise. Without lecturing on this subject, I would like to stress the importance of exercise among the things that people with mood disorders can do to help with their wellness. Although efforts to study the positive mood effects of exercise have had mixed results, no study has ever shown that exercise worsens your mood.

I find that the patients I see benefit from some form of exercise. This may be from the exercise itself, the distraction from worries and concerns that the exercise provides, or the pride that comes from doing something to help oneself.

It’s easy to put up roadblocks to doing exercise, so I encourage you to make it as easy as possible for yourself. Here are four things that I believe are key to developing a successful exercise routine. All of these are simple behavior changes that can help you do what is good for you more easily.

Pick a form of exercise you enjoy. If you hate running, don't even think about making that your way of getting some exercise. Maybe you once used to enjoy walking or dancing. Weather's nasty? Try walking in a mall. No one to dance with? Try dancing to a video or taking a class at a local community center.

Stay close to home. Pick a form of exercise that you can do in or near your home or work. If getting to the exercise becomes more of a challenge than doing it, you will have lots of excuses to put it off. Keep it simple. If all you need to do to get started is put on some comfortable clothes and put a tape into the VCR, you are much more likely to stick to your exercise plan than if you have to drive a half hour to the nearest tennis court.

Don't be rigid about how much time you have to spend. Don't make the best the enemy of the good. Your aerobics video is 30 minutes, but you have to shower and be out of the house in 45 minutes. Rather than skipping the whole idea, just do the first 15 minutes. Fifteen minutes is better than no exercise at all - for your body and your self-esteem.

Try to find a companion to exercise with you at least some of the time. Unless you enjoy solitary activity, find a friend to walk with, to meet you at the gym and then go out for coffee, or to come over to do that pilates video with you. This probably increases the chances that you will actually get some exercise. It may also give you an opportunity to see old friends more often or make new ones.

Don't try to do everything right away, and give yourself credit for small accomplishments. As you exercise more often, it will get easier.

In an effort to support the wellness strategies discussed during this session, the following is a list of resources that you may want to investigate to learn more.

DBSA has neither reviewed, nor approved, nor does DBSA recommend any of the resources below that were not published by DBSA. DBSA is not responsible for the content of the resources listed. The resources below are provided for your information, and to offer alternative viewpoints.

DBSA maintains a bookstore on its website, which can be found at <http://www.dbsalliance.org/store/>. All books in this bookstore (which does NOT include the listed resources below) are reviewed by people with a mood disorders for relevancy and by a member of DBSA's Scientific Advisory Board for scientific and medical accuracy. Books are usually available below retail list price and additional discounts are available for DBSA donors.

Wellness Strategy Resources

Music as a Wellness Strategy

Books and Resources

Healing Power of the Drum

Robert Lawrence Friedman, Foreword by Shi-Hong Loh

Self-Healing with Sound and Music: Revitalize Your Body and Mind with Proven Sound Healing Tools

Andrew Weil, Kimba Arem

Music Therapy

Rachel Darnley-Smith, Helen M. Patey

Healing Power of Sound: Recovery from Life-Threatening Illness Using Sound, Voice, and Music

Mitchell L. Gaynor

Pet Therapy as a Wellness Strategy Books and Resources

The Tao of Equus: A Woman's Journey of Healing and Transformation through the Way of the Horse
Linda Kohanov

Handbook on Animal-Assisted Therapy: Theoretical Foundations and Guidelines for Practice
Aubrey H. Fine (Editor), Aubrey Fine

My Therapist's Dog
Diana Wells

Therapy Pets: The Animal-Human Healing Partnership
Jacqueline J. Crawford, Karen A. Pomerinke

Healthy Eating as a Wellness Strategy Books and Resources

Calm Energy: How People Regulate Mood with Food and Exercise
Robert E. Thayer

Self-Healing Cookbook: Macrobiotic Primer for Healing Body, Mind and Moods with Whole, Natural Foods
Kristina Turner

Food and Mood: The Complete Guide to Eating Well and Feeling Your Best
Elizabeth Somer, Foreword by Nancy L. Snyderman

The Food and Mood Cookbook: Recipes for Health and Happiness
Elizabeth Somer, Jeanette Williams

The Mood Cure: The 4-Step Program to Take Charge of Your Emotions - Today
Julia Ross

Meditation as a Wellness Strategy Books and Resources

The Promise of a New Day: A Book of Daily Meditations
Karen Casey, With Martha Vanceburg

Zen Path through Depression
Philip Martin

The Healing Handbook: A Beginner's Guide and Journal to Meditation
Jodi Levy

Peaceful Mind
John R. McQuaid, Paula E. Carmona, Foreword by Zindel V. Segal

The Depression Book: Depression as an Opportunity for Spiritual Growth
Cheri Huber, June Shiver (Editor)

Yoga as a Wellness Strategy
Books and Resources

Yoga for Depression: A Compassionate Guide to Relieving Suffering through Yoga
Amy Weintraub

Yoga Therapies: 45 Sequences to Relieve Stress, Depression, Repetitive Strain, Sports Injuries, and More
Jessie Chapman, Dhyan (Photographer)

Yoga Beats the Blues: Boost Your Mood, Memory, and Concentration with Easy 5-Minute, 10-Minute, and 20-Minute Yoga Routines
Donna Raskin, Bobbie Bush (Photographer)

The Yoga Minibook for Stress Relief: A Specialized Program for a Calmer, Relaxed You
Elaine Gavalas, Nelle Davis (Illustrator)

Yoga and Optimum Health after 40
Yvonne Seltzer

Exercise and Movement as a Wellness Strategy
Books and Resources

Conquering Depression and Anxiety through Exercise
Keith Joshsgard, Keith W. Johnsgard

Move Your Body, Tone Your Mood
Kate Hays

The Healing Power of Exercise: Your Guide to Preventing and Treating Diabetes, Depression, Heart Disease, High Blood Pressure, Arthritis, and More
Linn Goldberg, Diane L. Elliot

Creative Writing and Poetry as a Wellness Strategy
Books and Resources

The Healing Art: A Doctor's Black Bag of Poetry
Rafael Campo

Writing Well: Creative Writing and Mental Health
Deborah Philips, et al

Writing Out the Storm: Reading and Writing Your Way Through Serious Illness or Injury
Barbara Abercrombie

The Writing Cure: How Expressive Writing Promotes Health and Emotional Well-Being
Stephen J. Lepore (Editor), Joshua M. Smyth (Editor)

When Your Heart Speaks, Take Good Notes : The Healing Power of Writing
Susan Borkin

Arts and Crafts as a Wellness Strategy
Books and Resources

Art Heals : How Creativity Cures the Soul
Shaun McNiff

Grief and the Healing Arts: Creativity As Therapy (Death, Value and Meaning)
Sandra L. Bertman

Rituals of Healing : Using Imagery for Health and Wellness
by Jeanne Achterberg, Barbara Dossey

The Soul's Palette : Drawing on Art's Transformative Powers
Cathy A. Malchiodi

The Art Therapy Sourcebook
Cathy Malchiodi