

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance-Greater Houston
2008 Outcome Study
Executive Summary

Background

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance-Greater Houston (DBSA) sponsors *free* support groups to aid in the recovery of those affected by depression or bipolar disorder, including the diagnosed, family members and friends.

In 2008, DBSA conducted an independent efficacy study or "*Outcome Study*" to determine the impact participating in a DBSA sponsored support group has on participants. The purpose of this summary is to simply share with you the positive outcomes that participating in a support group can have on your quality of life; your understanding of how to effectively manage depression or bipolar disorder; and ultimately to show you that a marked improvement in your own recovery from these very treatable illnesses is within your grasp.

The findings from the *Outcome Study* confirmed what many in DBSA have believed to be true since its inception -- that our support groups work for those who participate, regardless if you are diagnosed, a family member or a friend. The improvement is evident in a range of areas such as: support, increased knowledge of both illnesses, increased coping skills and better treatment compliance. Of the most importance, attendees report a significant improvement in their overall quality of life and their own progress toward recovery. Finally, if a participant attended a support group on a consistent basis, that individual obtained a stronger and more positive impact from the support group experience. The information below will further explain how we arrived to this conclusion.

Outcome Study Process

An outcome questionnaire designed specifically for DBSA support groups was sent to all of our support groups and completed by attendees in March 2008. The 5-page questionnaire asked a broad range of questions regarding the DBSA support group experience. The responses to those questions are listed in the 3 tables found on pages 2 and 3.

Responses were analyzed for 5 subgroups of attendees:

1. **Participants**: Attendees diagnosed or experiencing the symptoms of depression or bipolar disorder.
2. **Family**: Attendees in support of another person -- whether a relative or friend.
3. **Short-timers**: Attendees who had joined a support group within the previous 2 months.
4. **Long-timers**: Attendees who had been participating in a support group for 2 months or more.
5. **Facilitators**: Attendees who are unpaid volunteers who facilitate support groups.

Participant answers were broken into 3 distinct outcome categories:

1. **Short-Term Outcomes**: The short-term outcomes are results that occurred fairly quickly -- perhaps beginning at the first meeting.
2. **Medium-Term Outcomes**: Medium-term outcomes were examined by the outcome instrument to determine changes over time based on assessments by respondents.
3. **Long-Term Outcomes**: Long-term outcomes are those changes in support group attendees which are experienced after an individual has attended a group for a longer time. Long-term outcomes were assessed by having respondents estimate gains (or losses) with respect to their progress toward recovery and quality of life.

Outcome Study's Findings

The tables below summarize the short, medium and long-term benefits of group participation broken down by the 5 subgroups of attendees.

Short-Term Outcomes

The following table shows how respondents reported support group attendance benefits. Each group member was asked to rate the benefits listed below on a 6-point scale ranging from "none" to "very high." The table below lists the percentages of respondents who rated the particular benefit from DBSA support group participation to be a 4 (high) or 5 (very high) on the rating scale.

Percent of Respondents Experiencing High Levels of Support Group Benefits

DBSA Support Group Benefit	ALL	FAMILY	PARTICIPANTS	SHORT-TIMERS	LONG-TIMERS	FACILITATORS
Support	84%	100%	81%	58%	86%	95%
Knowledge	83%	100%	79%	55%	85%	84%
Advice	76%	81%	75%	75%	75%	63%
Help with Coping	63%	67%	62%	45%	66%	63%
Crisis Management	60%	76%	57%	38%	60%	58%
New Friends	59%	62%	59%	39%	63%	58%
Social Interaction	70%	62%	71%	47%	76%	58%
Sharing Experience	79%	82%	79%	58%	84%	84%
Helping Others	75%	77%	75%	44%	80%	100%
Hope	77%	91%	74%	58%	78%	95%
AVERAGE	73%	80%	71%	52%	76%	76%

Medium-Term Outcomes

The table below reflects how respondents assessed their own medium-term benefits of group participation based on change between the time an attendee first participated in a DBSA-sponsored support group meeting to the time he or she completed the outcome questionnaire. Again, the responses were based on a 5-point scale "very low" to "very high". In every category, the individuals who had attended group meetings more than 2 months assessed their improvement to be higher than those attending for less than 2 months.

Mean Percentage Change in Medium-Term Outcomes Reported by Group Participants

DBSA Support Group Outcome	ALL	FAMILY	PARTICIPANTS	SHORT-TIMERS	LONG-TIMERS	FACILITATORS
Empowerment	+40%	+36%	+41%	+30%	+44%	+59%
Utilization of Services	+34%	+35%	+34%	+21%	+37%	+51%
Coping	+39%	+45%	+38%	+26%	+42%	+53%
Social Relationships	+28%	+20%	+30%	+19%	+33%	+32%
Treatment Compliance	+22%		+22%	+20%	+23%	+25%
Communication	+20%	+19%	+20%	+6%	+23%	+28%
Hope	+38%	+36%	+38%	+33%	+39%	+51%

Long-Term Outcomes

Respondents were asked to rate their individual progress toward recovery as a result of attending DBSA peer support group meetings (i.e., resulting from group participation, not other circumstances). Recovery was not defined in order to allow respondents freedom to communicate their own perception of progress toward "recovery." The responses were calculated only for

participants (i.e., diagnosed individuals, not family members). The responses were on a five-choice scale from "very negative" to "very positive."

Change in Progress Towards Recovery

Progress Toward Recovery	PARTICIPANTS	SHORT-TIMERS	LONG-TIMERS	FACILITATORS
Unchanged	15%	25%	12%	-
Positive/Very Positive	85%	75%	88%	100%

Similarly, respondents were asked to assess changes in their quality of life attributed by the individual to participation in DBSA support groups. The 5 possible choices ranged from "much worse" to "much better." Those rating quality of life in the top 2 choices -- better and much better -- are quantified in the following table.

Change in Quality of Life

QUALITY OF LIFE	ALL	Family	PARTICIPANTS	Short-timers	Long-timers	FACILITATORS
Unchanged	11%	-	13%	35%	7%	-
Better/Much Better	89%	100%	87%	65%	93%	100%

Finally, group attendees (participants, family and facilitators) were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the DBSA support group experience on a five-point scale (from very low, to low to high or very high). Substantially all group attendees rated the DBSA support group experience high or very high as shown in the following table.

Overall Satisfaction with the DBSA Support Group Experience

Rating	Overall
Low/Very Low	1%
-	6%
High/Very High	93%

If you have any questions or need further information regarding the *Outcome Study*, please feel free to call our office at (713) 600-1131.