

# THE SPECTRUM HOLIDAY

Depression & Bipolar Support Alliance of Greater Chicago



## Happy Holidays from DBSA-GC!

Happy Holidays! We hope you and your family are doing well during this holiday season. It's not for everyone - the lights, the decorations, the shopping and more get togethers. We encourage you to find some peace within by doing things that make you feel happy and strong. Be mindful not to overextend yourself. It's ok to rest more during these colder months and it's ok to say no when it doesn't feel right. As we have learned during the pandemic, your health is your number one asset, so try to eat healthy, sleep well and get moving!

The DBSA-Greater Chicago Board and I would like to share the most recent Spectrum newsletter. The main focus of this newsletter is to provide mental health articles about light therapy during the winter, discuss ways that pets to improve your mental health and provide Board insights about programming with a featured Board member who discusses the power of support groups. We hope you find this edition interesting and useful to promote strong mental health.

Bridget Maul, DBSA-GC President

***Behind the Board***  
**Judy Sturm, DBSA-GC**  
**Vice President**



***What makes you feel good for your mental health?***

- Being productive in some way on a daily basis - even if it is cleaning out a closet. Sometimes mundane things "hit the spot".

***What motivates you?***

- Being of help, of service to others. Sometimes if you cannot help yourself, it helps to help others. It is so rewarding to see people doing better!

***What are you proud of in DBSA-GC?***

- BeDBSA-GC helped my daughter understand my illness by attending Family and Friends Support Group, led by Dennis Chan, many moons ago. He helped folks understand the illnesses and the effects. Because my daughter went, I decided to go...each time I went I felt a bit better. Soon I became a facilitator, then a board member, then president for 10 years. I am proud of all the people I worked with over the years. They all have done their best. And that mission continues with our "young bloods" who have joined us - even through Covid and Zoom meetings!

## DBSA-GC Announcements

•**Virtual Events:** We are still holding our free virtual events, such as support groups on Wednesdays and Sundays, along with a 50+ group every on the second and fourth Thursday of each month. We also have music therapy on Tuesday at noon and meditation at noon on Monday's. Please join us when you can. Here is our [virtual events calendar](#). Note that Cooking with Q is taking a break, but he will be back as soon as possible!

•**In Person Peer Support Groups:** – We are keeping our virtual programming for now, but stay tuned for future announcements about in person events. You can join our Sunday and Wednesday 7pm Support groups by registering [HERE](#). No registration is necessary for our ages 50+ group on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month. TO join our ages 50+ group at 7pm click [here](#).

•**Buddy Project:** We are still holding our buddy project, which connects people in our community as buddies, who have similar interests. Please reach out to [Margaux@dbsa-gc.org](mailto:Margaux@dbsa-gc.org) if you are interested.



# DBSA-GC Annual Holiday Party Monday December 13th 6pm

Join us on Monday December 13th at 6pm via Zoom for our Annual Holiday Party! We'll play some trivia, name-that-Holiday-tune, and other fun games! Don't forget to come dressed in your most festive holiday outfit - best dressed wins a prize!

We hope to see you there!

Happy Holidays!



## Retro-Perspective 2021

*By Judy Sturm, DBSA-GC Vice President and Spectrum Contributor*

### Getting Diagnosed

Initially, a diagnosis of Clinical Depression or Bipolar Disorder is met with DENIAL. Especially if the diagnosis is BP and the patient is manic. It is *de rigeur* to totally dismiss the doctor's findings. This can go on for years. I know. I am the poster child for that scenario.

I should say I *was* the poster child. After years of a roller coaster life, I finally came to terms with the fact that I did have a mental illness. This was due to my daughter's involvement in educating herself about my illness and finding DBSA-GC (Depression Bipolar Support Alliance – Greater Chicago) and its support group for family and friends.

### Getting Help

She steered me to the right doctor, he steered me to the right medication and I actually stayed on it because it actually did not numb me or take away my super-duper personality. I was able to laugh and cry and function as a total human being. Finding the right medication or combination, known as a “cocktail”, is often a challenge to the patient and the doctor. This is sometimes the phase that I call “being your own guinea pig” and it is quite a trying time.

Even in the best scenario, there is no instant fix due to meds. For recovery, one has to be proactive. That means doing more than just popping a pill or even the right pill. It means therapy. It means

exercise, focus, and mindfulness. Mindfulness is the mental health buzz in recent years. And rightfully so - it is imperative! It is a huge help to attaining recovery and keeping it.

## Support Groups

Because my daughter sought support for herself, I could not refuse her request for me to go to a support group. Each time I went, I felt a bit better. After several months I felt a lot better. Soon I was involved as a facilitator, a board member and now, an officer on the board of our chapter. I have been stable, was employed full time until I retired just before Covid.

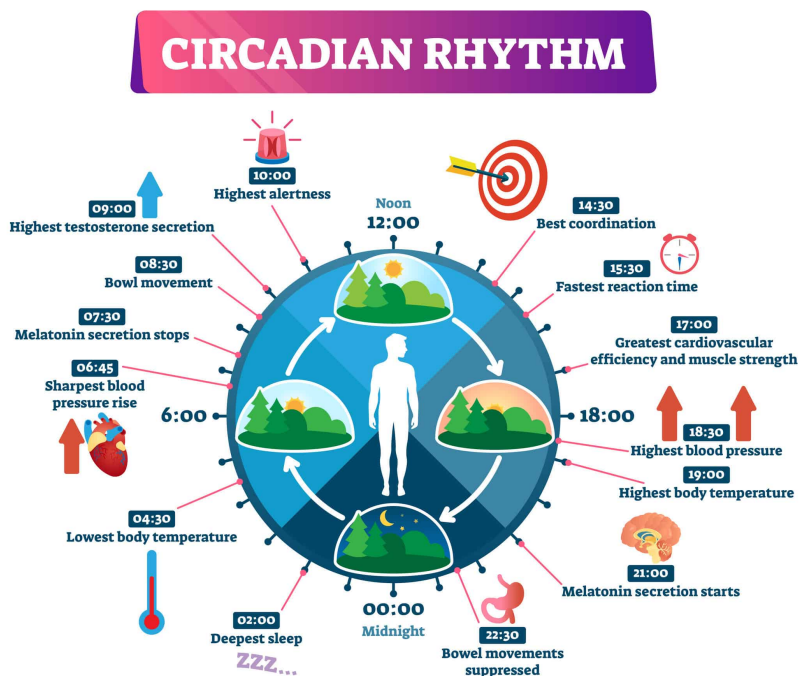
## Involvement

My involvement with our organization is paramount in my continued recovery. As having been a facilitator of multiple groups I find that sharing and supporting others keeps me aware of my own issues and it is wonderful when the group helps me, supports me in ways they may not even know.

But, it is the nature of a support group to know that you are in the company of people that totally “get it”. There is a shorthand in communication that you do not find outside of a group. No matter what the group, AA, NA, Cancer Survivors, etc, the group itself has a dynamic that has instant contact and empathy because you already know you are with kindred spirits. No cocktail party niceties trying to find common ground with a stranger...It is such a relief!

# How Circadian Rhythms Impact Our Mental Health

DBSA National <https://www.dbsalliance.org/education/newsletters/how-circadian-rhythms-impact-our-mental-health-around-the-wellness-wheel/>



As the weather gets cooler, the clocks give us an extra hour of sleep with daylight savings time. We may not have complaints about extra sleep, but some of us still struggle with adjustments caused by shorter days and longer nights.

If you live with depression or bipolar disorder, you likely have a more sensitive body clock, or circadian rhythm, meaning adjustments to time of day and differences in light can have a great impact on your mood. For example, we see this phenomenon with Seasonal Affective Disorder. As the days shorten in the winter, we know some people tend to experience heightened symptoms of depression



because of the shorter amount of light exposure in a given day.

The good news is we can take steps to help regulate our body clocks. At DBSA's Leadership Summit, Dr. Holly Swartz gave a talk about the importance of regulating our body clocks.

Dr. Swartz provided us with some important takeaways and tips:

- **Go to sleep and wake up at the same time each day**, even on the weekends. While you don't have to wake up earlier, setting a consistent time can help keep our body clocks regulated.
- **Limit exposure to light, especially light from the screen two hours before bed.** Lights from a computer or phone can impact our ability to fall asleep. Limiting our light exposure can be helpful to signal to our body it is time to go to sleep.
- **Don't spend excessive time in bed.** We want our body to associate our bed as a place for sleep only. While we may like to read or watch television in bed, it can be helpful to limit our bedtime only for sleep and sexual activity, so that our bodies get the right cues to signal our sleep.

## The Best SAD Light Therapy Lamps of 2021

[CLICK HERE](#)

### Everything you need to know about SAD lamps

Before committing to purchasing one of these lights you may be asking, "What is SAD, anyway?" Seasonal affective disorder is basically defined as a bout of depression during the same time frame each year for at least two years in a row, followed by remission during the remaining months, according to the American Psychiatric Association. Women and people who live in areas that see less daylight in the winter months seem to be more affected than others, according to the National Institutes of Health.



If that sounds anything like you, the next logical question may be "Can a SAD lamp help?" Since 1984 when it was first researched, bright light therapy (BLT) has proven to improve those winter doldrums again and again. Enter the SAD lamp. Scientists have started zeroing in on exactly what kind of light, when to use it and how much light will do the trick best. The two key things that have been identified in order to get the best results are 10K lux brightness and UV filtered light. In general, the light should be 16 to 24 inches from your face and point toward your eyes from the side and at an angle of about 45 degrees, or halfway between your nose and your shoulder. Never look directly at the light. (You wouldn't look at the sun, would you? That's basically what this is mimicking.) Thirty minutes at 10K lux first thing in the morning (generally recommended to occur before 8 a.m.) is the equivalent of one hour of sunrise. See the lamp's instructions for its specific recommendations.

Before adding a SAD lamp to your morning routine, speak with your doctor. Certain supplements, lifestyles and medical conditions have shown to reduce or negatively impact the use of light therapy. Even with a doctor's approval, it's recommended to test your personal reaction to the light by setting it about 18 inches from your face at an indirect angle (ideally 45 degrees from your forward glance) for about 10 minutes. If you feel dizzy, get a headache or experience any other odd symptoms, a SAD lamp, sadly, may not be for you.

## Henry Cavill says his dog, Kal, has saved his mental health

*Henry Cavill opened up about his bond with his dog, an American Akita called Kal.*

By By Toyin Owoseje, CNN: [click here for article](#)

"Superman" star Henry Cavill has revealed that not all heroes wear capes -- some just have fluffy paws. The British actor, best known for portraying the DC Comics character in the DC Extended Universe, has credited his dog for saving his mental health.

Cavill appeared alongside his pooch, Kal, on British talk show "Lorraine" on Monday to promote season 2 of his Netflix show "The Witcher" -- which is set to premiere on December 17. The conversation soon turned to his canine companion and he told host Lorraine Kelly just how important Kal was to him. The film star regularly shares pictures of his well-groomed American Akita with his 17.7 million Instagram followers.

"He really is (my best friend)," the 38-year-old told Kelly as he stroked Kal. "We go everywhere together. He's 8 now and he has saved my emotional, psychological bacon plenty of times." Cavill said they share an "incredibly close bond."

During the interview, Cavill, whose acting credits also include "Enola Holmes," "The Man From U.N.C.L.E." and "Immortals" also revealed that he keeps his Superman suit in his wardrobe and is "ready and waiting for the phone call" to reprise the role.

Cavill first portrayed Superman in the 2013 film "Man of Steel," before going on to reprise the part in DC projects "Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice" and "Zack Snyder's Justice League."

Speaking about playing the character, he said: "You look back and you just think, what a wonderful opportunity. And even if I were to stop acting tomorrow and go live on a yacht or boat somewhere, a sailing boat, and just travel the Med... I can still look back and say I've worn a cape and leaped about the place and entertained some people."



# The Spectrum

Thank you for reading! Got Spectrum Newsletter Feedback? Do you like what you are reading and/or do you want more? We would love to hear what's on your mind. Please reach out to us if there are topics and ideas you would like to include or share in the next quarterly Spectrum. Anything goes – events, memorials, celebrations, recognition, thank you's, etc.

## *2022 Spectrum Schedule*

Q1: Feb-Mar

Q2: May-June

Q3: Aug/Sept-Oct

Q4: Nov-Dec

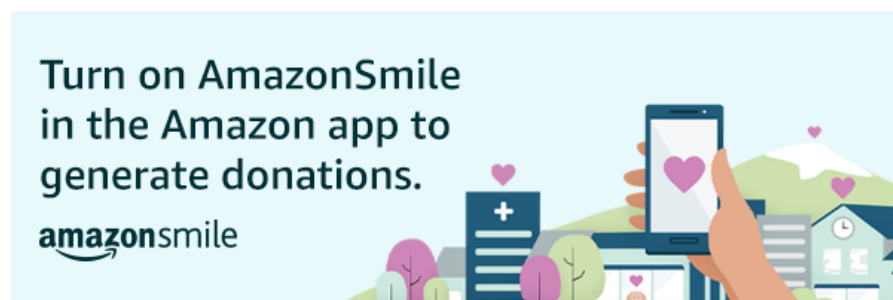
If you'd like to submit an article, event, celebration, recognition, etc. to be included in our Spectrum, please submit to [Margaux@dbsa-gc.org](mailto:Margaux@dbsa-gc.org) and we'll be happy to review!

## Get in Touch with Us

If you are feeling alone, please know we're here to support you. Your recovery matters to us. If you're experiencing a difficult time, please reach out and we'll do what we can to help you get back on track. Please join us for our virtual peer lead support groups. We have a group on Sunday evenings at 7pm, Wednesday evenings at 7pm, and we've added an Ages 50+ support group on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of every month at 7pm. All groups are currently on Zoom. For questions on our peer lead virtual support group or anything else on your mind to get more involved, please reach out to us at: [wecanhelp@dbsa-gc.org](mailto:wecanhelp@dbsa-gc.org) and visit [dbsa-gc.org](http://dbsa-gc.org). We'd love to speak with you and build our community foundation stronger.

## Amazon Smile

Shopping online? Support DBSA-GC by shopping with Amazon Smile! At NO CHARGE to you, just choose DBSA-GC as your preferred charity and a portion of your purchases are donated directly to us every time you shop on Amazon! Follow this [LINK](#) to shop on Amazon and AmazonSmile gives back to DBSA-GC! Thank you.



## Wrap Up

In closing, we wish you a good holiday season. Take care of yourself and make time to do things that feel good. Stay connected with us since this community supports you.

For future Spectrum newsletters, if you want to share an article, testimonial or photo, please submit it to [Bridget@dbsa-gc.org](mailto:Bridget@dbsa-gc.org) and [Margaux@dbsa-gc.org](mailto:Margaux@dbsa-gc.org).

Warm Regards,

***DBSA Greater Chicago Board***

