

Opening Our Eyes

Happy New Year!

by Nan Dickie

A new year begins for me on three days of the calendar year: on January 1st (this goes without saying); on September 1, when most of us return to scheduled activities and pursuits after, hopefully, an enjoyable summer; and on my birthday, when I change a digit - or two - in my age, and feel a wee bit older.

We are now beginning a “New Year.” It’s September! It’s a great time to make good a resolution you committed yourself to in January or on your birthday this year. For anyone who lives with clinical depression, bi-polar disorder or anxiety, now is a perfect time to go to your first depression support group (DSG) meeting - something you promised yourself to do after reading an “Opening our eyes” article I wrote last winter.

I am well aware of the vast distance between thinking, “I should go to those meetings,” and actually turning up at the meeting door a few minutes before one of the bi-monthly meetings. That distance - that vast territory between thinking and doing - contains so many obstacles in the form of reasons not to go. It takes great courage to live through episodes of deep depression or unmanageable mania (we most often don’t recognize this courage required), and then greater courage is required of us to enter a room of strangers. No wonder it is difficult to take that scary step.

Many of the reasons depressed people stay away from a DSG with other people who experience depression and mania are understandable fears. These fears range from “What if I see someone I know?” to “I wouldn’t know what to say,” and a dozen in between.

The saddest thing about people holding themselves back from going to a support group out of fear is that at the end of their first meeting, without an exception, everyone says, “I wish I had come when I first heard/read about this group” - often six months earlier. Each participant of the support group has taken the risk and has survived in tact - in fact has thrived by coming.

If you (or a loved one) are a candidate for the DSG, come to a meeting and just observe - you don’t have to say a word. No one has to speak, ever. Listening is participating. Bring a family member or friend as support to your first meeting. I guarantee you will be glad you took that courageous first step.

Nan Dickie, who lives with clinical depression, facilitates the DSG meetings that take place every first and third Monday at Askews Uptown conference room at noon. For more information, contact Nan at ndickie@telus.net; or 250 832-3733.