Finding a Helpful Online Support Group

If you don't have a local community support group anywhere near you that deals with your love one's disorder, or if you simply want to explore an online group to supplement the community group that you already attend, you can review and access any of the following online groups to see if "it's for you."

Online mutual support groups exist in 4 forms:
- "Message Boards" on websites, which sometimes are referred to as "forums."
- "E-mail Discussion Groups" or "Mailing Lists" (where people share through e-mail messages).
- real-time "Chat Room" meetings, usually available only at limited, scheduled times on specific days.
- Online social networks like Facebook.

Many existing community support groups use several of these ways to support members.

To Obtain a Less Identifiable Email Address?
If you don't already have your own e-mail address (like JohnDoe@gmail.com), you can get a free one for yourself by going to any of the websites that provide free e-mail services. These are services like gmail.com, hotmail.com, and others. Many people, who already have their own e-mail address identifying them by name, also register to obtain a free e-mail address because it can better help them to remain anonymous.

Family/Friends Online Groups:

NAMI (National **A**lliance on **M**ental **I**llness**) Message Boards** www.nami.org
First click on "*Online Communities*" in the menu column on the left. Then, after you register for free, you can sign in here, and you'll see a listing of almost 50 different Forums or message board sections. They include forums for: "*Parents of Adult Consumers*" (note that those with a mental

illness are referred to as "consumers"), "*Spouses of Consumers*," "*My Parent is a Consumer*," and other sections dealing with specific disorders. Get a rough idea how active any specific forum is, by noting the total number of messages posted. Family members, consumers and anyone else with interest can post & respond to messages.

Schizophrenia.com www.schizophrenia.com
Has multiple message boards just for families of those with the disorder, to include those for *Parents and Caregivers, Brothers & Sisters, Husbands & Wives, Girl & Boyfriends*, and *Offspring of Parents with Schizophrenia* (see listing within the box in the center of their homepage).

Schizophrenia-parents
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/schizophrenia-parents An email discussion group for those with children of any age or other loved ones who have any schizophrenia disease.

Schizoaffective.org Support Group
http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/schizoaffectiveorg Email support group for family and loved ones of persons with schizo-affective disorder. Includes discussion of treatment of schizoaffective disorder

North American Society for Childhood Onset Schizophrenia www.nascos.org
Provides families of children, with onset before age 13, with access to information, discussion forum, e-mail list. Families and caregivers of older patients, whose onset was during childhood, as well may join.

DBSA (**Depression** & **Bipolar S**upport **A**lliance) www.dbsalliance.org At their website, click on "Find Support" on the left. For real-time chat meetings via computer,

click on "Online Support Group" in center, to see registration process and times for *Family & Friends* of people with mood disorders. Or click on "DBSA Forums," the box on the right, for many message forums to include separate Forums for *Family and Friends*, and for *Parents*.

BPSO (Bipolar Significant Others) Bulletin Board www.bpso.org
Mutual support for families and friends of persons with bipolar disorder. Opportunity to communicate online with others in similar situations. Has forums, e-mail list, chat-rooms, and over 3000 pages of information.

Child & Adolescent Bipolar Foundation www.bpkids.org
For parents & families of children or teens with bipolar disorder. Offers over two dozen message boards for raising children with BP disorder of different ages. Forum message boards provide some additional message boards, e.g., "*Newly Diagnosed*" "*Parents with BP Raising Kids with BP*."

Eating Disorders Something Fishy Website http://fishybb.something-fishy.org
Has "Family & Friends Bulletin Boards" with separate boards for *parents, spouses-partners-lovers, siblings, other family members, co-workers*, and *friends* of those with eating disorders, like anorexia, bulimia, etc.

BDD Central (**B**ody **D**ysmorphic **D**isorder) www.bddcentral.com Click on "Forum" at the top, for the forum message boards for parents, families & friends.

Conduct Disorders Parent Message Board www.conductdisorders.com
Support for parents of a child with any behavior disorder such as **oppositional**

defiance disorder, conduct disorder, intermittent explosive disorder - frequently occurring with bipolar disorder, depression, ADHD, anxiety or substance abuse. Parents of children of all ages are welcome.

OCD & Parenting E-mail List

http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/ocdandparenting An e-mail discussion & support group for parents of children with **obsessive compulsive disorder** (OCD). Also has professional advisors to answer questions.

Parent Trichotillomania Support

http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/ParentsTrichSupport moderated email list for parents of children with Trichotillomania (**compulsive hair pulling or skin picking**).

BPD (**B**orderline **P**ersonality **D**isorder) Central www.bpdcentral.com Provides links to online groups for persons dealing with a loved one with. Several mailing lists are available for *parents, siblings, grand-parents, gays/lesbians, Christians* and others close to someone with BPD.

Paranoid Personality Disorder Forum

http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/paranoidpersonalitydisorderforum Email group for anyone affected by a loved one or friend with paranoid personality disorder.

Attachment & (Child) Trauma Network

www.radzebra.org support and information network for parents or caregivers currently raising **children impacted by trauma or attachment disorder**. Free 30-day trial membership. Annual dues $35 for full membership. Scholarships available to those in need, who cannot pay full amount. Separate online group for professionals.

SibNet http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SibNet an email listserv for **adult brothers and sisters** (siblings) of those with special health, developmental or emotional needs.

Please Note

We include online support groups that, for the most part, reflect those positive mutual help characteristics that keep members returning to the group to help themselves and others. Our information on a group does not constitute an endorsement of that group, nor does the omission of a group signify disapproval. Evaluation of any self-help group is ultimately determined by those who participate in it, who judge whether it's really "for them" - meeting their needs for help and for community.

We truly appreciate your feedback and especially **any suggestion you have for a good group to add** that are for any specific family members, spouses, partners, and friends. Please let us know your favorite by emailing us at info@selfhelpgroups.org

Similarly, if you find any problems with any of the groups listed, please let us know. Understand that when the leadership of an email support group leaves and is not replaced, spammers often take over the postings. Let us know if you see any of those listed fail in that way or any other.

If you are reading this as a folded paper brochure, and you would prefer to receive it in digital form to more easily access the websites, just let us know that you would like a copy of the Mini-Guide for Families, by emailing us at info@selfhelpgroups.org and we'll email you a copy.

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A Mini-Guide to
Online Support Groups
for Families of Those
Recovering from a
Mental Illness

N.J. SELF-HELP GROUP CLEARINGHOUSE

"Helping New Jerseyans to Find & Form Mutual Aid Self-Help Support Groups"

In NJ: **1-800-367-6274**
outside NJ: 973-989-1122
www.NJgroups.org

A program of *Saint Clare's Health System, Denville, NJ*

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