

# ***MDDA-Boston Membership Agreement***

MDDA-Boston brings us together to offer each other what we have learned in our struggle to live with affective disorders. In these circles of trust we share our feelings, our experiences and our coping strategies. Each of us holds a piece of the puzzle of wellness. Often we find our own individual piece fitting others' and everyone gains strength to carry on.

MDDA-Boston does *not* offer professional mental health services. We do *not* give advice, particularly about medication. Our support groups are not therapy groups. Our facilitators are not therapists, but MDDA-Boston members trained in peer group facilitation by our organization. Within these limits, however, comes a healing inspiration no other source can provide.

To keep this source clear, our groups value and strive to adopt certain attitudes. In particular, we recognize that everything shared within groups (and much revealed one-to-one) must be kept confidential in order for people to feel safe enough to participate freely. When differences arise, we refrain from judging one another, seeking understanding instead.

*MDDA-Boston* members in good standing are entitled to the following privileges:

- A safe and empathetic environment to aid in their personal growth
- Receipt of our quarterly newsletter via 1st class mail (in discreet envelopes)
- Participation in our twice-monthly lectures, ongoing share/care groups and daytime drop-in center
- Group functions including the summer picnic and holiday party
- Opportunities to "give back" to others by serving as a group facilitator, running for the Board of Directors or working on committees
- The right to vote in MDDA-Boston elections

MDDA-Boston has established clear guidelines for the security and well-being of all members participating in our organization. Because disruptive behavior is often a symptom of bipolar and depressive illnesses, it must be accommodated to some degree. Beyond a certain point, however, it cannot be tolerated as it jeopardizes the work or even the existence of a group dedicated to helping people transform their lives. We list here some examples of behavior that, if persisted in, can lead to an official review of an individual's group participation privileges, and possible to that individual's removal from the organization by the Board of Directors.

1. Discrimination against any individual or group based on age, gender, race, creed, nation of origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, or any other characteristic protected by the laws of the United States.
2. Physical or verbal aggression
3. Suggestive remarks or other forms of sexual harassment
4. Violating confidentiality of support group meetings or individual members
5. Disrupting groups by coming in late habitually, wandering in and out or refusing to cooperate with a group facilitator in following established MDDA-Boston guidelines.
6. Abuse of the telephone or email lists by making calls at inappropriate times or by refusing to stop contacting those who have asked not to be contacted
7. Harassing or stalking individuals who have asked not to be contacted
8. Inappropriate or illegal behavior wherever members are viewed as representatives of MDDA-Boston, such as at McLean Hospital, Friendlys or other public places
9. Bringing pets to group meetings
10. Attending MDDA-Boston meetings or functions while under the influence of alcohol or other recreational drugs, or smoking inside the building where an MDDA-Boston group is meeting

Your cooperation and commitment are what keep MDDA-Boston alive and well. Thank you!