



## WELCOME TO THE DOCTORS' SUPPORT NETWORK

The **Doctors' Support Network (DSN)** is a warm, friendly self-help group for doctors with mental health concerns. These problems include stress, burnout, anxiety, depression, manic depression, psychoses, eating disorders and probably other things as well.

The group believes that contact with and support from other doctors can help recovery. All doctors in the group have themselves been troubled at some stage in their lives. This group is therefore well placed to help those who are beginning the slow process of re-establishing themselves after a breakdown or other mental crisis. The group also believes that appropriate support offered before a crisis develops helps defuse it.

The Network seeks to reduce the isolation and stigma associated with mental health concerns. It is not group therapy, nor does it have other therapeutic aims. It aims to complement other sources of support available to doctors and fills a gap not otherwise catered for.

We are a vulnerable group by the nature of both our illnesses and our status and registration as doctors. To ensure this, we do ask that all our full members have been medical doctors at one point, and in order to ensure the security of the organisation we ask for something to back that up. For many people that will be a current GMC number, but it doesn't have to be. For example you could use a copy of your degree certificate, an old GMC certificate, or perhaps an old wage slip. Please don't let this matter put you off from joining us, if you have any questions or difficulties then contact us and we will be able to sort something out.

DSN is managed by a Committee of members – maximum 12 in number. The accounts are fully audited and presented to the Charity Commission yearly. Details of the Committee members are available via [info@dsn.org.uk](mailto:info@dsn.org.uk) and also via the newsletters.

We have members throughout the UK. Many members work full or part-time whilst others are pursuing other options. DSN is almost totally funded by subscriptions from Members and Associates, and we would ask that you contribute if at all possible. The subscription for working members is £25 a year (January to January) and only £5 for the unwaged. We also hope that a Gift Aid form will be completed by those who pay tax, so that we can take full advantage of our charitable status, to augment our funds.

The DSN has **regular meetings** throughout the UK and is always looking for new venues to expand into. Currently local groups meet in Scotland, Wales, and York. We are hoping to revive meetings in London & SE England, and the North West, depending on local interest.

DSN members also receive a **regular Newsletter** and have access to 2 **email discussion groups**. The debate forum is designed to allow debate, exchanges of opinion, plan campaigns and has even resulted in the publication of a book "Doctors as Patients". The support forum is more focussed on helping support each other through difficult times and to share the good times when they happen.

Medical students have their own group within DSN and there is a moderated email students' support forum.

DSN also runs the **Doctors' SupportLine (DSL)** – a confidential and anonymous peer support helpline for doctors who need to talk to someone whatever their concerns.

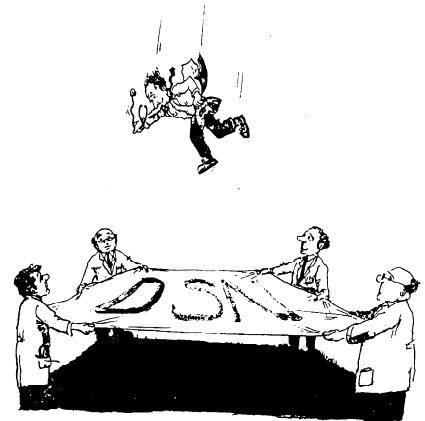
DSL 0870 765 0001 confidential anonymous helpline :  
[support@doctorssupport.org](mailto:support@doctorssupport.org) support via e-mail  
[www.doctorssupport.org](http://www.doctorssupport.org) web site for details

Membership of DSN is open to medical graduates, and student membership is available to medical students. Verification of student status is required - please contact us for details. We also encourage interested persons, who wish to support the aims and objectives of the Network, but who are not medically qualified, to become Associates, by subscribing. Associates receive the regular Newsletters, can attend the AGM, have full voting rights, and can become committee members.

We also attend as many Medical Conferences, in person, manning stands informing doctors of our Network, and if that is not possible, advertise with documentation in course packs, etc. In addition, we seek to make representations to the GMC and BMA for instance when such bodies are forming guidelines and protocols for monitoring the health and wellbeing of doctors and medical students.

**www.dsn.org.uk**  
email [secretary@dsn.org.uk](mailto:secretary@dsn.org.uk)

tel:  
DSN 0870321 0 642  
(for information about DSN – please leave a message and your call will be returned asap)





## DSN Internet Support Forum.

The forum serves many functions. It is a place where it is safe to say how you are feeling, knowing your words will be read by a sympathetic audience. A place to get sensible advice from other doctors who may well have "been there" - or at least somewhere a bit like it. A place to exchange ideas, to share the small triumphs that are part of recovering from mental ill health and staying well. A place where those who feel very low and unworthy can be held and supported until they feel stronger.

It is also a place where friendships are made. Those of us that read and/or post regularly really do feel a part of the lives of other members - we worry when they go quiet, applaud their successes and hope to be there if needed.

There is no expectation to post messages - some people post a lot and gain support from knowing others out there care and are aware of what is happening in our lives. Others read the messages regularly and send love and best wishes to those who need them but do not feel the need to post a message that often (although when they do it is usually very wise). For some support is gained from reading the advice posted to others. Different people are helped when people share their stories - to know you are not the only one, that others have also been through difficult times and are surviving is very powerful.

Like many other internet "groups" the forum works as follows: messages are "posted" to a bulletin board and members can either visit the yahoo web site to read the messages or have them automatically forwarded to their email in box (see below). Your e-mail address will appear on your message, so use a non-identifiable one if you want to remain anonymous. Forum guidelines are on the following sheet. Both the support and debate fora are only accessible to DSN members, and all messages are regarded as confidential. We ask for people's GMC numbers before granting membership of the forum as a security measure to help ensure only doctors have access. This forum is moderated by members of the committee to ensure that the guidelines of the forum are maintained.

### Debate forum

This is a separate forum where we can debate matters of interest to us that aren't directly related to our current mental health. The same rules of respect, courtesy and confidentiality apply as on the support forum, but we can have more robust arguments and discussions here. It is often the case that a subject will come up on the support forum as it directly affects someone at the time, but will then be discussed in more general terms, and the thread will be shifted to the debate forum.

The forum can be accessed in the same ways as the support forum.

At the moment membership of the debate forum is by request rather than automatic on joining DSN, so please contact [declanfox@hotmail.com](mailto:declanfox@hotmail.com) if you would like to join either forum.

## Accessing the fora

Via Yahoo (recommended) - This enables you to read and reply to messages, view messages on the same thread easily, and search old messages for keywords or by message number. To access the forum, go to the Yahoo homepage at [www.yahoo.co.uk](http://www.yahoo.co.uk), and click on 'groups' in the list on the left hand side. You will need to create a Yahoo username and password if you don't already have one. DSN should then appear as one of 'my groups'.

E-mail - You can choose to have all messages on the forum sent to your personal e-mail address, and can reply to people from there. You can choose to receive messages individually, as a 'daily digest' (which many find less overwhelming), or not at all if you prefer to access the forum via yahoo alone. To choose how you receive messages, enter the forum via yahoo as above, click on 'edit membership' above the blue band near the top of the page, and select your option. The volume of messages is very high if you choose to receive them individually, so it is best to create a separate folder for DSN messages so as not to swamp your e-mail inbox.

## Other stuff

If you access the forum via yahoo, you will see a list on the left of the DSN page. This includes a list of all forum members (email addresses only), member profiles of those who want to give some info on who they are, various photos people have shared, useful links, copies of the guidelines and welcome pack, and a calendar on which dates of meetings, exhibitions etc can be posted. These features are very underused at the moment, so if anyone feels like adding anything, please do!

Our website is in the process of being updated, so please log on occasionally to see what changes we are making: [www.dsn.org.uk](http://www.dsn.org.uk)

## **DOCTORS SUPPORT NETWORK EMAIL FORUM - GUIDELINES FOR USE**

### **MODERATORS**

If there are any queries or problems please contact the moderators of the DSN forum group; Declan Fox at [declanfox@hotmail.com](mailto:declanfox@hotmail.com) (2nd moderator to be announced soon)

### **MEMBERS of DSN Forum/DSN Student Forum**

The groups are confidential and only accessible through the DSN. All members of the forum are full DSN members (ie not Associates)

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Real names and addresses must be provided on registration. The group is not accessible except by invitation from the Forum moderators.

Email addresses may include real names and are visible to all members of the group. It is therefore advised that those individuals who are concerned, set up a more discrete Yahoo identity and Yahoo email address.

It is important to remember that any personal information you post, such as a phone number or home address can be accessed by everyone on the forum. This information may enable someone else on the forum to recognize you. If you are concerned that you might be recognized, it is advisable not to post these details.

Do not share anyone else's personal information or stories without that person's specific permission as that person will be at risk of being recognized. You can say that you are a member but not that anyone else is.

The only situation in which confidentiality will be broken is if there is a serious risk of injury to another person. Even in this situation, confidentiality will not be broken without the member concerned being told that this will happen.

### **USE OF THE FORUM**

#### **Respect**

The spirit of all messages must be one of respect for all our fellow human beings. This includes respect for the writer of the message, and people we might refer to in our communication. We are all at different stages of our journey, sometimes we need to help others reach their next step and sometimes we need that help ourselves.

#### **Support**

This group provides unconditional and respectful support. Communications that are outside this remit are best left outside and not sent to the group. We can challenge each other and this can often be helpful. We are here to help each other and that is not necessarily to say what the other person wants to hear, but what is necessary to say. We need to be free in our response but think before answering.

Feedback must always be given in a supportive manner – say something nice, make the point in as gentle a manner as possible – say something nice again.

#### **Welcoming Newcomers**

When newcomers arrive, say "hi" and welcome them to our growing community. When replying to a new member, thank them for their contribution and say a couple of lines about who you are.

## **Language**

Read your posting before you send it. 'Throw away' remarks can easily be misconstrued on an email.

Derogatory language is not acceptable. Profanity will not be permitted. If it seems that someone has used such language then please contact the moderator of the group who will then contact that person and if necessary ask them to retract their statement and provide an appropriate apology. The matter is then closed and no further comments should be made.

"Personal attacks" are defined as comments that reflect upon the person instead of their opinion or that are directed against one's race, religion, ethnic origin, gender or sexual preference. They are not allowed. You may challenge others' points of view and opinions, but do so respectfully and thoughtfully. Don't attack individuals. Personal attacks on individuals will not be excused and will be removed. Agree to disagree.

Use (X), ;- ) and other helpful gestures freely so as to make the meaning clearer!

## **Depressed and suicidal communications**

It is important that people have the freedom to express their feelings freely and the DSN cannot accept responsibility for the content of postings. Where depressed or suicidal communications are posted, it is on the understanding that no action will be taken by members of the forum. These posts may also trigger feelings in other people on the forum, so please if possible mention the way you are feeling in the title of the post, so people can choose not to read the post.

This should not however discourage personal friends from acting towards each other in a way that they would choose with regard to the posting and still allows everyone to post freely.

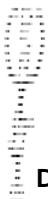
## **Personal responsibility**

DSN is not a substitute for treatment and we would always encourage members to seek appropriate help from those health professionals treating them.

DSN members should not be offering their own advice or making decisions on behalf of other members. Rather, the likely outcome of different courses of action should be explored in a way that empowers each member. Each DSN member takes responsibility for his or her opinions and actions

Any comments or advice between group members is not the responsibility of the group facilitator

**This forum is about making friends, exchanging ideas and most of all realising we are not alone**



# Doctors Support Network

PO Box 360, Stevenage, Herts SG1 9AS

Dear Member

We need to ensure that we receive an annual subscription from all our members. We would not deny anyone access to the support network if they were unable to pay but members' subscriptions are our biggest source of income and we do need an income to cover costs.

**Subscriptions 2008 – 2009 : £25 per annum (*waged*) / £5 per annum (*not waged*)**

We also welcome anyone who supports the aims of our organisation to become an associate member - if you have friends or family looking for a good cause to support please point them in our direction. All donations are also gratefully received!

I wish to become a:

- Full DSN Member** (medically qualified with mental health issues) ( )
- Associate Member** (Non medically qualified/no mental health issues) ( )
- Medical Student Member** ( )

If you are able, a standing order ensures a regular income for us. Please complete the enclosed form and send it **directly to your bank**. Please also tick here so we can make sure that the banks do their bit:

**I wish to pay my subscription by standing order and have completed the enclosed form and have sent it to my bank ( ) £25 £5 (delete as appropriate)**

If you wish to pay by direct bank transfer (eg internet or phone banking) the bank details are as per the standing order form. Please tick here so that we can marry up payments with members:

**I wish to pay my subscription by direct bank transfer and will instruct my bank accordingly ( ) £25 £5 (delete as appropriate)**

Cheques can be made payable to "Doctors Support Network" and returned with this form to the address above.

**I wish to pay my subscription by cheque and enclose it with this letter ( ) £25 £5 (delete as appropriate)**

**I wish to donate to DSN £ .....**

**Please see over to complete the form:**

**PLEASE COMPLETE :**

**Name on GMC Register:**  
(or Medical School attending + expected year of qualification)

**GMC Number (if applicable)**

**Name to be known by if preferred :**

**Date of Birth**  
(for GMC verification purposes only)

**Address**

**Phone No. (optional)**

**E mail address (for Newsletters etc)**

**If you would prefer Newsletters to come by post please indicate here ( )**  
**(please note that e-mail is much more efficient)**

***I hereby agree that I have read and understood the aims, objectives and guidelines of the Doctors' Support Network, and will maintain confidentiality at all times.***

***Signed:***

***Date:***

If you are a UK tax payer we can claim back the tax you have already paid.

Please complete the gift aid form below.

Thank you.

Roberta - DSN Secretary



**Doctors' Support Network**  
**PO Box 360,**  
**Stevenage, SG1 9AS**

**ENSURE YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO DSN .Forward this to your bank.**  
**PAY YOUR MEMBERSHIP RATE BY STANDING ORDER**

Your Details (Please print clearly)

Title:  Forename:   
Surname:   
Address:   
Address   
Postcode   
Tel  Email

**Instruction to your bank/building society to pay by Standing Order**

To the Manager

Bank Name   
Bank Address   
Postcode   
Exact name(s) of account holder(s)   
Branch Sort code     
Bank/Building Society Account number

Instructions to your Bank or Building Society

Please pay £25 /£5/£..... (delete as necessary) on receipt and annually thereafter.

HSBC Bank PLC  
89 Buckingham Palace Rd, London SW1W 0QL  
Sort Code 40-01-13  
Account Number 91429361

Signature:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(CAPITAL LETTERS PLEASE)

**Charity Number 1103741**

# Doctors Support Network

PO Box 360, Stevenage, Herts SG1 9AS

## Gift Aid

Gift Aid is one of the simplest and most effective ways of giving to charity. It means that for every pound you give, the charity you are supporting will receive an extra 28 pence from the Inland Revenue. This means that a £25 donation to DSN is worth £32 when it has been gift aided. A big difference to DSN which doesn't cost you a thing.

Gift aid applies to donations of any amount, large or small, by cash, cheque, direct debit or standing order. What's more a single declaration can cover all past donations back to April 2000 and all future donations you may make.

So go ahead and fill in the short form below and return it to the address at the top.

Thank-you.

Doctors Support Network / charity number 1103741

## Donor Details

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Signature..... Date.....

I want this charity to treat all donations I have made since 6/4/00, and all donations I make from the date of this declaration (until I notify you otherwise) as Gift Aid donation.

## Notes.

You must be paying income tax and/or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax that the charity reclaims on your donations in the tax year (currently 28p for each £1 you give) "Standard" rate is fine. If you pay higher rate tax you can claim further tax relief in your Self Assessment tax return.

If you change address let us know.

You can cancel at any time.

If you stop paying tax ie. your circumstances change- let us know.

## OTHER SOURCES OF HELP

### **BMA Counselling Service**

Tel: 08459 200169

24-hour support with immediate access to trained counsellors.

### **Samaritans**

Tel: 08457 90 90 90

[www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

### **Support4Doctors**

[www.support4doctors.org](http://www.support4doctors.org)

Website run by the RMBF – aims to put doctors and their families in touch with a range of organisations who can help. Covers: Work & career; Money & finance; Health & well-being; Family & home

### **BMA Doctors for Doctors**

[www.bma.org.uk](http://www.bma.org.uk) (click on doctors health & well-being)

Web based resource pack intended as a self-help tool to aid doctors in accessing appropriate help for any difficulties in which they may find themselves. Also contact with doctor-advisers through BMA Counselling service. For BMA members only.

### **The British Doctors and Dentists Group**

Tel: 0870 444 5163.

Monthly group meetings for doctors recovering from chemical dependency.

### **The Sick Doctors Trust**

Tel: 0870 444 5163

[www.sick-doctors-trust.co.uk](http://www.sick-doctors-trust.co.uk)

Undertake to provide early intervention and treatment for doctors suffering from addiction to alcohol or other drugs, thus protecting patients while offering hope, recovery and rehabilitation to affected colleagues and their families.

**Anaesthetists** Tel: 020 7631 1650

[www.aagbi.org](http://www.aagbi.org)

An alternative contact for anaesthetists seeking help

**Mind** Tel: 0845 766 0163

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

The leading mental health charity in England and Wales. Work to create a better life for everyone with experience of mental distress

### **Independent Career Assessment**

[www.medicalforum.com](http://www.medicalforum.com)

### **Financial help**

**BMA Charities** Tel: 020 7387 4499

Including the Cameron Fund

### **Royal Medical Benevolent Fund**

Tel: 020 8540 9194 [www.rmbf.org](http://www.rmbf.org)

### **The Royal Medical Foundation**

01372 821011

[www.royalmedicalfoundation.org](http://www.royalmedicalfoundation.org)