

## **Elegy for Deb Mann 4/25/15 by Dennis Hagler**

First my heart breaks for the Mann family, Lois, Dick, Joanna, Cory, and Jeffery; and for all of Debbie's families - her DBSA family, her work family, her family of peers, her family of friends, her world. And her world, our world, is a little emptier without her. That today, and every day after, will be a little emptier. There is a hole in each of us were Debbie used to fit. It can be covered over in time, but never truly filled.

My name is Dennis Hagler.  
I am a member of a group called DBSA-Boston,  
The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance of Boston.  
This is the world where Debbie and I intersect.  
And I am here today to talk about how Debbie affected that world.

This world of DBSA is a room actually, a grouping of people, who share one commonality, a mood disorder, a disease of affect. I call this a disease because of the pain, suffering, and loss that accompany those who have it, and their loved ones who suffer their own pain, their own losses. One of the frustrations stemming from this illness is our inability to be understood by those who don't suffer from it.

This room, this circle of trust, is where we come every week to listen, to speak, and to care for each other. In these rooms, in these groups, we share our deepest fears, our daily triumphs, the mundane, the silly, and the transcendent. We are free to cry for ourselves, and for each other. But much more often we laugh at ourselves, with each other. We come as strangers, yet leave as friends, bonded by the relief of being understood and accepted.

I first met Lois and Dick, Deb's parents, 25 years ago at DBSA. They were part of a group called Family and Friends. Family and Friends is one of the ten groups we offer every week in McLean Hospital. This group consists of loved ones of those of us who have the illness. It's a group that I don't go to because I have bipolar disorder, and have nine other groups to choose from. But judging from the light that shines in their eyes, as these friends leave room 118, I know their meeting was just like ours.

Five years after meeting Lois and Dick, I saw Deb come into DBSA. She started going to the Young Adults Group, which is one of the more close-knit groups at DBSA. I believe they are so close because in that group they are free mock, and plot against all the adults they have to endure.

By the time Deb aged out of young adults, she became a Facilitator. A Facilitator is the greatest role one can fill at DBSA-Boston. A facilitator takes on the responsibility of keeping each group safe, and effective. I saw Deb facilitate the Bipolar Group, not an easy group to control, as you can well imagine. I also saw her facilitate the Depression Group, where curiously enough you hear the most laughter. She often facilitated the women's group, who are reeling from two devastating losses in as many months.

An even larger honor than being a facilitator is to be chosen to the Share/Care Committee. These nine members are responsible for all the facilitators, all the groups, and all of the individuals that comprise these groups. The tough decisions made in this committee are ones that pit the safety of the group against the interests of the individual. What Debbie brought to this Committee was her kind regard for the individual, be it member or facilitator. She would often remind us that compassion trumps passion. That a group is only as strong as the respect we show for each of its' members.

Debbie was also elected to the Board of Directors of DBSA. This twelve-person Committee is responsible for the financial wellbeing of the organization. Usually as the responsibility for an organization grows, contact with members of that organization suffers. This happens everywhere to most leaders. It did not happen with Debbie. Debbie remained a champion of the little guy both in DBSA, and the mental health community as a whole.

And finally Debbie became the organizer, the chairperson, and the Captain of the DBSA team for the NAMI Boston Walk these past few years. It was difficult for Deb this year because of her ankle cast and crutches. But, she soldiered on. And now we must soldier on, and continue this May 16th to walk in her honor.

In closing:  
I know we can never wish to have more time with anyone,  
or take any of that time back.  
But...we can wish  
that the time we DO have with those we love.  
we use wisely,  
And that we do it in time.

We do it in time.