



NEWS RELEASE

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2011/12 BLACK DOG INSTITUTE WRITING COMPETITION

WALKING THE TIGHTROPE – CARING FOR SOMEONE WITH DEPRESSION OR BIPOLAR DISORDER

The impact of depression is like the tremors of an earthquake. While one in five Australians will personally experience clinical depression or a bipolar disorder over their lifetime there are the families, partners, friends and work colleagues who are also drawn into the crisis.

Often, it is these people on the perimeter that selflessly reach out to assist those who are living with a mood disorder, offering their time, their acceptance, support and hope.

In searching for strategies to deal with mood disorders, the latest Black Dog Institute Writing Competition throws the spotlight on the powerful stories that come from **Carers**, with a particular focus on the questions of what worked best, what didn't work and what did you learn?

“While depression can be very isolating, individuals fighting this private battle are often surrounded by those who love them, with friends, family and colleagues all looking for practical and sensitive ways to show their support,” said Professor Gordon Parker, Executive Director of the Black Dog Institute.

“The theme of the 2011/12 writing competition is ‘*Walking the Tightrope – Caring for Someone with Depression or Bipolar Disorder.*’ I feel this will resonate with Carers who are often the unsung heroes in helping people with mood disorders while at the same time exposing themselves to an increased risk of them facing a similar fate.”

This year the writing competition is being conducted with the support of Carers Australia, Mental Health Carers ARAFMI NSW Inc. and Hunter Institute of Mental Health's national initiative, Partners in Depression.

Over the past eight years the writing competition has focused on a wide range of topics including adolescents, the elderly, postnatal depression and tackling mood disorders in the workplace, as well as mastering depression and bipolar disorder; resulting in the publication of five (soon to be six) books by distinguished publishing companies.

“People have commented that most books on depression and bipolar disorder have been written from the outside looking in. Drawing together perceptions and personal accounts from those who have experienced such mood disorders- whether personally or in this case, as a Carer - allows us to reverse this approach. ‘Inside out’ views offer rich information that assists in breaking down their mysteries and their management and are particularly appreciated by general readers” he said.

“In each of our past writing competitions, there is always mention of the role played by Carers. This time we felt it was appropriate to focus specifically on the Carers’ contributions to gather new insights,” said Professor Parker.

Essays are to be no longer than 1500 words and will need to include:

- **At least two recommendations which will be collated into a list of tips to help all carers.**

(For example, there was the case of a couple that adopted the following practice when one of them was depressed. They would hold hands and while looking into each others eyes, jump up and down. Not before long, they were laughing at each other; thus providing a fun way of finding a ‘circuit breaker’ to override this black cloud of depression.

(There was also a couple living in London. When one of them was feeling depressed, they would go cycling around London – at 2.00am and 3.00am.)

- **At least two useful strategies such as the type of support services or websites that proved the most helpful and practical.**

The 2011/12 competition invites entries from the Australasian region.

Prizes will be awarded for the three best essay entries.

First Place: \$2000; Second Place \$1000 and Third Place \$500.

The closing date for receipt of entries is 31 January 2012.

Participants are required to complete an application form and forward, where possible, an electronic copy of their essay to blackdog@blackdog.org.au plus an original copy of the essay on A4 paper (paper clip/not stapled) by post, addressed to:

Black Dog Institute Writing Competition

Black Dog Institute,

Hospital Road, Prince of Wales Hospital, Randwick NSW 2031

An application form and further information can be obtained via the Institute’s website (www.blackdoginstitute.org.au) or by telephoning (02) 9382 4523. An independent judging panel will select the winning entries and they will be announced early in 2012.

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