Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

TARGET AUDIENCE

This therapy was designed for adults with self-harm behaviors, many of whom have borderline personality disorder, and has been extended to other populations.

SUMMARY

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) is an adaptation of cognitive behavior therapy that utilizes acceptance strategies and skills training designed to help individuals eliminate self-harm behaviors (e.g., self-cutting and suicide attempts), improve management of emotions and relationships, and live more rewarding and satisfying lives.

EVIDENCE

Five randomized trials were evaluated to place this intervention, three by the program developer and two by independent researchers. Across studies, female participants diagnosed with borderline personality disorder (BPD) demonstrated significant decreases in parasuicide acts (i.e. self-injurious behavior) and psychiatric hospitalizations. Additional trials and quasi experimental studies demonstrated consistent results. In the only trial that evaluated DBT one year post-treatment, the developer found that effects were maintained.

COMPONENTS

DBT combines individual therapy, group-based skills training, and phone coaching and progresses in four stages.

Stage 1: The goal is for clients to move from uncontrolled behavior to being in control of their actions. Therapists seek to help clients reduce and eliminate life threatening and self-injurious behaviors and any actions that interfere with treatment. Skills for emotion regulation and relationship stability are emphasized.

Stage 2: The goal is for clients to progress from being emotionally shut down to experiencing emotions fully. Therapists help clients to experience their emotions without being controlled by them or disassociating from them.

Stage 3: The goal is for clients to build an ordinary life and solve real-life issues and conflicts. Therapists support clients as they address normative problems such as marital conflict, job dissatisfaction, and relationship struggles.

Stage 4: The goal is for clients to proceed from a feeling of incompleteness to completeness and connectedness. Therapists encourage clients to gain a feeling of wholeness through positive interpersonal relationships and a belief in their own purpose.

PREVIOUS USE

DBT has been used in the United States and in several other countries since 1993.

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Training may be completed online at a 2-day workshop or via a DVD series. For information and training costs visit www.behavioraltech.com/training/options.cfm Implementation of DBT requires joining a consultation team of three to eight clinicians who practice DBT, share clinical challenges, and seek advice from peers.

Considerations for implementing DBT include acquiring buy-in from other team members, purchasing implementation materials, satisfying training requirements, and preventing client attrition.

The Clearinghouse can help address these considerations. Please call 1-877-382-9185, or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

If you are interested in implementing DBT, the Clearinghouse is interested in helping you! Please call 1-877-382-9185, or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

DBT involves weekly, individual sessions; weekly group skills training; and telephone consultations with the therapist as needed. Individual sessions are 1 to 1 1/2 hours; group skills training is 2 to 2 1/2 hours.

Cost of materials ranges widely from $15 to $300. See the program website for details www.behavioraltech.com/products/list.cfm

To move DBT to the Effective category on the Clearinghouse Continuum of Evidence an external evaluation should be performed that demonstrates positive effects lasting at least one year from program completion or two years from the beginning of the program. This study should be conducted independently of the program developer.

The Clearinghouse can help you develop an evaluation plan to ensure the program components are meeting your goals. Please call 1-877-382-9185, or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

Contact the Clearinghouse with any questions regarding this program.
Phone: 1-877-382-9185 Email: Clearinghouse@psu.edu

You may also contact Behavioral Tech, LLC by phone 206.675.8588, fax 1.206.675.8590, email information@behavioraltech.org, or visit www.behavioraltech.com/index.cfm