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## **Dialectical Behavior Therapy Program Guide**

Welcome. Our standardized DBT program is comprehensive, time-intensive, and substantially different from other types of counseling. This guide introduces you to the program so that you can make an informed decision about whether this program is right for you.

### **What is Dialectical Behavior Therapy?**

“Dialectic” refers to the fact that two things can be true at the same time. For example:

- It can be true that a person is doing the best that they can and still needs to get better.
- It can be true that a person wants to get better and still struggles to do what would help.
- It can be true that therapists who help people accomplish great change must also accept people just as they are in the moment.

“Behavioral” brings in a wide variety of research-proven tools from cognitive behavioral therapy and neuro-physio-emotional research, allowing us to structure the treatment to maximize your outcomes.

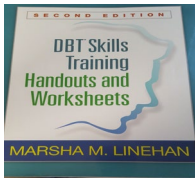
DBT’s originator, Marsha Linehan, Ph.D., wanted to help people who experience intense emotions, problems in relationships, depression, anxiety, anger or impulse control difficulties, trauma, eating disorders, and substance abuse problems.

While no single treatment can solve all of these problems, DBT helps many people overcome difficulties like the ones listed above. Marsha Linehan believes these problems tend to happen when people have not yet learned effective strategies to cope with intense emotions or, perhaps, learned strategies that helped in one stage of life but cause problems now. In DBT treatment, we help you develop strategies that work for you in your current life situation. Here’s how:

### **Group Skills Training:**

We teach classes to improve your ability to

- cope safely/ effectively with emotional crisis
- change and prevent painful emotions that lead to crisis, as well as understand the natural purpose/ usefulness of emotions
- keep and strengthen important relationships while protecting your own sense of self-respect
- take charge of your mind and thoughts, rather than your thoughts/ impulses taking charge of you



Our classes meet weekly for 2 hours. At each meeting, we teach and practice skills from the DBT Skills Training Handouts and Worksheets, 2nd. Ed. by Marsha Linehan. In order to learn how to use the skills when you really need them, we assign a weekly homework practice to be reviewed in class the following week. Our Group Guidelines document offers more detail regarding what to expect in group skills training.

We require a one-year commitment to this program. It is a six month curriculum, and research indicates that going through the curriculum twice produces the best results. Some individuals choose to go through the curriculum a third time in order to consolidate all of the skills they are learning.

Group Times (subject to change): Tuesdays 10-12 (virtual only), Tuesdays from 2pm-4pm, Wednesdays from 10am-12pm, Thursdays from 9am-11am

### **Individual DBT sessions:**

An individual DBT therapist partners with you throughout the duration of the program. Together, you work to strengthen the skills you are learning, overcome obstacles that get in the way, and keep motivation going when the work gets really difficult.

You meet with your individual DBT therapist weekly, and typically, any other counseling is put on hold until DBT is complete. Together, you clarify your treatment goals, what specific situations and behaviors to target, and how to prioritize those targets. Individual DBT activities are as follows

- Throughout the week, you track your progress on your chosen targets using a “diary card.”
- Based on your tracking information, the therapist sets up the agenda for the meetings, and together, you focus on identifying what factors are in play with those specific targets.
- When those factors are identified, you and your therapist plan for how to handle them in the upcoming week. This may involve changing the situation if you can, exploring new ways to look at the situation, and/ or using specific DBT skills. Sometimes, the best way to cope is to simply do nothing, just be present and breathe.
- As much as possible, you and your therapist actively practice strategies in session, so that you are ready to use them outside of sessions.

Our Therapy Contract form offers more detail about what to expect in individual DBT sessions.

Because you work closely with your individual DBT therapist over a period of a year, it is very important you get to know this person enough to decide if you can work effectively with them (and vice versa) before committing to the program. This is why we have Orientation before actually enrolling individuals in the program.

### **Phone Coaching**

We all have had the experience of learning and mastering a new skill with a teacher, only to find it difficult or impossible to do on our own, especially when we are feeling stressed. To address this, each DBT therapist offers after-hours coaching by phone. Often, 5-10 minutes on the phone with your DBT therapist makes the difference in your ability to activate skills when you really need them, even during times of stress.

This service is available throughout your time in the DBT program, and it helps maximize your progress in our program. You can call or text with a brief description of your situation/ how you are trying to practice your DBT homework, and the therapist will talk with you about what to do next. Details about how phone coaching works are available in our Phone Coaching Contract.

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Most people considering a DBT program have questions/concerns that need to be discussed.

Some FAQs:

Does DBT really work?

Has this program helped other people like me?

Will this program work with my schedule?

How much does it cost?

Can I just try it out and see how it goes?

What if I don't know where I will be in a year?

What if I know someone in the class?

How much will I have to share about myself?

Other questions? We encourage you to discuss these with our staff. Each one of us is committed to providing the most helpful services to those who would benefit, and so, we are invested in making sure this program is a good fit. Thank you.