

(Handouts & Worksheets)

Intro to DBT

Dialectical Behavior Therapy {DBT}
is based on the dialects of

ACCEPTANCE and **CHANGE**



What is Behavior Therapy?

The focus of Behavior Therapy is on helping an individual understand that by changing their behavior, the change in actions can lead to changes in how they are feeling. The focus is on current problems and behavior, and on attempts to remove behaviors the patient finds troublesome.

Behavior Therapy is in great contrast with Freudian Psychodynamic Therapy, which is much more focused on trying to uncover unresolved conflicts from childhood, believed to be the cause of abnormal behavior. Behavior Therapy stands on the premise that since people are born a blank slate (tabula rasa) and that all behavior is learned (i.e. conditioned), it is faulty (or maladaptive) learning that causes abnormal behavior.

Therefore, behavioral problems are not considered as something that a person has, but as the effects of a person's learning, environment, and influences. Behavior Therapy is based on the premise that all behavior (including maladaptive behavior) is learned, and therefore can be unlearned. The individual can learn the correct or acceptable behavior.

It is a treatment that focuses on altering negative behaviors that have become problematic and stressful, especially those which can potentially pose harm to the person. It also focuses on changing the thoughts and feelings that lead to self-destructive behavior. It helps with all types of behaviors, from those that were learned to those influenced by one's environment.

Behavioral Therapy is simply defined as changing what someone does with guidance from a therapist, while having a goal focused on increasing the person's engagement in positive or socially reinforcing activities. It is a structured approach that carefully measures what the person is doing and then seeks to increase chances for positive experience.

“DIALECTICAL BEHAVIORAL THERAPY”

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) is a modified form of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) which was developed by Marsha M. Lineham, PhD., in the 1980s. It begins with the standard cognitive behavioral techniques for emotion regulation and reality testing then adds in concepts of distress tolerance, acceptance and mindful awareness.

Cognitive behavioral therapy's aim is to identify and change negative thinking patterns with the intended goal of positive behavioral changes. It is designed to help people increase their emotional regulation and cognitive awareness by learning about their triggers that are followed by their unwanted behavior. Learning those triggers can help them to access which coping skills would be the most effective to halt the sequence of events, feelings, thoughts and behaviors to help them evade undesired reactions.

The main goals of DBT are to teach people to mindfully live in the moment, to tolerate and cope with stress in a healthy manner, to regulate emotions, and to develop enriching and healthy relationships with others.

“DIALECTS”

Dialectics is based on the theory of ‘thesis, antithesis, and synthesis’. In simple terms, the belief that everything is composed of opposites, and that when one opposing force is stronger than the other it results in change.

Three basic assumptions of ‘Dialects’:

- All things are interconnected.
- Change is constant and unavoidable.
- Opposites can be assimilated to form a closer estimation of the truth.

The philosophical perspective of dialects (balancing opposites) is the basis for DBT. It consistently works to help the individual to find ways to hold two seemingly opposite perspective at once. DBT promotes balance and avoidance of black and white or the all or nothing way of thinking. It promotes the outlook of **‘both ~ and’** instead of **‘either ~or’**.

Dialects promotes Open Minded Thinking.

- Dialectical means two ideas can both be true at the same time.
- There is always more than one TRUE way to see a situation.
- There is more than one TRUE opinion, idea, thought or dream.
- Two things that seem like (or are) opposites can both be true.
- All points of view have both TRUE and FALSE within them.
- A life worth living has both comfortable and uncomfortable aspects:
 - Happiness AND Sadness
 - Anger AND Peace
 - Hope AND Discouragement

****NOTE: FACTS only have one truth****

At the heart of DBT is the ‘Dialects’ - or in other words, the resolution of the seeming contradiction between self-acceptance and change in order to bring about positive changes. It supports the idea that bringing together two opposites in therapy brings better results than either of these alone.

THE FOUR MODULES OF DBT



DBT specifically focuses on providing therapeutic skills in four key areas. The four modules embrace the Dialects of DBT. Two of the modules *{Mindfulness and Distress Tolerance}* focus on ACCEPTANCE Skills while the other two *{Emotion Regulation and Interpersonal Effectiveness}* are aimed at CHANGE Skills.

I] Mindfulness: {Acceptance}

Mindful means becoming more aware of self and others, while focusing on improving an individual's ability to accept and be present in the current moment.

Mindfulness=focusing on the present ("living in the moment")

Core Mindfulness Skills:

- What Skills - Observe, Describe, and Participate. They answer the question, "What do I do to practice mindfulness skills?"
- How Skills - Non-judgmentally, One-mindfully, and Effectively answer the question, "How do I practice the "What" mindfulness skills?"

II] Distress Tolerance {Acceptance}

Distress tolerance behaviors concentrate upon tolerating and surviving crises while learning to accept oneself and the current situation. (i.e. accepting life as it is in the moment).

Distress tolerance skills are a natural development evolving from mindfulness skills. In mindfulness skills it is encouraged that one is mindful in a nonjudgmental fashion, both of oneself and the current situation. Distress tolerance is the next step, accepting what you were mindful of. It is important to point out that adopting a nonjudgmental stance is not the same as approval. You can accept what is (the reality of the situation) without approval of that reality.

Distress Tolerance Skills Include:

Distracting	Radical Acceptance
Self-soothing	Turning the mind toward acceptance
IMPROVING the Moment	Willingness vs. Willfulness
Pros and Cons	

The majority of mental health treatments focuses only on changing events that cause distress. Little attention has been paid to accepting, finding meaning for, and simply tolerating distress. DBT emphasizes learning how to bear pain skillfully. It stresses the importance of learning how to feel intense emotions without acting impulsively (using self-injury or substance abuse to dampen the distress). Distress tolerance is aimed at increasing a person's tolerance of negative emotion, rather than trying to escape from it.

III] Emotion Regulation {Change}

Emotion regulation gives strategies and tools to help manage and change intense emotions that are causing problems in a person's life.

Emotion Regulation Skills Include:

- Learning to properly identify and label emotions
- Identifying obstacles to changing emotions
- Reducing vulnerability to "emotion mind"
- Increasing positive emotional events
- Increasing mindfulness to current emotions
- Taking opposite action
- Applying distress tolerance techniques

Emotion Regulation is recognizing and coping with intense or undesired emotions and reducing one's emotional vulnerability by increasing positive emotional experiences.

IV] Interpersonal Effectiveness {Change}

Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills training are similarities to those you might find in some assertiveness or interpersonal problem-solving lessons. These would include strategies to effectively ask for what one wants of needs, how to say “no” with assertiveness, and learning how to cope with interpersonal conflict.

Interpersonal Effectiveness teaches techniques allowing a person to communicate with others in a way that is effective and assertive while maintaining self-respect and strengthening relationships.

Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills Include:

- D-E-A-R M-A-N is most useful to obtain the goal of Objectiveness Effectiveness, the most encompassing of the three. It focuses on clarifying what is wanted from an interaction as well as the skills needed to achieve this goal.
In simple language, **“How to get someone to do what you want”**.
- G-I-V-E is aimed more at Relationship Effectiveness as the main goal. It emphasizes how to skillfully interact with the other person in a way that the relationship is preserved, perhaps even improved.
In simple language, **“How to keep a good relationship”**.
- F-A-S-T is directed at Self Respect Effectiveness. If your highest goal is to maintain or increase your Self-Respect, the skills in FAST are aimed at helping you to achieve that. This is concerned with maintaining your values and beliefs so that you can still feel good about yourself after the interaction.
In simple language, **“How to keep your self-respect”**.

These skills are intended to improve the chances that a person’s goals in a specific situation will be met, while at the same time not causing damage to either the relationship or the person’s self-respect.

Characteristics of DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOR THERAPY

Cognitive-based

DBT helps a person to identify the thoughts, beliefs, and assumptions they hold that makes life harder for them while helping them to learn different ways of thinking that can make life more bearable.

EXAMPLE: “I have to be perfect at everything.” TO “I don’t need to be perfect at things for people to care about me”

Cognitive-based: DBT helps identify thoughts, beliefs, and assumptions that make life harder: “I have to be perfect at everything.” “If I get angry, I’m a terrible person”, and helps people to learn different ways of thinking that will make life more bearable: “I don’t need to be perfect at things for people to care about me”, “Everyone gets angry, it’s a normal emotion”.

Homework-based:

DBT asks people to complete homework assignments, to role-play new ways of interacting with others, and to practice skills such as soothing yourself when upset. These skills, a crucial part of DBT, are taught in weekly lectures, reviewed in weekly homework groups, and referred to in nearly every group. The individual therapist helps the person to learn, apply, and master the DBT skills.

In these weekly group therapy sessions, people learn skills from one of four different modules: interpersonal effectiveness, distress tolerance/reality acceptance skills, emotion regulation, and mindfulness skills are taught.

Support-oriented

It helps a person identify their strengths and builds on them so that the person can feel better about him/herself and their life. The group interaction helps the person to learn, apply, and master the DBT skills.

DBT skills group participants learn and practice skills alongside others. Members of the group are encouraged to share their experiences and provide mutual support.

Patients agree to do homework to practice new skills. This includes filling out daily "diary cards" to track more than 40 emotions, urges, behaviors, and skills, such as lying, self-injury, or self-respect.

It is important to note that since the introduction of DBT it has greatly evolved with many different specialists modifying and adding to it. It is no longer ONLY available in an in-person mental health group. There are many successful support groups taught by peers, both in person and online. It is also being taught within some public school systems as Juvenile Life Skills.

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