Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

TARGET AUDIENCE
This program is 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), a community-based intervention, is a cognitive behavioral treatment that utilizes acceptance strategies and skills training designed to help individuals eliminate self-harm behaviors (e.g., self-cutting, suicide attempts), improve management of emotions and relationships, and live more rewarding and satisfying lives.

EVIDENCE
Modified versions of DBT have been used with various populations; however, only evaluations among individuals with borderline personality disorder were included in this review. Five randomized trials were evaluated that included three by the program developer and two by independent researchers. Across studies, female participants 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 at 1-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. This therapy has been used with Service members and has been studied in female Veterans.
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**TRAINING**

Clinicians facilitate this program, and implementation of DBT requires the clinician join a consultation team of three to eight clinicians who practice DBT, share clinical challenges, and seek advice from peers. Training is required, and options include online, on- and off-site in-person, or self-study. For information and training costs, please visit [www.behavioraltech.com/training/options.cfm](http://www.behavioraltech.com/training/options.cfm).

**CONSIDERATIONS**

Considerations for implementing this program include acquiring buy-in from participants, preventing client attrition, understanding facilitators must obtain training and must join a team of other professional clinicians, and realizing some costs could be associated with acquiring implementation materials.

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

**IMPLEMENTATION**

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.

**TIME**

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 lasts 2 to 2 1/2 hours.

**COST**

Implementation costs vary. Please visit [www.behavioraltech.com/products/list.cfm](http://www.behavioraltech.com/products/list.cfm) for a list of products and costs.

**EVALUATION PLAN**

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**

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 mail 1107 NE 45th Street, Suite 230, Seattle, WA 98105, phone 1-206-675-8588, fax 1-206-675-8590, email info@behavioraltech.org, or visit [http://behavioraltech.org/about/contactus.cfm](http://behavioraltech.org/about/contactus.cfm).

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