

## **Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)**

Developed by psychologist Marsha Linehan in 1981 (Albert Bandura, 1969 & Staats 1975) to help people struggling with mental health issues. DBT can provide people with healthy structured steps aiming at addressing concerns and promoting positive outcomes when interacting with others. DBT helps the patient communicate their needs when interacting with others. Providing behavioral principal practices to help communicate those needs. There are a lot of acronyms to help remember them, some are listed below.

DBT can be organized into 4 different models including Mindfulness, Distress Tolerance, Emotional Regulation, and Interpersonal Effectiveness (IE).

Mindfulness: This model brings in a variety of tools to help you through your day. This can include spiritual practices, practicing being present in your day and not future thinking or remunerating. Using breathing skills, exercises, creativity to help stay in the present moment.

Distress Tolerance: This model includes a variety of tools and strategies to help with difficult feelings. Teaching lessons to deal with and accept your situation where it is at. Tools include observing your body with the TIPP skill (acronym listed above), pro's & con's, distract (ACCEPTS acronym listed above), self-soothe, willingness & half-smile, STOP (acronym listed above).

Emotional Regulation: This model helps people with emotional dysregulation, where their emotions are all over the place. Struggling to control your emotions can happen to anyone. Some tools here include checking the facts, opposite to emotion action, ride the wave, problem solving, identifying and describing emotions, doing positive pleasant activities, letting go or painful emotions.

Interpersonal Effectiveness (IE): These tools can help with social interactions in your community. This can include skills for finding potential friends, using FAST, DEARMAN, GIVE (acronym listed above), mindfulness of others, troubleshooting through reflecting and questioning, and how to end friendships when needed.

Learning the above skills for your toolbox can be difficult on your own. Without having someone to model the skills for you to observe, it can be scary and confusing to implement them ourselves. Establishing these skills can help set healthy boundaries, leading to respect and successful relation interactions in the future. But at first these skills can feel aggressive or intimidating. Try starting small, don't go for the elephant in the room. Try smaller goals like asking for small 'helps' from someone you trust, saying no to social outings you truly do not want to go to, offering help to others that are within the limits you set for yourself. It's important to recognize at this moment not to overextend yourself. Helping someone and giving more than you have are not the same thing. Notice how you feel when you help someone, if there are any negative feelings starting to show like resentment, frustration or disappointment then take a

break, breathe, and recognize what was above your limits. It's okay to say no, it's okay to have limits.

## **DEAR MAN**

Potential to help you get what you want

**D**escribe one's situation

**E**xpress why this is an issue and how you feel

**A**ssert yourself by asking for what you want

**R**einforce your position by offering positive consequences

**M**indful of the situation by focusing on what you want to achieve, ignoring distractions

**A**ppear confident even when you don't feel it

**N**egotiate with the other person and reach a comfortable compromise

## **GIVE**

Goal is to maintain the relationship

**G**entle and appropriate language to avoid negative putdowns, sarcasm, judgement

**I**nterested in the other person, make eye contact, ask questions and avoid distractions

**V**alidate by showing understanding and sympathy for the other person's situation

**E**asy manner by showing calm and comfortable behavior

## **FAST**

Helps maintain your self-respect and usually combined with another skill

**F**air consideration for yourself and others

**A**pologies, when necessary, don't apologize more than once for the same thing

**S**tick to your values and what you believe in

**T**ruthful and don't lie. (This can help build trust)

## **TIPP**

**T**emperature change. Cool down your body by placing ice packs on your neck, wrists or forehead.

**I**ntense exercise. Do a short sprint, jumping jacks, jogging or a short intense burst of exercise to release the energy in your body. (Intent to increase heart rate through exercise).

**P**aced breathing. This skill needs you to focus your mind on breathing. Inhale through your nose all the way into your belly, hold your breath and exhale calmly and thoughtfully through your mouth. Repeat as necessary (also check out our Breathing technique PDF).

**P**aired muscle relaxation. Focus your energy and mind on 'squeeze and release' muscles in a calm focused manner. This is great with bilateral muscles, meaning left and right side

simultaneously. Squeeze your toes then relax, your calves then relax. Or squeeze your hands then relax and work your way through your muscle groups.

\*(This is not medical advice. Please consult your doctor and be mindful on your own body limitations and health conditions before attempting some of these tools.)

## **STOP**

**Stop**, do not react. Freeze before you react

**Take** a step back by taking a break, take a breath, let go

**Observe** what's happening around you, what are others doing? What are you thinking, feeling?

**Proceed** mindfully. Moving forward, remembering your goals and what will help you get closer to them? (What actions might move you further away from them?)

### Resources/References:

Linehan, Marsha Ph.D., ABPP. The course and evolution of dialectical behavioral therapy, [https://psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.psychotherapy.2015.69.2.97#:~:text=Dialectical%20behavior%20therapy%20\(DBT\)%20emerged,clients%20effective%20problem%2Dsolving%20strategies](https://psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.psychotherapy.2015.69.2.97#:~:text=Dialectical%20behavior%20therapy%20(DBT)%20emerged,clients%20effective%20problem%2Dsolving%20strategies)

Delray Center for Healing, Common Dialectical Behavior Therapy Acronyms  
<https://www.delraycenter.com/common-dialectical-behavior-therapy-acronyms/>

DBTSelfHelp.com, DBT Encyclopedia  
<https://dbtselfhelp.com/dbt-encyclopedia/>

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