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What is Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)?

The goal of DBT is to build a life worth living.

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT*) is a proven treatment for people with the diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). DBT combines *behavioural therapy* with *mindfulness practice* within a *dialectical* world view.

- *Behavioural therapy* involves learning skills to regulate emotions, tolerate distress, solve life problems and be effective in relationships.
- *Mindfulness practice* involved learning to control our attention and focus the mind in effective ways.
- A *dialectical* view recognises that contradictions exist in life, and that apparent opposites can sometimes both have truth. In DBT this view encourages therapists and clients to find a wise balance between changing what can be changed, and accepting things that cannot be changed.

How is DBT delivered?

Comprehensive DBT treatment involves attending both individual therapy appointments and group-based skills training. The therapist may provide additional telephone contact at times, and the therapist should regularly be receiving supervision from other DBT-trained therapists.

Group skills training helps to maximise the effectiveness of DBT individual therapy. Four topic areas are covered in group skills training:

- ***Mindfulness***: learning to focus attention, closely observe and describe experiences, to participate non-judgmentally and effectively in life.
- ***Interpersonal Effectiveness***: learning to be effective in getting more of what you want and need from others while strengthening healthy relationships and feeling good about yourself.
- ***Distress Tolerance***: learning to get through emotional crisis situations safely and effectively, and be more accepting of difficult realities that can't be changed.
- ***Emotion Regulation***: learning to understand emotions, change emotions, and keep moving forward towards your goals despite emotional challenges.

The role of the DBT individual therapist is to provide support for you to explore and understand the particular patterns of feelings and behaviours that you want to change. The focus of DBT individual therapy is tailoring the use of mindfulness, interpersonal effectiveness, distress tolerance and emotion regulation skills to overcome your own unique difficulties.

* see Linehan (1993) "Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Borderline Personality Disorder".