

DIALECTICAL BEHAVIORAL THERAPY

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) is officially recognized by the Cochrane Review (Stouffer et al. (2012)) as the treatment of choice for characteristics associated with borderline personality disorder (BPD) including impulsivity, interpersonal problems, emotional dysregulation, self-harm, and suicidal behaviors.

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) is a cognitive behavioral treatment that was originally developed to treat chronically suicidal individuals diagnosed with borderline personality disorder (BPD) and it is now recognized as the gold standard psychological treatment for this population. In addition, research has shown that it is effective in treating a wide range of other disorders such as substance dependence, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and eating disorders.

Current research also shows the cost-effectiveness of the DBT model. DBT offers Level 1 (highest level) evidence of efficacy and effectiveness, and is an evidence-based option for treating people with BPD.

Characteristics of DBT

- ⟨ 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.
- ⟨ 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” & 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.
- ⟨ Collaborative: It requires constant attention to relationships between clients and staff. In DBT people are encouraged to work out problems in their relationships with their therapist and the therapists to do the same with them. 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.

Sources: The Linehan Institute <http://www.linehaninstitute.org/research.php> and Psych Central <http://psychcentral.com/lib/an-overview-of-dialectical-behavior-therapy/>

Resource Links:

1) DBT Overview <http://behavioraltech.org/resources/whatisdbt.cfm>