



nh healthy families.

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Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

DBT is a form of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) originally designed to treat suicidal and self-harming people who meet criteria for borderline personality disorder. DBT originated from the work of psychologist Marsha Linehan, who worked with people living with [borderline personality disorder \(BPD\)](#) or ongoing thoughts of suicide. The main goals of DBT are to teach people how to live in the moment, cope with stress, regulate emotions, and improve relationships with others.

Best Practices

When a person is undergoing DBT, they can expect to participate in three therapeutic settings:

- A skills training group setting where a person is taught behavioral skills by doing homework assignments and role-playing new ways of interacting with people. Typically, skills training groups meet for two to three hours on a weekly basis.
- Individual therapy with a trained professional where those learned behavioral skills are adapted to the person's personal life challenges. (Running concurrently with the group work, individual therapy sessions usually last for 60 minutes, once a week.)
- Phone coaching in which a person can call their therapist in between sessions to receive guidance on coping with a difficult at-the-moment situation.

DBT Strategies

People undergoing DBT are taught how to effectively change their behavior using four main strategies

Core Mindfulness: [Mindfulness skills](#), which are perhaps the most important strategy in DBT, teaches individuals to focus on the present or “live in the moment.”

Distress Tolerance: [Distress tolerance](#) teaches individuals to accept yourself and the current situation

Interpersonal Effectiveness: Interpersonal effectiveness helps individuals to become more assertive in a relationship (for example, expressing needs and saying "no") while still keeping that relationship positive and healthy.

Emotion Regulation: [Emotion regulation](#) provides a set of skills that help to keep your emotional system healthy and functioning.

While the majority of research to date has focused on the effectiveness of DBT for people with borderline personality disorder, as well as co-occurring thoughts of suicide and self-harm, [post-traumatic stress disorder](#), and [substance use disorders](#), DBT has also been shown to work for a variety of mental health conditions including:

- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Binge eating disorder
- Bipolar disorder
- Bulimia
- Generalized anxiety disorder
- Major depressive disorder (including treatment-resistant major depression and chronic depression)
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Substance use disorder
- Suicidal and self-harming behavior

Researchers have also found that DBT is effective regardless of age, sex, sexual orientation, and race/ethnicity.