

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy

Dialectical behaviour therapy is a treatment used to help people with borderline personality disorder who use self-harming behaviour to cope with intense emotions as they have difficulty in recognizing and controlling their emotions (developed by Marsha Linehan). DBT teaches accurate expression of emotions, problem-solving skills and decreases crisis generating behaviour.

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy is initially offered for a year. The patient is encouraged to learn skills to overcome the problem behaviours.

There are four primary modes of treatment in DBT:

1. Individual therapy: 1:1 sessions with the therapist
2. Group skills training: 2.5 hours per week. Following four types of skills are taught in these sessions
 - Skills to increase awareness of events, emotions, and behaviours and to learn to do this in a non-judgmental way.
 - Skills to communicate needs effectively and to deal successfully with interpersonal conflicts.
 - Emotional regulation skills to understand emotions, to decrease emotional susceptibility and lessen distress.
 - Distress tolerance skills to increase ability to tolerate and survive crises.
3. Between sessions patient is offered telephone contact with the therapist, including out of hours telephone contact. Calls from the patient after self-harm are not taken for twenty four hours after making sure that the patient is safe. This is to avoid reinforcing self-harming behaviour.
4. Therapist consultation. DBT therapists meet once per week to ensure good communication between group skills trainers and individual therapists.

How is DBT arranged?

After referral patient has an initial assessment to find out if DBT is a suitable option for them. An individual therapist is then assigned who spends a few weeks getting acquainted with the patient before skills training programme is started.

References:

- Linehan, M.M. (1993a). Cognitive Behaviour Therapy of Borderline Personality Disorder. New York: Guilford Press.
- Linehan, M.M. (1993b). Skills Training Manual for Treating Borderline Personality Disorder. New York: Guilford Press.