

PAUQUETTE NEWS

The Pauquette Center for Psychological Services Newsletter

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Dialectical Behavior Therapy

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Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) is a life-saving treatment with a strong evidence-base for treating suicidal behavior, self-injury, emotion dysregulation, borderline personality disorder, eating disorders, depression, substance use, and other problems. It has been proven to be effective with children, adolescents, and adults. If you or a loved one are struggling with these types of problems, you may want to consider discussing DBT with a trained provider. The information below is intended to provide a brief overview of the treatment and what you could expect as a patient in DBT.

What is DBT? *DBT stands for Dialectical Behavior Therapy.*

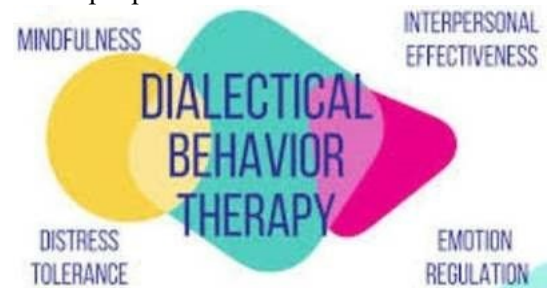
- DBT is **dialectical**. Dialectical means that a person is able to see the truth and validity in opposing perspectives. It is the opposite of all-or-nothing, black-and-white, and rigid thinking. It prevents people from getting stuck in a single viewpoint and recognizes that there are many ways to view and solve a problem. Often times, people with emotion regulation difficulties have problems with extreme viewpoints, which can lead to extreme emotions and behaviors or can cause them to get stuck in one side of a problem.
- DBT is **behavioral**. Much of this treatment focuses on not only decreasing or eliminating problem behaviors, but also increasing productive behaviors that can improve a person's quality of life. A great deal of time is spent analyzing problems to truly understand them and implementing behaviorally-based interventions to address problems and improve overall functioning. Sometimes this can be frustrating for people if they are embarrassed by their behavior or generally do not wish to discuss it. However, like taking your car into a mechanic, a thorough investigation of the problem is vital in order to be able to understand where it came from and how to fix it.
- DBT is **therapy**. In fact, a team of therapists provide treatment to patients receiving services within a DBT program. Because DBT has a number of components, the treatment team is a very important aspect of patient care. Patients and therapists must work collaboratively and the goal of the treatment team is to support, challenge, and work alongside the patient in order to achieve the goals that would make their life worth living.

How is DBT structured? *DBT is a comprehensive treatment with multiple parts running simultaneously. It requires a significant commitment from patients and therapists to work properly. These different aspects include:*

- **Individual therapy** with a trained DBT therapist. The purpose of this therapy is to motivate and assist the patient to make changes including modifying behavior that is currently posing obstacles in reaching their goals. Examples of obstacles include things like self-injury, suicide attempts, difficulty following through on therapy tasks, substance use, disordered eating behavior, and other mental health problems. Individual therapy is fairly structured and addresses life threatening behavior, therapy interfering behavior, and behaviors interfering with quality of life.
- **Skills training** is typically done in group format (but may occasionally be done on an individual basis). The purpose of this part of the treatment is to enhance patient's abilities and skills to navigate situations effectively in their everyday lives.
- **Skills coaching** (or telephone consultation). In this mode, patients may call their therapists when they need coaching or ideas about how to handle a situation. The intention of coaching is to help patients put the skills they have been learning into practice when they need them the most and to support patients to address problems effectively before they become crisis situations.
- **Consultation for the therapist**. DBT emphasizes that therapists treating patients using DBT participate in regular consultation with one another to ensure that they are providing patients the highest quality services and are delivering treatment the way it was intended. The consultation team of therapists makes up most of the treatment team and consultation serves to increase the therapists' skill and motivation to provide the treatment.
- **Orienting the environment**. In many cases, it is important for the therapist and the patient to work together to orient other important people and providers to the type of treatment the patient is participating in in order for it to be effective. This can be especially important because DBT is delivered differently than many other types of treatments and expects the patient, rather than the therapist, to take the lead in discussing things with other people.

What do you learn in skills group? *DBT skills groups typically meet weekly for 1.5 to 2.5-hour sessions over the course of one year. The groups focus on teaching four major skill-sets, or modules:*

- **Mindfulness** is the first module taught and these skills are reviewed several times over the course of treatment. The purpose of this skill set is to increase attention and awareness, self-awareness, and decrease confusion about oneself. The mindfulness skills underly all other skills.
- **Distress Tolerance** helps patients to improve their ability to cope with stressful situations they cannot change without making it worse and to accept reality as it is to reduce suffering.
- **Emotion Regulation** helps to understand the function of emotions, decrease the pain of unwanted emotions, and increase the experience of pleasurable emotions.
- **Interpersonal Effectiveness** focuses on improving relationships by learning and practicing skills that help with making requests, being assertive, and generally communicating effectively with others.
- **Walking the middle path** - adolescents receive this additional module which specifically targets dialectical thinking, finding balance, and effective behavior change.



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How long does DBT take?

DBT is a multi-stage treatment and how long it takes depends on the patient and their goals. The research base for the first stage of treatment is typically one year or less and this stage is focused on addressing behavioral problems that seriously interfere with life and well-being. The second stage of treatment focuses primarily on addressing trauma and improving emotional experiencing. The goal of the third stage is increasing self-respect, self-esteem, and achieving life goals. Finally, in stage four, patients strive for achieving greater joy, happiness in living, and connections with others.

I am already working with a therapist I like, can I still do DBT?

Being involved in a fully-adherent DBT program would most likely require you to work with a DBT therapist that is involved in a DBT-focused consultation team. If your therapist is trained in DBT, it may be possible for them to work with other therapists to provide the other modes of treatment. If your therapist is not trained or practicing DBT, you may still be able to join a skills group and continue with your therapist. Individuals that are not getting all of the modes of DBT are considered to be participating in **DBT-informed** treatment. Patients who only participate in a skills group are learning DBT skills, which can be incredibly helpful for many people, however, they are not getting full DBT treatment. Some people can benefit from skills-group alone, whereas many others require a the more intensive and comprehensive treatment in order to effectively reach their goals.

I have PTSD, can DBT help me?

There are applications of DBT that have been demonstrated to be effective for treating PTSD with some patients. DBT-PE has a strong evidence-base for treating symptoms of PTSD amongst high-risk patients with multiple problems and diagnoses. Additionally, more recently a DBT-PTSD protocol has been developed and also has a promising foundation for addressing PTSD amongst individuals with complex PTSD.

How do I find a DBT program?

There are several ways to find a DBT provider. A simple web-search can often reveal needed information. However, if you are looking for a truly adherent DBT program, it is also important to look into the structure of the program. Places offering high-fidelity DBT offer the modes discussed above (including skills group, individual DBT therapy, and phone coaching with a therapist). Many places offer DBT skills groups and do not offer the other modes of treatment. One way to ensure that you are working with a specifically trained DBT therapist is to look for a person who is board certified by the Linehan Board of Certification (LBC). The person who created DBT developed this LBC board certification process that certifies individuals and programs with very specific credentials, training, and experience who have demonstrated a competence in DBT. Their website can be found at <https://dbt-lbc.org/> To find a certified provider, click on the “consumers” tab and then “find a certified clinician” or “find a certified program.” Clinicians are not required to be board certified in order to practice DBT and not all competent practicing clinicians hold certification, however, finding a certified clinician and/or program is one of the easiest ways to ensure your clinician is appropriately trained and practicing adherent treatment.

DBT Skills Group
Tools and support to change your life

The Pauquette Center Portage office is forming a Dialectical Behavior Therapy skills training group planned to begin in May. The group will meet twice per week on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:00-2:00pm. This group is for adults ages 18 and over and focuses on providing mindfulness, distress tolerance, interpersonal effectiveness, and emotion regulation skills for individuals struggling with intense emotions. Interested established patients can speak with their therapists about a group referral. Individuals not yet established with the Pauquette Center can contact us at 608-742-5518 to schedule an appointment for group screening.

Stephanie White Eagle, MS, LMFT, CSAC has joined our team! She sees clients 13 years and up, AODA and enjoys seeing couples. She sees clients in Baraboo on Monday, Tuesday and Friday and in Prairie du Sac on Wednesday and Thursday.



Visit our website www.pauquette.com to check out all of our therapists and their locations!



PAUQUETTE CENTER FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES LOCATIONS



1002 Lincoln Avenue
1343 Park Avenue
2901 Hunters Trail, PO Box 301
50 Prairie Avenue
710 N. Webb Avenue, Suite 400
23295 US Hwy 14

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Columbus, WI 53925
Portage, WI 53901
Prairie du Sac, WI 53578
Reedsburg, WI 53959
Richland Center, WI 53581

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