



Dialectical Behavior Therapy

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Disclosures

I receive royalties from Oxford University Press for co-authoring treatment manuals. I receive royalties from Springer for co-editing a book. I receive honoraria from the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT) for being Associate Editor of a journal.

DBT Overview

- A multi-component outpatient therapy
- Developed from Linehan's work with chronically suicidal patients
 - Acceptance and dialectical strategies added to CBT's focus on change
 - A treatment for borderline personality disorder
- Now in an era of thoughtful adaptation:
 - modified to fit new settings
 - new populations

Standard DBT Modes of Treatment

Individual Therapy (weekly)

Skills Training Group (weekly)

Telephone Coaching of patient (as needed)

Therapists' Consultation Meeting (weekly)

Problem Behavior = Patient's best attempt to cope

- Maladaptive behavior as an attempt to alleviate intense emotion
 - Brings relief in the short-term
- Patient's chosen solution is the problem, not the patient him/herself
 - Understanding what maintains problem behavior can help us remain empathic in difficult interactions
- Patients can be helped to observe the long-term negative consequences of problem behaviors

Standard DBT Dialectical Dilemmas

- Emotional Vulnerability versus self-
invalidation
- Active passivity versus apparent competence
- Unrelenting Crises versus inhibited
experiencing

Individual DBT

- Identification of target behaviors
- Self-monitoring via Diary Card
- Chain analysis:
 - What external & internal events led to the behavior?
 - What may be reinforcing this behavior?
- Solution Analysis:
 - Where in chain could patient have used DBT skills for a different outcome?
- Multiple chain analyses help patient and therapist:
 - understand patterns of behavior over time
 - troubleshoot obstacles to skills use

DBT Treatment Targets

Decrease maladaptive behaviors

- Life-threatening behaviors
- Therapy-interfering behaviors
- Quality-of-life interfering behaviors

Increase behavioral skills

- Core Mindfulness
- Distress Tolerance
- Interpersonal Effectiveness
- Emotion Regulation

DBT Skills Training Group

- Class-like format:
 - In-session mindfulness practice
 - Homework review
 - Teach new material
- Benefits:
 - Teaching stays on track
 - Members offer peer support, validation, normalization, and examples of effective skills use

DBT Principles: Validation

- Acknowledges patient's point of view and communicates that it is understandable. Validation does not equal approval or agreement.
- “In nearly all situations, the DBT therapist may validate that the client's problems are important, that a task is difficult, that emotional pain or a sense of being out of control is understandable, and that there is wisdom in the client's ultimate goals, even if not the particular means he or she might use to achieve them...Unless the client believes that the therapist truly understands..., he or she will not trust that the therapist's solutions are appropriate or adequate...In this way, validation is essential to change: The therapist must simultaneously deeply understand the client's perspective as well as maintain hope and clarity about how to effect change (Koerner & Dimeff, 2007)”.

DBT Principles: Dialectics

- Contradictory truths exist simultaneously inside, for example:
 - **Patient:**
 - feeling love and hate toward same person
 - needs freedom and limits
 - **Clinician:**
 - attend to own boundaries and patient’s needs
 - feeling hopeful and hopeless
 - **Session:**
 - balance acceptance and change
- Patients can get stuck—unable to reconcile opposing thoughts, feelings, needs, points of view.
- DBT aims to “hold both” and asks, “What are we leaving out?”
- Dialectical language links ideas with “and” instead of “but”

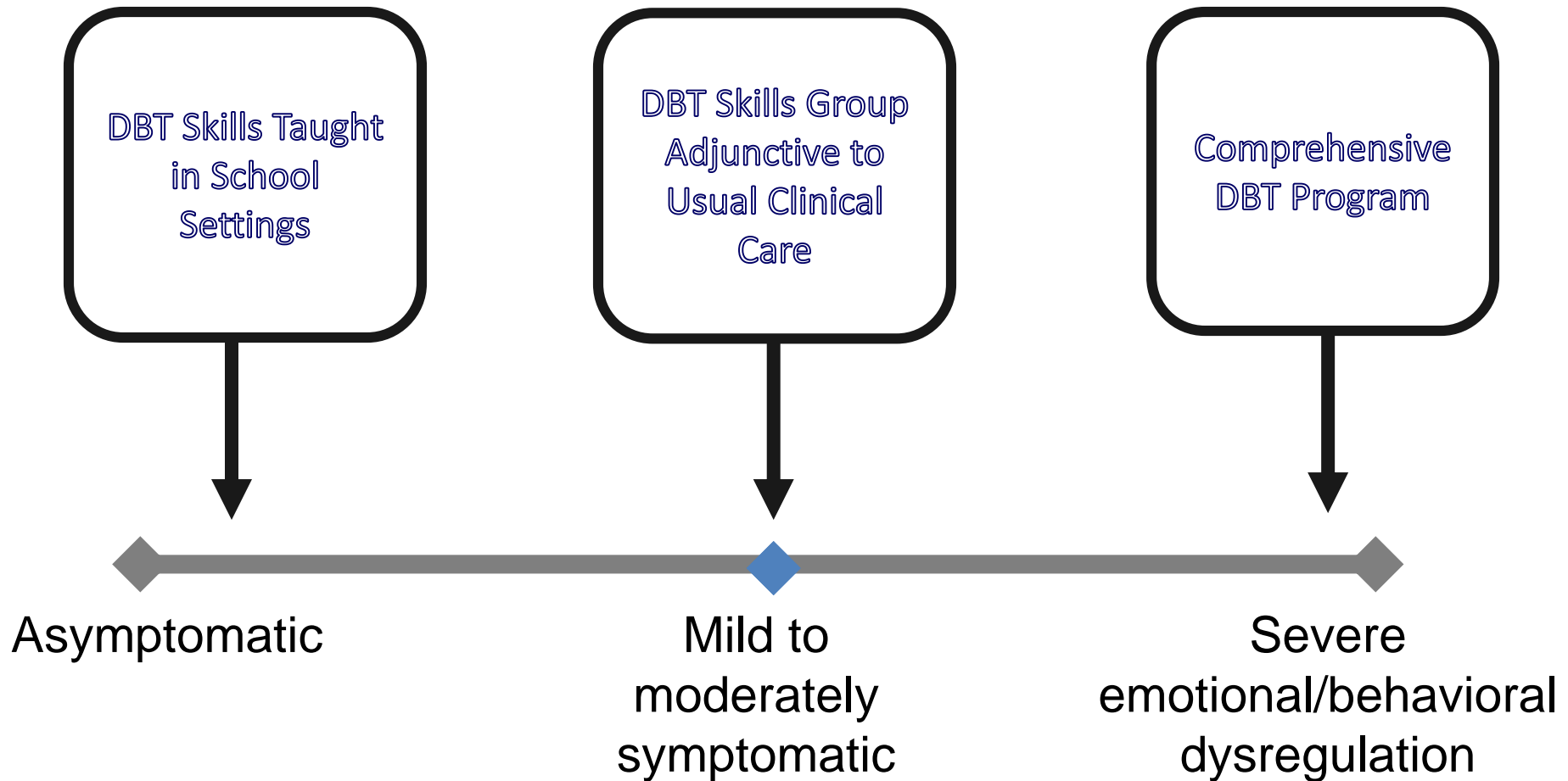
Balance Core Strategies

VALIDATION

PROBLEM
SOLVING

Dialectics

DBT in Youth: Who Might Benefit?



DBT Program Adapted for Adolescents: Comprehensive outpatient DBT

- Individual DBT therapy
- Therapist Consultation Team meeting
- **Multifamily** skills training group
- Telephone coaching for teens **and family members**
- **Parenting sessions (as needed)**
- **Family sessions (as needed)**

DBT Program Adapted for Adolescents: Comprehensive outpatient DBT

Possible ancillary treatments:

- Pharmacotherapy
- Therapeutic/residential schools

DBT Program Adapted for Adolescents: Inclusion of Families

- Since much of the turmoil in the lives of suicidal/multi-problem teens involves the family, families must be included in treatment.
 - Examples:
 - Coaching of both teen AND parents during crises
 - DBT skills group for both
 - Helps parents to understand skills their child is learning and to use skills themselves
 - Improves contingencies at home

DBT Program Adapted for Adolescents: Additional Skills Training Module

Walking the Middle Path:

Dialectics (dialectical thinking and acting, dialectical dilemmas)

Validation (of others, self)

Behavior Change (reinforcement, shaping, extinction, punishment)

Adolescent Dialectical Dilemmas

- Excessive leniency versus authoritarian control
- Normalizing pathological behaviors versus pathologizing normative behaviors
- Forcing autonomy versus fostering dependence

DBT Ideas for Any Clinical Practice

- Maladaptive behavior as patient's best attempt to cope
- Watch for reinforcement at work in the clinical encounter & in patient's environment
- Validate, Validate, Validate!
- Use dialectics when feeling stuck
- Importance of a “consultation team” —
Seek collegial support for challenging cases

Research support—DBT in adolescents

- DBT in adolescents has not been studied as much as DBT in adults
- DBT in adolescents is gaining empirical support
- Review of early studies indicated promising findings (Groves, Backer, van den Bosch and Miller, 2012)
- Recent RCT demonstrated improvements in Suicide attempts, NSSI, and self harm in DBT group compared with individual and group supportive therapy (McCauley et al., 2018)

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Resources

For a summary of DBT research to date (including efficacy trials of standard DBT for adolescents and stand-alone DBT skills interventions) go to:

behavioraltech.org/research

To find DBT services in your area, go to:

behavioraltech.org/resources/find-a-therapist