

DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY (DBT)
Information for Patients and Families
Covenant Health
Grey Nuns Community Hospital & Misericordia Community Hospital

What is DBT?

“DBT” is Dialectical Behavioural Therapy, a treatment used to help people who are diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder. DBT was developed by Dr. Marsha Linehan and combines some of the most effective components of the philosophy and psychology of the Far East with western psychological practice.

People with Borderline Personality Disorder have difficulty regulating their emotions. This often leads them to harm themselves or engage in chaotic relationships with other people. The purpose of our program is to help these people build a life worth living. A variety of skills that are designed to help develop more control over emotions are taught so they can be more effective in their daily lives.

There is a strong teaching/learning/practicing component to DBT therapy. Patients are first taught skills and then helped to practice those skills in order to achieve their goals.

Components of DBT

The DBT Program consists of the following components, all of which are necessary aspects of the approach:

- DBT Skills Training Group
- DBT Individual Psychotherapy
- Telephone Consultation/Coaching
- Consultation Team Meetings

DBT Skills Training Group

During the time that patients are in the DBT program they are expected to attend a weekly skills training group. The primary focus of this group is to learn the following skills:

1. **Core Mindfulness Skills** – learn to control your mind by focusing your attention on simple tasks in a non-judgmental manner.
2. **Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills** – learn to get what you want in interactions with others and learn how to say no while you maintain personal integrity.
3. **Emotion Regulation Skills** – learn to control and change emotions when possible.
4. **Distress Tolerance Skills** – learn to tolerate uncomfortable feelings in situations that can not be changed.

Homework and practice of skills is absolutely essential in DBT. Without reinforced practice, a skill cannot be learned. Homework includes:

1. Bringing completed assignments to group
2. Engagement in skills training activities
3. Bringing completed diary cards to each group

The skills learned in the skills training group are practiced in patients' day to day lives and in their individual therapy sessions. Weekly attendance of the skills training group is mandatory.

DBT Individual Psychotherapy

The second component of DBT is the weekly individual therapy sessions. These sessions are geared towards helping patients apply the skills they are learning in their day to day lives, and in their therapy sessions. Individual therapy is also used for encouraging patients to actively solve problems in their lives and has some very clear goals.

The first goal is to reduce behaviour that is life-threatening. The second goal is for the patients to make use of the DBT skills during interactions with the therapists. Patients will also learn effective strategies for working in collaboration with the therapists. The third goal is to help the patients apply the skills in their lives outside of treatment. This includes the application of the skills such as the ability to manage the symptoms of psychological trauma. Attendance of weekly sessions is mandatory in order to ensure effective treatment.

Telephone Consultation/Coaching

A therapist is available on-call via a paging service after regular hours for the purpose of helping patients learn to ask for help prior to problems reaching crisis proportions. These calls provide an opportunity for the patients to review the skills they have learned in the skills training group and to rehearse the use of these skills with the coach while they use them in their daily life.

DBT Consultation Team Meetings

These meetings help the therapists and skills trainers improve their own skills and receive support from each other. This helps them apply DBT most effectively with their patients. DBT therapists and skills trainers learn and practice the same skills that the patients learn.

The DBT Program takes between 18 - 24 weeks. Patients may have the opportunity of attending the program twice if they are benefiting from it and actively using the skills they are learning.

Referral Process

1. A Psychiatrist from the Grey Nuns Community Hospital must refer the individual to the program. Patients are placed on waiting list for assessment once there is room in a program.
2. When there is an opening in the program there will be an initial telephone screening to determine whether the patient is appropriate for more intensive screening.
3. DBT screening continues with a face to face interview, completion of assessment tools, and verifying the diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder.
4. If the patient completes the preliminary screening stage, “contracting” with an individual therapist proceeds. “Contracting” establishes the working relationship between patient and therapist and forges a mutual commitment to the treatment goals. In addition, problems that could interfere with therapy are identified ahead of time so that solutions can be worked out in advance.
5. Once the patient completes the contracting process, they are either put on a waiting list or, if there is an opening are advised of the starting date of the program.

Admission To The Program Is Granted If The Patient

- Has a confirmed diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder
- Commits to attend the Skills Training Group and individual therapy sessions each week.
- Commits to remaining in the program for the duration program
- Commits to use the coaching line to address problems before they get worse.
- Participate earnestly to learn and practice the skills taught in group and complete homework weekly for both the group and individual therapy sessions.
- Agrees to be on time for each group and to stay for the whole group.
- Understands that absences or frequently use of behavior that interferes with the therapy can result in discharge from the program.

For more information about our program at Grey Nuns Community Hospital

Call our program secretary at 780-735-7575

- Call Health Link - 780-408-5465
- www.behavioraltech.org