

# Dialectical Behaviour Therapy Program

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) is an effective treatment for individuals who experience frequent and intense changes in their emotional state, often leading to self-defeating behaviours. Research has shown that DBT helps people experiencing emotional dysregulation learn new skills to manage overwhelming emotions without resorting to self-harming behaviours.

## About the Program

The Dialectical Behaviour Therapy Program at Bethesda Clinic is focussed on the skills training component of DBT. The 12-week closed group program is followed by periodic reviews for ongoing skills training as needed. This program is highly structured and includes sessions dedicated to learning mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotion regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness.

### Mindfulness

Those who experience emotional dysregulation can often feel emotional duress. Mindfulness skills are a core component of DBT, as it helps individuals to become more aware of their state of mind and learn how to respond to certain emotions. The mindfulness module will demystify mindfulness by breaking the process down into steps that can be practiced. I.e., What to do to be mindful and how to do it. Mindfulness skills can help individuals experience the present moment and learn to let go of, and get less caught in, habitual, negative judgements about themselves.

### Distress Tolerance

The distress tolerance module is focussed on developing practical crisis survival skills. This set of skills helps individuals to reduce their reliance on problematic coping mechanisms for dealing with very strong emotions and with self-destructive urges. Distress tolerance skills are essential to overcome behaviours associated with distress intolerance and impulsivity, such as substance use, disordered eating, and self-harm. The aim is for individuals to feel more in control when they experience significant distress, and to avoid the long-term costs that problematic coping has on emotional and physical wellbeing, and relationships.

### Emotion Regulation

Emotion regulation is at the heart of the DBT Skills program. This module begins with developing an in-depth understanding of emotions, which is a prerequisite in learning how to regulate emotions. The module also includes cognitive and behavioural skills that can become powerful tools to modulate the intensity of emotions. Additionally, the skills introduced help individuals reduce their vulnerability to emotional dysregulation by building up positive experiences and attending to health issues.

### Interpersonal Effectiveness

Interpersonal effectiveness focusses on developing skills that enable the individual to express feelings and needs, set limits, negotiate solutions and validate the feelings of others. This final program module is specifically aimed at improving relationships and respecting personal values and beliefs. Problematic beliefs or 'myths' that get in the way of communicating effectively are addressed in this module.

## Format

Individuals admitted to this program are required to attend one three-hour group session each week for 12 weeks and be committed to ongoing individual therapy (fortnightly minimum). Opportunities exist for participants to engage in an ongoing open DBT skills group once they have finished the initial 12-week program. An integral part of this program is a commitment to regular group attendance and practice of the skills introduced. Groups are set at a maximum of 12 people with similar diagnosis.

## Clinic Staff

The program is conducted by a team of qualified health professionals:

- Consultant Psychiatrist
- Mental Health Nurses
- Allied Health - Mental Health Clinicians

## Eligibility and Referrals

Eligible patients must be referred to a Bethesda Clinic program by a General Practitioner or Psychiatrist. Individuals will be assessed to establish suitability for the program. A progress report will be sent to the referring practitioner at the completion of the program and will include suggestions for ongoing management.