

Calming the Emotional Storm: Using Dialectical Behaviour Therapy to Treat Emotion Dysregulation Disorders in Youth and Adults

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Learning Objectives

- Learn the DBT theory of how problems managing emotions develop, and how to help your clients be more accepting of their difficulties
- Practice applying behavioural theory concepts to clinical situations
- Learn about neuroplasticity and how this concept can be used in treatment to move clients in healthier directions
- Examine the connection between neuroplasticity and DBT skills, and learn how practicing DBT skills helps to create lasting changes in the brain that help to regulate emotions more effectively
- Practice some of the core DBT skills – such as radical acceptance, nonjudgmental stance, opposite to emotion action, and self-validation – and learn more about how to teach these skills to clients in the context of their specific emotional and behavioural difficulties
- Learn how the DBT skills help us to live healthier, more balanced lives and reduce the feelings of ineffectiveness and burnout we often experience as clinicians
- Consider some of the benefits and pitfalls to doing DBT in individual therapy
- Discuss what to do when interventions don't seem to be moving clients forward, with a focus on skills training, behaviour theory, and dialectical strategies
- Delve further into treatment planning from a DBT perspective, and learn how to decide which DBT interventions will best suit clients' needs
- Build confidence in providing DBT-informed therapy in your practice

Program Outline

Neuroplasticity and DBT

- The connection between neuroplasticity and DBT's mindfulness and acceptance techniques
- The effects of acceptance on the amygdala
- Strategies to teach this science to clients in understandable ways that motivate change

Defining Emotion Dysregulation

- The role of emotion dysregulation in disorders and problems other than BPD, such as depression, bipolar disorder, and anxiety disorders
- Applying the biosocial theory more broadly to emotion dysregulation, and using this as an empowering intervention with clients to help move them towards self-acceptance and away from toxic shame

Application of DBT

- A brief overview of the four modules: core mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotion regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness skills
 - How to help clients reduce emotion dysregulation through present-moment focus
 - How to help clients learn to tolerate their experience rather than acting on urges (such as to use substances, engaging in obsessive thoughts, lashing out at others in anger, self-harming, engaging in disordered eating behaviours, etc.)
 - Teach clients to reduce the tendency to personalize, and to improve ability to connect with others, through observing, describing, and participating
- Emphasis on some of the primary emotion regulation skills:
 1. Nonjudgmental stance: teach clients this skill to help improve self-esteem, reduce anger, and improve relationships with others
 2. Radical acceptance: to help clients deal more effectively with grief, trauma, anger and shame
 3. Self-validation: help clients learn to validate their own emotions to prevent emotional escalation
 4. Opposite Action: teach clients to be more effective and to reduce emotional intensity by acting opposite to urges related to depression, anxiety, anger, guilt, and shame
- The importance of validation and how to do this
- Use of self-disclosure and the importance of bringing more of yourself to therapy
- Become more capable of spotting skills-deficits in clients with emotion dysregulation problems, and use these as opportunities for teaching

Using DBT techniques in working with young clients

- Getting buy-in and enhancing drive to make positive changes
- Goal-setting with youth
- Surviving the crises
- Getting along with friends, teachers and family

Helping Clients Get Unstuck

- Emphasizing the “B” in DBT – applying behavioural theory principles in clinical settings
- Applying Dialectical Strategies
- Formulation and Treatment Planning: teaching specific skills to help clients manage mood and anxiety disorders, grief, anger, low self-esteem and chronic shame, substance abuse
- Helping clients to get unstuck by addressing objections to skills and willfulness
- Strategies to enhance motivation and commitment

Modifications of Skills Training for Emotion Dysregulation

- What the research is telling us
- DBT skills training group for bipolar disorder
- Considerations for trans-diagnostic groups
- Using DBT across a variety of work-settings: out-patient programs in the community and in hospital/residential settings, in private practice, and in individual as well as group