



Dialectical Behavior Therapy Frequently Asked Questions

What is comprehensive DBT and who is it for?

Comprehensive DBT is a psychotherapy treatment for people aimed at helping people build a life that is worth living and get you better! Good candidates include people who fall into multiple categories below:

- intense emotions,
- current psychotherapy isn't progressing and desire to take a different approach,
- emotions lead to other problems for them,
- suicide and self-harm thoughts and behaviors,
- frequent psychiatric hospitalizations,
- psychiatric diagnoses (e.g., borderline personality disorder (BPD), depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), eating disorders, substance use disorders, and more).

What type of a commitment does DBT require?

- 1) Individual DBT therapy, 1 session a week
- 2) DBT skills group, 1 time a week for 2 hours
- 3) Homework is assigned in group and individual therapy weekly

How long do people stay in the program?

The length of treatment is flexible and depends on the person's individual needs. Typically, people are with us for 1-2 years, although others might graduate earlier or take longer than this time frame. Things that affect this time are: severity of symptoms, if we're also treating trauma, and the patient therapist fit.

What else does comprehensive DBT include?

- 1) Skills coaching - access to the primary therapist between sessions for coaching to help integrate skills into real life and challenging situations that come up.
- 2) DBT consultation team - a weekly meeting for the treatment team to stay on track in providing the best treatment possible.

What is DBT skills group like?

Group is a place to learn and practice skills. People discuss what each skill means and how to use it in their lives.

We are often asked about the amount of personal sharing that occurs, as some people have been in groups in the past. DBT skills group is not a place where people share in great detail about their problems or traumatic experiences.

Each round of group takes 6 months to learn all the skills. People typically complete a full round of group several times in order to ensure confidence with and thorough use of the skills.



Do you offer virtual or in person therapy?

We are still providing therapy virtually, and use Zoom as our platform. Some of us see our clients in person for individual therapy as well. All groups are still virtual, also through Zoom.

When are therapy sessions offered?

Each therapist sets their own schedule. While some have earlier sessions and some have later, it is safe to assume most of our sessions are scheduled during typical work hours. None of us work on weekends right now, so all sessions happen Monday-Friday.

Groups are also Monday-Friday at different times. Not all groups are open for new patients all the time.

Do I start DBT right away?

DBT starts with about 4 weeks of a pre-treatment stage that is aimed at getting to know one another, you learning more about the treatment and making sure the treatment is a fit for you, and you committing to the DBT program. We do not consider this pre-treatment an active stage of therapy. Once you commit to doing comprehensive DBT, you then start active DBT therapy. Skills coaching also starts after you finish pre-treatment and commit to comprehensive DBT.

When can I start DBT skills group?

After you commit to comprehensive DBT, you are able to join your assigned group. Groups open up for the first few weeks of each skills module, and then the group closes until the next module begins. Therefore, sometimes your group is not “open” right when you commit to comprehensive DBT and it may take a few weeks for the group to start a new skills module and be open again. Your individual therapist can provide more information about this.

Can I keep my current therapist and have a DBT therapist in your DBT program?

You will be required to discontinue with your current therapist at the end of pre-treatment when you commit to comprehensive DBT. While there are many reasons for us requiring this transition, some common reasons include the importance of sticking with one treatment modality at a time, to reduce possible confusion, in order to create a solid relationship with the new therapist. We know that the relationship many people form with a therapist is strong, important, and one that is hard to end. Therefore, you are welcome and encouraged to work with your current therapist through the pre-treatment stage. Many people return to their previous therapist after they have completed DBT.

What insurance do you take?

We offer DBT through BCBS/Carefirst as well as out-of-pocket payment.

For individuals who have other insurance types and wish to receive reimbursement for the out-of-pocket payments that they make, we encourage you to contact your insurance company to



attempt to obtain reimbursement for sessions. Some people get what is called a “single case agreement” with their insurance to cover the costs of DBT. Here is more information about this process: <https://dbt-lbc.org/index.php?page=101175>

We bill the following codes:

- 1) Admission/Intake: 90791
- 2) Group: 90853
- 3) Individual therapy sessions: 90832, 90834, or 90837

How does DBT treat PTSD?

The initial stage of DBT does not treat PTSD directly, although it helps with specific symptoms that people with PTSD experience. For example, tolerating distress, grounding strategies, learning to experience emotions, and changing behaviors are heavily focused on for people with PTSD who are in DBT. When someone is ready, based on their and the therapist’s collaborative decision, we add another evidence-based PTSD treatment to your care. Most of our therapists who treat PTSD do a treatment called DBT-Prolonged Exposure, or DBT-PE (dbtpe.org for more info).

Our friends at Trinitas Behavioral health in New Jersey have written more expanded FAQs:

http://www.dbtnj.org/adult_dbt_questions.htm

The treatment creator, Marsha Linehan PhD, and her team have created these resources for learning more about DBT:

<https://behavioraltech.org/resources/faqs/dialectical-behavior-therapy-dbt/>

<https://dbt-lbc.org/index.php?page=101119>