

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) Skills Groups: An Overview

 blogs.psychcentral.com/dbt/2010/04/dialectical-behavior-therapy-dbt-skills-groups-an-overview/

By Christy Matta,
MA

4/12/2010

We've all found ourselves in a crisis, in a conflict with someone important in our lives or overwhelmed by emotion and circumstances. It can be difficult to maintain emotional balance while figuring out just how to navigate through those stressful times. For some, repetitive stressful events and an inability to recover fully from one event before another occurs results in destructive behaviors, such as self-injury and suicide attempts. It takes skills to solve life's problems while enduring intense emotion.

In DBT, four skills modules are designed to specifically assist individuals in better managing behavioral, emotional and cognitive instability. Their intent is to help people with problems with anger or the expression with anger, episodic depression, irritability or anxiety, intense or chaotic relationships, impulsivity, stress and feelings of emptiness.

The Four Skill Modules: Mindfulness, Distress Tolerance, Emotion Regulation, and Interpersonal Effectiveness

The skills modules include mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotion regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness. Mindfulness is designed to teach a person how to focus their mind and attention. Distress tolerance is centered on accepting the current situation and finding ways to survive and tolerate the moment without engaging in problematic behavior. Emotion regulation skills include learning to identify and label current emotions, identifying obstacles to changing emotions, reducing emotional reactivity, increasing positive emotions, and changing emotions. Finally, interpersonal effectiveness skills teach effective strategies for asking for what one needs, saying no, and coping with interpersonal conflict.

New skills are presented each week and homework is assigned for individuals to practice during the week. Homework is reviewed at a later group session or at the next group. The goal is for people to gain new skills, get better at the skills they have and be able to use the skills when they are really needed, like during times of intense emotion, crisis or conflict.

Linehann M. M. (1993). *Skills Training Manual for Treating Borderline Personality Disorder*. New York: The Guilford Press.