

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) is an evidence-based psychotherapy program designed to treat adolescents and young adults (ages 12-18) who exhibit difficulty regulating their emotions and behavior. Developed by Dr. Marsha Linehan, DBT was originally created to treat adult women who were chronically suicidal, self-injuring, and exhibiting symptoms of Borderline Personality Disorder. It has since been adapted for teens and families. Through a supportive and validating therapeutic environment, behavioral skills are developed to improve impulse control, emotion regulation, interpersonal effectiveness, and overall functioning, replacing harmful ways of thinking and behaving with healthier ones.

Goals of DBT:

- To decrease behaviors that interfere with treatment (i.e. lack of compliance, passivity).
- To decrease suicidal, non-suicidal self-injurious behaviors and other problematic behaviors (e.g., bingeing/purging, school truancy, substance abuse, etc.)
- To increase the ability to regulate emotions and behavior.
- To teach the ability to “think down the middle,” or to see both sides of an issue.
- To build a life worth living!

The initial 24-week phase of the Trinitas Adolescent DBT program consists of:

Weekly Individual Therapy: Clients are assigned a member of the DBT team as their primary therapist. Individual sessions are designed to validate the experiences of the clients, while encouraging changes that can improve their lives. The DBT therapy process is structured and collaborative in terms of identifying behaviors targeted for change, generating solution strategies, applying skills learned in group, and improving decision-making skills. Family sessions are included on an as-needed basis.

Weekly Multi-Family DBT Skills Group:

The Multi-Family DBT Skills Group is a highly structured 20-week skills-oriented group for teens and their caregivers that takes place once a week for two hours. It is designed to teach the DBT skills of *mindfulness*, *emotion regulation*, *interpersonal effectiveness*, *distress tolerance*, and *walking the middle path*. It has a class-like format with handouts, take-home exercises, and experiential activities, but there is no expectation that group members share information that is uncomfortable. Research has shown that caregivers’ involvement makes treatment more effective because caregivers learn to serve as coaches for their children and benefit from learning the skills themselves.

Telephone Coaching: Clients and their caregivers can get brief coaching between sessions to help them generalize their skills outside of therapy.

DBT Skills:

Mindfulness: The ability to observe and experience the present moment without judgment. Individuals learn to notice their emotions and to experience them—without always acting upon them.

Emotion Regulation: Helping teens and their caregivers learn behavioral and cognitive techniques for reducing their vulnerability to, and enhancing their ability to cope with, overwhelming emotion.

Interpersonal Effectiveness:

Assertiveness and communications skills are emphasized with the aim of helping individuals achieve their goals, maintain healthy relationships, and maintain their self-respect even after conflicts.

Distress Tolerance: Helping teens and their families learn ways to get through difficult moments without making impulsive decisions they may regret.

Walking the Middle Path: Learning to live a more balanced life and avoid the emotional and behavioral extremes that frequently lead to stress.

Additional Services for DBT Clients:

Graduate Group: For teens who successfully completed the initial 16-week cycle and would like support to maintain and strengthen their treatment gains.

Is Dialectical Behavior Therapy right for you?

Do you frequently have thoughts that you would be better off dead?

Have you ever made a suicide attempt?

Do you engage in frequent impulsive or self-destructive behaviors (cutting, substance abuse, bingeing and purging, school truancy)?

Do you have frequent and intense shifts in mood?

Do you have frequent problems managing anger?

Do you have frequent and intense conflict with peers and/or family members?

Do you ever dissociate or fear that others are purposely out to harm you?

Do you at times have intense feelings of emptiness?

Do you have an unclear sense of who you are or where you are headed?

If you answered yes to one or more of these questions, our treatment program may be of help.

**For more information,
please contact
Atara Hiller, Psy.D.
at 908-994-7378**

**Adolescent
Dialectical Behavior
Therapy (DBT)
Program**

**Trinitas Regional Medical Center
Child and Adolescent Outpatient Unit
New Point Campus
655 East Jersey Street
Elizabeth, NJ 07206**

www.dbtnj.org

