

## RESEARCH ASSESSMENT 1: DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOR THERAPY

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SOURCES: "What Is DBT?" Behavioral Tech. The Linehan Institute, n.d. Web. 22 Sept. 2016.

### ANALYSIS:

Dialectical Behavior Therapy, otherwise called DBT, is a cognitive behavioral treatment that is now recognized as the gold standard psychological treatment for those diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, chronic suicidal tendencies, substance dependency, depression, eating disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Dialectical behavior therapy is a specific form of cognitive behavioral therapy that Dr. Marsha M. Linehan wished to improve. As a result, DBT builds upon the foundation of CBT. It was developed in the 1970s by Dr. Marsha M. Linehan attempted to apply standard Cognitive Behavior Therapy to adult women with histories of chronic suicide attempts, suicidal ideation, and non-suicidal injury. 'Dialectical' means synthesis or integration of opposites because a main aspect of Dialectical Behavior Therapy are the opposite strategies of acceptance and change. The second portion, 'behavior therapy', focuses on helping patients understand how changing their behavior can lead to changes in their mood and feelings. Together, they work together to become DBT, which concentrates on teaching patients to accept themselves as they are and then recognize that they need to change to reach whatever goals they have.

This type of treatment has four aspects to it according to The Linehan Institute Behavioral Tech Research. The first component is skills training group, which enhances patients by teaching them behavioral skills and techniques. Patients are taught skills in class and then given homework to practice these newly acquired skills. The second part is individual therapy, which works on motivating patients and teaching them how to apply the skills to challenges in their lives. The next portion, phone coaching, is similar to individual therapy in that it teaches patients how to effectively deal with difficult situations that arise spontaneously. The final aspect is a therapist consultation team which encourages therapists themselves to remain motivated and provide quality treatment. Additionally, it allows multiple therapists come together as a group and work together to come up with a plan of action regarding each of their patients' treatment. This is similar to the treatment plan meetings I observed last year with Dr. Dunn.

After learning about all of this, it is important to understand the various stages of DBT. There are three main stages. However if an individual needs it, there is a fourth stage available. According to the article, stages are defined by the severity of the patient's behaviors. The most severe level is stage one, and

the severity decreases from there. Patients in stage one treatment of DBT are "miserable and their behavior is out of control." To clarify, stage one patients are likely to attempt suicide or self-harm, try drugs and alcohol, and engage in self-destructive behaviors. In stage two, an individual's behavior is under control but the suffering still persists due to factors such as past traumatic events. As a result, a patient in this stage may suppress emotions so a main goal of this stage is to help them transition to "full emotional experiencing." The third stage is less severe than the first two and focuses on teaching patients how to live a balanced life. This stage helps individuals learn how to lead "a life of ordinary happiness and unhappiness." Finally, the fourth stage is an additional step that is available to those who have a necessity for it. It focuses on helping individuals find a deeper purpose and meaning to life through spiritual experiences. I found this especially interesting because I have learned a lot about deeper purpose and meaning to life through spiritual experiences through Chinmaya Mission, a temple. Though spiritual learning has been a large part of my religious education, I didn't realize it was used in modern psychology as well.

Similar to the stages of DBT, therapists target specific behavior in a most to least severe organization. To clarify, while a therapist will most certainly work towards addressing all behaviors, the ones deemed urgent are addressed first. There are two types of urgent behaviors; life-threatening behaviors and therapy-interfering behavior. Life threatening-behaviors are the most severe because they can cause a patient's death. Examples of such behaviors include self-injury and any behavior with the purpose of bodily harm. Next, a therapist will target therapy-interfering behaviors, such as tendencies to be non-collaborative, that prevent an individual from accessing proper treatment. The last two are quality of life behaviors and skills acquisition, in order of severity respectively. Quality of life behaviors are behaviors that might hinder an individual's, as is in the title, quality of life. Examples may be gambling, poor saving decisions, etc. On the other hand, skills acquisition deals with ineffective behaviors by replacing them with skillful behaviors to benefit the individual.

When reading the article, there was a brief section that mentioned the importance of understanding the behavior therapy paradigm before attempting to do dialectical behavior therapy. However, there was no information about the subject in the article so I was forced to look elsewhere. To begin on the matter, a paradigm is a theory or a group of ideas about how something should be done, made, or thought about, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Behavior therapy paradigm, also known as cognitive behavioral paradigm, is a theory that individuals can best be understood if we study their perception on matters and how it influences behavior.

DBT is a simple enough to understand but can become complex when going more in depth. According to the article, research has shown DBT to be effective in reducing suicidal behavior, non-suicidal

self-injury, psychiatric hospitalization, treatment dropout, substance use, anger, and depression and improving social and global functioning. Learning about it has furthered my understanding on therapy.