



# Untold Story Counseling Services

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## Understanding Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

### Dialectical Behavior Therapy

*"Healing often begins when we learn to accept ourselves as we are while also believing we are capable of meaningful change."*

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### What Is DBT?

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) is an evidence-based psychotherapy approach that helps people develop practical skills for managing intense emotions, improving relationships, and responding to life's challenges more effectively.

The word *dialectical* refers to bringing together two ideas that may seem opposite but can both be true at the same time. In DBT, this often means learning to accept yourself as you are while also working toward positive change.

DBT combines acceptance-based strategies with skills that help improve emotional regulation, communication, and coping during stressful situations. Rather than trying to eliminate difficult emotions, DBT teaches you how to respond to them in ways that align with your values and goals.

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### What Can DBT Help With?

DBT was originally developed to treat individuals with chronic emotion dysregulation and has since been adapted to help many other concerns.

DBT may be helpful for:

- |                                        |                                                          |                                  |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Difficulty managing intense emotions | • Suicidal thoughts (as part of comprehensive treatment) | • Relationship conflict          |
| • Anxiety                              | • Borderline Personality Disorder                        | • Anger management               |
| • Depression                           | • Trauma-related symptoms                                | • Stress and burnout             |
| • Self-harming behaviors               | • Impulsive behaviors                                    | • Substance use recovery         |
|                                        |                                                          | • Eating disorders               |
|                                        |                                                          | • Difficulty tolerating distress |

Your therapist will work with you to determine whether DBT is an appropriate approach for your treatment goals.

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### How Does DBT Work?

DBT focuses on building practical skills that can be applied in everyday life.

Rather than simply talking about problems, therapy includes learning, practicing, and strengthening new ways of responding to difficult emotions and situations.

DBT is built around four core skill areas:

#### Mindfulness

Learning to notice your thoughts, emotions, and experiences without immediately reacting or judging them.

#### Distress Tolerance

Developing healthy ways to cope with painful situations when they cannot be changed immediately.

#### Emotion Regulation

Understanding emotions and learning strategies to reduce emotional vulnerability and respond more effectively.

#### Interpersonal Effectiveness

Building healthier relationships through communication, setting boundaries, and asking for what you need while maintaining self-respect.



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## What Happens During DBT?

DBT is collaborative and skills-focused.

Sessions often include:

- Reviewing current challenges
- Identifying situations that triggered strong emotions
- Learning new coping skills
- Practicing skills during session
- Planning how to apply those skills between appointments

Many therapists integrate DBT skills into individual therapy, while others may also recommend DBT skills groups depending on your needs.

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## Common DBT Skills

Depending on your goals, your therapist may teach skills such as:

- Grounding exercises
- Mindfulness practices
- Emotional awareness
- Opposite Action
- Radical Acceptance
- Wise Mind
- Self-soothing techniques
- Crisis survival strategies
- Boundary setting
- Assertive communication
- Validation skills
- Problem-solving

The goal is to build a toolbox of skills you can rely on when emotions become overwhelming.

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## What Might I Experience?

As you begin using DBT skills, you may notice:

- ✓ Greater emotional awareness
- ✓ Fewer impulsive reactions
- ✓ Improved relationships
- ✓ Increased confidence
- ✓ Better ability to tolerate stress
- ✓ More balanced decision-making
- ✓ Greater self-compassion

Developing these skills takes practice. Progress often occurs gradually as you apply them in everyday situations.

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## Common Misconceptions

### "DBT is only for Borderline Personality Disorder."

No.

Although DBT was originally developed for Borderline Personality Disorder, it is now widely used to treat many emotional and behavioral concerns.

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### "DBT is only for people in crisis."

No.

Many people use DBT simply because they want healthier coping skills, stronger relationships, or better emotional regulation.

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### "Acceptance means giving up."

No.

In DBT, acceptance does not mean approving of painful experiences or stopping your efforts to grow. Acceptance means acknowledging reality as it is in the present moment so you can respond more effectively rather than fighting against what has already happened.



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## Is DBT Right for Everyone?

DBT can be especially helpful for individuals who experience emotions intensely or who find themselves reacting in ways they later regret.

Many therapists also integrate DBT skills alongside other evidence-based approaches such as:

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)
- Mindfulness-Based approaches
- Narrative Therapy

Your therapist will recommend the combination of approaches that best fits your needs.

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## How You Can Prepare

To get the most from DBT:

- Practice skills between sessions.
- Be patient with yourself as you learn new habits.
- Keep track of situations that trigger strong emotions.
- Bring examples from daily life to discuss in therapy.
- Remember that progress is built through consistent practice rather than perfection.

Learning new coping skills is similar to learning any new language—it becomes easier with repetition.

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## The Goal of DBT

The goal of Dialectical Behavior Therapy is not to eliminate emotions.

Instead, DBT helps you understand, manage, and respond to emotions in ways that support your well-being and relationships.

Over time, many people experience greater emotional stability, healthier relationships, increased resilience, stronger self-confidence, and an improved ability to navigate life's challenges with flexibility and balance.

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## Questions?

If you have questions about Dialectical Behavior Therapy or whether it may be appropriate for you, please bring them to your next session. Your therapist is happy to discuss the process, answer your questions, and help determine the treatment approach that best supports your goals.

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*Helping you become the main character in your story, not the experiences that have shaped it*

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