



The Augusta DBT Program: Treatment for Severe Emotion Dysregulation

What is Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)?

DBT is an outpatient therapy for people with serious emotion regulation problems. DBT targets severe problem behaviors that interfere with having a life worth living. The problem behaviors are often attempts to deal with the intense emotions that seem impossible to control. The behaviors can include:

Suicidal behavior
Substance abuse
Excessive spending
Aggressive behavior

Self-harm behavior
Eating disorder behavior
Sexually impulsive behavior

Over time, these behaviors create their own set of serious problems. Often, the individual with emotion regulation problems feels out of control.

A DBT therapist helps identify where, how, when, and why the problem behaviors occur and what other, more skillful behaviors might work in the same situation. These more skillful behaviors are learned in DBT skills training, a class that accompanies the individual therapy. DBT skills training teaches how to identify, label, experience, and regulate emotions, and how to interact more effectively with yourself and others.

Does DBT work?

DBT has been shown to be effective in randomized controlled trials to reduce suicidal and self-harm behavior, psychiatric hospitalizations, anger, hopelessness, and dissociation, while increasing certain coping skills for people with Borderline Personality Disorder, and other serious disorders that affect quality of life.

What happens in DBT?

Standard outpatient DBT consists of both individual therapy once per week and a skills training group/class once per week. Individual therapy focuses on how to decrease targeted behavior problems and how to apply the full range of DBT skills to the difficulties that life is presenting. Skills training is a class which includes lecture and discussion, homework and behavioral rehearsal of a wide array of skills organized into four modules. The modules are:

Mindfulness
Distress Tolerance

Emotion Regulation
Interpersonal Effectiveness

It takes a minimum of 6 months to complete the skills training curriculum, and it is recommended that an individual allow one year to thoroughly learn the skills. Similarly, serious behavior problems are unlikely to disappear quickly even with the best motivation. Therefore, you will usually be asked to make a 6-month commitment to DBT therapy that is renewable if you are meeting collaboratively established goals.

DBT individual therapists make themselves available to you by phone in between appointments for the purpose of coaching you in applying your new skills to real-life situations. This is so that the skills you learn in the class can become even more helpful to you in decreasing problem behaviors.

An additional component of DBT is consultation among DBT therapists, so that therapists remain balanced and focused in applying therapeutic strategies. Information about you will always be kept confidential by members of the DBT team.

The combination of individual therapy, skills training, skills coaching, and consultation is what makes DBT a unique and comprehensive treatment. It's also this combination of treatment that has been researched and shown to be more effective than treatment-as-usual in helping people with severe problems with emotion dysregulation.

DBT for Adolescents and Families

Our program includes specialized treatment for adolescents and their families. DBT skills training is offered in a multifamily group format for 6 months. Contact Dr. Chris Drescher at 762-375-0058 for more information about Adolescent DBT.

Skills Class Only Option

Our program often has more referrals for comprehensive treatment than we can accommodate. Because of that, we are offering a "skills class only" option. Our DBT team offers in person and virtual adult skills classes. We will work with your non-DBT individual therapist while you participate in our DBT skills class. Research has shown that DBT skills group is an effective and powerful component of the DBT program. Please talk to us about the details of this option.

Insurance

Our DBT providers accept most private insurances. Some of our providers are able to accept Medicare for adults and Medicaid for adolescents.

What do I do if I'm interested?

Contact the Augusta DBT Program at 762-375-6963. The admissions process to the program usually begins with having you complete a set of questionnaires and return these to us. If these questionnaires indicate that DBT may be appropriate for you, you will be contacted about availability for an initial evaluation appointment. At that appointment, the assessment process will continue, and you will learn more about DBT. You will be given plenty of opportunity to have your questions about DBT answered before you are asked to commit to the therapy.