

## **What is DBT?**

Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (or “DBT”) is a comprehensive, cognitive-behavioral treatment for clients who have problems with managing their emotions, engaging in self-destructive behaviors, and/or who find themselves in unproductive, unfulfilling relationships.

Originally developed to treat borderline personality disorder, DBT has been found to be useful to treat a wide range of problems related to unstable emotions, including mood swings, substance abuse, binge eating, depression, and anxiety. The therapists at Therapy Resource Associates offer DBT using a model developed by Marsha Linehan, Ph.D., from the University of Seattle in Seattle, Washington.

Clients involved in our DBT program attend a weekly class for approximately one year. In this group, they learn specific skills to help them manage their emotions, tolerate distress, and more effectively manage their interpersonal relationships. Clients keep a weekly scorecard to track unhealthy behaviors, the intensity of their emotions, and the level of effective skill usage. A DBT-trained therapist helps clients apply the skills to their specific problems and situations. DBT involves a team approach, as the client's individual therapist meets twice monthly with the therapist in charge of the weekly class.

DBT is designed to first stabilize the client and help achieve behavioral control. In subsequent stages, the treatment goals include helping the client feel better, resolve problems with day-to-day living, move forward from trauma, and find joy in life. The "dialectical" emphasis of DBT requires that the therapist balance acceptance of the client as he or she is with fostering positive change in the client's behaviors. The dialectical approach of DBT also helps clients replace rigid, black-and-white thinking with a more balanced approach to their problems.