



Personality disorder help available

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Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) is a serious mental illness characterized by pervasive instability in mood, interpersonal relationships, self-image, and behavior.

According to the DSMIV, a person with BPD must have five (5), or more of the following criteria: frantic efforts to avoid abandonment, unstable and intense interpersonal relationships, unstable self-image, impulsivity, recurrent suicidal behaviors or threats or self-mutilating behavior, affective instability and marked reactivity of mood, chronic feelings of emptiness, inappropriate intense anger or difficulty controlling anger, and transient stress related paranoia.

People with BPD suffer from a disorder of emotion dysregulation. BPD affects two percent of adults, mostly young women. Fortunately, there is hope for people struggling with the above symptoms.

Marsha Linehan has been fine-tuning Dialectical Behavioral Therapy for at least the past twenty years or so.

“Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, (DBT), is a broad-based cognitive-behavioral treatment developed specifically for Borderline Personality Disorder. It was the first psychotherapy shown via controlled clinical trials to be effective with this disorder.”

The therapy is rooted in the concepts of the Biosocial Theory and the role of the invalidating environment.

“The main tenet of the Biosocial Theory is that the core disorder in BPD is emotion dysregulation.”

The Biosocial Theory asserts that persons with BPD have difficulty controlling their emotions due to the fact

that the limbic system, the emotional center of the brain, is created larger in individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder.

Therefore, emotional stimuli hit the brain more intensely, resulting in a slower return to baseline functioning for the individual. Furthermore, DBT speaks of the “role of invalidation.” This concept refers to the fact that persons who have gone through multiple traumas have not experienced the benefit of a natural, nurturing support system and thus have adopted maladaptive coping skills to facilitate emotional control.

I often at times explain to my patients that the main difference between us is that I was raised in an emotionally supportive environment where I learned effective coping skills for my emotions and they were not.

Thus, DBT therapists serve as a “coach” on their path to wellness in learning the skills that are central to the effectiveness of Dialectical Behavioral Therapy.

The therapy is typically a year long commitment on behalf of patients. It contains four modules of skills training including: mindfulness skills, distress tolerance skills, emotion regulation skills, and interpersonal effectiveness skills.

The goal of these skill sets is to teach patients how to develop a healthy balance between their actions being driven by emotional urges and logic.

The goals of DBT therapy are to decrease interpersonal chaos, labile emotions and moods, impulsiveness, and confusion about self and cognitive dysregulation.

Mindfulness skills teach awareness of the environment on a moment-to-moment basis so that individuals become more aware of their emotions and related urges.

Distress tolerance skills are used in crisis settings to calm individuals when an immediate resolution is unavailable.

Emotion regulation skills teach individuals about the function of their emotions and how to relieve emotional distress by building positive experiences and acting opposite of the current emotion.

Interpersonal effectiveness skills teach individuals how to express their needs and wants clearly and effectively to others.

Southwestern Behavioral Healthcare, Inc. offers three DBT based therapy groups. If you would like more information please contact 812.476.5437.

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