



WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) skills groups

A DBT (dialectical behavior therapy) skills group is a structured, curriculum-based group led by a licensed therapist trained in DBT. It teaches four sets of skills for managing intense emotions: mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotion regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness.

WHO IT'S FOR, AND WHO IT'S NOT

- Best if you want concrete tools and can commit to the full curriculum and homework.
- Not drop-in, and not mainly for peer support or open discussion.
- In active crisis? A full DBT program with individual therapy is a better starting point. Call or text 988 first.

What it's used for

Originally developed for borderline personality disorder and self-harm.

Now also used for eating disorders, PTSD, substance use, and hard-to-treat depression.

Worth exploring if emotions feel overwhelming, more intense than most, or slow to settle.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- 1 Sessions usually run 90 minutes to two hours, with a clear weekly structure.
- 2 Homework review, a new skill, practice, then an assignment for next week.
- 3 You'll get a workbook or handouts. It feels more like a class than a support group.
- 4 The skills are the focus, not open-ended processing.

DBT has strong research support, especially for borderline personality disorder and self-harm.

- A 2022 review found DBT skills training improved **BPD severity and psychosocial functioning** versus usual care.¹
- A 2023 network meta-analysis confirmed DBT as the best-connected treatment, with solid evidence across BPD outcomes.²
- Evidence is also building for eating disorders, adolescent suicidality, and substance use.

MAKING THE MOST OF IT

Practice daily. Skills work under real emotion, not just in class.

Use the diary card. Tracking is part of the method.

Expect clumsy. Skills get smoother with reps.

QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU JOIN

- 1 Is the leader trained in DBT, and how?
- 2 Is this a standalone skills group, or part of a full DBT program?
- 3 Do I need my own individual therapist to join?
- 4 How long is the full curriculum, and when can I start?

Ready to find a group?

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If you're in crisis, call or text 988.

The Group Guide is a directory, not a clinic. This handout is general education, not medical or mental health advice. Listings are written by group leaders and are not endorsements. Confirm details, cost, and fit with any group you contact. Sources on page 2.



Sources

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) skills groups · references keyed to the numbers on page 1.

- 1 Stoffers-Winterling, J. M., et al. Psychotherapies for borderline personality disorder: a focused systematic review and meta-analysis. *The British Journal of Psychiatry* (2022).
- 2 Cristea, I. A., et al. Which psychotherapy is most effective and acceptable in (sub)clinical borderline personality disorder? A systematic review and network meta-analysis. *Psychological Medicine* (2023).

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