



Beyond the Workbook: Creative Ways to Engage in DBT Skills Groups

Kimberly Applewhite, PsyD
Rosa Waters, LCSW



Accuracy, Utility, and Risks Statement

Accuracy Statement: This training aligns with evidence-based principles of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) and incorporates research-backed teaching strategies from education and psychology to enhance skills group efficacy across developmental levels and learning styles.

Utility Statement: This training equips professionals in DBT and DBT-informed settings with interactive, developmentally appropriate strategies to improve client engagement and skills retention in group settings, benefiting both established DBT programs and general psychotherapy practices.

Risk Statement: The effectiveness of these strategies may vary based on client factors, group dynamics, and facilitator skill. Misapplication could hinder engagement or comprehension, and participants are encouraged to seek supervision when adapting these techniques to their practice. Participants are encouraged to receive more training in DBT to avoid potential for misapplication of the materials.



Program Notices

Conflicts of Interest:

None

Commercial Support:

None

Use of AI:

For generation of APA citations.



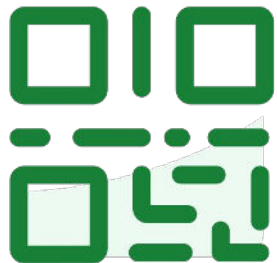
Agenda

- Mindfulness
- Group Format Review
- Defining Successful Engagement
- Who's in the room?
 - Considerations for Inclusive Groups
 - Developmental Considerations
 - Learning Considerations
- Strategies
- Final Q&A





slido



Join at slido.com
#DBTBTW

① Click **Present with Slido** or install our [Chrome extension](#) to display joining instructions for participants while presenting.



Mindfulness Activity





slido



**What thoughts/reflections do
you have after mindfulness?
What did you notice?**

① Click **Present with Slido** or install our [Chrome extension](#) to activate this poll while presenting.



Mindfulness Reflections

- Does an activity like this count as mindfulness?
 - Open mind or focused mind?
 - Does it embody mindfulness principles?
 - Where is participant attunement in the moment?

“Mindfulness and mindfulness skills can be practiced anytime, anywhere, while doing anything. Intentionally paying attention to the moment, without judging it or holding onto it, is all that is needed.”

Linehan, 2015



Group Format Review





Focus Today is on Standard DBT Groups

Dr. Katie Flanagan, Psy.D. &
Dr. Jessica Flynn, Ph.D., C. Psych.

DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOR THERAPY
VS.
RADICALLY OPEN DIALECTICAL
BEHAVIOR THERAPY

0:20 / 1:56:36

Video player controls: Play, Next, Volume, Full Screen, CC, Settings, Download, Share, Embed.

RODBT vs. DBT: Choosing the Most Effective Approach for Your Clients



Utah Center for Evidence ...
917 subscribers



Subscribed



11



Share



Download





DBT Skills Groups

- Goal: to increase client capacity for change
- Standardized for 2.5 hours
- First half of group
 - Mindfulness activity
 - Homework Review
- Second half of group
 - Skills Lesson
 - Homework Assignment
 - Wind-down
- Standard practice dictates two leaders
- Changes in different DBT formats
 - DBT-A - Adolescents and families
 - DBT-C - Family Sessions



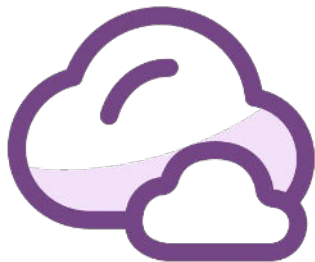


Defining Successful Engagement





slido



What does an engaged DBT skills group feel like?

① Click **Present with Slido** or install our [Chrome extension](#) to activate this poll while presenting.



Borrowing from Education Literature...

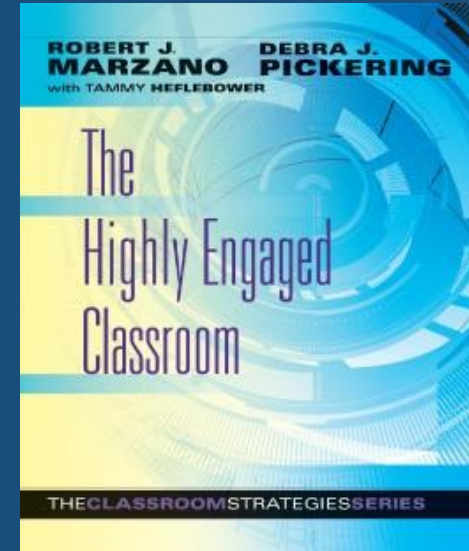
Dimension	What Engagement Looks Like
Cognitive	Being curious, wanting to understand, being invested in learning
Behavioral	Asking questions, attending class, paying attention
Affective	Caring about learning, interest, enthusiasm, excitement, motivation, willingness to participate

(Barkley & Major, 2020)



Borrowing from Education Literature...

- To foster learner engagement, classroom instruction decisions should be made based on four questions (Marzano & Pickering, 2010). Engagement results when students answer affirmatively to the following:
 - How do I feel?
 - Am I interested?
 - Is this important?
 - Can I do this?





Pedersons' Recommendations for DBT Teaching Skills (2017)

- Interactive Lecture
- Socratic Questioning
- Group Presentation & Discussion
- In-Group Experiential Learning
- Role Plays
- Modeling
- Mix in Audio, Video, and Other Media
- Behavioral Homework



Video Example – Validation





DBT Common Factors for Success

- DBT Program Fidelity Checklist (Harned & Schmidt, 2022)
- Clinician and Programmatic Factors (Popowich et al., 2020)
 - Systemic supports
 - Clinician commitment and “buy in”
 - Team cohesiveness
- Hibbs et al. (2024) found that higher ratings of client-perceived DBT skills group **treatment credibility** (helpfulness, acceptability, and the extent to which the group met their needs) was associated with greater improvements in most symptomatology measures.
- New metric in development: DBT - California Competency Scale - Skills Training Group (DBTCCS-G) (McFarr & Komtois, 2023).



slido



What are your challenges with group engagement?

① Click **Present with Slido** or install our [Chrome extension](#) to activate this poll while presenting.



Who's in the Room?





Consideration for Inclusive Groups





Richness of Identities

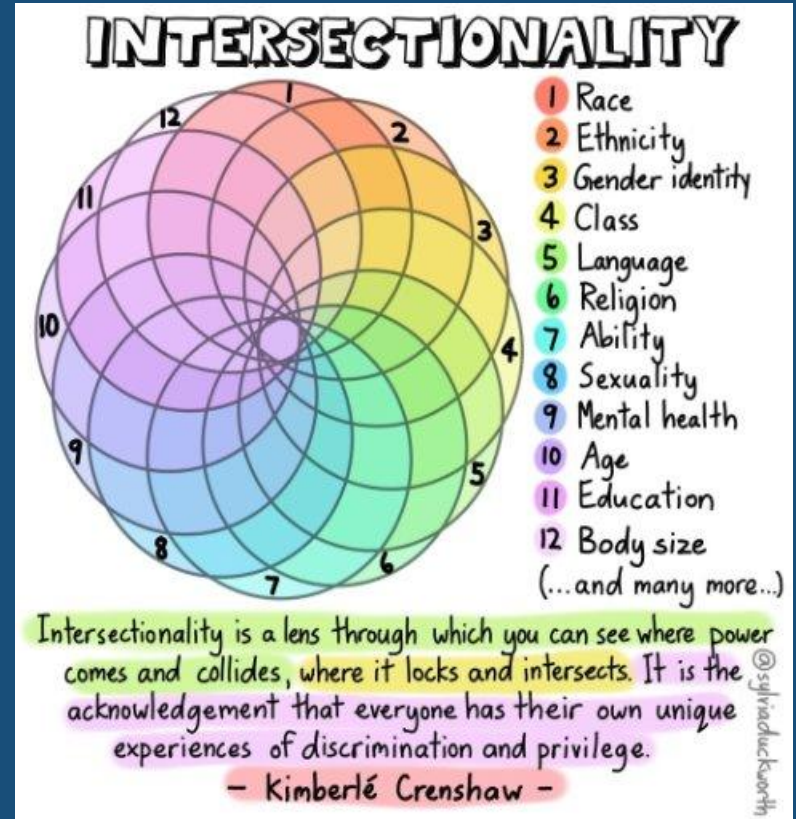


Image Citation: Duckworth, S. (2020, Aug 19). Intersectionality [Infographic]. Flickr.
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/sylviaduckworth/50245846893/>. CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.



Culturally Responsive DBT

- A study of DBT with an adolescent American Indian and Alaska Native population found improvement in mood symptoms when DBT was incorporated with traditional cultural and spiritual practices (Becksted et al., 2015).
- O'Grady et. al. (2022) offer seven clinical recommendations for cultural adaptations to DBT:
 1. Utilize the client's native language
 2. Explicitly discuss identity-based prejudice when introducing the biosocial theory
 3. Provide psychoeducation and tools for clients to cope with cultural stigma
 4. Use flexibility within fidelity with the diary card
 5. Increase attention to cultural context in the interpersonal effectiveness module
 6. Adopt additional components into DBT teams
 7. Advocate for increased training of clinicians from different cultural contexts.

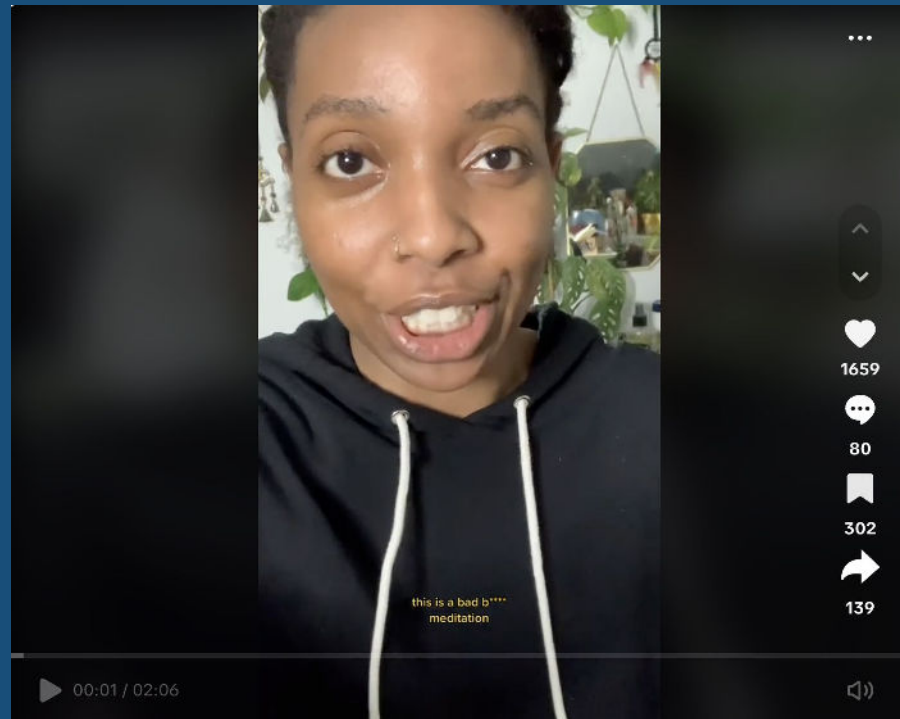


Identity-Affirming DBT

- Cheng and Cohen (2022) proposed five clinical recommendations for doing affirmative DBT with LGBTQ+ clients, including:
 - Incorporate Minority Stress
 - Amplify Resilience
 - Center the LGBTQ+ Experience
 - Advocate: Engage in Consultation to the Environment
 - Check Yourself: We are all Fallible and Contribute to Oppressive Structures
- Brook et al. (2024) have also proposed neurodiversity-affirming guidelines for Autistic clients.



In clients' native language...





Developmental Considerations





slido



How do people change as they age?

① Click **Present with Slido** or install our [Chrome extension](#) to activate this poll while presenting.



How do people change as they age?

- Cognitive capacity
- Ability for abstraction
- Fluid vs. crystallized reasoning
- Physical ability
- Identity development stages



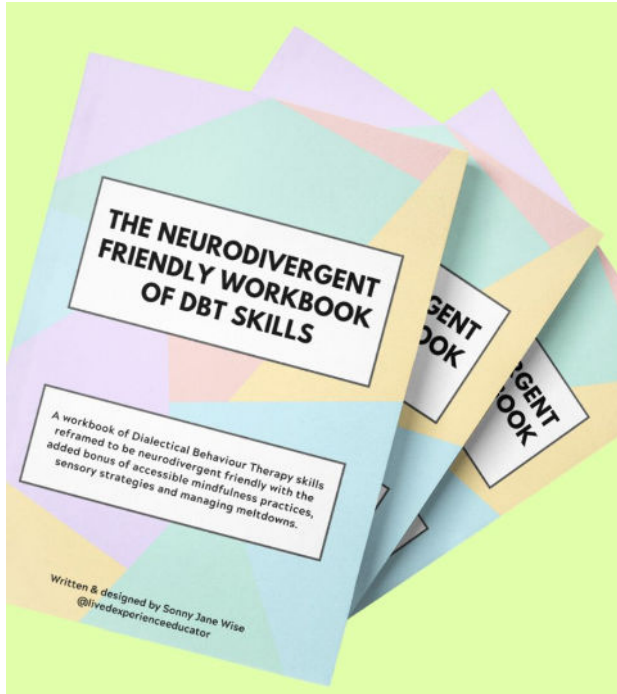


PRACTICE: Engaging Different Levels

- Think of a story (60-90 seconds)
- How would you tell it as if you were telling it to...
 - Your mother
 - A stranger
 - Your supervisor/boss
 - A 6-year-old child
 - A 12-year-old with ADHD
 - A 37-year-old adult who recently has been stressed
- What did you notice?
 - Tone changes
 - Body language
 - Frequency of checks for understanding
 - Length
 - Pulling points of interest



Engaging Different Learning Styles



MELTDOWN PREVENTION TIPS

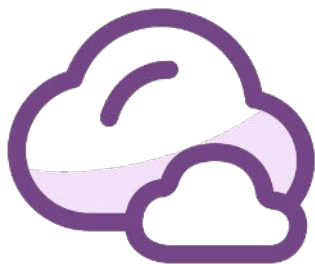
- listen to your body
- create a routine that works for you
- make a meltdown plan for loved ones to use
- learn your triggers + create a plan
- regular sensory breaks
- identify early warning signs
- create a sensory toolbox with your favourite sensory items
- allow yourself space to unmask
- use AAC or written communication
- have an exit strategy for situations
- give yourself time to stim
- utilise noise cancelling headphones and sunglasses
- plan for events and outings in advance
- reduce triggers like sensory input asap
- deep pressure like weighted blankets

41

Can freely use and share as long as (a) author is credited, (b) no changes are made, (c) it is not sold. Copyright 2022 Sonny Jane @livedexperienceeducator www.livedexperienceeducator.com



slido

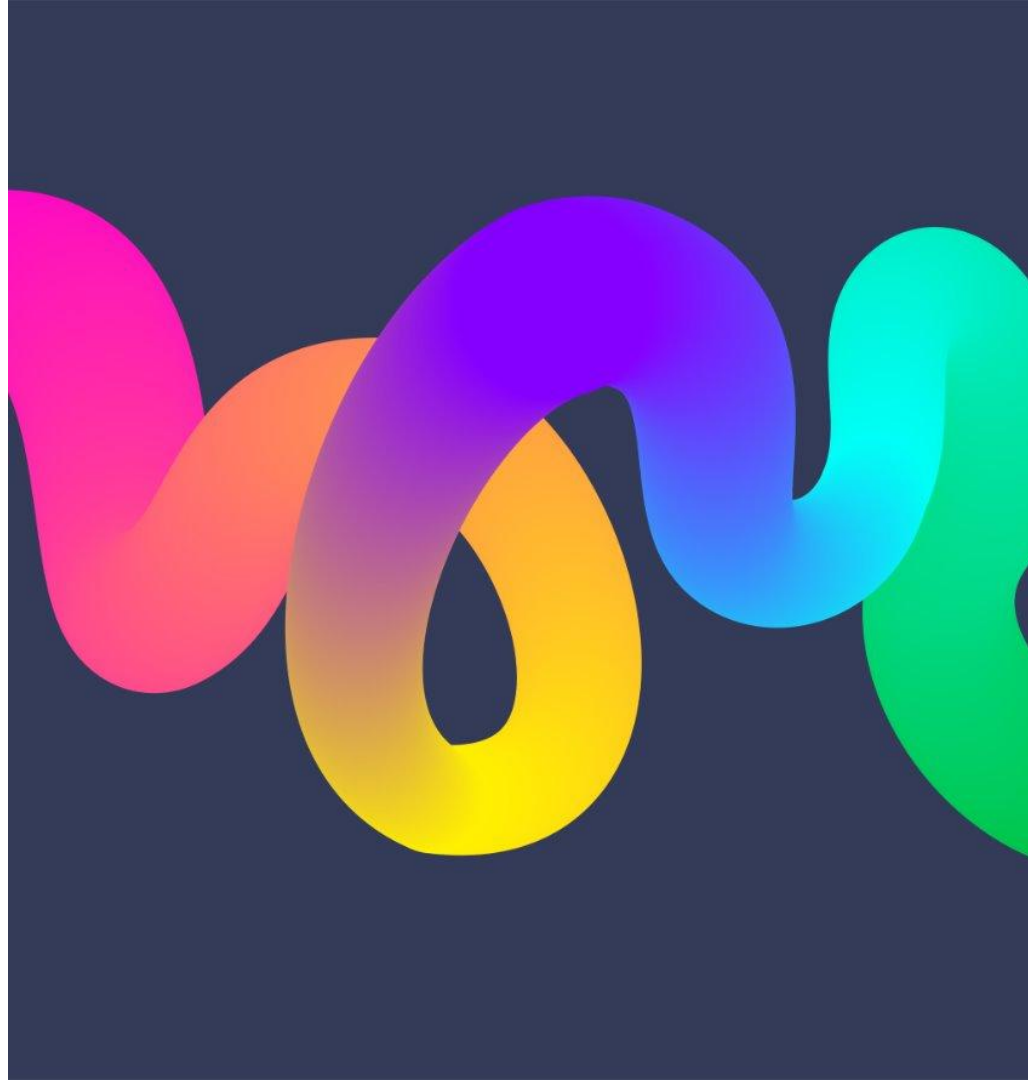


**We listen and don't judge -
what is your least favorite
skill to teach?**

① Click **Present with Slido** or install our [Chrome extension](#) to activate this poll while presenting.

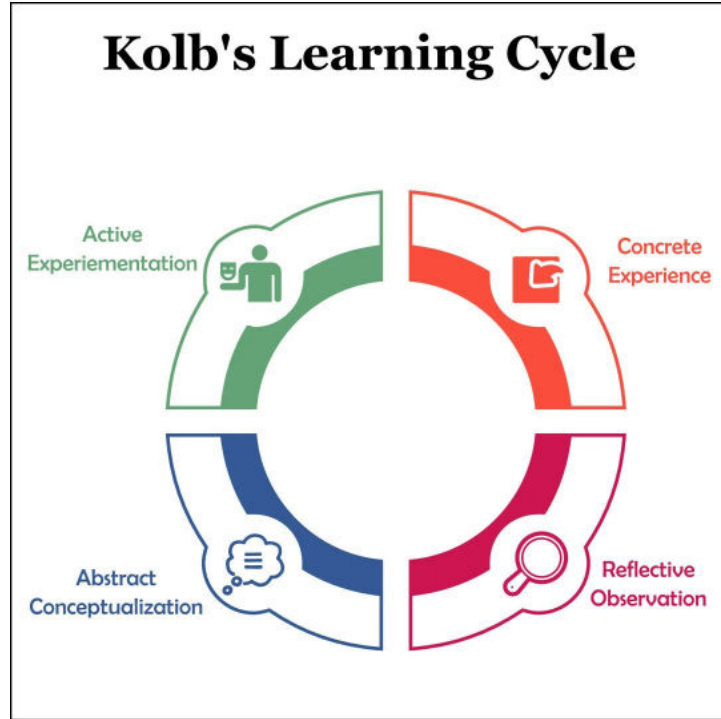


Kolb Learning Cycles



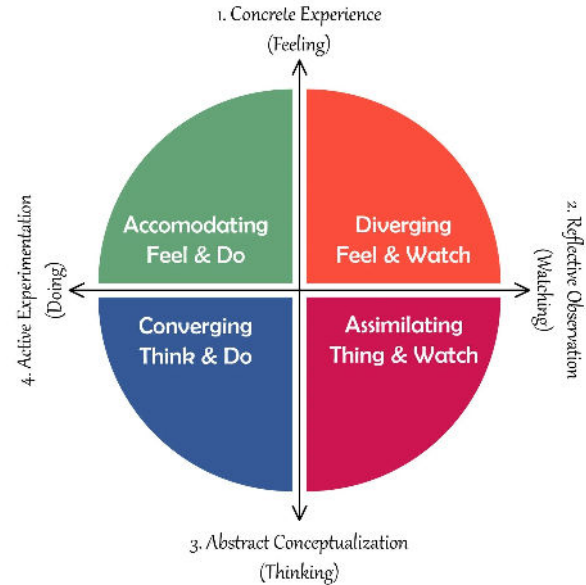


Kolb Experiential Learning Theory (1984)



Images from simplypsychology.org

Kolb's Learning Cycle





Kolb Learning Strategies

01	Diverging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working in groups• Round the room discussion• Emotion Reflection questions
02	Assimilating	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Videos• Storytelling from group leaders• Brainstorming• Hearing from others• Reading from manual• Reading/hearing practice situations from others
03	Converging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mental rehearsal• Practice writing scripts• Fake role plays• Quizzes
04	Accommodating	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Real role plays• Rehearsal• Dragging out



Ex: Assimilating Strategies

- Storytelling
 - Important to practice skills in daily life!!!
- Video demonstrations
- Brainstorming
- Discussions with others
- Reading sections from the manual





Role Plays





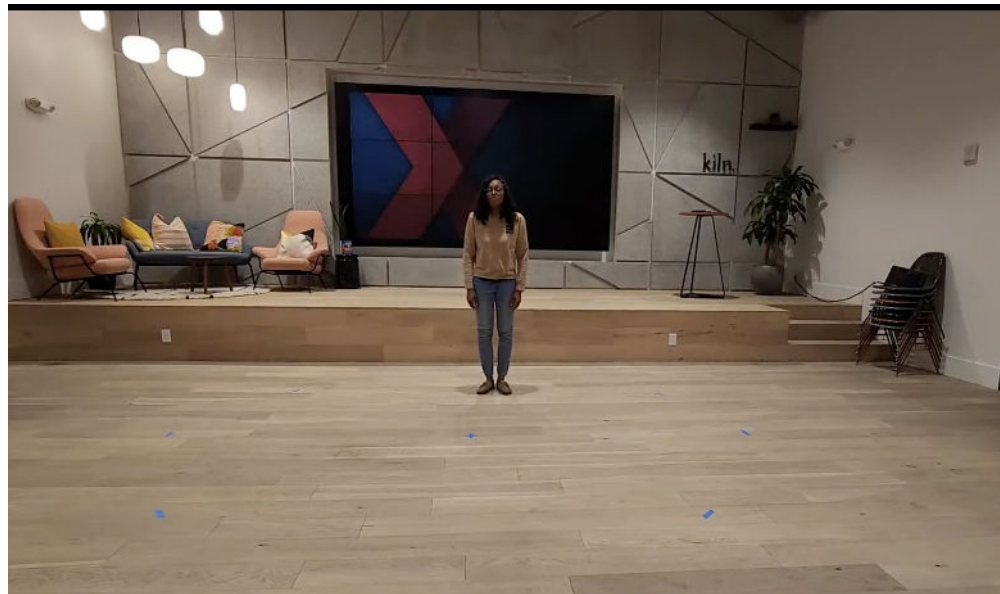
Opposite Action

- On your own, generate a list of urges that are associated with each of these emotions:
 - Happiness
 - Sadness
 - Fear
 - Anger
 - Disgust
 - Love
- Write them on cards, but don't list what the associated emotion is (or put it in code)





Rehearsal





Dragging Out Behaviors



Questions?



References

- Barkley, E. F., & Major, C. H. (2020). *Student engagement techniques: A handbook for college faculty* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Beckstead, D. J., Lambert, M. J., DuBose, A. P., & Linehan, M. (2015). Dialectical behavior therapy with American Indian/Alaska Native adolescents diagnosed with substance use disorders: Combining an evidence based treatment with cultural, traditional, and spiritual beliefs. *Addictive Behaviors*, 51, 84-87.
- Brook, A., Kraus, R. L., Chaney, C., & Swenson, C. (2024). Increasing effectiveness of DBT for autistic clients. *DBT Bulletin*, 9(1).
- Chang, Cindy & Cohen, Jeffrey. (2022). Doing Affirmative Dialectical Behavior Therapy with LGBTQ+ People: Clinical Recommendations. *DBT Bulletin*, 6, 11 - 15.
- Duckworth, S. (2020, Aug 19). Intersectionality [Infographic]. Flickr. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/sylvia duckworth/50245846893/>. CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.
- Harned, M. S. & Schmidt, S. C. (2022). The Dialectical Behavior Therapy Program Fidelity Checklist (DBT PFC). <https://www.dbtadherence.com/>
- Hibbs, C., King, A. M., & McFarr, L. M. (2024). The effects of client-perceived DBT skills group treatment credibility on treatment outcomes. *CBT California*, *DBT Bulletin*, 8(1). <https://www.dbtbulletin.org/>
- Linehan, M. M. (2015). *DBT® skills training manual* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D. J., & Pollock, J. E. (2001). *Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- McFarr, L., & Comtois, K. A. (2023). *DBT – California Competency Scale – Skills Training Group (DBTCCS-G)* [Psychological measure]. CBT California.
- O'Grady, S. M., Haft, S. L., Shaller, E. A. L., & Liu, N. H. (2022). Cultural adaptations of dialectical behavior therapy: Clinical recommendations. *DBT Bulletin*, 6(2).
- Pederson, L., & Pederson, C. (2017). *The expanded dialectical behavior therapy skills training manual: DBT for self-help and individual & group treatment settings* (2nd ed.).
- Popowich AD, Mushquash AR, Pearson E, Schmidt F, Mushquash CJ. Barriers and facilitators affecting the sustainability of dialectical behaviour therapy programmes: A qualitative study of clinician perspectives. *Couns Psychother Res*. 2020; 20: 68–80. <https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12250>.
- Schaller, G., Blanck, P., Vogel, E., Vonderlin, E., Bents, H. and Mander, J. (2018). Therapeutic processes in group therapy: Intersections between general change mechanisms and motivational stages of change from patient perspective. *European Journal of Psychotherapy & Counselling*, 20(3), 312–336. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13642537.2018.1495247>.
- Swenson, C. (2022). Oh give me the skill [song]. Accessed from <https://charlieswenson.com/songs/>
- Weiler, R., Steinberg, H., Simonson, A., Thacher, A., & Zack, S. (2021). Towards an intersectional DBT skills training. *DBT Bulletin*, 4(1), 9-13.
- Wise, S.J. (2022). *The Neurodivergent Friendly Workbook of DBT Skills*. Lived Experience Educator.



Contact UCEBT

Kimberly Applewhite – kimberly.applewhite@ucebt.com

Rosa Waters – rosa.waters@ucebt.com

(801) 419-0139

info@ucebt.com

Connect on Social Media

@UCEBT

Want to be notified of our upcoming events? Sign up for our mailing list!

www.ucebt.com/mailling-list