

Doing therapy online:  
We can do better if we  
don't do the same as  
face-to-face



Associate Professor Richard Lakeman  
& Dr Peter King

1



Lakeman, R., & Emeleus, M. (2020). The process of recovery and change in a dialectical behaviour therapy programme for youth. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*, 29(6), 1092-1100



Lakeman, R., Emeleus, M., Davies, S., & Anderson, S. (2021) A pragmatic evaluation of a high-fidelity Dialectical Behaviour Therapy programme for youth with borderline personality disorder, *Advances in Mental Health*. 19(2) 116-126

2

# COVID



Social distancing measures arising from the COVID-19 pandemic led to a cessation of therapeutic programmes in many places. This survey of DBT clinicians in a regional State mental health service in Australia explored the impact of the cessation of DBT programmes in the region and obstacles to engaging with people via online platforms.

Lakeman, R., & Crighton, J. (2021). The Impact of Social Distancing on People with Borderline Personality Disorder: The Views of Dialectical Behavioural Therapists. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 42(5), 410-416. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01612840.2020.1817208>

3

# COVID



All respondents were nurses and allied health professionals which is in itself curious as in Australia medicine and psychiatry purport to be the experts in psychiatric treatment. It is highly probable that if medical oncologists were more involved in the training in or provision of DBT then this treatment would not have been so quickly dropped and greater efforts would have been made to maintain treatment fidelity. **If the treatment for BPD was a drug, and this was denied people who had benefitted from it then this would have inevitably led to a public outcry.** However, the treatment for BPD is a labour-intensive programme with a tradition of face-to-face engagement with nursing and allied health professionals in the Australian context. The programme status in part reflects that undervaluing and under-provision of psychotherapy generally in Australian State services.

Lakeman, R., & Crighton, J. (2021). The Impact of Social Distancing on People with Borderline Personality Disorder: The Views of Dialectical Behavioural Therapists. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 42(5), 410-416. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01612840.2020.1817208>

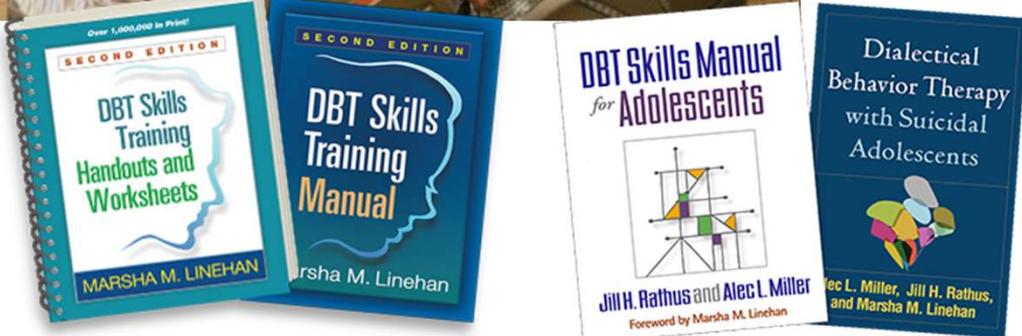
4



5



**DBT is a  
therapeutic  
programme**



The image shows a group of young people sitting in a circle in a room, engaged in a group therapy session. In the foreground, there are four book covers related to DBT: 'DBT Skills Training Handouts and Worksheets' (Second Edition, Marsha M. Linehan), 'DBT Skills Training Manual' (Second Edition, Marsha M. Linehan), 'DBT Skills Manual for Adolescents' (Jill H. Rathus and Alec L. Miller, Foreword by Marsha M. Linehan), and 'Dialectical Behavior Therapy with Suicidal Adolescents' (Alec L. Miller, Jill H. Rathus, and Marsha M. Linehan).

6

**Therapist Consultation Group**

## Elements of a DBT programme



**Skills Group**

Skill acquisition and practice



**Individual therapy**

Skill enhancement and generalisation



**Telephone Coaching / Consultation**

7

**Mindfulness**  
(being aware of the present moment without judgment)

**Emotion regulation**  
(understanding and reducing vulnerability to emotions, changing unwanted emotions)

**Distress tolerance**  
(getting through crisis situations without making things worse and accepting reality as it is)

**Interpersonal effectiveness**  
(getting interpersonal objectives met, maintaining relationships, and increasing self-respect in relationships)

DBT, dialectical behavior therapy.

8



9

## Towards online delivery of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy: A scoping review



Of 127 papers, 11 studies from 2010 to 2021 investigating online DBT for any clinical population were included in the review. A narrative synthesis of papers selected was undertaken. Seven articles reported results from five clinical trials (n = 437). Most adaptations mirrored face-to-face programmes although there was considerable variation in how therapy was facilitated. Attendance was reported to be greater online with comparable clinical improvements to face-to-face for those who remained in therapy. Additional challenges included managing risk, therapist preparedness and technology difficulties. Online delivery of DBT programmes is feasible and may be more accessible, acceptable and as safe and effective as face-to-face delivery. However, **mirroring face to face delivery in an online environment may not be the most effective and efficient way to adapt DBT to online provision.** Research is needed to identify areas which require further adaptation.



Lakeman, R., King, P., Hurley, J., Tranter, R., Leggett, A., Campbell, K., & Herrera, C. (2022). Towards online delivery of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy: A scoping review. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*, 31(4), 843-856. <https://doi.org/10.1111/inm.12976>

10

## Learning from expert practitioners

Delivering skills training online, either exclusively or in hybrid form (with face-to-face individual therapy), was acceptable and even preferable to therapists and clients. It was considered safe, the programme was associated with few non-completers, and it improved the accessibility of DBT to those who might otherwise not be able to engage in a face-to-face programme. Skills training utilized a 'flipped-learning' approach which improved the efficiency of online delivery.



Lakeman, R., Hurley, J., Campbell, K., Herrera, C., Leggett, A., Tranter, R., & King, P. (2022). High fidelity dialectical behaviour therapy online: Learning from experienced practitioners. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*, Early View. <https://doi.org/10.1111/inm.13039>

11

## What we explored...

### Definition of Flipped Learning

Flipped Learning is a pedagogical approach in which direct instruction moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space, and the resulting group space is transformed into a dynamic, interactive learning environment where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter.

- Differences between the standard DBT skills group and the DBT Assist programme
- Preparing for online delivery
- Acceptability of the programme and noncompletion
- Challenges and therapy interfering behaviour
- Maintaining safety online



12



13

## What we explored...

### Definition of Flipped Learning

Flipped Learning is a pedagogical approach in which direct instruction moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space, and the resulting group space is transformed into a dynamic, interactive learning environment where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter.

- Differences between the standard DBT skills group and the DBT Assist programme ✓
- Preparing for online delivery
- Acceptability of the programme and noncompletion
- Challenges and therapy interfering behaviour
- Maintaining safety online

Lakeman, R., Hurley, J., Campbell, K., Herrera, C., Leggett, A., Tranter, R., & King, P. (2022). High fidelity dialectical behaviour therapy online: Learning from experienced practitioners. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*, Early View. <https://doi.org/10.1111/inm.13039>



14