

TAKE 10

DBT RESEARCH TAKEAWAYS

1ST QUARTER, 2021

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GENERAL DBT RESEARCH

1

Beanlands, H., McCay, E., Wang, A., Aiello, A., Schwind, J., Martin, L. S., Mina, E. S., Rose, D., Fredericks, S., & Newman, K. (2021). **Exploring undergraduate nursing students' experiences of engaging with a dialectical behavior therapy-skills group intervention: Findings of a thematic analysis.** *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research*, 53(1), 39–46. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0844562119896487>.

HOW. Strategies are needed to address the high levels of stress that nursing students experience. 26 senior undergraduate nursing students participated in a DBT-Skills Group (DBT-SG) intervention. **WHAT.** Participants reported that DBT-SG was helpful for de-stressing and encouraging self-care; taught an array of applicable skills; taught a new, dialectical perspective on emotions; and overall, reported enhanced well-being after participating in DBT-SG.

2

Boritz, T., Varma, S., Macaulay, C., & McMains, S. F. (2021). **Alliance rupture and repair in early sessions of dialectical behavior therapy: The case of Rachel.** *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 77(2), 441–456. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.23101>.

HOW. The therapeutic alliance is essential to clinical outcomes for individuals with borderline personality disorder (BPD), and yet is one of the most challenging treatment components. The Rupture Resolution Rating System (Eubanks et al., 2015) was applied to videos of a client's first through fourth sessions. **WHAT.** This case study highlights the value of using an alliance-focused lens within DBT, and illuminates the need for therapists to notice and respond to alliance ruptures by familiarizing themselves with indicators and maintaining a curious attitude.

3

Cavicchioli, M., Barone, L., Fiore, D., Marchini, M., Pazzano, P., Ramella, P., Riccardi, I., Sanza, M., & Maffei, C. (2021). **Emotion regulation, physical diseases, and borderline personality disorders: Conceptual and clinical considerations.** *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12(567671), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.567671>.

HOW. This paper discusses theoretical principles behind the relationship of physical diseases and emotion dysregulation within the context of BPD. **WHAT.** Empirical data suggests that the suppression and avoidance of emotions plays a role in the reciprocal relationship between emotion dysregulation and chronic physical diseases. This is especially notable among those with BPD; DBT may be an effective path toward addressing the maladaptive association between the two.

4

Harned, M. S., Korslund, K. E., Schmidt, S. C., & Gallop, R. J. (2021). **The Dialectical Behavior Therapy Adherence Coding Scale (DBT ACS): Psychometric properties.** *Psychological Assessment*, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pas0000999>.

HOW. The DBT Adherence Coding Scale (DBT ACS; Linehan & Korslund, 2003) measures therapist adherence to Linehan's treatment model, yet its official psychometric properties were not known. The DBT ACS was used in six clinical trials, analyzing 1,271 individual DBT therapy sessions and 180 DBT skills training groups. **WHAT.** The DBT ACS was found to be a valid, reliable, and dependable measure for both individual sessions and group sessions. These findings support the continued use of DBT ACS in efficacy trials and DBT therapist certification programs.

5

Heath, N., Midkiff, M. F., Gerhart, J., & Goldsmith Turow, R. (2021). **Group-based DBT skills training modules are linked to independent and additive improvements in emotion regulation in a heterogeneous outpatient sample.** *Psychotherapy Research*, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10503307.2021.1878306>.

HOW. Heath et al. explored whether improvements in emotion regulation could be attributed to specific modules of DBT skills training. 136 clients enrolled in the group on a rolling basis; difficulties with emotion regulation were measured at the beginning and end of each skill module. **WHAT.** DBT skills training significantly improves emotion regulation across modules. Each module was uniquely associated with an overall improvement in clients' emotion regulation, and earlier sessions were more impactful than later ones.

6

Kannan, D., Chugani, C. D., Muhomba, M., & Koon, K. (2021). **A qualitative analysis of college counseling center staff experiences of the utility of dialectical behavior therapy programs on campus.** *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*, 35(1), 53–69. <https://doi.org/10.1080/87568225.2019.1620662>.

HOW. There is an urgent need to explore the effectiveness of DBT treatment in College Counseling Centers (CCCs). 15 mental health professionals working at CCCs participated in semi-structured interviews to discuss their experiences with DBT services. **WHAT.** Four main themes were identified: a comprehensive DBT model was influenced by the CCC's resources and was adapted to fit the clinic's existing services; DBT fits well within CCC's approaches to clinical care and helps students with wide ranges of needs; skills training groups are a main focus of DBT in CCCs; and clinician perceptions of DBT have a significant impact on the success of the DBT programs.

7

Mann, J. J., Michel, C. A., & Auerbach, R. P. (2021). **Improving suicide prevention through evidence-based strategies: A systematic review.** *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ajp.2020.20060864>.

HOW. A systematic review of articles from 2005 to 2019 was conducted to examine suicide prevention tactics. **WHAT.** Education of general practitioners, youth, and system-level education was found to be a significant avenue towards reducing suicide, in addition to screening protocols and treatment interventions, including pharmacotherapy, psychotherapy (including DBT), active outreach, brain stimulation, and internet-based interventions.

8

Salamin, V., Rossier, V., Joye, D., Nalde, C., Pierrehumbert, T., Gothuey, I., & Guenot, F. (2021). **Adaptations of an outpatient dialectical behavioral therapy during the Covid-19 pandemic and consequences of the confinement on patients with borderline personality disorder.** *Annales Medico-Psychologiques*, 179(2), 131–136. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amp.2020.08.006>.

HOW. Researchers analyzed changes in diary card entries and frequency of problem behavior for seven outpatient program clients before and during confinement from the COVID-19 pandemic. During confinement, patients completed all program components via telehealth. **WHAT.** During confinement, patients reported a decrease in alcohol consumption, binge eating behavior, shame, guilt, fear, and tension, and an increase in distress.

9

Westad, Y. A. S., Hagen, K., Jonsbu, E., & Solem, S. (2021). **Cessation of deliberate self-harm behavior in patients with borderline personality traits treated with outpatient dialectical behavior therapy.** *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12(578230), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.578230>.

HOW. Westad and colleagues identified when 75 outpatients stopped engaging in deliberate self-harm (DSH) during treatment. They also compared demographics, comorbidities, and symptom severity across two groups of patients: those who stopped DSH early and those who stopped late. **WHAT.** Most patients stopped DSH during the first year of treatment. No significant differences in demographics, comorbidities, symptom severity or treatment outcome were observed.

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YOUTH, ADOLESCENTS, & FAMILIES

10

Asarnow, J. R., Berk, M. S., Bedics, J., Adrian, M., Gallop, R., Cohen, J., Korslund, K., Hughes, J., Avina, C., Linehan, M. M., & McCauley, E. (2021). **Dialectical behavior therapy for suicidal self-harming youth: Emotion regulation, mechanisms, and mediators.** *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2021.01.016>.

HOW. Researchers evaluated DBT versus individual and group supportive therapy (IGST). 173 adolescents were randomized to either six months of DBT or IGST. **WHAT.** DBT led to greater improvements in emotion regulation and planned suicide/self-harm outcomes. Improvements in emotion regulation predicted greater self-harm remission at 12-months, which supports the significance of emotion regulation as a therapeutic target, and more broadly, as a therapeutic change mechanism in DBT.

11

Guillén, V., Díaz-García, A., Mira, A., García-Palacios, A., Escrivá-Martínez, T., Baños, R., & Botella, C. (2021). **Interventions for family members and carers of patients with borderline personality disorder: A systematic review.** *Family Process*, 60(1), 134-144. <https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12537>.

HOW. Guillén et al. reviewed 11 studies on interventions designed to decrease mental health burden on relatives of patients with borderline personality disorder (BPD). **WHAT.** All 11 interventions were shown to be useful across a variety of measures, including reduced emotional burnout and improved relationship skills. Researchers highlight the Family Connections (FC) program as the most advanced so far.

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Greaves, A. E., McKenzie, H., O'Brien, R., Roberts, A., & Alexander, K. (2021). **The impact of including babies on the effectiveness of dialectical behaviour therapy skills groups in a community perinatal service.** *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 49(2), 172-184. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1352465820000673>.

HOW. Researchers examined the impact of including mothers and infants in DBT skills groups. Several perinatal adaptations were implemented, i.e., presence of the infant during group, inclusion of childcare staff, and a modified curriculum. **WHAT.** Community perinatal DBT skills groups led to reduced psychological distress and emotional dysregulation.

13

Holland, M., Hawks, J., Morelli, L. C., & Khan, Z. (2021). **Risk assessment and crisis intervention for youth in a time of telehealth.** *Contemporary School Psychology*, 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40688-020-00341-6>.

WHAT. In this article, Holland et al. provide context regarding the mental health impact that the COVID-19 pandemic and remote learning have had on middle and high school-aged populations, proposing school-based prevention and intervention programs delivered via telehealth as a potential solution to both existing and exacerbated barriers to access. **HOW.** Research regarding telehealth and telehealth adaptations, symptom clusters for at-risk youth, and existing adolescent interventions are discussed.

14

Ramsey, W. A., Berlin, K. S., Conte, G. D., Lightsey, O. R., Schimmel-Bristow, A., Marks, L. R., & Strohmmer, D. C. (n.d.). **Targeting self-criticism in the treatment of nonsuicidal self-injury in dialectical behavior therapy for adolescents: A randomized clinical trial.** *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1111/camh.12452>.

HOW. Researchers investigated potential benefits of targeting self-criticism in the treatment of non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) in adolescents. 40 adolescents were randomized to either DBT-A or DBT-A Plus, an adaptation that includes an additional brief cognitive intervention to decrease self-criticism. **WHAT.** DBT-A Plus resulted in decreased NSSI at post-treatment compared with DBT-A.

15

Sved Williams, A., Osborn, A., Yelland, C., & Hollamby, S. (2021). **Changing intergenerational patterns of emotional dysregulation in families with perinatal borderline personality disorder.** *Archives of Women's Mental Health*, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00737-021-01119-2>.

HOW. Researchers investigated the potential benefits of Mother-Infant Dialectical Behavior Therapy (MI-DBT), an adaptation that includes both mothers with borderline personality disorder (BPD) and their infants. **WHAT.** MI-DBT resulted in improvement across a range of measures, including depression, anxiety, BPD symptomatology, and parenting competence.

EATING DISORDERS

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Isaksson, M., Ghaderi, A., Wolf-Arehult, M., Öster, C., & Ramklint, M. (2021). **Sharing and connecting with others – patient experiences of radically open dialectical behavior therapy for anorexia nervosa and overcontrol: A qualitative study.** *Journal of Eating Disorders*, 9(1), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40337-021-00382-z>.

HOW. Isaksson et al. interviewed 11 female patients with anorexia nervosa after undergoing Radically Open DBT. 8 patients completed treatment; 3 dropped out. Patients' experiences were evaluated. **WHAT.** Five major themes emerged, including: a comprehensive treatment, the benefits of sharing/connecting with others, growing trust, moving toward valued goals, and doing well in treatment. Patients reported appreciation for DBT's holistic perspective.

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Isaksson, M., Ghaderi, A., Ramklint, M., & Wolf-Arehult, M. (2021). **Radically open dialectical behavior therapy for anorexia nervosa: A multiple baseline single-case experimental design study across 13 cases.** *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry*, 71, 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbtep.2021.101637>.

HOW. Researchers assessed eating disorder pathology over the course of a 40-week DBT program. Thirteen patients with Anorexia Nervosa were evaluated before, during and after treatment. **WHAT.** Each patient who completed treatment was in full remission after 40 weeks. Most patients also underwent a change in their EDE-Q score.

POPULATION-SPECIFIC

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Chang, T.-H., Liu, S.-I., Korslund, K., Lin, C.-J., Lin, Y., Huang, H.-C., Chen, S.-C., Chang, Y.-H., Sun, F.-J., & Wu, S.-I. (n.d.). **Adapting dialectical behavior therapy in Mandarin-speaking Chinese patients with borderline personality disorder: An open pilot trial in Taiwan.** *Asia-Pacific Psychiatry*, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1111/appy.12451>.

HOW. Researchers evaluated the viability and effectiveness of Mandarin-translated DBT to treat suicidal Chinese patients with borderline personality disorder (BPD). **WHAT.** Mandarin-translated DBT was found to be feasible and to decrease the frequency and severity of suicidal behaviors and ideations, depressive symptoms, and BPD symptoms.

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Giordano C, Iannuzzi V, Danesi F, Poletti M. **Feasibility and effectiveness of Dialectical-Behavior Therapy for patients with borderline personality disorder in Italian mental health services: a preliminary study.** *Riv Psichiatr.* 56(1):43-45. doi: 10.1708/3546.35219.

HOW. Researchers collected preliminary data to assess the feasibility and effectiveness of DBT in Italian mental health services. 28 patients with BPD engaged in a 16-session DBT program. **WHAT.** Completion of the treatment program predicted significant improvements in emotional dysregulation, awareness, and impulsivity.

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Loo, J. L., Keng, S.-L., Ramírez-Espinosa, I. G., Hadi, N. M. N., Ramírez-Gutiérrez, J. A., & Shoesmith, W. (2021). **Dialectical behavior therapy in the Asia-Pacific Rim region.** *Asia-Pacific Psychiatry*, 13(1), 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1111/appy.12437>.

HOW. Loo and colleagues evaluated existing DBT services in several countries across the Asia-Pacific Rim region (i.e., Singapore, Malaysia, and Mexico). **WHAT.** Researchers found two DBT services in Singapore, four in Malaysia, and numerous in Mexico. Challenges to offering DBT in this region include translation, limited staff, and cost of training.

ADHD

21

Moritz, G. R., Pizutti, L. T., Cancian, A. C. M., Dillenburg, M. S., Souza, L. A. S. de, Lewgoy, L. B., Basso, P., Andreola, M. M. P., Bau, C. H. D., Victor, M. M., Teche, S. P., Grevet, E. H., Philipsen, A., & Rohde, L. A. P. (2021). **Feasibility trial of the dialectical behavior therapy skills training group as add-on treatment for adults with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder.** *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 77(3), 516-524. <https://doi.org/10.1002/iclp.23049>.

HOW. Researchers investigated the potential use of a skills-only dialectical behavior therapy group (Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skill Training Group, DBT-ST) as an ancillary treatment for adult ADHD in Brazil. 31 participants were assigned to either DBT-ST or treatment as usual. Brazilian Portuguese versions of psychometric assessments and DBT materials were utilized. **WHAT.** No significant improvements were found for DBT-ST versus treatment as usual.