

## **Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) Skills Group Orientation Guide**

### **Welcome to DBT Skills Group!**

DBT Skills Group is a skills training program where members learn practical, evidence-based strategies to manage emotions, improve relationships, and cope with distress. The group supports your progress in building a life that aligns with your values and goals. We look forward to learning these skills with you that we believe have the potential to change your life!

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### **Benefits, Structure, and Format**

The DBT Skills Group typically meets every week for about six months and is organized in 3 training modules. Each module begins with group orientation and **Core Mindfulness**: skills that increase our awareness and are the building blocks to all other skills.

1. **Distress Tolerance**: Skills for surviving a crisis and living with longer term issues without making things worse.
2. **Emotion Regulation**: Techniques to understand, label, and shift emotional responses.
3. **Interpersonal Effectiveness**: Skills for navigating relationships

**Cycle and Duration**: Each module typically runs for 8 weeks. The full cycle is approximately 24 weeks (6 months) which is the minimum commitment to treatment and may be repeated as needed - behavior change is not easy!

**Sessions Structure**: Each session is 1.5 to 2 hours long and follows this structure:

Opening mindfulness practice -> Review of homework -> Short break -> Teaching of new skills -> Homework assignment and wind down

**Homework**: Assigned each week to practice applying the skills in daily life. What we do between sessions will determine how much you get out of the program.

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**Role of the Skills Trainer and Co-Lead**: DBT Skills Groups typically include two skills trainers to help facilitate both learning skills and addressing any issues that may come up

- **Skills Trainer**: Teaches DBT skills and guides participants in understanding how to apply them.

- **Co-Lead:** Supports group facilitation, models skills, addresses any technical issues, and helps coach members that need help during group.
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## **Guidelines for Skills Training**

DBT lays out a few guidelines to help create a culture of support and learning.  
(*General Handout 3 in the DBT Skills Training Handouts and Worksheets*)

- 1. Participants who drop out of skills training are not out of skills training.**
  - a. The only way out is to miss four scheduled sessions of skills training in a row.
- 2. Participants who join the skills training group support each other and:**
  - a. Keep names of other participants and information obtained during sessions confidential.
  - b. Come to each group session on time and stay until the end.
  - c. Make every effort to practice skills between sessions.
  - d. Validate each other, avoid judging each other, and assume the best about each other.
  - e. Give helpful, noncritical feedback when asked.
  - f. Are willing to accept help from a person they ask or call for help.
- 3. Participants who join the skills training group:**
  - a. Call ahead of time if they are going to be late or miss a session.
- 4. Participants do not tempt others to engage in problem behaviors and:**
  - a. Do not come to sessions under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
  - b. If drugs or alcohol have already been used, come to sessions acting and appearing clean and sober.
  - c. Do not discuss, inside or outside sessions, current or past problem behaviors that could be contagious to others.
- 5. Participants do not form confidential relationships with each other outside of skills training sessions and:**
  - a. Do not start a sexual or a private relationship that cannot be discussed in group.
  - b. Are not partners in risky behaviors, crime, or drug use.
- 6. \*For Telehealth: Treat telehealth with the same standards as in person:**
  - a. Be in a quiet, private, and well-lit space, fully attentive, and prepared for session. Be mindful that therapy is an active process (lying down, doing chores, texting on your phone, or driving can significantly limit the effectiveness of treatment).
  - b. Please have your camera on during the session, within reason, to ensure privacy, safety, and attentiveness for all parties involved.
- 7. OTHER:** You are welcome to request other guidelines to be considered as well (e.g. special accommodations, eating, certain use of language, etc.)

