

The Windham Center

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

“Offers A New Beginning...”

DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOR THERAPY OFFERS HELP AND HOPE.

Do you know a friend, relative, acquaintance, or perhaps a patient whose emotional life seems completely out of control?

It is now recognized that some people, due to a combination of invalidating environments during childhood and biological factors, react abnormally to a variety of emotional stimuli. Their reactions are more intense. Their level of reaction is extreme. And they require more time to return to a normal frame of mind after an upsetting emotional incident.

Help Is Available...

The good news is there is help available at The Windham Center for those who live with these symptoms that are recognized by the clinical name Borderline Personality Disorder. Dialectical Behavior Therapy (also known as the DBT program) is an educational approach to behavior therapy designed to teach people the skills they need to manage their emotional crises in a positive way.

We recognized the need for a local resource to help people with Borderline Personality Disorder. Three years ago, Jean Etter, LICSW, Co-Director of The Windham Center in Bellows Falls applied for and received a \$150,000 grant from the Fanny Holt Ames and Edna Louise Holt Fund and the Bellows Falls Chapter of WCTV to set up a DBT program. Training 25 people resulted in two highly-specialized, multi-disciplinary teams—one inpatient and one outpatient—that include a psychiatrist, social workers, nurses, counselors, and mental health workers. The Outpatient DBT Program is one of only two free-standing DBT programs in the country, and these two specialized teams now provide greatly-needed service for many people who face the challenges of living with borderline personality disorder on a daily basis.

Who Can Benefit From DBT?

Borderline Personality Disorder is more likely to affect women — of all ages. These women are more likely to have a sensitive disposition and to have grown up subjected to continual invalidation and sexual abuse and/or physical abuse. Because of their history, they simply have not learned the proper behavioral skills to manage stress in their lives. DBT gives them the skills they so desperately need, and much, much more. By accessing this program, they also gain access to a network that includes education and support as they begin to learn to manage their lives in a healthy way.

How Does The Program Work?

Getting started simply requires a phone call by a physician or mental health care provider. Dialing 802-463-1292 will put you in touch with Jean Etter and a team of mental health professionals who will help you through the steps required to complete applications and negotiate insurance and/or financial assistance. The program lasts six months and is a two-part program. It includes meeting twice each week from 5:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. for skills training—and once each week (at the participant's convenience) for a one-hour therapy appointment during normal business hours, 8 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Is DBT Successful?

Yes! Most people who are referred to DBT for help are suicidal or frequently acting on self-harming urges that are likely to put them in the ER or the hospital for an extended period of time. DBT treatment is an effective way to pre-empt those crisis situations through effective behavior therapy. For those who do end up in crisis, DBT training arrests most life-threatening behaviors and shortens the duration of the crisis.

After their first six months, participants enter the second phase of treatment which includes applications training and family group training. The applications group helps participants review their new skills and how to internalize those skills so they become second nature. Participants meet for an hour each week in groups of 6 to 10, for whatever length of time they need help and support. In addition, the family group gives the participant's support network education around diagnosis and treatment so they can also learn skills that are helpful to family and friends.

We're teaching people the skills they need to help them help themselves. Patients generally come to our program not understanding the cause of their problems or why they behave the way they do. They know something is wrong, but they don't know what. One of the reasons DBT is successful is that it keeps participants out of hospitals and teaches them how to successfully manage their lives. DBT Treatment has changed a previously intractable diagnosis into a very treatable issue.

Why Should Participants Come To DBT?

In three simple words... “Because it works.”

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