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Dialectical Behavior Therapy Program

Role of the DBT Individual Therapist

To Primary Individual Therapist
From: Shorehaven DBT Group Leader

Our mutual client was referred to our DBT Skills Group. On behalf of Shorehaven's DBT Skills Group and DBT Team, we value your referral and your participation. In order to collaborate and communicate for the welfare of the client, we request a few steps.

We want to make sure the role of the individual therapist is clear. *If you are referring a client you plan to see individually, rather than refer entirely to Shorehaven, this short letter explains your role in DBT.*

First, so you can learn about the role of the individual therapist working alongside a dBT group.

Second, in order to work out a plan for communication between you and the leader, he or she will want to talk over the case with you and work out a communication process.

Third, the group leader will assess the client for fit with DBT and readiness to participate, and work out a treatment plan. That will be discussed with you.

Fourth, work with the client to fill out the Crisis Plan form.

I. How to Be the Individual Therapist in Coordination with a DBT Program

1. Primary Responsibility. Because *DBT Skills Group is a didactic skills program*, not a traditional therapy group, *the individual therapist and not the group leader is the primary therapist*. As the primary therapist, you are responsible for *the psychotherapy, diary calls, coaching calls, and crisis calls*. So, we will need two documents, an Authorization for Disclosure of Healthcare Information (release of information) and your crisis plan below.

This 7-minute video helps you understand the Role of the Individual Therapist in DBT:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wu92TM-kZuo&t=151s>

2. Elements of the Role of the Individual Therapist DBT - ACCCORDD

- A **Assessment** - Although the group leader(s) will assess the client for the purpose of fit for DBT group, the individual therapist [T] conducts the diagnostic evaluation and sets a treatment plan.
- C **Client commitment** - Both the group leader(s) and T focus on building/eliciting client commitment to treatment, including a year of skills group. For adolescents, both the client *and* the parents commit to six months of steady participation.
- C **Coordinate with the DBT team leaders** - It is important for T to know which of the skills within the four main elements – emotional regulation, distress tolerance, interpersonal, and mindfulness skills – the group is covering. That way T can reinforce mastery. The DBT program can send you materials on DBT skills.
- C **Crisis plan** - DBT is designed for clients with suicidal behavior, Borderline Personality, and other problems with emotional regulation. Therefore, a crisis plan – prepared at the outset and periodically updated – will help best secure the clients stability and help the team and T coordinate.
- C **Coaching calls** - DBT treatment includes at least one weekly coaching call in which T asks the client about implementation of DBT skills. If the client has urgent needs or a crisis, that is an opportunity to use DBT skills.
- O **Orienting the client to DBT and “Pre-treatment”** - Both the leader(s) and T help the client understand DBT and prepare the client for participation in group. All the therapists focus on the therapeutic alliance and overcoming therapy-interfering behaviors.
- R **Resources** – The DBT team is a resource. The client can show you the skills worksheets.
- D **Documentation** – It is helpful for the client when all the therapists include DBT skills – how the client uses them or could use them, or referencing them as a form of intervention – in documentation.
- D **Diary Cards** - An important part of DBT is a Diary card in which the client records the use of skills and the regulation of emotional states. Reviewing Diary Cards is a part of individual therapy sessions.

We look forward to working with you.

Would like to learn more about DBT skills? Read the article An Introduction to DBT on our website, <https://www.shorehavenbhi.com/mental-health-programs.php>

This 8-minute video explains DBT for Adolescents.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Stz--d17ID4&t=31s>

These videos introduce DBT:

What is DBT, 3 minutes, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDnvZS5DP68>

DBT Orientation, 9 minutes, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1HMQubkRz4&t=5s>

The Four Stages & Targets, 6 minutes,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D55zSQ01Nho&t=15s>