

## DBT INFORMATION FOR CLIENTS

The Open Arms Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) Program provides an evidence based treatment for people aged 18 or over who are experiencing social and emotional problems including self-harming and suicidal behaviour. Currently, this program is only available at Open Arms, Townsville. All clinicians involved in the program are qualified mental health professionals and hold registration with AHPRA or AASW. These mental health professionals also have specialised training in Dialectical Behaviour Therapy.

### What is Dialectical Behaviour Therapy?

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy is a powerful form of psychotherapy that was primarily designed to treat emotional dysregulation. Therefore, DBT is useful if you have difficulty regulating your emotions. This means that it might work for you if you seem to get more upset than people around you, if you feel upset for a long time, or if it is really hard to calm yourself down when you are stressed or cheer yourself up when you feel low. DBT includes skills to tolerate distress more effectively, and can be very helpful if you feel that intense emotions make you act impulsively or if you feel that you are often in crisis. DBT can also be useful if you find maintaining relationships hard, as it teaches skills designed to help you manage your relationships more effectively.

DBT has over a decade of research supporting its effectiveness in helping people make important changes in their lives. DBT has demonstrated effectiveness in adolescents and adults struggling with conditions associated with high emotional reactivity and/or persistent difficulties in coping with life.

**D = Dialectical.** This means that two things that seem like opposites can be true at the same time.

In DBT we believe that balancing ACCEPTANCE and CHANGE is an important part of therapy – and of life. For example, your therapist will balance understanding that you are doing the best you can while challenging and supporting you to make changes to attain your goals.

**B = Behaviour.** DBT focuses on decreasing behaviours that are getting in the way of your life worth living and increasing behaviours that will get you closer to your goals.

Common behaviours that we try to decrease in DBT can include unhelpful coping behaviours, aggression, suicidal thoughts, and self-harming behaviours. Common behaviours that we try to increase in DBT include regulating our emotions, practicing awareness, and positive social engagement.

**T = Therapy.** DBT may be different to other therapies you have previously experienced.

DBT therapists offer a collaborative approach to therapy. This means that therapist and client both make a commitment to work together towards targeted goals. DBT therapy is a structured and skill based process that targets specific emotional and behavioural goals.

**The main goal of DBT is to *build a life worth living*.** This means having things that are meaningful and important to YOU in your life.

## What does the DBT program at Open Arms involve?

- **Weekly DBT Individual Therapy Session (1 hour)** - Where you will meet with one of our DBT therapists and explore your individual feelings, situations & goals. You will also have the opportunity to learn how to tailor skills to meet your needs. Together, you and the therapist, will explore what has happened in the previous week, learn from this, and take steps towards the life you want. In order for the therapy to work, you and your therapist will both need to attend and participate in the sessions, monitor your emotions and behaviours each week and follow through with commitments between sessions. Individual sessions will commence at least four weeks before the first DBT Group session.
- **Weekly DBT Skills Training Group (2.5 hours)** – This is where you will learn and practice new skills in a supportive group environment. You will learn a number of different skills and will be asked to practise these each week and then share your practise with the group so that you can learn from and support each other on your journey. Skills groups are held in-centre commencing from the Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022 for 22 weeks (including a two week break for the school holidays).
- **Phone Coaching (as required)** - This involves being able to have phone contact with a therapist between appointments for support in using your skills, help with a crisis or when you want to share good news with us. Phone coaching is available to all clients involved in the DBT program.

## Is Dialectical Behaviour Therapy right for me?

You will likely find DBT helpful if you answer **YES** to the following questions:

### **Am I willing to change my behaviour?**

Your DBT therapist will assume that you want to improve and will focus on helping you to change the behaviours that are getting in the way of the life you want.

### **Am I able to put the work in?**

DBT can be hard work and requires practising your new skills outside of sessions.

### **Am I looking for practical skill based strategies to manage my everyday life?**

DBT primarily focusses on building skills for a life worth living. If you are more interested in talking about your problems in general and trying to understand where they came from you may wish to consider various other talking therapies instead. Ask us to make some recommendations for you when you call us.

### **Is now a good time for me and my family to be making changes?**

Doing DBT involves stopping behaviours that you have been using to manage your emotions and learning new skills. This is HARD! If you do not have a stable living situation, you and your family members are wanting to go away for a large chunk of time in the middle of treatment or you are currently unable to prioritise treatment over other priorities then you may want to consider waiting for a time when you and your family can make a full commitment.

## What skills will I learn?

### PROBLEMS (Have less of these)

**Reduced awareness and focus; confusion about yourself:**

Not always aware of what you are feeling, why you are upset, what your goals are and/or having trouble staying focused.

**Impulsivity:**

Acting without thinking it all through; escaping or avoiding emotional experiences.

**Emotional Dysregulation:**

Fast, intense mood changes with little control and/or steady negative emotional state; mood dependant behaviours.

**Interpersonal Problems:**

Pattern of difficulty keeping relationships steady, getting what you want, keeping self-respect; loneliness.

### SKILLS (Learn more of these)

**Mindfulness:**

Learning how to be in the moment rather than always in your thoughts.

**Distress Tolerance:**

Learning how to sit with emotions that cannot be changed.

**Emotion Regulation:**

Learning how to change emotions you want to change so that you can experience the ones you like more and the ones you don't less.

**Interpersonal Effectiveness:**

Learning how to get what you want from your relationships while maintaining your self-respect and potentially improving the relationship.

**Walking the middle path:**

Learning how to make balanced decisions in your family and within your own life.

### Eligibility and Referral Information

This program is at no cost to participants, however, participants must meet the eligibility criteria for Open Arms services (anyone who has served at least one day in the ADF, their partners and families), be over the age of 18 years of age, and agree to participate in a screening assessment with an Open Arms clinician to determine their readiness/suitability to commence in the program. Eligible participants are encouraged to self-refer by contacting **1800 011 046**.

# OPEN ARMS

Veterans & Families Counselling

1800 011 046