

## DBT INFORMATION FOR REFERRERS

The Open Arms Townsville 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. This program is currently running in the Townsville Open Arms office only. 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. It includes skills to tolerate distress more effectively, and can be very helpful for maintaining effective relationships. 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, a DBT therapist will balance understanding that a client is doing the best they can with challenging and supporting them to make goal-orientated changes.

**B = Behaviour.** DBT focuses on decreasing behaviours that are getting in the way of a life worth living and increasing goal-orientated behaviours.

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 that is structured and skill based to target specific emotional and behavioural goals.

**The main goal of DBT is to *build a life worth living.***

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

- **Weekly DBT Individual Therapy Session (1 hour)** – Where clients will meet with one of our DBT therapists and explore individual feelings, situations and goals. They will also have the opportunity to learn how to tailor skills to meet their specific lifestyles and goals. The client will be supported to explore what has happened in the previous week, learn from this, and take steps towards improving their lives. Clients will be expected to complete activities between sessions such as keeping records of target emotions/behaviours and practising skills learnt in session. Individual sessions will commence at least 4 weeks before the group program starts.

- **Weekly DBT Skills Training Group (2.5 hours)** – This is where clients will learn and practice new skills in a supportive group environment. Clients will learn a number of different skills and will be asked to practise these each week and then share their practice with the group to facilitate skill uptake and group support. 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 skills, help with a crisis, or sharing success using skills. Phone coaching is available all clients involved in the DBT program.

## Is Dialectical Behaviour Therapy right for my client?

Your client may benefit from DBT if they:

- ✓ Are ready to engage in proactive behavioural change
- ✓ Are willing to actively participate in the program (including skills practice between sessions)
- ✓ Are looking for practical and skill based strategies for improving distress tolerance, emotion regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness.
- ✓ Can commit the required time and prioritise their treatment over the course of the program.

## What skills will clients learn in DBT?

### 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 identify and manage emotions to increase the experience of pleasant emotions, and decrease the experience of unpleasant ones.

### Interpersonal Effectiveness:

Learning to balance assertiveness with maintaining relationships and self-respect.

### Walking the middle path:

Learning how to make balanced decisions 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**. Alternatively, other health professionals, can complete attached referral form and send to the [openarms.northqld@dva.gov.au](mailto:openarms.northqld@dva.gov.au) and will be advised of the outcome of the referral.