

# Efficacy of Dialectical Behavioral Therapy with Deaf Psychiatric Patients: Longitudinal Changes

Amanda O'Hearn, Ph.D.

University of Rochester School of Medicine

## Abstract

Dialectical Behavior Therapy was originally developed to treat chronically suicidal individuals and has become the treatment of choice for those diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder. DBT is behaviorally based and incorporates validation and change strategies. It has been adapted and used to treat a number of patient populations in different settings. Studies have shown it to be effective in reducing self-harm behaviors. DBT typically includes individual therapy as well as group therapy to address deficits in interpersonal skills, distress tolerance, and emotion regulation skills.

Although deaf patients are commonly mainstreamed into hearing groups, or occasionally into all-deaf groups where available, no studies of the ability of deaf consumers to comprehend the workbook or benefit from the therapy have been conducted. As the workbook is currently written, the average deaf consumer is unable to use and comprehend the materials adequately. The workbook is only accessible to consumers who are fluent in English and familiar with culture-bound concepts presented. This excludes the bulk of the deaf mental health patient population, whose literacy level and fund of information is poorer than the average deaf population at large. Clinicians and interpreters attempting to employ or translate DBT concepts with deaf patients informally report considerable effort being expended in the process of translation/explanation attempts.

**Mindfulness Walk:** Take a walk. Be aware of the things you see, hear, smell, taste, touch. Be aware of nature and write down what you experience of each sense.



Handwritten notes on a lined page, partially obscured by a white box.