

[Dialectical behavior therapy \(DBT\)](#) is a state-of-the-art, evidence-based form of cognitive behavioral therapy for teenagers and adults who experience significant trouble managing their emotions, thoughts and behaviors.

In order to more effectively manage intense emotions that can lead to impulsive decision-making and problematic behaviors, patients participating in DBT learn how to practice mindfulness — fully being present in the moment and focusing on one thing at a time, without judgment — along with new problem-solving skills. When mindful awareness is combined with effective problem-solving skills, sensitive and emotionally reactive teenagers and young adults have the tools to respond flexibly to difficult and stressful life experiences.

This approach has helped teenagers and young adults who struggle with any or all of the following:

- Impulsive/disruptive behaviors
- Frequent mood swings
- Self-injurious and suicidal behaviors
- Depression and anxiety
- Family and peer conflict
- Anger outbursts
- Eating disordered behaviors
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Poor coping skills

Considerable research has been conducted on DBT for adolescents and adults, and multiple randomized controlled research trials have demonstrated its effectiveness. At the Child Mind Institute, we treat many young people who struggle with emotional ups and downs and assist families who want to help their children manage these intense emotional fluctuations. DBT is an excellent option for those who want a comprehensive treatment that teaches emotional, behavioral and cognitive skills.

DBT Skills Training

1. Understanding, managing and regulating emotions
2. Tolerating distress and crises without making problems bigger
3. Maintaining satisfying relationships with others
4. Increasing self-awareness, expanding one's ability to recognize alternative points of view and managing emotional situations
5. Increasing problem-solving skills, learning validation and effectively managing differences of opinion with family members

Current research suggests that DBT may also be effective for children and preadolescents (aged 8 – 13) who struggle with intense emotions, disruptive behaviors, and challenging relationships.