

*Understanding the Basics of DBT:  
A 4-Part Foundational Skills Series  
Session 2: Strategies for Distress Tolerance*

Crystal Socha, MS, LPC, CRC, NCC, ACS

June 11, 2024



**Mental Health Technology Transfer Center**  
*Funded by SAMHSA*

**Northeast and Caribbean  
Region 2**

**General Mental  
Health Workforce**

**Provider  
Wellness**

**Youth & Young  
Adult Services**

**School Mental  
Health Workforce**



Northeast and Caribbean (HHS Region 2)

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Northeast and Caribbean (HHS Region 2)

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# Video Recording Information

## *Please Note:*

We will be recording this webinar and posting it to our website along with the presentation slides and any relevant resources.

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This work is supported by grant H79SM081783 from the DHHS, SAMHSA.



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## Question and Answers

- Q & A will occur at the end of the call.
- Type your questions in the Q & A feature in Zoom located on the task bar (hover over task bar).
- Note: your question may be visible to other participants.

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- Throughout the webinar, we will be asking for your input.
- Use the Chat or Poll features in Zoom located on the task bar.
- You can control who can see your chat comments.

The MHTTC Network uses affirming, respectful and recovery-oriented language in all activities. That language is:

STRENGTHS-BASED  
AND HOPEFUL

INCLUSIVE AND  
ACCEPTING OF  
DIVERSE CULTURES,  
GENDERS,  
PERSPECTIVES,  
AND EXPERIENCES

HEALING-CENTERED AND  
TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE

INVITING TO INDIVIDUALS  
PARTICIPATING IN THEIR  
OWN JOURNEYS

PERSON-FIRST AND  
FREE OF LABELS

NON-JUDGMENTAL AND  
AVOIDING ASSUMPTIONS

RESPECTFUL, CLEAR  
AND UNDERSTANDABLE

CONSISTENT WITH  
OUR ACTIONS,  
POLICIES, AND PRODUCTS

A woman with dark, curly hair is looking out a window. She has a nose ring and is looking upwards and to the right. The background shows a bright blue sky with clouds and some greenery outside the window. The overall mood is hopeful and serene.

# 988

SUICIDE  
& CRISIS  
LIFELINE

**For people experiencing:**

- Suicide, mental health, substance use crisis
- Emotional distress
- People concerned about someone in crisis

# Meet Today's Presenter



Crystal Socha, MS, LPC, CRC, NCC, ACS  
(she/her)



# **Understanding the Basics of DBT: A 4-Part Foundational Skills Series**

Crystal Socha, MS, LPC, CRC, NCC, ACS

# Foundational Series Outline

## Session 1:

- Introduction to DBT & Strategies for Mindfulness

## Session 2:

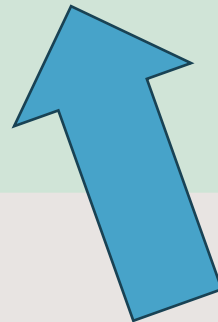
- **DBT Skills Training: Strategies for Distress Tolerance**

## Session 3:

- DBT Skills Training: Strategies for Emotion Regulation

## Session 4:

- DBT Skills Training: Strategies for Interpersonal Effectiveness



# Session 2: DBT Skills Training: Strategies for Distress Tolerance

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# Learning Objectives

<b>Understand</b>	Understand when to use distress tolerance skills
<b>Examine</b>	Examine distress tolerance skills for navigating a crisis, intense emotions, and when problem solving is not possible
<b>Recognize</b>	Recognize the difference between crisis survival and reality acceptance skills
<b>Review</b>	Review a case study and practical examples of using distress tolerance skills with clients



# Homework Review

If you practiced a mindfulness skill...

- What went well?
- What was difficult or challenging?

# Skills Overview

Mindfulness

Distress Tolerance

Emotion Regulation

Interpersonal Effectiveness



**Time to Pause**

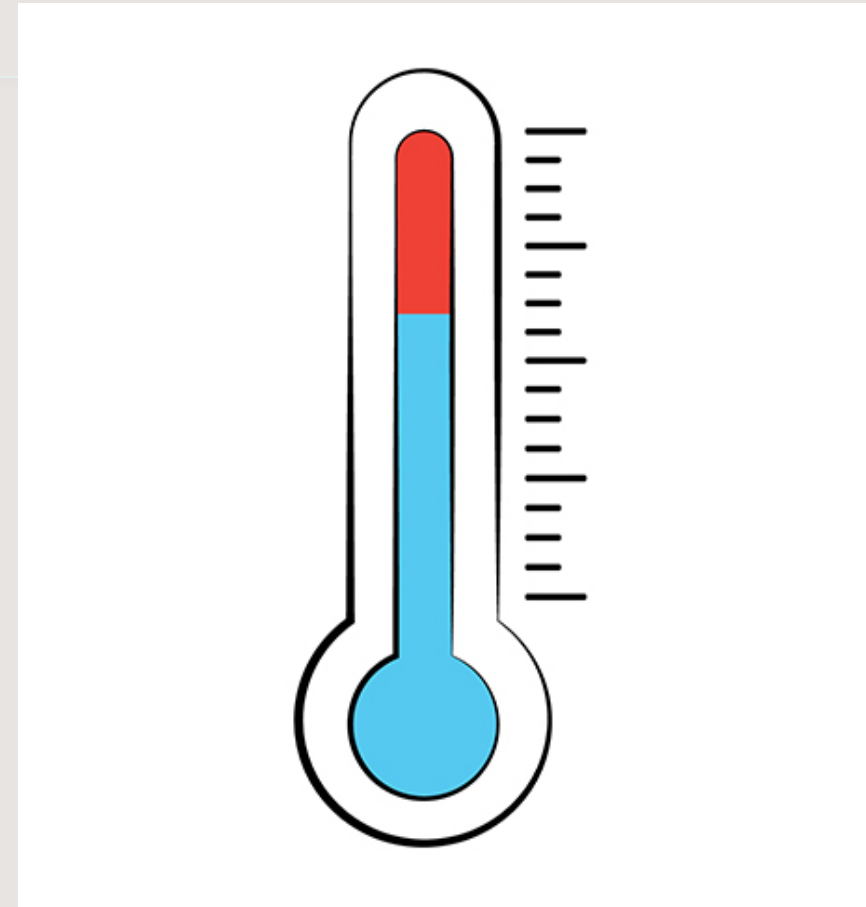
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**What are some examples of situations where individuals feel distressed, overwhelmed, or another intense emotion?**

# Red Zone vs. Blue Zone

- **Red Zone**
  - Feelings:
    - Anger, irritability, overwhelm
  - Physiological and behavior changes:
    - Heart racing, temperature rising, knot in stomach, clenched fist, tightness in jaw, screaming, yelling
  - Hard to think clearly and make decisions
- **Blue Zone**
  - Feelings:
    - A little upset, calm
  - Physiological and behavior changes:
    - Alert, able to self-soothe
  - Easier to be skillful





# Distress Tolerance Overview

- *Teach clients how to:*
  - To tolerate painful events, urges and emotions without making them worse
  - To reduce suffering by accepting reality

# Distress Tolerance: Crisis Survival Skills

The STOP  
Skill

Pros and  
Cons

TIP Your  
Body  
Chemistry

Distract with  
Wise Mind  
ACCEPTS

Self-Soothe  
with the Five  
Senses

Improve the  
Moment

**Distress  
Tolerance:  
STOP**

**Stop**

**Take a Step Back**

**Observe**

**Proceed Mindfully**



# Distress Tolerance: TIP Skills

- Temperature
- Intense Exercise
- Paced Breathing
- Paired Muscle Relaxation



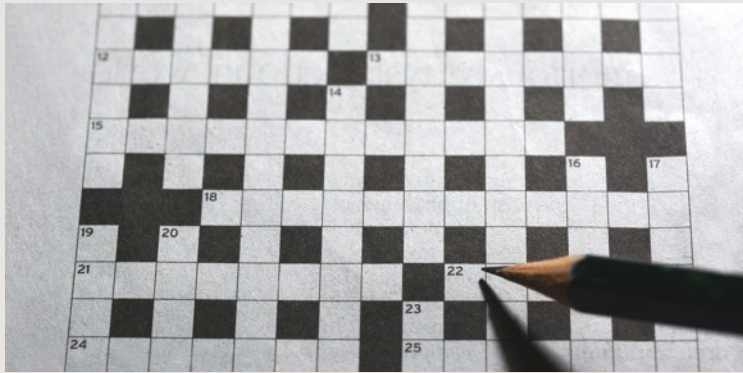
(Linehan, 2015)



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# Distress Tolerance: Distracting with Wise Mind **ACCEPTS**

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- **Activities**
- **Contributing**
- **Comparisons**
- **Emotions**
- **Pushing away**
- **Thoughts**
- **Sensations**



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# Distress Tolerance: Self-Soothe with Five Senses

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- **Vision:** Looking at the stars or nature
- **Hearing:** Listening to music, nature
- **Smell:** Favorite soap, lotion, candle
- **Taste:** Favorite food or soothing drink
- **Touch:** Pet a comfort item, animal, blanket



(Linehan, 2015)



**What is a place  
that is safe and  
secure to you?**  
(Either real or imagined)

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# Distress Tolerance: IMPROVE the Moment

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- Imagery
- Meaning
- Prayer
- Relaxing Actions
- One Thing in the Moment
- Vacation
- Encouragement





# **Distress Tolerance: Reality Acceptance Skills**

Radical Acceptance

Turning the Mind

Willingness

Half-Smiling and Willing Hands

Mindfulness of Current Thoughts

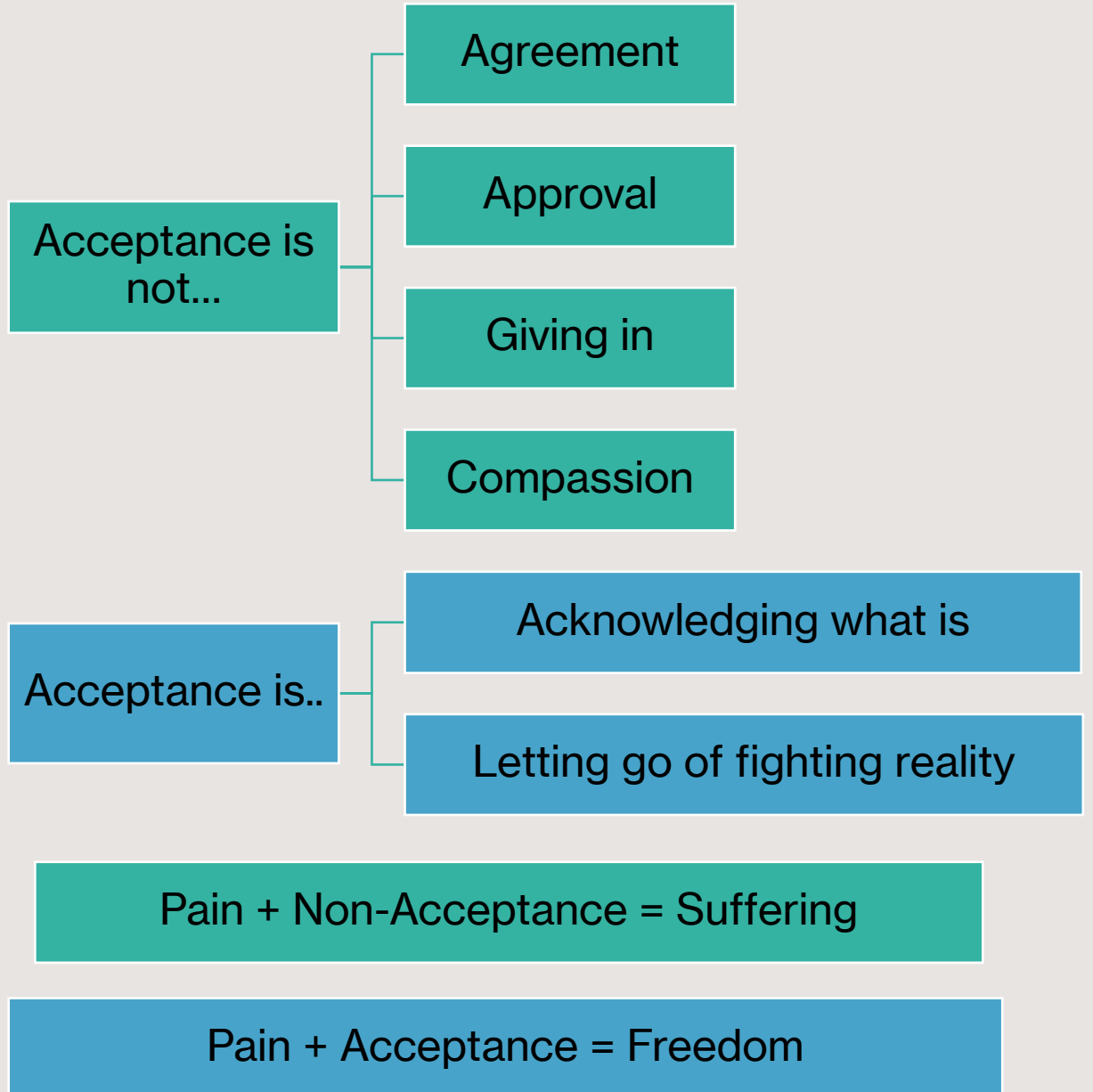
# Distress Tolerance: Radical Acceptance

Radical means all  
the way, complete,  
and total

Accepting with your  
mind, your heart,  
and your body

When you stop  
fighting reality, and  
let go of bitterness

# Distress Tolerance: Radical Acceptance





# Distress Tolerance: Mindfulness of Current Thoughts



1. Observe your thoughts



2. Adopt a curious mind



3. Remember:  
You are NOT your thoughts



4. Do not block or suppress  
thoughts

# Guest House

by Jalaluddin Rumi

This being human is a guest house.  
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes  
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still, treat each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,  
meet them at the door laughing,  
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.



# Case Study

- Michael is a 25-year-old Hispanic cisgender male who grew up in a high-conflict household where he often witnessed arguments between his parents. As a child, he struggled with anxiety and had difficulty managing stress. Throughout his teenage years, Michael began to use alcohol as a coping mechanism, which continued into adulthood. Despite these challenges, he was able to complete his education and establish a career in marketing. However, his job involved high pressure and long hours, which exacerbated his anxiety and led to burnout. Recently, Michael was laid off from his job, and shortly afterward, his long-term relationship ended.
- These events triggered intense feelings of worthlessness and despair. Michael's coping strategies, such as excessive drinking and spending, have intensified, leading to strained relationships with friends and family and financial difficulties. Michael feels overwhelmed and struggles to cope with his intense emotions. He often feels like he's "on the verge of a breakdown" and doesn't know how to manage his distress in an effective way.

**How might you utilize distress tolerance skills to help Michael navigate these intense emotions?**



# Summary

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Distress tolerance includes crisis survival and reality acceptance skills

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Crisis survival skills help individuals to survive a crisis without making things worse and when things cannot be solved right away

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Skills are working when we are not acting on any dangerous, self-destructive or impulsive behaviors

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Reality acceptance skills help individuals to reduce suffering and increase freedom when painful facts cannot be changed immediately, if ever

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# Homework



Practice a distress tolerance skill



Practice teaching this skill to a friend or loved one

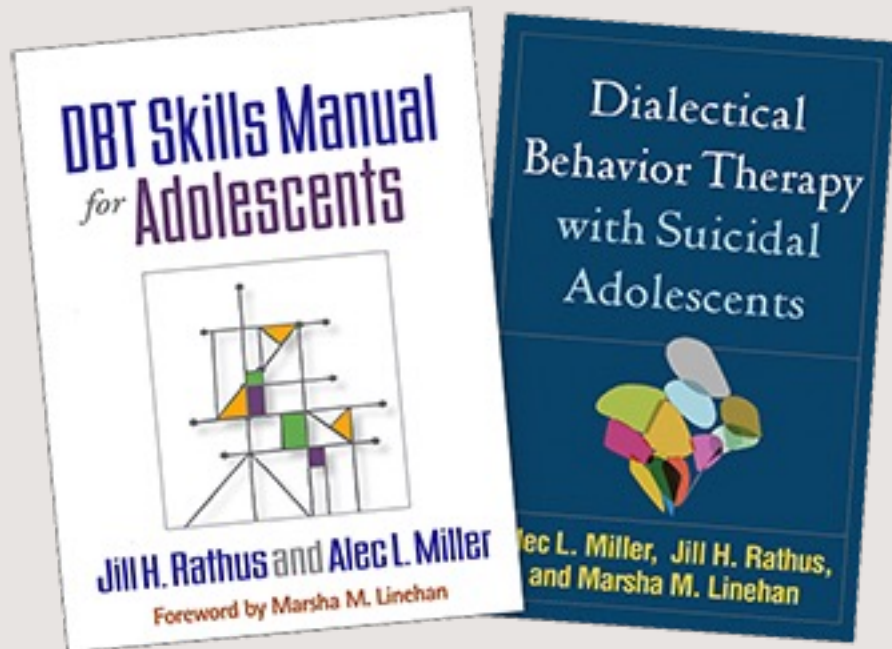
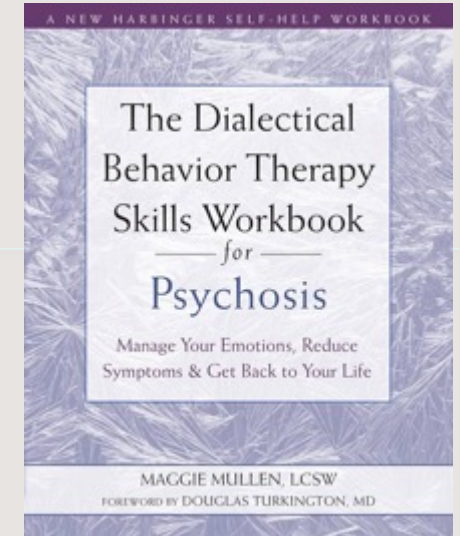
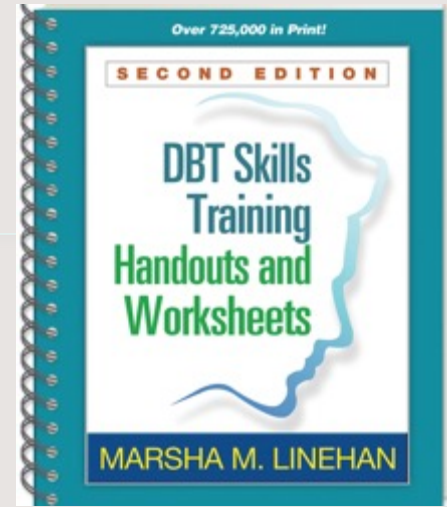
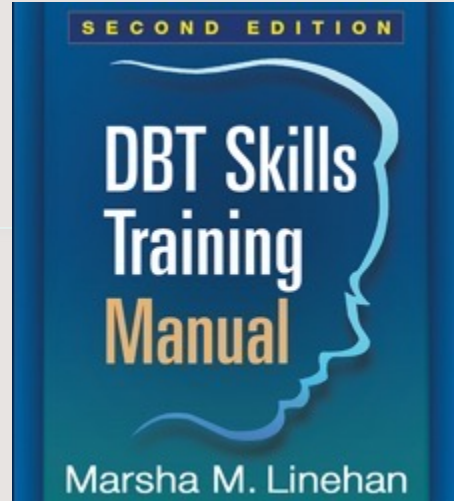
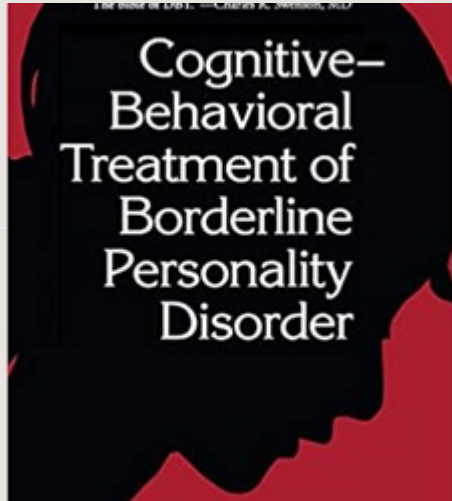


**Join us next Tuesday  
June 18<sup>th</sup> 12-1PM EST**

**Session 3:  
DBT Skills Training:  
Strategies for  
Emotion Regulation**

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# Resources

<https://dbt-lbc.org/>

<https://behavioraltech.org/>

<https://www.youtube.com/dbtru>

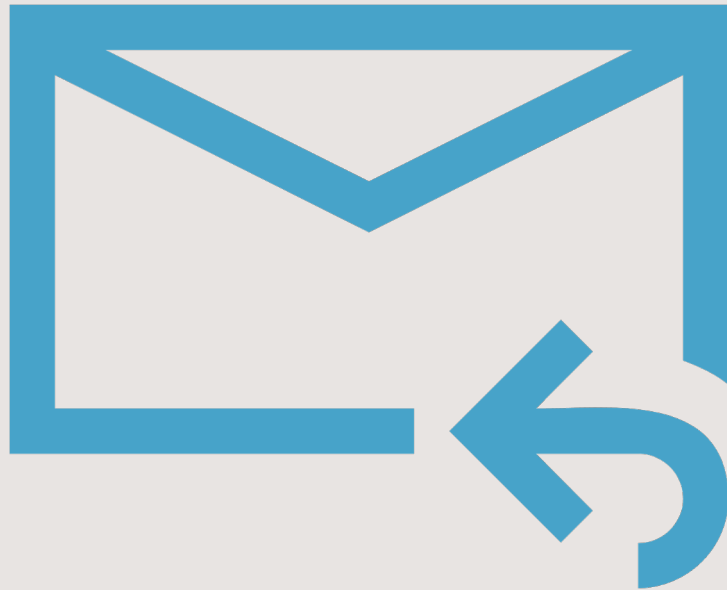
# References

- Chapman A. L. (2016). Dialectical behavior therapy: Current indications and unique elements. *Psychiatry (Edgmont (Pa. : Township))*, 3(9), 62–68.
- Linehan, M. (2015) DBT skills training manual (2nd Ed.) New York: The Guilford Press.
- Schimelpfening, N. (2023). *Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT): Definition, techniques, and benefits.*  
<https://www.verywellmind.com/dialectical-behavior-therapy-1067402>



# Thank You!

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# Evaluation Information

The MHTTC Network is funded through SAMHSA to provide this training. As part of receiving this funding we are required to submit data related to the quality of this event.

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A Certificate of Completion will automatically be emailed to all online participants within 7 days of webinar broadcast.

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Website: <https://mhttcnetwork.org/centers/northeast-caribbean-mhttc/home>

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**MHTTC**

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

The purpose of the MHTTC Network is technology transfer - disseminating and implementing evidence-based practices for mental disorders into the field.

Funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the MHTTC Network includes 10 Regional Centers, a National American Indian and Alaska Native Center, a National Hispanic and Latino Center, and a Network Coordinating Office.

Our collaborative network supports resource development and dissemination, training and technical assistance, and workforce development for the mental health field. We work with systems, organizations, and treatment practitioners involved in the delivery of mental health services to strengthen their capacity to deliver effective evidence-based practices to individuals. Our services cover the full continuum spanning mental illness prevention, treatment, and recovery support.

## CONNECT WITH US



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