

DBT for Complex PTSD

An evidence based multicomponent program to treat the sequelae of interpersonal violence during childhood and adolescence

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Date: Oct 12-14, 2020 (Tallinn) and Feb 04-06, 2021 (Tartu)

Registration: soon to be announced

Organizer: Estonian Association for Cognitive and Behaviour Therapy

Description

This 6-day workshop (2x 3 days) teaches Dialectical Behavior Therapy for Complex PTSD (DBT-PTSD). DBT-PTSD is tailored to treat adult PTSD after childhood abuse, including patients with borderline personality disorder (BPD). Most of these patients show severe problems in emotion regulation, negative self-concepts, dysfunctional memory processing, and maladaptive social interaction. To target these core domains DBT-PTSD merges multiple evidence-based elements: DBT principles, trauma-specific cognitive and exposure-based techniques, compassion focused interventions, and behavior change procedures. The treatment program is designed to be delivered in a residential program (three-months) or in an outpatient setting (45 weeks). Empirical evidence comprises from 2 RCTs. A most recent multi-center RCT under outpatient conditions (n=200; 100%female) finds large effect sizes in all relevant domains as well as significant superiority of DBT-PTSD to Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT).

DBT-PTSD is based on a psycho-social model, where typical dysfunctional behaviors can predominantly be understood as strategies to avoid or escape from trauma-associated primary emotions like powerlessness, threat, anxiety, disgust, humiliation, or sexual arousal. Corroborated by dysfunctional cognitive assumptions, dysfunctional behaviors such as self-injury, suicidal ideation, dissociation, or intoxication and problematic secondary emotions such as shame, guilt, self-hatred, or chronic anger, develop over time into problematic self-concepts which strongly impair quality of life. DBT-PTSD primarily aims to help patients a) revise their fear of trauma-associated primary emotions, b) question whether secondary emotions like guilt and shame fit the facts, and c) radically accept the fact of trauma in their lives in order to establish a life worth living.

The workshop is intended for mental health professionals interested in treating complex PTSD using evidence-based principles and procedures. Basic knowledge of DBT is recommended, but not needed.

Learning objectives

1. Describe the basic psychosocial and neurobehavioral principles of complex PTSD.
2. Implement the principles of DBT-PTSD.
3. Develop an individualized trauma- model
4. Teach skills for dissociation, distress tolerance, and regulation of trauma-related emotions
5. Conduct in-sensu exposure