

# DBT for Complex PTSD

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

**Presenter: Prof MD Martin Bohus**, University of Heidelberg

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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