

# WELCOME

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## DBT CENTER IOP

1348 Heights Blvd  
Houston, TX 77024



## **Welcome to the Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP)**

We're happy to welcome you to our Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)-based Intensive Outpatient Program. This is your space for healing, growth, and building the life you want to live. Our program is here to support you in managing your emotions, improving your relationships, and enhancing your overall well-being.

This booklet is designed to help you understand the program and make the most of your time with us.

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### **About the Program**

#### **What is DBT?**

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) is a therapeutic approach that helps people manage intense emotions and reduce harmful behaviors. It combines cognitive-behavioral techniques with mindfulness, focusing on both acceptance and change. With DBT, you'll learn skills to handle life's challenges, manage stress, and build healthier relationships. DBT is backed by research and proven to be effective.

#### **What is an Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP)?**

Our IOP provides structured support while allowing you to continue your daily life. It's often a step down from inpatient care or an alternative to it. You'll attend group therapy sessions 4–5 days a week and have individual therapy as well. This combination allows you to practice skills in real-world situations while receiving focused therapeutic support.

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### **Program Goals and Expectations**

#### **What You Will Learn:**

Throughout the program, you'll develop key DBT skills in the following areas:

- **Mindfulness:** Staying present and aware.
- **Emotion Regulation:** Managing intense emotions.
- **Distress Tolerance:** Surviving emotional crises without unhealthy behaviors.
- **Interpersonal Effectiveness:** Building healthy relationships and setting boundaries.

#### **Program Objectives:**

Our goal is to help you:

- Reduce emotional pain and suffering.
- Cope with distress in healthier ways.
- Communicate effectively with others.
- Accept yourself while making positive changes.

#### **What We Expect from You:**

Your commitment is key to success. We ask that you:

- Attend all scheduled sessions.
- Actively engage in group discussions.
- Complete homework assignments.
- Use the skills you learn both in and outside of therapy.
- Meet regularly with your individual therapist.

Attendance is crucial. Missing 4 consecutive sessions will be considered leaving the program, as regular attendance is vital for progress. If you're having trouble attending, please speak with your individual therapist or a group leader.

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### Program Schedule

- **Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday:** Group sessions from 11 AM to 1 PM, with a brief break.
- **Saturday (Optional):** Two-hour specialized groups:
  - **Trauma-Informed Yoga:** Gentle movement and mindfulness to connect with your body and regulate emotions.
  - **DBT through Creative Arts:** Learning DBT skills through art, music, and creative expression.

If you're seeking insurance reimbursement, attending one of the Saturday groups is necessary, as 9 hours per week are typically required.

You'll schedule your individual therapy sessions with your therapist.

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### Meet Your Team

Our dedicated team of therapists, group leaders, and support staff is here to guide you. Frances Fisher, Stacy Fromberg, and Marie Musanga will be your group leaders. You can learn more about them on our website: [houstondbtcenter.com](http://houstondbtcenter.com).

Each client will also have an individual therapist for one-on-one sessions to address your specific needs and to track your progress using diary cards. Your individual therapist may be someone outside the Center. The individual session is billed separately from the IOP.

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### DBT Skills Overview

#### Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the foundation of DBT. It helps you stay present, observe your thoughts and feelings without judgment, and respond to life with awareness rather than reacting impulsively.

In our program, you'll practice mindfulness through breathing exercises, body scans, mindful observation, and mindful listening. These skills can reduce anxiety, improve emotional regulation, and enhance your connection to the present moment.

#### The Six Components of Mindfulness:

1. **Observe:** Notice your thoughts and emotions without getting caught up in them.
  2. **Describe:** Put words to your experience in a non-judgmental way.
  3. **Participate:** Engage fully in the present moment.
  4. **Non-Judgmentally:** Accept your experiences without labeling them as good or bad.
  5. **One-Mindfully:** Focus on one thing at a time.
  6. **Effectively:** Do what works, adapting as needed to stay grounded.
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## Emotion Regulation

Emotion regulation helps you manage intense emotions in healthier ways. Through the program, you'll learn to:

- Identify emotional triggers.
- Understand how emotions impact thoughts and behaviors.
- Develop healthier responses to emotions.
- Build emotional resilience by practicing long-term strategies for emotional balance.

By practicing emotion regulation, you'll gain greater control over your emotional life, empowering you to handle challenges with stability and clarity.

## Distress Tolerance

When life feels overwhelming, it's easy to turn to harmful behaviors to cope. Distress tolerance skills give you alternative strategies to manage crises without making the situation worse.

Distress tolerance is a vital component of DBT that focuses on surviving emotional crises without making the situation worse. In life, it's inevitable that you'll experience distressing situations, intense emotions, or overwhelming stress. The goal of distress tolerance is not to eliminate those feelings but to help you manage and cope with them in healthier ways.

In DBT, distress tolerance skills help you handle immediate emotional pain without resorting to harmful behaviors like self-injury, substance use, or other forms of impulsive decision-making. These skills provide you with tools to navigate challenging moments, allowing you to "ride out the storm" rather than being consumed by it.

## Skills for Distress Tolerance

The distress tolerance module in DBT teaches several specific strategies designed to help you endure and manage crises:

### 1. Crisis Survival Strategies

- These skills help you get through high-stress moments without making the situation worse. Some of the core crisis survival strategies include:
- **TIPP Skills (Temperature, Intense Exercise, Paced Breathing, Paired Muscle Relaxation):** These are immediate, physical ways to calm your body's stress response. For example, holding an ice cube can lower your emotional intensity by changing your body temperature, while intense exercise can help release pent-up energy.
- **Distraction:** This skill involves focusing your attention on something other than the distressing situation. For instance, watching a favorite TV show, engaging in a hobby, or doing a simple chore can provide a mental break and help reduce the intensity of your emotions.
- **Self-Soothe:** This skill helps you calm yourself by engaging your five senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell). Lighting a candle, listening to calming music, or wrapping yourself in a soft blanket are examples of self-soothing techniques that help you feel grounded.

## 2. Radical Acceptance

- Radical acceptance is a key skill in distress tolerance that teaches you to fully accept reality as it is, without trying to change or resist it. This doesn't mean you have to agree with or like the situation, but it helps reduce suffering by letting go of the fight against reality. For example, accepting that a relationship has ended, rather than ruminating on how it could have been different, can reduce emotional pain and allow for healing.

## 3. Pros and Cons

- In moments of distress, it's easy to feel tempted to act on impulse. The pros and cons skill encourages you to weigh the short-term and long-term consequences of both acting on impulsive urges and resisting them. This can help you make more mindful decisions and avoid behaviors that might cause regret later on.

## 4. IMPROVE the Moment

- This skill helps you shift your mindset during distressing situations. IMPROVE stands for:
  - **Imagery:** Visualizing a peaceful place or imagining yourself handling the situation successfully.
  - **Meaning:** Finding meaning or a lesson in the painful situation.
  - **Prayer:** Connecting to a sense of spirituality or something larger than yourself.
  - **Relaxation:** Engaging in calming activities like deep breathing or taking a warm bath.
  - **One Thing in the Moment:** Focusing on just one aspect of the current situation, instead of overwhelming yourself with the entire experience.
  - **Vacation:** Taking a short break from the stress, whether that's a physical getaway or a mental break, such as reading a book for a few minutes.
  - **Encouragement:** Offering yourself kind and supportive self-talk during tough times.

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## Building Long-Term Distress Tolerance

While these strategies are helpful for managing immediate crises, distress tolerance also involves building your resilience over time. In the program, you'll learn how to reduce your overall vulnerability to emotional distress by maintaining healthy habits such as regular exercise, balanced nutrition, sufficient sleep, and positive social connections. The more you strengthen your overall well-being, the less likely you are to become overwhelmed by difficult emotions, and the more equipped you'll be to cope when stress does arise. By mastering distress tolerance skills, you'll gain the ability to navigate emotional crises with greater calm, reduce impulsive reactions, and build a sense of confidence in your ability to handle life's inevitable challenges.

## Interpersonal Effectiveness

Building healthy relationships is a key part of the program. You will learn skills to improve communication, set boundaries, and express your needs without damaging relationships.

Interpersonal effectiveness in DBT focuses on improving your ability to communicate with others, maintain healthy relationships, and assert your needs while respecting others. Many people struggle with relationship conflicts, difficulty setting boundaries, or saying “no” without feeling guilty. This module helps you learn skills that allow you to express yourself more effectively, resolve conflicts, and build stronger, healthier connections with others.

## Core Interpersonal Skills

The core interpersonal skills taught in DBT can be grouped into three main areas:

### 1. **DEAR MAN**: Assertiveness Skills

- **DEAR MAN** is a strategy for asking for what you want or saying “no” in a way that is both assertive and respectful. This skill helps you maintain your self-respect while also considering the needs of others in your communication.

Here’s how it works:

- **Describe**: Start by describing the situation objectively, without emotional language. For example, “When you didn’t text me back yesterday...”
- **Express**: Express how the situation made you feel. For instance, “I felt hurt and ignored.”
- **Assert**: Clearly state what you need or want. “I’d like it if you could let me know if you’re too busy to talk.”
- **Reinforce**: Explain why the person should honor your request or the benefits of meeting your needs. “That way I won’t feel like I’m bothering you unnecessarily.”
- **Mindful**: Stay focused on the present conversation without getting sidetracked by past issues.
- **Appear Confident**: Use confident body language, tone, and eye contact, even if you don’t feel confident inside.
- **Negotiate**: Be open to compromise if needed, while still maintaining your core needs.

### 2. **GIVE**: Maintaining Relationships

- This skill focuses on strengthening relationships and maintaining a positive connection with others, particularly during difficult conversations. **GIVE** stands for:
  - **Gentle**: Use a soft, calm tone and avoid aggressive or harsh language.
  - **Interested**: Show genuine interest in the other person’s feelings, thoughts, and perspective.
  - **Validate**: Acknowledge and validate the other person’s feelings and opinions, even if you don’t agree with them. For example, “I understand that you’re upset right now.”

- **Easy Manner:** Keep things light and relaxed where possible, using humor or a casual tone to de-escalate tension.

### 3. **FAST:** Maintaining Self-Respect

- In some situations, it's important to focus on maintaining your self-respect and values, especially when someone is asking you to compromise on something important to you. **FAST** helps you stand your ground without being aggressive:
  - **Fair:** Be fair to both yourself and the other person in the conversation.
  - **Apologies:** Avoid unnecessary apologies. Don't apologize for having needs or for saying "no."
  - **Stick to Your Values:** Stay true to your personal beliefs and boundaries, even if it's uncomfortable.
  - **Truthful:** Be honest and avoid exaggerations, lies, or manipulation.

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## **Balancing Relationships**

One of the challenges of interpersonal effectiveness is learning how to balance three competing priorities in relationships:

- **Your goals:** Getting what you want or need from the interaction.
- **Your relationship:** Maintaining or improving your connection with the other person.
- **Your self-respect:** Holding on to your values and self-worth during interactions.

Interpersonal effectiveness skills teach you how to navigate these priorities and make decisions that honor all three areas. Sometimes, your priority may be to get your needs met, while other times, maintaining the relationship or protecting your self-respect may be more important. Learning how to make these decisions in a mindful and balanced way is a key part of the program.

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## **Managing Conflicts and Setting Boundaries**

In addition to learning how to ask for what you need, interpersonal effectiveness also focuses on managing conflicts and setting healthy boundaries. This includes:

- **Saying "no":** Many people struggle with saying no, fearing it will damage relationships or cause others to be upset. In the program, you'll learn how to assertively and kindly say no, while standing by your own needs and limits.
- **Handling criticism:** Criticism can trigger feelings of defensiveness or shame. You'll learn how to receive feedback, respond effectively, and manage your emotional response without feeling invalidated or reactive.
- **Setting boundaries:** Healthy relationships require clear and consistent boundaries. In DBT, you'll practice setting boundaries in ways that are respectful to both yourself and others, helping to prevent feelings of resentment or burnout.

By practicing interpersonal effectiveness skills, you'll gain confidence in your ability to navigate relationships in a way that honors both your needs and the needs of others. Over time, these skills can lead to deeper, more fulfilling connections with the people around you, and reduce relationship stress and conflict.

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## **Your Role in Treatment**

### **Commitment to Change**

Change can be challenging, but your active participation is crucial for success. We encourage you to stay committed to the process, engage fully in therapy, and practice your DBT skills daily.

### **Self-Care and Wellness**

Taking care of your mental and physical health is an essential part of healing. We'll work with you to develop self-care routines and help you find ways to reduce stress outside of therapy.

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## **Attendance and Participation Guidelines**

### **Attendance Policies**

Attendance is critical for your progress in the program. Missing 4 consecutive sessions will be considered a decision to withdraw from the program. If you need to miss a session, please notify your therapist as soon as possible. Make-up sessions may be arranged based on availability. Please note that you will be charged for any session you miss and do not cancel 24 hours in advance.

### **Group Participation**

We value open, respectful communication in our group sessions. Every client is encouraged to share and participate about their own experiences. Please note that in our groups we do not give feedback or advice to others. All comments and participation is about your own situation and the skills being taught. Please let us know how we can support you in this process.

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## **Homework Assignments**

### **Weekly Homework**

You will receive homework assignments to help reinforce the skills you learn in sessions. Completing these assignments is essential for skill development and will be reviewed in the appropriate group.

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### **Journals and Logs**

You will be asked to complete daily diary cards, tracking your emotions, behaviors, and use of DBT skills, depending on the decisions you make with your individual therapist. These will be reviewed with your individual therapist to help monitor your progress and adjust your treatment as needed. If you have an outside therapist who is not a DBT therapist, you and your therapist will determine if tracking is indicated and if so the best way to do so.



## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **What happens if I miss a session?**

Please notify your therapist if you need to miss a session. Missing 4 consecutive sessions is considered a decision to leave the program. We encourage you to find out the homework assignment and complete it.

### **How is my progress measured?**

Your progress is tracked through diary cards, homework assignments, and regular discussions with your individual therapist.

### **Is everything I say confidential?**

Yes, confidentiality is a priority in this program. There are certain legal exceptions to confidentiality, which were discussed in your intake interview and in the intake forms.. Though we ask each group member to keep the group confidential, participating in group has some risks in that other members could discuss your personal issues outside of the group. If you have any questions, please ask one of the group leaders or your individual therapist

We look forward to supporting you on your journey and helping you build a life worth living!

Our office is located at  
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It is at the corner of Heights Blvd and 14th Street

Our phone number is 713-973-2800

Instagram is <https://www.instagram.com/dbtcenterofhouston/> (dbtcenterofhouston)  
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