



Radically Open Dialectical Behavioural Therapy: Information for Referrers and Clinicians

BodyMatters and Treat Yourself Well are pleased to be offering online Radically Open Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (RO-DBT) classes from October 2020.

What is RO-DBT?

RO-DBT is an evidence-based treatment, new to Australia, that targets over-controlled behavior. It has been used in the USA and Europe for over 20 years to successfully treat some of the rigid responses and emotional inhibition thought to underlie many treatment-resistant conditions. RO-DBT has been informed by over 20 years of clinical and experimental research, and is a talking therapy that involves weekly individual and group sessions.

Who is RO-DBT treatment for?

RO-DBT is suitable for clients who experience emotional over-control. 'Self-control' is usually seen as a good thing, however excessive self-control can cause difficulties and is associated with social isolation and poor interpersonal relations. Patients who may have a diagnosis of chronic depression, treatment-resistant anxiety disorders, anorexia nervosa, avoidant, paranoid and obsessive compulsive personality disorders and autistic spectrum disorders.

Is RO-DBT effective?

The evidence base for RO DBT is robust and growing. It has been shown to be highly effective in treating chronic forms of depression with rates of full recovery from depression reported as high as 71% in some studies. Research has also demonstrated the potential utility of RO DBT in the treatment of severely underweight adults with anorexia nervosa with studies reporting significant increases in body mass index (BMI; weight gain), low rates of treatment dropout, and significant improvements in eating disorder related psychopathology.

Most research support is for the treatment of chronic depression, anorexia, and maladaptive personality dysfunction in adults—with additional ongoing research examining RO DBT with violent offenders in forensic settings, among young children, and with adolescent eating disorders.

What does the treatment target?

RO-DBT posits that high temperamental threat sensitivity, high temperamental constraint, and low temperamental reward sensitivity transact with early family experiences emphasizing mistakes as intolerable and self-control as imperative. This results in an overcontrolled coping style that limits opportunities to learn new skills and exploit positive social reinforcers. Robust research has confirmed that signalling matters when it comes to psychological well-being—e.g. chronic inhibition or disingenuous expression of emotion has been linked to social isolation, poor interpersonal functioning, and severe and difficult-to-treat mental health problems, such as anorexia nervosa, autism disorder, chronic depression, and obsessive-compulsive personality disorder. Novel strategies are introduced in the treatment, targeting social connectedness and the reduction of unhelpful envy, bitterness, and revenge—including skills designed to activate neural substrates associated with social-safety and desires for affiliation, nonverbal social-signaling skills linked to the mirror neuron system and the establishment of trust, forgiveness of self and others, self-enquiry and openness, and breaking-down over-learned inhibitory barriers. With patients' permission, the sessions may be video-recorded, to help therapists with supervision and on-going training.

How is RO DBT different from regular DBT?

RO-DBT shares similarities and differences to the more well known, standard version of DBT. The decision to retain the terms dialectical and behavior therapy (BT) in the name of this new treatment reflects the desire to acknowledge two of its fundamental roots. Dialectical principles are used in RO-DBT to encourage cognitively rigid overcontrolled clients to think and behave more flexibly. Although RO-DBT and standard DBT share this common ancestry, they differ in several important ways. Understanding their differences is important because the similarities in their names can lead to the misperception that they are substantially alike or even the same treatment. Some of the key differences between RO-DBT and standard DBT include:

	RO-DBT	Regular DBT
Target population	Overcontrolled clients whose emotions are often directed inward or don't emerge at all (anorexia nervosa, chronic depression and obsessive compulsive disorder)	Undercontrolled clients whose emotions are often directed outwards and appear disruptive to others (eg borderline personality disorder, substance misuse, bipolar disorder)
Primary therapeutic focus	External (interpersonal)- social signalling and social connectedness skills	Internal (intrapersonal)- emotional regulation, impulse control and distress tolerance skills
Role of bio-temperament	Emphasizes how biology influences how we perceive others and how that perception affects our actions	Bio-temperament not directly addressed or focused on
Mindfulness practices	Informed by Malamati Sufism. Emphasis on self inquiry, "outingoneself", participating without planning and the cultivation of healthy self doubt. Encourages flexible-mind responses that promote the relaxation of rigid, rule-governed control efforts and an increase in context-appropriate emotional expression	Informed by Zen Buddhism, Emphasis on non judgemental awareness of "what is" and intuitive knowing. Encourages cultivation of "wise mind" responses that focus on reducing distress and mood altering, impulsive responding and increasing ability to delay immediate gratification in order to pursue distal goals.
Therapeutic stance	Less directive, encourages independence of action and thought	Uses external contingencies, including mild aversives, and takes a direct stance in order to stop dangerous, impulsive behaviour
Radical openness vs radical acceptance	Prioritises radical openness- actively seeking the things one wants to avoid in order to learn- challenging our perceptions of reality, modelling humility and willingness to learn	Prioritises radical acceptance- that is, letting go of fighting reality and turning suffering that cannot be tolerated into pain that can be tolerate

What does RO-DBT treatment look like?

The duration of the therapy is thirty weeks. The RO-DBT treatment typically involves a 1-hour weekly individual session and a 2.5-hour weekly group skills "class". This has been modified in our offering to include a 1.5-hour weekly group skills class. We require our class participants undertake individual therapy in addition to this. Ideally this will be with an individual therapist who offers individual RO-DBT.

An overview of the 30 group skills classes is as follows:

1. Radical Openness
2. Understanding Emotions
3. Activating Social Safety
4. Enhancing Openness and Social Connectedness via Loving-Kindness
5. Engaging In Novel Behavior
6. How Do Emotions Help Us?
7. Understanding Overcontrolled Coping
8. Tribe Matters: Understanding Rejection and Self-Conscious Emotions
9. Social Signalling Matters!
10. Using Social Signaling to Live by Your Values: Flexible Mind is DEEP
11. Mindfulness Training Part 1: Overcontrolled States of Mind
12. Mindfulness Training Part 2: The "What" Skills
13. Mindfulness Training Part 3: The Core Mindfulness "How" Skill: With Self-Enquiry
14. Mindfulness Training, Part 4: The "How" Skills
15. Interpersonal Integrity, Part 1: Saying What We Really Mean
16. Interpersonal Integrity, Part 2: Flexible Mind REVEALS
17. Interpersonal Effectiveness: Kindness First and Foremost
18. Being Assertive With An Open Mind
19. Using Validation to Signal Social Inclusion
20. Enhancing Social Connectedness, Part 1
21. Enhancing Social Connectedness, Part 2
22. Learning from Corrective Feedback
23. Mindfulness Training Part 1: Overcontrolled States of Mind (Repeated from Lesson 11)

- 24. Mindfulness Training Part 2: The “What” Skills (Repeated from Lesson 12)
- 25. Mindfulness Training Part 3: The Core Mindfulness “How” Skill: With Self-Enquiry (Repeated from Lesson 13)
- 26. Mindfulness Training, Part 4: The “How” Skills (Repeated from Lesson 14)

- 27. Envy and Resentment
- 28. Cynicism, Bitterness, and Resignation
- 29. Learning to Forgive
- 30. RO Integration week

How can I find out more about the treatment?

Find out more via <https://bodymatters.com.au/ro-dbt/>

How can I refer someone to RO-DBT

Refer a client via <https://bodymatters.com.au/ro-dbt/>