



Dialectical Behavior Therapy Program Contract

Client's Agreement Private & Confidential

I, _____, agree to the terms and conditions of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) as follows:

I. **Basic Principles of Therapy Agreement:**

Therapy is based on three unalterable principles:

1. *Mutual Trust.* My therapist and I are entering into this contract in a trusting manner. I need to trust that my therapist is here work with me as per the terms and conditions of this contract. Similarly, my therapist needs to trust that I will maintain my commitment to the terms of this contract. Each party is responsible for maintaining that trust.
2. *Safety.* Therapy cannot proceed until there is clear agreement about maintaining safety. I agree to commit to the goal of safety towards self and others. If there are concerns that this can't happen, my therapist and I need to have in place a clear safety plan that specifies the steps I or others need to take to ensure safety. At the very least, active pursuit of harmful behaviors to self or others robs me of the chance to remain committed to the current therapy goals and to learn more helpful ways of dealing with problems in life. By agreeing to do my best to keep others and myself safe I can have a better chance of helping myself apply the principles of DBT to my life. All participants in DBT therapy are expected to act in a way that does not endanger their therapist, family, or others (e.g., through threats or acts of violence against people or property). Such behavior may result in duty to warn.
3. *Family therapy.* Effective therapy can involve the inclusion of family and significant others. Although I am assured confidentiality, I agree to maintain an open and honest communication with my family in family sessions. Family members agree to be involved in treatment and to learn what they can about my problems and although they can't solve them, they will do what they can to help.

II. **The Aim of Therapy Agreement:**

Therapy is about learning skills that are likely to increase my ability to have a life that is worth living. Therapy is not about "feeling better" in the first instance. In fact, a good part of DBT is about learning to be "better at feeling" some of my uncomfortable emotions in the service of beginning to live a life that is worth living.

III. **Target Behaviors Agreement:**

These are of vital importance and prioritized in the following order:

1. **Eliminating behaviors that are harmful to self or others:** Reducing suicidal or self/other-harm behaviors is a primary therapy goal. The basic agreement is that I will work towards solving problems in ways that do not include intentional harm to self, others, attempts to die or suicide. If these behaviors do occur they will be explored in detail through use of behavioral chain analysis.
2. **Eliminating therapy-interfering behaviors:** I agree to work on any problems that interfere with the progress of therapy. If these behaviors do occur they will be explored in detail through use of behavioral chain analysis. Therapy is about working together and requires the participation of both my therapist and me. I agree to give feedback to my therapist on effectiveness of therapy especially if I am concerned about anything that occurs in therapy. Similarly, my therapist agrees to provide feedback on progress in therapy.

- 3. **Reducing quality-of-life interfering behaviors:** These are unhelpful problems that may block my chances of living a life of reasonable quality. Guidelines for addressing these problems are as follows: Problems linked to higher priority targets or to my own life goals take precedence. Beyond this, immediate problems take priority and easy problems should be solved before hard ones.
- 4. **Increasing behavioral skills:**
 - A. Core mindfulness skills
 - B. Interpersonal effectiveness
 - C. Emotion regulation
 - D. Distress Tolerance

IV. Frequency of Contact Agreement:

Guidelines for frequency of sessions is weekly for 45-50 minutes but, from time to time, may be at different intervals depending on circumstances of either party and by mutual arrangement.

V. Therapy Attendance Agreement:

I agree to attend scheduled therapy sessions. It is not acceptable to miss sessions because I find them too uncomfortable or aversive, am not in the mood for therapy, wish to avoid certain topics or if I feel hopeless.

Every member is expected to attend all Group and individual sessions. Clients who miss 4 consecutive sessions for scheduled services, either skills training group or individual therapy, will be discharged from the program and cannot return to therapy until the end of their contracted time period, and then return is a matter of negotiation. Excused absences: planned vacations, serious illness and medical hospitalization. Unexcused absences: mental health hospitalization and non-emergencies.

VI. Agreement to Advise When Unable to Keep a Scheduled Session:

I agree to do my best to give at least 24 hours notice when unable to attend a scheduled session. Similarly, my therapist will do their best to give me at least 24 hours notice if it has become necessary to re-schedule a session.

VII. Agreement on Homework Assignments and Related Material:

I agree to take responsibility for ensuring that I bring my personal therapy folder and the latest homework assignments to each session because these will be a vital part of in-session work. This includes bringing a completed diary card to each group and individual session that I attend.

VIII. Skills Training Agreement:

Skills' training is a central part of DBT. During the period of therapy, I will be expected to participate in learning DBT skills weekly through either a group, (date to be announced) or in individual therapy.

IX. Role of Therapist or other providers

This contract neither replaces nor alters the key-working role of others. I understand that DBT makes a distinction between the roles of my other providers and my therapist. I understand my therapist will be seeking consultation through her consultation team.

X. The ultimate goal of having a life worth living

I understand that the goal of this therapy is to not need therapy. Therefore, as I become more competent with my skills, and strive towards a life worth living, this will result in a decrease in the need for and dependency on my therapist. Although we will have developed a strong and positive therapeutic relationship, it is meant to be temporary and that is the goal. If this is not happening, there is something wrong and consultation will be sought.

XI Contracted Time Period

I understand that I am agreeing to participate in DBT for a period of ____ months. I also understand that if I choose to leave the program prior to the contracted time period or if I break the four miss rule, I will not be able to receive therapy services of any kind from Recovery Technology until the end of my contracted time period.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

**Dialectical Behavior Therapist's Agreement
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I, _____, agree to make every reasonable effort to conduct the DBT program as competently as possible. This includes my working within the limits of my scope of practice and also abiding by the requirements of my profession's ethical code. Beyond this, my clients can expect me to make my best effort to be helpful, to help them gain insight and learn new skills and to teach them behavioral tools they need to deal more effectively with their current living situation.

I also make it clear that I cannot "save" clients, nor can I solve their problems or force them to cease suicidal behaviors. My clients need to solve their own problems.

Although I can help clients develop and practice new behaviors that may help them build a life worth living, I cannot in the final analysis build my clients' life for them. The analogy of therapist as guide is helpful: I can show someone the way, but I cannot walk the path for them. My caring is in staying with someone while they are doing their best to walk the path.

Signature: _____

Date: _____