

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy for Common Mental Health Disorders: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis

Chantal Delaquis^a, Kayla Joyce^a, Maureen Zalewski^b, Laurence Katz^c, Julia Sulymka^a, Tayla Agostinho^a, Leslie Roos^{a,d,e}

^a Department of Psychology, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada

^b Department of Psychology, University of Oregon, Oregon, United States

^c Department of Psychiatry, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada

^d Department of Pediatrics and Child Health, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada

^e Children's Hospital Research Institute of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada

Introduction

- **Context:** Emotion regulation deficits are increasingly recognized as an underlying mechanism of many disorders (Aldao et al., 2010; Cludius et al., 2020)
- Dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) holds potential as an effective transdiagnostic treatment for disorders with underlying emotion regulation deficits (Linehan, 2015)
- **Objective:** Highlight the potential of DBT as a transdiagnostic treatment for common mental health disorders through a systematic review and meta-analysis of extant research.

Highlights

- Emotion regulation (ER) deficits are an underlying mechanism in many disorders.
- We examined DBT as a transdiagnostic treatment for common mental health disorders.
- 13 RCTs of DBT for mental health disorders, and no comorbid personality disorder, were included.
- DBT led to ER improvements and significant effects for depression and eating disorders.
- DBT is an effective treatment for common mental health disorders.

Methods

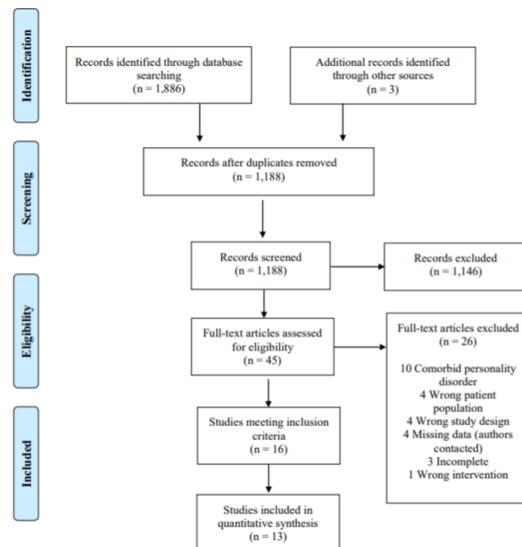


Figure 1. PRISMA diagram of the study inclusion process.

Study Selection: Randomized control trials of DBT skills training groups for adults with common mental health disorders, and no comorbid personality disorder, were included.

Analyses

- Random effects meta-analysis
- Calculated with Hedges g to correct for small sample size
- Subgroup analyses by disorder and for emotion regulation
- Publication bias was assessed using Egger's Test, visual inspection of funnel plots, and the trim-and-fill procedure (Duval & Tweedie, 2000), which results in an effect size estimate after taking into account publication bias.

Results

- Thirteen RCTs met inclusion criteria ($N = 515$ participants)
- Overall, DBT resulted in a moderate effect on symptom reduction (outliers excluded) ($g = 0.51$, 95% CI [0.30, 0.72], $p < .001$)
- Improvements on emotion regulation outcomes yielded a small-to-moderate effect ($g = 0.44$, 95% CI [0.12, 0.75], $p < .01$)
- Results showed significant effects of DBT on:
 - Depression ($g = 0.44$, 95% CI [0.24, 0.65], $p = .001$)
 - Eating disorders ($g = 0.83$, 95% CI [0.49, 1.17], $p = .001$)
 - But not for anxiety ($g = 0.33$, 95% CI [-0.02, 0.67], $p = .06$)

Figure 2: Forest plot with outliers

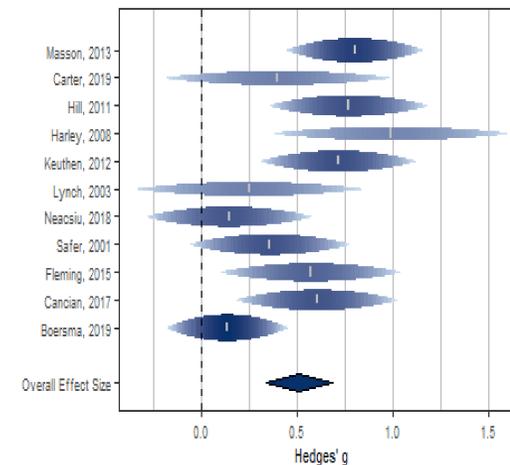
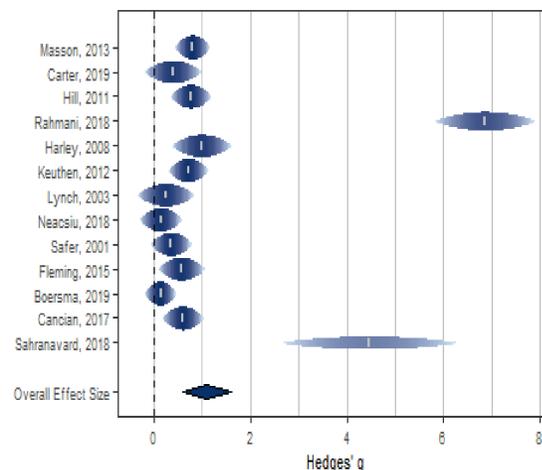


Figure 3: Forest plot without outliers

Conclusions

- Results suggest DBT skills groups are effective:
 - Reduced overall psychiatric symptomatology (moderate effect)
 - Emotion regulation (small-to-moderate effect)
 - Symptoms of depression (small-to-moderate effect),
 - Eating disorders (large effect).
 - Not significant for anxiety
- First meta-analysis examining common mental health disorders without co-occurring BPD
- Provide emerging evidence for DBT skills training groups as an effective transdiagnostic treatment modality for treating a range of disorders.
- Future research: explore DBT as a transdiagnostic tool for treating emotion dysregulation & gain precision on both the mechanisms of change and critical components for best-practice guidelines across disorders.

References

- Aldao, A., Nolen-Hoeksema, S., & Schweizer, S. (2010). Emotion-regulation strategies across psychopathology: A meta-analytic review. *Clinical Psychology Review* (Vol. 30, Issue 2, pp. 217–237). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2009.11.004>
- Cludius, Barbara & Menhin, Douglas & Ehring, Thomas. (2020). Emotion regulation as a transdiagnostic process. *Emotion*. 20. 37-42. 10.1037/emo0000646.
- Duval, S., & Tweedie, R. (2000). A Nonparametric "Trim and Fill" Method of Accounting for Publication Bias in Meta-Analysis. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 95(449), 89–98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01621459.2000.10473905>
- Linehan, M. (2015). *DBT® skills training manual, 2nd ed.*. Guildford Press.



University
of Manitoba

