

Dialectical Behavior Therapy Client Agreement

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

I. Basic Principles

Therapy is based on:

Mutual Trust. I trust that my therapist is committed to working with me and will be available per the terms and conditions of this agreement. Similarly, my therapist needs to trust that I will maintain my commitment to therapy. Each party is responsible for maintaining that trust.

Safety. I agree to commit to keeping myself and others safe. If there are concerns that I cannot maintain safety, my therapist and I will have a safety plan in place that outlines the steps I need to take to ensure safety. Harmful behaviors to myself or other people negatively impact my therapy goals. By agreeing to do my best to keep myself and others safe I will more likely apply the principles of DBT to my life. All participants in DBT are expected to act in a way that does not endanger their therapist, family members, or others (e.g., through threats or acts of violence against people or property). Such behavior may result in legal consequences or risk termination of therapy.

II. The Aim of This 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 immediately “feeling better.” In fact, DBT is about learning to be “better at feeling” some of my uncomfortable emotions to live a life that is worth living.

III. Target Behaviors

1. **Eliminate behaviors that are harmful to self or others:** Reducing suicidal or self/other-harm behaviors is my primary therapy goal. I will work toward solving problems in ways that do not include intentional harm to self, others, attempts to die, or suicide.

2. **Eliminate therapy-interfering behaviors:** I agree to work on any problems that interfere with my therapeutic progress. I agree to give feedback to my therapist, especially if I am concerned about anything that occurs in therapy. Similarly, my therapist agrees to provide feedback on my progress.

3. **Reducing harmful behaviors:** This includes unhelpful behaviors that limit my progress. Problems linked to higher-priority targets or to my goals take precedence.

4. **Increase skills in the following areas:**

- a. Mindfulness
- b. Interpersonal effectiveness
- c. Distress tolerance
- d. Emotion regulation

IV. Timeframe:

Therapy will begin on this date: _____ and will end on this date: _____.

My therapist and I will occasionally review my progress, which may lead to refining or changing my targets and goals. At the end of this timeframe, the need for additional sessions will be discussed and may be implemented by mutual consent.

V. Frequency of Sessions

My therapist and I will meet weekly / bi-weekly / monthly (*circle one*) for _____ minutes. This might change depending on circumstances of either party and by mutual arrangement. When sessions are further apart than two weeks, it may be beneficial to schedule a longer session and, if possible or desirable, include phone, text, or email contact.

VI. Therapy Attendance

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

VII. Cancellation Policy

I agree to do my best to give at least _____-hours-notice when unable to attend a scheduled session. Similarly, my therapist will give me at least _____-hours-notice if it has become necessary to reschedule a session. I agree to pay the missed session fee, if applicable: \$_____ / missed session.

VIII. Homework Assignments

I agree to bring my completed homework assignments to each session because they will be an important part of in-session work.

IX. Termination of Therapy

If I miss _____ weeks of scheduled therapy in a row, therapy will be terminated.

X. Skills Training Agreement

Skills training is a central part of DBT. During therapy, I will be expected to participate in learning DBT skills through either group, family, or individual therapy sessions.

XI. Role of Therapist or Other Providers

This agreement neither replaces nor alters the roles of other providers. I understand DBT makes a distinction between the roles of my other providers and my therapist. I understand my therapist will seek consultation as needed.

I understand the goal of therapy is to no longer need therapy. Therefore, as I become more competent with my skills, and create a life worth living, this will result in a decrease in the need for therapy. Although my therapist and I will have developed a strong and positive therapeutic relationship, it is meant to be temporary.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Dialectical Behavior Therapist's Agreement

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. My clients can expect me to make my best effort to be supportive, to help them gain insight and learn new skills, and to teach them the tools they need to deal more effectively with their problems.

I also make it clear that I cannot "save" clients, nor can I solve their problems or force them to cease self-harming behaviors.

Although I can help clients develop and practice new behaviors that may help them build a life worth living, I cannot 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.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____