



The Melbourne Clinic

# Trauma and DBT Programs

Treatment programs for trauma, emotional  
dysregulation and attachment difficulties



# Trauma and DBT Programs

## Who

The treatments offered under the Trauma and DBT Programs are for people who are experiencing longstanding and chronic emotional difficulties which are often linked to a history of painful traumatic experiences or early attachment issues.

### **These programs are relevant to a range of symptoms and diagnoses including:**

- Borderline personality traits
- Classic and complex PTSD
- Ongoing difficulty regulating emotional states
- Instability of relationships
- Dissociative symptoms
- Impulsivity
- Changes or difficulties related to sense of self
- Distorted and/or rigid patterns of thinking.

## Program structure

The Trauma and DBT Programs are longer term with a minimum of 12 months commitment. In addition, these programs include weekly groups and weekly individual sessions on two separate days.

This ensures that therapy is consistent and intensive which is important to address symptoms that might be very engrained or long-standing.

## Content

The Trauma and DBT Program includes three treatment streams which run for a minimum of 12 months each. These include:

- **Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT) Program (Page 4)**

Increases understanding, stabilisation, and regulation of emotions, relationships, sense of self and aims to find a sense of safety and stabilisation to build quality of life.

- **Supporting Trauma and Recovery (STAR) Program (Page 6)**

Focuses on retaining and building on the use of coping and problem solving skills whilst processing traumatic memories.

- **Skills Integration Program (Page 8)**

Focus on experientially integrating the use of skills in every-day living to reach goals and enhance quality of life.

## Intake

A referral from an accredited psychiatrist at The Melbourne Clinic to the Trauma and DBT Program is required. Upon receipt of the referral, an assessment will be set up to explore pathways of treatment.



# Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT) Program

The DBT Program is a well-established treatment designed to stabilise a range of symptoms which might include emotion dysregulation, relationship/attachment difficulties, and high levels of distress.

Often this program is a first line of treatment for people who have experienced trauma and/or early attachment difficulties in their past. The DBT Program includes two phases, the DBT Foundations Group and DBT Skills Training.

## Program structure

### DBT Foundations Group

The initial component of the DBT Program is an eight week DBT Foundations Group designed to prepare and orient participants to the DBT treatment. This involves learning about the components and structure of DBT, the challenges involved, and how to prepare for them. In addition, participants are guided to connect to values and set goals to work towards throughout their time in DBT.

**Duration:** The program is eight weeks in length and consists of weekly group sessions. Attendance is prerequisite for entry into the 12 month DBT Skills Training component.

## DBT Skills Training

Upon completing the DBT Foundations Group, participants become eligible for 12 months of DBT Skills Training. There are three components of this treatment including:

- Weekly DBT Skills Training groups, which introduce the sets of DBT skills including:
  - Core mindfulness
  - Distress tolerance
  - Emotion regulation
  - Interpersonal effectiveness
- Weekly one hour individual DBT sessions with a DBT therapist
- Phone coaching (as required between 8:30am - 4:00pm Monday to Friday)

**Duration:** The program is 12 months in length and is delivered in three 14 week modules.



# Supporting Trauma and Recovery (STAR) Program

The STAR Program is designed for people who are experiencing significant and ongoing emotional and interpersonal problems due to having experienced difficult circumstances, early attachment disruptions, or painful traumatic experiences in their past. The STAR program is evidence-based and provides skills training and an opportunity to process traumatic experiences. STAR is informed by Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT) and may be recommended following completion of the DBT Program.

## Content

The program aims to help people enhance their quality of life by:

- Improving emotion regulation skills
- Improving relationship skills
- Clarifying and developing one's sense of self
- Processing and moving forward from trauma
- Letting go of unhelpful beliefs.

## Program structure

The program includes two phases, Safety and Stabilisation, followed by the STAR treatment component.

## **Safety and Stabilisation Group**

The initial component of the STAR Program is a 12 week Safety and Stabilisation Group which teaches skills to help people manage distress more effectively. Strategies taught include mindfulness, grounding, self-soothing, and self-compassion skills. This program also aims to deepen clients' understanding of their symptoms by providing education about how and why post-traumatic symptoms emerge following trauma.

**Duration:** The program is 12 weeks in length and consists of weekly group sessions. Attendance is prerequisite for entry into the 12 month STAR treatment.

## **STAR Treatment**

Upon completion of the Safety and Stabilisation Group, participants are considered for the 12 months STAR Treatment. There are two components of this treatment including:

- Weekly Skills Training groups combining DBT, cognitive-behavioural, and mindfulness based approaches. The program is structured as three modules:
  - Managing emotions
  - Improving relationships
  - Sense of self
- Weekly one hour individual therapy sessions to allow for a tailored approach to treatment and an opportunity to process traumatic experiences.

# Skills Integration Program

The Skills Integration Program is designed for people who have completed the DBT and/or STAR programs. The treatment aims to provide reinforcement and expansion of the coping strategies learnt in the DBT and STAR programs with a focus on integrating them into daily life.

Participants have an opportunity to strengthen and generalise their skills whilst moving towards future goals pertaining to a range of domains including career, education, interests, relationships, or other meaningful activities.

## Goals of the program

- Consolidation and reinforcement of coping skills and strategies
- Further understanding of concepts learnt in prior therapy
- Experiencing and practising the skills
- Application of the skills within the group
- Learning to take ownership and identifying your own learning goals.

## Program structure

The Skills Integration Program consists of weekly groups which run throughout a 12 month period.

The program is delivered in three 15 week modules.



**The program differs from DBT and STAR in a number of ways including:**

- The content of each group is driven by the participants of the group.
- The focus in the Skills Integration Program is on the actual experience of using tools and skills. Participants are encouraged to use the group setting as a safe forum to trial and apply their mindfulness, emotion regulation, and interpersonal skills.
- The process of being in the group is highlighted rather than solely focussing on content of the group.
- Great emphasis is placed on participants taking ownership of their treatment and becoming an active group member. Participants are encouraged to identify their own learning goals and be proactive in working towards them.

**Duration:** The program is offered as three 15 week modules over 12 months.



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