

# AICT

American Institute for Cognitive Therapy



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Newsletter**

## **What is Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)?**

DBT is a form of cognitive behavioral therapy that focuses on helping people build the life they want to live. DBT has helped countless people learn to tolerate distress and uncertainty, to regulate their emotions effectively, communicate their needs to others, and learn to have more choice over their behavior in distressing situations. Comprehensive DBT treatment includes individual psychotherapy, group therapy to learn specific skills that people can incorporate into their everyday lives, and phone coaching so that people can reach out for help in emotional emergencies. DBT was originally developed to help people with borderline personality disorder but has since been demonstrated to be helpful for people with a variety of disorders and life challenges. By using DBT skills and learning to manage emotions and behavioral effectively, a person can have greater control over their life and navigate challenging situations with greater ease.



## What are DBT Skills?

The DBT skills are designed to be applicable to everyday life. As an example, here is a set of skills that can be used to have a happy holiday with family and friends: **the GIVE skills**

**G** – be Gentle

**I** – act Interested

**V** – be Validating

**E** – have an Easy manner

The way we interact with people is more than just the words we use. Our tone of voice, how we pay attention, and the ways we communicate that we hear what other people are saying are all important parts of relationships with others. Think about a person you really enjoy having in your life. What draws you to that person? Many people will talk about how that person seems to really listen and really pay attention, or how the person is kind and welcoming.

You can use the GIVE skills any time that you want another person to feel that you value the relationship you have with them. Here are some ideas for putting these ideas into practice:

- **Slow down and focus.** In a world of multitasking, we need to remind ourselves to do one thing at a time. If you're having a conversation with someone, stop the other things you're doing. Pause the TV show, put down the magazine you were reading and make eye contact.
- **Be curious.** People are often more interesting than we know. Even if it's someone you know well, you can learn new things. Ask questions about what they are doing or what is going on in their lives. Using open-ended questions that are specific is usually a better way to start a conversation than general questions. For example, asking your college-age nephew "What was your favorite class this semester?" will help you learn more than a generic "How's school going?"
- **Try to understand another person's point of view.** Most people want to be heard and understood. If your sibling is upset, it will help build a stronger relationship to try to understand and empathize rather than trying to talk them out of their feelings. [Here's a fun video](#) that describes the power of validation.
- **Relax and enjoy!** It may feel frustrating sometimes to have someone interrupt you when you're in the middle of something. Ask yourself which is more important to you – doing the dishes or taking ten minutes to talk to your sister about her exciting new project? If you're tempted to multitask, remember to slow down and focus. The dishes will wait patiently for you!

*Written by AICT's Senior Clinicians Dr. Kathleen Taylor and Dr. Allie Funk.*

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**Kathleen Mattran Taylor, Ph.D.**, is a licensed psychologist in New York and is the DBT program coordinator at AICT. Dr. Taylor creates a collaborative therapeutic process that is focused on how to help you make changes that will alleviate suffering and increase your happiness and satisfaction in life. She employs cognitive behavioral therapies to treat a variety of psychological disorders in both individuals and couples. Dr. Taylor works with people suffering from mood and anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder, trauma, and borderline personality disorder.

Dr. Taylor is extensively trained in the treatment of adult posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) using cognitive processing therapy (CPT), prolonged exposure therapy (PE), and dialectal behavior therapy – prolonged exposure protocol (DBT-PE) to help people who have experienced sexual assault and other trauma. She is also intensively trained in dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) and works with persons with borderline personality disorder, co-morbid substance use disorders, and other disorders of emotional regulation. Dr. Taylor has expertise in behavioral therapies and uses this knowledge to work with individuals with ADHD in learning behavioral control. Dr. Taylor earned her bachelor's degree in psychology from George Mason University and her doctorate in Psychology and Neuroscience from Princeton University. She completed her postdoctoral respecialization in clinical psychology at Hofstra University and her psychology internship at the VA Connecticut Healthcare System in West Haven, CT. Dr. Taylor brings 25 years of behavioral neuroscience research in psychiatry to her clinical practice. Dr. Taylor is a Clinical Lecturer in Psychology at Barnard College, Columbia University, where she teaches and advises the next generation of psychologists and collaborates in ongoing psychological research.

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