What is borderline personality disorder (BPD)?
BioSocial Model

- This model posits that someone with BPD was born as a very sensitive baby.
- They came straight out of the womb with intense emotions.
Sensitive Baby

In individuals with BPD, emotions are triggered easily and quickly. Emotional intensity lasts a long time before starting to return to baseline.

Emotions are triggered easily

They become very intense very quickly

Emotional intensity lasts a long time before starting to return to baseline

Time

Emotions are triggered easily
Emotional Burn Victim

Emotional intensity without learned coping skills leaves individuals with an inability to withstand much distress before resorting to unhealthy means of regulating their emotions.
Invalidating Environment

“Don’t be a sissy.”

“I’ll give you something to cry about.”

“You’re not hurt, you better suck it up.”

“You’re not hurt, you better suck it up.”

“You’re fine”

“Cheer up! You’re fine”

“Shake it off.”

“You’re overreacting.”

“Let it go.”

“Boys don’t cry.”

“You’re being dramatic.”

“Just get over it.”

“You must be hormonal.”

“Just snap out of it.”
Poor fit: This metaphor describes the difficulty of an orchid growing in an environment suitable for a dandelion. So the orchid grows up not trusting their own needs for nourishment, (which were definitely valid) while coming to believe that they are wrong for feeling the way they do and being the way they are.
Borderline Personality Disorder

1. Abandonment
2. Chaotic relationships
3. Identity disturbance
4. Impulsivity
5. Suicidal or self-harm behavior
6. Mood instability
7. Feelings of emptiness
8. Intense anger
9. Stress related paranoia or dissociation
In DBT, Borderline PD is conceptualized as a disorder of regulation in 5 systems that are key to survival and healthy functioning. At its core, BPD is a dysregulation of the emotional system. This accounts for the intensity of emotional expression and the extreme sensitivity to emotional feelings, in particular negative emotional states. You can see this Emotion Dysregulation expressed directly through the criteria of mood instability and intense anger. Emotion dysregulation also sets up dysregulation in other areas. Interpersonal Dysregulation includes chaotic social supports and environments as well as fears of abandonment. Behavioral dysregulation includes impulsivity and parasuicidal behaviors that are often seen as ways to regulate emotional states at least temporarily. Self-dysfunction includes problems with identity and feelings of emptiness; and finally Cognitive Dysregulation includes dissociation and paranoia.
What is Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)?
How DBT addresses BPD

Individual Therapy

Consultation Team

Group Therapy

Telephone Consultation
Individual Therapy

Hierarchy of Treatment Targets

1. Life Threatening Behavior
2. Therapy Interfering Behavior
3. Quality of Life Interfering Behavior
4. Skills Acquisition
Dialectics: Balancing acceptance and change.
Black & White Thinking

Reality is a gradation, from dark grey to light grey.
Neglecting the grey, middle path, they tend to focus on extremes of either "All Good" or "All Bad". Black and White Thinking: One reason dialectics is emphasized in DBT is that individuals with BPD tend to have a difficult time finding a middle path in their patterns of thinking, behaving, and feeling. Splitting creates tension in the way individuals relate to themselves and others. One small mistake or defect can translate into a person seeing themselves as all bad.
Throughout the presentations, the developers use a color scheme of orange, purple, and blue.

They've used this to visually demonstrate the tendency for extremes within BPD clients and the use of balance within DBT. Extreme rationality (what DBT calls Rational Mind) can be shown in blue, while the opposite, extreme emotionality (or Emotional Mind) is shown in orange.

The central piece of the diagram is the intersection of the two in purple – Wise Mind. A nice balance in purple is always the goal: not too orange – which is hot, animalistic, and emotional but also not too blue – which is cold, robotic, and rational.
3 dialectical dilemmas are represented in this chart that help conceptualize the habitual polarizations that individuals with BPD often experience. The top 3 are related to the orange, hot, emotional spectrum and are more biologically related. The bottom three parts are the cold, shut down, and excessively rational reactions (or over reactions) to these emotional tendencies. In practice, you'll notice a client vacillating between the two extremes on each dialectical dilemma.
Dialectical Dilemmas

Animalistic

Unrelenting Crisis

Emotional Vulnerability

Active Passivity

Working from extreme Emotion Mind

Too hot
Dialectical Dilemmas: On the other side of the balance beam, the aspects of Apparent Competence, Self Invalidation, and Inhibited Grief can be characterized as too cold, working from extreme Rational Mind, and being robotic. Again clients are able to talk about going into Robot mode when they shut off their emotions and invalidate themselves.
For the three Dialectical Dilemmas we have Unrelenting Crisis, paired with Inhibited Grief. Emotional Vulnerability with Self Invalidation. And Active Passivity with Apparent Competence.
Dialectical Dilemmas: Emotional Vulnerability and Self Invalidation
Emotional Vulnerability

Dialectical Dilemmas

Emotional Burn Victim that you'll remember from the BioSocial Model. Individual's with BPD have a thin emotional skin; they are sensitive to stimuli (easily triggered), have a high emotional intensity (their highs are very high and lows are very low), and they take a long time to calm down. With poor skills to regulate this emotional reaction, individuals can experience almost continuous intense pain. They're often desperate for anything that will decrease that pain.
Dialectical Dilemmas: Self Invalidations.

Individuals learn to react to their intense emotions and vulnerability by invalidating themselves, just like so many others have done throughout their lives. Self-blame and self-hatred come in and emotions are then harshly controlled or completely shut off. Sometimes one might see self-injury as a means to quickly change those extreme emotions and to punish oneself for feeling emotional in the first place and not better controlling their behavior.
Dialectical Dilemmas

Active Passivity

Apparent Competence
Dialectical Dilemmas: In this dilemma individuals are in the extreme because they feel like they have absolutely no ability to control their life, solve their problems, or make changes and they communicate this to others.
Apparent Competence

Dialectical dilemmas: Apparent competence is the tendency to not ask for help from the environment even when it is needed. Individuals can appear deceptively more competent than they actually are. This can happen when skills or competencies don't generalize in different situations, across moods, time, etc.
Dialectical Dilemmas: Unrelenting Crisis and Inhibited Grief
Dialectical Dilemmas

Inhibited Grieving is the tendency to avoid and over-control negative emotional responses to loss. It is involuntary and an automatic learned response to managing difficult emotions.
Dialectical Dilemmas

Unrelenting Crisis

Dialectical dilemmas is a self-perpetuating pattern of frequent, stressful, negative events that occur more regularly and with more intensity than one would reasonably expect in life. It is often related to an individual's poor coping skills or intense emotionality.
To review, we've gone through all six of the dialectical dilemmas in DBT. The top portions are fueled by intense emotions, while the bottom are more social. In our visual metaphors, the top can be explained by an animalistic nature and the bottom by a robotic one.
Dialectical Dilemmas:

- Emotional Vulnerability
- Unrelenting Crisis
- Active Passivity
- Apparent Competence
- Inhibited Grief
- Self Invalidation

Balancing in Wise Mind is the goal
Our goal, as always, is to walk the middle path through balance in wise mind.

Emotional Vulnerability

Unrelenting Crisis

Active Passivity

Emotional Mind

Rational Mind

Apparent Competence

Inhibited Grief

Self Invalidation

Wise Mind
Interpersonal Dysregulation

Skills Modules

Self Dysfunction/
Cognitive Dysregulation

Mindfulness

Emotional Dysregulation

Emotion

Regulation

Distress

Tolerance

Behavioral Dysregulation

Interpersonal

Effectiveness

Interpersonal Dysregulation
Mindfulness Skills
Emotional Mind

Wise Mind is found at the intersection of one's Emotional Mind (animalistic, raw, hot) and one's Rational Mind (robotic, logical, cold). Either extreme is unhealthy, but both aspects are needed. A cool/warm middle ground is ideal in which one uses their rational mind in congruence with their emotions.
Distress Tolerance Skills
Distress Tolerance

Use distress tolerance skills to withstand the situation and not make it worse.

Emotion become so intense that skill breakdown point is reached.

A situation happens that causes an emotional reaction.

Emotion increases.

Until emotional arousal returns below the crisis line.

And other skills can be used to solve the problem.
Temperature change

Distress Tolerance (TIPP): The first series of distress tolerance skills are referred to as the TIPP skills. TIPP stands for Temperature, Intense Exercise, Paced Breathing, and Progressive Muscle Relaxation. When negative emotions are extreme they can be powerful and distressing. TIPP skills offer patients a concrete way to change their physiological state so that sensations associated with the negative emotion are relieved.

The T in TIPP stands for Temperature. Individuals with BPD are taught that holding ice in their hand can create powerful pain sensations similar to cutting but without the damage to their body. Another way that relief can be felt with temperature change is by placing a bag of ice water on your forehead and eyes. This technique relies on the Dive Reflex, which all mammals have to presumably protect them when they fall into water.
Intense Exercise

Intense Exercise is sometimes referred to as a runner’s high, where individuals experience a relaxed and subjectively comfortable state after 20 minutes of intense exercise that raises respiration and pulse rate. Most individuals have experienced this sensation and can identify with its calming effects. However, it is important to remind them that relief is usually not felt until after they have exercised 20 minutes and then had an additional 20 minutes after the exercise has taken place. Therefore, you may need to incorporate other distress tolerance skills such as distraction until the “runner’s high” kicks in.
Distress Tolerance - TIPP

Breathe in through your nose.

Paced Breathing

Breathe out through your mouth.
Distress Tolerance - TIPP

Paired Muscle Relaxation

Muscles become maximally relaxed after a brief period of tension. In this skill, patients are taught to tense certain muscle groups starting with the feet and working the way up to the forehead. After the initial phase of tension, they are to relax the same muscle group and notice the sensation of relaxation that naturally takes over. Each muscle group is done twice before moving on to the next muscle group. Gradually, as they practice this over time, patients can remove muscle groups and attain the same level of relaxation throughout the body. With enough practice, they may have trained their body to the point where it habitually relaxes when tension seeps into the muscles.
Emotion Regulation Skills
Emotions

Motivate

Communicate & Influence Others

Communicate to Ourselves
The emotion will decrease.

When you follow the behavioral urge...

the emotion continues and gets bigger.
If you practice Opposite Action... the emotion will get smaller.
Anger: Anger ranges in intensity from frustration at the low end to rage at the high end. You may want to completely get rid of anger, or you may simply need to get the intensity down because rage is almost never helpful. The first step is to ask yourself when is anger justified and is it justified in this situation. With anger, you may also want to ask yourself, even if it is justified now, would it be helpful to get rid of it now or at least get it down to a manageable level. If the answer is that no it is not justified, or no it is not helpful, then the second step is to ask yourself what urge accompanies the emotion of anger.

Justified:

Goal Blocked
Anger: With anger the urge is generally to attack physically or verbally. Sometimes the urge is not to attack directly, but to be opposition and undermine the other person's goal.

- **Action Urge:**
  - Attack
Opposite Action

- Step 1: Gently avoid
  - Take a time-out
- Step 2: Do something a little bit nice, have empathy.
For our second example let's apply the skill of opposite action to the emotion of sadness. Again the first step is to identify when sadness is justified by the situation. Sadness is justified when someone experiences a loss. This can be loss of a job, person, marriage, or even ability you once had. The urge that goes with sadness may initially be to seek out comfort but over time, sadness will generally make us have the urge to isolate, stay at home, and even crawl in bed and never get out. Sadness can be helpful if it influences others to provide support either emotional or physical and to comfort us.

Justified:

Loss
Sadness

Action Urge:
- Withdraw
Sadness

Opposite Action:

- Engage
Fear

Justified:

Danger
Fear: The first step for opposite action of fear is to identify when fear is justified. Fear is justified whenever a situation can harm you or puts you and your loved ones in danger. Situations such as combat, dealing with dangerous animals, having unprotected sex are all situations where fear is justified. However, the most common fears such as phobias and difficulty with public speaking are almost always not dangerous.

Action Urge:
- Avoid
Fear

- Opposite Action
  - Approach
Joy or Love

Justified:

Life Improved
Joy and Love: Joy and Love are not justified when an activity causes us health problems, such as smoking or drug use, or when we are spending time with someone that encourages us to go against our values. They may even be harmful to us physically or emotionally. The urge that goes with joy and love is to repeat the activity, or approach and think about the person or activity. We may keep mementoes of those activities and people. We may constantly look at pictures that remind us of them even when that causes us pain and reopens old wounds.

Action Urge:
- Repeat
Joy or Love: The opposite action for unjustified Joy and Love is to avoid the activity or person. To put away pictures and reminders where we cannot easily get to them.

Opposite Action:
- Avoid
- Ignore
- Distract
Shame: Shame and guilt can be particularly problematic emotions for patients with BPD. They seem to be felt much more intensely and often lead to the most impulsive and dangerous behaviors. Shame and guilt can lead to thoughts of being a burden on others and worthlessness. The thoughts lead people to have negative judgments of themselves that seem to shape a person’s core identity as bad, at fault for their own problems and perhaps the problems of those they love. Shame and guilt often lead into a complex and confusing pattern of emotions of anger, acting out, and then more sadness and guilt for harmful behaviors.

**Justified:**

Violation of Morals
Shame & Guilt

Action Urge:
  - Hide
Shame & Guilt

Opposite Action:
- Show up, be proud
Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills
Interpersonal Effectiveness

Get what you want with...

D - Describe the situation
E - Express your thoughts and feelings
A - Assert your needs
R - Reinforce the consequences

M - Mindful of your goal
A - Appear confident
N - Negotiate
Interpersonal Effectiveness

Keep your relationships!

Interpersonal Effectiveness

Dear Man helps individuals be assertive when they're too meek and mild. The Give skill helps them be soft and gentle when they're too harsh. When the goal is to keep a relationship, clients are taught to use Give. It stands for be Gentle, no attacks, threats, judging, or non-verbal cues of eye rolling or smirking. I is to act Interested. Don't interrupt, maintain good eye contact. V is to validate. Here we teach clients how to be empathic and give validating responses. This can be hard for them if they've been trained in an invalidating environment all of their lives. We practice in group by conducting an exercise in which clients give validating responses to each other's statements. And E is to keep an easy manner, stay light hearted and smile.

G I V E

Gentle
Interested
Validating
Easy manner
Interpersonal Effectiveness

**F**air

Don’t **A**pologetic

**S**tick to your value

Be **T**ruthful

Keep your self respect!
Dialectical behavioral therapy components: Individual therapy, telephone consultation, group therapy, and consultation team.
Skills Modules

Mindfulness

Emotion Regulation

Distress Tolerance

Interpersonal Effectiveness
Dialectical Dilemmas:

- Emotional Vulnerability
- Active Passivity
- Unrelenting Crisis
- Apparent Competence
- Self Invalidation
- Inhibited Grief

Secondary Targets meaning they are patterns of behavior typically seen in an individual with BPD. They represent the vacillation between extremes.