What is borderline personality disorder (BPD)?
BioSocial Model

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

Emotions are triggered easily and quickly. Emotional intensity lasts a long time before starting to return to baseline.

They become very intense very quickly.

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

Emotions are triggered easily

Time

Emotional Intensity
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 (e.g., self-harm, drug or alcohol use, impulsive behavior).
Invalidating Environment

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

“Don’t be a sissy.”

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

“Just snap out of it.”

“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.”
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.

1. Fear of Abandonment — Interpersonal Dysregulation
2. Chaotic relationships
3. Impulsivity — Behavioral Dysregulation
4. Suicidal or self-harm behavior
5. Mood instability — Emotional Dysregulation
6. Intense anger
7. Feelings of emptiness — Self Dysfunction
8. Identity disturbance
9. Stress-related paranoia or dissociation — Cognitive Dysregulation
What is Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)?
How DBT addresses BPD

Individual Therapy

Telephone Consultation

Consultation Team

Group Therapy
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 an orange, purple, and blue color scheme. 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 that 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.

Unrelenting Crisis

Active Passivity

Emotional Vulnerability

Self Invalidation

Apparent Competence

Inhibited Grief
Dialectical Dilemmas: Emotional Vulnerability and Self-Invalidation.
Emotional Vulnerability

Dialectical Dilemmas

Individuals 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
active passivity

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.
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.
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

The unrelenting crisis dialectic 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 and include Unrelenting Crisis, Apparent Competence, Emotional Vulnerability, and Active Passivity. The bottom portions are fueled by Rational Thinking and include Robotic, Working from Rational Mind, Inhibited Grief, Self Invalidation, and Animalistic behavior. In our visual metaphors, the top can be explained by an animalistic nature and the bottom by a robotic presence.
Dialectical Dilemmas: Everyone exists somewhere on the spectrum of dilemmas at any given point, but clients should work to come in towards the middle on each of these extremes.

- 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.

Dialectical Dilemmas

Emotional Vulnerability

Unrelenting Crisis

Active Passivity

Emotional Mind

Rational Mind

Apparent Competence

Inhibited Grief

Wise Mind

Self Invalidation
Skills Modules

- Mindfulness
- Emotional Dysregulation
- Self Dysfunction/Cognitive Dysregulation
- Interpersonal Effectiveness
- Behavioral Dysregulation
- Distress Tolerance

Emotion Regulation

Interpersonal Dysregulation
Mindfulness Skills
Wise 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

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

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.

Until emotional intensity becomes so intense that skill breakdown point is reached.
Distress Tolerance - TIPP

The first series of distress tolerance skills are referred to as the TIPP skills. TIPP stands for Temperature change, 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 Distress Tolerance: Intense Exercise. Sometimes referred to as a runner's high, 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. It is important, however, 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.
Paired Muscle Relaxation

Distress Tolerance - TIPP

Paired Muscle Relaxation
Emotion Regulation Skills
Emotions: Emotions have 3 important functions. First, emotions motivate us to take necessary action and organize our attention and behavior to react to our environment. The second function of emotions is to communicate and influence others around us. The third and final function of emotions is to communicate important information to ourselves.
Opposite Action

When you follow the behavioral urge...

Behavior

Emotion

the emotion continues and gets bigger.

The emotion will decrease.

When you follow the behavioral urge...
If you practice Opposite Action...

the emotion will get smaller.
Anger

- Justified:
Anger

Action Urge:

- Attack
Opposite Action

- Step 1: Gently avoid
  - Take a time-out
- Step 2: Do something a little bit nice, have empathy.
Sadness: 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 other 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
It's hard to imagine but even pleasant emotions such as Joy and Love can cause suffering when they are experienced in certain situations. Joy and Love are helpful and justified when the activity we are participating in or the people we are with are healthy, improve our lives, and move us in a direction in life that we genuinely value.
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:

Opposite Action:
- Avoid
- Ignore
- Distract
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.
Shame & Guilt

Action Urge:
- Hide
Shame & Guilt

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

Get what you want with...

Describe the situation
Express your thoughts and feelings
Assert your needs
Reinforce the consequences
Stay mindful of your goal
Appear confident
Negotiate
Interpersonal Effectiveness

Individuals with borderline personality disorder tend to interact in extremes when it comes to relationships, either being overly dominant or overly submissive. These communication skills help them find a balanced way of communicating.

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.

Keep your relationships!
Interpersonal Effectiveness

Be Fair
Don’t Apologize
Stick to your value
Be Truthful

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

- Mindfulness
- Distress Tolerance
- Emotion Regulation
- Interpersonal Effectiveness
Dialectical Dilemmas:

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

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