

What is the Balance Programme?

The Balance Programme is a community-based programme run by Auckland DHB for clients with the diagnosis of “Borderline Personality Disorder” (BPD). The programme runs across the four Community Mental Health Centres and uses an approach called “Dialectical Behaviour Therapy” (DBT).

What is Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)?



“the condition where people have intense overwhelming emotions”

BPD is a clinical term used to describe the condition where people have intense overwhelming emotions, intense and difficult relationships, fear of abandonment, intense anger, impulsive and/or self-harming and/or suicidal thoughts/behaviour, identity issues and sometimes transient dissociative or

psychotic states. Most people have some of these things some of the time. People who qualify for the BPD diagnosis have many of these problems across much of their lives.

Some people think the term “borderline personality disorder” is odd, unhelpful or disrespectful. Other terms have been put forward (such as complex PTSD) to describe

similar problems. For the time being we have kept the term BPD as it is the official diagnosis. And the terminology is less important than finding effective treatment.

What is Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT)?

Many people with the diagnosis of BPD feel that life is not worth living. The goal of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) is about building a life worth living.

DBT is the most proven treatment for people with the diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder. BPD is viewed as a consequence of a biologically-based tendency towards intense emotions combined with strongly invalidating experiences in life, often when young. Neglect and abuse are examples of invalidation that can contribute to this condition.

DBT combines *behaviour therapy* with *mindfulness practices* within a *dialectical* world view. A dialectical view is one that tries to “hold” tensions that exist in our lives. It is the opposite of “black and white” thinking. Behavioural therapy is about learning skills and solving problems. Balance groups teach skills to tolerate distress, regulate emotions, become more effective in our relationships and to be mindful. Mindfulness practices draw from eastern and western contemplative

practices that teach us how to control our attention to be more effective in our lives.

The Balance Programme involves individual therapy for one hour each week and skills groups for 2 ½ hours each week. It also involves “homework” to practice the skills and become more familiar with them. The first stage of DBT is mostly about stabilising your life. This usually lasts for 12 months in which you complete the 22-week skills group twice. The second stage of the programme looks more at the underlying or trauma issues that may continue to affect your life.

What do I have to agree to?

Effective treatment takes time and effort. So we want you to commit to the programme for at least 12 months. This level of commitment can seem impossible when you start out. Finding reasons to make – and keep – the commitment are actually the first things to discuss with your therapist and the first steps to building a life worth living.

Can I be in other treatments / therapy too?

Being in more than one kind of therapy at the same time gets confusing. So we ask that you are not in other therapy while you are in the Balance programme. However you can (and often should) get help with other problems, such as alcohol and drug or eating problems. Discuss this with your therapist.

How do I join?

You must be a current client of an Auckland DHB Community Mental Health Centre and reside in the Auckland DHB area for the length of the programme. Talk to your key-worker/case-manager or doctor at the clinic.

Please be aware the places are very limited and there may be a delay and/or other requirements before joining the programme.

Want to know more?

To learn more about the Balance Programme



talk to your therapist and obtain a brochure called "More about Dialectical Behaviour Therapy and the Balance Programme".

You can also visit an American website where DBT was developed: www.behavioraltech.com

Auckland District Health Board Community Mental Health Centres:

Cornwall House, 2 Onslow Rd, Epsom
Phone 623 5780

Manaaki House, 15 Pleasant View Rd,
Panmure. Phone 570 6520

St Lukes CMHC, 615 New North Rd,
Morningside. Phone 845 0940

Taylor Centre, Second floor, 308 Ponsonby
Road, Ponsonby. Phone 376 1054

After Hours Crisis Services
Phone 0800 800 717



About the Balance Programme

Information for clients
and their families

This brochure contains introductory information about the Balance Programme and Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT)