

Statement of Understanding for Consent for Therapy

Before beginning therapy at DBTCSD, it is important to fully understand what therapy will involve and the policies and procedures of the clinic.

Our Approach to Psychotherapy

Our therapy approach is cognitive-behavior therapy (CBT), which is a particular kind of therapy that involves the application of findings from psychology research to help individuals change in ways they would like to change. CBT is very present-focused, based on the belief that the current environment is very important in affecting our present emotions and behavior. The procedures used in CBT are generally intended to improve the person's well-being and quality of life by expanding the person's skills, abilities, and independence, and by improving abilities for managing emotions and the situations that trigger them. There is an emphasis in CBT on monitoring and evaluating the individual's progress to determine how effective the intervention is. Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) is a specific form of CBT we utilize that helps you tolerate and change your emotions, control your behavior, improve relationships, and build a meaningful life. You will also practice expressing yourself fully and behaving in ways that will create better relationships. In doing so, it is important for us to focus on the interactions between us because they are often similar to how you interact with other people, which allows you to experiment with different ways of relating, and then to take it to your relationships outside of therapy.

Our Treatment Team

Milton Brown, Ph.D. is the head of the DBTCSD treatment team. Dr. Brown received ten years of training in DBT from Marsha Linehan at the University of Washington. Currently he teaches therapy classes at the California School of Professional Psychology at Alliant International University.

DBT is a team-based treatment approach, and the team consists of staff therapists (paid employees) and clinic associates (therapists who are not employees of DBTCSD). The treatment team meets at least once per week to discuss current cases, and all therapists are available to all clinic patients when the primary therapist is needed but not available, for example in case of emergencies or out of town travel. DBTCSD staff therapists and clinic associates are listed at the end of this consent form and on our website www.dbsandiego.com.

Confidentiality

All identifying information about your treatment and treatment records are kept confidential. You can submit your personal information through our secure Google web-based intake form (on our website click on "Privacy Notice" to read the ways we protect your private electronically-stored information). It is important to be aware that e-mail communication, especially non-encrypted e-mail, can be easily accessed by unauthorized users which can violate your confidentiality. The law requires that we keep your records for at least seven years following treatment.

Because we teach off-site psychology workshops and courses, we occasionally present cases to off-site non-clinic mental health professionals and trainees. We may discuss your case with them without sharing any identifying information. These students/interns are also bound by law and the ethics of our profession to keep all such case material confidential.

There are some exceptions to confidentiality according to state laws:

1. If you tell us, or we suspect, that a child, elderly person, or disabled person is being abused, either by neglect, assault, battery, or sexual molestation, or other forms of maltreatment, we are required by California state law to report our suspicion of such abuse to the appropriate state agency.
2. If you seriously threaten to harm someone else, we have the legal duty to warn that person and the police.
3. If you seriously threaten to harm yourself, we may need to contact the police and/or a family member.
4. If your records are subpoenaed by an attorney, they will not be released without your written consent. However, they must be released if a court order signed by a judge orders us to do so.
5. If you are using insurance, we may be asked by the insurance company for ongoing treatment reports. These would include a diagnosis, a summary of treatment to date, and plans for future sessions.

At DBTCSD, we continually strive to improve our understanding of the problems we treat and the ways to help people change. We sometimes statistically analyze questionnaires and outcomes of our clients and publish them in scientific journals in the hopes that other treatment providers can also learn ways to improve the care they provide. In publications, we never include client names or any possible identifying information.

Services & Procedures

Individual therapy sessions are usually scheduled for 50 minutes, once per week. At times, sessions may be scheduled for 90 minutes or the frequency of sessions may be altered if there are indications that such changes would help reach your goals. Your primary individual therapist, but not your group therapists, will be available via telephone for helping you apply coping skills to challenging life situations.

Fees & Methods of Payment

Intake Session: Our fee is \$300 for the first therapy session, when it is scheduled for 90 minutes, paid in full before the session. The first session focuses on us understanding your goals, struggles, and diagnoses. We generally collect a \$50 deposit at the time you schedule the intake appointment, to reserve your spot, with the remaining \$250 paid before the start of the intake session. The \$50 deposit is not refunded if a client fails to show up for the appointment, unless the intake is cancelled at least 24 hours in advance. We never bill insurance for first sessions, unless we send you a written confirmation before your intake session that we will do so.

We ask that you provide your credit card information to keep on file, and we will charge unpaid fees to your credit card about once per month, without prompt-payment discounts given. If a credit card payment is not possible, we will suspend treatment until the balance is paid. In the event that you end treatment (e.g., no sessions in 30 days) we will charge your credit card for all remaining unpaid charges. The fee for returned checks is \$40.

If your health insurance plan covers psychotherapy, we will provide a statement that you can submit to your insurance company. Unless otherwise specified in writing, we expect you to pay the full fees billed and to obtain reimbursement for the insured portion from your insurance company. Unpaid balances may be reported to a credit bureau, collection agency, or small claims court following reasonable attempts at collection. In most collection situations, we report that that an unspecified psychological service was provided to the patient.

Scheduling Sessions

If you need to change or cancel an individual therapy session leave your therapist a telephone message (see Contact Information section, below). If you do not show up for a scheduled individual session, you will be charged a \$100 fee unless you have canceled it 24 hours in advance. The late cancellation charge for individual therapy sessions will be waived if you cancel due to physical illness or an emergency and you leave your therapist a phone message as soon as possible; however, the fee will not be waived more than once every four months. Cancellations made via email will not be honored, and will still incur the \$100 fee. Payment is required for all missed group therapy sessions, however, regardless of your reason for missing, even when you notify us in advance of your absence from group. The group therapy fee will not be waived. If you are late for a session, the remaining minutes can be used for therapy. If at any point you have not attended a DBTCSD individual therapy session for more than 30 consecutive days, for any reason, we will end your treatment at DBTCSD. In such case, to resume therapy you will need to sign a new consent form, and until you officially resume therapy by attending another therapy session, DBT therapists will not be available to you for skills coaching phone calls or crisis management.

Emergencies

Generally, first call your primary individual therapist when emergencies arise. When your primary therapist is out of town or otherwise unavailable for extended periods of time, you can call other DBTCSD therapists (all phone numbers are listed at the end of this consent form). We may not always be available to you immediately by telephone but for emergencies you can expect a call back within about two hours. If you have a clinical emergency, you can also call the Crisis Line at 1-800-479-3339. If you believe you cannot maintain your own safety and life until we are in contact, or it is a medical emergency, we expect you to telephone 911 or go to a hospital emergency room and discuss your current situation and the possibility of admission to the hospital's psychiatric unit. We require that you notify us via telephone of psychiatric emergencies and that you do not communicate emergencies to us via email or telephone text messages.

Therapy Termination

Clients who miss four consecutive weeks of individual therapy sessions (or four consecutive groups) will not be allowed to continue in individual DBT or skills training for a period lasting up to six months. When this happens, clients can apply to reenter our DBT program. We ask that planned absences be discussed with the primary therapist far in advance if the absences will result in missing more than two weeks of therapy.

Audio Recording

All group therapists record their skills lectures so that their clients can listen to missed lectures, and to confirm their lectures are effective. In addition, we occasionally record individual therapy sessions to get consultation from other DBT therapists, but we will not record your individual sessions unless we obtain additional written consent. However, if the DBTCSD clinical team believes that you are at high risk for suicide and you do not consent to audio recording, you may not be eligible to receive services at the DBT Center of San Diego and be referred to another DBT program or similar psychological service.

Risks of Psychotherapy

There are no guarantees that you will benefit from treatment will that. It is even possible that adverse effects can occur, like some worsening of symptoms or interpersonal difficulties. The length and outcome of treatment is based upon your motivation for and commitment to treatment, complexity of the symptom profile, and other factors. At any time you may ask us to explain the approach and techniques, or express any concerns you have about your treatment. You may also choose to end treatment at any time – we only ask that you discuss this with us in advance so that we can try to work out any problems between us. If there are other therapists or alternative treatments that might better serve you, we will discuss these with you at that time.

Release of Information for Billing Purposes

Signing this page authorizes us to provide specific relevant billing information to your insurance company or to other people (written in below) who will pay for your therapy. Sometimes insurance companies request detailed clinical information, including treatment plans or summaries, before they will provide reimbursement. This information will become part of the insurance company files and will be stored in a computer system, and we have no control over what they do with it, although all insurance companies claim to keep such information confidential. Insurance companies do sometimes share information with each other (or ask you to release it), and sometimes this information may affect your ability to obtain life insurance, coverage for “pre-existing conditions,” etc. In some cases, they may share the information with a national medical information databank. We make every effort to protect your privacy and to minimize the details we release. Do not sign this page if you do not authorize us to provide your personal information for billing purposes. Authorization is valid for one year from date of signature, unless you specify a different date here: _____

I authorize DBT Center of San Diego to provide the following information (those circled “Yes” below)
to _____ (name) at _____ (address & phone)
(non-insurance) _____ (email address)

No Yes name, date of birth, home address

No Yes all fees and fee descriptions

No Yes all diagnosis codes, except for

Insurance Coverage

We are currently not contracted as an in-network provider with any insurance company. Therefore, we do not generally submit insurance claims or bill insurance companies, and we request that you pay the full fee for each session in advance or at the time of service, as specified on page 2. It is your responsibility to verify how much your insurance company will reimburse you when you submit your claims. We do not guarantee how much your insurance company will reimburse you. The only exceptions are that we will agree to collect from you only your copay if we sign a contract with your insurance company (e.g., a single-case agreement).

If we agree to bill your insurance company, we will follow these procedures:

1. We do not bill insurance for first sessions. We will submit insurance claims starting with your second session.
2. In the event that we do not receive payment from your insurance company within 60 days of your second session, we will suspend your services at DBTCSD until we receive payment.
3. We will charge the full balance to your credit card in the event that your total charges exceed your total payments by more than \$400, or if you owe more than \$160 in copays, and we will add a 3% late fee. If a credit card payment is not possible, we will suspend treatment until the balance drops below \$400.

Dialectical Behavior Therapy Center of San Diego (DBTCSD)

4. In the event that we never receive full payment from your insurance company, you will be responsible for paying for all unpaid charges.

Insurance companies will not pay for telephone calls, missed therapy groups, late cancellation fees, and some other sessions. You agree to pay out-of-pocket the full fee for the following services when your insurance company does not reimburse you for the following:

1. Each individual session (e.g., CPT codes 90834, 90846, and 90876) that you do not attend when you fail to cancel 24 hours in advance.
2. Group therapy sessions (e.g., CPT code 90853) that you do not attend, while you are enrolled in a DBT therapy group, even if you cancel in advance. This billing policy is on pages 2-3 of this consent form.
3. Phone calls according to fee schedule specified on page 2 of this consent form.
4. Multiple therapy sessions that you attend on the same day.
5. DBT sessions you attend on the same day as sessions with psychiatrists or other therapists, or DBT sessions you attend on the same day as inpatient treatment.

DBTCSD Treatment Team

The DBTCSD treatment team is headed by Milton Brown. Dr. Brown received a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from University of Washington in 2002 and completed two years of post-doctoral training in clinical psychology and behavior therapy at the Behavioral Research and Therapy Clinics (University of Washington). During these positions he received ten years of training in DBT from Marsha Linehan. He completed his clinical internship at the Veteran Affairs Palo Alto Healthcare System, which included training at the National Center for Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. Currently he holds a position as an assistant professor at the California School of Professional Psychology at Alliant International University, for which he teach classes on cognitive behavior therapy and DBT. His clinical work and research focus on the evaluation and treatment of anxiety disorders, borderline personality disorder, shame, and self-hatred. He holds an active psychology license in the state of California (Lic # PSY20785).

Staff Therapist Employees

Amanda Gutierrez received a Psy.D. in clinical psychology from Azusa Pacific University in 2009, and completed her post-doctoral training at the Sharp Mesa Vista Hospital DBT Intensive Outpatient Program. 2005-2006 she worked at the DBT program at Harbor Medical Center at University of California at Los Angeles. She holds an active psychology license in the state of California (Lic # PSY23873).

Kristen Dahlin received a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the California School of Professional Psychology. She has extensive experience treating personality disorders, anxiety disorders, self-injury, and eating disorders. She holds an active psychology license in the state of California (Lic # PSY30126).

Jason Weingarten received a Psy.D. in clinical psychology from Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology, Yeshiva University in 2011, completing his pre-doctoral internship at NY Harbor Healthcare, Manhattan VA Hospital and his post-doctoral training at a private practice DBT clinic in Manhattan. He holds an active psychology license in the states of New York (Lic #019647-1) and California (PSY28756).

All biofeedback therapists at DBTCSD are current doctoral students (unlicensed) in clinical psychology at the California School of Professional Psychology at Alliant International University (CSPP-Alliant). They receive ongoing training in heart rate variability (HRV) biofeedback from Richard Gevirtz, Ph.D. at the CABS Anxiety and Stress Disorders Clinic at CSPP-Alliant.

If you wish to make a complaint about our activities as therapists you can contact the California Board of Psychology (866-503-3221) or the Board of Behavioral Sciences (916-574-7830 www.bbs.ca.gov).