

## How Will Family DBT Help Me?

While your child is going through a difficult time, you are also more than likely going through a difficult time. The good news is, at NAL we have found a way to treat each family as a whole unit; treating more than only one individual in the family system. DBT offers you, as a parent, skills to cope and act effectively with this difficult time. The goal is to help you and your child to enhance your understanding of the dynamics that may be playing out in the household. As a parent you will learn and apply skills to build a life worth living for both yourself as well as your child. The goal is that learning and utilizing these skills will enhance the relationship between yourself and your child. Learning how to find balance with Dialectical Dilemmas will help with the following:

- Encourage healthy development through adolescent/childhood.
- Effectively respond to crisis behaviors.
- Effective and open communication between yourself and child
- Finding balance between being too strict and too lenient (Middle Path).
- Learning new ways to offer your teen/child support, validation and encourage independence.
- Avoid blaming yourself or others for your teen's/child's mental health concerns so that you can focus on influencing (but not forcing) growth and change.

As a parent in the program you will also learn skills to parent from wise mind.

- Recognize your state of mind and your emotions (Mindfulness).
- Validate and accept difficult emotions (Interpersonal Effectiveness and Distress Tolerance).
- Manage difficult emotions so they do not get in the way of effective parenting (Emotion Regulation).

Overall you will learn skills from the following modules:

- Distress Tolerance
- Emotion Regulation
- Interpersonal Effectiveness
- Walking the Middle Path, Dialects, and Validation
- Mindfulness

## **Dialectical Dilemmas**

A Dialectical Dilemma occurs when one feels stuck between two ideas that **seem** opposite to each other (Linehan, 1993). The focus in DBT is to find balance by incorporating elements from both sides of the dialectic. In other words, the goal is to avoid being on one end of the extreme or the other and instead find balance in the middle.

Three adolescent-specific Dialectical Dilemmas were identified by Miller, Rathus and Linehan (2007) in their book *Dialectical Behavior Therapy with Suicidal Adolescents*. These Dialectical Dilemmas are common and important for parents to know and understand, as parents are most effective when they incorporate elements from both sides of the spectrum in these dialectics.

**Allowing Developmentally Typical Behaviors vs. Addressing Problem Behaviors.** Finding balance with this dialectic means letting teenagers practice their developmental tasks while taking seriously behaviors that are beyond what one would expect developmentally. This requires parents to differentiate between developmentally typical and more serious problem behaviors.

**Being Strict vs. Being Lenient.** Finding balance with this dialectic means having expectations, rules or limits while also being flexible. This requires parents to identify rules and consequences, while also using their Wise Mind to determine when some slack is needed.

**Fostering Independence vs. Giving Support.** Finding balance with this dialectic means supporting a teen's primary developmental task of gaining autonomy by providing space for them to make their own decisions while also providing structure, support, and problem solving. This requires parents to recognize and act effectively with their own thoughts and emotions about their teen being independent.

**Blame Self vs. Blame Others.** Finding balance with this dialectic means not blaming yourself or others for your teen's/child mental health concerns. Assigning blame creates difficult emotions and actually gets in the way of change. Balance is found with Radical Acceptance, which helps parents to accept that they cannot change or control their child. This frees parents up to focus on ways to influence (but not control) their child's decisions and behaviors