Dialectical Behaviour Therapy: Philosophy

The main philosophy of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) is to create ‘a life worth living’. This philosophy is characterised by balancing the need to become aware of and accept things in life that you can’t change, while simultaneously working on the things which you can change to improve your emotional wellbeing and overall quality of life.

‘Dialectic’ means to examine, discuss and reconcile opposing ideas. The dialectic in this approach is that change can only begin to happen when you accept things as they are, yet accepting things as they are often requires us to change.

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy: Aims

There are a number of primary aims of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy. These are

to decrease:

- suicidal and life-threatening behaviours
- therapy interfering behaviours
- quality-of-life interfering behaviours

to increase:

- core mindfulness
- interpersonal effectiveness
- emotion regulation
- distress tolerance
- self-management

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy: Key Assumptions

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) outlines a number of assumptions that need to be shared and understood by both the person attending for treatment and the DBT therapist. Some of these assumptions include:

- People are doing the best they can
- People want to improve
- People need to do better, try harder, and be more motivated to change
- People must learn new behaviours in all relevant contexts e.g. social, occupational and vocational
- People may not have caused all of their own problems, but they have to solve them anyway