

# Helping Clients Heal from Self-Harm: A DBT Approach for Teens

Self-harm, or non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) is most common among adolescents and young adults. Although NSSI typically decreases in late adolescence, this behavior is one of the strongest antecedents of suicide in youth; and those who engage in repetitive NSSI seem to be at high risk for continuing to use dysfunctional emotion regulation strategies, even after discontinuing NSSI. People engage in NSSI for a wide array of reasons (including a diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder, or BPD), but usually this involves an inability to manage emotions in some way, making Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) an ideal treatment for this population.

While most mental health clinicians will encounter NSSI at some point, there is still a paucity of research about this behaviour and why it happens; and education programs rarely teach about this behaviour and how to work with clients who are engaging in it. This workshop will help you understand NSSI, factors to consider when assessing and working with clients, and will take a DBT approach to helping clients eliminate this behaviour.

## Target Audience

Psychologists  
Therapists

Social Workers  
Psychiatrists

Counselors  
Nurses

Course level: Intermediate

## Learning Objectives

At the end of this seminar, participants will be able to:

1. Define Non-suicidal Self-Injury and some of the statistics related to this
2. Identify ways to avoid over-reacting to self-harming clients.
3. Educate your client and their family about self-harming behaviors.
4. Conduct an assessment of self-harming behaviors.
5. Identify interventions to reduce self-harming behaviors.

## Seminar Schedule

The webinar outline is attached. See the Live Webinar page for the start and end times.

## Outline

Begin 10 AM ET

What is NSSI, and what do we know about it?

Why do people self-harm?

How to not freak out when you discover your client is self-harming

Break 11:30-11:45 AM ET

How to effectively assess for NSSI

Conceptualizing NSSI through the DBT Biosocial Theory and The Experiential Avoidance Model (EAM)

Lunch Break 1-1:30 PM ET

Overview of treating NSSI from a DBT-informed perspective:

The Behavioral Analysis

Distress Tolerance Skills:

F-TIP skills to regulate emotions quickly

Pros and Cons

Dialectical Abstinence

Alternate Rebellion

Break 3:30-3:45 PM ET

Distract, self-soothe, and IMPROVE the moment

The role of Mindfulness in eliminating NSSI

Emotion Regulation Skills:

Nonjudgmental Stance

Radical Acceptance

Self-validation

Opposite to Emotion Action

End 5 PM ET

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## The Presenter

Sheri is a Social Worker who has been working with clients with severe mental health problems since 2000. With extensive experience in a hospital as well as community setting, Sheri now sees clients in private practice, and provides consultation and training internationally to other clinicians. Sheri has had extensive training in dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) and mindfulness and has been providing DBT-informed therapy to individuals and groups since 2004. In 2010 Sheri was the winner of the R.O. Jones award for her research on using DBT with bipolar disorder, presented at the Canadian Psychiatric Association Conference.

Sheri is the author of numerous books that focus on helping readers learn DBT skills and apply them to a variety of mental health problems, including *The DBT Workbook for Emotional Relief*; the best-selling *Don't Let Your Emotions Run Your Life for Teens*; and her newest book, coming in 2025, *The DBT Workbook for C-PTSD*. Sheri trained in Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) in 2018 and is an EMDRIA-approved Consultant; she is a member of the International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation (ISSTD), and is a consultant for the ISSTD's EMDR training program.

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This seminar has been reviewed and approved by Keith Hannan, Ph.D., Laura Davie, LICSW, Tina Jenkins, Psy.D., and Loreen Yearick, MSN, RN. This approval expires on March 1, 2028.

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tzkseminars, LLC  
168 West Lake Drive  
Annapolis, Md. 21403