

DBT PE Readiness Criteria for PTSD-focused Treatment

This handout is designed to assist therapists in assessing whether their clients are ready to proceed with PTSD-focused treatment, particularly from a Dialectical Behavior Therapy Prolonged Exposure (DBT PE) perspective. The readiness criteria outlined here include both objective and subjective assessments, recognizing that therapist judgment plays a crucial role in determining client readiness. Each criterion includes a description to guide evaluation and blank lines for therapists to document specific observations and thoughts about their clients, facilitating a collaborative and informed decision-making process.

1 No Imminent Risk of Suicide

The client must not be at imminent risk of engaging in suicidal behavior. This ensures that the client is in a stable enough state to engage safely in exposure therapies.

- Notes:

2 No Suicidal or Self-Injurious Behavior for at Least Two Months

The client should have a clear history of at least two months without any suicidal attempts or self-injurious behavior. This timeframe provides a baseline indication of stability and safety.

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3 Ability to Control Urges for Suicidal and Self-Injurious Behavior When in Presence of Cues

Clients are expected to manage and control urges to engage in harmful behaviors effectively, even when faced with emotional triggers or stressful situations.

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4 No Serious Therapy-Interfering Behavior

There should be no substantial behaviors that could disrupt the therapeutic process. This includes repeatedly missing sessions, significant non-compliance with therapeutic assignments, or persistent resistance to therapy modalities.

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5 PTSD as a Priority Goal

The client must prioritize the treatment of PTSD above other issues, demonstrating a clear commitment to engage with and persist in therapeutic activities directed at managing PTSD symptoms.

- Notes:

6 Ability and Willingness to Tolerate Intense Emotions Without Escaping

Essential for the success of exposure-based therapies, the client must be able to face and process intense emotional experiences without resorting to avoidance tactics such as dissociation or substance use.

- Notes:

Key Points

- The readiness criteria combine objective and subjective measures, emphasizing the importance of therapist judgment.
- Clients must demonstrate a clear commitment to addressing PTSD as a primary treatment goal, showing consistent participation in therapy sessions and adherence to treatment protocols.
- Successful engagement in DBT PE requires clients to tolerate and process intense emotions without resorting to maladaptive escape strategies, ensuring they can benefit from exposure-based interventions.