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**Dialectical Behaviour Therapy skills use in a Substance Use Disorder  
and Borderline Personality Trait population**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Psychology**

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## Abstract

This study examined the skills use<sup>cl</sup> within a Dialectical Behaviour Therapy programme for 13 clients presenting with comorbid Substance Use Disorders and Borderline Personality Disorder traits at the Community Alcohol and Drugs Service North. This was the first known study to evaluate skills use within a 12-month Dialectical Behaviour Therapy programme for this client population in an outpatient alcohol and drug community based treatment service in New Zealand.

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy is an evidence-based treatment comprised of four components, one being the training and practice of behavioural skills. Skills training has been suggested as an important element in attaining positive treatment outcomes. This study was designed to explore the frequency and variety of skills used by clients in this population.

Skills use was recorded on the daily diary cards completed by clients over the course of treatment. The findings indicated that the clients made statistically significant increases in their rate of skills use as treatment progressed. Increases in all skills modules were observed, with the skills module of Core Mindfulness being used the most frequently, followed by Emotion Regulation, Distress Tolerance, and Interpersonal Effectiveness. In addition, findings also indicated reductions in substance use and substance use urges.

These findings suggest tentative support for the use of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy skills training with Substance Use Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder trait clients in an alcohol and drug community based setting.

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