

Building Your DBT House

With bipolar, your changing symptoms can make you feel like you are changing too. The change creates feelings of imbalance and unease that add stress and worry to each day. Because of this, it is valuable to have an established sense of self. A written standard will help encourage a sense of being grounded, stable and balanced.

A useful tool comes from the work of dialectical behavior therapy (DBT). DBT is a spinoff of [cognitive behavioral therapy](#) (CBT) that is helpful for a range of mental health issues including depression, borderline personality disorder and bipolar disorder. The tool is called a DBT house. This intervention works to illustrate aspects of your life by bringing attention to strengths and supports while highlighting areas to grow.

From the Ground Up

A dialectical behavior therapy house is a simple, yet engaging and beneficial tool with a lot of information to be gained and processed. Interested? Here's how to create your own:

1. **Draw a house.** Any house will do but there are a few necessities. Your house should have a foundation, walls, roof, door, and chimney. An online search will yield many templates but don't worry about how it looks. This is *your* DBT house and feel free to use your creativity. After all, the house represents you.
2. **The house's foundation is your foundation as a person.** List and label the values, beliefs and traditions that direct your life. Do you put family above all else? Do you think that being financially successful is paramount? Include these on your foundation.
3. **The walls represent your supports.** Are you struggling to name supports? Remember that supports can be people, places, and things. Who have you interacted with in the last weeks? What did you do and where did you go to feel better and find assistance? Supports can be professionals in your life. A therapist is a great professional support to list on your walls.
4. **What gives you shelter? Who protects you?** Like supports, these can be people or things. Do you feel like your parents encourage you unconditionally? If so, include them on your roof.
5. **The door keeps things hidden and others out.** What things do you hide? Are you ashamed of things or do aspects of your past? List these in the door.
6. **The chimney releases hot air.** What do you do to blow off steam? Exercising, watching a funny movie, journaling and taking a long bath are great ways to relax and unwind. List these on your chimney.
7. **Bonus: Billboard.** So, not many houses actually have billboards but your DBT house does. On the billboard, write the things that you are proud of. The accomplishments, skills or characteristics about you that you would like to share with the world.

Conclusion

Your dialectical behavior therapy house is you, all of your strengths, supports, value and areas to grow disguised as a house. Bring this information into the open and putting it on paper allows you to understand yourself a bit better. If you understand yourself, you will be able to help others understand you as well. Share your house with trusted people in your life and seek their feedback. Your house is modifiable so, if there is something you do not like, work to change it. The power is yours.

Billboard:
Things you are proud of and want others to see

Chimney:
ways you "blow off steam"

Roof:
People/Things that protect you

Level 4:

List OR draw what a "life worth living" would look like for you.

Level 3:

List all the things you are happy about OR want to feel happy about.

Level 2:

List OR draw emotions you want to experience more often, OR in a more healthy way.

Door:
Things you keep hidden from others.

Level 1:

List behaviours to gain control your life you

you are trying of OR areas of want to change.

Foundation: values that govern your life

Walls: Anyone/thing that supports you

