



Multiple Emotions in TF-DBT

Martin Bohus

Martin Bohus, MD is a German psychiatrist and Professor of Psychosomatic Medicine at Heidelberg University. He served as Scientific Director at the Central Institute of Mental Health in Mannheim and is the President of the European DBT Association. He is founding editor of the Journal BPDEd and founding president of the 1st World Congress on BPD. M. Bohus is also the primary developer of Trauma-Focused DBT (TF-DBT). His work centers on emotion regulation as a prerequisite for trauma processing, especially in patients with BPD and Complex PTSD (CPTSD). He has published more than 300 reviewed papers, covering the entire field of BPD and CPTSD. M. Bohus argues that the traditional concept of trauma should be broadened to encompass both interpersonal and somatic forms of traumatization. Building on this expanded perspective, he proposes conceptualizing borderline personality disorder as a trauma-associated disorder. The most recent revision of Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Trauma-Focused DBT (TF-DBT), places the formalized, exposure-based processing of trauma-associated "alarm networks" and their corresponding self-concepts at the center of treatment. A large multicenter study demonstrated a significant superiority of TF-DBT over standard DBT.

**October 7
2026
19:00 CET
edbta.eu/live**



About the webinar

Title: **Multiple Emotions in DBT: From Modern Emotion Theory to Trauma-Focused Practice**

Instructor: **Martin Bohus**

Date: **7 October**

Organiser: **European DBT Association**

Location: **Online @ edbta.eu/live**

Moderator: **Jan Hilbig**

Contemporary clinical emotion theory increasingly emphasizes that emotional experience is rarely reducible to a single, discrete, categorical emotion. A growing body of theoretical and empirical work indicates that several emotions can be activated simultaneously, or in rapid succession, rather than one emotion at a time (Larsen, McGraw, & Cacioppo, 2001; Cacioppo & Berntson, 1994). This shift away from classical basic-emotion accounts (Ekman, 1992) toward dimensional, componential, and constructionist models of emotion (Barrett, 2006; Izard, 2007; Kragel & LaBar, 2016) has direct implications for the treatment of disorders characterized by severe emotion dysregulation, including borderline personality disorder (BPD) and complex trauma-related conditions.

Multiple emotions appear to arise in at least two qualitatively different ways. First, they can emerge as situationally novel configurations, in which several emotion components (e.g., anger and shame, or fear and disgust) are co-activated in response to a specific, current situation. In patients with BPD, such newly formed emotion blends appear to generate particularly intense aversive tension, plausibly because the concurrently activated, and often incompatible, action tendencies cannot be resolved through a single coherent behavioral response (Linehan, 1993). Second, multiple emotions can exist as preformed, associative networks that have been consolidated through repeated, multiple traumatic experiences. Such trauma-related emotion networks, like “fear of abandonment”, “social rejection” or “loss of control”, once activated, can exert broad, trans-situational control over behavior across many areas of a patient's life, largely independent of the objective demands of the present situation (Lang, 1979; Brewin, Dalgleish, & Joseph, 1996).

Trauma-Focused DBT (TF-DBT), the most recent extension of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (Linehan, 1993), draws substantially on this modern emotion-theoretical framework and adapts core therapeutic strategies accordingly. New skills specifically targeting the recognition, differentiation, and regulation of multiple, co-occurring emotions have been developed, and formalized exposure to well-established trauma networks has been placed at the center of treatment (cf. Bohus et al., 2020, for the closely related DBT-PTSD approach). A recent large-scale, international multicenter randomized controlled trial demonstrates a clear superiority of the newly developed TF-DBT protocol over standard DBT (Vonderlin et al., in preparation).

This webinar introduces the modern theoretical understanding of multiple emotions and shows how it has been translated into clinical practice within TF-DBT.