

Dialectical behavior therapy reduces suicidal behavior in adults with autism

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Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) is safe and shows short-term efficacy in reducing suicidal ideation and suicide attempts in adults with suicidal behavior and autism spectrum disorder (ASD), according to a study published online April 12 in *Psychological Medicine*.

Anne Huntjens, from Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, and colleagues

evaluated the effectiveness of DBT versus treatment as usual (TAU) in reducing [suicidal ideation](#) and suicide attempts among people with ASD. The analysis included 123 outpatients (18 to 65 years of age) with diagnosed ASD and suicidal behavior who were randomly assigned to DBT or TAU.

The researchers found that at the end of treatment, DBT significantly reduced both suicidal ideation and attempts versus TAU. However, at 12-month follow-up, the differences were no longer statistically significant. Both posttreatment and at 12 months, depression severity significantly decreased with DBT. No differences between the groups were seen for [social anxiety](#). Two suicides occurred in the TAU group.

"This study demonstrated that a shortened 26-week DBT treatment was effective in autistic adults with suicidal ideation and [suicide attempts](#)," the authors write. "Specifically, participants received DBT well, as evidenced by the low attrition rate, and DBT was shown to be safe in clinical practice, as it did not provoke severe adverse events."

More information: Anne Huntjens et al, The effectiveness and safety of dialectical behavior therapy for suicidal ideation and behavior in autistic adults: a pragmatic randomized controlled trial, *Psychological Medicine* (2024). [DOI: 10.1017/S0033291724000825](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291724000825)

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