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Marsha Linehan is a Professor of Psychology and adjunct Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Washington and is Director of the Behavioral Research and Therapy Clinics, a consortium of research projects developing new treatments and evaluating their efficacy for severely disordered and multi-diagnostic and suicidal populations. Her primary research is in the application of behavioral models to suicidal behaviors, drug abuse, and borderline personality disorder. She is also working to develop effective models for transferring science-based treatments to the clinical community.

She has received several awards recognizing her clinical and research contributions to the study and treatment of suicidal behaviors, including the Louis I. Dublin Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Field of Suicide, the Distinguished Research in Suicide Award (American Foundation of Suicide Prevention), and the creation of the Marsha Linehan Award for Outstanding Research in the Treatment of Suicidal Behavior established by the American Association of Suicidology. She has also been recognized for her clinical research including the Distinguished Scientist Award from the Society for a Science of Clinical Psychology, the award for Distinguished Scientific Contributions to Clinical Psychology (Society of Clinical Psychology,) and awards for Distinguished Contributions to the Practice of Psychology (American Association of Applied and Preventive Psychology) and for Distinguished Contributions for Clinical Activities, (Association for the Advancement of Behavior Therapy).

She is the past-president of both the Association for the Advancement of Behavior Therapy and of the Society of Clinical Psychology, Division 12, American Psychological Association. She is a fellow of the American Psychological Association and the American Psychopathological Association and is a diplomat of the American Board of Behavioral Psychology.

She is the developer of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) a treatment originally developed for the treatment of suicidal behaviors and since expanded to treatment of borderline personality disorder and other severe and complex mental disorders, particularly those that involve serious emotion dysregulation. In comparison to all other clinical interventions for suicidal behaviors, DBT is the only treatment that has been shown effective in multiple trials across several independent research sites. It has been shown both effective in reducing suicidal behavior and cost-effective in comparison to both standard treatment and community treatments delivered by expert therapists. It is currently the gold-standard treatment for borderline personality disorder, a disorder with a 8-10 suicide rate that afflicts between 4-6% of the population.

Linehan is the founder and the convener of both the Suicide Strategic Planning Group and the DBT Strategic Planning Group. Both groups meet annually or bi-annually at the University of Washington. The goal of the suicide group is to jump start the building of a field of suicide treatment research. The further goal of both groups is to bring together both expert, new and potential treatment researchers to collaboratively evaluate the state of current research in the respective areas, chart necessary studies to advance the development of more effective treatments and build a rigorous and cohesive next generation of young clinical-scientists.

She has written four books, including two treatment manuals: Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment for Borderline Personality Disorder and Skills Training Manual for Treating Borderline Personality Disorder. She serves on a number of editorial boards and has published extensively in scientific journals.

Linehan is founder of Behavioral Tech LLC, a behavioral technology transfer group. She is also founder of Behavioral Tech Research, Inc., a company that develops innovative on-line and mobile technologies to disseminate science-based behavioral treatments for mental disorders.

Linehan was trained in spiritual directions under Gerald May and Tilden Edwards and is an associate Zen teacher in both the Sanbo-Kyodan-School under Willigis Jaeger Roshi (Germany) as well as in the Diamond Sangha (USA). She teaches mindfulness via workshops and retreats for health care providers.