

Mingling with eating disorders: Feasibility of an online RO DBT program for people with and without eating disorders



SCAN ME

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Introduction

While there are benefits of running group based treatments for people with eating disorders, there are known risks including:

- Impact of having role modelling disordered eating
- Difficulty with attendance and managing life roles
- May not address underlying individual factors maintaining an eating disorder.



Why RO DBT and what is it?

- Instead of targeting individual diagnoses, Radically Open Dialectical Therapy (RO DBT) aims to treat **underlying maladaptive overcontrol and loneliness**.
- RO DBT targets social-signalling, openness and flexible responding using a manualised individual and skills class approach.
- Since it's a relative newcomer, there is yet to be evidence for transdiagnostic skills classes that include people with and without eating disorders.

What is in an online RO DBT skills class?

*It's not a therapy group.
It's a tribe learning skills together.*

- 1.5 hour classes designed to teach key skills in a light-hearted irreverent way
- Homework is a critical component requiring a practice of skills learned
- The class is a tribe. Instructions are members of this tribe and do all activities including self-enquiry (This means we are disclosing things we are still working on!)

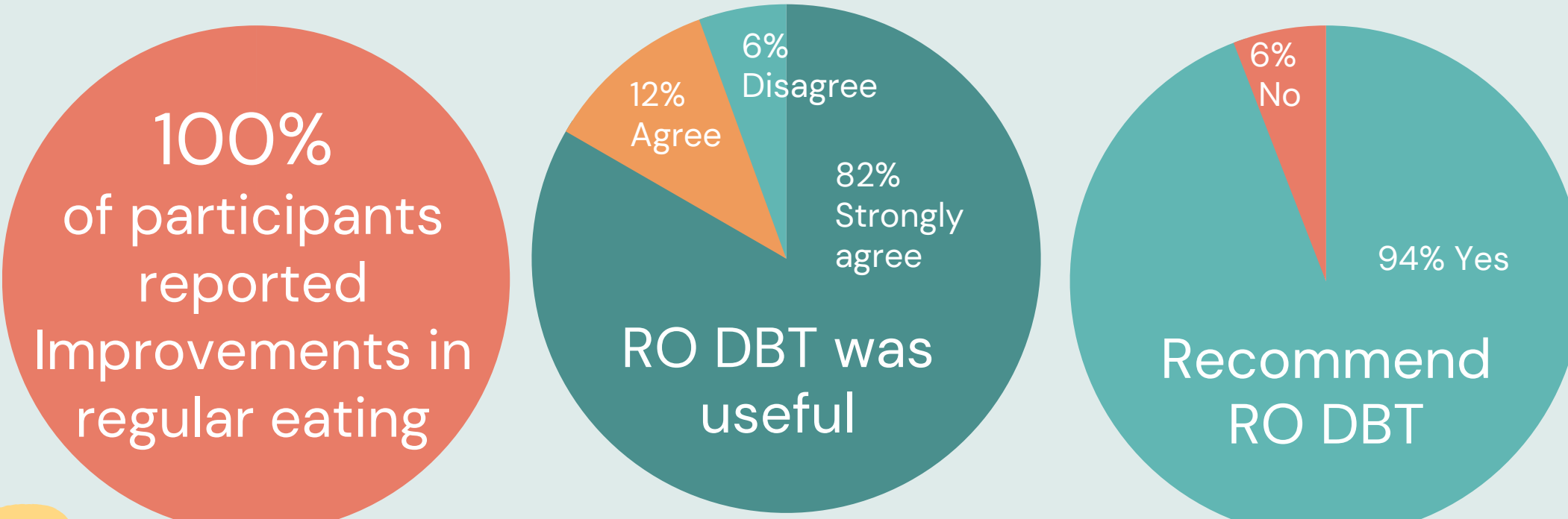
Methods

- Data is presented from 2 years of group sessions in a private practice.
- 36 participants (average age= 21.87).
- 38% (n = 14) of the participants reported the presence of an active eating disorder (AN= 8, ARFID=3)
- Participants were asked about regular eating before and after each module attended
- These classes did not attract Medicare rebates but some participants accessed NDIS and private health funding.

References

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Results



Feedback from participants

I have truly loved the RO DBT course, it didn't feel like a chore to attend, it was a group/ tribe I looked forward to being a part of each week. I'll really miss attending. I hope people enjoy it as much as I have. It's the organizers that made it special, it was always appreciated that the instructor felt like a member of the group and was vulnerable and honest with us. It's been an unforgettable experience, thank you so much for running the modules!

I've learnt more in these modules than I have in school. They have taught me valuable skills and broadened my worldly perspective a great deal. I feel less scared to do basic everyday things because of them. I've learnt that I alone don't have all the answers.

Discussion

- **Yes, it's feasible** to treat underlying maladaptive overcontrol for those with and without eating disorders via an online RO DBT skills class.
- Small sample size so unable to test effects of dosage of number of classes or modules or key mechanisms of change.

Lessons learned

- Treating underlying maladaptive control strengthens regular eating even though it is never mentioned in classes.
- Recruitment to group skills classes are difficult in private practice settings, including concerns of social anxiety.
- Scheduling enough time between classes is important to allow for practice of skills and completion of homework.
- Advocacy is needed to increase accessibility for all.

RO DBT skills classes

Karen runs adolescent (14-17) and adult (18-35) RO DBT online skills classes.

Clients do not need an active diagnosis or individual therapist.



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