With *DBT Skills Training Manual*, and *DBT Skills Training Handouts and Worksheets (both second editions)*, Marsha M. Linehan, PhD offers the field of mental health her opus work on Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). Linehan is the originator of DBT, which was historically the first empirically validated treatment for Borderline Personality Disorder, and other disorders with severe emotional dysregulation, and behavioral dyscontrol. In her second edition, published 22 years after the original, Linehan clearly intends to set down a lifetime of wisdom and expertise about the therapy she pioneered. Her work on this second, long anticipated edition greatly expands and codifies her written guidance on DBT, and achieves her goal of providing a manual that more directly articulates her views and guidance for this therapy.

In comparison with the first edition of the DBT Skills Training Manual (a much shorter and linearly structured manual), the second edition is more like a “Choose Your Own Adventure” guide to DBT. In many ways Linehan’s second edition more fully realizes the spirit of dialectics, in that it reflects the multiple approaches and therapy choices a skills trainer (Linehan’s word for the person providing a DBT skills group) can make over the course of group therapy. Even after several read-throughs, this expansion may be both liberating and over-whelming at the same time. Talking points for the skills lessons are greatly expanded; multiple examples and stories are provided to tailor skills lessons to individual groups and clients; and multiple group schedules and structures are offered to meet a variety of needs and therapy settings. There is even a separate DBT Skills Manual for Adolescents. This offers nearly endless opportunities for customization of DBT skills training therapy.

The number of options presented in the second edition may also be deeply disorienting for skills trainers who have been using the more linear approach of the now 20+ year old first edition. Additionally, newer therapists and skills leaders may not have the experience with providing DBT skills groups that would allow them to take full advantage of the incredible richness of what is offered in this manual. Either way, using the second edition manual will likely require more group preparation time and effort for most skills trainers. Linehan does try to ease this burden by reviewing the most significant changes in the initial pages of her manual (and this review is very helpful). However, most people would likely also benefit from seeking out training to help them better navigate all of the changes and updates effectively.

A final note about the DBT Skills Training Manual (Second Edition): This book contains a lifetime of wisdom and strategy about this therapy. It may be big (some might say unwieldy), but it is generally an absorbing read. Don’t be surprised if you pick it up just quickly to consult a page, and realize some time later that you are still reading it. Even casual referencing is likely to give you a new insight, or improve your skillfulness as a
therapist. Linehan has presented therapists with a “new classic” for their libraries, one that they can return to again and again.