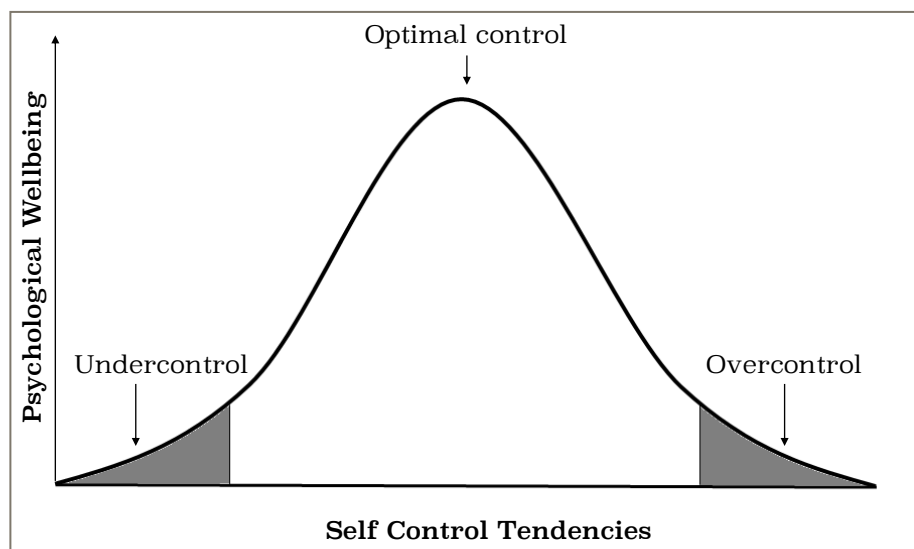


# OVERCONTROL

## An overview of the theory and therapy for overcontrol



## What is Overcontrol?

People who experience overcontrol have low emotional expression, a strong focus on performance and often feel lonely.

Often referred to as a “control freak”, overcontrolled people have a strong desire to be correct and to help others. They perform well, value rules and fairness, are detail orientated and often perfectionistic. They live up to their duty, frequently self-sacrificing to ensure that others are cared for (though they may secretly resent this), and can tolerate delayed gratification.

## The Neurobiosocial Theory of Disorders of Overcontrol (Lynch, 2018)

The personality style of overcontrol can often be seen in children from the age of 4. Thus, the development of overcontrol is a combination of temperament, parenting style and coping behaviours.

1

### NATURE

- ▶ Low reward sensitivity
- ▶ High threat sensitivity
- ▶ High inhibitory control
- ▶ High attention to detail

2

### NURTURE

- ▶ Self-control is crucial
- ▶ Mistakes are intolerable
- ▶ Hide any weakness
- ▶ Be prepared

3

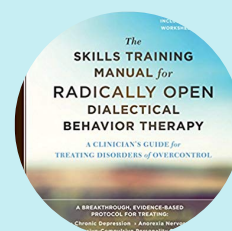
### COPING STYLE

- ▶ Mask inner feelings
- ▶ Compulsive striving
- ▶ Avoid unplanned risks
- ▶ Distress overtolerance



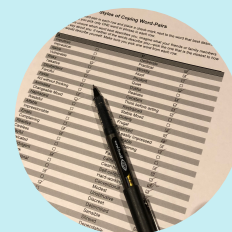
THEPSYCHCOLLECTIVE.COM

Check out our website for videos, curated content and more resources.



**RO-DBT was developed by Thomas Lynch**

He published his first two textbooks in 2018.



### OC-Assessment

Interested in your level of over-control? Check out the Styles of Coping Word Pairs at [ThePsychCollective.com](https://ThePsychCollective.com)

# The Problems with Overcontrol

## The hidden loneliness

While most people who present as over-controlled are often rewarded for their good performance, there can often be a strong sense of disconnection from the people around them. Over-controlled people are usually emotionally inhibited, aloof and are hard to get to know. They often feel lonely, struggle to connect with others and may be rejected or criticised for their inflexibility.

Because of this, a new form of therapy was developed to address the behaviours. Radically Open Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (RO-DBT) was created by Thomas Lynch with the aim of treating five problems that occur for people who are over-controlled:

1. Inhibited emotional expression
2. Over-cautiousness and hyper-vigilance
3. Rigid and rule-governed behaviour
4. Aloof and distant relationships
5. Envy and bitterness

## Radically Open Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (RO-DBT)

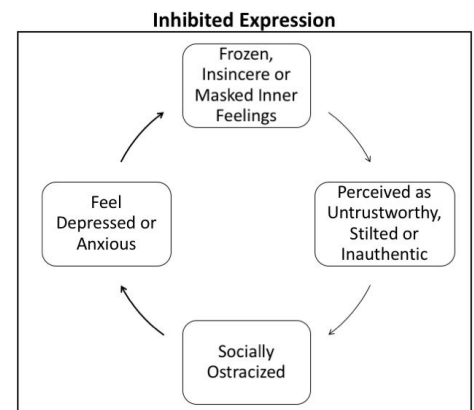
RO-DBT is based on evolutionary psychology, stipulating that everyone needs a tribe in order to survive. As overcontrolled people often feel ostracised (and may not know why), RO-DBT has three targets:

1. Increasing openness and receptiveness
2. Allowing flexible control
3. Developing intimacy and connectedness

In order to achieve this, RO-DBT has three main techniques:

1. **Self-Enquiry:** Learning how to develop their self-awareness to know how they are feeling.
2. **Social Signalling:** Learning how to express themselves and communicate with others, largely through non-verbal cues.
3. **Social Connectedness:** Learning how to use these skills to improve relationships with other people.

RO-DBT involves a lot of role-play, mimicry, spontaneous silliness and novel behaviours. It can be very challenging, like most forms of therapy, but worth it if it means getting the life you want.



## How to be Radically Open

- ▶ Try new things
- ▶ Listen attentively to others
- ▶ Be willing to hear other opinions
- ▶ Ask questions
- ▶ Increase novelty
- ▶ Make time for play
- ▶ Talk to safe people about your feelings
- ▶ Join a group to build your tribe
- ▶ Practise self-compassion
- ▶ Express your needs
- ▶ Practise self-enquiry
- ▶ Increase your body awareness to know how you are signalling to others

## Know someone who is over-controlled?

- ▶ Know that they are doing the best they can
- ▶ Don't tell them to try harder
- ▶ Let them be silly
- ▶ Help them to feel included

## REFERENCES

Image source: [radicallyopen.net](http://radicallyopen.net)

Lynch, T. R. (2018). *Radically Open Dialectical Behavior Therapy: Theory and Practise for Treating Disorders of Overcontrol*. Context Press: Oakland, CA.