

March is WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

This **Women's History Month**, we celebrate amazing women trailblazers in the worlds of intellectual/developmental disabilities and mental health. Learn more about how **their contributions have impacted countless lives.**



**PATRICIA S.
GOLDMAN-RAKIC**

“ The brain's capacity for storing information seems virtually unlimited.

Read more: go.nature.com/3MqpRNQ

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**MARSHA M. LINEHAN,
PHD, ABPP**

“ If I can make it, then you can make it.

Read more: nyti.ms/3MoYKmr

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Patricia S. Goldman-Rakic was a world-renowned, award-winning neuroscientist and professor at Yale University. Trained as a psychologist, her groundbreaking multidisciplinary research on brain and memory functions broadened the field's understanding of complex disorders like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and schizophrenia, which involve dopamine-containing cells in the brain.

Goldman-Rakic discovered that dopamine loss in the prefrontal cortex results in memory deficits. This revelation expanded knowledge of mental illness symptoms, transforming the field of neuropsychiatry. She also discovered the brain's frontal lobes, which affects high level cognitive functioning, such as personality and reasoning.

One of Goldman-Rakic's critical discoveries was that certain cells in the prefrontal cortex are dedicated to specific memory tasks. Like a computer chip, the mind's "working memory" retrieves data from other regions of the brain, keeps it for as long as necessary, and then stores it away when one's attention shifts to a new task.

The revolutionary psychologist and author Marsha M. Linehan, PhD, ABPP created Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) first to treat chronic suicidal behaviors and then eventually borderline personality disorder (BPD). DBT uniquely emphasizes balancing self-acceptance and validation with doing the work necessary to change negative thinking patterns and behaviors.

DBT can be very effective treatment for suicidal behaviors and other hard-to-treat mental health conditions that involve self-destructive behaviors or difficulty with regulating emotions. For example, suicidal borderline patients randomly assigned to DBT were half as likely to make suicide attempts as those receiving "treatment as usual," according to a study from the *Archives of General Psychiatry* (Vol. 63, No. 7).

Dr. Linehan's own long history of severe depression, suicidal thoughts and harmful behaviors led to her mission to help others. She eventually shared her story with *The New York Times* to reduce stigma and serve as a beacon of hope. She says, "I wanted to say something about my life; I have made it out of hell. I often think if I can make it, then you can make it."



**LOIS
CURTIS**

“ I feel good about myself. My life [is] a better life.

Read more: bit.ly/3vBvnr

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Lois Curtis is a visual artist, activist, and public speaker with schizophrenia and intellectual disabilities who is at the center of what many call "the most important civil rights decision for people with disabilities in history" – the Olmstead Decision. Throughout her childhood and adulthood, Curtis lived in state-run institutions. Her requests to live in the community were repeatedly denied, though she was capable of living independently, so she sued the state of Georgia in 1995, and her case went to the Supreme Court.

In 1999, The Supreme Court declared that unnecessary institutionalization is a form of segregation and illegal under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Court ruled that Curtis and other people with disabilities have the right to live independently in the community and be provided adequate supports.

Now, Curtis lives in an apartment with someone who helps her with daily living activities, and proactively uses other community supports. Her work has been displayed in art galleries across Georgia. In 2011, Curtis presented one of her self-portraits to President Barack Obama. She travels the country to advocate and share her story.



**JOAN B.
BEASLEY, PHD**

“ There is great joy in this work.

Read more: bit.ly/35wD47o

Photo by Unknown Author, 2021, via centerforstartservices.org

For more than 30 years, Joan Beasley, PhD has developed and implemented effective services and programs for people with disabilities and their families, both nationally and internationally, as the co-founder of the START (Systemic, Therapeutic, Assessment, Resources & Treatment) program model. START addresses disparities in access to quality care and provides community-based crisis intervention for people with co-occurring intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD) and behavioral health conditions.

START's person-centered and solutions-focused approach optimizes treatment, independence and community living, utilizing evidence-based practices and the positive psychology premise that all people have inherent strength and skills. Continuum is excited to be certified for START Coordination, and qualified to train other providers to learn to use the model for crisis intervention.

Findings show that many individuals in the START program who had been chronically institutionalized are successfully living in community settings with improved behaviors and reduced usage of emergency services. START was cited as a national model program in a report from the US Surgeon General.