Using DEAR MAN (DM)

Core concept: DEAR MAN is used to get wants and needs met.

The DEAR MAN skill focuses on us. We use DEAR MAN to get our wants and needs met, to say no, and to set boundaries. This skill is the DBT version of assertiveness.

The building blocks of DEAR MAN (described later in this section) work best together, but some of them can be used independently (e.g., you can Assert without using any other DEAR MAN building blocks). Use as much or as little of DEAR MAN as is required by the situation. To be most effective, approach DEAR MAN with the following core assumptions and guidelines:

Others Cannot Read Your Mind: This includes your closest friends and family. Assume that others are oblivious to you and that they cannot tell how you are feeling or know what you want or need; it may feel personal but it is simply reality. We often get frustrated when our wants and needs go unmet and blame others. We need to ask for our wants and needs, say no when appropriate, and maintain our own boundaries.

Effective Communication of Your Wants and Needs Requires Words: Do not sigh, sulk, cop an attitude, get destructive, withdraw, or otherwise communicate without thoughtful words and expect it to work effectively. It is true that our behaviors communicate volumes, just not clearly.

DEAR MAN does not always work, even when done effectively: DEAR MAN increases the probability that you will get your wants and needs met, but it does not guarantee it.

You must be mindful of your DEAR MAN goals before you begin: Decide what is important and what is negotiable before you use DEAR MAN.

Remember to balance DEAR MAN with GIVE grounded in FAST: Attending to others (GIVE) makes them more willing to assist, accept it when you say no, and respect your boundaries. Keep track of priorities, goals, and values in relationships (FAST).