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).
DEAR MAN Factors to Consider

Core concept: Consider factors that can increase your effectiveness with using DEAR MAN.

Be in WISE MIND: Wise Mind is essential for the effective use of DEAR MAN. If you are not in Wise Mind, consider soothing your emotions before using DEAR MAN in most cases. (Sometimes using DEAR MAN based in emotion mind is needed, e.g., if safety is an immediate issue.)

Use GIVE First: Start an interaction with GIVE to increase your effectiveness. Others are more receptive when you consider their feelings, point of view, and situation. GIVE can open doors for using DEAR MAN.

Think About Timing: It’s been said that “timing is everything.” They also say “There’s no time like the present.” Both of these sayings have truth. Consider whether the timing of your use of DEAR MAN seems to favor it, but do not use timing as an excuse to put off using DEAR MAN when you need to, especially if the situation is time sensitive.

Direct DEAR MAN Appropriately: Make sure you speak to someone who can actually respond to your use of DEAR MAN. Sometimes it is difficult to predict if someone will respond well to your use of DEAR MAN. Start where you can and be respectful at all times, then move on to a different person if your use of DEAR MAN is not working. Remember that even if one person may not be able to help you when you use DEAR MAN, he or she might have influence with the next person you address.

Do Not Give Up: DEAR MAN is a difficult skill that varies in its effectiveness. Practice it in everyday situations and you will improve your overall assertiveness.
Guidelines for Objectives Effectiveness: Getting What You Want (DEAR MAN)

A way to remember these skills is to remember the term DEAR MAN:

Describe
Express
Assert
Reinforce
(Stay) Mindful
Appear Confident
Negotiate

D: Describe
Describe the current SITUATION (if necessary). Stick to the facts. Tell the person exactly what you are reacting to.

"You told me you would be home by dinner but you didn't get here until 11."

E: Express
Express your FEELINGS and OPINIONS about the situation. Don't assume that the other person knows how you feel.

"When you come home so late, I start worrying about you."

Use phrases such as "I want" instead of "You should," "I don't want" instead of "You shouldn't."

A: Assert
Assert yourself by ASKING for what you want or SAYING NO clearly. Do not assume that others will figure out what you want. Remember that others cannot read your mind.

"I would really like it if you would call me when you are going to be late."

R: Reinforce
Reinforce (reward) the person ahead of time (so to speak) by explaining positive effects of getting what you want or need. If necessary, also clarify the negative consequences of not getting what you want or need.

"I would be so relieved, and a lot easier to live with, if you do that."

Remember also to reward desired behavior after the fact.

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(Stay)

**M**indful

Keep your focus ON YOUR GOALS.
Maintain your position. Don't be distracted. Don't get off the topic.

"Broken record": Keep asking, saying no, or expressing your opinion over and over and over.
Just keep replaying the same thing again and again.

Ignore attacks: If another person attacks, threatens, or tries to change the subject,
ignore the threats, comments, or attempts to divert you.
Do not respond to attacks. Ignore distractions.
Just keep making your point.

"I would still like a call."

**A**ppear confident

Appear EFFECTIVE and competent.

Use a confident voice tone and physical manner;
make good eye contact.

No stammering, whispering, staring at the floor, retreating.

No saying, "I'm not sure," etc.

**N**egotiate

Be willing to GIVE TO GET.
Offer and ask for other solutions to the problem.
Reduce your request.
Say no, but offer to do something else or to solve the problem another way.
Focus on what will work.

"How about if you text me when you think you might be late?"

Turn the tables: Turn the problem over to the other person.
Ask for other solutions.

"What do you think we should do? . . . I can't just stop worrying about you [or I'm not willing to]."

Other ideas: