

What is DEAR MAN

DEAR MAN is an acronym used in DBT to help you with interpersonal effectiveness. This skill is used to help you ask for and get what you want in a healthy way that still holds space for the relationship you have with the other person. **DEAR MAN** helps you get clear on your objectives + ask for them in a direct way.

- Describe
- Express
- Assert
- Reinforce
- (stay) Mindful
- Appear Confident
- Negotiate

DEAR MAN Steps

- **Describe** - In this step, you simply describe the situation you are dealing with. When doing this, only state the facts. So, instead of saying “You hurt my feelings when you blew me off again,” say “Last night, we had plans to spend time together and you ignored those plans.” When you set up the conversation around the facts of the situation, rather than the emotions, you increase your chances of getting through to the other person.
- **Express** - This is the step where you can express your feelings about what’s going on. It’s important not to make any assumptions in this step. Don’t assume the other person knows your thoughts and feelings. Another tip for this step is to use “I” language instead of “You” language. Focus on your own feelings and express them without giving the other person a reason to be defensive. In the above example, you can say something like, “When you cancel our plans, I feel like I’m not a priority for you.”
- **Assert** - This step is about asking for what you want or firmly saying no. Remember, people can’t read your mind, so even if the conversation you are having is building to this point, it’s crucial to say your objective plainly. To continue the previous example, you can state, “Please let me know in advance when you can’t keep our plans.”
- **Reinforce** - Explain to the other person the positive outcomes that would come from them granting your request. You can describe the positive outcomes of them agreeing to what you want. You can continue the discussion from above with something like “If you can agree to this, I will feel less worried and frustrated.”

DEAR MAN Steps Continued

- **(stay) Mindful** - This step reminds you to keep the conversation on topic. Don't get derailed by arguments, attacks, or deflections. Calmly repeat your objective, over and over, if necessary. "Please let me know in advance when you can't keep our plans."
- **Appear Confident** - Even if you don't feel confident, do your best to project an attitude of confidence. Make eye contact with the person you're talking to. Stand tall. Try not to mumble. Remember, you need to believe that you deserve to have your needs met so that others will believe it too!
- **Negotiate** - The person you are talking to might not be willing or able to agree with your first request, but you may be able to come to a compromise. Sometimes you have to give something to get something. Ask them for a solution that would work for them. You can go back and forth until you've reached an agreement you are both comfortable with.

How does DEAR MAN Help?

DEAR MAN is a helpful tool to have in your back pocket because it can be really hard to stick up for yourself! It can also be frustrating when people can't read your mind or when you can't figure out the best way to communicate with someone. DEAR MAN allows you to present your objective in a simple, straightforward way.

It's also a good thing to consider when you plan to use DEAR MAN. Don't let waffling over the perfect moment hold you back from asking for what you need. There is something to be said for planning your conversation in advance, but don't let the need to control the interaction prevent you from using DEAR MAN effectively.

This isn't to say that it will work every time you try to use it. DEAR MAN is not an infallible skill, so sometimes using it won't work, but it is still worth a try.

What to do before you use DEAR MAN

Be in Wise Mind

Remember Wise Mind? Wise Mind is the place where your Reasonable Mind and your Emotion Mind overlap. This is the state of mind you want to be in when you use DEAR MAN.

Use GIVE first

GIVE is another acronym used in DBT. This is a skill that is used to help maintain your relationships. It stands for:

- (be) Gentle
- (act) Interested
- Validate
- (use an) Easy Manner

Basically, when you use this skill, you want to make sure you are thoughtful and considerate toward the other person. Act interested in what they are saying to you, and don't use the time when they are speaking to think of the next thing you're going to say. Hear them out fully. Once they've expressed themselves to you, validate their feelings and keep your mannerisms easy - give them a smile, check your body language, and soften your approach. Remember, you are using this skill because you want to maintain a relationship with this person, not ruin it.

GIVE is a great skill to use in tandem or just before you employ DEAR MAN. When you can set up your discussion in a respectful but firm way, you show the other person that even though you don't see eye to eye, you still respect each other.

Bill of Rights

If you're ever feeling unsure about using DEAR MAN, don't despair. It is a skill that takes practice. To boost your courage, you can repeat to yourself the reasons why it's appropriate for you to assert yourself in this way. You can say things like:

I have the right to be treated respectfully.

I have the right to form my own opinions.

I have the right to express my emotions.

I have the right to stand up for the things I believe in.

I have the right to disagree.

I have the right to have all the information I need before making an informed decision.

I have the right to take time + think things over.

I have the right to say no.

I have the right to ask for what I need AND for what I want.

I have the right to establish my own boundaries.

I have the right to be in Wise Mind when I have a conversation with someone.

I have the right to remove myself from conflict.

What other rights do you have? Make a list below: