

DBT Skills Group

- Goal: Learn DBT skills to help manage strong emotions, unhelpful behavior urges, improving relationships, and navigate stressful situations in your life, and to achieve readiness for trauma exposures
- Daily Format:
 - Brief mindfulness exercise
 - Review of previous day's skills practice
 - Learn and try out new skills
 - Assign outside practice



Mindfulness

Skill Practice Review: Mindfulness WHAT Skills

- Practice Observe, Describe, & Participate (remember, no multi-tasking!) using 1 of the following options
 - While washing dishes or completing some other chore
 - While doing something fun/pleasant
- Practice all 3 during moment of strong emotion, and notice the outcome



DBT Skills Categories:

Mindfulness

Distress Tolerance

Emotion Regulation

Interpersonal Effectiveness



DEAR MAN

Communication Styles

Passive

- Over-prioritize other person's needs or wants
- Treat own needs/wants as unimportant

Aggressive

- Over-express own needs/wants in a way that prevents the other person from being treated respectfully



Assertiveness
*is a tool to help us
communicate in a way that
helps us BALANCE respect for
our own needs with
respecting the other person*

DEAR MAN

- Tool to practice assertiveness
- Can help make request, say no, resolve conflict/make changes in relationships, set a boundary
- Like a recipe – might need to follow more precisely at first but in time these elements will come more naturally and you can weave them into interactions
- Acronym – DEAR is what we say, MAN is how we say it

Describe

- Describing the situation – facts, objective
- Nonjudgmental language
- Starts the conversation with a statement that both of you can agree with
- Ex) *I've noticed that you have called at night to ask me for a ride three times this week.*

Express Clearly

- Express clearly and directly how you feel or what you believe about the situation
 - Don't expect mind reading
 - How much vulnerable emotion you choose to share can depend on the person/context.
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- Ex) *"I'm getting home so late from work that it's already really hard for me to have time with my family, and I'm trying to protect the limited time I have."*
 - Ex) *"I've been noticing myself feel frustrated when you call to ask for a ride last-minute"*

Assert Wishes

- Asking concisely and clearly for what you need or say no directly
- Ask rather than demand (e.g., avoid “you should/you need to”)
- Try to be specific about what are asking for
 - “I can’t give you rides this often”
 - vs “I can’t give you a ride more than once a month”, “I can’t give you rides anymore”
- Ex) “I can’t give you a ride tonight.”
- Ex) “I can’t give you rides at night anymore. I might be able to give you rides on weekends sometimes if you let me know at least a day ahead of time.”

Reinforce

- Identify something positive or rewarding that would happen for the other person if they meet your needs
- Physically positive or look like expressing gratitude
- Ex) *I would really appreciate you understanding. I also wonder if it would be less stressful for you to have a way home that you know you can count on.”*

Stay Mindful

- Stay focused on objective
- Do not let other person's topic changes, attacks, or your own emotions distract you
 - Broken Record
 - Ignore attacks and diversions

Appear Confident

- Tone, physical manner
- Act like we deserve to make this request

Negotiate

- Offer alternative solutions
- Be willing to give to get
- Turn the tables – ask for their help in problem-solving

Practice

Stood up by friend – want a conversation with him about status

- D – You stood me up for the third time over the weekend.
 - E – It hurts my feelings and makes me feel self-conscious and unwanted.
 - A – We should have a discussion about our friendship. Also, in the future, I'd appreciate if you would text in advance if you are going to cancel.
 - R – I really enjoy our friendship and would like to figure out a way to work this out.
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- M – I want to focus on this discussion so we can figure out our next steps.
 - Appear Confident – saying how I feel directly instead of keeping quiet, head up, eye contact
 - Negotiate – Maybe we can schedule plans at a time when conflicts are less likely to come up.

Practice

Want to schedule a *family meeting* due to recent difficulties in communication with support person

- D –
 - E –
 - A –
 - R –
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- M –
 - Appear Confident –
 - Negotiate –

Practice with difficult convos

Apply DEAR MAN Skills

1. **Describe the current interaction.** If the “broken record” and ignoring don’t work, make a statement about what is happening between you and the person now, *but without imputing motives*.

Example: “You keep asking me over and over, even though I have already said no several times,” or “It is hard to keep asking you to empty the dishwasher when it is your month to do it.”

Not: “You obviously don’t want to hear what I am saying,” “You obviously don’t care about me,” “Well, it’s obvious that what I have to say doesn’t matter to you,” “Obviously you think I’m stupid.”
2. **Express feelings or opinions about the interaction.** For instance, in the middle of an interaction that is not going well, you can express your feelings of discomfort in the situation.

Example: “I am sorry I cannot do what you want, but I’m finding it hard to keep discussing it,” or “It’s becoming very uncomfortable for me to keep talking about this, since I can’t help it. I am starting to feel angry about it,” or “I’m not sure you think this is important for you to do.”

Not: “I hate you!”, “Every time we talk about this, you get defensive,” “Stop patronizing me!”
3. **Assert wishes in the situation.** When another person is pestering you, you can ask him or her to stop it. When a person is refusing a request, you can suggest that you put the conversation off until another time. Give the other person a chance to think about it.

Example: “Please don’t ask me again. My answer won’t change,” or “OK, let’s stop discussing this now and pick it up again sometime tomorrow,” or “Let’s cool down for a while and then get together to figure out a solution.”

Not: “Would you shut up?” “You should do this!”, “You should really calm down and do what’s right here.”
4. **Reinforce.** When you are saying no to someone who keeps asking, or when someone won’t take your opinion seriously, suggest ending the conversation, since you aren’t going to change your mind anyway. When trying to get someone to do something for you, you can suggest that you will come up with a better offer later.

Example: “Let’s stop talking about this now. I’m not going to change my mind, and I think this is just going to get frustrating for both of us,” or “OK, I can see you don’t want to do this, so let’s see if we can come up with something that will make you more willing to do it.”

Not: “If you don’t do this for me, I’ll never do anything for you ever again,” “If you keep asking me, I’ll get a restraining order against you,” “Gosh, you must be a terrible person for not doing this/for asking me to do this.”

Home practice ideas

- Identify a current or past situation in your life that DEAR MAN would apply to and practice writing out “DEAR” script for this situation
- Practice making one assertive request, e.g.:
 - Special request at restaurant
 - Ask someone you love to help you with something
 - Disagree with someone’s opinion
 - Ask for help in a store