Lesson 4-5 (Handouts & Worksheets)

DEARMAN

INTERPERSONAL
EFFECTIVENESS
The three commonly known DBT “Interpersonal Effectiveness” acronyms are each directed at decreasing interpersonal conflict, but each is directed at a specific effectiveness goal.

**D-E-A-R M-A-N** is most useful to obtain the goal of Objectiveness Effectiveness, the most encompassing of the three. It focuses on clarifying what is wanted from an interaction as well as the skills needed to achieve this goal.

In simple language, **“How to get someone to do what you want”**.

**G-I-V-E** is aimed more at Relationship Effectiveness as the main goal. It emphasizes how to skillfully interact with the other person in a way that the relationship is preserved, perhaps even improved.

In simple language, **“How to keep a good relationship”**.

**F-A-S-T** is directed at Self Respect Effectiveness. If your highest goal is to maintain or increase your Self-Respect, the skills in FAST are aimed at helping you to achieve that. This is concerned with maintaining your values and beliefs so that you can still feel good about yourself after the interaction.

In simple language, **“How to keep your self-respect”**.

This lesson will focus on **D-E-A-R M-A-N** which is directed at the Objectiveness Effectiveness Goal:

- D – Describe
- E – Express
- A -- Assert
- R -- Reinforce
- M – Mindful *(stay mindful)*
- A – Appear *Confident*
- N – Negotiate

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D-E-A-R M-A-N

D-E-A-R M-A-N is a DBT acronym that was developed to help people remember the importance of using effective communication as a means to build healthier relationships. It is a reminder of how to get needs met in a healthy manner. If we are to have satisfying relationships, it is important to feel capable and competent in our interactions with others. It is important in all of our relationships that we feel comfortable in our ability to communicate our needs and expectations.

When communication is not clear, direct, and effective, relationships suffer. Lack of effective communication leads to misunderstandings, unmet needs, and resentment. Our struggle to communicate our wants and needs or to set up boundaries in our relationships can play out in many different ways, many of which can add further stress to our relationships.

A lot of us have mixed feelings about asking others to do something for us. Maybe we feel inadequate if we need to ask someone for help. Perhaps we feel guilty, believing that we are being a burden on others if we ask. We may feel anxious about the prospect of being turned down if we ask something of another. Some of us may worry that if we ask for something, it will open a door for the other person to make a request of us that we do not want to agree to. Any factor leading us to not communicate our needs can result in us bottling up our frustrations and unmet needs until they boil over to the point that we lash out.

Many of us find it difficult and awkward to respond with the answer “No” when someone asks something of us. Perhaps we have been programmed to be a pleaser, or find it easier to be passive or manipulative in communicating our desires and wishes.

Some people might act out indirectly; withholding what the other wants or needs to attempt to force someone to see that their needs are met. Some people might act out on the opposite end of the spectrum behaving in a more emotional manner, perhaps becoming overly aggressive or confrontational. Both of these prove to be ineffectual behaviors, either trying to force someone else to meet our needs or sacrificing our needs for our emotional state. Acting out in either direction wreaks havoc on our relationships.

You can use “DEAR MAN” to resolve a conflict or make a request in a respectful and effective way that maintains a relationship. As you practice these skills you’ll find that having hard conversations becomes easier over time.

D – Describe
E – Express
A -- Assert
R -- Reinforce
M – Stay Mindful
A – Appear Confident
N – Negotiate

“This DBT acronym offers a healthy dose of self-validation, which is critical for someone in early recovery who’s working to overcome feelings of shame and doubt.”

The DEAR MAN skills can be used to make nearly any difficult conversation a little easier. You’ll find that implementing these skills into your communications can reduce arguments and increase your understanding of one another.

Without open effective communication relationships can foster resentment, hurt feelings, and unmet needs. It is also important to remember when asking others for what we want: even the most skilled communicators are not guaranteed to always get their way. Effective communication is not only being able to ask, but also being able to graciously accept “no.”

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DESCRIBE

You can’t ask for what you want, if you can’t describe it

This skill could be seen as an extension of “homework” from our last assignment. If you cannot clearly explain what you want, and how it will help you for the other person to assist in making it possible to have that need met, you are not likely to be very successful in communicating those needs in your conversation.

Describe the situation in a clear, simple way. At this point in the conversation, you are not expressing your feelings, opinions, or asking for anything. You are setting up the conversation using the facts. Use specific, objective words to describe the situation as clearly as possible. Stick to the facts and use non-judgmental statements.

Describe to the other person exactly what you want, along with the details of the situation that led up to your request as precisely as possible, leaving little question as to what you want and need. By describing it factually, you’re making sure they understand the circumstances that are leading you to this request. Knowledge of your reasons for making the request, can play a part in the other person’s deliberations, and their decision on how to best respond.

When you begin your request / reply communication with a description, this can ensure that you and the other person are starting the conversation on the same page.

Clarify with the other person which things you can both agree on in terms of what is occurring, and what the situation is. This forces you both to be present and mindful and illustrates that opinions on either side are separate from the facts.

EXPRESS

After you have described the situation, you go on to say what you think and how you feel about it. This is the step where you express your opinions, your perspectives, and how this situation affects you. Don’t assume that the other person knows how you feel. You can acknowledge your emotions and express vulnerability in an empowered way. This will help the other person understand where you’re coming from.

Part of learning how to effectively communicate, while still being intentional and mindful, involves using facial expressions, tone of voice, or gestures that capture the content and importance of your request. This can be done even while maintaining self-control, and not allowing our emotions to take control of the conversation. Don’t assume that the other person knows how you feel.

Defining your feelings as separate from the facts tends to foster more compassion and cuts out some of the useless arguing that can happen in conversations where the facts and emotions seem so mixed that they appear inseparable. This allows an opportunity for self-validation as well.

Expressing how you’re feeling using “I” statements shows that you’re taking accountability for your own feelings, which can prevent the other person from going into defense mode. Remember to use “I feel” instead of “you make me feel.” Also utilize phrases such as “I want” instead of “You should,” -- “I don't want” instead of “you shouldn't”.

Don’t leave the other person guessing. Tell them clearly what you are feeling and why, but don’t allow your emotions to take away from the importance of the reason for the conversation.

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ASSERT

Now that you’ve clarified your position, it’s time to ask for what you want. Once you understand the opportunity or the challenge, it is time to present your solution.

To “assert” your needs means that you are asking for what you want in a clear, precise, and effective way. Balance is critical here between the goal of asserting your needs and avoiding aggressiveness or passive aggressive behaviors.

Be assertive even if you don’t feel assertive. Use an even tone of voice, make eye contact, and don’t threaten or belittle. Work towards finding your own balance between asserting your needs and staying away from aggressiveness, including passive aggressiveness.

Don’t hint or allude to what you want. It may seem obvious to you, but the other person involved may not have any idea what you want. Possibly they are unclear as to exactly what you are asking for. Any unclear expectation is a major source of friction in relationships. Take the ambiguity out of the situation and ask directly and clearly.

You can also “assert” your stance by saying “no” firmly in response to an undesired request made of you.

Do not assume that others will figure out what you want. Remember that others cannot read your mind.

REINFORCE

Relationships are built on reciprocity which tends to occur naturally. If someone does us a favor, we’re more likely to do them a favor in return.

Be sure that the other person understands exactly why responding favorably to your request is effective and beneficial for them as well as for you. As you work towards getting what you want and need, describe why the other person would benefit from helping you. Other people want to feel good about complying to requests rather than being left with the feeling that they are being coerced into meeting demands.

Remind them of the anticipated benefits associated with the solution you’ve proposed, but take care not to offer reinforcing rewards that are not reasonable to expect (or that you are unlikely to follow through with). Be true to your word.

“Reinforcing” in this skill reminds the person that something’s in it for them too, even if the benefits are the avoidance of the negative consequences of you not getting what you want or need. Sometimes what you are requesting, is for the other person to not do something you don’t want - or to stop doing it.

If they know what’s in it for them, people are more likely to respond in the way we want them to respond. If not, reinforce how responding is a positive decision in general.

Remember to reward desired behavior after the fact. If we reward a behavior, we tend to see an increase in frequency and can create a relational bond.

Always follow through with promised rewards.
Stay MINDFUL

Be present in the moment. Stay focused on the present conversation. Try not to become distracted by things going on around you, rather be intentional with your communication, keeping your goals in the forefront of your attention.

It is easy to get distracted, especially if the topic is uncomfortable. Unfortunately, when the conversation goes off in a different direction you reduce your chance of getting what you are requesting. Stay the course with your objective and don’t get off track by getting involved in other discussions at this time. If the other person takes the conversation in a different direction it is your job to bring it back to working toward a resolution.

This is not the time to bring up past grievances or get sidetracked by them. Don’t get carried away by intense emotions and don’t engage the other person if they respond with aggression or defensiveness. Avoid invalidating the other person as well.

Mindfulness is all about paying attention to biases and noticing intense feelings. Rather than counter responding with intensity, practice opposite action, radical acceptance, and mindful breathing. Maintain your focus.

• "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 attempt to divert you. Do not respond to attacks. Ignore distractions. Just keep making your point.

Staying focused until you’ve reached a resolution increases your chance for success.

APPEAR Confident

When you appear confident, it sends the message to the other person that what you’re requesting shouldn’t be difficult to agree to. If you are having trouble believing in your request so will other people. Your confidence also makes you seem like a harder person to turn down.

Even if you feel nervous or unsure of yourself, present yourself as though you feel confident. Practice self-validation as you imagine yourself as competent, confident, and fully deserving of what you need or desire. If you have trouble doing this, try to imagine someone you know who possesses this quality. How would they be in this situation?

Speak with a confident tone of voice, loud enough to be clearly heard. Maintain direct eye contact. Hold your head high, sitting or standing straight. This may be something you need to practice so that you’re prepared for situations that call for DEAR MAN. In preparation, try a Superman pose, with elbows bent, hands resting on hips, and head held high.

You can also use positive self-validation to help yourself feel more confident.
NEGOTIATE

When our request cannot be met, or it is not agreed to in the way we desire, there frequently is a way to meet halfway. You might need to alter your request to make it more appealing to the other person. Often two people can find a solution that is “good enough” without either party having to compromise their values or go beyond their personal boundaries.

Have a conversation about how you might be able to resolve the problem together, in a way that will work for you both. A big part of negotiating is about respecting other people’s limits. One of the most important aspects of any relationship is hearing each other out, then accommodating one another as much as possible.

When the other person sees that you are capable of negotiating, they are more likely to view you as a reasonable person. Willingness to negotiate shows that you care about their feelings and opinions as well as your own. A positive result of this is that it is more likely that future interactions with this person will be effective and successful.

When you say no to a request that would require you go beyond your boundaries or against your values, negotiating doesn’t mean you give in. You can still say “no”, but offer to do something different, or look for another way to solve the problem. Focus on what can work.

If you hit a brick wall (an impasse in negotiations) “Turning the Table” may be the most effective means of solving the problem. “Turn the Table” – turn the problem over to the other person. Ask them what they would do if they were the ones in your situation.

Think of the negotiation process as a bonding experience rather than a battle of wills.

PRACTICE

It takes both time and practice to learn how to stand up for what we need while mindfully respecting the needs of others. Remember to be kind to yourself if some of these skills don’t come natural to you. Many of us have spent years learning ineffective and unhealthy relationship patterns and habits from our original family and other life experiences.

When used effectively, DEARMAN skills can help you express your needs and wishes clearly. These interpersonal skills remove the misunderstandings and stress that occur when the other person has to “read your mind”. They will enable you to ask for what you need respectfully while considering the other person’s feelings. Learning these skills can improve your life and preserve relationships while increasing the likelihood of positive results in any type of interpersonal interaction.

This is a skill that needs practice. Try using this skill to make non-emotional requests at first. Remember to practice compassion for yourself if the skills are new to you. This is about practice, not perfection.

The important thing is that you are making a choice today to learn a new (more effective) way to communicate.

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D-E-A-R-M-A-N
WORKSHEET

DESCRIBE:
1) If you have decided to make a request of another person (or to respond with “No” to a request that was made of you), what were the FACTS of the situation that lead up to that decision?

______________________________________________________________________________

2) Do the facts of the situation explain the reason for your request or response?
   Yes   No - If not, what is the reason?

______________________________________________________________________________

3) Which things can you both agree on in terms of what is occurring and what the situation is?

______________________________________________________________________________

EXPRESS:
4) How is this situation affecting you emotionally?

______________________________________________________________________________

5) Which personal opinions and beliefs influence your feelings about the situation?

______________________________________________________________________________

6) Using an “I Statement” describe what you feel or want.

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

ASSERT:
7) Precisely what do you want? Explain exactly and clearly what you want (what you are requesting, or why you are saying “no” to a request).

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

(continued)
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REINFORCE:
8) How will the other person involved benefit by agreeing to what you want? ______
_____________________________________________________________________________

9) If there is not a direct rewarding reinforcement for them, what can you offer in
exchange to make it more appealing to them to agree? ____________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

10) How do you plan to follow through with what you promised in exchange for
getting what you want? ____________________________

MINDFUL:
11) Do you have past grievances with the other person? ____Yes ____No
What subjects do you need to be mindful not to
engage in during this conversation?
_____________________________________________________________________________

12) If the other person becomes intensely emotional, defensive, or aggressive. how can
you respond that will keep the emotional intensity under control? ______________
_____________________________________________________________________________

13) How can you remain mindful of the conversation? ____________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

APPEAR CONFIDENT:
14) What does “confident” look like to you? ____________________________

15) How can you plan ahead to be assertive, without becoming aggressive? _______

_____________________________________________________________________________

NEGOTIATE:
16) What are you willing and able to give to come up with a mutually satisfactory
solution to the situation? ____________________________

17) Is there something involved in this situation that you are not willing to sacrifice (or
cannot give without sacrificing your values?) ____________________________

18) Is there another workable solution? ____________________________
**D-E-A-R-M-A-N**

| **Describe** | Describe to the other person exactly what you want, along with the details of the situation that led up to your request as precisely as possible, leaving little question as to what you want and need. Clarify with the other person which things you can both agree on in terms of what is occurring, and what the situation is. This forces you both to be present and mindful and illustrates that opinions on either side are separate from the facts. |
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Bibliography


