

DEAR MAN SKILL

A Practical Communication Guide

A DBT interpersonal effectiveness worksheet to support clearer communication, healthier boundaries, and reduced conflict in difficult conversations.

What is DEAR MAN

DEAR MAN is a structured DBT skill used to express needs, set limits, and communicate clearly while staying calm and goal-focused.

The DEAR MAN Skill: Steps and Practice

1. Describe

State only the observable facts of what happened. No blame or interpretation.

Practice prompts:

- "Yesterday when our plans changed..."
- "This morning you stopped replying..."

2. Express

Share how the situation made you feel using simple, direct emotion words.

Practice prompts:

- "I felt confused."
- "It left me feeling disconnected."

3. Assert

Say exactly what you want or need, without softening or apologising for it.

Practice prompts:

- “I need clearer communication when plans change.”
- “I’d like a quick message before stepping away from the conversation.”

4. Reinforce

Explain how cooperation benefits both people or the situation.

Practice prompts:

- “It helps me stay grounded when I know what’s happening.”
- “It makes things smoother for both of us.”

5. Mindful

Stay on topic. Ignore interruptions, distractions, or emotional bait.

Practice prompts:

- “I want to stay focused on the communication issue.”
- Repeat your request calmly if the conversation drifts.

6. Appear confident

Use a calm tone, slow pace, steady posture. Confidence increases effectiveness.

Practice prompts:

- Speak 10–20% slower.
- Relax shoulders and keep voice even.

7. Negotiate

Be willing to find a compromise if needed.

Practice prompts:

- “What would work for you?”
- “If not that, can we try this instead?”

DEAR MAN SCRIPT EXAMPLE

Describe: “When plans changed yesterday without a message...”

Express: “...I felt unsure and disconnected.”

Assert: "I need clearer communication when plans shift."

Reinforce: "It helps me stay steady and reduces conflict."

Mindful: "I want to keep focused on this."

Appear confident: *slow breath, steady tone.*

Negotiate: "What's a realistic way we can handle this?"

When to Use DEAR MAN

- Asking for a need to be met.
- Setting a limit or boundary.
- Repairing miscommunication.
- Reducing conflict or preventing escalation.

Common mistakes

- Adding blame during Describe.
- Over-explaining in Assert.
- Getting pulled into side arguments.

Your DEAR MAN PRACTICE

- Describe:
- Express:
- Assert:
- Reinforce:
- Mindful plan:
- Confident posture:
- Negotiate options:

Additional Resources

DBT Support Hub

Psychoeducation and peer support only – not therapy, diagnosis, or crisis care.

If you cannot stay safe:

- Call 000 (Australia)
- Lifeline 13 11 14
- Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467

- 13YARN 13 92 76