



DEAR MAN

Effective interpersonal communication is key to healthy relationships. The DEAR MAN skill provides a framework to ask for what you want or to maintain a boundary in a clear way.

DESCRIBE

Objectively describe the situation/need/request by sticking to the facts and avoiding subjective information (like your opinion). For example, let's say a person has crossed a boundary by borrowing something without your permission.

You might say: "You borrowed X yesterday. I'd like to talk about that, please."

EXPRESS

Clearly assert your feelings and emotions about the situation, without assuming the other person knows how you feel. They cannot read your mind, so you'll need to let them know about your emotions.

For example, you can say: "I felt that by borrowing X, you crossed a boundary, and that made me feel X."

ASSERT

Use assertive language to describe what you are asking for, or saying no to, as clearly and directly as possible, while respecting the other person.

For example, you can say: "In the future, I'd like you to ask before borrowing or using X without my permission."

REINFORCE

Clearly tell the other person the benefits (or consequences) of agreeing to or not agreeing to your request, and how you are going to follow through with it.

For example, let's say they borrowed your car.

You can say: "If you take my car again without my permission, I will ask for you to return my keys and take your name off the insurance so that you cannot use the car."

MINDFUL

Stay present in the situation by being mindful of your tone of voice, posture, and body language, while staying focused on the objective of the conversation.

Talk calmly and at a reasonable tone of voice. Be mindful of not reacting to the person if they become unreasonable and start to threaten, distract, or avoid you, or become defensive.

APPEAR

Maintain an appearance of confidence, assertiveness, and competence by maintaining the same neutral tone of voice, eye contact, and assertive posture.

Avoid looking away, retreating, crossing your arms, stammering, or silencing yourself (even if it does feel uncomfortable).

NEGOTIATE

Be open to feedback about your request or negotiation. Be willing to compromise, unless it is something you feel uncomfortable compromising on, like a value or personal boundary.

For example, they may have a valid reason for using your car, but didn't communicate it. Now that you know, you can find a way that they can reasonably request the use of your car in the future by outlining what you feel is reasonable or unreasonable.



DEAR MAN Practice

Directions: Using the template below, plan out a situation in which you can use this skill. You can also talk this over with your therapist in your next session.

Describe the situation.

Express your feelings and request.

Assert your needs.

Reinforce the benefits and consequences of agreeing or disagreeing with your request.

Mindful: Keep focused on your objective, while maintaining your composure and not reacting to the other person.

Appear confident, competent, and effective, without retreating.

Negotiation: Be willing to negotiate or find a solution.