

# Interpersonal Skills: The Basics

**Interpersonal Effectiveness skills are not about the outcome.** Using Interpersonal Effectiveness skills is tricky, because these skills involve other people and we cannot control what others do. Using these skills makes getting the outcome we want *more likely*, but we only have control over our part of the relationship. This means that when we use Interpersonal Effectiveness skills, we may not get the outcome we want. It is important to give yourself credit for using skills, and not let the outcome determine if you are successful.

**Interpersonal Effectiveness skills can be used for my relationship with myself.** Interpersonal skills can also be used as Intrapersonal skills. *Intrapersonal* means the way you communicate with yourself. The longest and closest relationship you will have in your life is the relationship that you have with yourself, so it is important to attend to this relationship. Interpersonal skills can be used with other people but can also apply to the relationship that you have with yourself.

**It's Ok and normal to have needs and wants.** Everyone has needs and wants, and this is Ok and normal (Linehan, 1993b). You have the right to ask for what you need or want from others, and it is Ok to say no to others so that you can meet your own needs and wants. You can assert yourself and still be a good person.

**I have the right to say no.** Saying no can be difficult and scary. Even though it can be difficult, you have the right to say no if you want or need to. You may want to please people that you care about, but you do not have to please them all the time (Linehan, 1993b). Sometimes you will need to say no so that you can take care of yourself. You are just as important as everyone else. If someone gets upset with you for saying no, that does not mean that you should have said yes.

**It's Ok to be different from others.** It's Ok to have your own interests and likes, even if they are different from those of your friends or people around you. It is normal to want to fit in, but remember to be yourself, too.

## What Is Your Goal and Priority?

### **Keeping and maintaining healthy relationships (GIVE Skills)**

Question: How do I want the other person to feel about me?

*Example:* If I care about the person or if the person has authority over me, act in a way that keeps the person respecting and liking me.

### **Getting somebody to do what you want (DEAR MAN Skills)**

Question: What do I want? What do I need? How do I get it?  
How do I effectively say “no”?

*Example:* How do I ask for something, resolve a problem, or have people take me seriously?

### **Maintaining Your Self-Respect (FAST Skills)**

Question: How do I want to feel about myself after the interaction?

*Example:* What are my values? Act in a way that makes me feel positive about myself.

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## Getting Someone to Do What You Want: DEAR MAN Skills

Remember **DEAR MAN**:

Describe      Mindful  
Express      Appear Confident  
Assert      Negotiate  
Reinforce

- Describe:** Describe the situation. Stick to the facts. “The last three weekends, I have noticed you coming home after curfew.”
- Express:** Express your feelings using “I” statements (“I feel . . .,” “I would like . . .”). Stay away from “you should . . .”; instead, say, “When you come home late, *I feel*/worried about you.”
- Assert:** Ask for what you want or say “no” clearly. Remember, the other person cannot read your mind. “*I would like* you to come home by curfew.”
- Reinforce:** Reward (reinforce) the person ahead of time by explaining the positive effects of getting what you want. “I would be able to trust you more and give you more privileges if you stuck to our curfew agreement.”
- Mindful:** Keep your focus on what you want, avoiding distractions. Come back to your assertion over and over, like a “broken record.” Ignore attacks. “I know the other kids stay out later than you, *and* I would still like you to do your best to meet your curfew.”
- Appear Confident:** Make (and maintain) eye contact. Use a confident tone of voice—do not whisper, mumble, or give up and say “Whatever.”
- Negotiate:** Be willing to **GIVE TO GET**. Ask for the other person’s input. Offer alternative solutions to the problem. Know when to “agree to disagree” and walk away. “If you can do this for the next 2 weeks, then I will feel comfortable letting you stay out later for the party.”

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## Practice Exercise: DEAR MAN Skills

Due Date \_\_\_\_\_

Choose one situation during the week in which you used your DEAR MAN skills and describe below.

What happened? (Who did what? What led up to what? What is the problem?) \_\_\_\_\_

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What did you want (e.g., asking for something, saying "no," being taken seriously)?

Be specific: \_\_\_\_\_

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**DEAR MAN Skills used (write down *exactly* how you used each one):**

**Describe** (describe the situation; just the facts): \_\_\_\_\_

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**Express** (feelings): \_\_\_\_\_

**Assert:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Reward:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mindful:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Appear confident:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Negotiate:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What was the result of using your DEAR MAN skills?** \_\_\_\_\_

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