

## **Handout: Interpersonal Effectiveness with DEAR MAN**

Interpersonal effectiveness is the ability to communicate clearly, assertively, and respectfully while also balancing personal needs and relationship dynamics. The DEAR MAN technique (which is spelled out below) is a structured communication approach from DBT that offers a clear framework for effective, balanced dialogue—especially in emotionally charged or sensitive conversations.

For example, if someone feels overwhelmed by frequent texts from their partner during work hours, they might use interpersonal effectiveness skills to set a boundary respectfully: “I really appreciate your messages, but I need to focus on work during the day. Can we agree to text during breaks or after work instead?”

By using DEAR MAN, requests are framed with clarity, emotional expression, and a willingness to negotiate, making it more likely to be received positively:

- **Describe:** State the situation factually without judgment or exaggeration. (e.g., “I’ve been getting a lot of texts while I’m at work.”)
- **Express:** Share your emotions about the situation without blaming. (e.g., “I feel overwhelmed because I want to respond but also need to stay focused.”)
- **Assert:** Clearly state your request in a way that is reasonable. (e.g., “I’d like us to limit texting during my work hours and connect during my breaks instead.”)
- **Reinforce:** Highlight a positive outcome if your request is met. (e.g., “That way, I can give you my full attention when we do talk.”)
- **Be Mindful:** Stay focused on the goal and avoid getting sidetracked. (e.g., “I know this is just about our texting, and I really appreciate you understanding.”)
- **Appear confident:** Maintain self-assurance even if you feel nervous. (e.g., “This is important to me, and I hope we can agree on something that works for both of us.”)
- **Negotiate:** Be open to compromising while standing by your core needs. (e.g., “If something urgent comes up, you can message me of course, and I’ll check in when I can.”)

Encouraging clients to practice interpersonal effectiveness skills in their digital and face-to-face interactions can strengthen relational trust and clarity, making it easier to navigate boundaries, expectations, and emotional needs with mutual understanding.