

# DEAR MAN Skill

## A Tool for Asking for What You Need and Setting Boundaries

The DEAR MAN skill is a communication tool that can help you express your needs more clearly, set boundaries, and build healthier relationships. Many people who struggle with people-pleasing find it helpful because it provides a simple structure for speaking up while still being respectful.

**D – Describe** the situation. Focus on what actually happened rather than assumptions or interpretations. This helps the other person understand what you're responding to.

**E – Express** how the situation made you feel or what you think about it. People can't always tell how something affected you unless you say it directly.

**A – Assert** yourself by asking for what you need or say no if something doesn't work for you. Being clear and direct can feel uncomfortable at first, but it helps prevent misunderstandings.

**R – Reinforce** (reward) the person ahead of time by sharing why your request is important and how it could improve things. This helps the other person understand your perspective and the impact the situation has on you.

**M – Mindful** stay focused on what you're trying to communicate. It's easy for conversations to shift or become emotional, but try to gently bring the conversation back to your point if needed.

**A – Appear** confident and effective. Try to communicate in a calm and steady way. Even if you feel nervous, using a confident tone and body language can help your message come across more clearly.

**N – Negotiate** be open to finding a middle ground when it makes sense. Healthy communication often involves working together to find a solution that respects both people's needs.

Note: This handout is inspired by the DEAR MAN skill from Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), developed by Marsha Linehan, and adapted for this support group.

