

Interpersonal Effectiveness

Slide 1

Hello and welcome to UHCL Counseling Center's online Dialectical Behavioral Therapy skills group titled "All the Skills". Dialectical Behavioral Therapy is an empirically supported therapy model. Dialectical behavioral therapy, or DBT, is influenced by the philosophical perspective of dialectics, which means two things can seem opposite but can both be true and coexist at the same time. In DBT, the core is to balance acceptance and change, so there are sets of acceptance skills as well as change skills. Skills are further divided into four skill modules. These modules are mindfulness, emotional regulation, interpersonal effectiveness, and distress tolerance. The purpose of the online all the skills group is to teach you DBT skills. We hope these skills will help you live in the moment, develop healthy ways to cope with stress, manage your emotions, and improve your relationship with others. Today's module, interpersonal effectiveness, is designed to help you improve your relationship with others. You may watch this module independent of the other modules or following some of the other modules. Remember that during today's module you may pause, rewind, or fast forward the video as needed or watch it as many times as you desire.

Slide 2

Positive relationships are critical to building a life worth living, so let's discuss a little bit of interpersonal effectiveness.

Slide 3

Important things to recognize in our relationships. Before we begin, there are two things to discuss. The first is safety and trust. Take a moment and ask yourself what does safety and trust mean to you, and how can you achieve it in your relationships? There are several things to consider for safety and trust. One, attending to relationships. Don't let hurt some problems build up in your relationship. Use your relationship skills to head off problems as you notice them. In terms of safety, please end any hopeless relationships as they occur, and think about your contribution to a hopeless relationship. You want to resolve conflicts before they get overwhelming. We also want to balance the wants and should in our relationship. Look at what you do because you're doing it and want to do it. And how much you do it because it has to be done and what you should do. Try to keep the number of each in balance, even if you have to: Get your opinion to be taken seriously. Get others to do things in relationships or say no to unwanted requests. Ultimately, in building safety and trust, we hope to build mastery and self-respect. We hope to interact in a way that makes you feel competent and effective, not helpless or overly dependent. We hope you're able to stand up yourself, your beliefs and your opinions, and follow your values. The other thing to keep in mind for relationships is dialectics. Remember, there is no one right way, no absolute truth. The only constant relationships is change. That means that both you and the people in your relationships can be simultaneously both wrong and right.

Slide 4

Our goal for this module is to be more effective in attaining interpersonal goal and there are three ways that we do this. The first is getting your objectives or needs met. Ask yourself: what results or changes do I want from my interactions with people in my relationships? What do I have to do to get it? A key to getting what you want in a relationship is to assume that other people do not know what you want.

There are several skills that may help here. One – describe. Being able to describe the situation. Express your feelings about the situation. Assume no one knows how you feel. Saying “I want”, “I don't want” rather than “I need” or “you should” or “I can't”.

The second goal in a personal effectiveness is to get or maintain a relationship. Ask yourself: How do I want the other person in this relationship to feel about me after our interactions? What I have to do to get or keep this relationship? We're going to work on being courteous (that is, not attacking, threatening or judging people in our relationships), acting interested in individuals in our relationships, and validating the other people in our relationships.

And then lastly, we hope in this module you'll continue to keep an improved self-perspective and liking for yourself. Ask yourself: How do I feel about myself after these interactions? What do I need to do to feel positive about myself?

Slide 5

There are several barriers to interpersonal effectiveness or factors that can reduce our interpersonal effectiveness. On this slide will go over the top five barriers you may encounter.

The first is skills or lack thereof. You may not actually know what to say or how to react. You don't know how you should behave to achieve your objectives and you might not know what will work in a relationship.

The second barrier is thoughts and myths about relationships, specifically worry thoughts. Worry thoughts get in the way of your ability to act effectively. You have the ability, but your worry thoughts interfere with doing or saying what you want. These can be worries about bad consequences, i.e. the other person won't like me or they may think I'm stupid. Worries can be worry about whether you deserve to get what you want? An example of this would be I'm such a bad person, I don't deserve this. Or even worries about not being effective and calling yourself names. These are thoughts such as I won't do it right, I'll probably fall apart or I'm so stupid.

The third barrier to interpersonal effectiveness, our emotions. Our emotions, such as anger, frustration, fear, or guilt can get in the way of our ability to act effectively. You may have the ability, but your emotions make you unable to do or say what you want. Emotions, instead of skills, may control what you say or do in this relationship.

Our fourth barrier is indecision. Perhaps you can't decide what to do or what you really want. You have the ability, but your indecision gets in the way of doing or saying what you want. You may be ambivalent about your priorities, or perhaps can't figure out how to balance between asking too much versus not asking for anything at all, or balancing, saying no to everything, versus saying yes to everything.

Our last barrier to interpersonal effectiveness, is the environment. Characteristics of the environment can make it impossible for even a skilled person to be effective. Examples of these include when other people will be threatened or have some reason for not liking you if you get what you want. Or, when other people won't give you what you need or let you say no without punishing you unless you sacrifice some perspective. Take a moment to reflect on these five different barriers. If you're having interpersonal difficulties in your relationships, which of these barriers has been the root of that problem?

Slide 6

Before we move on to learning interpersonal skills, we'll check in. For all these skills, ask yourself two different questions. What specific results or changes do I want from these interactions in our relationship? And what do I have to do to get the results? What will work? We want to be effective communicators.

Slide 7

The first interpersonal skill we're going to learn is titled DEAR MAN. This helps us for our guidelines of getting what we want in relationships. Dear man stands for describing, expressing, asserting, reinforcing and staying mindful, appearing confident, and negotiate. Let's breakdown the acronym even further.

Describe. Describe the situation if necessary. Tell the other person what you're reacting to. Stick only to the facts and try not to distort or exaggerate the situation.

Express. Express your feelings and opinions about the situation. Always assume that your feelings and opinions are not self-evident. If needed, give a brief rationale. We want to use phrases such as "I want", "I don't want" or "I feel", "I don't feel" instead of "you should", "I can't", "you feel".

Assert. Assert yourself by asking for what you want or saying no clearly, assuming the others people in your life will not figure it out or not do what you want unless you ask. Always assume that others cannot read your mind, no matter how long you've been in this relationship. Don't expect others to know how hard it is for you to ask directly for what you want.

Reinforce. Reinforced or reward the person ahead of time by explaining the consequences. Tell the person the positive effects of getting what you want or need. Tell them, if necessary, the negative effects of you not getting it. Help the person feel good ahead of time for doing or accepting what you marked, and reward them afterwards.

After we complete the DEAR part, we want to stay mindful, confident, negotiating.

Mindful. We want to focus on you and your objectives. Maintain your position. Don't be distracted during the conversation.

Appearing confident. Appear effective and competent. Find and use a confident voice, tone and physical manner. That is, make good eye contact, try not to stammer, whisper, stare at the floor, retreating or saying you're not sure, etc. Remember, we don't actually have to feel confident in relationships to be effective communicators, we just have to appear confident.

Negotiate. Be willing to give to get. Offer and ask for alternative solutions to the problem. Consider reducing your request. Maintain no, but offer to do something else that can sell for problem one way or another. We want to focus on what will work between you and the people in your life. An example of this might be turning the tables. For example, turn the problem over to the other person, ask for an alternate solution. What do you think we should do? I'm unable to say yes in this situation and you seem to really want me to. What can we do here to negotiate? How can we cope, solve this problem together?

Slide 8

Our next interpersonal effectiveness skill is for keeping and maintaining relationships, and it's using the acronym GIVE. An easy way to remember this is to pair it up with our last skill. The dear man together would be dear man, give. We are going to be Gentle, Interested, Valid and use an Easy manner. Let's break this down further.

So, be gentle - be courteous and temperate in your approach. No attacks, no verbal or physical attacks. Do not hit or clench fists. Express anger directly. "I feel angry in this moment when you...". No threats, no manipulative statements, no hidden threats. No, "I'll kill myself if you..." Tolerate "no" to requests. Stay in the discussion, even if it gets painful, and exit gracefully if it becomes too much. No judging or sneering, no moralizing. We want to avoid statements such as "well, if you were a good person, you would...", or "you should", or "you shouldn't".

Acting interested. We want to listen and be interested in the other person. We want to listen to their point of view, opinion, reasons for saying no, who reasons for their requests of you. You want to try not to interrupt, talk over, etc. Want to be sensitive to the other person's desire to have a conversation at a later time and be patient. Want to face them as they're speaking. And try not to interrupt them.

Validate them. With actions and words we want to validate or acknowledge other persons feelings, wants, difficulties and opinions about situation. Ideally, we'll do this non-judgmentally. We can say out loud "I can understand how you feel about that and..." or "I realize this is hard for you and..." Another example would be "I see that you're busy and...". In using these kinds of statements, paired with our dialectics, we show that we understand their thoughts and feelings.

In all of this we can use an easy manner. For example, we can use humor to ease the persona for to be lighthearted. We can smile. Can we try and consider this more of a soft approach rather than a hard approach.

Slide 9

We previously covered two interpersonal skills. DEAR MAN for asserting your needs and GIVE for maintaining relationships. Let's talk about a guideline for keeping self-respect for yourself. We can use this skill fast, FAST. Put together with our previous skills, it would be dear man, give, fast.

You want to be Fair. Want to be fair to yourself and the other person in your relationship. Validate your feelings and the other persons as well. Both can be true. Remember our dialectics.

No Apologies. We don't want to be over apologetic. For example, we will not apologize for being alive or for making a request at all. Our request can be denied. That doesn't mean we apologize. No apologies for having your opinion or for disagreeing, and no invalidating validation to yourself or to your partner.

Stick to your values. Stick to your own values and be clear on what you believe on. Don't sell out your values or integrity for reasons that aren't very important. Be clear on what you believe is the moral valued way of thinking and acting, and stick to your guts.

Be Truthful. Don't lie, act helpless when you're not, or exaggerate. Try not to make up excuses in your relationship.

Slide 10

Remember when we discussed earlier that dialectical behavioral therapy, or DBT, is about acceptance and change. In our relationships, remember those dialectics - there's always more than one side to everything that exists. Look for both sides. You and the people in your relationships will each have a side, and then they'll be the third side. A co-created story together. Be aware that you and your relationships are connected. These relationships are meaningful for a reason. For that reason, don't be afraid to embrace change. Often negotiating and improving effectiveness involves changing- either behaviors or opinions. And remember the change is transactional. Just as you affect your environment, your environment can affect you. For example, just as you impact your relationships, your relationships can impact you. Ideally, these relationships are both directional. In this module, we discussed the DEAR MAN, GIVE, and FAST interpersonal skills for serving our needs, maintaining healthy relationships, and doing so respectfully for our self and in our partner. Thank you for joining us for this brief module on interpersonal effectiveness. Please see the other DBT modules if you'd like assistance on emotional regulation, distress tolerance, or staying present in the moment.