

DEAR MAN

Planning a conversation to ask for what you need

DEAR MAN is a Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) skill for asking for something, or saying no, clearly and respectfully. It gives hard conversations a simple structure, so you can stay steady when emotions run high. Page 2 is your plan.

WHAT IT'S FOR

DEAR MAN focuses on your **objective**: the outcome you want from the conversation. It doesn't guarantee a yes, but it gives you the best chance of being heard, while protecting the relationship and your self-respect.

USEFUL WHEN YOU WANT TO

- Ask for help, a change, or something you need
- Say no to a request, or set a limit
- Raise a problem without it turning into an argument
- Be taken seriously when you often give in or go quiet

The Seven Steps Four for what you say, three for how you say it

What you say



Describe

Set out the facts, briefly, without blame.



Express

Share how you feel, using "I" statements.



Assert

Ask clearly for what you want, or say no.



Reinforce

Explain what's in it for them.

How you say it



Mindful

Stay on your goal; calmly repeat it.



Appear confident

Steady voice, calm posture.



Negotiate

Be open to a workable middle ground.

A Worked Example How the steps fit together in one conversation

Situation: asking a manager to move a deadline after being given extra shifts.

D	Describe	"The report is due Friday, and this week I've also been asked to cover two extra shifts."
E	Express	"I'm worried that rushing it means it won't be the quality either of us wants."
A	Assert	"Could we move the deadline to next Wednesday?"
R	Reinforce	"That way you'll get a finished, checked report rather than a rushed draft."
M	Mindful	If the talk drifts: "I understand. I'd still like to ask about Wednesday."
A	Appear confident	Steady tone, eye contact, no over-apologising or trailing off.
N	Negotiate	"If Wednesday doesn't work, what would? I could send the first half on Friday."

Remember: a "no" isn't a failure. You can use the skill well and still not get what you asked for. Success means you asked clearly, kept your self-respect, and cared for the relationship.

Before You Start: Clarify Your Goals Most conversations have three

My objective

What exactly do I want to happen, or to say no to?

The relationship

How do I want them to feel about me afterwards?

My self-respect

How do I want to feel about myself afterwards?

My DEAR MAN Plan

Write it out, then practise saying it aloud

WHO I'M TALKING TO _____

WHEN _____

D

Describe

Just the facts: what happened, when. No judgements or "you always".

THE FACTS I'LL DESCRIBE

E

Express

"I feel... / I think...". Don't assume they already know.

HOW I FEEL ABOUT IT

A

Assert

Ask, or say no, directly. Don't expect them to read your mind.

WHAT I'M ASKING FOR, OR SAYING NO TO

R

Reinforce

Say how a yes helps them too, and thank them afterwards.

WHY IT'S WORTH IT FOR THEM

----- how I'll say it -----

M

Stay mindful

Keep to your goal. Calmly repeat it; don't take the bait if they change the subject.

MY "BROKEN RECORD" LINE

A

Appear confident

Even if you don't feel it: steady voice, eye contact, fewer apologies.

HOW I'LL HOLD MYSELF

N

Negotiate

Offer alternatives, or ask: "What would work for you?"

WHAT I COULD ACCEPT INSTEAD

READY TO GO?

- ☐ I know what I want from this conversation
- ☐ I've practised my key lines out loud
- ☐ I've thought about how they might respond
- ☐ I've picked a reasonable time and place
- ☐ I know what I'm willing to negotiate on

AFTERWARDS

How well did I stick to my plan?

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

What went well, whatever the outcome?

What would I try differently next time?
