



## **Guidelines for Objectives Effectiveness: Getting What You Want (DEAR MAN)**

A way to remember these skills is to remember the term **DEAR MAN**:

Describe  
Express  
Assert  
Reinforce  
(Stay) Mindful  
Appear Confident  
Negotiate

### **D**escribe

Describe the current SITUATION (if necessary). Stick to the facts.  
Tell the person exactly what you are reacting to.

“You told me you would be home by dinner but you didn’t get here until 11.”

### **E**xpress

Express your FEELINGS and OPINIONS about the situation.  
Don’t assume that the other person knows how you feel.

“When you come home so late, I start worrying about you.”

Use phrases such as “*I want*” instead of “*You should*,” “*I don’t want*” instead of “*You shouldn’t*.”

### **A**ssert

Assert yourself by ASKING for what you want or SAYING NO clearly.  
Do not assume that others will figure out what you want.  
Remember that others cannot read your mind.

“I would really like it if you would call me when you are going to be late.”

### **R**einforce

Reinforce (reward) the person ahead of time (so to speak)  
by explaining positive effects of getting what you want or need.  
If necessary, also clarify the negative consequences of not getting  
what you want or need.

“*I would be so relieved, and a lot easier to live with, if you do that.*”

Remember also to reward desired behavior after the fact.

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(Stay)

### **M**indful

Keep your focus ON YOUR GOALS.

Maintain your position. Don't be distracted. Don't get off the topic.

"Broken record": Keep asking, saying no, or expressing your opinion over and over and over.  
Just keep replaying the same thing again and again.

Ignore attacks: If another person attacks, threatens, or tries to change the subject,  
ignore the threats, comments, or attempts to divert you.  
Do not respond to attacks. Ignore distractions.  
Just keep making your point.

"I would still like a call."

### **A**pppear confident

Appear EFFECTIVE and competent.

Use a confident voice tone and physical manner;  
make good eye contact.

No stammering, whispering, staring at the floor, retreating.

No saying, "I'm not sure," etc.

### **N**egotiate

Be willing to GIVE TO GET.

Offer and ask for other solutions to the problem.

Reduce your request.

Say no, but offer to do something else or to solve the problem another way.

Focus on what will work.

"How about if you text me when you think you might be late?"

Turn the tables: Turn the problem over to the other person.  
Ask for other solutions.

"What do you think we should do? . . . I can't just stop worrying about  
you [or I'm not willing to]."

Other ideas:

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### Applying DEAR MAN Skills to a Difficult Current Interaction

To turn around really difficult situations, focus the skills on the other person's behavior right now.

When other people have really good skills themselves, and keep refusing your legitimate requests or pestering you to do something you don't want to do.

#### Apply DEAR MAN Skills

1. **Describe the current interaction.** If the "broken record" and ignoring don't work, make a statement about what is happening between you and the person now, *but without imputing motives*.

*Example:* "You keep asking me over and over, even though I have already said no several times," or "It is hard to keep asking you to empty the dishwasher when it is your month to do it."

**Not:** "You obviously don't want to hear what I am saying," "You obviously don't care about me," "Well, it's obvious that what I have to say doesn't matter to you," "Obviously you think I'm stupid."

2. **Express feelings or opinions about the interaction.** For instance, in the middle of an interaction that is not going well, you can express your feelings of discomfort in the situation.

*Example:* "I am sorry I cannot do what you want, but I'm finding it hard to keep discussing it," or "It's becoming very uncomfortable for me to keep talking about this, since I can't help it. I am starting to feel angry about it," or "I'm not sure you think this is important for you to do."

**Not:** "I hate you!", "Every time we talk about this, you get defensive," "Stop patronizing me!"

3. **Assert wishes in the situation.** When another person is pestering you, you can ask him or her to stop it. When a person is refusing a request, you can suggest that you put the conversation off until another time. Give the other person a chance to think about it.

*Example:* "Please don't ask me again. My answer won't change," or "OK, let's stop discussing this now and pick it up again sometime tomorrow," or "Let's cool down for a while and then get together to figure out a solution."

**Not:** "Would you shut up?" "You should do this!", "You should really calm down and do what's right here."

4. **Reinforce.** When you are saying no to someone who keeps asking, or when someone won't take your opinion seriously, suggest ending the conversation, since you aren't going to change your mind anyway. When trying to get someone to do something for you, you can suggest that you will come up with a better offer later.

*Example:* "Let's stop talking about this now. I'm not going to change my mind, and I think this is just going to get frustrating for both of us," or "OK, I can see you don't want to do this, so let's see if we can come up with something that will make you more willing to do it."

**Not:** "If you don't do this for me, I'll never do anything for you ever again," "If you keep asking me, I'll get a restraining order against you," "Gosh, you must be a terrible person for not doing this/for asking me to do this."