

Clarifying Priorities

DBT: Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills

Before we use an interpersonal skill, we have to know what we want to accomplish. Determining your goal first makes it more likely you will be successful. With this worksheet, we'll walk you through the steps to clarify your priorities in interpersonal situations as described in DBT.

1 Describe the problem

What happened? What is problematic or difficult about the situation? Describe in detail, and check the facts if you need to.

2 Describe the outcomes you want

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Assert your rights / Get what you want: What do I want the other person to start or stop doing? What do I want them to acknowledge or respect?

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Keep your relationship positive: How do I want the other person to feel about me, based on how I handle this situation, regardless of whether I get what I want?

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Keep your self-respect in the relationship: How do I want to feel about myself, based on how I handle this situation, regardless of whether I get what I want?

**This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.*



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3 Rank your goals

Rank the three outcomes above from 1 (most important) to 3 (least important).

In doing so, think carefully about what is most important to **you**. Each approach is valid depending on **your** priorities.

Here are some examples of problems and each outcome. What would you choose in these situations?

You get into a political argument with a friend about something very important to you.

- Rights/What you want: Have your perspective taken seriously by your friend
- Positive Relationship: Keep the relationship friendly
- Self-respect: Stand up for what you believe in

Your coworker asks you to cover their shift once again.

- Rights/What you want: Do not change your schedule for them
- Positive Relationship: Keep the working relationship collaborative
- Self-respect: Don't let others take advantage of you

Your friend wants you to keep up a lie to his wife that you two went fishing over the weekend.

- Rights/What you want: Avoid drama
- Positive Relationship: Keep a relationship positive (with your friend, or his wife, or both?)
- Self-respect: Don't act against your ethics and lie

4 Consider tradeoffs

Are there any ways that your goals conflict? For example, would making a request of someone make them frustrated (even if the request is appropriate)? Would keeping the relationship positive make you feel unhappy with yourself (even if you feel it's the top priority)?

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5 Re-rank your goals

Given the tradeoffs you just described, re-rank your goals - only if you need to.

6 Make a plan

Access the skill worksheet for your #1 goal by clicking the link, and use it to figure out what to say and what to do in your next interaction to achieve your goal:



Assert your rights / Get what you want → [DEAR MAN skill](#)



Keep your relationship positive → [GIVE skill](#)



Keep your self-respect in the relationship → [FAST skill](#)

To consider:

If you find that over time you *almost always* choose the same goal, pause and reflect!

- Always seeking to get what you want in interpersonal interactions might feel unfair to others
- Always trying to keep a relationship positive (that is, always subverting your own needs) might make you feel frustrated, because your needs aren't being met, and might diminish your own respect for yourself, because you may ignore your personal values to keep the peace
- Always attempting to maintain your self-respect (especially if you are always trying to “win” or have control) can be alienating for others





Additional Resources to Support Your Mental Health Journey

It can be hard to know where to begin looking for support in your mental health journey. Getting a referral from a primary care physician is a reliable first step. Also, sometimes family and friends have experienced similar issues and have professionals they would recommend. The experts at ChoosingTherapy.com are here to help as well, with resources we have reviewed and recommend. Our [strict editorial standards](#) ensure our reviews are fair, honest, thorough, and based on firsthand experience.

You Can Trust ChoosingTherapy.com



325+
Companies Reviewed



3,625+
Hours of Firsthand Experience



1,545+
Data Points Analyzed



[Best Online Therapy](#)

Online therapy is a convenient way to connect with a licensed therapist to address mental health issues, reduce unhealthy behaviors, develop effective coping skills, and get more satisfaction out of life. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.

[Best Online Psychiatry](#)

Online psychiatry providers enable patients to consult with licensed psychiatrists and other mental health professionals. They can evaluate, diagnose, and prescribe medication to help manage mental health issues. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.



[Best Mental Health Apps](#)

Apps can be great way to monitor mood, track sleep, journal, and practice healthy coping skills like mindfulness and meditation. There are apps specifically designed to help people reduce the symptoms of depression, anxiety, ADHD, chronic stress, and burnout.

[Therapist Directory](#)

When you're looking for a mental health provider with a very particular skill set, level of experience, or personality type, a therapist directory can be very helpful. Using the filters, you can refine your search until you find a therapist who feels like a perfect fit.





Tools for Self-Assessment and Psychoeducation

Figuring out the next step in your mental health journey can be overwhelming. Developed by psychologists, the tools at [ChoosingTherapy.com](https://www.ChoosingTherapy.com) can help. Our mental health self-assessment quizzes can help you explore common symptoms of mental health concerns, as well as find the best therapy style for you. Our mental health worksheets can guide you through therapy concepts and how to use them in your life.

[Learn More with Mental Health Quizzes](#)

Our collection of psychologist-developed mental health quizzes can help you learn if you are experiencing mild, moderate, or concerning levels of anxiety, depression, stress, burnout, and more. Each quiz also provides targeted resources based on your answers. These self-assessments are designed to offer insight, not diagnoses, and can be a helpful first step in recognizing symptoms and deciding whether to seek further support. If you have concerns about your mental health or your quiz results, we recommend you reach out to a licensed mental health professional.



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