

Goals of Interpersonal Effectiveness

DBT: Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills

Communication is a skill. In Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), there is a strong emphasis on interpersonal effectiveness: using the right communication skills in the right ways to achieve our goals. This worksheet will help you set goals and explore skills related to interpersonal effectiveness.

Common interpersonal challenges

Have you ever had experiences like these? Check any boxes that sound familiar.

- I think I'm clearly expressing what I want, but people don't seem to understand
- I feel like I'm treated unfairly by others
- In some of my relationships, there's a lot of conflict and discomfort
- I don't know how to speak up or stand up for myself
- I do what I must to keep the peace with others, but it feels like compromising my values
- People say hurtful things to me - they should realize they're being hurtful, but they don't
- People close to me don't do what I need them to do. I shouldn't have to ask - it's obvious (to me)

If you've experienced some of these situations before, it makes sense to feel stuck. Sometimes we feel powerless in interpersonal situations because we cannot control someone else's actions.

Interpersonal effectiveness skills from DBT help us with what we *can* control - our own actions. These skills invite us to think through our goals and communicate proactively and clearly. This type of communication makes it the most likely that interactions go the way we want.

Common interpersonal goals

When facing a difficult interpersonal situation, it can be helpful to think about your goal. What do you want to happen as a result of an interaction? How do you want others to feel about you? How do you want to feel about yourself? These are three common interpersonal goals:



**Assert your rights
Get what you want**

(objectives effectiveness)



**Keep your relationships
positive**

(relationship effectiveness)



**Keep your self-respect in
relationships**

(self-respect effectiveness)

To consider: Which goal is most important right now?
How firmly or intensely do you want to ask for things or say no?

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



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If you have multiple goals for an interaction, it can also be helpful to decide which is most important. You should also consider *how* you would like to achieve your goal - by speaking more indirectly (like hinting or suggesting) or more directly (by firmly making a request or saying no).

Why is it hard to achieve interpersonal goals?

Lots of roadblocks can make achieving interpersonal goals difficult. Here are just a few:

Not knowing how (lack of interpersonal skills)

You're not sure what you want in an interaction

Difficulties balancing your needs vs. others'

Strong emotions make it hard to communicate

Forgetting your long-term goals in a difficult moment

Other people are more powerful than you

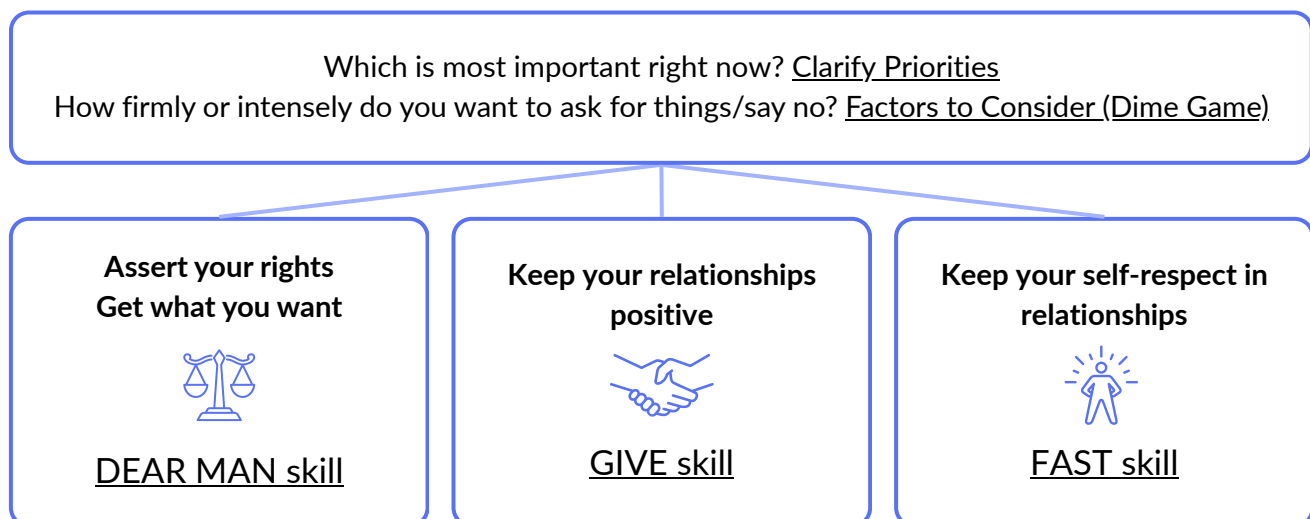
Other people treat you unfairly or disrespectfully

Worries about negative consequences

Interpersonal myths (like "I don't deserve what I want")

How do we overcome these roadblocks?

Five DBT skills can help us effectively achieve interpersonal goals despite roadblocks by preparing thoughtfully for difficult interactions. You can click on each of the links below to access our worksheets covering each skill.



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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.



[Free Mental Health Worksheets](#)

Search our collection of therapy worksheets by mental health topic, therapy modality, or demographic group. Our free, psychologist-developed worksheets make therapy exercises understandable and relevant to daily life. Find worksheets for help with ADHD, anxiety, depression, relationship difficulties, and other common mental health challenges.