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DEAR MAN

FACILITATOR HANDOUT

The DEAR MAN skill can be used as a framework to help you express yourself in an assertive way. This is a skill and like any skill, gets better with practice! The more you practise, the more you will find yourself being assertive without having to think about it.

If you know you need to have a conversation with someone that you may find it difficult to be assertive in, practise using the DEAR MAN skill beforehand, and you will feel much better prepared for the situation!

DEAR MAN is an acronym and stands for...

Presenter to write 'DEAR MAN' on the white board while explaining what each letter stands for.



Describe

Describe the situation when necessary - stick to the facts and avoid judgemental statements

e.g. "I often lend you my clothes but you do not return them after I have asked"



Express

Express feelings/opinions about the situation clearly

Describe how you feel or what you believe about the situation

Don't expect the other person to read your mind or know how you feel - give a brief reason for making your request

Use "I feel" statements. This is a great way to help people understand specifically what you are feeling. However, you can only use "I" statements when talking about yourself. It is not assertive to say "I feel like you are making me angry." This would be blaming the other person. To say this assertively you would say "I feel angry"

e.g. "I feel annoyed when I do not get my stuff back"



Assert



Assert your wishes

Ask for what you want

Say “no” clearly

Don't expect the other person to know what you want them to do if you don't tell them
(don't expect them to mind-read)

Don't tell others what they 'should' do

Don't beat around the bush...just bite the bullet and ask, or say “no”

e.g. “Please return my stuff when I have asked for it back”

Reinforce



Be sure that the other person understands why they should respond to your request – tell them the positive effects/outcome of getting what you want or need from the request. If necessary, tell the other person the negative effects of you not getting it (no threats)

e.g. “I would feel a lot happier and more comfortable to lend you my stuff if you returned it.

“Thanks for being so understanding. I really appreciate it.”

Stay Mindful



Keep your focus on your objectives in the situation

Two helpful techniques for staying mindful:

1. Broken record

Keep asking, saying “no” or expressing your opinion...over and over and over

You don't have to think up something new each time, just keep saying the exact same thing. Keep a mellow tone of voice...your strength comes from maintaining your position

2. Ignore

If the other person attacks, threatens or tries to change the subject, ignore their threats, comments or efforts to divert you. Just keep making your point. If you respond to these attacks, you have allowed the other person to take control of the situation

These two skills are really effective when you get the hang of them – it's extremely hard to keep attacking/criticising a person who isn't reacting to it or 'playing the game'

Appear confident



Use a confident tone of voice

Confident physical manner

Appropriate eye contact

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

Think about all the assertive body language presentations you have learnt about

Negotiate



Be willing to give to get

Offer and ask for alternative solutions

Reduce your request

Maintain your “no”, but offer to do something else or solve the problem another way

A helpful skill here is ‘turning the tables.’ Turn the problem over to the other person and ask for alternative solutions. Examples of things you could say include:

“What do you think we can do?”

“I am not able to say yes, but you really seem to want me to. What can we do here?”

“How can we solve this problem?”

Using DEAR MAN skills in really difficult situations



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

Use the same ‘DEAR MAN’ skills, but change the focus to the current interaction.

1. Describe the current interaction

“You keep asking me over and over again even though I have already said no”

Avoid blaming the other person...i.e. don't say “you just don't want to hear me”

2. Express your opinions/feelings of discomfort about the interaction

“I'm not sure that you understand what I am asking”

“I'm starting to feel angry about this”

3. Assert your wishes

When the other person is refusing a request, suggest that you put off the conversation to another time

Give the person another chance to think about it

When the other person is pestering you, ask them to stop

4. Reinforce

When saying “no” to someone who keeps asking, suggest that you end the conversation because you aren't going to change your mind anyway

Relationship effectiveness skills...using skills to maintain or improve a relationship, while you are trying to get what you want

Activity



Children to split into pairs (if possible) and practise using the DEAR MAN skill or writing a DEAR MAN script using real life situations. If they get stuck thinking of situations, some examples are below:

Family member or friend asks for a lift home but it's not convenient for you (role play saying no)

Borrowing a large sum of money (role play making request or saying no)

You want to ask for time off from your job to take a trip

You want to ask a family member to spend more time with you

Parent wants teen to come home earlier than planned from a party. Teen wants to stay out later

Turning down a request to hang out with a friend