

Calming the Emotional Storm:
Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills

Sheri Van Dijk, MSW, RSW
sherivandijk@rogers.com

Conflict of Interest

No individuals who have the ability to control or influence the content of this webinar have a relevant relationship with any commercial interest, including but not limited to members of the Planning Committee, speakers, presenters, authors, and/or content reviewers.

Many of the concepts I'm presenting today are from my books. I do benefit financially from royalty payments from the sale of these products.

Objectives

Participants will learn:

- The DBT Interpersonal Effectiveness skills, including:
 - goal-setting in IP situations and how to teach your clients to assertively communicate
 - How to think dialectically and bring a more balanced perspective to relationships
 - The role of mindfulness and behavior theory in relationships
 - Skills to help clients develop healthier relationships and make healthier choices

Interpersonal Effectiveness

The IE module teaches clients skills to help them be more effective in relationships – e.g. assertiveness, maintaining a balance in relationships, finding new and ending problematic relationships, and the importance of having a balance of responsibilities as well as enjoyable activities in their lives

Interpersonal Effectiveness

Many individuals have a hard time communicating effectively, especially when emotion regulation is a problem. The IE skills help people learn how to ask for what they want (get their needs met), or say no (observe a limit) in a way that makes the other person want to accept the request or the “no”. Essentially, these are assertiveness skills.



Interpersonal Effectiveness

There are three sets of assertiveness skills in this module:

1. Objective Effectiveness – skills to help you reach a goal or say no to another’s request
2. Relationship Effectiveness – skills to help ask for something while maintaining or improving relationships
3. Self-Respect Effectiveness – skills to assist you in asking for something while maintaining respect for yourself.

**Objective Effectiveness:
“DEAR MAN”**

Describe what the situation is; stick to the facts, no judgments.

Express your feelings or beliefs (e.g. “I feel...”)

Assert yourself – ask for what you want; clearly state your objective

Reinforce the person by telling them what any positive or negative consequences might be

**Objective Effectiveness:
“DEAR MAN”**

Example: client asking dad for financial help

Describe: “Dad you know I’m not working right now and I’ve been falling behind in my bills”

Express: “I’m worrying about getting too far behind and it’s causing extra stress right now with the holidays”

Assert yourself – “I’m wondering if you could pay half of my 407 bill”

Reinforce: “I’d really appreciate it and it will help me enjoy the holidays more”

**Objective Effectiveness:
“DEAR MAN”**

Stay **M**indful – stay focused on your request; ignore distractions

Appear confident – look and sound self-assured, no matter how you feel!

Negotiate – find something you can offer in exchange; look for alternative solutions; ask for the other person’s assistance in problem-solving if they reject your ideas

**Relationship Effectiveness:
“GIVE”**

Be **Genuine (Gentle)** – act from your wise mind, your true self, be sincere

Act **Interested** – be patient and listen; show you care about what they think

Validate – demonstrate that you understand their perspective and emotions

Use an **Easy manner** – no judging or blaming, smile, look and sound friendly, use a light tone and even humor

**Relationship Effectiveness:
“GIVE”**

Ways of Validating:

1. Pay attention: look interested
2. Reflect: ensure understanding
3. “Read Minds” (but check it out!): what isn’t being said that you can surmise?
4. Understand: the response makes sense based on the person’s present/past experiences, state of mind, physical condition

**Relationship Effectiveness:
“GIVE”**

Ways of Validating:

5. Acknowledge the valid: the person’s response is understandable and logical given the situation
6. Show equality: be yourself, treat the other as equal, not as fragile or incompetent (e.g. ask others for their opinions; give up being defensive; be careful in giving advice)

Self-Respect Effectiveness: "FAST"

Be Fair – both to yourself and the other person

No Apologies – at least not for having an opinion or being alive!

Stick to Values – be clear on your own values and stand up for them

Be Truthful – avoid lying, acting helpless, exaggerating or making up excuses

Emotion Regulation Skills

Cope Ahead: importance of practicing assertiveness ahead of time (role-play, and/or imaginary practice)

Interpersonal Effectiveness

Balancing Priorities and Demands

1. A priority is something we do for ourselves because it's enjoyable, peaceful, calming; something we do just because we want to do it
2. A demand is external, placed on us by others; responsibilities, things that are expected of us

Interpersonal Effectiveness

- It can be an eye-opening experience to have clients do an inventory of their priorities and demands
- Discuss what it means to be overwhelmed versus underwhelmed

Interpersonal Effectiveness

Finding new relationships:

- Finding friends and getting people to like you (reducing interpersonal isolation and loneliness)
- It's important that people recognize the role of social anxiety, since we all have different needs for relationships; wise mind!
 - Reconnecting with old friends
 - Deepening relationships with current people
 - Finding new friends

Interpersonal Effectiveness

- Being mindful of others
 - Stop multi-tasking
 - Pay attention with interest and curiosity to others
 - Stay in the present rather than planning what to say next
 - Notice judgmental thoughts about others, and let them go
 - Give up clinging to always being right
 - Avoid assumptions and questioning others' motives (unless good reason to do so)
 - Observe, Describe, and Participate (throw yourself in, go with the flow rather than trying to control the flow)

Interpersonal Effectiveness

Ending Relationships

- Be sure to end relationships from Wise Mind, not from Emotion Mind
- If the relationship is important and NOT destructive, try problem-solving/repairing first (using DEAR MAN skills); practice Cope Ahead
- Practice Opposite Action for love when you love the wrong person
- Safety First!

Behavior Theory: Definitions

- A *contingency* is when there is a relationship between two events, so that if one event takes place, the other event is more likely to also occur
- *Contingency management*, then, is to “harness the power of therapeutic contingencies to benefit the patient” (Linehan, 1993, p. 294) – i.e. you need to think about how your behaviours will affect your client’s.

Interpersonal Effectiveness: Behavior Theory

We train people how to be in relationships with us

- What problem behaviors are you reinforcing?
- What positive behaviors are you punishing or providing negative consequences for?
- How can you get more of what you’re looking for?

Interpersonal Effectiveness

Factors reducing Interpersonal Effectiveness:

If a client is not reaching their IE goals, it is important to assess why; there are many reasons why this might be the case:

- a. Lack of skill – e.g. not knowing what to say
- b. Worry thoughts or other emotions interfere with ability to act skillfully

Interpersonal Effectiveness

Factors reducing Interpersonal Effectiveness:

- c. Indecision – they may be ambivalent about their goals; need to clarify objectives in the situation
- d. Environment – some environments will not result in you getting what you want, regardless of how skillful you are acting.

Interpersonal Effectiveness

It's important to remind clients that, even though they may use these skills and they may be acting very skillfully, there is no guarantee that they are going to reach their goals. These skills make it more likely that they will get their needs met, but there are no guarantees.

When clients need to work on being more assertive, role-playing is essential!

Interpersonal Effectiveness

Dialectics:

- There is always more than one way to see a situation and to solve a problem
- Everything is connected in some way (the flutter of a butterfly's wings...)
- Change is the only constant – each moment is new, we have to adapt and flow
- What we do influences our environment and vice versa

Interpersonal Effectiveness

How to think and act dialectically:

- Look for both sides:
 - . Ask Wise Mind “what am I missing?”
 - . Let go of extremes; change BUT to AND
- Be aware that you’re connected:
 - . Treat others as you want them to treat you

Interpersonal Effectiveness

How to think and act dialectically:

- Embrace change:
 - . Throw yourself into change; radically accept it
- Remember that you affect your environment and your environment affects you:
 - . Pay attention to these effects
 - . Practice letting go of blame by looking at how behaviors are caused by interactions over time; remind yourself that everything is caused

Overview of DBT Skills

There are four modules in DBT:

1. Core Mindfulness Skills
2. *Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills*
3. Emotion Regulation Skills
4. Distress Tolerance Skills

The IE skills are typically the last module I teach in group; remember flexibility and adaptability of DBT!

Thank You!!!
