

DBT Purposes of Communication Worksheet

Introduction: Effective communication serves different purposes, including getting what we want, maintaining relationships, and preserving self-respect. In Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), understanding the **three primary purposes of communication—Objective Effectiveness, Relationship Effectiveness, and Self-Respect Effectiveness**—helps individuals navigate social interactions more effectively (Linehan, 2015). This worksheet will guide you in identifying your communication goals and applying DBT strategies to achieve them.

Step 1: Identify the Communication Situation

- Describe a situation where communication is necessary.
 - What is your primary goal in this interaction?
 - **Objective Effectiveness** (Getting what you want/need)
 - **Relationship Effectiveness** (Maintaining or improving a relationship)
 - **Self-Respect Effectiveness** (Standing up for your values and self-worth)
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Step 2: Understanding the Three Purposes of Communication

1. Objective Effectiveness (Getting What You Want)

- Focus on achieving a specific outcome.
- Use **DEAR MAN** (Describe, Express, Assert, Reinforce, Mindful, Appear Confident, Negotiate).
- Example: "I need an extension on my project deadline because I want to submit my best work. Can we discuss an alternative due date?"

2. Relationship Effectiveness (Maintaining Relationships)

- Prioritize keeping a positive relationship while expressing needs.
- Use **GIVE** (Gentle, Interested, Validate, Easy manner).
- Example: "I appreciate all the effort you put into this. I'd love to talk about how we can make this work for both of us."

3. Self-Respect Effectiveness (Maintaining Self-Respect)

- Communicate in a way that aligns with your values and self-worth.
- Use **FAST** (Fair, Apologies (limited), Stick to values, Truthful).

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- Example: "I understand your point, but I need to stick with my decision because it aligns with my personal values."
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Step 3: Client Exercises

Exercise 1: Identifying Communication Goals

- Think of a recent conversation. What was your primary goal? (Objective, Relationship, or Self-Respect Effectiveness?)
- How well did you communicate that goal?

Exercise 2: Applying DBT Skills

- Write a short dialogue using **DEAR MAN, GIVE, or FAST** to improve communication in a past or future conversation.
- Role-play this dialogue with a friend, therapist, or in front of a mirror.

Exercise 3: Self-Reflection Journal

- After a social interaction, reflect on which communication purpose you used.
- What worked well? What could you improve next time?

Exercise 4: Confidence Building

- Practice saying assertive statements aloud while maintaining a confident posture.
 - Focus on using a calm tone and positive body language.
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Step 4: Summary

Understanding the purposes of communication helps individuals approach interactions with clarity and intention. Whether the goal is to achieve an outcome, maintain relationships, or uphold self-respect, applying DBT skills such as **DEAR MAN, GIVE, and FAST** can enhance interpersonal effectiveness. Practicing these techniques regularly leads to stronger, healthier communication patterns and greater emotional resilience (Linehan, 2015).

References:

Linehan, M. M. (2015). *DBT Skills Training Manual* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.