

Introduction to GIVE

Relationship Effectiveness skills are specifically aimed at maintaining or improving our relationships with important people in our lives. While at the same time, dialectically speaking, trying to get what we want and need from the relationship by effectively communicating these things, when the time is right. When the relationship is important to maintain, in other words, when it's a healthy adult connection that is a valuable aspect of our support network, it's vital to pay attention to the general maintenance and dynamic that makes it this way. Increasing the strength of this type of relationship builds motivation to create more. So, when the situation calls for us to be there for someone else in a way that supports their needs, while maintaining our own sense of Self respect, Dialectical Behaviour Therapy draws on a skill known as GIVE.

“Healthy adult relationships are reciprocal, they go back and forth, and they’re definitely not just one way traffic.”

~Steven Morris RP.

In any healthy adult relationship, there are naturally many different aspects of give and take. Sometimes we're the ones that are receiving support, getting what we need, and doing what it is that we want to do. Sometimes we're the ones that are giving these things, and then there are times when we are all in a pretty central space that meets the needs of everyone involved. Healthy adult relationships are reciprocal, they go back and forth, and they're definitely not just one way traffic. The Dialectical Behaviour Therapy Interpersonal Effectiveness skills provide the ability to create this type of relationship. In this PDF, we are going to introduce you to the skills involved with effectively maintaining relationships that are important by asking the central question, "what do I want the person to think and feel about me once this interaction is over."

When entering into any kind of communication with another person, where the primary objective is improving or maintaining the dynamic of the relationship itself, Interpersonal Effectiveness turns the focus on the skills we need to improve the relationship. We do this by listening to the conversation, communicating in a way that actually makes the interaction a pleasant experience for all, taking accountability for our own behaviours, and not blaming others for the issues we're facing. For instance, some of us may have a story that people don't listen to us, don't pay attention, or understand us when we speak. The emotional impact of these stories effects the way we communicate in many of our conversations.

Delving into the way we behave in relationship dynamics is often tied to understanding a particular schema. Probably one that was created in our early childhood environment. If the dominant schema we developed was one of Self Sacrifice, we have to be sure when maintaining the relationship dynamic that we don't compromise our own self respect. It's far too easy for us to bow down to the demands of others, to only do what it is that they want to do, or to agree with their point of view or opinion even if it compromises our own authentic core beliefs. The GIVE skill helps us to achieve these things in a way that supports us in Living the Life we Want to Live by being the person we want to be according to our true sense of Self.

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As with most Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) skills, GIVE continues the use of mnemonics. The purpose of this is because it's been found to be extremely helpful for people to actually access the skills of DBT if they use this system of memory recall. Most people who struggle with obsessive, addictive, or compulsive behaviours, report that it can be difficult to access their memory when trying to figure out what it is they have to do in the moment. Which for many different reasons, can be particularly difficult to do in times of emotional distress. Mnemonics can help with this, and in this case, the mnemonic in question stands for (be) **G**entle, (act) **I**nterested, **V**alidate, and (use an) **E**asy manner. Let's take a brief look at what each one actually means.

(Be) Gentle:

Being gentle actually translates to being nice and respectful in your approach to communication with others. It is well proven that, in general, people tend to respond better to “gentleness” way more than they do to communication that contains a level of “harshness” or confrontation.

(Be) Interested

The second G.I.V.E skill is to be interested in the other person. Listen to the other person's point of view, opinion, reasons for saying no, or reasons for making a request of you. Don't interrupt or try to talk over the other person. Don't mind read thoughts or intentions

without checking them out. Don't assume that your ideas about what is going on inside the other's mind are correct, especially if you think the other person is being intentionally hostile, hurtful, rejecting, or simply uncaring.

Validate

The third aspect of the skill in this particular module is validation, and hopefully we know by now, that validation means communicating that the other person's feelings, thoughts, and actions are understandable to you, given his or her past or current situation. It's important to note that, throughout the DBT skills training program, we are building our ability to validate the why, and not the what. In other words, you can validate the reason why a person is feeling, thinking, or doing something, without actually agreeing with what they are actually thinking or doing.

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(Use an) Easy Manner

The final G.I.V.E skill is all about maintaining an “Easy Manner” which basically means practicing your ability to be lighthearted, relaxed, and open minded in your connections with the people you want in your life. If it's appropriate, use a little humor, smile to help ease the other person along. This is often the difference between what's sometimes known as the “soft sell” approach and what's usually called the “hard sell” approach. Most people don't like to be bullied or pushed into doing things, and they definitely have a push back against attempts to make them feel guilty by not doing what is being asked of them.

On the following page you will find a worksheet designed to help you explore your use of the GIVE Skill, creating scripts that you can use in conjunction with the Planning Ahead to Build Mastery skill we previously explored. If possible, take some time to download this worksheet, fill it out, and then mindfully rehearse the interactions that are important for you to maintain or improve the relationship dynamic.

GIVE Worksheet

In which Domain of Life does the relationship you are working on exist?

- Marriage, Partnership, Intimate Relationship _____
- Parenting _____
- Family Relations _____
- Friendship and Social Relations _____
- Career and Employment _____

What level of importance does this area hold for you in Living the Life you want to live?

RATING SCALE

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| Not important at all to me on my agenda for life at this point in time. | Sometimes important, but mostly not high on my current agenda for life. | Middle of the road, fairly average level of importance on my agenda for life. | Quite important most of the time, fairly high on my current agenda for life. | Extremely important to me, at the top of my agenda for life. |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Describe the situation you are preparing for. This may be a situation that is repetitive in the relationship, something with a recurring theme, or a conversation that you want/need to have to establish the required dynamic for a Healthy Adult relationship.

Central Question – How do I want the other person to think and feel about me once the interaction is over?

State your objective in this area, bear as clear as you can in describing how you want the other person to think and feel about you during, and after the completion of your interpersonal interaction.

G = (Be) Gentle

Describe the ways you can “be gentle” in the conversation. Pay attention to how you can notice your tone, approach or even choice of words. How do you want to be in this situation to demonstrate your true authentic values and beliefs?

I = (Be) Interested

Describe ways that you can demonstrate your genuine interest in what the other person/people are discussing. How do you want to be in the situation so you represent your values and beliefs in this area of life?

V = Validate

Describe ways you can validate the persons experience, emotion, or point of view. Remember, it's important to make sure we validate the why, not the what.

E = (Use an) Easy Manner

Describe ways that you can create safety in the dynamic by using an easy manner, remaining calm and, if appropriate, using humour to relax uncomfortable situations.

Now that this worksheet is complete, use this information, in conjunction with the Interpersonal Effectiveness skills of Boundary Setting and Positive Communication to create a script that fits your own unique use of language. Then, use the DBT Emotion Regulation skill called Planning Ahead to Build Mastery, to support you in developing your ability to deliver your message in a way that helps you to be the person you want to be. This will keep you Living the Life you Want to Live, in areas of life that are important to you, and the healthy adult relationship you have chosen to work on.