For more than 50 years, social psychology has investigated persuasion techniques intended to facilitate influencing the behavior of others. This body of research has identified techniques and principles with demonstrated efficacy and effectiveness (see: Cialdini, 2007). Over roughly the same period, clinical psychologists developed interventions targeting assertiveness, the ability to influence others in socially appropriate ways (see: Long, Long, & Whitson, 2009) and the related construct interpersonal effectiveness, and the ability to influence others’ without harming relationships or self-respect (Linehan, 2015, p. 231-237). However, this literature review was unable to identify linkages between these two related areas of inquiry. This suggests that clinical psychology has generally not employed social psychology research paradigms to assess assertiveness or interpersonal effectiveness techniques included in therapy protocols.

The present study is an attempt to adapt a social psychology research paradigm (Lyon & Greenberg, 1991) to empirically assess the effectiveness of Linehan’s (2015, p. 248-254) DEAR-MAN skill. DEAR-MAN is a loose script intended to facilitate making requests of others. Participants were assigned at random to hear a DEAR-MAN request or one of two controls. All requests attempted to persuade the participant to take part in a study one week later. Dependent variables were verbal compliance (agreeing to
participate), behavioral compliance (arriving at an agreed-upon time and place) and subjective judgments of the research assistant making the request, as measured by the Interpersonal Judgment Scale-Revised (adapted from Byrne, 1971). Chi-square analyses showed that participants in the DEAR-MAN condition were significantly more likely to both agree to attend and to actually arrive, when compared to one of the control conditions. The DEAR-MAN request did not differ significantly from the other control request, but trends suggested superiority of DEAR-MAN in both verbal and behavioral compliance. These findings held true when possible confounds were controlled using a binary logistic regression. Interpersonal judgments of the research assistant did not vary across the three groups. The findings suggest that DEAR-MAN is an efficacious persuasion tool, at least within the limited context of the present study. Implications of the findings are discussed in this study.