

COMMUNITY SUPPORT ADVOCATES

BE YOUR OWN BEST ADVOCATE

What does it mean to advocate for yourself? Being your own advocate means that you ask for what you need while respecting the needs of others. Self-advocacy is asking for what you need in a direct, respectful manner.

Why is this skill important? Self-advocacy helps you:

- Obtain what you need
- Make your own choices
- Learn to say no without feeling guilty
- Express disagreement respectfully

How to Advocate for Yourself

You become a self-advocate by taking the initiative to ask directly and specifically for what you need. When you ask, you are polite. You listen to the other person's response without interrupting. You are patient, knowing that change might take some time. If you feel nothing is changing despite your best attempts, you can ask for help. Here are a few ideas to help you advocate for yourself.

1. Take a deep breath.
2. Think about what just happened.
3. Think about what you want to be different.
4. Speak clearly and slowly.
5. Let the other person speak.
6. Don't expect immediate results.
7. Ask someone to help.
8. Understand your disability.

When to Advocate for Yourself

You may need to advocate for yourself in many situations. You may need to advocate for yourself in times when you might need to stand up for your rights or make sure your voice is heard.

Remember, no one is born knowing how to be their own self-advocate. It is a learned skill. You can find out more about it by watching someone who is a good advocate (a parent, aunt, uncle, or neighbor, for example). What is the tone of their voice? How do they stand? Do they make eye contact? What else do you notice?