

The Three Principles of Self-Advocacy

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1.) Letting Others Know What You Want

Self-advocacy is all about letting people know what you want or need. You can communicate what you want in many ways like having a conversation, or writing an email. Whatever way you use to communicate with others, try to say exactly what you want or need.

2.) Speaking Up for Yourself

Self-advocacy starts with you. Advocating for yourself requires you to be your own spokesperson. You must be the person that begins the process of getting what you want.

3.) Being Polite

It is always important to be polite when asking for anything. You might need to aggressively go after the things that you want, but you should always be respectful and nonviolent in your tone and actions.

Using System Supports

When you are advocating for yourself, it may be necessary to use System Supports. System Supports (or Natural Supports) can be individuals at your school, job, or in your community that are in a position of authority and are willing to help you. Examples of System Supports can be a counselor, a teacher/professor, manager, disability support coordinators or your attorney. It is good to know who these people are before you find yourself in need of their assistance.

Is this Self-Advocacy?

Fast Food Example: You go into a fast food restaurant with a few of your friends and ask for a chicken sandwich, French fries, and a drink. Once you pay the cashier, get to your seat, and begin to eat your food, you realize that your chicken sandwich has not been completely cooked. Keeping in mind what you have learned, see if the following ways to address this problem are using the principles of self-advocacy.

The Three Principles of Self-Advocacy

- 1.) **Letting Others Know What you Want**
- 2.) **Speaking Up For Yourself**
- 3.) **Being Polite**

- 1.) Once you see the chicken sandwich you paid for has not been completely cooked, you just sit in your seat and eat your French fries. Is this self-advocacy? Explain why.
- 2.) Once you see the chicken sandwich you paid for has not been completely cooked, you ask your friend to tell the cashier that you would like another sandwich. Is this self-advocacy? Explain why.
- 3.) Once you see the chicken sandwich you paid for has not been completely cooked, you run up to the cashier, throw the sandwich on the floor, and begin screaming at the top of your lungs that you want a new sandwich. Is this self-advocacy? Explain why.

Using Self-Advocacy: Professor

Sue is a freshman in college. She is two weeks into her first math class and her professor has announced that the class is going to have their first quiz next week. Sue has been studying on her own since class started but she is having a really hard time understanding her professor's lectures and her homework assignments. How should Sue get the academic support she needs to take the quiz?

Notes:

Using Self-Advocacy: On the Job

Joe takes a job at a clothing store. The job requires him to say hello to customers as they enter the store, help them find their size and to let them into the dressing rooms. If there is no one in the store Joe is supposed to stand behind a table near the front door and fold clothes. After doing the job for a few weeks, Joe realizes that the problem he has with his back makes it really hard for him to stand up continuously in one place and fold clothes. What should Joe do to help him at work?

Keep in mind:

- Every company has a person and/or policies in place to look out for the rights and needs of employees with disabilities or mental health issues. This person may have a title that centers on employee rights, disability services, or promoting diversity.
- It is against the law to deny someone a "reasonable accommodation" for a disability.

Notes:

Using Self-Advocacy: Roommate

Ray is a student who lives in the dorms with a roommate that likes to play music all the time. Ray finds it hard to concentrate on his studies with music playing. As midterm exams get closer, Ray knows he will need to study in his room. What can Ray do to allow him to study in his room?

Keep in mind:

- Every dorm has a Resident Assistance (RA) who is a student that helps to run the building.

Notes:

Using Self-Advocacy: Email

Aniyah is a high school student working on a research paper for her history class. After the five page paper is finished, Aniyah's teacher wants everyone in the class to email their final draft to him by 6pm on Sunday night. Aniyah spends Sunday afternoon typing up the last pages of her paper and at 5:30 she is ready to email the paper from her home computer to her teacher's inbox. After trying to send the email over and over again, Aniyah realizes that her internet connection is down. With 30 minutes left before the assignment is marked late, what should Aniyah do with her paper?

Notes: