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.

• For example:
  • If you are at a store and the clerk ignores you, are you able to ask in a polite way to be served?
  • Self Advocacy is asking for what you need in a direct and 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 disagreements respectfully

• How to Advocate for yourself
• You become a self-advocate by taking the initiative to ask directly and specifically for what you need.
• 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 ask for help from a family member, friend, teacher or another adult.
Here are a few Ideas to help you Advocate for yourself

**TAKE A DEEP BREATH**

Deep breathing gives your body lots of oxygen and oxygen helps you feel calmer and think more clearly.

Think about what just happened.

Before you react to something someone said or did, think about it a bit; ask yourself questions such as:

"Did that person really mean to bump into me or was it just an accident? Or is the clerk really ignoring me or is she just busy? Maybe I need to be more patient"

**THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU WANT TO BE DIFFERENT**

Before you talk to the other person, make sure you know what you want to happen.

Do you want to be treated differently?

Do you want that person to stop doing something?

Speak clearly and slowly.

Start by saying something like "I would like to talk with you about..."

And then calmly describe how you see the situation.

**LET THE OTHER PERSON SPEAK**

Being a Self-Advocate doesn’t mean that only you talk, the other person needs a chance to respond to what you are saying.

If that person becomes impatient, try to stay calm and take a deep breath.

Don’t expect immediate results.

Change is not always instant or lasting.

Sometimes it takes many conversations with other people before anything changes.

You may even have to remind the person more than once.
Helping you Advocate

ASK SOMEONE TO HELP

• There may be times when you and another person cannot agree or the other person becomes unreasonable, one of the best parts of being your own advocate is that you don’t have to solve all the problems own you own. You can and should ask for help.

• Asking for help is also Advocating for yourself
Talking with your Team

Teams that can talk together stick together
Conversation are at the core of a constructive team
They’re the way we stay in touch, build bonds, exchange ideas, sort out plans, fix problems and take action
Communication or lack of it is a constant problem and at the bottom of better communication is an ability to have conversation
Just the Facts: How to Talk to Your Healthcare Team

Who is on my healthcare team?

- Your care team is the staff who cares for you. Your doctor is like the “head coach” and your social worker, dietitian, nurses, and techs are part of the team. You may also have a family doctor and see other specialists. The most important member of your team is you.

Why am I the most important team member?

- Your team is busy caring for many patients, but you take care of just one: yourself. Learn all you can about your illness and its treatment. Learn what is normal for you, so you can tell your team when something is wrong.
- Your care team needs to know how you feel, both physically and emotionally. They cannot read your mind, so you need to tell them when you have a problem. They want to know what concerns or confuses you, so they can help you follow your medication, treatment, and diet plans.
- Your team will help you set and reach realistic goals.
“Doctor, Can We Talk”
Way to improve Communicating with your Health Care Team

Remember that you are the consumer. As a patient, it is important to remember that you are a consumer of health care. The best way to begin making difficult decision about health care is to educate yourself about your health and who is on your health care team, including nurses, social workers and patient navigators.
How to Talk to Your Healthcare Team

What does my team do for me? (dialysis example)

- Your team is important because their goal is to keep you healthy.
- Your doctor prescribes medicines and follows your care.
- Nurses and techs make sure you get safe, effective dialysis, based on your doctor’s orders.
- Your dietician teaches you to plan renal meals.
- Your social worker can help you and your family cope with dialysis.
- He or she may also help you sign up for services you are eligible for.

How should I talk to my care team?

- Ask questions! Patients who study their options and help decide about care are stronger members of their care teams.
- Write your question down so you can remember them.
- Ask your most important question first.
- Repeat back the answers you hear so you can make sure you understand them.
- Tell the truth — your team can’t help you feel better if you’re not honest with them.
- Be clear as you can when you have a problem. If you have a pain, be able to say where it is, when it happens, for how long.
## How can I make sure I get what I need from my healthcare team?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>How can I prevent it?</th>
<th>What should I ask?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I always feel so rushed.</td>
<td>Before an appointment, write down your questions.</td>
<td>I wrote down some question—can you please answer them for me before you leave?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Don’t get sidetracked by small talk. Be pleasant, but make sure you get</td>
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<td></td>
<td>meaningful answer to all your questions.</td>
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<td>If you run out of time, make another appointment.</td>
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<td>After I’ve seen my doctor, I have a hard time telling my family what</td>
<td>Repeat back what the doctor said to be sure you understand.</td>
<td>Can I tell you what I heard you say, so you can tell me if I heard it right?</td>
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<td>she/he said to me</td>
<td>Write down what you heard.</td>
<td>Do you have a pamphlet on this problem that I could take home with me?</td>
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<td>Bring a family member to the appointment</td>
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<td>There is so much about my kidney disease I don’t understand</td>
<td>List the things that confuse you.</td>
<td>Who is the best person on my team to ask about________________________?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ask the social worker to help you find people to answer your questions.</td>
<td>Do you have anything I could read on________________________?</td>
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<td>Go to the library and do your own research</td>
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