Self-Advocacy

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The Self Help Alliance
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We hope that you enjoy our materials.

Thank you,
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Scope
This curriculum duration is 12 hours (2 hour sessions x 6 sessions). The curriculum plan followed the Kemp (1994) Curriculum planning model and Blooms Taxonomy. This workshop content was developed and will be implemented with a learner-centred approach.

Goal
On completion of this workshop learners will be aware of the importance of advocating for oneself and have exposure to some of the skills necessary to do so.

Outcomes
These outcomes build upon the belief that everyone the potential to understand the role advocacy plays in our lives and take proactive measures continuously to get our needs met. Upon completion of this workshop you will be able to:

- understand the meaning of advocacy (Knowledge)
- describe ways that self advocacy can benefit you and the system (Knowledge and Attitude)
- Identify the importance of advocacy related skills and how they can aid in your personal situation (Knowledge and Attitude)
- Evaluate your ability to utilize some self advocacy skills (Evaluation and Skill)
- Demonstrate and practice various advocacy methods (Skill)
- Identify barriers to your advocacy activities (Knowledge)
- Evaluate and choose from various methods to overcome these barriers (Evaluation and Skill)
- Understand some internal barriers and ways to overcome them (Knowledge and Attitude)
Section 1
Introduction to Advocacy

Learning Outcomes

Completion of this section will enable you to:

✓ understand the meaning of advocacy (Knowledge)
✓ describe ways that self advocacy can benefit you and the system (Knowledge and Attitude)
✓ Identify potential advocacy situations in your own life or community (Knowledge)
Introduction to Advocacy

As users of mental health and addiction services, we face many obstacles in our lives, and often we may face these obstacles alone. Therefore, it is important for us to learn to advocate for ourselves, for others we care about, and for an improved mental health and addiction system. Learning about advocacy will help us to identify obstacles, develop strategies to overcome them and then implement these plans. Although we may be discouraged from standing up for ourselves, advocacy is possible for every consumer.

Advocating for yourself is essential for two basic reasons. An obvious reason is that there are insufficient advocacy resources to fully assist every individual with lived experience of the mental health and addiction system. Although we may have advocates in our lives, such as family, friends, peers, medical professionals, social workers and lawyers to help us with some of our needs, many needs go unmet.

Mary Ellen Copeland, mental health advocate and person with lived experience, offers another reason that self advocacy is essential: “The number one reason is that I’m the only person who has to live my life. Nobody else can know what I really need. Other people can look at me and say what they think, but it is very important for me to ask for what I want.”

Even when we do have an advocate working for us, active participation in the process can help you obtain what you want and need.

You can be an advocate for yourself, and while you may need some help along the way, it can make you stronger and help you feel better about yourself.

(Adapted from: Self-Advocacy. Self Help Clearinghouse)
A Way to Look at Self Advocacy

You might think of yourself as a bus driver. You drive your bus and can have as many passengers as you want. You can ask for a particular passenger to come on board, and you can have the right to ask passengers to leave. You can ask passengers questions along the way. You decide when you step on the break or the accelerator and what direction to steer. You can park the bus at any time for as long as you want, so you can figure out where you can go next.

You are capable, worthy and responsible for driving your bus, and you can take as much time as you need along the route. You may want someone to help you navigate your way.

Sometimes it seems your road is leading nowhere. That often happens in life, and if you want, you can choose to turn around, go back to where you started and try a new direction.

Keeping Yourself Safe

Whatever road you choose, whatever circumstances you find yourself in and whatever challenges you face, the first objective need to be to keep yourself safe. Sometimes people react from feelings such as anger and end up getting themselves into a new and/or difficult situation. Think carefully before you act and get help when and where you need it.
Definitions of Advocacy

Advocacy is speaking up for yourself or others. It is attempting to change how things work in order to change how things are. Advocacy is empowering yourself, and a way to find your voice when people are not paying attention to your needs and rights.

Self Advocacy Is:
- Standing up for your rights
- Speaking or acting for yourself
- Fighting for your personal rights and/or against personal discrimination
- Deciding what is right for you and taking charge of getting it

Advocacy:
“The act of pleading for, supporting, or recommending; active espousal: He was known for his advocacy of states' rights.”
(Source: Random House dictionary)

Advocacy is the pursuit of influencing outcomes — including public-policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions — that directly affect people’s current lives.
(Source: Advocacy for social justice. D.R. Cohen.)

What is your own definition of Advocacy?
What are some examples of times you have advocated for yourself or have seen others advocating?
I.e. Suspended from a job for having a mental health issue, and decided to take action against the employer.

List and discuss with your group some examples of situations in your life or in your community you would like to advocate for:
Why is Advocacy Important?

With your group, brainstorm reasons and examples where advocacy has been important in the world today:

Example: In the late 1800's and early 1900's, the Suffrage Movement advocated for equal rights for women, especially giving women the right to vote.

Brainstorm ways that advocacy can be important in your life and in your community:
**Reasons to Become a Self Advocate**

In order for others to know that you disagree with them or that your rights have been disregarded, **you need to tell them!**

You know best what you feel, think, need and what your life situation is. Do not wait for others speak up on your behalf – it may never happen!

The people who have the authority to make decisions over your situation may think that everything is fine if you do not speak up.

By speaking out, you may be helping other people in the same or similar situations.

You have a responsibility to take care of yourself. Speaking out will help you to keep your self-respect and dignity, even if you do not always get what you want.

Remember that rules may not always be fair or suitable for you. You have the right to question rules, as they may not apply to your situation.

**What are some other reasons you can think of for becoming a Self Advocate?**
Benefits of Self Advocacy

By being a self advocate, you will also learn about your rights (or if your rights are being abused), and develop your self-confidence. Self advocacy can help you realize your strengths. You will learn new things; and knowledge is power, and the key to open new doors.

Self advocacy requires persistence but offers great rewards. Some people believe that those who advocate for themselves are the ones who achieve the highest level of recovery.

An old adage says, “The squeaky wheel gets the grease.” People are more likely to respond to you if they are not given the opportunity to forget about you and your situation. It is important to remember that a polite, non-threatening manner is often responded to in the most productive ways.

Some of the benefits of becoming an effective advocate for yourself also include learning skills like:

- Speaking and writing
- Problem solving
- Managing conflict
- Assertiveness
- Effective communicating
- Leadership
- Membership in a community
**Advocacy Success Stories**

**Advocacy at Work**
I would like to share with your readers my advocacy success story, and say Thank You to [the Self Help Alliance Advocacy Coordinator] for helping me with my situation.

I had been working at my job for many years, and one day the company nurse asked me to come into the office. The nurse told me that my eyes were glazed and my speech was slurred. I told them I was fine and they had no issues with my productivity, but the nurse insisted that I go home for the day and come back the next day. I later got a call telling me that my company had determined that I was not fit to continue working and I was suspended. I do experience a mental health issue, and I use medication to help me. Some of the side effects of my medication are dry mouth and watery eyes. I went to my doctor, who wrote a note to my company explaining that I was fit and capable to work. Despite this, they refused to let me return to work.

With the support of the Advocacy Coordinator, I contacted the Human Rights Commission. The company was investigated and it was found that I had been discriminated against on the basis of mental health. Although it took several months to resolve, the company was ordered to pay me for lost wages and allowed me to return to my previous position.

– S.M.
(Source: Changing Lives, Volume 4 Issue 1)

**Advocacy with Support Services**
A Self Help Alliance member was receiving services from a family support organization. They were asked by a Children’s Aid (CAS) worker to have a mental health assessment because it had been revealed that the member had experienced some mental health challenges in the past. The member did not want to have this assessment. They were under the care of a psychiatrist whom they trusted, and did not feel comfortable talking to someone else. The member offered to provide their most recent psychiatrist’s report, as well as giving permission to the worker to contact their psychiatrist.

A meeting was set with the CAS worker, the service worker, the member and myself, the Self Help Alliance Advocacy Coordinator, at the member’s request. The CAS worker was not able to attend; however, we were able to explain to the service worker what the member’s objections to an assessment were and questioned whether the member was being discriminated against because they had a mental health issue. I asked the service worker if all their clients were required to have a mental health assessment. They replied no. I asked if the member was displaying any inappropriate behaviour that would lead them to require an assessment and the worker said no.

The assessment had been previously scheduled and was set for the next afternoon. When I called the member the next morning to ask if they whether they wanted me to meet them at the appointment location, I was pleasantly informed that the Children’s Aid worker had cancelled the assessment and no further actions would be taken.
Section 2
Attitudes Necessary for Self Advocacy

Learning Outcomes

Completion of this section will enable you to:

- understand the role attitude plays in advocacy (Knowledge & Attitude)
- identify the areas in which you can improve in order to achieve a more positive advocacy outcome (Knowledge & Skill)
Defining Attitude

"Position as indicating action, feeling, or mood; as, in times of trouble let a nation preserve a firm attitude"

"The attitude of the country was rapidly changing," J. R. Green.

(Source: http://www.selfknowledge.com/6804.htm)

What does Attitude mean to you? Write down your answer and/or discuss it with your group.
**Attitude Quote**

“The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill.

The remarkable thing is that we have a choice every day of our lives regarding the attitude we embrace for that day. We cannot change the past. We cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. I’m convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you. We are in charge of our attitudes”.

Charles Swindoll (1987), a clergyman

Reflect on this quote and share your reactions with your group members.
Attitudes Necessary for Self Advocacy

Many of us worry that we cannot advocate for ourselves. However, anyone can be an advocate; even a 2 year old is advocating for themselves by letting you know when they want something. Of course, advocating is not always so simple, but time and time again, people share stories of how they surprised themselves with their own power to advocate.

As an early step to achieving your self advocacy goals, you might need to spend some time developing the attitudes necessary to reach those goals. For some people, it may mean being more assertive, while for others it means taming aggressions.

Above all, self advocacy requires developing a belief in yourself!

Believing in Yourself

As individuals with lived experience of the mental health and addiction system, we may face many obstacles in our lives, and sometimes we must face these obstacles alone.

“Self advocacy requires an internal belief that you are someone who is worth advocating for,” says Clearinghouse program director Marie Verna. “As mental health consumers, we are often led to believe that we're not worth advocating for,” she continues, “and we have to change this belief in order to take advantage of advocacy training.”

Individuals who have been involved in self advocacy also agree that once you become involved, the rewards multiply. Success improves your self-esteem. The more you reach out and get what you need, the better you feel about yourself. Although self advocacy means taking responsibility for getting what you want, it does not mean that you have to do it alone. You can find people to help you.
7 Tips for Self-Belief

Why you need self-belief
Self-belief is vital. How many things have you not done or tried because you lacked belief in yourself? Many fail to believe in themselves because others did not. As Eleanor Roosevelt so deftly put it:

“Nobody can make you feel inferior without your consent.”

Yet self-doubts creep in. Like unwelcome house guests that keep calling round simply because you played host to them before. Doubts such as:

- Can I really do this?
- Other people are better, smarter, more worthy than me.
- What will other people think if I do/say this?
- I cannot risk failure.
- Success is for others but not for the likes of me.

If you sometimes have trouble believing in yourself then read, absorb, enjoy, and practice these self-belief tips:

**Tip 1 – Remember Self-belief is Learnable**
Just as you have learned to doubt yourself from what others have said or past experiences, you can also learn to believe in yourself. Your level of self-belief is not set in stone; not unalterable.

One of the first steps is to re-examine and discard many of the limiting ideas you have about yourself; ideas that you have somehow collected along the way.

In the first column, write down a few things you believe you cannot do. Now in the second column, think of ways you could change that belief. Feel free to brainstorm with others ways to change your belief.

<table>
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<th>I.e I will never learn to use a computer.</th>
<th>I can take an adult computer classes at a local community centre or job resource centre.</th>
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Continue this list on another piece of paper.
Tip 2 – Deal with the inner negative voice
When you start to doubt yourself, listen for a moment to that little negative inner voice. Whose voice is it really? A parent’s, old school bullies? A collection of lots of different voices from different times and people? One thing’s for sure; that little inner self-critical voice was not yours originally. It may masquerade as belonging to you now, but it really does not.

Tell yourself: “This is not my true voice!” Then start to challenge it and to just plain ignore it.

Tip 3 – Flip a weakness into a strength
If we just focus on what is not right about ourselves rather than what is, then we miss opportunities for self-belief. We should not assume there is nothing to improve about ourselves, but just focusing on perceived weaknesses without either: a) taking steps to improve them, or b) recognizing and using our strengths, gets us nowhere.

For example, if you know that you can be stubborn then find the positive in this. Stubbornness used well is called single-minded determination.
If you worry a lot, know that the positive flip side of this is that you have a powerful imagination which, in the right context, can be put to good use.

Take any negative belief you have about yourself and creatively flip it so that it becomes, in its place, a positive resource. You will find this exercise fun to do. Ask your group for ideas if you are having difficulties seeing the positives.

Negative Belief:

Positive Flip:

Negative Belief:

Positive Flip:
Tip 4 – Develop your ‘Super Powers’!

Think of the typical powers of the more popular superheroes and write them down before you start your day. They may be such things as super speed, the ability to climb walls, flight, x-ray vision…whatever. Why do I suggest this? Because ‘priming’ your mind with qualities and positive characteristics can actually determine your behaviour.

You likely will not start flying to the rescue of stranded citizens, but the pattern of superhero powers is one of ability, courage, and competence. In one study, people who were asked to write down as many super powers as they could think of were more likely to give to charity months afterward. The pattern of giving to charity is that of being able. Prime your mind with ‘able words’ before you start each day.

As well as superhero powers, write all kinds of other positive characteristics (whether you think you have them or not). Do this before you go out. For example, I might write:

- Strength
- Dignity
- Calm
- Intelligence
- Humour
- Generosity
- Quick wittedness
- Charisma
- Sex appeal
- Approachability
- Popularity
- Determination

I am not just asking you to focus on your own present or future qualities, just on the words. Take a few moments writing them down each day, then a few moments to read your list. Really reflect upon what each word means to you. You will be amazed how doing this will powerfully prime your unconscious mind.

Tip 5 – Be your own motivational coach

If you notice doubts rearing their ugly heads, imagine you are the coach and the anxious part of you is the person you need to talk to.

Think what you would say to someone you really believe in if they started showing doubts. Sit down and say those same things to yourself. For example, if you need to confront your doctor for not listening to your needs, you can say to yourself:

“Look, you can do this! It is natural to feel a little anxious, but that just means taking care of yourself if important to you. Now get in there and stop whining! If the doctor does not listen, you still do not have to fill the prescription.”
**Tip 6 – Do ‘hero training’**

Hero training is a great way to increase your own self-belief. Think of a situation in which lack of self-belief holds you back. Now think of your ‘hero’ this could be a world leader, a movie hero, or someone you admire in your life.

Now close your eyes and strongly imagine them dealing with the situation ‘heroically’.

Imagine *being* them for a few moments, experiencing that time in their shoes. Keep doing this until you notice you can start to transfer a sense of their qualities to yourself.

**Tip 7 – Create a powerful vision of yourself**

Self-belief comes not just by trying to convince yourself you can do stuff. True self-belief actually comes from developing the vision that you can relax socially, write that letter, call that worker, or whatever it is you need to believe you can do or be.

Get into the habit of sitting down, closing your eyes, and watching yourself behaving decisively, calmly, and strongly. This powerful visualization exercise means you can learn from yourself how to be confident, have self-belief, and behave in ways which maximize chances of success.

Imagine you are viewing yourself on a TV screen. The ‘you’ in the screen is showing the ‘you’ watching how to act with self-belief. The more you do this, the more you will find that you quite naturally start to become like the ‘you’ in the movie.

Self-belief does not mean arrogance or blindness to one’s own shortcomings. Then again, it does not mean believing that you are perfect as you are, either. Your self-belief really needs to be focused on what you will become. An important part of self-belief comes from knowing your weaknesses and being relaxed about them.

Self-belief gives you the freedom to make mistakes and cope with setbacks by seeing them for what they are: temporary setbacks, not the end of the world. And something else you will notice: As your *self*-belief grows, people around you start to believe in you more, too.

(Adapted from: www.uncommonhelp.me/articles/self-belief/)
Being Assertive

Once you begin to believe in yourself you will find yourself becoming more assertive. While self-esteem is internal, assertiveness shapes the way we deal with others. It is an important skill to learn, especially for those of us with lived experience of the mental health and addictions system. A lack of assertiveness is a primary obstacle to obtaining the services that we want and need. Often, individuals use anger or aggression instead of assertiveness. For more information about aggression see pages 35 to 38.

To learn more assertive behaviours, there a number of things we can do:

1. **Learn why we are not assertive**
   For some of us, the moods we experience, such as depression or anxiety, might make us less willing to stand up for ourselves.

   Can you think of any thoughts, feelings or experiences from your own life that may prevent you from acting more assertively?

2. **Overcome the fear of retaliation or punishment**
   Rather than allowing your fears to lead you to procrastinate or remain silent, you can learn to overcome your concerns.

   Firstly, ask yourself “Why am I afraid? What is the worst that can happen?” Secondly, ask yourself “What will happen if I choose to remain silent?” Then compare your answers.

   You may find that this specific action is not worth completing, and that is ok, just move on to the next one!

3. **Practice your skills**
   There are many counsellors that specialise in assertiveness training, and joining a self help group is another way to work on your assertiveness skills in a supportive setting.

4. **Reward Yourself**
   Self advocacy is hard work, and you deserve to reward yourself for every success, big or small. To help yourself make that difficult phone call, set up a reward to give yourself after you make the call, such as a coffee date with a friend or a nice bubble bath.

5. **Work with others**
   You do not have to rely solely on yourself: You can become a more effective self-advocate by working with others to improve you assertiveness skills. Many counsellors specialise in assertiveness training, and joining a self-help group is another good way to work on your assertiveness skills in a supportive setting.

(Adapted from: *Self-Advocacy. Self Help Clearinghouse*)
Section 3
Managing Emotions

Learning Outcomes
Completion of this section will enable you to:

✓ Identify your feelings and feelings states (Knowledge)
✓ Evaluate your level of control over your own emotions (Evaluation)
✓ Demonstrate technique to control your emotions (Knowledge and Skill)
Managing Emotions

"The heart has its' reason, which reason knows not."
Blaise Pascal (1623-1662)

A significant part of people’s experience is emotional and it is only when we are conscious of this that we can live a full life. For many people there is a lack of awareness and understanding about feelings. As this quote says: “Emotions contain wisdom greater than reason alone.”

Here, we will explore this area and look at an approach that allows us to bring this important part of our lives into balance with the other areas of mental, physical, and spiritual being.

**Emotion – What does this Mean?**

Synonyms for Emotion
- mood
- affect
- feelings

Can you think of others words used to describe your emotions?

Definition:
For general use the terms feelings, affect, mood, and emotions are interchangeable and refer not to body sensations (e.g. “I feel tingly”) but to internal states such as happy and sad.

An affective state of consciousness in which happiness, sorrow, fear, hate, or the like, is experienced, as distinguished from cognitive and volitional states of consciousness. (Source: Random House Dictionary)
Societal and Gender Influences on Emotions

Understanding how our society and culture relates to emotions can help us understand our own states and reactions to situations.

Our current society often values thinking over emotions. Society is generally “thought” centered and cognitive understanding holds such a high place in our world.

Gender differences

Women and men are taught/trained to express and repress different feelings based on there perceived value/vulnerability. This may be related to survival in primitive times and to make the person more attractive relative to current cultural values.

For males it is common to suppress feelings of sadness, and fear. They are told to endure pain. They may be told in childhood to “take it like a man” and “there is no need to cry over that”. Showing fear may be seen as a sign of weakness and with any expression a person may be labeled a “wimp”.

Women are often told it is not “lady like” to show anger. Sometimes, women are shown that they can use being upset and crying to their advantage, for example, to get out a speeding ticket.

Both genders are told "There's no reason to feel that way," and are encouraged to emphasize only the cognitive experience.

How has society and gender differences affected how you express and manage your emotions?
Identifying your feelings

There are many benefits to identifying your feelings:

- understand why we react to certain circumstances in particular ways
- gives you the ability to better understand and allow a fuller expression of yourself
- understand why we suppress experiences and feelings
- builds trust in ourselves (precognitive)
- express self more fully
- relate/communicate better with others (empathy)
- connect to, and better understand ourselves as well as others
- allows for releasing of held feelings
- allows us to honour feelings and explore them at a deeper level with a view to releasing any held feelings
- identify and explore the emotions containing adaptive wisdom or what many people call spirit

Can you think of other benefits?

Ignoring and suppressing feelings, on the other hand, can and often do lead to negative consequences:

- physical illnesses (ulcers, heart attacks)
- emotional conditions (depression)
- avoidance behaviors (addictions)

In the United States in 1996, there were 460 million prescriptions for mood altering drugs were written. How do you think ignoring or suppressing feelings may have factored into this large need of mood altering drugs?

How has ignoring and suppressing your own feelings affected your life?
It is behavior, NOT feelings, which can and should be controlled

Feelings are a natural activity that cannot and, some say, should not be controlled. What people can control is the behavior they engage in.

Language and Ownership
Language and ownership are about the importance of labeling our emotions. Feelings just are, they happen and often in spontaneous ways.

Feelings get labeled as positive and negative
People seek to increase positive emotions and tend to dismiss or want to suppress the "negative" ones.

It is important to view all emotions as helpful. To label any as negative might steer people away from learning about feelings, as they may want to avoid something labeled negative.

Emotions that are traditionally ‘negative’ can warn us when a situation is headed in a direction that may not be the best choice for us, and can motivate us to make changes.

With your group, review the list of feeling words below.
How can the feelings traditionally thought of as ‘negative’ been viewed in a more positive frame?

- Dejected
- Excited
- Panicked
- Mad
- Depressed
- Elated
- Scared
- Furious
- Hopeless
- Tremendous
- Threatened
- Angry
- Unhappy
- Fantastic
- Afraid
- Enraged
- Sad
- Thrilled
- Worried
- Aggressive
- Pessimistic
- Optimistic
- Nervous
- Irritated
- Solemn
- Great
- Alarmed
- Bothered
- Wrecked
- Good
- Wary
- Annoyed
- Blue
- Glad
- Uptight
- Hostile
- Unhappy
- Splendid
- Frightened
- Perturbed
- Troubled
- Marvelous
- Edgy
- Cross
- Lonely
- Ecstatic
- Outraged
- Terrific
- Critical
- Snubbed
- Delighted
- Fired up
- Forgotten
- Overjoyed
- Grouchy
- Disliked
- Neglected
- Hopeless
- Helpless
- Useless
- Worthless
Ownership of Feelings

Feelings are our own and people are entitled to them. Saying “You make me feel” may be taken as blaming others for our emotions as well as not recognizing they belong to me.

Taking ownership of feelings involves coming to the understanding that my feeling reactions and experiences originate within me. They may be precipitated by external experiences and it is a more appropriate characterization and more accurate to say “When you did this” or “When that happened” “I feel” whatever feelings arose.

“I messages” are a great way to own our feelings and still express our needs to others.

I-Messages

This is a strategy that is sometimes useful in dealing with problems that come up with various types of people. I-messages help to reduce defensiveness in others while still allowing us to clearly state what it is we need and how we feel.

An 'I-message' is a way to be strong without being mean (that is, assertive) when you are angry, upset or disappointed with something another person has done, without blaming the other for your feelings. The formula for an I-message is as follows:

I feel ___________________________ (say your feeling)
when you ___________________________ (describe the action)
because ___________________________ (say why the action connects to your feeling)

The "I-message" is different from a "You-message." In a "You-message," you attack the other person, make judgements about him or her, and sometimes even call the person names.

For example, your worker explains something in a way you do not understand. Your respond to your worker by saying “If you don’t want to help me, just say so! You make me so mad!”

A more assertive way to say this using an I-message is: “I feel angry when you explain things in ways I do not understand because this is really important to me and I want to do the right thing.”

I-Messages can also be used to express positive feelings. (For example, "I'm excited that you are coming because we always have so much fun on your visits.")

(Adapted from Amy Martin, Morningside Centre, New York)
I-Messages Practice

For the following situations, write an I-message that would help express feelings without blaming others:

1. You were expecting an important phone call regarding your advocacy claim. Your roommate says someone called, however the message they took does not include a phone number.

   I feel ____________________________________________________________

   when you _______________________________________________________

   because _________________________________________________________

2. You have an appointment early in the morning and are running late. Your friend borrowed your car and brought it back on empty.

   I feel ____________________________________________________________

   when you _______________________________________________________

   because _________________________________________________________

3. Think of a situation in your own life where an I-message would be helpful.

   I feel ____________________________________________________________

   when you _______________________________________________________

   because _________________________________________________________

(Adapted from Amy Martin, Morningside Centre, New York)
Feeling States

Even with all the words or labels we have in our language for our feelings (see the list on page 27), all these boil down to five categories of feelings, or Feeling States.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feeling State</th>
<th>Objective Reality</th>
<th>Thinking Associated</th>
<th>Body Sensation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>Get what you want</td>
<td>Wanting something</td>
<td>Smile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>Losing something</td>
<td>You values</td>
<td>Tears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Getting something OR not getting something</td>
<td>You did not want or you want</td>
<td>Muscle reactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Guessing what you will get OR will not get</td>
<td>What you do not want what you want</td>
<td>Hear/respiratory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
<td>Loss of self</td>
<td>Sense of worth</td>
<td>Darkness/numbness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This template charts feelings using the reality of the experience, thoughts associated with the feeling and body states.

The technique suggests it is as simple as looking at your body sensations and/or thinking about the situation and putting them together to guess what the simplified feeling is.

**Benefits of this method** are that we use a cognitive approach. This is the dominant mode of experience for most people and valued by our culture. Sometimes people are inclined to intellectualize this too much and so it may be necessary to test it out in a variety of situations. Depending on the intensity of the experiences and people’s willingness to practice they eventually become aware and in touch with their feelings very quickly.

The feelings are broken down to **FIVE feeling states**. Some people suggest there are as few as four and others number up to seven. I find it is not so critical to be fixed on the number as to simply begin using them.
Feeling State Practice

Either cut out the emotions below to sort into feeling state categories, or simply write beside each face which Feeling State the face fits into. Do you think the face fits best with Happiness, Sadness, Anger, Fear or Shame?

Remember, there is no right or wrong answer. Some feelings can fit into more than one state according to the cause. For example, if you get your job back after being let go for mental health reasons, you could be happy excited because you are making money again, or nervous excited if you are not sure how your coworkers will react.

Afraid  Confused  Surprised  Sad

Excited  Disgusted  Proud  Angry

Sick  Happy  Very Happy  Hungry

Lost  Shy  Sleepy  Embarrassed

Unhappy  Very Sad  Tired  Worried
This is a model developed to help picture the interaction of the feeling states.

**There is an interactive effect in emotions that acts as a layered effect.** This is when the expression of one emotion may layer or cover up an underlying emotion. An example is anger, as it can be a secondary emotion if it is sometimes a cover up for fear.

**There is also a ripple effect amongst feelings.** This occurs when the intensity of feelings associated with different situations and the behavioral reaction is out of proportion to the situation at hand. The common expression is something like this has been “blown out of all proportion”. It can expand the circle outwardly toward “behaviors” or inwardly to shame. There may be a conflicting of emotions identified by a sense of frustration where a person may experience one or more feelings. Most often there is a belief attached to the feelings, and when the thinking is understood, the conflicting of feelings is resolved.

**Feelings and behavior:** It is important to differentiate between feelings and actions and to help people understand the difference and their awareness that people do not have to act on their feelings regardless of the intensity.
Detachment

Detachment is experiencing your feelings without allowing your feelings to control you. It is choosing what you will do in a situation rather than having the situation dictate what you will do. Detachment is a way to use thinking and feeling together, so that you do not let your feeling run away with you.

Detachment means to feel what you feel but not having to act on the feeling unless you want to. It can be like standing beside yourself and watching what you are feeling as well as feeling it.

Detachment does not mean you pretend to feel differently than you do. It does not mean you pretend to like something that makes you angry. Some people think detachment is being cold or pretending not to care. Feelings are wonderful when they belong to us, when we use them to do what we really want and choose to do.

Detachment is a tool for thinking and feeling in a more productive way.

You are practicing detachment when you:
- Name what you are feeling “I feel….”
- Think what led to the feeling
- Stop BEFORE acting on feelings
- Think what you want to say or do

Why Practice Detachment
- Detachment is very important for personal and professional growth.
- It allows you to choose the way you are going to act no matter how you feel.
- It permits you to be kind to people you do not like.
- Detachment helps you to decide what to do about strong feelings like anger. You can decide to use your voice to tell someone how mad you are and why, rather than throwing something at them (which you might like to do).
- Detachment can help your self-confidence. It is like going to a calm, peaceful place within your mind and looking at what is happening without getting swept away.

Without detachment, you never know what you are going to do – it depends on how you feel!

When you practice detachment, it becomes easier to do even when your emotions are very strong.
**How to practice Detachment**

**LOOK, CHOOSE, ACT**

You can practice detachment whenever you have a feeling about something or someone.

**LOOK**

First, **you recognize the feeling** – how can you be detached if you do not know what you are detached from?

Stop and LOOK at your feelings and thoughts.
Ask yourself two questions:
1) What am I feeling about this?
2) What do I want to do?

Pay attention to what you want to do and ask
- Is it good for me?
- Will it help someone else?
- Is it right? (morally, ethically, legally)
- Is it the best I can do?

**CHOOSE**

If the answer to any of the questions above is “NO”, then CHOOSE to do something else instead.

**ACT**

If you answered no, go back and think of something else you can do and ask the questions again. When the answers are “YES”, then do it!

You need more practice with detachment when you:
- Feel nothing or ignore feelings
- Do not know what you are feeling
- Cannot figure out what led to your feelings
- Act on feelings without thinking
- Do not decide what you want to do or say, it just happens
- Do something that . . .
  - is not good for you
  - will not help someone
  - is something that you are not supposed to do
  - is less than your best in the circumstances
  - do nothing at all
Managing Your Anger

Assertiveness is not the same as aggression. You can be a persistent, tireless advocate for yourself, but you may not do yourself any good if you shout at or insult others in the process. Andrea Stephenson, a person with lived experience who offers advocacy training, suggests, “Assertiveness is being able to say what you need in a respectful and dignified manner.”

When we perceive something as an injustice, our anger can help to motivate us to become involved in self advocacy. However, it may be more beneficial not to let our anger become a liability for us. If you are able to transfer your anger into positive behaviours, instead of shouting or attacking the character of people, than others will be less defensive and will not be able to use your behaviour as an excuse for denying what you want.

Anger Checklist
Check the box next to the item that pertains to you.

- People tell you that you need to calm down.
- You feel tense much of the time.
- At work or school, you find yourself not saying what is on your mind.
- When you are upset, you try to block the world out by watching TV, reading a book or magazine, or going to sleep.
- You are drinking or smoking frequently to help you calm down.
- You have trouble going to sleep.
- You feel misunderstood or not listened too much of the time.
- People ask you not to yell or curse so much.
- Your loved ones keep saying that you are hurting them.
- Friends do not seek you out as much.

Scoring: count up the number of boxes checked.
0-2 = MANAGEABLE: You may benefit from anger management training.
3-5 = MODERATE: You need to learn more about what stresses you out, and develop stress management and emotional intelligence techniques.
6+ = OUT OF CONTROL: You have an anger problem and could benefit from learning anger management techniques. You would benefit from an anger management class.

(Source: http://www.acenterforhumanpotential.com/docs/angerchecklist.pdf)
Ways to Manage Anger

No matter your anger score on the previous checklist, it is beneficial to have anger managing tools that you can rely on. Even the calmest person is bound to be angry sometimes!

1. Relaxation

Simple relaxation tools, such as deep breathing and relaxing imagery, can help calm down angry feelings. There are books and courses that can teach you relaxation techniques, and once you learn the techniques, you can call upon them in any situation.

Some simple steps you can try:

- Breathe deeply, from your diaphragm; breathing from your chest will not relax you. Picture your breath coming up from your “gut.”
- Slowly repeat a calm word or phrase such as “relax,” “take it easy.” Repeat it to yourself while breathing deeply.
- Use imagery; visualize a relaxing experience, from either your memory or your imagination.
- Non-strenuous, slow yoga-like exercises can relax your muscles and make you feel much calmer.

Practice these techniques daily. Learn to use them automatically when you are in a tense situation.

2. Cognitive Restructuring

Simply put, this means changing the way you think. Angry people tend to curse, swear, or speak in highly colourful terms that reflect their inner thoughts. When you are angry, your thinking can be exaggerated and overly dramatic.

Try replacing these thoughts with more rational ones. For instance, instead of telling yourself, “oh, it’s awful, it’s terrible, everything’s ruined,” tell yourself, “it’s frustrating, and it’s understandable that I’m upset about it, but it’s not the end of the world and getting angry is not going to fix it anyhow.”

Be careful of words like “never” or “always” when talking about yourself or someone else. These words are most often inaccurate and may alienate and/or humiliate people who might otherwise be willing to work with you on a solution.

Remind yourself that getting angry is not going to fix anything, that it will not make you feel better and can actually make you feel worse.

Logic defeats anger, because anger, even when it is justified, can quickly become irrational. Remind yourself that the world is “not out to get you,” you are just experiencing some of the rough spots of daily life. Do this each time you feel anger getting the best of you.

Angry people tend to demand things: fairness, appreciation, agreement, willingness to do things their way. Everyone wants these things, and we are all hurt and disappointed when we do not get them, but angry people demand them. As part of their cognitive restructuring, angry people need to become aware of their demanding nature and translate their expectations into desires. In other words, saying, “I would like” something is healthier than saying, “I demand” or “I must have” something.
3. Problem Solving
Sometimes, our anger and frustrations are caused by very real and inescapable problems in our lives. Not all anger is misplaced, and often it is a healthy, natural response to these difficulties. There is also a cultural belief that every problem has a solution, and it adds to our frustration when we find that this is not always the case. The best attitude to bring to such a situation is not to focus on finding the solution, but rather on how you handle and face the problem.

Make a plan, and check your progress along the way. Resolve to give it your best, but also do not to punish yourself if an answer does not come right away. If you can approach it with your best intentions and efforts and make a serious attempt to face it head-on, you will be less likely to lose patience and fall into all-or-nothing thinking, even if the problem does not get solved right away.

4. Better Communication
Angry people tend to jump to—and act on—conclusions, and some of those conclusions can be very inaccurate. The first thing to do if you are in a heated discussion is slow down and think through your responses. Do not say the first thing that comes into your head, but slow down and think carefully about what you want to say. At the same time, listen carefully to what the other person is saying and take your time before answering.

It is natural to get defensive when you are criticized or are not having your needs met, but do not fight back. It may take a lot of patient questioning on your part, and it may require some breathing space, but do not let a discussion spin out of control. Keeping your cool can keep the situation from becoming a disastrous one.

5. Using Humor
“Silly humour” can help defuse rage in a number of ways. For one thing, it can help you get a more balanced perspective. When you get angry and call someone a name or refer to them in some imaginative phrase, stop and picture what that word would literally look like. If you think of someone as a “dirt bag,” picture a large bag full of dirt sitting in their place. Do this whenever a name comes into your head about another person. If you can, draw a picture of what the actual thing might look like. This will take a lot of the edge off your fury; and humour can always be relied on to help ease a tense situation.

Do not take yourself too seriously. Anger is a serious emotion, but it is often accompanied by ideas that, if examined, can make you laugh.

6. Changing Your Environment
Sometimes it is our immediate surroundings that give us cause for irritation and fury. Problems and responsibilities can weigh on you and make you feel angry at the “trap” you seem to have fallen into and all the people and things that form that trap.

Give yourself a break. Make sure you have some “personal time” scheduled for times of the day that you know are particularly stressful. If you have had to make a difficult and stressful phone call, take a 15 minute break when the call is over. Hopefully this will help the stress from the phone call not carry over as anger to other people or activities.

(Adapted from: Strategies To Keep Anger At Bay. American Psychological Association)
Assertive Versus Unassertive/Aggressive Behaviour

Many people are concerned that if they assert themselves others will think of their behavior as aggressive. But there is a difference between being assertive and aggressive.

Assertive people state their opinions, while still being respectful of others. Aggressive people attack or ignore others’ opinions in favor of their own. Passive people do not state their opinions at all.

The chart below gives some examples of the differences between passive, aggressive, and assertive behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passive Behaviours</th>
<th>Aggressive Behaviours</th>
<th>Assertive Behaviours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afraid to speak up</td>
<td>Interrupts and ‘talks over’ others</td>
<td>Speaks Openly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaks Softly</td>
<td>Speaks loudly</td>
<td>Speaks in a conversational tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoids looking at people</td>
<td>Glares and stares at others</td>
<td>Makes good eye contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows little or no expression</td>
<td>Intimidates others with expressions</td>
<td>Shows expressions that match the message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slouches and withdraws</td>
<td>Stands rigidly, crosses arms, invades others' personal space</td>
<td>Relaxes and adopts an open posture and expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolates self from groups</td>
<td>Controls groups</td>
<td>Participates in groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree with others, despite feelings</td>
<td>Only considers own feelings and/or demands of others</td>
<td>Speaks to the point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values self less than others</td>
<td>Values self more than others</td>
<td>Values self equal to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurts self to avoid hurting others</td>
<td>Hurts others to avoid being hurt</td>
<td>Tries to hurt no one, including self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not reach goals and may not have goals</td>
<td>Reaches goals, but hurts others in the process</td>
<td>Usually reaches goals without alienating others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You're okay, I'm not</td>
<td>I'm okay, you're not</td>
<td>I'm okay, you're okay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do your behaviours fit into the passive or the aggressive column more than the assertive?

If so, it may be time to take a look at your behaviours and your levels of assertiveness.

(Source: http://www.mtstcil.org/skills/assert-3.html)
Learning Outcomes

Completion of this section will enable you to:

- Identify the importance of advocacy related skills and how they can aid in your personal situation (Knowledge and Attitude)
- Evaluate your ability to utilize some self advocacy skills (Evaluation and Skill)
Problem Solving & Decision-making Skills

One of the exciting parts of life is the number of choices we have every day. Some decisions are simple, like deciding what to eat for dinner or what shirt to wear. But some choices are more challenging, and take careful thought and consideration.

When you have to make harder decisions, it can be very difficult to decide on the best choice, and you may be plagued by indecision. You may be forced to choose between two equally good options, or you may have to pick between two choices that both have drawbacks. You may waver back and forth between different alternatives and may seem paralyzed to make the decision. This is a very normal reaction to tough choices in our lives, and we all, at times, experience a sense of being unable to decide on some option.

There is a technique that many people find useful when they are trying to make a difficult decision or solve a problem that seems unsolvable. The technique uses a series of steps that you can go through on your own when you have trouble making a decision, or have a problem that needs to be solved. The technique may not work perfectly for all difficulties, but it may help with many of the problems you are confronted with in your life.

**Step 1: Problem Overview**
Recognize that there is a problem, and that you think that solving it is worthwhile. *It is important that you approach the decision-making process with a positive attitude and view the situation as an opportunity or challenge.*

**Write down your problem and a statement about why it is worthwhile:**

Example: I have an arrest under the provincial Mental Health Act, which I know will show up on my police records check, and may be an obstacle to volunteering. It is worthwhile to solve this problem because I have a lot to offer others and want to help people.
**Step 2: Define the Problem**
Before you start to tackle the problem, it is important to clearly understand the difficulty and why you are unhappy with the current situation. Really think about and get information about the problem, and make sure that the problem you are trying to solve is the "real" problem. Sometimes people find a different problem than the one that is really distressing them, and focus on it, since it is easier than dealing with the real problem. In this step, think about the difficulty you are having, try to understand it, and think about why it is distressing.

Write down what your current situation is like and how this is different from what you want it to be.

Write down what your goals are.

Pick the most important goals and differences to focus on first. Remember you are only one person, so deal with one issue at a time!

**Step 3: Develop Alternative Solutions (Brainstorming)**
In this stage, ask yourself, "What have I done in this situation in the past, and how well has that worked?" If you find that what you have done in the past has not been as effective as you would like, it can help if you come up with some other solutions that may work better. Even if your behaviour in the past has worked like you wanted it to, you should think of other possible solutions, because you may come up with an even better idea.

Write down as many possible solutions as you can think of. Ask others for their ideas as well.
Step 4: Decision Making
Now you are ready to narrow down some of the options that you generated in Step 3. Examine each option, think about how realistic each one is, how likely you would be to try that option, and the possible drawbacks of each. For example, if your solution costs a lot of money, or requires many hours of effort every day, it may be too difficult to do. You should also consider the possibility of each option in terms of your being able to achieve the goals that you want.
As you start to narrow down your choices, remember that no solution is perfect and all may have drawbacks. You can always try another solution if one does not work the way you want it to work.

Step 5: Try Your Solution and See if it Works
Once you have examined all your options and decided on one that seems to meet your goals and minimize your costs (for example, time or money), it is time to test it out.

Things to remember when trying your solution:
- Give it your best effort — the solution will not work if you do not give it your all!
- Continue to examine the solution you picked, and how well it is "solving" your problem
- If the solution is too hard to implement or is just not working, change it or try one of the other options from Step 3.

Trying to solve problems is never easy, and you may have to try several solutions before one works. Do not give up hope, because with persistence and your best effort, many difficult decisions and problems can be made better! Remember to try to find ways to make the situation more manageable. Take all the time you need, and take small steps.

(Adapted from: Positive Coping Skills Toolbox, VA Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Centers)
Many of us who have had experience with the mental health and addiction system often feel unheard or powerless to find our own voice. This exercise will give you a chance to practice using your voice without being interrupted or distracted.

The group members with a particular concern or advocacy issue create a circle in the middle of the room, or with their back facing towards the table or centre of the circle.

The rest of the group, form a circle around the inner circle. Individuals in the inner and outer circles should be facing each other.

For the next 10-15 minutes, the inner group will discuss their concerns while the outer group silently observes. Do this with the following guidelines in mind:

- Speakers should be as clear and specific as possible.
- People in the outer circle must remain both verbally and non-verbally silent.
- All participants should strive to maintain a problem solving rather than an adversarial stance.

The overall goal is to develop an understanding and work toward solutions.

After the first 10-15 minutes, inner and outer circles switch positions and repeat the above process.

Once everyone has had a chance to use their voice, come back and discuss the results with the group.

**How did it feel to be able to share your concerns without interruption?**

**What was it like listening to another's concerns without being able to speak?**

**Were you able to find solutions to your concerns, either by sharing your thoughts or hearing another's?**

(Adapted from: A Handbook of Interactive Exercises for Groups, by Barlow, Blythe & Edmonds)
Effective Complaining Skills

Why is the right to complain important?

- To stop injustice
- To fix mistakes
- To change things for the better
- To empower
- To ensure fair treatment for all
- To get answers
- To get change both individually and systemically (laws, policy)
- To get results
- To ensure democracy
- To educate / inform
- Decrease frustration / stress
- To address injustice(s)
- Other:__________________________

Which of these reasons apply to your own situation?

What are the benefits of Complaining?

- Sense of accomplishment
- Get some money
- Setting procedure (improve the system)
- Lesson to those who abuse power
- Closure
- Public trust
- Self worth
- Bring things to light
- Get what you want
- Have things the way you need
- Other:__________________________

Which of these reasons apply to your own situation?
What is your Complaining Style?

On your own or with your group, describe the type of person who may be characterized as a *Chronic Complainer*, an *Effective Complainer* and a *Why Bother* complainer, adding to some of the ideas below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chronic Complainer</strong></td>
<td><strong>Effective Complainer</strong></td>
<td><strong>Why Bother?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Whiner</td>
<td>• Realistic</td>
<td>• Grin and bear it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No Solutions</td>
<td>• Reasonable</td>
<td>• Apathetic</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Blame others</td>
<td>• Responsible</td>
<td>• Overly optimistic</td>
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<tr>
<td>• negative – dislike/anger</td>
<td>• non-blaming</td>
<td>• Passive/Lazy</td>
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</table>

Where do you fit? Mark on the line or continuum the place that seems most familiar to you.

Think of a complaint you have had in the past: would you have been more successful if you had moved along the continuum one way or another?

When making a complaint, which of the three styles are most likely to get you what you want, and why?

Over the next week when you complain about something, do not come from your old familiar place – move along the continuum to the place where you can be most effective. Bring in an example of this for your homework over the next week.

Remember, where you are on the continuum can change depending on your environment or situation. You may be a *Chronic Complainer* at home with your family, but take a *Why Bother* position when at work/school.

(Adapted from: *How to Complain Effectively*. OBUDSMAN ONTARIO, 2003)
Complaining Style Role Play

For this activity, three individuals can demonstrate to the group each of the three complaining styles.

Each volunteer is assigned a persona: Chronic Complainer, Why Bother or Effective Complainer.

The facilitator or another group member will assume the role of the boss, and will respond more or less neutrally depending on how the volunteer acts.

Scenario
Each “Complainer” is at work one afternoon when their pay cheque arrives. The amount is lower than they thought it would be, and they think they have not been paid for the overtime worked. It was likely an innocent mistake, but they really need that money today.

Each individual needs to approach the boss to discuss the issue in their assigned complaining style.

After hearing each “complainer,” which style would make you more willing to help? Explain:

Which “complainer” would you be the least likely to help? Explain:

(Adapted from: How to Complain Effectively. OBUDSMAN ONTARIO, 2003)
Effective Complaining

What is most likely to work?

- Be calm, cool, and collected when expressing your complaint
- Be clear and concise when describing the problem
- Let your anger motivate and give you energy
- Treat people as you would like to be treated: with respect and courtesy
- Listen carefully to the other person
- Keep detailed records of who you talked to, their phone number, when you spoke to them and what they told you
- Ask questions – prepare a list of questions in advance if you can
- Find out about any relevant complaint and appeal process
- If you are not satisfied with a response, ask for a referral to someone at the next administrative level
- Put your complaint in writing and keep copies of all documentation
- Decide what you want and what you are willing to settle for
- Be flexible and open minded to find a win/win solution to the problem
- Call Ombudsman of Ontario if you have exhausted all statutory avenues of appeal
- Know the right contacts
- Have a plan of action
- Use of the media
- Start with the least intrusive measures
- Have the courage to act
- Stick with the issue and do not allow yourself to be side tracked
- Be patient
- Keep your eye on the prize
Effective Complaining (Continued)

What is least likely to work?

- Being unclear or confused about your complaint
- Having no documentation or evidence
- Making unreasonable demands
- Not listening
- Swearing, shouting, generally rude, insulting and offensive behaviour
- Making conclusions without knowing all the facts
- Inconsistency
- Doing nothing
- Not having facts / evidence
- Not knowing your rights
“SMART” Complaining Checklist

Before you share your complaint, or following a failed complaint, review the following checklist as a guide:

S – Specific/Support
- Are you being specific when you explain your complaint?
- Can you speak with a specific person who can change policy or decisions?
- Do you have support? Have you asked friends, family or others for help or advice?
- Is there a community group that could give you support?
- Do you have facts and documents to support you?

M - Measurable
- Is there a way to measure the result of your problem? Has it cost you money?
- What will fix your complaint?
- Would you be willing to compromise? By how much?

A – Achievable/Anger
- Can you achieve your goal? Did you give clear, factual evidence?
- Are you using your anger positively: to energize and motivate you?
- Are you negatively expressing your anger: by shouting, threatening, etc.?

R – Respectful/Reasonable
- Are you being respectful and courteous?
- Are you treating others, as you would like to be treated?
- Are your expectations reasonable?

T – Tracking
- Are you tracking your progress by keeping a detailed record of all calls, letters, responses and any other relevant items?
How NOT to complain

1. **Complain all the time.** Constant complaining is just whining, and makes you seem like a kermudgin.

2. **Complain without checking the facts.** Do some research about the issues before you start to complain.

3. **Be non-specific:** I tell my students "Don't tell me that this assignment sucks, tell me why it sucks."

4. **Complain to the wrong person.** If you are not complaining to someone who can correct the problem, the chances of correcting the problem are slim.

5. **Make the complaint a personal attack.** Use "I" messages to avoid criticizing directly. See pages 28 and 29 for examples.

6. **Have no suggestions as to how to fix the issue.** If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem.

7. **Let the issue escalate.** If you are proactive, maybe the problem can be fixed more easily if it is noticed quickly.
Negotiation Skills

There are five basic principles you can use in negotiating:

1. Be hard on the problem and soft on the person
2. Focus on needs, not positions
3. Emphasize common ground
4. Be inventive about options
5. Make clear agreements

If you can, prepare in advance. Consider your needs, and the other person's needs. Think about possible solutions that would get more of what you both want. Be clear that your job is to move the negotiation forward by doing some of the following:

Reframe
- Ask a question to reframe (ask the question in a different way), for example, "If we succeed in resolving this problem, what differences would you notice?"
- Request checking of understanding. For example, "Can you please tell me what you heard me say?"
- Re-interpret an attack on the person as an attack on the issue.
- Request something she/he said to be re-stated more positively, or as an "I" message. See pages 28 and 29 for examples.

Respond instead of Reacting
- Manage your emotions, and try to stay calm. Take time out, if you need it.
- Let some accusations, attacks, threats or ultimatums pass.
- Make it possible for the other person to back down without feeling humiliated (for example, by identifying changed circumstances which could justify a changed position on the issue.)

Re-focus on the issue
Here are some ideas to maintain the relationship and try to resolve the issue.
- Find out what is fair for both sides.
- Summarize the progress you have made toward solving the problem.
- Review common ground and agreement so far.
- Focus on being partners solving the problem, not on being opponents.
- Divide the issue into parts.
- Address a less difficult aspect when stuck.
- Invite trading ("If you will, then I will").
- Explore the best and worst alternatives to negotiating an acceptable agreement between you.
Identify Unfair Tactics
Be aware that some people will use unfair tactics, like deceiving you, discounting what you say, or distracting you. You need to be aware of what the other person is doing and take steps to deal with it. Here are some other strategies:
- Name the other person's behaviour as a tactic.
- Address the person's motive for using the tactic.
- Have a break.
- Change locations or seating arrangements.
- Go into smaller groups or meet privately.
- Call for a meeting to end now and start again later, giving people a chance for reflection and regrouping.

Negotiating Role Play
With a partner, act out the following situations using as many of negotiating skills as you can:
- There is one special toy left you both want to purchase as a gift for a child who really wants that toy.
- Your landlord wants to go into your apartment without having given the required 24 hours notice. You have company and do not want to be disturbed.
Conflict Management

Conflict means a disagreement or opposing interests or ideas between people. Every conflict is a struggle to meet people’s goals or needs. Conflict can occur when:

- There are differences about values or beliefs.
- Resources or rewards are scarce.
- People are under a great deal of stress, or they face an uncertain environment.
- There is a breakdown in communication (one of the most common cause of conflict).

Conflict management is a positive process where people work to resolve issues. Conflict is a normal part of life because people have different and opposing goals. Conflict should not be judged as "good" or "bad," but should be looked at from a wider perspective that looks at the individual and society.

Conflict can be constructive or destructive— it can liven up a disagreement or be a deadly quarrel. The Chinese pictogram for conflict has two parts, one meaning ‘danger,’ and the other meaning ‘opportunity.’

Conflict resolution is not just about avoiding danger, or fixing things up— it is about finding and making the best of the opportunity that is built into the conflict.

Conflict management has a set of steps that work on the conflict in an attempt to settle it (see next page). Conflict involves not just the real situation, but also how people understand and feel about it.

You can develop the skills and attitudes that are needed to deal with conflicts, even difficult ones.
Steps to Manage Conflict

1. Identify the positions of each side of the people in conflict. Choose an appropriate time and place. Never berate a person — this can make the situation worse. Remain focused on the problem.

2. Learn more about the true needs and desires behind each side or person. Identify the conflict, as you understand it. Tell your side of the story without emotion. Describe what, not why, happened.

3. Listen fully to the other person’s ideas and feelings about the conflict. Ask questions to get more information and to make sure a point is clear.

4. Together, brainstorm some possible solutions to resolve the situation.

5. Discuss how each solution would affect each side or person, and figure out possible compromises.

6. Agree on a WIN/WIN solution (see next page), both sides/people get what they want.

7. Try the solution.

8. Meet again to re-evaluate the solution, if the conflict is still there.
Styles of Conflict Management

1. Win/Lose

In this style, only one person or side gets what they want, so power is the key thing. It can be physical power, the power of an authority, or mental power. Sometimes this style is the only choice if there are scarce resources. It can also be the only choice if the other side or person wants to defeat you and you have to fight back.

Think of a time you have been involved in a Win/Lose Situation. How did you feel about the outcome?

2. Lose/Lose

In the Lose/Lose style, nobody wins. An example is family members in a conflict deciding never to talk to each other again.

Can you think of another example of a Lose/Lose situation?

3. Compromise

In this style, both people/sides get some of what they want, but they also lose out on getting something they really want or need. Some compromises can work out for both sides, like agreeing with a seller on a “middle” price for something you want to buy. The problem with compromises is that there are many bad ones, where both sides lose.

Share an example of a good compromise and an example of a time when a compromise was bad. How could this have been different?

4. Win/Win

This can be a style that results in the least amount of conflict, because both sides work together to find a solution to get what they want. It is also called collaboration, because people do not try to win at the cost of the other person losing. Win/Win goes beyond compromising and lets both people or sides reach their goals or needs. Working together means you can be creative in finding the best solution for a conflict or problem.
Walk a Mile in Their Shoes

Sometimes it can be helpful to explore the other person's interests and think about what you would do in their situation. This can be helpful because you may find out that your interests, wants or needs are not that different from the other person's. You may also discover you have some interests in common, and that there may not be a conflict at all.

There is a story about two people in a kitchen. There is only one orange left and both of them wanted it. After arguing, they decided to stop and listen to each other's point of view. They discovered that their needs are complimentary: one person just wanted the orange peel to use for baking, and the other person wanted the inside of the orange to eat. The conflict ended and both people got what they wanted.

Even if your needs and the needs of the other person as not as easily met as with the orange, understanding the others perspective may help in many ways; you may be able to think of a wider variety of situations and be able to show true compassion towards the other person. Kindness and understanding always leads to the best outcomes.

In the following situations, think about what the other person's feelings or thoughts may be. You may choose to share your answers with the group:

- You are driving on a busy street, and a red sports car cuts you off. Put yourself in the other driver's shoes

- You are a worker for a social service agency who really wants to help people. However, the policies and finances of your organization limit your ability to help as much as you would like.
Section 5
Communication

Learning Outcomes

Completion of this section will enable you to:

✓ Define various types of communication (Knowledge)
✓ Explore ways to improve your ability to effectively communicate with others (Skill and Knowledge)
Definitions of Communication

“The imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, or signs.”

(Source: Random House Dictionary, 2009)

**Non-verbal communication** is the act of saying what is on your mind without speaking words. Examples of this include facial gestures (smiling, frowning), body language (arms crossed, giving someone the "finger", legs shaking resembling nervousness, sitting upright giving someone their full attention), and the impression you give to others with your appearance (dress, body image, body odor).

Also, the tone of your voice can be expressed non-verbally. For instance, if you are saying one thing, but your tone of voice is saying another, then that reflects how you are truly feeling without speaking a word about it (yelling and crying while saying your okay).

**Verbal communication** is the act of saying what is on your mind with words. This form of communication is often taken for granted..such as saying regretful things and opening your mouth before thinking about what you are saying.


What is your personal definition of communication?
12 Road Blocks of Effective Communication

1. **Name Calling, Ridiculing, Shaming**
   “Stupid”, “That was a dumb thing to do!” “How could you?”

   Such messages can have a devastating affect on the other person’s self image. They may lead to similar responses back and decrease the likelihood of other’s being willing to help you get what you need. Instead of the person being able to clearly and realistically look at your situation, they will instead become defensive and unwilling to listen to your concerns.

2. **Judging, Criticizing, Disagreeing, Blaming**
   “You are not thinking straight!” “You are acting foolishly!”

   This kind of message makes the person feel bad, incompetent, or inadequate. S/he may respond defensively – after all, no one likes to be wrong! Evaluation such as this cuts off communication.

3. **Warning, Admonishing, Threatening**
   “You better…..” “If you don’t, then…..”

   These kinds of responses bring in the threat power. They produce resentment, anger, resistance and rebellion. They invite the person to do exactly what s/he is being warned not to do.

4. **Moralizing, Preaching, Obliging**
   “You should...” “You ought...” “It is your duty...”

   This makes the person feel guilty and inadequate. The person may really dig in and prefer to not help you solve your problem. When a person is feeling like they are being told what to do or how to do their job, they are less likely to want to help.

5. **Ordering, Directing, Commanding**
   “You must...” “You have to...” “You will...”

   In addition to provoking active resistance and rebellion, these responses may frighten the person. They may also produce resentment; no one likes to be ordered around.

6. **Persuading with logic, Arguing, Instructing, Lecturing**
   “Yes, but...” “Do you realize...” “This is not right...” “The facts are...”

   Responses like this imply that you think you are superior to the person. They will bring forth defensiveness and counter-arguments and they may cause the person to defend his/her position more strongly. Remember, having logic on your side does not always bring forth compliance or agreement. Nor does your proving something right make it right for the other person.
7. **Interrupting, Analyzing, Diagnosing**
   “What you need is...” “What’s wrong with you...” “You don’t really mean that.”

   To tell someone what their “real” feelings or motivations are is threatening if you are right, leaving them to feel exposed and naked. If you are wrong, it is unfair, resulting in resistance and anger from the other person. Again, this response implies you think you are superior.

8. **Probing, Questioning, Interrogating**

   Of course when you are advocating for yourself, it is important to ask questions. However, if you ask too many questions at a time, without allowing the other person time to respond, it can lead to frustration and resistance. These responses convey a lack of trust on your part.

9. **Advising, Giving Suggestions or Solution**
   “What I would do is...” “Why don’t you...” “Let me suggest...”

   It is important to let the other person know what you need from them and hope to gain from the exchange. However, when you give advice, you are implying that you think you are superior to the person on the receiving end.

10. **Withdrawing, Distracting, Humouring, Diverting**
    “That reminds me...” “By the way, did you hear the one about...?”

    This kind of response communicates that you are not interested in what the other person has to say and that you are not taking the meeting seriously.

11. **Praising, Agreeing, Evaluating, Approving**
    “You’ve done the right thing!” “What a great job!”

    Although it is important to show appreciation when someone is able to help you get what you need, you do not want to sound patronizing or condescending.

12. **Reassuring, Sympathizing, Consoling, Supporting**
    “It’s not so bad.” “Don’t worry.” “That’s too bad.”

    While these responses may be very well intended, the person will probably feel that you do not understand them. Also, in terms of advocacy situations, it is not your job to console the other person; it is your job to get the answers you need.
Communication Blocks Discussion

Which blocks do you think you use the most?

With whom did you use the blocks most?

What subjects or situations usually trigger the block?

When you start to block, you were feeling:
(Check all that apply)

- Bored
- Hurt
- Frustrated
- Attached
- Pre-occupied
- Anxious
- Jealous
- Other: ________________________________

- Criticized
- Rushed
- Irritated
- Down
- Tired
- Excited
Different Skills Used to Effectively Communicate

S.O.L.E.R.

Five steps to attentive listening:

**Squarely** face the person  
**Open** your posture  
**Lean** towards the sender  
**Eye** contact maintained  
**Relax** while attending

**Paraphrasing**

This means restating a message, but usually with fewer words. Where possible try and get more to the point. The purpose of paraphrasing is:

- To test your understanding of what you heard.
- To communicate that you are trying to understand what is being said. If you are successful, paraphrasing indicates that you are following the speaker’s verbal explorations and that you are beginning to understand the basic message.

When listening, consider asking yourself:

- What is the speaker’s basic **thinking** message
- What is the person’s basic **feeling** message

Example  
S: I just don’t understand, one minute she tells me to do this, and the next minute to do that.  
X: She really confuses you.

**Clarifying**

Clarifying is the process of bringing vague material into sharper focus. The purpose of clarifying is:

- To untangle unclear or wrong listener interpretation.  
- To get more information  
- To help the speaker see other points of view  
- To identify what was said

Example: “I'm confused; let me try to sate what I think you were trying to say…”
Perception Checking

The purpose is of perception checking is:

- To request for verification of your perceptions.
- To give and receive feedback
- To check out your assumptions

Example: “Let me see if I’ve got it straight. You said that you love your children and that they are very important to you. At the same time you can’t stand being with them. Is that what you are saying?”

Summarizing

This is pulling together, organizing, and integrating the major aspects of your dialogue. Pay attention to various themes and emotional overtones. Put key ideas and feelings into broad statements. DO NOT add new ideas. The purpose of summarizing is:

- To give a sense of movement and accomplishment in the exchange
- To establish a basis for further discussion.
- To pull together major ideas, facts, and feelings

Example: “We’re going all over the map this morning. If I understand you correctly…”

(Source: Active Listening Skills by Robert B. Hill, D. C.)
The Art of Listening – Paper Doilies Exercise

One person reads the instructions to the group, while the group listens and follows along. Each listener needs a piece of paper and a pair of scissors.

Read the following instructions exactly as they are, without and discussing or explaining (you may repeat a line if needed):

1. Fold the paper in half horizontally
2. Fold in half again diagonally
3. Fold in half again vertically
4. Fold the top right corner so that the point is at the centre of the folded sheet
5. Fold the longest point to the corner farthest away from it
6. Fold in half again or as close to two halves as possible
7. Tear or cut off 2 cm of the sharpest corner with a straight cut or tear
8. Tear or cut off 1 cm of the opposite or farthest corner above the corner with a curved cut or tear
9. Punch three holes along the longest edge
10. Punch two holes in the next-to-longest edge
11. Cut a 0.5 cm sharp 'V' two-thirds into the shortest edge
12. Unfold your paper and compare your doily with other group members.

How many ended up with the exact same doily?

Why do you think you were unable to end up with exactly the same doilies when you were all listening to the same instructions?

What clarifying questions could you have asked, if permitted?
5 Steps to Poor Listening

For those who choose to take the road most travelled, here are a few thoughts on how to ensure poor advocacy relationships.

1. Just Keep Talking
Look at it this way--the more you talk, the less time others get to talk. This way, you completely avoid the issue of listening all together. Why risk having to pretend you are listening when you have the opportunity to completely prevent others from talking? There is also a particularly useful secondary effect of this recommendation. The more often you do this, the less often others want to be around you. Voila! You have also reduced the frequency of situations where you might be forced to listen.
If you take only one useful tip away from this article, this one is it: Flapping your gums will save your ears.

2. When you are not talking, think about what you are going to say next
On occasion, even the best talker among us either runs out of things to say or is rudely interrupted. When this happens, be prepared to jump right in to step 2. As soon as your mouth stops moving start thinking about how to resume talking. It is that simple. You may want to consider bobbing your head up and down a few times while you are thinking. If you are not careful, the speaker will notice that you are not listening, and will ask you a question for which you are unprepared. Then you will be stuck stammering some sort of answer.

3. Interrupt Frequently
Once you have figured out what you want to say next, then you are ready for step 3, interruption. Interruption takes two major forms: 1) finishing the speaker's sentence and 2) just doing it. Finishing the speaker's sentence is particularly effective since it brings closure to their thought and demonstrates that you understand it completely. Just starting to talk is usually best done when the speaker is forced to take a breath. This way, you are not both talking at the same time, which becomes a nasty battle of the talking wills. Remember, others want to talk as much as you do. If you give them a chance, they will just keep talking forever.

4. Look Away
Whether you are talking or not, you always have one tool at your disposal, avoiding eye contact. This prevents the speaker from getting non-verbal feedback indicating that you are not listening. Some like to just stare, unfocused into space. Some poor listeners prefer to silently hunt the room for more important or attractive people. There is always someone better to talk to. If you must look at the speaker, focus on some odd aspect of their appearance, like a piece of spinach between their teeth.

5. Never, ever, ask clarifying questions
Finally, when you do get the chance to talk, do not ask questions that help clarify the comments of other speakers. Doing so would require that you listened to what was said in the first place. It also seals the transfer of information by confirming what you heard. Additionally, questions invite others to talk, ensuring that you are spending too much time listening.

(Adapted from http://www.businesslistening.com/listening_for_IT_pros.php)
Communication Points to Remember

Eye Contact:
   a) suggests that you are attending to what is being communicated
   b) best if natural and direct without constituting a stare
   c) comparatively constant – frequent breaks in eye contact suggest inattention
   d) is most likely to be interrupted when a break in discussion occurs or when either party is thinking

Body Posture:
   a) best if natural, attentive, and relaxed.
   b) gestures should be easy and natural
   c) facial expression should be appropriate to the material under discussion
   d) leaning slightly towards the speaker with arms uncrossed suggests interest and attention

Verbal Responses:
   a) made in a warm and expressive tone, at an appropriate pace, and communicate involvement
   b) follow from the person's comments
   c) try not change the subject or interrupt the person
   d) relate to concerns expressed previously by the person when the topic is being discussed is exhausted
   e) made with regard to both verbal (content and tone) and the non-verbal (glances, gestures, and other physical reactions) behaviours of the person

Silences:
   a) may occur, since people often need time to think
   b) are often a positive form of communication

When making minimal encouragements:
   a) used prompts such as “and then”, “ummmmm”, and “right”
   b) repeat a few key words from a person's previous statement

Make minimal encouragement to:
   a) encourage the person to continue
   b) indicate that you are focusing and following
Body Language Exercise

1. Find a public place where people tend to congregate, like a plaza, shopping center, cafe or bar. OR Have a few group members role play a conversation. OR You can play a video on mute.

2. Take note of peoples' body language, and see if you can capture the essence of their emotion by drawing simple stick figures.

3. Limiting yourself to simple stick figures will help you focus on gesture and pose, rather than getting caught up in the details.

Doing this will improve your skills of observation, improve your sketching skills, and also fine-tune your ability to "read" the body language of others.

Section 6
Knowing Your Rights

Learning Outcomes

Completion of this section will enable you to:

☑ Understand that we all have rights (Knowledge and Attitude)
☑ Explore what your rights are and how to find information about rights (Knowledge and Skill)
Personal Bill of Rights

1. I have the right to ask for what I want.
2. I have the right to say no to requests or demands I cannot meet.
3. I have the right to express all of my feelings, positive or negative.
4. I have the right to change my mind.
5. I have the right to make mistakes and not have to be perfect.
6. I have the right to follow my own standards.
7. I have the right to say no to anything when I feel I am not ready, it is unsafe, or it violates my values.
8. I have the right to determine my own priorities.
9. I have the right not to be responsible for others’ behaviours, actions, feelings, or problems.
10. I have the right to expect honesty from others.
11. I have the right to be angry with someone I love.
12. I have the right to be uniquely myself.
13. I have the right to feel scared and say "I'm scared."
14. I have the right to say "I don't know."
15. I have the right not to give excuses or reasons for my behaviour.
16. I have the right to make decisions based on my feelings.
17. I have the right to my own needs for personal space and time.
18. I have the right to be playful and frivolous.
19. I have the right to be healthier than those around me.
20. I have the right to be in a non-abusive environment.
21. I have the right to make friends and be comfortable around people.
22. I have the right to change and grow.
23. I have the right to have my needs and wants respected by others.
24. I have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
25. I have the right to be happy.

(Source: The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook by Edmund J. Bourne)
What are Your Rights?

What is right?
There are two important things you should know:
- What your rights are.
- Which resources are available to assist you if your rights are violated.

Who or what decides these definitions?
- The courts, based on laws and customs.
- Parliament, based on current beliefs.
- Local councils.

What can you do to make things work for you?
- Know about the law.
- Know about your rights.

What is fair?
There can be a difference between the law, and what you think may or may not be fair. But remember that life is not always fair. You can still work to get justice for yourself, or find the best solution possible for you.
We all have Rights


The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

In Canada, this document guarantees personal human rights and freedoms. Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:

- Freedom of conscience and religion
- Freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other communication media
- Freedom of peaceful assembly
- Freedom of association
- Freedom of discrimination

The Charter covers many areas, such as:

- Employment (example: Employment Insurance)
- Income: includes the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), and Canada Pension Plan Disability Benefits (CPP-D)
- Health: includes regulations and funding for the provinces
- Consumer rights and protections
- Privacy rights

Provincial Rights in Canada

Some provinces have legislation that delves more deeply than the *Canadian Charter of Right and Freedoms*. For example, the *Ontario Human Rights Code* explores concerns including Employment, Disability and Family Law, with greatly clarity. These provincial legislations may more specifically relate to your circumstances. Be sure to research all potential areas that may affect your case.
Research Skills

There are so many reasons and issues that would create the need for a person to advocate for themselves, so many reasons that no one place can list all of them. The best way to know your rights is to do your research.

- List key words to help you look up information about the topic.
- Go to an encyclopaedia, or other reference source, to get an overview of the topic.
- Brainstorm questions about the topic on your own or with a group
- Group questions under similar headings.
- Make a list of possible sources that can answer your questions. This can include local legal services, advocacy supports or organizations.
- Find the sources in the library, on the computer, etc.
- Know that in Canada, most Codes, Acts, Laws, by-laws, and more are available free on the internet

Brainstorm ways to research topics of interest with your group:
Section 7
Practical Self Advocacy Skills

Learning Outcomes

Completion of this section will enable you to:

☑ Demonstrate and practice various advocacy methods (Skill)
Advocacy on the Telephone

Most of us know how to use a telephone, but we can learn to use it more effectively as a tool for getting what we want. Many people – understandably – lose patience when dealing with large bureaucracies such as insurance companies or government agencies: more and more, callers must navigate automated menus before reaching a live person. Some people have feelings of fear or anxiety when making phone calls. However, we all can work to improve our telephone skills.

Phone Manners
Resolving a problem by phone is often the quickest and most straightforward way to resolve a problem. However, the process still takes some time and can cause frustration. If you are able to keep in control and avoid getting angry with delays and frustrations, then you will be a much more effective advocate for yourself.

Eventually, you will make it past the pre-recorded messages and press the right keys to get to the correct department. When you finally do reach a live voice, it may be a lower-level employee who may not have the authority to resolve your request. No matter how frustrated or upset you feel, refrain from screaming at the person on the other end of the line. Your ability to handle your anger may have an impact on how well (or poorly) the organization resolves your problem. The person will probably be able to understand your situation more easily if they can understand what you are saying and be more willing to help you get what you need.

Telephone Tips!

- **Plan the call.** Always jot down key objectives before making a call. What are you trying to accomplish? What outcomes are you expecting? How will you deal with objections? By setting an agenda, you are showing respect to the person you are calling and acknowledging his or her busy schedule.

- **Know who you are calling.** Getting a person's name right and understand the person's position in the organization is critical. This way you can have a better idea of what they may be able to do for you, and can later thank or make complaints about the individual.

- **Be polite.** This should be obvious, but being polite does not just mean treating the person you are calling with respect. This should extend to the person answering the phone or to the message that you leave on voice mail. Many business people rely on voice mail to screen calls, and your approach can make the difference as to whether or not they return your call. Be careful to keep your tone of voice modulated and never indicate impatience at having to leave a message. If the technology allows, review your message before hitting "send." Many systems allow for you to erase and re-record your message.

- **Introduce yourself.** Make sure that your party knows who you are and the nature of your call. This applies whether you reach the person's voice mail or connect in person. Speak clearly and slowly.
• **Get to the point.** Once you are successful in reaching your party and have introduced yourself, get to the point. Let the person know why you are calling and use your notes to keep your agenda clear.

• **Listen.** Allow the person you are calling to ask questions and convey his or her point of view. Do not interrupt, and answer questions honestly and directly. Even if you are met with objections, allow the individual to finish before jumping in with your defense. Be courteous and check your attitude frequently. Indicate that you are listening by saying, "I see," "I understand," or simply, "Yes." However, be sure to refrain from other comments until the individual is finished.

• **Ask open-ended questions.** Encourage a free flow of dialogue by asking questions that require the person to respond fully. You can learn a lot from this type of exchange and this often leads to further discussion.

• **Be patient.** Never try to rush a call, and allow the individual to fully express his or her opinions, reactions, etc.

• **Know when to end the call.** There is generally a point at which it becomes clear that the call should be concluded, and trying to extend the call to reach additional objectives can be counterproductive. Sometimes the person you have called may seem to want to extend the conversation, and you will need to politely conclude the conversation without offending the individual. Use positive statements such as "I know you are busy, and want to thank you for your time," to politely signal the end of the conversation.

(Adapted from: *Self-Advocacy. Self Help Clearinghouse*)
Advocacy in Writing

Being able to write a short, direct, and assertive letter can aid your advocacy efforts. Writing letters is a skill to be learned, and fortunately it is easier that almost any other writing style. Keep in mind the shorter the letter, the better!

Format of a business letter or email:
Although there are many variations in the format used for business letters, the sample on the next page provides a good model to follow.
Make sure your letter includes:
- Your return address or email
- The Date
- The other person’s address or email
- Greeting
- Signature, similar to that of the sample letter

The content of the letter
The sample letter also provides an idea of what to include in your letter or email. When you write, it is recommended that you:
- Open by explaining why you are writing
- Include or attach copies of relevant documents, or offer to provide necessary documentation if necessary.
- Explain the reason why you are asking for action by the recipient.
- If the action is urgent, explain why.
- If you are considering legal action or formal complaint, note that you are considering it. However, reserve this tactic for situations in which you feel that you have a valid case and could follow through; otherwise, the other party could call your bluff.
- In the closing paragraph, give a time by which you expect the recipient to respond or take action. This should be a reasonable amount of time in relation to the urgency of the situation.
- In the closing paragraph, thank the recipient, or if the recipient has not proven helpful so far, express your hope that they will resolve the matter as soon as possible.

(Adapted from: Self-Advocacy. Self Help Clearinghouse)
Sample Letter
Elizabeth Martin
127 Maple St. Apt. 105
Anytown, Prov. A1B 1A1

April 1, 20--

Mr. Edward Peters
Peters Property Management
13 Main St.
Anytown, Prov. A1B 1A1

Dear Mr. Peters:

I am a tenant in your building at 127 Maple Street. I am writing to request as a reasonable accommodation, that I be allowed to keep a service dog in my apartment. My hope is that as a caring landlord you would provide this reasonable accommodation to a tenant with a disability.

I understand that the building has a 'no pets' policy; however, health care professionals have recommended that I use a service animal for emotional support. I would be happy to provide written documentation of my need and my provider's recommendations. Please contact me within ten days to let me know whether my request has been granted, as I need to proceed with finding a suitable service dog. You may reach me by telephone at (555)555-2525. Thank you for your prompt consideration of my request.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Martin
Advocacy in Person

For some forms of self-advocacy, such as participating in your own health care decisions, in-person advocacy is inevitable. Some advocates think that meeting face-to-face with the person you are trying to influence is the most effective way to advocate. By working to improve your in person advocacy skills, you can help overcome the anxiety that many people experience when preparing for a meeting.

Preparing for a Meeting
Preparing in advance of a meeting may help reduce anxiety, and preparation can also help you to become a much more effective self-advocate.

Steps:
1. **Write down the appointment details** as soon as you have scheduled it and keep this information in convenient place. Include date, time, and location, name of contact person, directions and any other relevant information. Although this is simple step, it is extremely important.
2. **Ask for information** that will help you prepare when you are scheduling the meeting. Is there any type of documentation you will need to bring along? Do you need to meet certain qualifications in order to get what you are asking for? Make sure all parties clearly understand the purpose of the meeting.
3. **Find a friend to come with you.** Although it is helpful to have someone who knows something about advocacy, it is not necessary. Your friend can act as a support and also a witness to what happens in the meeting.
4. **Think about what could happen in the meeting.** Ask yourself the following questions:
   - What do I want to happen at the meeting?
   - What do I want to learn at the meeting?
   - What could happen as a result of the meeting?
   By knowing these things, you can better think through your strategy.
5. **Prepare an agenda** for what you would like to say, what you would like to ask the other person, and how you would respond to the other party’s suggestion of what they would like to happen. Bring a copy of this agenda with you, and if appropriate, copies for the other parties as well.
6. **Bring photocopies** of all relevant documents, including any laws or regulations that apply to your situation. Demonstrating that you know your rights makes it much more difficult for your rights to be ignored!
7. **Keep the appointment.** Remember that the person you are meeting with has other commitments. Not keeping appointments gives people a reason to focus their time to other people and work.
8. **Call in advance** to cancel or reschedule if you absolutely cannot make the appointment. Give as much notice as possible; you should not cancel the same day unless it is a sudden, unanticipated emergency.

(Adapted from: *Self-Advocacy*. Self Help Clearinghouse)
Holding a Successful Meeting

The most important first step of a successful meeting is to show up on time! Once you are there, you have many tactics you can use to improve your chances of a successful outcome. Although some of these skills require practice, learning them will help you be a much more effective self-advocate.

Body Language

In an ideal world, justice and fairness would govern everyone’s actions. However, in the real world, people will judge you for how you present yourself at a meeting, which can greatly impact the outcome. Using positive body language conveys confidence and assertiveness. Here are some examples of positive body language:

- **Dress and groom yourself appropriately** for the meeting. Poor grooming or sloppy dress can leave a negative impression, regardless of anything else. If you dress nicely, people will treat you with more respect.

- **Do your best to maintain eye contact.** Although difficult if you are feeling shy or nervous, maintaining eye contact helps you maintain control over the meeting. You do not need to 'stare down' the other person, but do look the other person in the eye when they are talking.

- **Use good posture.** By sitting up straight in your chair, you show respect for the other person and also convey confidence in what you are seeking.

- **Practice these skills.** Before an important meeting, you can practice your body language with a friend or in front of a mirror. If you do not demonstrate positive body language naturally, you can improve with practice!

(Adapted from: *Self-Advocacy. Self Help Clearinghouse*)
Listening during a Meeting

When you are meeting with someone, active listening can mean the difference between being spoken to and 'spoken at'. Active listening means that you take steps to find out the information you need, rather than simply hearing the words.

Listening Tips

- **Clarity Language** – if the person uses jargon or abbreviations you do not understand be sure to ask what they mean.

  Example: “We don't usually hear about these types of situations until the DDM has contacted us”
  If you do not know what the DDM is, ask! If you try to find out after the meeting, you may miss important opportunities during the discussion.

- **Restate** a person's position to make sure that you both understand what the person is offering or requiring.

  Example: “So what you are saying is that I should contact the DDM to ask them to review my case before we can proceed.”

- **Clarify Reactions** – ask questions if you do not understand a person's reaction to what you say. Someone may reply “I see”, but what they really mean “I see that you are being difficult.” When someone is being vague, do not guess, ask!

- **Record** what went on during the meeting and share your notes with all parties to make sure you clearly heard what was being said. Be sure to write down:
  - any promises that you or the other person made
  - any actions you must take
  - any explanations the person makes for granting or denying your requests
  - anything the person says in support of your position

  You may also choose to use an audio recording device to keep an exact record of the meeting. Be sure to ask for permission before recording.
Learning Outcomes

Completion of this section will enable you to:

- Identify barriers to your advocacy activities (Knowledge)
- Evaluate and choose from various methods to overcome these barriers (Evaluation and Skill)
- Understand some internal barriers and ways to overcome them (Knowledge and Attitude)
Limitations & Barriers

You may find both internal (personal) and external barriers when being a self advocate, and are dealing with a problem or conflict. It can be very helpful to look at the barriers being faced in your circumstances.

Any of these barriers can stop you from moving forward. So, start from where you are and know that with time and help you can overcome any barrier, maybe by taking small steps. At the very least, you can present your case in the best way.

External Barriers
These are barriers that come from outside of us. They can include bureaucratic requirements like costs, or documents that are written in a way that are hard for you to easily understand.

Internal (Personal) Barriers
It is just as important to be aware of the barriers that are inside us. We can get stuck in fear; like fear of someone’s reprisal, fear of being embarrassed, or fear of not being heard. Sometime mood swings interfere with presenting yourself in the best way. Lack of trust or just thinking you are not up to the challenge may stop you from moving forward. Lack of support, or thinking you do not have enough knowledge about your rights, or about the best approach to take may get in your way. You may not be sure what questions to ask, or about having a good enough vocabulary or that you need better communication skills. These are all things you can learn to overcome.

List some External Barriers you or others in your group are facing:

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

List some Internal (Personal) Barriers you or others in your have:

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
Why You May Not Want to Advocate for Yourself

There are many reasons why you may feel that you cannot advocate for yourself. Listed below are just a few reasons we tell ourselves why we cannot stand up for what we believe in, or change a situation that may be unfair. Unfairness may have a negative impact on us or on people we know, and may cause us to let others have power over us. You may feel that you can not change things because:

- You do not have control over your life.
- It is too hard to change your situation.
- Nothing you do will make a difference.
- The 'System' is just too big and powerful.
- No one cares, or really understands you or your situation.
- You are caught in a situation not of your own making.
- You are being discriminated against because of your mental health issues.

What are some other reason's you may not want to advocate for yourself?

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________
Overcoming Barriers

All of us face barriers from time to time, especially when it comes to self advocacy. Most often, it was a barrier that encouraged us to advocate in the first place. The following two articles will talk about naming barriers we face and prioritizing our problems so that we may cope with them more effectively.

Prioritizing the barriers you face will help you in dealing with your advocacy issues. It will help you map out what the known and perceived outcomes may be; thereby giving you the information you need to be successful.

Example: You were fired from your job for mental health reasons
1. Look into financial assistance
2. Make sure you can meet the basic needs for you and your family
3. Find out what laws, acts or codes relate to your situation
4. Do you have supports to help you?
5. Do you need legal representation?

Preparing for these things will help make the situation easier to cope with. The more information you receive, the less anxiety.
Facing the Barriers

A barrier is something that stops you from doing what it is you want to do. People encounter barriers in every aspect of their daily lives. Some problems can be overcome with patience and time, while others are much larger and require time, effort (be it monetary, physical or emotional), and a great deal of planning.

Often it is helpful to identify the barriers that you are facing then create a plan to help break down those barriers. Sometimes the barriers or issues that you face are easily identified, while others are easily overlooked. Let us look at the barriers that you or I may be facing and how we may overcome them.

Naming the Barriers

Below is a list of possible barriers that you may face in any given situation. It may not include all barriers but it gives a starting point in which to be totally honest and open about what those barriers are and what we may be actually facing. Place a check by each of the issues that may be a barrier to reaching your advocacy goals. Some individuals may check off every item, and some only a few. Feel free to write down any others that come to mind.

Following the checklist are questions that may help to access where you are in your life. These are for your own personal file. It will help you to see what direction it is that you need to go in to resolve those barriers. Keep this checklist on file and use it later as a guide or gauge to see how far you have come.

Barriers you may be facing – check all that apply

- lack of formal education
- problems getting a job
- problems holding a job
- budgeting problems
- lack of financial resources
- domestic violence (between partners/family members)
- child support not getting collected
- child care problems
- divorce/custody case
- language barrier
- eviction or threat of eviction
- homelessness
- utility shut off or threat of utility shutoff
- trouble paying bills or student loans/being harassed by creditors
- medical crisis of self or family member
- fear of losing Medicaid/medical insurance
- hard to handle emergencies all alone
- lack of emotional support
- other

**Not All Problems are Created Equal**

Take a look at the list of barriers that you have just filled out. Looking at this list, we can see items that can wait, and items that need to change right away. There also may be barriers that can turn into opportunities. Prioritizing your barriers means that you can decide what has the most importance in your life right now and what can wait. By knowing what barriers are the most important and by careful planning we will be able to concentrate on those that need immediate attention. By working on those of top priority you could inevitably end up working on or even solving other issues along the way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Priority Problems</th>
<th>Breathing Room Problems</th>
<th>Opportunities Disguised as Problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Barriers that affect your life in an immediate and life threatening way are the top priority. Each individual will consider top priorities differently. Some examples may include:  
  - threat of eviction  
  - threat of losing utilities  
  - violence or abuse  
  - potential loss of child or custody of child to a dangerous ex  
  - homelessness  
  - a mental or medical crisis  
  - suicidal feelings  
If more than one of these is your top priority, still rank them in order of importance. This will help you decide which barrier to work on first.  
Breathing room problems are barriers in your life that are not immediately threatening or potentially harmful to you or your family.  
Problems like these should not be ignored.  
  - Potential loss of job  
  - Child care problems  
  - Problems collecting child support  
  - Long term debt  
Problems like these can easily escalate into an emergency if not dealt with. Solving these issues may help to open up new opportunities.  
When we take a good look at some of our barriers we may find that these problems will actually challenge you into making your life richer and more satisfying.  
These barriers may help you to advocate for yourself, reach out to your community, and develop your own sense of personal power.  
While these barriers may be your last priority to work on, these may have the most lasting effect on you and your family. Working on these barriers will make your everyday life run smoother and become much more fulfilling. |

Prioritizing the Barriers You are Facing

Return to the checklist and prioritize the barriers that you are facing towards your advocacy goals. Use the categories that were described on the previous page. It may be easily apparent what issues are of top priority, or it may be difficult to categorize. Giving a number rank to you barriers to rank each problem in order of priority may be easier.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Priority Problems</th>
<th>Breathing Room Problems</th>
<th>Opportunities Disguised as Problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List the barriers to change that are top priority that you need or want to work on immediately:</td>
<td>List the barriers that you would like to work on but are currently not emergencies or life threatening to you or your family:</td>
<td>List the barriers that you have identified as “low priority” issues. List also any issues that you are facing that may not fit into the other categories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once you have identified and prioritized your barriers, you can more clearly see the next step and begin your advocacy journey.

Learned Helplessness

“In order to survive the larger society, members of oppressed groups are forced to come to terms with a potent force that constantly, and in many ways, says they are no good. This is truly an impossible dilemma, and it is not surprising that people react with rage and fear, turning inward against themselves or outward against others. One of the less constructive ways people may use to cope with their situation is Learned Helplessness, which may consciously or unconsciously be adopted as a mechanism of defence”
(Source: N.I. Brill, 1990)

“A … model of depression in which exposure to a series of unforeseen adverse situations gives rise to a sense of helplessness or an inability to cope with or devise ways to escape such situations, even when escape is possible.”
(Source: The American Heritage Stedman’s Medical Dictionary, 2002)

Has learned helplessness been present in your own life? In what ways?

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________
Getting in Your Own Way

Following is a list of destructive behaviours that can block your ability to advocate for yourself or others. If one or more of these behaviours related to your own situation, then it is time to stop getting in your own way.

- Act dumb or be over dependent.
- Exaggerate the negative.
- Lash out or blame others if you are disappointed.
- Withdraw, do nothing, or give up.
- Put yourself down.
- Deny that you are having difficulties.
- Accept goals and solutions suggested by others, even when you know these may not be possible to achieve; or give no input to an action plan.

Are there any other times when you get in your own way?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Overcoming Learned Helplessness

Overcoming learned helplessness requires patience and dedication. Getting over a deeply believed sense of futility is no easy task. Indeed, it may require changing both external situations as well as internal beliefs.

If you suffer from learned helplessness, here are some helpful steps you can take:

- Find out what situations contributed/caused the feelings of futility.
- Acknowledge that although change may take some time, belief structures can be changed.
- Make a compassionate decision to work on overcoming learned helplessness.
- Find a good support group or therapist who understands learned helplessness and can help guide you through the rougher times.

Learned helplessness can be very subtle. Because the feeling is so interwoven with our deep beliefs about our worth and abilities, it can be a challenge to overcome. Like any similar psychological phenomenon, feelings of futility can become such a habit that we do not recognize that we are involved in a self-defeating process. Learned helplessness can be overcome, however, with time, patience, vigilance, and compassion towards oneself.

(Source: Chris M. Carmicheal, 2007)

What are some things you can do to overcome your own sense of helplessness?
Section 9
Advocacy Review
**Steps to Being an Effective Self-Advocate**

**Believe in yourself.**
The first step to becoming an effective self-advocate is to believe in yourself. Believing in yourself means you are aware of your strengths, know that you are worthwhile, and are willing to take good care of yourself. Many people who have troubling emotional symptoms or who have a disability struggle with self-esteem. To ask for what you need and want and to protect yourself when others treat you badly, you will need to support your self-worth. You will want to assess, appreciate, support, and improve the way you feel about yourself.

- **Assess:** On a 1-10 scale, what is your self-esteem? If you are undecided, give yourself a 5.
- **Appreciate:** Give yourself credit for as much self-esteem as you do have. It can be really hard to hold one's own in the world, and you deserve appreciation for every point you have been able to hold on to. Forgive yourself for the points that lie between you and a 10. You have done the best you can. Also give yourself credit for reading this workbook.
- **Support:** What do you do for yourself that supports your well being? Write down those things, like eating well, making sure you have fun regularly, or pursuing your goals. Write only the good things you do right now, appreciate yourself for them, and vow to continue.
- **Improve:** Think of something you would like to change to improve your well being. It can be just one small thing that is easy for to stop doing or begin to do; such as exercising more, signing up for a class, or watching less television. It may even be getting out of bed. Sometimes deciding is enough, but here, it is helpful to make a step-by-step plan of how you are going to change, if you need to.

**Exercises to raise Self-esteem**
- Get together with a trusted friend. Divide a block of time in half, for instance, 20 minutes divided in half would be 10 minutes each. Then, take turns telling the other person everything good about them. Just think, 10 minutes of compliments!
- Go to the library or Self Help Alliance Recovery Centre, and get a book on building self-esteem. Do any of the suggested activities that feel right to you.
- Repeat over and over the affirmation:  
  *I am a unique and valuable person. I am worth the effort it takes to advocate for myself, to get what I want and need for myself, to protect my rights and to insist that others treat me well.*
- Think of other affirmations that you could say to yourself on a regular basis.
- Set a timer for 10 minutes. Write down all of the good things you can think of about yourself. After your time is up, read what you have written. Then fold it up and put it in a convenient place, like in your pocket or next to your bed. Read it over before you go to bed, when you get up in the morning and every time you have a spare moment. If you cannot think of enough things to write in this exercise, ask your friends for ideas before you begin.
- Do something nice for someone else or for your community. Take fresh flowers to a friend, visit a person in the hospital or a nursing home, or clean up the trash in a park.
Decide what you want or what needs to change

Think about your life. What is it that you need and want for yourself? Make a list of these things. For instance, you may want to:

- get a job, or a better job
- find housing in a safe neighbourhood
- take some educational courses or go back to school
- change your medications or treatments
- make more money
- lose weight
- buy a car
- have a partner
- take some sick or vacation time
- be treated as an equal by your health care provider
- not be subjected to inappropriate sexual talk in your workplace

Your list of what you need and want may be very long. In order to make your list more manageable, answer the questions below:

- Which of these things could you achieve, or try to achieve by advocating or speaking out for yourself? Circle those.
- Which of your circled needs and wants is most important to you? Put #1 beside that want or need. Number the others in order of priority. For instance, your #1 might be going back to school. Your #2 might be getting a better job and #3 might be making more money.

Through this simple process you have identified your needs or goals, and how important they are to you in your life. It would be overwhelming to begin working on all of your goals at the same time. Start working on meeting these needs and goals by beginning with your top priority. After you have met that goal, or are coming along well with that one, you can begin work on another need or goal.

Keep in mind that your needs and goals may change from time to time. What seems like a high priority now may not seem like such a high priority in several months, when something else may have taken precedence over it.

Get the facts.

When you speak up for yourself, you need to know what you are talking about. You need to gather information and make sure the information you have is accurate. There are many ways to get information:

- Ask people who have done something similar or who have been in a similar situation
- Ask someone who has special expertise in the area you are working on. For instance, if you want to go back to college, meet with a college advisor or a student support program. If you need safe housing, talk to someone in the housing authority.
- Study books and other resources you can access through your library, related organizations and agencies, or the Internet
- Contact various agencies and organizations, especially those that specialize in advocacy and education. If this is hard for you to do, ask someone you trust to help you — like a friend, family member, or health care provider.

Once you have the facts you think you need, write them down or make copies, and keep them in a safe place where you know you can find the information when you need it.
Plan your strategy.
Now that you know what you want and you have information about it, what do you think is your best strategy for getting what you want or for achieving your goal? What steps would you need to take? You may want to set a timeline and small goals to achieve by certain dates. You may want to think of several ways to address the problem in case one way does not work out. Ask supporters for suggestions. Get feedback on your ideas. Then choose the strategy or strategies.

Gather support.
It is easier and usually more effective to work on getting what you want and need for yourself if you have the support of one or several friends, family members, or health care providers. You may even want to start or join a group of people with issues similar to yours such as a self help or peer support group. If necessary, call your protection and advocacy organization for support. A good supporter is someone who:
- you like, respect, and trust; and who likes, respects, and trusts you
- allows you the space to change, grow, make decisions, and even mistakes
- listens to you, and shares with you both the good and the bad times
- respects your need for confidentiality, so you can tell them anything
- lets you freely express your feelings and emotions without judging, teasing, or criticizing
- gives you good advice when you want and ask for it
- assists you in taking action that will help you feel better, and works with you to figure out what to do in difficult situations
- accepts help from you when they need it
- you want to be with, but do not desperately need to be with
- does not ever take advantage of you

Tell them you are working on becoming a better advocate for yourself. Ask them if they would be willing to help you in this effort by listening to you, giving you feedback from time to time, and being with you when you are taking some difficult steps. Make a list of your supporters contact information and post it in a convenient place where you can easily find these phone numbers when you need them. However, do not overwhelm your supporters with your problems and needs, and be there for them when they need your help.

Keep in mind that even the very best friend may inadvertently let you down from time to time. No one is perfect. Try to forget the incident and continue with the good relationship you have.
Assert yourself calmly.
When you are speaking up for yourself you may get very frustrated and angry if the other person is very negative or difficult to deal with. Stay cool. Do not lose your temper and lash out at the other person, their character, or the organization. If you lose your temper, it may make it more difficult to get what you want and need for yourself. It will help if you treat the other person or people courteously. Repeating these affirmations over and over may help:

In the process of advocating for myself, I will keep calm because this increases my effectiveness. In the process of advocating for myself, I am committed to speaking out and also respecting the rights of others and listening to what they have to say.

For more information on assertiveness, see pages 35 to 38.

Be firm and persistent.
Do not give up! Keep at it until you get what you want, need, and deserve. It may take a very short time and little effort, but more often, it takes persistent effort over time. Repeat the following affirmation:

I will be firm and persistent. I will stick with it until I get what I need for myself.

(Adapted from: Source “Speaking Out For Yourself, A Self-Help Guide. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s National Mental Health Information Center)
Self advocacy is acting to influence people, agencies, and sometimes, policies. This may seem to be more of a challenge than you want to attempt. But what do you have to lose?

**Doing Nothing**
You may be afraid that if you speak out about your situation, things may become more difficult or that you will be looked at as a 'problem.' If you do not let people know what your situation is and how you want it improved, things will likely stay the same.
Ask yourself if you want to stay where you are. Ask yourself:
“Will things get worse if I do not do anything? If things will stay the same, is that OK with me?”

**Overcoming Inertia or Fear**
Sometimes you may feel tired and it can be challenging to get the energy to advocate for yourself. Know when you have reached your limit. If you have, it may be a good time to ask someone to help you. If you are afraid, you can still act, and see what happens. It is a risk, but you are worth it.

**Stay Calm**
No matter how upset you may be or how badly you have been treated, try to stay calm. It may help to talk with someone about what happened to upset you, like a friend, family member, or a professional. They can offer support and advice. Find an appropriate person you can express your feelings to, but try to remain calm when trying to get your needs met.

Being calm helps when dealing with people because if you are calm, they will likely stay calm too. But if you are angry or aggressive, for example, people will respond to you differently, maybe in ways that will not help you meet your needs or get what you want.

**Keep At It**
Do not give up once you have started. Remember that you have the right to ask for what you want or need. And you have the right to:
Speak to someone who has the authority to make decisions.
Be treated as a competent individual.

**Read a recovery book**
You can find out how others have dealt with similar situations, discover ideas that might help or learn some new skills.

**Go to a group**
Self help or peer support groups are places to share experiences, strengths and hopes. People in these groups can offer practical tools and provide you with a variety of supports and information.

**Use community resources or your own resources**
Your resources may include: family and friends, distress centres, crisis or distress lines, radio or TV talk shows, videos, the internet, journaling, doing household chores, or doing something you enjoy. Exercise is a great stress reducer, even just going for a walk. Other options are resources in the community like counselling, guidance, a mentor, a teacher, a facilitator, a hospital, a mental health clinic, or a self-help or peer support organization.
Workshop Evaluation

By filling out this page, we can learn what you found to be most helpful about this workshop and what areas of the workshop could use more development.

What did you find most useful about the Self Advocacy workshop?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Were the groups facilitated in a way that was suitable to you? Please explain.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Was there anything you were hoping to learn from the workshop that was not discussed?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________