Self-Advocacy: Be Your Own Champion

Table of Contents

Self-Advocacy/ What You Will Learn	03
Activity: Your Self-Advocacy Goal	04
Activity: Communication Style Quiz	05
The Communication Spectrum	07
Activity: Your Turn to GROW	08
Self-Advocacy Bad Habits	09
Assertive Strategies	10
Activity: Your Assertiveness Toolkit	13
Say No with Y-E-S	14
Next Steps: Find a Sponsor	15
Final Thoughts	16

Self-Advocacy

"I learned a long time ago the wisest thing I can do is be on my own side, be an advocate for myself and others like me."
- Maya Angelou

What you will learn:

At the end of this course you will be able to:

- Define self-advocacy and its value in work and life
- Differentiate between passive, aggressive, and assertive communication
- Discover your typical communication style
- Practice a method for setting and planning goals
- Recognize self-advocacy bad habits that may be holding you back
- Identify strategies to communicate more assertively
- Establish when and how to say no
- Identify how to find a sponsor

Activity: Your Self-Advocacy Goal

What is self-advocacy?

How would you describe it? What does it look like? Feel like?

What is my self-advocacy goal?

What do you hope to learn? What do you want to be able to do? Using your definition of self-advocacy, what is your desired outcome for this course?

Communication Style Quiz

1. Your co-worker always leaves a mess in the office kitchen when they prepare their lunch and doesn't clean it up. How do you respond?

A) Assume someone else will clean it up.
B) Take them aside after lunch and ask them to tidy up after themselves so the kitchen stays clean for everyone.
C) Leave a note on top of their mess, calling them out by name to clean up.

2. You notice office supplies like post-its and pens randomly go missing from your desk. You see them turn up on your co-worker's desk. What do you do?

A) Get some more for yourself from the supply closet.
B) Ask them to return these items to you and request they ask before using your supplies.
C) Grab them off their desk and tell them to get their own.

3. During a team meeting, your co-worker presents an idea for an improved process. You see some flaws with their idea. What do you do?

A) Keep quiet - you don't want to rock the boat.
B) Share your opinion and offer suggestions for improvement.
C) Dismiss their new process and continue to do it the way you want to.

4. Your co-worker, who sits next to you, talks and laughs very loudly when they take phone calls, typically a few times a day. It drives you crazy and you find it very distracting when you're trying to do your own work. What do you do?

A) Try to make do by blasting music on your headphones to drown them out.
B) After they hang up a call, ask them to try to keep it down or find another area of the office to take their calls, as their volume is making it hard for you to concentrate.
C) Make noise or take phone calls when they're working to show how distracting it is.

5. You and your co-worker tend to disagree on the best way to do things. While working on a group project, you notice they've made changes to your contribution that suit their perspective. What do you do?

A) Change it back.
B) Change it back and ask them to not make changes to your part unless you ask them.
C) Change it back and make changes to their stuff, too.

Communication Style Quiz Results

Take note of your responses on the previous page.

If you responded with mostly As, you're likely a **passive** communicator.
If you responded with mostly Bs, you're likely an **assertive** communicator.
If you responded with mostly Cs, you're likely an **aggressive** communicator.

What did you think of your results? Did they surprise you?

Go through the quiz again, but substitute a close friend or partner for your co-worker. Do your results change? How does the context of the situation impact how you respond?

Take a look at the descriptions on the next page to learn more about your communication style.

The Communication Spectrum

Passive

“The observer,” while known as “the good sport,” communicates opinions passively and as a result feels undervalued and overlooked.

Aggressive

“The achiever” communicates opinions aggressively because they know exactly what they want, but can often lose their temper and feel frustrated in the process. Furthermore, the achiever often does not consider the thoughts, feelings, and wants of others along the way.

Assertive

The “assertive communicator” combines traits from both of these — they acknowledge the thoughts and opinions of others without changing their own. The assertive communicator is “keeping it real” by saying how they feel *while* respecting the thoughts, feelings, and wants of others.

Activity: Your Turn to GROW

GOAL: What are your **goals**?

REALITY: What is your **current reality** in relation to your goals?

OPTIONS: What are your **options** based on your goals and reality?

WILL: What are **specific actions** you can commit to to move forward?

Self-Advocacy Bad Habits

Padding and Blathering

Over-talking during challenging moments, using filler words and phrases.

'Just', 'would you mind if', 'would it be okay if', 'I only ask because', etc.

Saying Sorry

Apologizing needlessly when we find ourselves feeling uneasy or uncomfortable with a situation.

'Sorry, 'sorry to bother you', etc.

Attacking

Saying no poorly, using aggressive language such as profanity, shouting or demanding instructions.

Passive-Aggressive Language

This is aggression disguised to be passive. Tone is important here.

'I must have missed that instruction/email/message',
'I'll get it to you tomorrow', 'well, I'll try'.

Hedging Our Bets

Avoiding putting ourselves on the line with our thoughts or opinions.

'Perhaps', 'maybe', and 'in my opinion', 'from where I'm standing', 'it could be said', 'it might be thought that', 'according to some people', 'many people have told me', etc.

Accommodating

Saying yes when we want to say no.

'I suppose I could do that', 'I guess I don't mind', 'If you really need me to', etc.

Avoiding

Not saying anything at all.

Assertive Strategies

Anticipate and Plan
(BATNA = Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement)

Anticipate difficult or challenging interactions. Consider all the possible outcomes and identify strategies or alternatives. Use an IF/THEN/ELSE flowchart to map out the possibilities.

The SBI Model

Use the SBI Model to provide clear, direct feedback while remaining objective and rooted in fact.

S Describe the specific **situation.**

B What was the **behavior** you observed?

I What was the **impact** of the employee's behavior in the situation?

Assertive Strategies

Neutral Statements

Avoid pointing fingers by sticking to the facts. Avoid “you” language that points fingers or blames.

Ineffective:

The product was delayed because **your** team took so long to get organized and because **you** made too many changes.

Better:

The product was delayed as a result of the many changes that were made.

We Statements

Appeal to shared interests such as equality, fairness, or quality in order to find common ground.

Broken Record

Reinforce your main message by repeating words and phrases or using similar words. Be careful not to use this aggressively.

Reschedule

Delay (don’t avoid) conversations that you aren’t prepared for.

‘I’m sorry, but this is not a good time to talk about this.’

‘Let’s talk about it this afternoon.’

‘Let me think about it and I’ll get back to you tomorrow.’

‘I need to consult my supervisor/team/partner.’

Assertive Strategies

Know Your Needs

Take the time to reflect on what you truly need and why to prepare yourself for assertive conversations. Self-advocacy must start with a recognition and understanding of what you value or want and why.

When you're planning to advocate for yourself, really give some thought as to what it is you'll be asking for and why it will benefit you.

How will your request serve your needs? What are the benefits and what are the drawbacks? Put thought into why this is the best option for you so that you are well equipped to advocate for yourself and address any concerns when the time comes.

Activity: Your Assertiveness Toolkit

Of the strategies you just learned about, which will you use to reach your self-advocacy goal? List up to 3 below, and jot some notes about how you will use them.

Strategy 1:

Strategy 2:

Strategy 3:

Say No with Y-E-S

1. **Y**ield before answering.

When you're faced with a situation where you want to say no, but feel like you can't, stop and assess the risks. Does it make sense for you to say no? What would happen if you did? Would you fare better in the long run by saying yes or no?

2. **E**xercise your right to say no.

In most situations, you DO have the right to say no to things you don't want to do. It may seem hard to do so because of power dynamics, peer pressure, or a sense of obligation. However, you are in control of the decisions you make for yourself. Clearly and firmly, state your position.

3. **S**ay what you'll do

Rather than just leaving it as a flat-out no, consider what you may be able to say yes to. Could you help them achieve the same outcome in a different way? Can you commit to some, but not all of their request? Consider if there's a compromise you can mutually agree on.

"A 'No' uttered from the deepest conviction
is better than a 'Yes' merely uttered to please, or worse, to avoid trouble."
Mahatma Gandhi

Find a Sponsor

Who could be your sponsor? Do you need to earn any more performance or relationship currency before you ask them to be your sponsor?

Final Thoughts

What are some important considerations when advocating for ourselves?

Which strategies are the most difficult? Why?

What are your new self-advocacy tools?