

Advocacy Tips for Teens

Advocacy is speaking out on an issue that concerns you. This can mean talking to a talking with your parents about something you want to do, or talking to your teachers about a problem at school, or talking to your supervisor at a job about an accommodation you may need, discussing your healthcare with your doctors, or even talking to policymakers; such as your local or state government officials about a rule or laws you may feel are not fair.

How you advocate is very important if you want to be effective in getting your opinions heard and working towards making the changes you want. Here are some tips:

1. Have a basic idea of what you want to communicate and why you want it:
2. Rehearse what you will say, perhaps with a friend or parent, or even a tape recorder. Consider preparing e a written statement.
3. Maintain eye contact (as much as possible). Take your time when talking, and ask for time to think if you need it. Rephrase (repeat) what you heard, to be sure you understand. Ask questions if you don't understand something. Consider taking notes
5. Be respectful with your words and body language (Are you angry or impatient?)
6. Be flexible and ready to compromise.
7. Be clear on what responsibilities you are agreeing to. Do not agree to something you do not think you are able to do, and don't agree to something because you feel pressured.
8. Be prepared to possibly not get what you want immediately. You may have to determine what is your next step or who else you may need to talk to next to resolve your issue.

It's important as an advocate to keep track of what steps you have taken. Keeping written records of the date and names of the who you talk to, what was, or wasn't decided.

Following your meeting with another reminder of your desired action is a wonderful way to follow up with your advocacy efforts,

Some ways you can follow up are brief phone calls, letters, emails or notes thank the person for meeting with you and reminding the person of your commitment about the issue. Thanking people for their helps is always a great idea!

*Adapted from <http://familyvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Advocacy-Tips.pdf>