

November: Speaking Up for Yourself

Why should I care about speaking up for myself?

Learning how to speak up for yourself is important. Your voice and opinions matter! Letting others know your thoughts and feelings will help you feel heard and more confident. Sometimes it may seem easier to keep your feelings inside to avoid becoming embarrassed or having a hard conversation, but it's just a short term solution. It can be tricky to know when the best time is to speak up for yourself. Learning how to speak up can change your life in a very positive way.

How can I learn to speak up for myself?

- 1. First, figure out what the issue is and whether you want to do something about it.** Having a clear idea of what you want to say and why is the first step in speaking up.
- 2. Think about what you'd like to say.** Sometimes it helps to practice what you're going to say before you say it. This can be as simple as thinking it through or practicing out loud with a friend. Think about how you are going to start the conversation- it's important to use words that won't make the other person feel like they're being attacked. For example, say "I want" or "I need" instead of "You should" or "You did".
- 3. Think about the best time to speak up.** Decide whether the conversation is best to have with one person or in front of a group. If you get nervous in front of groups, maybe it's best to make an appointment with a trusted adult, or have a private conversation with a friend or parent.
- 4. Listen to the response.** We don't always get our way when we speak up. It may be that the other person doesn't see eye to eye with you, but it's still important to listen to their thoughts and let them speak without interrupting. Make eye contact with them and let them know that you're listening.
- 5. Safety first!** There may be times when you feel like you want to speak up about something you observe in a public place; however it may not be safe to do so. For example: If you observe someone being treated unfairly, it is still good to speak up to a safe person or other trustworthy adult and who can handle the situation and not put you or others in danger.
- 6. Most importantly, stay positive!** It gets easier to speak up for yourself with practice, and every time you do, you'll get better at it. You'll find that with practice it gets easier. Get tips from friends, siblings, parents, social worker and speech therapist, and teachers about how they learned to speak up.

How does this relate to Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy?

Being aware of your feelings is a starting point to recognizing next steps and where to go from there. Once you identify your feeling, you can implement coping strategies such as taking deep breaths in order to calm down and organize your thoughts and what you need. You can then calmly speak up and communicate using a feeling and need statement in order to begin problem-solving.