



## Stage 1: Advocacy for Self

### The Steps:



#### Step 1: Process the Situation

**Step Overview:** Before advocating for help, students must first process the situation in a way that allows them to determine how to move forward. In this step, students work through the internal processing that will help them identify their challenge or obstacle, identify possible solutions for the challenge/obstacle, and determine if the situation requires self-advocacy. If the situation does require self-advocacy, students should continue on to Step 2. If after completing step 1, the situation does not require self-advocacy, guide students to other health skills that could aid them in overcoming their challenge, such as *Decision-Making* and *Goal-Setting*.

##### Sub Skill(s):

- Identify the obstacle/challenge
- Determine solution(s) and/or need(s)
- Determine if the situation requires self-advocacy



#### Step 2: Determine How to Approach the Situation

**Step Overview:** Once a student knows they need to self-advocate in a situation, they must decide the best way to approach the situation. In Step 2, students work to identify people who can help them with their current challenge and how to best seek support from that individual. Because high school students often need to advocate for themselves in a more professional setting, time should be dedicated to crafting professional emails and other appropriate forms of communications.

##### Sub Skill(s):

- Identify individuals who can support
- Use appropriate strategies to ask for support
  - Approach in-person
  - Ask if it is the right time
  - Call
  - Write a note, email or text
  - Use appropriate non-verbal communication



## Step 3: Ask For What I Need

**Step Overview:** When advocating, an individual should provide a person (a helper) with the following information: sharing the challenge/obstacle, stating what they need, and specifically requesting what is needed. This step allows students to take the internal processing from Step 1 and Step 2 and put this planning into action. In Step 3, students provide clear background information and ask specific questions in order for a helper to provide necessary support. Students should practice communicating these components in order to practice advocating effectively. Sometimes during self-advocacy, we continue to experience obstacles. For example, the individual we went to may not be able to provide the help we are seeking. Therefore, in addition to constructing and communicating their obstacles and needs, students should also practice negotiating next steps. Students should practice listening to the individual, asking follow up questions, and breaking down their requests into smaller pieces in order to move forward. Pair Step 3 with *Stage 3: Conflict Resolution of Interpersonal Communication* for how to reach a compromise during self-advocacy.

### Sub Skill(s):

- Ask for what is needed
  - State the challenge/obstacle
  - State the need
  - Make a request
- Negotiate next steps



## Step 4: Reflect

**Step Overview:** Learning to reflect takes practice and intention. After an individual advocates for themselves, they then must reflect on how they feel after the situation, if additional follow up is necessary, and what they want to remember next time they are advocating for themselves. Building time for students to reflect is crucial in developing metacognition, which supports other health skills, such as *Decision-Making, Goal-Setting, and Self-Management*.

### Reflection Question(s):

- What was the challenge/obstacle?
- How did I know the situation required self-advocacy?
- Who did I go to for help? Why?
- How did I seek support? Why?
- How did I communicate my needs?
- Did I clearly communicate my needs using an appropriate method for the situation?



## Teaching Tips

- Use stories about individuals facing problems or obstacles to provide practice opportunities for students to identify problems.
- Prompt students to think about problems they can handle on their own and problems that require assistance.
- Be careful about how you define attention and attention seeking. The ways people gain attention, whether appropriate or inappropriate, can be cultural or a survival mechanism. When students suggest or demonstrate an inappropriate way to gain attention, debrief this with them to better understand what they are trying to do and refer them to support services as needed.
- Provide a variety of strategies students can use to get attention from helpers (e.g. raising their hand, calling for help, approaching someone in person, writing an email, text, or letter).
- Share with students that just because we advocate for something doesn't mean we will have these needs met, and that they may need to negotiate or break their request into smaller pieces.
- Pair *Stage 1: Advocacy for Self* with *Access Valid & Reliable Resources* to reinforce identifying individuals who can help.
- Pair *Stage 1: Advocacy for Self* with *Stage 1: Communication Techniques of Interpersonal Communication* to reinforce speaking strategies one needs when asking for help.

See *Teaching Progression* for suggested learning activities.