



SELF-ADVOCACY

Self advocacy means: (1) knowing what you need, and (2) knowing how to get those needs met. Self-advocacy is important for all life tasks, at home, in school, for work, and in the community.

When children are young, they rely on their families to “advocate” for them. Parents choose the preschool that best meets their children’s needs: one with a beautiful safe outdoor playground space for a “rough and tumble” child or one with a curriculum with lots of opportunities for imaginative play for a child who enjoys “pretending.”

As children get older, they naturally begin to make their own choices according to their likes and needs. Some children join little leagues or other sports teams, others prefer chess clubs. Some children prefer chocolate ice cream, others cherry water ice. For those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), knowing what their preferences are is one thing, but being able to self-advocate for them is quite another.

At home, in their most comfortable environment, individuals often seek out their needs and will figure out ways to have these needs met. For example, some children come home from school and bury themselves under the cushions in the sofa. These children may be in need of a sensory experience after a long hard day at school; the pressure and the weight of the cushions may be comforting. It is the job of parents, caregivers, therapists, and educators to help children learn to both realize and ask for what they need, in this example, a sensory “break.”

There will be many times throughout each day, and over the years, that being able to recognize what one needs and how to ask for appropriate accommodations to help meet those needs can be life changing. In school, students need to ask for elements in the curriculum to meet their learning style, for example opportunities to read aloud to comprehend what they are reading. At work, individuals with ASD

need to be able to request accommodations that will allow them to function at their best and which make them more productive. In the community, individuals with ASD should be able to identify situations and environments that pose difficulties and find ways to make accommodations for themselves. For example, knowing which grocery store has the least amount of flickering florescent bulbs can be a lifesaver.

The right to request and receive reasonable accommodations is part of the Americans with Disabilities Act. It gives civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities which are similar to those provided to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion. It guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications.

Related Articles:

- [Advocating for Your Child](#)
- [How to Be a Good Parent Advocate](#)
- [Sensory Processing and Sensory Integration in Individuals with ASD](#)
- [Accommodations and Supports for School-Age Students with ASD](#)
- [Workplace Accommodations and Supports for Individuals with ASD](#)
- [The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 \(ADA\)](#)
- [Developing Self-Advocacy Skills to Last a Lifetime](#)
- [Self-Advocacy in an IEP Meeting](#)
- [Life with Asperger Syndrome](#)
- [Climbing the Tree](#)

Additional Resources:

- [The Autism Self-Advocacy Network \(ASAN\)](#)
- [Global and Regional Autism Support Partnership \(GRASP\)](#)
- [Self-Advocacy, from the Autism Society of America \(ASA\)](#)
- [Self-Advocacy Tool Kit, from Autism Speaks®](#)
- [Self-Advocacy from Wrightslaw](#)
- [Helping Your Child to Help Him/Herself: Beginning Self-Advocacy](#)
- [Autism and Self-Advocacy](#)

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