

Being a Self-Advocate for YOUR Health

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What does it mean to be a Self-Advocate?

- “An individual’s ability to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate or assert his or her own interests, desires, needs and rights.”
- “It involves making informed decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions.” (VanReusen et al., 1994)

What does it mean to be YOUR own Self-Advocate?

- You are able to tell people about your thoughts and feelings, ask for what you need and want, and know/speak up for your rights

Benefits of Self-Advocacy

- Being able to make your own decisions
- Gaining self-confidence and self-respect
- Building allies
- Learning to properly express your need to achieve goals
- Experiencing teamwork
- Developing conflict resolution and creative problem-solving skills
- Making others aware of issues you are facing

REMEMBER.....

- No one knows **your needs** better than you!
- Before you can advocate, you must believe in yourself
- Know that you can make decisions about your own life and understand what is needed to improve your quality of life
- YOU matter most in this process!!!!
- Self-Advocacy skills include a person understanding themselves, their rights, and their needs, and communicating that understanding
- This leads to Self-Determination

Self-Advocacy Skills and Self-Determination

Self-Advocacy Skills

- Self-awareness
- Communication
- Navigating resources
- Forming and nurturing relationships
- Perspective taking

Self-Determination

- Self-advocacy skills
- Goal-setting
- Decision-making
- Problem solving
- Self-efficacy

What Happens if YOU Do Not Advocate for Yourself?

- You bottle up many of your thoughts and feelings
- You choose not to “inconvenience” others
- You put your needs on the “backburner”

Tips for Self-Advocacy

- Be self-aware. You need to know yourself in order to advocate for yourself.
- Know your needs
- Practice assertiveness
- Develop self-confidence
- Utilize supports

Physical Health

- Take time to think about your health goals
- Ask yourself how you define a good quality of life
- What matters most when it comes to your health
- As a Self-Advocate, you have to do your part
- Take your medications as prescribed
- Follow your doctor's recommendations about diet, exercise, rest, smoking, and alcohol/drug use
- You and your doctor's make decisions as a team
- Speak up with your questions, needs, concerns, and preferences

Doctor-Patient Relationship

- Your relationship with your doctors should be open, honest, and trusting
- You and your doctors are partners
- They should listen to your concerns and answer your questions, so you feel comfortable
- You should feel you can talk with your doctor about anything
- Your doctor should be sure you understand and feel comfortable with health decisions

Vaccines

- Getting vaccinated is one the safest ways for you to protect your health
- Vaccines help prevent getting and spreading serious diseases that can result in poor health, medical bills and not being able to care for your family
- As we get older, our immune systems tend to weaken over time putting us at higher risk for certain diseases

Vaccines

Vaccines for age 65 and older:

- COVID-19 vaccine
- Flu vaccine (influenza)
- Pneumococcal vaccine
- Shingles vaccine (zoster)
- Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and whooping cough) or Td (tetanus and diphtheria)

You may need other vaccines based on your age

- Talk with your doctor to learn which vaccines are recommended for you
- RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) single dose

End-of-Life Decisions

- It is hard to think about and make end-of-life decisions
- Few people want to think about dying and the physical, emotional and spiritual journey that dying involves
- It is important to indicate your end-of-life decisions in writing to ensure that your family and healthcare providers will honor them
- You will feel more at peace and so will your loved ones once you have made your end-of-life decisions and finalized them in writing

End-of-Life Decisions

End-of-Life Decisions to make if you or a loved one are planning in advance:

- Life support
- Health care proxy or health care power of attorney
- Organ and tissue donation
- Funeral plans
- Financial decisions
- Palliative care or hospice
- Where you want to die
- Who you want to care for you

Taking Charge Over Fear and Anxiety

- **Acknowledge your fear:** connecting to how you feel can help you make better decisions
- **Do a Reality Check:** most fears are not based on our current reality!
- **Work** to control your thoughts
- Commit to important values in your personal and work life
- Work to identify meaning and purpose in your life/
envision and focus on your desired future

Self-Care is Important

- Practice self-compassion
- Keep healthy sleep hours
- Maintain good nutrition/regular eating hours
- Constructive leisure time activities/hobbies
- Exercise, hiking, walking, etc. to relax
- Mindfulness, meditation, yoga/shift your focus to positive emotions in your daily life

Self-Care is Important

- Foster healthy and supportive relationships
- Avoid social isolation and negative coping skills
- Practice self care by taking time to relax
- Be kind to yourself and avoid comparisons to others in your ability to overcome fear/anxiety and reflect on your past successes

Self-Care is Important

- Examine your emotional reaction patterns and learn to express your feelings in a useful way
- Develop and learn new coping skills
- Control what you can and avoid dwelling on things you cannot control
- Explore community supports and programs and get professional help if needed

Encompass Community Supports
Access and Emergency Services

Regional Call Center:
434-230-9704

ECS Crisis Line:
540-825-5656, extension #7

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline:
988

When you Advocate for
YOURSELF,
You improve the
Quality of YOUR Life!