



Let's Talk about:

Advocating for Yourself



Hi CCS Community!

I hope you are all having a great start to the new year! In school, we have been talking a lot about advocacy this year. As future doctors, we all want to be strong advocates for our patients. However, we also talked about what it means to advocate for yourself. Advocating for yourself can be one of the hardest things to do. It can feel daunting and confusing. Here are some of my tips if you are not sure where to start!

Why is it important to advocate for yourself?

You are the only person who knows you best – it is important to make sure that your **voice is always heard**

If you don't speak up and share your needs, it is possible that other people will **make decisions for you** that you are not totally happy with
It helps you build **confidence**

What does advocacy look like?

Advocacy means a lot of different things to different people

For some people, advocacy means joining a committee, support group, or writing a letter to your elected representative

To others, advocacy happens on a day to day level when you speak up about your needs

My Tips for Advocating for Yourself

First, think about what you **value** – for example, when you go to the doctor's office, what type of communication makes you feel the most comfortable? Is it talking, writing, using an assisted communication device or something else? As a patient, it is your **right** to communicate in the way that makes you feel best, so it is important to make your preference known.

Second, think about things that upset you – for example, maybe there is a certain phrase or tone of voice that makes you upset. Think about what you would like to see done differently.

Third, advocate for yourself in a kind and respectful manner. To begin a conversation, you could say, "Hi, I wanted to talk to you about how I prefer to communicate. I prefer X, and I would appreciate it if you respect that going forward."

Advocating for yourself can be tricky and at times, a little awkward. However, if at the end of the day you feel more comfortable and confident because you made that change, it might be worth the initial discomfort.

Let me know if you try any of these tips!