Say It So They Hear You

TOPIC: Self-advocacy, communication, asking for help

AGE: About 10 to 18

SETTING: Family, classroom, advisory, afterschool, youth programs

Self-advocacy is not demanding that people do whatever you want.
It is saying clearly what is happening and what support may help.

1 Draw a Card. Build Your Response.

WHAT'S HAPPENING
"When _____ happens..."

WHAT I NEED
"It would help me if..."

WHAT I CAN DO
"I can also..."

EXAMPLE "When directions are given really quickly, I miss some of the steps. It would help me if I could see them written down. I can check them off as I work."

2 Role-Play It

A partner plays the adult, teacher, coach, or peer and responds. Then switch roles and try the next card.

3 Twist: Rewrite It

INSTEAD OF
~~"This class makes no sense.""~~
TRY
"I understand the first part, but I'm stuck on the second step. Can you explain that part another way?"

Learning Goal

Recognize the problem → Identify the need → Communicate clearly → Help build the solution

Inspired by: Search Institute. (n.d.). *Self-advocacy coaching guide*. Retrieved October 6, 2026, from https://searchinstitute.org/resources-hub/self-advocacy-coaching

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Situation Cards

Cutonthedashedlines.Drawacard,fillin all three parts, then say it out loud to your partner.

CARD 1

You don't understand an assignment.

WHEN... _____

IT WOULD HELP ME IF... _____

I CAN ALSO... _____

CARD 2

You need more time to process directions.

WHEN... _____

IT WOULD HELP ME IF... _____

I CAN ALSO... _____

CARD 3

A group member keeps talking over you.

WHEN... _____

IT WOULD HELP ME IF... _____

I CAN ALSO... _____

CARD 4

You are overwhelmed but don't know how to say it.

WHEN... _____

IT WOULD HELP ME IF... _____

I CAN ALSO... _____

CARD 5

You missed information because the room was too noisy.

WHEN... _____

IT WOULD HELP ME IF... _____

I CAN ALSO... _____

CARD 6

You disagree with an adult's decision.

WHEN... _____

IT WOULD HELP ME IF... _____

I CAN ALSO... _____

CARD 7

You need clarification but feel embarrassed to ask.

WHEN... _____

IT WOULD HELP ME IF... _____

I CAN ALSO... _____

CARD 8

You want to tell a coach, teacher, or parent something isn't working.

WHEN... _____

IT WOULD HELP ME IF... _____

I CAN ALSO... _____

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