



Respect Differences ✓



Not everyone will always agree with you, and that's okay. Respect their opinions, even if they are different from yours, without taking them personally and losing your key values. However, do not blindly accept views, beliefs, or behaviors that are different from yours to maintain a healthy relationship.

Consider the Timing and Context

Timing can make a big difference in how your advocacy is received. Choose a time when both you and the other person are calm, open, and ready to engage in a meaningful conversation. For example, maybe wait to have conversations if the person is having a stressful day. However, avoid waiting too long to express your needs.

Challenges You Might Face

Advocating for yourself can be tough. You might worry about starting an argument, or you might not even know what you need. Sometimes, the other person might not be used to this kind of open communication and might think you're being confrontational. That's okay; just be patient and keep practicing. Over time, it gets easier.



Relationship advocacy is a lifelong skill that can transform how we interact with others. By expressing our needs, maintaining our boundaries, and respecting others' boundaries, we create space for more genuine and supportive connections. Relationships are more fulfilling when both individuals feel comfortable advocating for themselves and respecting each other. Better communication can deepen trust, increase understanding, and lead to a more balanced and satisfying connection in every relationship we value.



Adrienne Duke Marks, *Extension Specialist*, Associate Professor, and Sandra Anti Eyiah, Graduate Research Assistant, both in Human Development and Family Studies, Auburn University The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) is an equal opportunity educator, employer, and provider.
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Talking It Out: Building Better Relationships



What Is Relationship Advocacy?

Relationship advocacy is about expressing your needs and boundaries in a way that builds trust, respect, and understanding. It is, therefore, important for youth to know ways to practice advocacy that can foster healthy, happy, and totally fulfilling relationships.

Understanding Relationship Advocacy

Relationship advocacy is an act of speaking up for yourself in a way that's respectful and clear. It is not just about talking; it is about making sure that everyone feels heard and valued. Whether it's with friends or someone you are dating, advocacy helps you build stronger and healthier relationships. Advocacy helps you work through your thoughts without your opinion being lost or misunderstood.

Importance of Advocacy in Relationships

Healthy relationships are built on trust, respect, and understanding. Advocacy helps you:

- say what you need, reducing misunderstandings.
- build trust by promoting open and honest conversation.
- respect boundaries so everyone feels valued.

When you advocate for yourself, you are not just looking out for your own needs, you are also showing respect for the other person's feelings. It's a win-win!

How to Practice Relationship Advocacy

Advocating for yourself takes practice, but it's worth it. Here are some tips to get started:

Get to Know Yourself First



Take time to figure out what makes you feel respected, valued, and safe in a relationship. Reflect on past experiences both good and bad and ask yourself questions like "What are my ideas about relationships?" or "What behaviors make me uncomfortable?" Knowing yourself is the first step to advocating for your needs.

Know Your Boundaries

- Understanding your own boundaries is the first step to advocating for them. Know your limits—what you are okay with and what you are not. For example, maybe you're okay with texting friends late at night, but you're not okay with someone pressuring you to do something you don't want to do.
- Confidently and clearly express what you are willing to do for others. For example, you might be happy to help a friend with homework, but you're not willing to skip your own responsibilities to do it. Knowing these limits helps you set boundaries without feeling guilty and protect your needs while respecting others.

Use "I" Statements

When there is conflict within relationships, expressing how you feel with "I" statements rather than "You" statements keeps the focus on your experience rather than blaming the other person. For example, saying, "I feel upset when plans are canceled last minute, and I need either more notice or follow-through on what we agreed upon" is more effective than "You always cancel plans."

Be Clear & Direct

Don't beat around the bush! If you need something, say it clearly. For example, instead of saying, "I need more support," specify the type of support you're looking for, such as, "I would appreciate it if we could set aside some time each week to talk about how we are both doing."

Listen Actively

Advocacy is not just about voicing your needs. It's about listening too. Show the other person you care about by really hearing what they have to say. Nod, make eye contact, and don't interrupt.

