

***PEER SUPPORT
AND
EMPOWERMENT***

Booklet Two



ABLE MINDS

• UNLOCKING MINDS. •
CULTIVATING COMMUNITIES.



Table of Contents

- 01. Self Awareness
- 04. Triggers and Feelings
- 07. Support from others
- 08. Trust in relationships
- 09 Turning the way we feel into self-advocacy goals
- 10. Self Care

How does someone who puts up with things that are not OK become someone who demands better treatment? If self-advocacy is like an engine, then what gives it the power to work?



Let's Explore what drives this important process



Self-Awareness

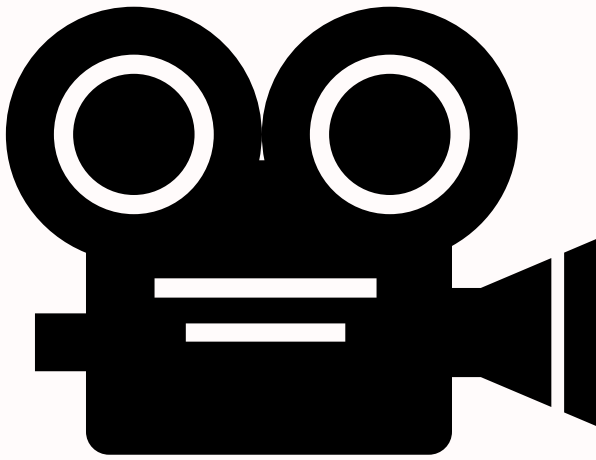
Self-awareness is the ability to recognize our emotions and feelings, and preferences.

Self-awareness is the ability to recognize our emotions and feelings, as well as our strengths, weaknesses, and preferences.

A Self-aware person:

- Understands what makes them feel happy, sad, or angry
- Knows what they are good at and what they need to work on
- Recognize a bad habit and understands its impact on them

Self-awareness is a skill that can benefit us in many ways. It helps us better understand the goals we truly want to achieve through self-advocacy.



[10 Things Only Self-Aware People Do](#)

[What is Self Awareness? - YouTube](#)

How well do you know yourself?



List 3 things that make you happy



List 3 things that make you sad or angry



List 3 things that make you nervous or anxious



List 3 strengths that you have



List 3 weaknesses that you may need to work
on

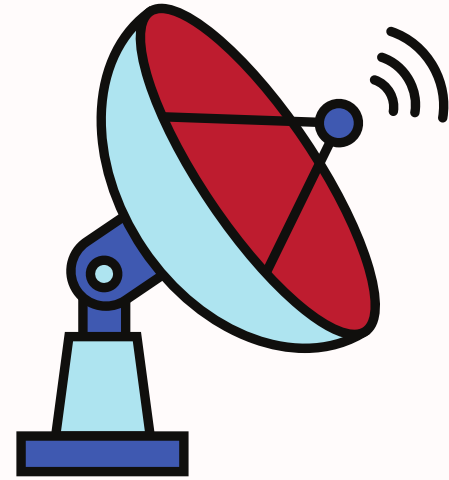
Self-awareness means noticing how our bodies feel.



We use self-awareness when we pay attention to things like:

- Whether our muscles are tense or relaxed.
- How fast our heart is beating.
- If we feel jumpy or calm.

Our bodies send us strong signals to let us know if we feel OK or not. These signals help us understand our feelings in different places and around different people. Our bodies also alert us when something is wrong.



Often, the journey of self-advocacy begins with the question, "What is my body telling me right now?"

Sometimes, stress is just a part of life. For example, we might want to speak up in a meeting, but we're not used to it. Our heart might beat faster, and we might feel nervous.

Can you think of a time you wanted to do something, but your nerves stopped you?

Can you think of another time when you wanted to do something, you were nervous but decided to do it anyway?



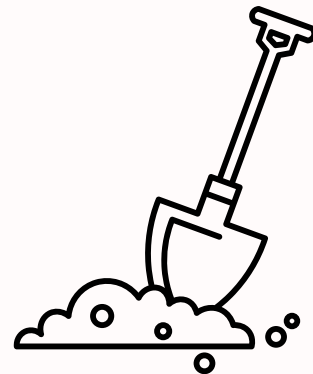
Digging a bit deeper with Self-Awareness

Sometimes, the first step in understanding a problem is noticing a feeling – the signal our body sends about how we are feeling in a situation.

Let's consider an example:

You have a speech you need to say in front of your class, and suddenly feel very tense. You don't remember not feeling this way earlier in the day.

You might notice your muscles are tight or your jaw is clenched, or maybe your heart might be beating faster. These are some signs you might experience or feel when you get nervous.



Scenario and questions

Self-awareness often starts by noticing a feeling and then gently exploring it with helpful questions.

For example, you might ask yourself

"Is the way I'm feeling right now indicating that I feel OK in this situation, or not OK?"

We can often figure out what's bothering us and what's causing the feeling by asking ourselves some more questions: (Following on from the previous scenario)



When did I start feeling this way?

Did it start when I found out about the speech?

Did it start when the teacher said I had to speak in front of the whole class?

Did it start when I entered the room?

Triggers and Feelings

We often use the word "trigger" to describe things people say or situations that cause strong emotional reactions in us.



Feelings that signal something is not OK include:

- Feeling tense or anxious
- Feeling annoyed (even if the reason isn't clear)
- Feeling threatened

Feelings that signal a general sense of being OK include:

- Feeling at ease and safe
- Feeling open
- Feeling seen, heard, and appreciated



Not Okay is Not Okay

Humans are interesting creatures as we go through life, we can become very good at ignoring the messages our bodies send us.

We carry on as if everything is OK, even when our body is telling us that something is wrong.

We force ourselves to smile when we feel sad.

We reassure others that we are fine when we are not.

Some of us put other people's feelings ahead of our own, and over time, this can lead to problems for us.

Our feelings and rights matter:

Our feelings matter.

Our rights matter.

Being the best we can be as part of the community matters.

Taking our feelings seriously is an important start for self-advocacy.

This helps us:

- Clearly see what is OK and not OK in our lives and situations.
- Think about the next steps in dealing with what is not OK.

IT'S OKAY
TO
NOT BE
OKAY



Can you think of a time you felt that a situation was not, okay?

You have a few mins to write down a time you thought a situation was not okay.

what steps you took to deal with it?

Did it work?



Support from others



Sometimes, we can figure out the connection between our feelings and what is not OK on our own.

That's great when it happens, and our ability to make those connections can improve as we work on our self-awareness skills.

However, there are times when it helps to get support from someone else. Many people find they need assistance from others during difficult times.



This is especially true when there's a lot happening in our lives, and our feelings are mixed up and hard to understand.

People who can help us include:

- Supportive family and friends we trust
- Mentors
- Helplines (E.g. Lifeline)
- Counsellors or psychologists

Talking to someone we trust is important in self-advocacy. It's not about giving our problem to someone else to solve. It's about asking for support so we can work on solving the problem ourselves.

Trust in relationships



Trust is crucial in our relationships with others. But how can we determine who to trust in our lives?

[How to Build Trust and Relationships](#)

[How to Build Trust: Ask for Help | Simon Sinek](#)

Who are people in your life that you trust the most?

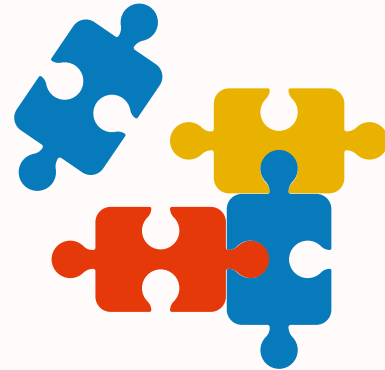


Kahoot link – Questions from Book 2 and Trust and building relationships

Turning the way we feel into self-advocacy goals

We self-advocate to reach a goal, such as:

- Wanting to be heard and taken seriously
- Letting others know what matters to us
- Fixing a problem that makes life difficult



The first challenge is often figuring out exactly what goal we want to achieve.

Sometimes, our self-advocacy journey starts with a general sense that something in our life isn't right. It might be more of a feeling than a thought: feeling cranky or overwhelmed, tired from lack of sleep, or feeling vulnerable or angry in certain situations.

Let's have a think and discuss !



Are there times when you don't feel like people are listening to you or take you seriously?



Are there times when you want other people to know what matters to you, but don't know where to begin?



Do you have any problems in your life right now that you want to try and fix?



Do you have a clear idea of some of the goals you want to achieve in better advocating yourself?



Self Care

Self-advocacy can be challenging.

Speaking up about what's not OK in our lives takes courage.

Facing our feelings and listening to them requires a lot of reflection and emotional energy.

Finding the best way to communicate and focusing on what we and others say in meetings demands concentration and emotional control.

Talking to people we find challenging can be exhausting.



Self-Care in Self Advocacy

Self-care involves a set of advocacy skills we use before, during, and after we have meetings or take steps to address what is not OK in our lives.

Self-Care During and After Challenging Situations

When something happens that is not OK and we feel upset, caring for ourselves is crucial. The first step in self-care might be removing ourselves from the situation if possible. This can help us regain our emotional balance and think more clearly about the next steps.

Self-Care after challenging situations



Right after being in a situation that is not OK, self-care is important. Everyone has different ways of caring for themselves during these times.

Some ways to care for yourself might include:

- Talking to someone who can help
- The police, if you have been a victim of a crime
- A trusted person, like your go-to person, to talk about your experience
- A professional, like a counsellor or psychologist, if you are struggling with mental health or trauma



Giving yourself time and space to process what has happened:

- Some people find it helpful to journal or reflect in other ways
- Some of us have places we can go to where we feel safe, calmer, and are able to think clearly
- self-care might involve spending time in a place like that.



Self-Care during self-advocacy

Self-advocacy at meetings can sometimes be challenging.

It requires a lot of focus and energy to communicate in a calm and effective way, especially when we are experiencing strong emotions.

Taking care of ourselves during these times is crucial to ensure we can advocate effectively.

Self-Advocacy in meetings

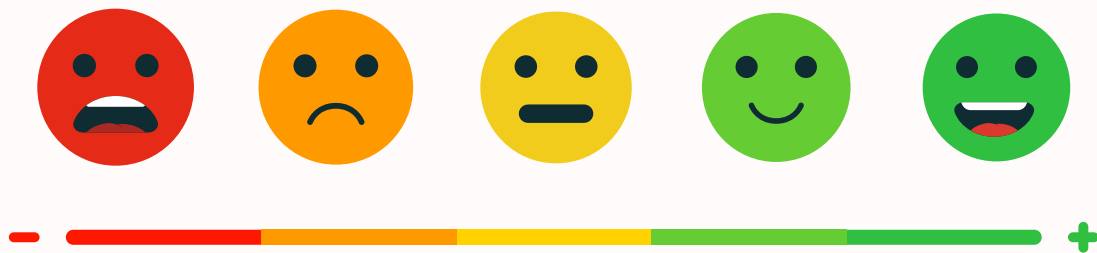
It's OK to ask for meetings to be arranged in a way that works for us. When organizing a meeting, self-help might involve:

- Letting the person, we're meeting with know if certain environments are problematic for us (e.g., some people have difficulty with fluorescent lights).
-
- Informing the person if we have any access requirements.

It's important to consider ways to care for ourselves while we are self-advocating. This helps ensure we can communicate effectively and feel comfortable during meetings.



Emotion cards and Questions



In a meeting, self-care might include:

- Asking for a break if the meeting is starting to feel overwhelming.
- Asking for a glass of water if you would find that helpful.
- Asking to have information in writing so you can read it in a more comfortable situation later.
- Arranging, before the meeting, to have a support person with you if that would help.
- Requesting people to slow down or repeat what they said if they are hard to understand.
- Requesting an explanation if something is said that you don't understand.
- Remember, taking care of yourself is crucial for effective self-advocacy!



Self-care after we have taken action

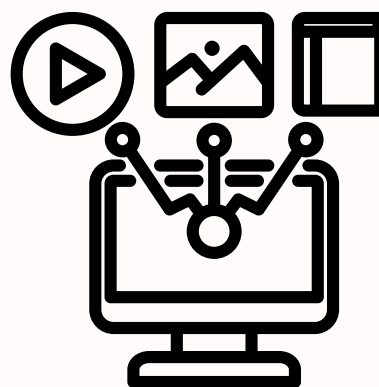
Self-care is crucial after we have taken self-advocacy action, regardless of whether we have achieved a successful outcome or still have work to do.

This is another time when self-awareness plays a role in checking in with ourselves:

- How are we feeling?
- What are the most helpful ways we can take care of ourselves?

By taking the time to understand our feelings and needs, we can better support our well-being and continue our self-advocacy journey with strength and resilience.

Resources and Links



More Resources, Information and Support

Self-Awareness

- Study Work Grow: Self-Awareness Resources for Teachers
Self-awareness - Study Work Grow

- ReachOut - Mental Health Resources for Young People
Positive mindsets | ReachOut Australia

Self-Care

- ReachOut – Mental Health Resources for Young People
Self-care | ReachOut Australia

- Beyond Blue: Self-Care Resources
Self-care (beyondblue.org.au)