



# SPEAK UP ABOUT SPEAKING UP!

## *Middle and High School Self-Advocacy Guide*

Middle and High School introduction: Lessons and strategies for engaging middle and high school students to advocate for themselves and others.

### IN THIS GUIDE:

#### Be a self-advocate

- When to speak up for yourself
- How to speak up effectively
- Which situations need you to speak up to a trusted adult

#### SELF-ADVOCACY

COMMUNICATING  
WHAT YOU NEED

#### ADVOCACY

HELPING OTHERS GET  
WHAT THEY NEED

#### Be an advocate for others

- When to speak up for others
- How to speak up effectively
- Which situations need you to speak up to a trusted adult

#### Additional Activities and Resources for Speaking Up

### Overview

Students don't always know how to ask for what they need, even when they really need help. Many youth think that involving an adult will lead to making the bullying situation worse, risking retaliation from their peers for snitching, or won't lead to anything positive happening at all. Often students don't think ahead about which adult they'd reach out to and how to conduct a productive conversation. Teaching youth to speak up for themselves effectively and respectfully can create better outcomes.

When adults promote a youth's ability to influence problems of all kinds, including bullying, students receive the message that they have power and do not need to be stuck in a harmful situation.

When adults and young people work together to solve problems in this way, a student's sense of safety and security is heightened because they know they have allies in the community who will listen and help when they speak up. Students who actively participate in providing input into their problems are better prepared to resolve those problems themselves and understand when a problem requires adult help.

Remember that positive social skills are acquired not only through teaching, but mainly through watching others model these skills. Showing students how to speak up and find success when they do is important for the mastery of self-advocacy skills.





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**Lesson One: becoming a self-advocate** (introducing the Student Action Plan)  
*Approx 15-20 minutes, Student Action Plan; lesson can be broken into shorter parts to accommodate your students' needs.*

### Objectives

The goal of this lesson is for students to identify when they need to ask for help, speak about what they need to have changed, and who they would talk to if they needed something.

In this lesson, we use Example Plan #1 to illustrate an ongoing bullying issue that a fictitious student is having while using the Student Action Plan. Have students read the example out to the class and then break into small groups to discuss how Jessy might respond (guide students to write in the first person as Jessy as the Student Action Plan directs). Bring the class back together and gather responses from each small group to have a larger discussion while you practice filling out the blank sections on a whiteboard or document projector.

### Example Plan #1

Jessy has started to notice that the friends she always eats lunch with are leaving her out of their group texts, have stopped saving a seat for her, and ignore her when they see her. She's asked one or two of them what happened, but they just say "if you were on social media, you'd know." Jessy finds out from another student that there's an anonymous account posting pictures of "Fashion Failures" and Jessy's outfits have been called "the worst in our school" and that she "always looks homeless." She is devastated by the post and by the rejection of her friends. What should Jessy do?

Step 1: Describe your experience	Step 2: Reflect on your ideas	Step 3: Develop potential solutions
Think about the bullying you have experienced, seen, or even done yourself. Describe the situation, including where it happened, who was involved, what happened, and how it made you feel.	Then consider how that situation could be different. Include what you would like to see happen, what things could change, and what would help you feel more in control of the situation.	Next, think about the steps needed to make those changes happen. Consider what role you need to take, who would need to be involved, and what they would need to do.



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### Peer support makes a difference!

Have you ever thought, “It’s none of my business—I should just ignore it and walk away”? Put yourself in the other person’s place. If you were being pushed around, laughed at, gossiped about, made fun of, or ignored on purpose, wouldn’t you want someone to be there for you? Know that when someone is hurting, especially emotionally, your support as a peer is incredibly meaningful!

### Lesson Two: How to speak up for others

**Approx 15-20 minutes, Student Action Plan; lesson can be broken into shorter parts to accommodate your students’ needs.**

#### Objectives

The goal of this lesson is for students to identify when they should step in and support a peer who is being bullied. This lesson also emphasizes when they should ask for help from an adult, speak about what’s happening, and who they would seek help from.

In this lesson, we use Example Plan #2 to illustrate a cyberbullying issue that a fictitious student is having. Have students read the example out to the class and then break into small groups to discuss how they would have handled each step. Bring the class back together and gather responses from each small group to have a larger discussion while you practice filling out the blank sections on a whiteboard or document projector.

#### Example Plan #2

Nate, a 14-year-old student, is tired of seeing his classmate, Sam, being harassed online through an anonymous account.

Step 1: Describe your experience	Step 2: Reflect on your ideas	Step 3: Develop potential solutions
Think about the bullying you have experienced, seen, or even done yourself. Describe the situation, including where it happened, who was involved, what happened, and how it made you feel.	Then consider how that situation could be different. Include what you would like to see happen, what things could change, and what would help you feel more in control of the situation.	Next, think about the steps needed to make those changes happen. Consider what role you need to take, who would need to be involved, and what they would need to do.



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### Activities and Resources Guide

#### TIPS using the Student Action Plan

- **When working with one student:** The form can be completed by the student on their own or through conversation and dialogue. For example, the student may have an easier time communicating verbally and would be more comfortable discussing the questions and letting the parent or educator record their responses. Keep in mind that the answers may not come all at once. Adults may have to revisit the Plan with the student to get a complete picture of the situation.
- **When working with a group:** Use either the fictitious examples found in the Student Action Plan or create fictitious examples of your own for the class to steer clear of any privacy issues with current bullying situations. Encourage students to keep private stories to themselves and not to use anyone's names or identities while speaking in the group. Ask them to see you privately if they want to tell you about something happening to them or to anyone known to the group.
- **More details on using the Student Action Plan can be found here:** [Parent and Educator Guide to Using the Student Action Plan](#)

### Videos and worksheets

 [Why Is It Important to Teach Self-Advocacy?](#)

 [Know Your Rights](#)

 [Advocacy & Self-Advocacy](#)

 [Peer Advocacy](#)

 [Reasons Teens don't tell](#)

 [Tell an Adult](#)

 [What You Can Do](#)

 [What Should You Do?](#)

 [Middle and High School Curriculum](#)

 [Middle and High School Activities](#)

 [TeensAgainstBullying website](#)

 [Publications](#)



PACER's

**National Bullying Prevention Center.**

[pacer.org/bullying](http://pacer.org/bullying)