

## *Steps in Self Advocacy*

### 1. Believe in yourself.

Remind the participants that they are all very wonderful, special, and unique, that they are important and that they deserve all the very best that life has to offer. Provide paper and pens or pencils. Let them take 10 minutes to write down all their positive attributes. Then tell them to carry this paper with them, to reread it every time they are waiting for a few minutes, when they first get up in the morning and before they go to bed at night.

### 2. Know your rights.

Ask participants to share rights that they are aware of and that are important to them. Use the "Bill of Rights" transparency to remind people of other rights they have and to start a discussion of rights. People sometimes want to reword one of the rights or add new ones to the list. Encourage them to change their handouts as they see fit.

Have available the name, address and phone number of your state's agency of protection and advocacy. Encourage participants to call this number for assistance, advice and support if they feel their rights are being violated.

### 3. Decide what you want or what you are working toward.

Ask participants to share what they want and what they are working toward.

### 4. Get the facts.

Give examples of how you have gathered information about something you have needed or wanted, that is, using resource books, the library, health care professionals, a health care

organization, etc. For instance, if a person wanted to get a complete thyroid test, they would go to a medical library or resource books to get information that will support their request.

5. Plan your strategy.

Share ways that you have planned your strategy when advocating for yourself. Ask participants for other ideas.

6. Gather your support.

Ask participants to share who their supporters are and how they would use them. Remind them that you will be discussing making and keeping a support system later in the workshop.

7. Target your efforts.

Ask participants who they would target to get the following:

- a complete thyroid test.
- further education.
- safe housing.
- copies of mental health records.
- changes in their treatment plan.
- vocational rehabilitation services.
- compensation for rights violation in a treatment facility.

8. Express yourself clearly.

9. Assert yourself calmly.

10. Be firm and persistent.

## *Personal Bill of Rights*

1. I have the right to ask for what I want.
2. I have the right to say no to requests or demands I can't meet.
3. I have the right to change my mind.
4. I have the right to make mistakes and not have to be perfect.
5. I have the right to follow my own values and standards.
6. I have the right to express all of my feelings, both positive or negative, in a manner that will not harm others.
7. I have the right to say no to anything when I feel I am not ready, it is unsafe, or it violates my values.
8. I have the right to determine my own priorities.
9. I have the right not to be responsible for others' behavior, actions, feelings or problems.
10. I have the right to expect honesty from others.
11. I have the right to feel angry at someone I love and to express this in a responsible manner.
12. I have the right to be uniquely myself.
13. I have the right to feel scared and say "I'm afraid."
14. I have the right to say "I don't know."
15. I have the right to make decisions based on my feelings, beliefs and values.
16. I have the right to my own reality.

17. I have the right to my own needs for personal space and time.
18. I have the right to be playful and frivolous.
19. I have the right to be healthy.
20. I have the right to be in a nonabusive environment.
21. I have the right to make friends and be comfortable around people.
22. I have the right to change and grow.
23. I have the right to have my needs and wants respected by others.
24. I have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
25. I have the right to grieve.
26. I have the right to a fulfilling sex life.
27. I have the right to be happy.

(Adapted by Mary Ellen Copeland from the *Anxiety and Phobia Workbook*, Edmund J. Bourne, Ph.D., 1990, New Harbinger Publications, Oakland, CA.)