



Mind: I've Got Your Back – Role of Advocacy

Body: The Happiness Trifecta

Spirit: The Voice of One

I've Got Your Back – Role of Advocacy



It was in the news again – the heart-breaking story of vulnerable loved ones receiving neglectful and sub-standard care. Frightened and angry family and friends came together to reveal problems and demand change.

Perhaps a related story has happened within your family or circle of friends.

Perhaps you found yourself speaking on behalf of someone else.

It is called Advocacy.

Although there are a variety of definitions of the term 'advocacy,' we can recognize common themes of taking action for a particular cause or policy on behalf of someone else.

Advocacy is necessary at both systems (regional, provincial/state, federal) and individual/family levels.

WHY?

Increasingly, our systems, especially our health and social services, have become inordinately complex.

Under-resourcing leads to 'rationing' of services, and staff reductions can create increased risk of error. As resources decrease, the quality of communication tends to deteriorate, resulting in too many gaps open to misinterpretation.

HOW?

The process of Advocacy includes 3 main elements:

Communication

Follow-up

Action

1. Let's First Look at How to Communicate:

- Clearly – state what you want to happen
- Accurately – get the facts straight and avoid editorializing
- Concisely – present the case -- lengthy dissertations are not read/listened to – use point form!
- Persuasively – keep argument sound, logical, objective and respectful

2. A Critical Second Step is Follow-up:

- Within reasonable time -- sooner rather than later, and don't lose your momentum
- Convey – when a response is expected
- Persist – confirm that stalling, ignoring is unacceptable

Appreciate Respect Value

Elevating the way the world sees and serves the age 50+.

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3. Finally, Take Action -- Nothing Happens Until Something Moves:

- Consider all available options based on input and feed-back
- Assess 'costs' of each option
- Formulate an action plan – include timing, responsibilities, resources
- Enlist help – numbers = strength

WHO?

Effective advocates are everyday people. They have become good communicators, and recognize that a key component of communication is listening.

Seek First to Understand – Then Be Understood!

One of the obstacles to understanding is our fear that if we understand the other person's position, that means that we must also agree with the other position. NOT SO.

Understanding does not mean that you agree, it only means that you took the time and offered the respect to fully comprehend what the other was saying. When you offer that first, you may be surprised what you can learn while you likely gain their reciprocal willingness to give the gift back to you.

Effective advocates observe what is happening in the situation, and are able to organize their thoughts and recommendations.

Ultimately, good advocates demonstrate the qualities of empathy, compassion, persistence, and courage.

IF NOT YOU – THEN WHO?

Many can feel overwhelmed by the prospect of advocacy, and assume that they are not ready or able. That is probably NOT the case. Advocacy does not have to involve big issues with world-wide impact.

If you see an injustice – speak up.

Envision a better process – share it.

Clear a roadblock to move a process to the next step. Be that voice for someone else. All it takes is a clear intention to make something better, a willingness to articulate the problem, a commitment to seek solutions in a firm a respectful way, and persistence to see it through to resolution.

Rhonda Latreille, MBA, CPCA

Founder & CEO

Age-Friendly Business®

The Happiness Trifecta – serotonin, dopamine and oxytocin. We know that when we help someone, it just feels good! That is because we are social beings, and the act of being helpful releases oxytocin, which elevates our mood and increases serotonin and dopamine. It doesn't end there! Dopamine is related to motivation and arousal, and serotonin contributes to good memory, learning, sleep, digestion and appetite. So, next time you need a boost – try a random act of kindness, or even simply offer a smile! Source: Psychology Today, The Neuroscience of Giving, 2014

The Voice of One

“When the world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful.” - *Malala Yousafzai (Pakistani activist for female education)*

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