



Curriculum for Empowering Self-Advocates

Volume 3 Chapter 1

Introduction

Purpose:

This session introduces the facilitator and participants, gives an overview of the course content and facilitation model, and solicits the participants' priorities for their learning.

Goals of the Session:

Participants will:

1. Meet one another and the facilitator, and discuss the overall content of the curriculum.
2. Identify their priorities for the course, and discuss common themes and potential adjustments to the curriculum to meet their preferences and needs.
3. Develop class agreements (or "ground rules") about interactions in the class.
4. Become familiar with the participatory nature of the facilitation model.



Chapter 1

Introduction

Description of the Activities

	Activity	Approximate Time
1-1	Meeting One Another This activity gives the participants an introduction to the facilitator and to one another.	30 minutes
1-2	Class Agreements In this activity, participants discuss how they want to be treated during the classes, and they come to agreement on a set of guidelines for their interactions with one another.	30 minutes
1-3	Our Priorities This activity encourages the participants to identify their goals or expectations for the course, and their priorities for information and skills. Common themes are identified, and the facilitator suggests curriculum or schedule adjustments to address these preferences.	30 minutes
1-4	Everyone Teaches, Everyone Learns This activity introduces participants to the Popular Education Model, and reinforces the participatory nature of the course.	15 minutes



Meeting One Another Activity 1-1

Purpose:

This activity gives the participants an introduction to one another and the facilitator.

Time Required:

Approximately 30 minutes.

Learning Experiences:

Large group discussion (and other format specific to warm-up activity)

Materials:

Flipchart, markers, and tape

Binders (one for each participant)

Any materials needed for warm-up or introduction activity of the Facilitator's choice

Introductions:

Welcome the participants to the course. Begin with some introductions. Be sure to introduce yourself, and let the participants know why you are enthusiastic about facilitating the class. Cover housekeeping issues such as parking, taking breaks, location of restrooms, handling phone interruptions, etc.

You may want to do a warm-up or team-building activity with the participants. Choose an activity that is appropriate for the group, if you have knowledge of the participants in advance. Facilitation books and on-line references have a wealth of activities. A few possibilities to consider are:

- Have a collection of pictures or magazines, and ask the participants to select one or two pictures that represent something about them (something they like, an activity they enjoy, a place they like to go, their job, etc.). As the participants introduce themselves, they can show the picture(s) they chose and tell why they made those selections.
- Pair participants, giving them a few minutes to chat with one another. Then have partners introduce one another to the group.



- Ask each participant to tell the group their name and share three things about themselves (such as their favorite food, their favorite color, and a hobby they enjoy).
- As participants introduce themselves, they tell something about their name (if they were named for someone in their family, if their name reminds them of someone else they know, if they have a nickname, if they would prefer a different name, etc.).
- Ask one or two participants to act as news interviewers. They take turns asking the other participants their names and something about themselves (their hobbies, an issue of importance to them, what they think about a current event, etc.).

Introduce The Course:

Ask the participants what “empowerment” means to them. You may want to record their responses on the flipchart. A good working definition is the process by which people gain mastery or control over their own lives.

Title a flipchart with “Where Power Comes From.” Ask the participants if they have some ideas about where personal power may come from. Explain that personal power is what you have when you take control in your life. Tell them some people have power in their lives because they have (list them on the flipchart as you speak):

1. Money
2. Position
3. Publicity
4. Pride

You may want to give some examples as you go through the first three items on the list. For instance, an example of someone with a lot of money might be Bill Gates; an example of someone in a powerful position might be the US President. Then, ask the participants if they have the kind of money or position, or if they get the kind of publicity that would give them a lot of power. Most likely, they will answer, no. Share with them that the last item on the list – pride – is available to everyone. By working on their pride in themselves, they will increase the amount of power they have in their own lives.

Tell The Participants:

“Pride can mean feeling good about who we are and what we do. Pride can be knowing that we deserve the same things as other people and using the rights we are entitled to. Pride can mean that we tell others what we want in an assertive way. We’ll talk about all of these ways of having pride – and having power -- in this class.”



Then, provide an overview of the course. Go through the Table of Contents, giving a brief description of each topic. Emphasize that participants will have an opportunity to decide if they want to add or eliminate topics or if they want to address topics in a different sequence. Answer any questions that arise.

Summarize And Transition:

Give a brief summary of what the participants have accomplished in this activity. Transition to the next topic by suggesting that it is helpful, when people come together as a class, to agree on how they expect others to treat them and how they will treat others in the class.



Class Agreements

Activity 1-2

Purpose:

In this activity, participants discuss how they want to be treated during the classes, and they come to agreement on a set of guidelines for their interactions with one another.

Time Required:

Approximately 30 minutes.

Learning Experience:

Large group discussion.

Materials:

Flip chart and markers
Tape (to secure flip chart pages to the wall)

Introduce The Activity:

“Part of being a self-advocate is that you want other people to treat you with respect and to listen to what’s important to you. We want to be sure to treat each other with respect in this class. How else do we want to treat each other here? What’s important in the way we behave in class?”

Facilitate a discussion of each idea as it is presented. Make sure the participants share an understanding of what each idea means, and record those that they agree to follow in class. For example, if a participant suggests “Be nice to each other,” you will want to elicit more detail or clarification as to what “nice” means to the participants. Following are some examples of agreements.

- Start on time.
- Let everyone have a turn if they want one.
- One person talks at a time.
- Count to ten if you get angry.
- Mistakes are okay.
- You can ask someone to explain what they mean.
- Don’t criticize harshly. No personal attacks.



- Be respectful by listening and appreciating what each person says.
- It's okay if people have differing opinions.
- Each person gets one turn before someone speaks twice.
- Avoid whispering or side conversations.

You may want to post the flipchart of agreements on the wall each time the class meets. As an alternative, a participant may want to hand write or type up the list, and copies can be given to all the participants. Participants may find it helpful to have a brief review of the agreements at the beginning of each session.

Summarize And Transition:

Encourage the group to recognize their success in coming to agreement on ways to be respectful to one another in class. Point out behaviors you noticed during the discussion that demonstrated their use of the agreements already, such as not interrupting, etc.

Transition to the next activity by reminding participants that the class is intended to be responsive to their interests and needs. Although the "Empowering Self-Advocates" curriculum does include topics of general interest to self-advocates, each group should decide what issues or concerns are of greatest importance to them. Share with the participants that you would like to get a sense of what they consider self-advocacy to be, and then discuss what topics or issues they want to concentrate on during the class.



Our Priorities Activity 1-3

Purpose:

This activity encourages the participants to identify their goals or expectations for the course, and their priorities for information and skills. Common themes are identified, and the Facilitator suggests curriculum or schedule adjustments to address these preferences.

Time Required:

Approximately 30 minutes.

Learning Experiences:

Large group discussion.

Materials:

Handouts:

- What is Self-Advocacy?

- Self-Advocacy Quick Guide (available from ACT Self-Advocacy Resource Network, www.selfadvocacy.org, 1-800-641-0059)

- AAMR Fact Sheet: Self-Advocacy

Flip chart and markers

Tape (to secure flip chart pages to the wall)

Initiate A Discussion Of Self-Advocacy:

Ask the participants:

“What does it mean to be a self-advocate?”

Record their responses on the flipchart. If you must paraphrase or shorten a particular response, be sure to get the participant’s okay for your paraphrased version. Record the responses even if the participants do not read; it is affirming for all participants to see that their responses are of value. Review “What is Self-Advocacy?” with the group, and emphasize how their understanding coincides with or adds to the information included in the handout.



Go over the highlights of the “Self-Advocacy Quick Guide” and “AAMR Fact Sheet: Self-Advocacy.” Address questions that arise. Encourage participants to offer answers to one another’s questions.

Ask The Participants:

“Being a self-advocate isn’t always easy. What kinds of things would you like to learn in this class that could help you be an effective self-advocate? What do you want us to talk about? What do you want to practice here to use in other areas of your life?”

Have some suggestions ready, or review the topics listed in the Table of Contents. Help the participants to rank the topics or identify where they would like to start. Be ready to adjust the curriculum sequence and emphasis to respond to the participants’ priorities. If the participants indicate interest in a topic not related to empowerment, or a topic which cannot be incorporate into the course, the Facilitator should identify and suggest some alternative resources.

Summarize And Transition:

Ask participants to summarize the discussion, or the Facilitator can give a brief summary. Emphasize that self-advocacy means speaking up about what is important for the individual, and making their own choices about their lives even if other people do not agree. Indicate to the participants that the course can be adjusted in future classes if their preferences change.



Activity 1-3

What is Self-Advocacy?

A self-advocate is...

Someone who speaks up for himself

Someone who speaks up for herself.



You can be a self-advocate. There are lots of ways you can speak up for yourself.

- When you go to a meeting and tell people what you want and the help you need, you are a self-advocate.
- When you go to the state capitol and tell legislators what changes need to be made in disabilities services, you are a self-advocate.
- When you tell the staff or people who help you what you want them to do or not do, you are a self-advocate.

A self-advocate lets other people know what he or she wants.

A self-advocate wants to be treated with respect. Self-advocates want to make their own choices in their lives. They want to have the same opportunities as everyone else in their community.

Some people may not use their voices to tell people what they want. They may use sign language, or point to pictures, or use a computer. A person who does not use his or her voice can still be a self-advocate.



Activity 1-3

AAMR Fact Sheet: Self-Advocacy

Q. Why Is Self-Advocacy Important?

A. Decisions are being made that directly affect our lives and we want to tell you what self-advocacy means to all of us. We are registered voters from across the country and we make our own choices and decisions. If you remember back in the 1970's, most of our decisions were made for us. Even doctors told our parents that we would not live a normal life, and we would not be able to read or write and that we should be sent away to institutions.

We, as self-advocates, believe that we should be treated with dignity and respect. It is important for us to have the same opportunities as any other person. We feel that we should be given chances to take risks because we know what is important to us. That is why the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became a law. The ADA helps us by letting people around the country become more aware of supports we might need to live in our communities and to have access to all places in this country.

Q. Who Is A Self-Advocate?

A. It is a person who speaks out for him or herself.

Q. Who is an advocate?

A. An advocate is someone who speaks for others or helps others speak for themselves. Advocates are different than self-advocates because self-advocates speak for themselves.



Q. What Is Self-Advocacy?

A. Advocacy gives a person with a disability a chance speak up for themselves and others. By letting individuals tell others how they feel about issues that affect their lives, they can educate the public about persons with disabilities and how they can be included in all aspects of community life.

Q. How Can We Teach Self-Advocacy?

A.

- * By joining a self-advocacy support group, e.g. People First
 - * Through education by taking courses in school
 - * By being involved in a training session
 - * By writing for the different national newsletters
 - * By using new technology like the Internet
-

Q. What Are Some Issues That Self-Advocates Feel Are Important To Them?

A.

- * SSI: With help from SSI we have been able to live our lives with our families, in our communities and become independent. Placing people in institutions costs more money than just helping us through SSI.
- * Families: Listen to families.
- * Budget: Be cost effective. Help us to help ourselves. Continue to fund programs that have made us more independent, productive and part of our communities.
 - Education: Keep inclusive education. We have the right to go to school with everyone else.



- * Health Insurance: Do not let insurance companies discriminate against us. It is not fair that these companies refuse to allow us to have health insurance.
- * Discrimination: Do not discriminate against us. We want anti-discrimination laws to work just as well for us as they do for other groups.
- * Labels: Do not label us. See us for what we can do, not for what we can't do.
- * Legislation: Learn more about how current legislation has improved our lives.
- * Sensitivity: Help professionals to be more sensitive to people's needs.
- * Housing: Housing programs that help us have a home of our own are important. These programs help make it possible for us to live independently.
- * Transitions: Programs that help us to make the transition from school to work are important. With the guidance of job coaches, we can become employed and stay employed.
- * Choices: Do not get in our way. Let us do what we can do. We do well on our own, please do not create obstacles for us.
- * Respect: Listen. We are self-advocates, we deserve the same attention and respect for our views as any other group before Congress... So count us in!

AAMR's Policy

AAMR joins with people with developmental disabilities in supporting the full expression of citizens with disabilities to speak for themselves in making choices about living arrangements, work, personal relationships and the funding of service needs and supports. The Association calls for the international, national, state, and local development of support of groups such as People First and Speaking For Ourselves that provide opportunities for individuals with disabilities to advocate for themselves. AAMR supports increased participation of people with disabilities at conferences and on policy making boards at all levels.



What Are Some Helpful Resources?

How To Start A People First Chapter. People First International, Inc., P.O. Box 1642, Salem, Oregon 97309 Ph. 503-362-0336 Fax 503-585-0287

People First Chapter Handbook: A reference guide for self-advocacy chapters. People. First of Illinois, P.O. Box 2153, Loves Park, Illinois 61130

Taking Place: Standing Up and Speaking Out about Living in Our Communities. Self Advocates Becoming Empowered, Tulsa ARC, 1601 South Main Street Suite 300, Tulsa OK 74119 Ph. 918-582-8272 Fax 918-582-6328,

Community Advocacy Press. Newsletter. People with Developmental Disabilities Speaking Out For What They Believe (Quarterly, Free). Capabilities Unlimited Inc., 2495 Erie Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45203 Ph. 1-800-871-2181 Fax 513-871-5893

Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered. National Self Advocacy Organization. Tia Nelis, Chair, University of Illinois at Chicago, 1640 West Roosevelt Road, Chicago, IL 60608-6904 Ph 312-413-1284 Fax 312-996-6942

Acknowledgments: Thank you to the group of self-advocates who helped identify the issues important to us.

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March 6, 2001 www.aamr.org/Policies/faq_advocacy.shtml



Everyone Teaches, Everyone Learns

Activity 1-4

Purpose:

This activity introduces participants to the facilitation model, and reinforces the participatory nature of the course.

Time Required:

Approximately 15 minutes.

Learning Experience:

Large group discussion.

Materials:

Flip chart, markers and tape

Preparation:

Review the materials in the “Facilitator’s Notes” section describing the Popular Education Model. (The training video and handbook titled “Lasting Leadership: Popular Education and Self-Advocacy” produced by Advocating Change Together [ACT] is an excellent additional resource.)

Ask the participants who has taught them things in the past. Participants may mention a teacher, a trainer, staff person, etc. Tell them that this class will be different from those kinds of situations. Create a flipchart with the steps of the Popular Education model (see “Everyone Teaches, Everyone Learns” on the following page). Give the participants a brief description of each step. Be sure to convey your belief that everyone has something to share, and that everyone can learn from one another. This “something” may be an experience, a belief, an opinion, or what one has learned from the experiences of his or her friends or acquaintances. Focus on the value of everyone sharing and learning from one another.

It may be helpful to walk through an example with the participants. Or, you may want to lead directly into Activity 2-1, which highlights the experiences of the participants with various concepts related to self-advocacy.

You may want to post the flipchart during each class meeting, and occasionally remind the participants of their roles as both student and teacher to one another.

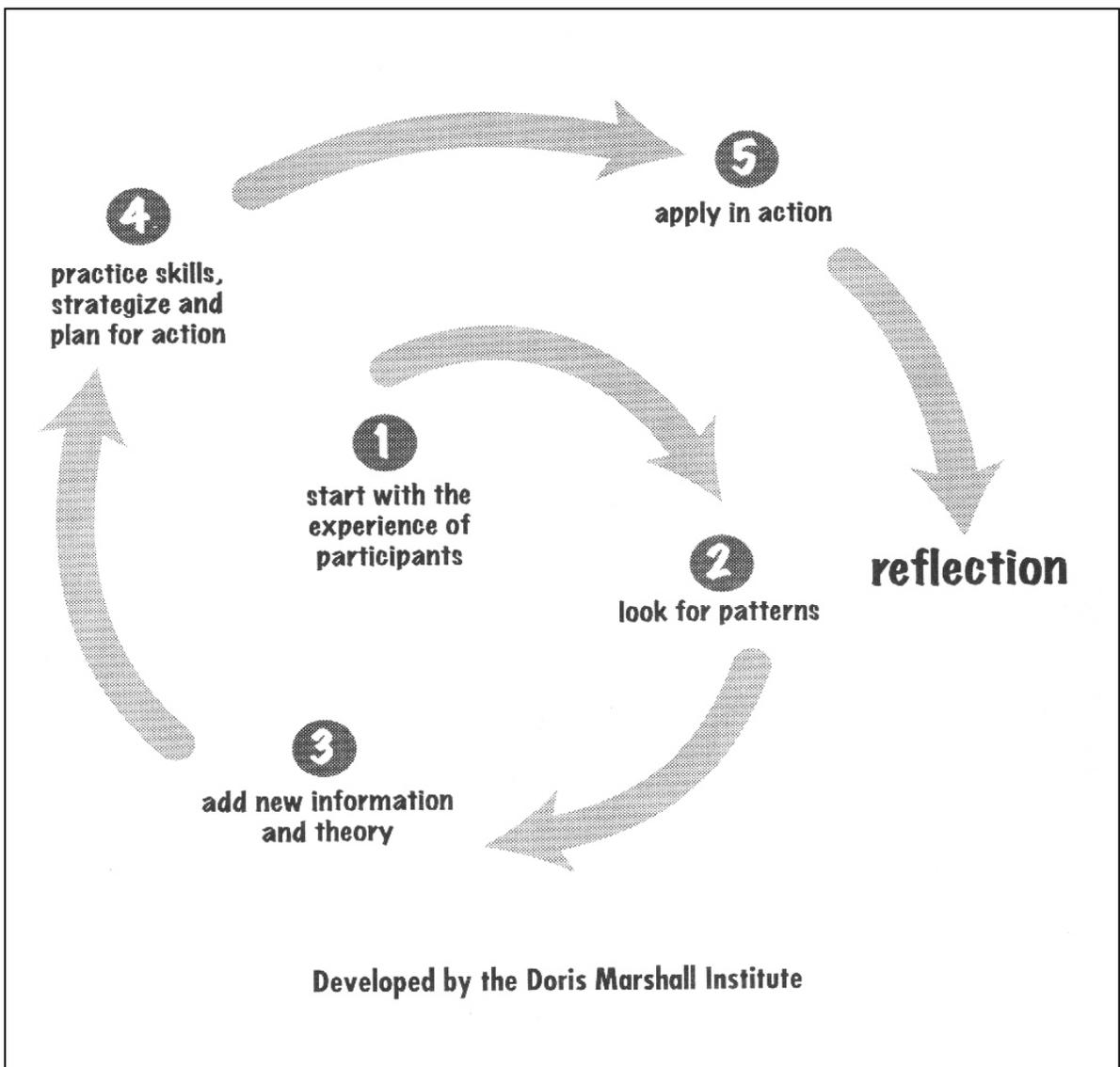


Summarize And Transition:

Ask the participants to point out the highlights of this section, or provide a brief summary of the material covered.

Everyone Teaches, Everyone Learns

Steps of the Popular Education Model





Adapted from “Lasting Leadership: Popular Education and Self-Advocacy,” by ACT
(Advocating Change Together)