

self-advocacy

a quick-reference resource

what is self-advocacy?

Self-advocacy is the ability to speak up for oneself and advocate for one's needs and rights.

Self-advocacy is an essential skill for neurodivergent individuals as it enables you to navigate professional environments that may not always be fully inclusive and accommodating of your unique strengths and needs.

This resource aims to empower neurodivergent individuals through self-advocacy, fostering independence, understanding, and inclusivity.

why is self-advocacy important?

Self-advocacy empowers neurodivergent people, who have a voice, to develop the confidence to assert their needs, rather than others speaking for them or making decisions on their behalf.

This enables neurodivergent colleagues to authentically communicate their own needs and preferences to line managers, colleagues and others.

For neurodivergent people, being able to self-advocate improves self-esteem and agency which supports the recognition of their unique abilities and strengths.

know your rights:

It is important for neurodivergent colleagues to be **aware of their rights** in professional settings.

Autism, for example, is considered a disability under the **Equality Act 2010**. This grants employees rights to request **reasonable workplace adjustments** such as the use of assistive technology, flexible working patterns or access to a workplace coach.

You can ask for **support from your line manager** for what you need to be your best self at work. You can also get support from HR or your Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) team. Also join a disability or neurodiversity resource group at work (also called an ERG).



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practise self care

- Keep a mood diary to check your mental health
- Consider therapy
- Find a practice that helps you to de-stress and to it daily (e.g meditation or mindfulness exercises)
- Keep calming items round you for tense moments
- Spend time away from social media
- Set alarms past the time you usually wake up
- Learn to socialise on your own terms
- Have a plan when overstimulation is unavoidable
- Have compassion for yourself
- Allow yourself to be imperfect
- Remind yourself that you are more capable than you think you are.
- Use constructive thoughts to challenge negative thoughts.
- Slowly expose yourself to forced situations
- A written 'script' beside the telephone will provide prompts and may increase your confidence in telephone interactions.
- Remember that masking is exhausting



Illustration: Megan Rhiannon 'Existing Autistic'

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Workplace adjustments

- Ask for **flexible work arrangements**, working hours, remote work options, or adjustable breaks
- **Sensory considerations** such as noise cancelling headphones; access designated quiet spaces
- Support with **task organisation** such as task management tools; breaking down tasks; accessing mentoring or coaching; visual timers; whiteboards; to-do lists
- Ask for a **workplace buddy**
- Suggest **awareness training** for managers/colleagues

Build a support system

Speak to understanding colleagues, friends, family and mentors who **appreciate your strengths and can offer support** when needed. Connecting with a group or community of other neurodivergent individuals can be incredibly beneficial. If you have a **disability or neurodiversity-focused** internal employee resource group (ERG) at work, join their mailing list.

Educate others

- Advocate for **acceptance** – raise awareness of neurodiversity to reduce stigma, increase understanding, and promote a culture of empathy and support. **Helping others** is a form of self-advocacy.
- **Educate** those who don't understand you - help to **transform** the attitudes towards neuroinclusive society.

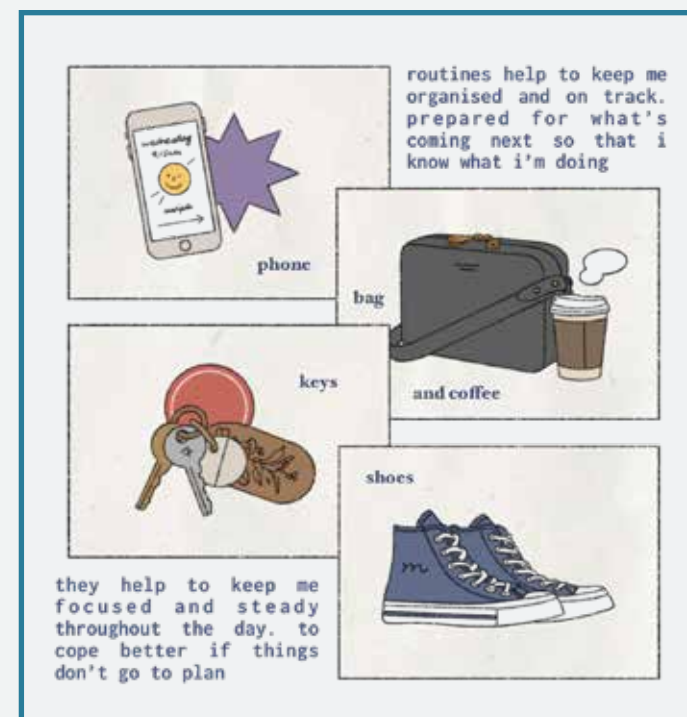


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