

# Siblings:

## Citizens with a Cause

*An advocacy guidebook designed exclusively for youth advocates of a sibling with a disability*

- ▶ *Self-care as an advocate*
- ▶ *Self-reflection on your unique sibling experiences*
- ▶ *Tools and resources*



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## Introduction

Siblings play an important role when it comes to advocating for the sibling who has a disability. We don't have firsthand experience as someone who has a disability. However, we DO have a much deeper experience than say a friend, colleague or another ally would have. There is a lot of support and many resources available for parents, but it's hard to find helpful information geared towards our experience as siblings. This resource has been created by siblings within the Re:Action4Inclusion network. This workbook focuses on the important role that siblings have in advocating for a more inclusive Canada. It is also a reflection tool to help guide you in thinking about your experiences as a sibling.

## SELF-CARE

Self-care is extremely important for advocates of any age. It helps us avoid something called burn out. Burn out is when you become so tired and lose your energy and motivation for what you are advocating for. This is usually brought on by being overwhelmed or when we don't take time to reenergize ourselves enough.

Self-care can look like a lot of things. Some people take baths and do face masks, others go to the gym or get active outside. It can be anything that helps you remove stress in a healthy and safe way.

A self-care kit is a space where you can put items or reminders of things that help you relax, reenergize, and recuperate.

Create Your Own Self-Care Kit:

- Find a book or box (whatever you prefer) that you will put your selfcare items in.
- Gather up items, photos or write a list of things that make you feel good, comforted or that inspire you
- Put it into a spot that is easy to access
- Make use of it!
- Make some time to do things that gives you an energy boost! (painting, singing, reading etc.)

Some things to think about that will help you feel focused, energized, and confident:

- Get your sleep!
- Food (fuel your body with good things)
- Relaxation activities
- Talk to a friend that inspires you
- Activities to get your body moving
- Go to people for support
- Find healthy distractions
- Get creative!



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There are endless possibilities for designing your self-care kit. You can put as much in there as you want. Make sure you have a few options for each category and make it as personalized as you want! Remember you're worth it!

## YOUR SELF CARE KIT

To help you in times of need, write down the different supplies that you need in order to take care of yourself! This can be self-help books, candles, face masks, running shoes for a nice workout, or anything you'd like! When you go home from conference, try making a self care kit out of these supplies!

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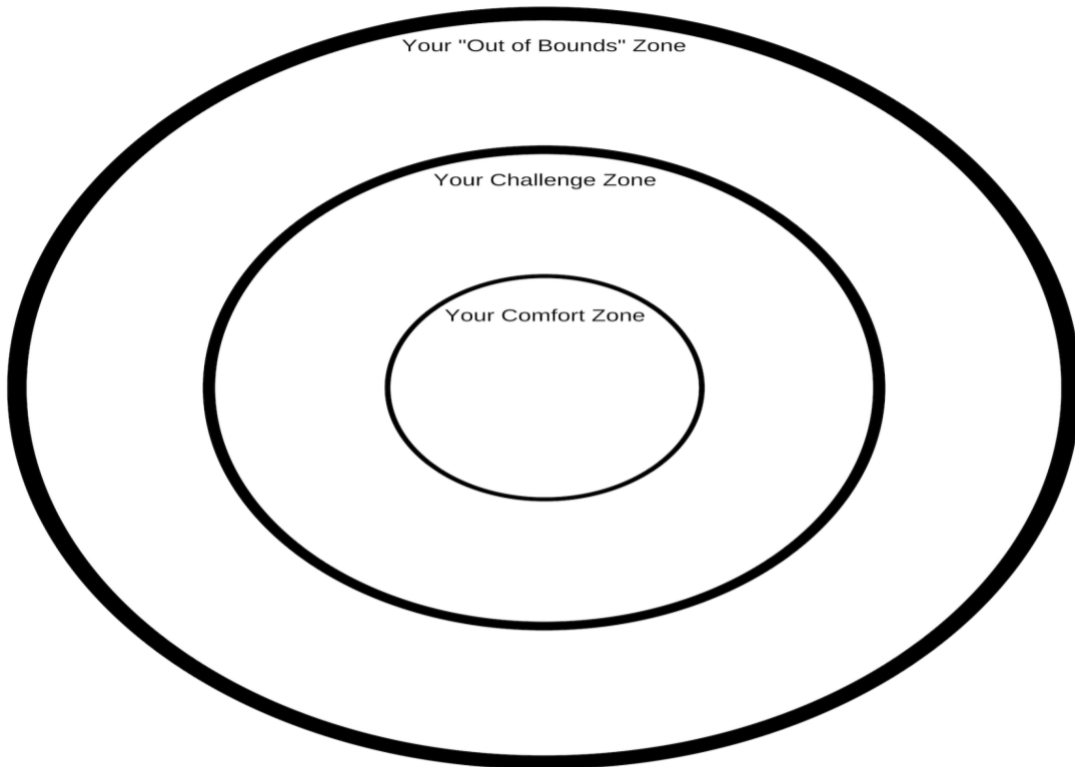


# Personal Boundaries Worksheet

Personal boundaries are very important for your mental health and maintaining good self-care practices.

The smallest circle (in the middle) represents your comfort zone. This is where you put what you are already comfortable doing or talking about. The second circle is your challenge zone. This is where you put things that you want to be able to do or say, but you aren't quite comfortable yet. The outside circle is your out of bounds zone. This is where you put the things that you should say no to no matter what, because it is not something you will be willing to do or talk about. This exercise can help you create personal boundaries, and help you understand the difference between something that you should challenge yourself to do, and the things that you need to say no to. This is a very important advocacy skill.

Using the circles below, write down things that fit into each zone.





# Your Personal Phone Book

A personal phone book is a visual tool that you can fill out and have access to at any time. It's a great way to see the names of the people who can support you, especially when you are burnt out or in a mental state where it's hard to think of those names in the moment. Your personal phone book doesn't have to just have friends and family, we also want you to include other siblings that you can connect with, supportive teachers and administrators in your school, and more!

Community Connections: \_\_\_\_\_

Allies from Conference: \_\_\_\_\_

Teachers: \_\_\_\_\_

Administrators: \_\_\_\_\_

Friends: \_\_\_\_\_

Family: \_\_\_\_\_

Organizations: \_\_\_\_\_

Mental Health Supports: \_\_\_\_\_

Furry Friends to Decompress With: \_\_\_\_\_





## REFLECTION PIECE

Below are some questions that you can use to reflect on your role as a sibling and advocate. It's important that you recognize that advocacy is a lifelong journey. It is also important that you have a clear idea of what your values and vision are as an advocate. It takes time to learn and grow into being a confident advocate and your relationship with your sibling will help shape your advocacy. Give yourself time and enjoy that journey!

### ADVOCACY

What does advocacy look like to me?

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Have I always seen myself as an advocate? How did I learn to find my voice?

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How do I advocate with empathy? What other values do I hold?

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What makes me feel supported as an advocate?

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What are my priorities as an advocate? Ex. education, health care, employment opportunities Etc.

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What is my vision for the future for people who have a disability?

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**DEALING WITH OPINIONS**

What kind of unsolicited advice have I received from a friend or stranger regarding my sibling? How did I respond to it?

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Whose responsibility is it to make others feel comfortable about my siblings' disability? Do I feel like it is my responsibility? Why?

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What gifts and experiences do I have that could help end the stigma around disabilities?

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How do I maintain my own identity while still advocating and being supportive of my sibling?

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**BEING INVOLVED IN THE CONVERSATION**

Am I involved in conversations and decisions that affect my life and experiences?

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Have I always been involved, or did I have to ask or prove that I can be included?

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Why is it important to me to be included in these conversations and decisions?

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What are my concerns about the future regarding me, my sibling, and my family?

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**SELF-CARE**

How do I practice self-care as an advocate?

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Have I ever experienced burn out? What did I do to regain my motivation and energy in that time?

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How do I maintain confidence as an advocate when I'm in a low space? What will I do to remind myself of my worth?

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## **START A CONVERSATION**

Now that you have reflected on the questions above you can use those responses to help you organize your thoughts and share them in a conversation with your family. Use the boxes below to brainstorm some topics you want to bring to the attention of your family. These can be things you want to share; changes you want made or things you want support with regarding you and/or your sibling.

### **ADVOCACY**

Think About: What kind of advocate am I? How can my parents support me better as an advocate? What changes do I want to see in my experiences?

### **DEALING WITH OPINIONS**

Think About: What are our family values? What do I need from other people? What outside support would be helpful to me?





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**BEING INVOLVED IN THE CONVERSATION**

Think About: What plans are in place for my sibling's future? What do I envision for my sibling's future? What responsibilities do I have in that future? Do I have too many or not enough responsibilities?

**SELF-CARE**

Think About: What do I need from my parents? What do I want them to know about my mental health? How can we stay happy, healthy and connected as a family?

