
Becoming Self-Determined & A Self-Advocate: Supporting College Students with Disabilities in Becoming Their Own Champions

— University of North Alabama & —
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Agenda

- Self-Advocacy vs. Self-Determination
- UNA Self-Advocacy Workshop
 - Research Study/Findings
 - Program Development
- UNLV Self-Determination Study
 - Research Study/Findings
 - Plans for the Future
- Self-Advocacy & Self-Determination
 - Differences
 - Similarities

Presenters

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What is self-advocacy?

- Speaking up for yourself
- Knowing what you want/need & making sure you have access to it
- Effectively communicating your interests, desires, needs and rights (Stamp, Banerjee & Brown, 2014)

What is self-determination?

- Human Motivation & Behavior (Deci & Ryan, 1985)
- External vs Internal Motivation
- Basic Psychological Needs of Self-Determination
 - Competence
 - Autonomy
 - Relatedness

UNA Self-Advocacy Workshops

- Research & Development
- Pre/Post Survey
- Workshop Program
- Research Findings
- Tips/Recommendations

What Students Need to Understand

Empower yourself with knowledge and understanding of your disability by asking the following questions:

- What is your diagnosis?
- How does it affect you and your daily functioning?
- What do you need to have access?

UNA Self-Advocacy Workshop Overview

- Self-Advocacy PowerPoint (30 minutes)
- Terminology (10 minutes)
- Break (15 minutes - Door Prize Drawings)
- Role-play Scenarios (45 minutes)
- Wrap/Questions (10 minutes)

Self-Advocacy Workshop Breakdown

- **Self-Advocacy PowerPoint** (30 minutes)
 - Define/Discuss: Self-Advocacy, ADA/AA, SMART Goals, Self-Advocacy Network, Self-Disclosure, Wants vs. Needs
 - Identify their strengths and areas needing improvement
 - Identify individual and academic supports
 - Develop communication skills
 - Employment Activity

UNA Self-Advocacy Workshop Breakdown Cont.

- **Terminology** (10 minutes)
 - ADA/AA
 - Reasonable Accommodations
 - Eliminating Barriers/Functional Limitations
 - Assistive Technology
 - Equity

UNA Self-Advocacy Workshop Breakdown Cont.

- **Role-Play/Scenarios**
 - Meeting with Professors
 - Group Project with Other Students
 - Workplace Accommodation Request

Participant Demographics

- 25 students participated
- African-Americans (20%), White (72%), and Multiracial (8%)
- Women (52%) and Men (48%)
- Average age = 25 years old
- The most common reported diagnosis among the sample was anxiety with other prevalent diagnoses including mood disorder (depression, bipolar, etc.), ADD/ADHD, reading disability, math disability, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Outcomes & Pre/Post Test Analysis

- Significant at the $p < .001$ level
 - Speak up for myself
 - Advocate for what I want and need in order to be sure I have access to those things
 - Request reasonable accommodations from future employers
- Significant at the $p < .01$ level
 - Explain the legal rights I have in receiving reasonable accommodations
 - Initiate change instead of reacting to events that happen to me
 - Persevere despite difficulty or delay in achieving success
 - Request reasonable accommodations from professors and/or staff members

Findings from Follow-Up Interviews

- 12 students participated
- Experiences of disability in relation to other identities (race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation)
- Lack of familial acceptance of mental illness diagnoses and/or psychiatric disabilities in several communities of color
- Fear of being perceived as incapable and unintelligent due to diagnosis and/or diagnoses
- Difficulty interacting with others, being social, making friends, dating, and establishing autonomy with family

What UNA Learned & Future Recommendations

- Collaborate MORE
- “Bring a friend”
- Provide Incentives - gift cards
- Utilizing University Peer Mentoring programs across campus
- Virtual attendance option
- Past attendees to provide feedback and role play

UNLV Self-Determination & Coaching

- Coaching creates a working relationship to promote growth (Spence & Oades, 2011)
- Coaching & Self-Determination (Parker & Boutelle, 2009)
 - Coaching & Competence
 - Coaching & Autonomy
 - Coaching & Relatedness
 - Executive Function Coaching

Becoming Self-Determined



(Field & Hoffman, 1994, 2015)

Becoming Self-Determined

- 12-week dissertation study conducted at UNLV with college students with disabilities ($n=4$)
- Innovation: *Self-Determination for College Success* (SDCS; Field & Hoffman, 2005)
 - Direct Student Interaction
 - Coaching
 - Self-Determination Notebook

Becoming Self-Determined

- Preliminary Observations
 - Students have been struggling to manage their disability and navigating the college environment
 - They often lack a strong support system
 - Do not always know who to go to for support on campus
- Study Impacts
 - Understanding one's disability and how it impacts them
 - Belonging to a supportive group
 - Being empowered to make goals and decisions for themselves

How are we the same and different?

- Help students understand their disability and how it impacts their lives
- Empower them to make goals
- Give students the tools they need to guide themselves through life
- Create an environment that allows for relationship building

Self-Advocacy / Self -Determination

- Stripes or spots
 - It's the same - by any other name it is still the same
- Doing similar steps for the same outcome:
 - coaching students to learn about themselves
 - their diagnosis
 - how to seek access
- Creating small communities to allow for relationship building and collaboration

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