

# ADVOCACY GUIDE: RESOURCE 6

## Getting Advocacy Started: For Listeners

### It is hard to advocate for a position and stand up for yourself.

In these situations, it is especially important that people feel heard, even if you don't personally agree with their points or you don't have any similar experiences of your own. Maintain a learning mindset and seek to understand more about the speaker's perspective. Use this guide to get started on becoming a better listener and help people advocate for themselves and others. Note: These suggestions are intended as reminders and personal checkpoints rather than used as a formula. Feel free to skip suggestions that do not work for you or the situation you are in—make it your own!

<p><b>Assume Best Intentions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Get into the mindset that people are generally trying their best and are genuinely speaking from their real, lived, everyday experiences, even if you cannot initially relate.</li> <li>2) Seek to understand where they are coming from and delay your urge to disagree. Avoid thinking about your next response or “yes, but...”</li> </ol>	<p><b>Be Surprised</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Keep an open mind and make it a goal to identify at least one thing that another person says that genuinely surprises you.</li> <li>2) Use differing ideas to inform your opinions. If you didn't know something, then what else do you need to research or ask? How can you revise your own thinking?</li> </ol>	<p><b>Step into Someone's Shoes</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) People are human and empathy is not a weakness. Take a moment to set aside your own biases and deeply listen to what matters to the speaker and how they feel.</li> <li>2) Ask people for the stories and examples that informed their opinions. Dig into the origins of someone's thinking.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Delay Debate</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Clarify the need that drives their arguments. Why do they identify something as a problem? If it is personal experience, find out more about it. If it is research, ask for follow-up on the facts and sources without being defensive.</li> <li>2) Ask more about the ideal vision and what this solution solves.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Be Hard on Ideas, Not People</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Advocacy is deeply personal, so do not attack people for expressing their experiences. Be rigorous with ideas by pushing to know more to genuinely understand an issue.</li> <li>2) Be sensitive about how speakers are feeling and adjust. Can they handle questions and discussion, or do they just need to feel heard?</li> </ol>	<p><b>Seek Common Ground</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Consider the description of the problem and vision of the ideal world. While you may disagree with the plan of action, you may agree on what it concerns.</li> <li>2) Generalize from specific issues to more universal themes to find connection; it's okay to agree to disagree with some elements.</li> </ol>

