



## Develop strategies to reach your goals.

*First comes thought; then organization of that thought into ideas and plans; then transformation of those plans into reality. The beginning....is in your imagination.*

— Napoleon Hill —

Successful people set goals, keep expectations high, and are creative in developing strategies to reach their goals. They look at options and make informed decisions. Successful planning requires knowledge of one's rights and responsibilities, strengths and challenges. It also requires that we use tools and resources available to us. Insights in these areas are shared in this chapter.

A key skill for success is *self-advocacy*. Being able to self-advocate requires that people become experts on their disabilities, know what specific services and help they need, and be able to use strategies to obtain this help and support. Their lives should not be defined by the assumptions and decisions of others.



By completing the following activities young people will learn strategies to:

- develop action plans for meeting their goals,
- anticipate the results and adjust plans accordingly,
- be creative as they develop their plans,
- visually rehearse their plans and make adjustments,
- be a self-advocate, and
- communicate effectively.

The e-mentoring administrator can select appropriate messages from the following examples and send the *Mentor Tip* messages to the mentors only and the *E-Community Activity* messages to the entire online mentoring community. Use these examples to stimulate other ideas for online discussions. It is desirable that, ultimately, most discussions topics come from the mentors and protégés.



## Mentor Tip: Self-Advocacy

Send this message to the mentors only.

Subject: Mentoring tips on self-advocacy

One skill for success is self-advocacy. Being able to self-advocate requires that people become experts on their disabilities, know what specific services and help they need, and use strategies to obtain this support. Their lives should not be defined by the assumptions and decisions of others.

Following are statements from individuals with disabilities about taking control of their lives. They can provide insights into mentoring young people to become better self-advocates.

- If a student does not speak up in school when she needs help because she cannot see the blackboard or she cannot read the book in front of her, she will fall behind in her schoolwork and have trouble achieving her goals. Disabled individuals need to remember that people are not psychic; if they have a problem and they do not tell anyone, nobody is going to magically figure out what the problem is. The more vocal you are, the more willing people are going to be in helping you. (college student who is blind)
- When I was in high school, I would talk to my teachers individually each year to describe my needs to them. The teachers found this to be extremely helpful to them, and I found it helpful as well. When teachers or professors know a student's needs and what they can do to help a student excel, it makes everyone feel secure. (college student who is blind)
- There is a difference between being the recipient of an act ("victimized") and allowing yourself to become overly affected by that act (to become a "victim"). (adult with mobility impairment)
- We don't have to be "victims" of other people's assumptions. We are only victims if we choose not to take charge of a situation. If you are blind and someone grabs your arm and pushes you across the street and you don't say anything but would like to, then you are letting the other person force the result of his assumptions on you. If you, on the other hand, say either, "Thank you, but I'll be fine" or "Let me take your arm," depending on what you would like to do, then you are taking charge and aren't a victim. (adult who is blind)

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## Mentor Tip: Self-Advocacy (continued)

- I agree with others about taking charge so that we are not “victimized” by other people’s assumptions. When [a blind person] tells a bystander, “Thanks, but I don’t need your help,” the bystander learns (we hope!) that people with visual impairments don’t always need help. And when I ask the airline staff at the gate to tell me what someone has just announced over the public address system (which I can’t lip-read, unfortunately), the airline staff person learns (again we hope!) that deaf people are capable of asking for help when they need it. So by being assertive, we lead people to look at their perceptions of us and even change them from inaccurate ones to more accurate ones. (adult who is deaf)
- The more often I express my needs and preferences, the easier it becomes. The easier it becomes, the more comfortable I am, and that makes people more comfortable, and on and on and on. And somewhere in the midst of this is also the need to be both polite and clear. (adult who is deaf)
- The way to preempt or erase assumptions is to tell people what you need rather than let them “act out” what they think you need. It is okay to say what you need help with. I think that is part of being independent. (adult who is blind)
- Just by going about your normal business, you also show people what you don’t need help with. After all, we all make assumptions, and even if a person has met someone with your disability, that other person may have had different abilities and needs than you do. For instance, people always assume that I access a computer using speech output, but I use a Braille display. The point is that communicating your needs is the best way to make everybody comfortable. (adult who is blind)
- Tell people what you can do. Until a while ago, people doubted my wanting to work with games and graphics. I have a vision problem but so what. I’ll give it a try, and if I can’t then I can’t. It’s worked quite well so far. Like this semester I wanted to take an art class. My instructor had no past experience with someone visually impaired. I guess you don’t see low vision students enrolling in a drawing class too often, but I love the class and am doing fine. (college student with a visual impairment)
- Some people feel that because you have a disability you can’t do normal tasks by yourself. I’ve even had people ask me if I wanted them to open my soda can for me. I think the best thing to do is to be assertive when people do something, or want to do something, for you that you feel you can do for yourself. I think people are just trying to be helpful and that they don’t know for sure how much help, if any, they should give. (high school student who is blind)



## Mentor Tip: Goals

Send this message to the mentors only.

Subject: Mentoring tips on goals

You can help young people set and reach goals. Advice from successful people with disabilities about working with teens includes the following:

- Keep your goals small to begin with, but as you grow in self-confidence, try to raise your expectations. There's no limit in the word "ability." (college student with mobility and speech impairments)
- I don't aim too high and I don't aim too low. If I feel I can do it, I go for it. I get stressed out a lot, but what's life without stress? No life at all. If I get out there and believe in myself, then nothing will stop me from doing my best! (college student with mobility and speech impairments)
- As someone who reads a lot and considers herself to be well informed, I have never come across the MAGIC answer. I read many books that offer ideas, strategies, and solutions, but none of them will work for everyone. I do encourage adults and young people to also read. Sometimes reading that one important book (like this one) is the critical factor in turning around a negative attitude. I also think giving young people a menu or toolbox to select options from is better than pushing ONE singular way to be successful. So give them many strategies, and let them use the strategies that suit them best. (adult with mobility and hearing impairments)
- I think adults have an essential role for young people in letting them know that they are not alone and that adults have been through what they are now going through—as a young person one can often feel immensely alone and isolated even with lots of people around. Disability can intensify feelings of differences and isolation. Be around and be available to help young people make choices of strategies, make mistakes, learn from them, and be successful. (adult with mobility and hearing impairments)



## Mentor Tip: Short- and Long-Term Goals

Send this message to the mentors only.

Subject: Mentoring tips on short- and long-term goals

You can begin to help young people with disabilities by asking:

- How can I help young people develop short-term goals that will lead to reaching longer-term goals?
- How can I help young people identify specific steps to reach a goal?
- How can I help young people develop effective strategies and skills for reaching goals?



## E-Community Activity: Making Informed Decisions

Send this message to the e-community of protégés and mentors.

Subject: Making informed decisions

Making decisions is an important part of becoming an adult. To make good decisions, you need to understand the problem and know what options are available and the consequences of each.

Here are steps you can follow to make an informed decision:

1. Determine what the problem is.
2. Determine what information you need, and use personal and information resources to get it.
3. Determine what choices you have and the consequences, advantages, and disadvantages of each action.
4. Make a decision.
5. Take action.
6. Evaluate your decision according to results.
7. Adjust your decision or next steps as needed.

What are some of the things you need to know in order to make an informed decision about what colleges to apply to?



## Mentor Tip: Rights and Responsibilities

Send this message to the mentors only.

Subject: Mentoring tips on rights and responsibilities

A "right" is something you are entitled to. A "responsibility" is something you are expected to do. As young people mature, they need to take increasing levels of responsibility. Knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, as well as those of others, will help them make plans that will lead to success. Below are comments of successful young people and adults with disabilities about taking responsibility. Let's see how the reactions of participants in our electronic community compare with these.

- I accept responsibility for my own actions, decisions, and feelings. Taking responsibility makes me feel that I have control over what is happening. I obtained this trait from my parents and by realizing that it generally makes me feel good when I accept and take responsibility. (Ph.D. candidate who is blind)
- I accept and take responsibility for myself. My mother and teachers have helped me to see that this skill is important. I have come to realize that a person must be responsible in order to succeed in life. (college student who is blind)
- I think that when a person finally realizes that he can't get around his disability and that he might as well make the best of things is when he truly begins to take responsibility for himself. I know that might sound pretty harsh, but from my experiences it's true. My mother is the one person who has helped me see this. She has been my supporter and advocate throughout my life, but she never let me think that it was not my problem. (high school student with a learning disability)



## **E-Community Activity: Knowing Your Rights and Responsibilities in College**

Send this message to the e-community of protégés and mentors.

Subject: Knowing your rights and responsibilities in college

A "right" is something you are entitled to. A "responsibility" is something you are expected to do. As you get older, you need to take increasing levels of responsibility. Knowledge of your rights and responsibilities, as well as those of others, will help you make plans that will lead to success.

The responsibilities of postsecondary institutions are somewhat different from those of precollege schools in the United States. In elementary and secondary educational systems, schools are required to provide a free and appropriate public education to each child with a disability. Postsecondary institutions are required to provide reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities who are qualified to participate in their programs.

In college you have a right to reasonable disability-related accommodations. However, it is your responsibility to provide appropriate documentation and request accommodations.

Read the publication *Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education: Know your Rights and Responsibilities* at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/list/ocr/transition.html>.

What did you learn?



## **E-Community Activity: Securing Accommodations in College**

Send this message to the e-community of protégés and mentors.

Subject: Securing accommodations in college

Students with disabilities have a right to reasonable accommodations in college. Review the website at <http://www.washington.edu/doi/Faculty/Strategies/> to explore typical accommodations institutions provide for students with different types of disabilities.

What types of accommodations might you need in college? When should you make the request for accommodations and to whom?



## E-Community Activity: Developing Study Habits

Send this message to the e-community of protégés and mentors.

Subject: Developing study habits

In order to achieve academic success, it is important to develop good study habits. Even students who did not need to study a lot in high school will find that they need good study habits in college. Here is what one successful person with hearing and mobility impairments reports:

- I could never achieve anything without writing things down. Sometimes I use a calendar, sometimes a blank sheet of paper in my notebook, and sometimes the computer. I use a prioritization process. I write out everything that I need to do. Then I mark the things that **MUST** get done today or tomorrow as opposed to later, and I prioritize in order of importance. I get a lot of satisfaction crossing off accomplished steps. It also helps to break down larger tasks into smaller ones. I make lists, plan how to do the things on the lists, and then use the lists to motivate me to get things done.

Read the following suggestions for good study habits and tell us what you would add to the list.

- Write a daily "to do" list.
- Get organized by keeping a calendar that schedules work to be done and deadlines.
- Break large projects into smaller tasks.
- Study at high-energy times of the day.
- Schedule uninterrupted study time each day.
- Find your best study places.
- Study in short segments throughout the day.
- Find ways to revitalize yourself—exercise, dance, sleep, healthy snacks.
- Create a support system of fellow students; study together or be available by phone and/or email.
- Reward yourself for developing successful habits, such as allowing time to play a favorite computer game.



## E-Community Activity: Creating Win-Win Solutions

Send this message to the e-community of protégés and mentors.

Subject: Creating win-win solutions

Although not all issues are negotiable, many conflicts can be solved so that both parties "win" something they want. The following steps can be taken in order to reach a win-win resolution.

1. You ask the other person to say what he or she thinks and how he or she feels about the issue. Actively listen to make sure you are understanding the other person's point of view.
2. You use assertive communication and "I" statements; tell how you think and feel about the issue.
3. Each person thinks about ways to solve the problem so that both people "win."
4. Both people state ideas for solving the problem.
5. Together, the two people find a solution that is agreeable to both and make plans to implement it. (Field & Hoffman, 1996, p. 180-181)

Describe a situation you have experienced where a problem or conflict between you and a parent, sibling, teacher, or friend was resolved in a win-win conclusion.



## E-Community Activity: Changing Advocacy Roles

Send this message to the e-community of protégés and mentors.

Subject: Changing advocacy roles

When you are young, adults in your life advocate for you. As explained by a college student with a hearing impairment:

- My mom had a meeting with the Board of Education about the options that were available for placing me in an education program. The board suggested to my mother that I be placed in the local special education program. She did not agree with the board and decided to fight against placing me in a program that was geared toward developmentally delayed children. The board's rationale for their decision was that they did not have the funds to send me thirty miles away to the school where there was an appropriate early intervention/deaf education program. My mom began researching the laws related to education services for children with special needs, and that's when she found out about PL 94-142. She used this law to force the Board of Education to allow me to take a bus to the school where appropriate services were available. My mother taught me how to stand up for what I deserved.

As you become an adult, you learn to advocate for yourself. The same student says,

- I learned to stand up for myself. [My mother] made sure that I was given the opportunities that were needed to allow me to grow and develop to my maximum potential. After that, it was up to me to fight for what I needed. [She] taught me how to be independent and to take matters into my own hands. I learned to be my own self-advocate at a young age, and I think a combination of that with self-esteem and confidence allowed me to excel to the level that I'm at today.

Give an example in your life of others advocating for you and one of you self-advocating. Share one thing you can do to become better at self-advocacy.



## E-Community Activity: Self-Advocating

Send this message to the e-community of protégés and mentors.

Subject: Self-advocating

It is critical to your success to be good at self-advocacy.  
This means that you

- are able to determine what you need,
- know who can help you get what you need, and
- are skilled at asking for what you need.

Suggest how family members, mentors, teachers, and friends can help you become a better self-advocate.



## E-Community Activity: Self-Advocating with Teachers

Send this message to the e-community of protégés and mentors.

Subject: Self-advocating with teachers

In high school your parents or guardians, teachers, and counselors work together and with you to make sure you have the disability-related accommodations you need. In college and employment, you need to advocate for yourself.

Sometimes teachers have a hard time understanding how they might best work with you so that you will be successful in their classes. You are the best person to explain this to them, but you may need some practice. One way to help teachers understand your learning styles, abilities, and disabilities is to meet with them or write a letter of introduction to give to them at the beginning of the year.

What would be important to tell your teacher about your interests, strengths, and challenges and about how he or she can best work with you so that you can be successful in the class?



## E-Community Activity: Disclosing Your Disability in College

Send this message to the e-community of protégés and mentors.

Subject: Disclosing your disability in college

In college you need to disclose your disability and provide appropriate documentation to the disabled student services office. Staff in this office facilitate accommodations in specific classes. However, it is also important to be able to effectively communicate directly with your instructor about your accommodation needs. It is best to meet with the instructor before a class begins. This may be awkward or difficult for you, so it is good to practice.

Draft a script of what you might say to an instructor before class begins. Introduce yourself, describe your disability, share what you do to be successful, and request an accommodation (if you don't anticipate needing one, say something that indicates this and express that you wanted to introduce yourself in the event that an accommodation might be necessary later on in the course).

You can practice self-disclosure of your disability with an adult pretending to be the instructor. Begin by introducing yourself, telling the instructor what class you are in (an example would be "Hi, my name is Sarah Parker. I'm in your Chemistry 101 class. I have Dyslexia, a learning disability. I am a very slow reader."). Then demonstrate how you will do your part, describing at least one strategy that you use for success. Be sure it is related to a challenge that you just mentioned. (In the example above, you said you are a slow reader, so a good response would be "I allow extra time in the evenings or on the weekends to complete reading assignments" or "I use a computer with speech output to help me read" or "I take fewer classes to make sure I have enough time to complete my work.") Finally, ask the instructor for an accommodation, and indicate who will do what. ("I will need extended time on tests. Here is a letter from the disabled student services office that explains my disability and accommodation needs and gives a phone number you can call if you have questions.") With this approach, the instructor has the information needed and understands that you will do your part in achieving success in the class.

What are the most important things that you would tell a college professor about yourself?



## **E-Community Activity: Disclosing Your Disability to an Employer**

Send this message to the e-community of protégés and mentors.

Subject: Disclosing your disability to an employer

Deciding if and when to disclose your disability when you apply for and participate in employment is a critical decision that can contribute to or interfere with your success. How you disclose your disability can impact your success in obtaining the accommodations you need.

Think of a job for which you might apply. Would you disclose your disability? Why or why not? If so, when and how would you disclose your disability?



## **E-Community Activity: Advising a Friend About Disability Disclosure**

Send this message to the e-community of protégés and mentors.

Subject: Advising a friend about disability disclosure

What advice would you give a friend with a disability that is not apparent regarding whether or not she should disclose her disability to an employer? If you recommend disclosing the disability, describe how and at what point in the employment process she should disclose.



## E-Community Activity: Being Assertive

Send this message to the e-community of protégés and mentors.

Subject: Being assertive

It's important to tell people what you think, but some ways are better than others.

- You can be aggressive; you yell at people and not listen to what they have to say.
- You can be passive; you avoid eye contact and talk like you are unsure of what you want.
- Or you can be assertive; you make eye contact when you talk, clearly state your wishes, and listen to the opinions of others.

Which approach do you think is most often successful—aggressive, passive, or assertive—and why?



## E-Community Activity: Securing Job Accommodations

Send this message to the e-community of protégés and mentors.

Subject: Securing job accommodations

The Job Accommodation Network is a national service to help employers and people with disabilities select reasonable accommodations. Access the Job Accommodation Network website at

<http://janweb.icdi.wvu.edu/>

Select a disability related to your own. Identify at least one idea about accommodating your disability in a job setting.

If you apply for a job and are eventually hired, at what point do you think it best to ask for a needed disability-related accommodation? Before the interview? During the interview? Once you are offered the job but before you start work? On your first day of work? After trying to satisfy the job requirements without accommodation? Explain your response.



## **E-Community Activity: Asking for Accommodations at Work**

Send this message to the e-community of protégés and mentors.

Subject: Asking for accommodations at work

It's important to secure the accommodations you need at work in order to be successful. If you have been employed, share with the group your experiences in getting accommodations at work. What accommodations did you need and how did you get them?



## E-Community Activity: Standing Up for Convictions and Beliefs

Send this message to the e-community of protégés and mentors.

Subject: Standing up for convictions and beliefs

Taking charge of your life requires that you stand up for what you believe in. Listed below are insights from successful individuals with disabilities about standing up for their convictions and beliefs. Think about your level of agreement or disagreement with each of these statements.

- My grandmother, my mom, and my teachers have helped me stand up for my own convictions and beliefs. One fitting phrase my grandmother uses is "Dare to be different if different is right." (college student who is blind)
- If you want to work toward something, go out and work for it. People can argue the point all they want, but I still don't let them make up my mind. (college student who is blind)
- People with disabilities are no different in this case. I always got in trouble with my parents if I didn't stand up for what I believed. Even if they didn't agree with it. (college student with Tourette's Syndrome, Panic Disorder, and Epilepsy)

Describe an instance where you had to stand up for yourself, for someone else, or for a conviction. What made it important to take a stand and what was the result?



## E-Community Activity: Learning from Mistakes

Send this message to the e-community of protégés and mentors.

Subject: Learning from mistakes

Everyone makes mistakes, but some people handle them more positively than others. Successful people learn to cope with mistakes in a positive way. They often treat a mistake as a problem to be solved, not as a characteristic of the person who made it. They monitor and evaluate outcomes of their efforts and make adjustments as appropriate, sometimes changing goals, standards, strategies, or support.

Tell the group about a mistake you made and how you learned from it.



## E-Community Activity: Affirming Success

Send this message to the e-community of protégés and mentors.

Subject: Affirming success

Listed below are affirmations of individuals with disabilities who have achieved success. Read each statement and think about whether it applies to you.

- I am a creative problem solver.
- I am assertive.
- I am persistent.
- I do not give up easily.
- I am adaptable.
- I can think of ways to accomplish a task differently.
- I can resolve conflicts in a positive way.
- I work hard.
- I am self-disciplined.
- I take risks.
- I communicate.
- I access resources and support.
- I am an effective self-advocate.
- I can negotiate.
- I can deal with conflict and criticism.

Select one of the statements that is not always true for you now, and give one example of what you can do to make this statement stronger in your life. Tell us how a parent, teacher, or other person in your life could help you make this statement stronger in your life and how you can obtain their assistance.

