



Women with  
Disabilities ACT

STRONG WOMEN  
STRONG VOICES

## Workshop 6

# Building confidence in self-advocacy



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Self-Advocacy and Supported Decision Making Series

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# Disability Discrimination Act 1992

## What do we mean by rights?

- Disability discrimination is when you are treated unfairly because you have a disability. You have the right to equal access and to have your needs met.

## Disability Discrimination ACT

- The Disability Discrimination Act is a law that says that people and the government must treat you fairly.
- It is called the DDA for short.
- It makes it illegal for you to be treated badly because of your disability.
- It tries to make sure you have a fair go and that society treats you fairly.

## Who is the DDA for?

The DDA is for people with any type of disability.

It protects you if you:

- have a disability now
- have had a disability in the past
- may have a disability in the future because of family history.

The DDA also protects people who are treated badly because they have a family member or friend with a disability.

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## Areas of life where the DDA protects you

- Employment or jobs
- Education
- Buying things and using services
- Playing sports and joining clubs and associations
- Buying or renting a house or other buildings.

### Employment or jobs

It is against the law to discriminate against you because of your disability at work or when you are looking for a job.

If you can do most of the job then you must have the same chance, rights and opportunities as others you work with.

Your workplace must make changes so you can do your job well.

They can:

- change the way they run the interview
- make the office space easier for you to work in
- change the tasks you have to do and give you extra breaks and time
- provide you with training and support
- provide assistive technology related to work.

### Education

It is illegal for a school, TAFE or university to discriminate against you because of your disability.

If you are applying for education, you have the same rights as everyone else to study there.

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Places of education cannot:

- stop you from studying there because of your disability
- ask you to pay more
- leave you out of activities, classes, lectures or on-site training.

They must make changes so that you can study well. Some examples are:

- making rooms and lecture halls accessible for you to get into and to study and learn in
- giving you the equipment you need to learn
- giving you extra time for exams and assignments
- giving you information you can read and/or understand
- having systems in place so that you can still get all the information you need if you miss or cannot go to a class.

## **Buying things and using services**

It is against the law for you to be discriminated against because of your disability when buying things or using services.

Stores and services cannot:

- stop you from buying something because of your disability
- ask or make you pay extra for things, for example using wheelchair taxi
- serve you last for no good reason
- refuse you entry because of your disability.

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## Playing sports and joining clubs

It is against the law for you to be left out from playing sports or being a member of a club, group or association because you have a disability.

This includes:

- sports and social clubs
- drama, dance and music groups
- political parties and business groups
- support groups.

They cannot:

- stop you from applying to become a member
- ask you to pay extra
- leave you out of activities.

The DDA says that clubs or groups must meet in a place that is accessible.

## Access to public places

The DDA makes it against the law for public places and public transport to not be accessible. Every public space should be open and for you to enter and use when they are open to the public.

For example:

- access and entrance and inside the building
- things you use inside the building should be accessible and in reach
- all parts of a public space that can be used should be available to you to use
- information about the place should be easy to read, understand and access.

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You have the right to complain if a public space is not accessible.

## Using government services

The DDA makes it illegal for the Commonwealth Government to discriminate against you because of your disability.

You must have access to:

- government offices
- places where government programs are run, like Centrelink
- voting places and information
- courts and legal help.

## Making a complaint

If you are discriminated against or bullied because of your disability you can complain to The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC).

To make a complaint you can write and email or letter and send it to:

[complaints@humanrights.gov.au](mailto:complaints@humanrights.gov.au)

For information on making complaints go to the AHRC's website:

[www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)

To speak with someone over the phone, call **02 9284 9600**

*Adapted from: Council for Intellectual Disability – DDA Easy English.*

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# The UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities

## What do we mean by rights?

- Countries will not treat people unfairly because of their disability.
- Countries need to make sure that people with disabilities get and have the same rights as others.
- Every country must have an independent organisation to make sure that to make sure people with disabilities get their rights.
- The UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities is also known as the UNCRPD.
- In Australia, this is the Australian Human Rights Commission.

## What are your rights under the UNCRPD?

### Economic rights

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- Equal access to family benefits, loans and credit.

### Social Rights

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- Equal access to employment and education.
- Equal access to housing and transportation.
- Equal access to healthcare and family planning.
- Equal treatment for rural women\* and marginalized people.



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## Cultural rights

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- Tells the government to stop cultural practices that discriminate against women\* and minorities.
- Equal participation in recreational activities such as sports.

## Civil rights

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- Equality in legal matters.
- The right to freedom of movement.
- The right to choose where they live.

## Political Rights

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- The right to vote.
- The right to hold office in politics and to participate in politics.
- The right to represent their government at an international level.

## Making a complaint

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WWDACT acknowledges that we work on the lands of the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people. We pay our respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

Women with Disabilities ACT Inc. is registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission ABN 74 908 530 982.

# Self-advocacy

## What is self-advocacy?

Self-advocacy is an inclusive term which encompasses many actions and circumstances. One form of self-advocacy is speaking out and representing ourselves in everyday situations.

In many cases, self-advocacy is about asserting our human rights of inclusion and equal access to fully participate in the community. An example of this is standing up for ourselves to ensure that our accessibility requirements and accommodations are being met.

Standing up for ourselves means that we are able to participate in making decisions that impact us. Importantly, it is also making sure that those decisions are heard, considered and respected by others.

## Confidence in advocating for myself

Self-confidence is an important skill to have when advocating for ourselves. In disability advocacy, confidence comes from understanding our human rights. The basic knowledge that people with disabilities have the legal right to equal access and participation in public life is the foundation of self-advocacy.

As people with disabilities who are impacted by sexism and gender discrimination, it is important to remember that we deserve to take up space. Our wants and needs matter, and self-advocacy is one way we can choose to assert that.

## Building my self-confidence

Self-confidence can seem like an overwhelming thing that is hard to define, much less to work on and improve. Like any skill, however, there are practical steps that we can take to build up and strengthen our self-confidence.

Firstly, acknowledging our skills and lived experiences is important in building up our confidence to advocate. There is much we can learn by looking back at the things we have experienced, positive or negative. These past experiences gives us an insight into which strategies worked and which ones didn't. These are all valuable information to have, as recognising areas of that we can develop further in is the first step towards improvement. After all, self-confidence and self-advocacy are both things we continue to learn and hone throughout our lives.

If we have been in a situation where our self-confidence has taken a hit, it's more likely that we would be less confident in ourselves in similar situations in the future. This is where recognising the areas that we would like to improve in becomes key. Instead of focusing on the negativity or blaming ourselves, we could instead use the opportunity to reflect on what as gone right.

Past experiences can also determine our self confidence in certain situations. If you have been in a situation where your self-confidence has taken a hit, you're more likely to have less confidence in yourself in a similar situation in the future. This is when it is important to focus on the times we have succeeded in these areas in the past, instead of the negatives.

Remember, being a self-advocate does not mean doing it alone! There are many ways of getting support in advocating for ourselves, including asking a friend, reaching out to the community or going to an organisation.

**Self-advocacy means to me ...**

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**The areas I find myself advocating in the most:**

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**Some ways self-advocacy can help me:**

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**Notes:**

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## What is self-confidence?

Self-confidence is believing in yourself as well as your skills and knowledge, it is made up of the internal thoughts we have about ourselves and how we treat ourselves. These beliefs can change depending on the circumstances, environments and situations we are in and can affect our self-esteem. This means our self-confidence can be strong in one situation but be almost no existent in another, meaning it is common for most to feel confident in some circumstances and situations than it is in others. Past experiences can also determine our self confidence in certain situations.

If you have been in a situation where yourself confidences has taken a hit, you're more likely to have less confidence in yourself in a similar situation in the future. This is where it is important to focus on the times we have succeeded in these areas in the past, instead of the negatives.

## So, what are the differences between self-confidence and self-esteem?

**Self-confidence** is how we feel about our abilities, such as what we can and can't do, and what we feel we are capable of. **Self-esteem** is how we view ourselves overall, but can include specific things about ourselves such as our body image, the way we communicate, and more.

Acknowledgment of what we like about ourselves and self-approval are a necessary part of boosting our self-confidence and self-esteem. Reminding ourselves as well as writing down or saying out loud the things we are good at is a healthy way to boost the way we see ourselves.

## Building confidence in self-advocacy

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Recognising the things we are good at, have succeeded in, and are able to do — instead of focusing on the ‘can’t’ is fundamental when it comes to building up the self-confidence we need to achieve what we want in life, when we encounter challenges, as well as when it comes to how we participate in life.

### **Five things I like about myself or am good at:**

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### **I feel confident about the way I ...**

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### **I feel confident when I am ...**

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## Tools that I can use to improve my self-confidence and self-esteem

**It's OK to say 'No'!** — Sometimes, we need to remind ourselves we have the right to say no. We don't need to feel guilty, justify ourselves or apologise for saying no.

**Learning to be more assertive** — Stepping outside our comfort zones and learning to speak up for ourselves can be a good starting point. It doesn't need to be big; starting out small is always a good idea. Remember you don't have to say sorry for everything.

**Giving yourself priority** — Putting the people you love first is natural, but you need to give yourself just as much love. There needs to be a balance between how much you give to others and how much you give to yourself.

**Think about the reasons surrounding why you feel bad about yourself** — Did these thoughts originally come from you? Are there resources you can access that can help you work through these thoughts?

**Think about how you internally talk to yourself** — Is it always in a negative way? Do you focus on the good or the bad? Both?

**Counteracting negative thoughts** — This could be done by thinking of something positive you have achieved.

**Taking a break from your own problems to help someone else** — This can help bring perspective back into your life and give you a break from your own thoughts.

**Take time to look after yourself and reward yourself** — When you do something you are proud of or achieve something — no matter how small — you have the right to reward yourself for it.



**Remember that you have the right to ask others for help and to receive help** — From personal support network or external support systems.

**The ways I go about improving my self-esteem and self-confidence are:**

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**I can improve my self-esteem and confidence by ...**

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**What are the three biggest barriers for my self-esteem and confidence?**

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## What strategies can I use to improve my self-confidence?

### Practicing self-acceptance

**Look at your strengths and achievements** — Recognise your past achievements, your knowledge and skills. Acknowledge your strong points and remember you are worthy.

**Notice your fluctuating levels of self-confidence** — Put a plan in place to address areas you wish to improve on, e.g. working on personal skills, how you interact with others, your knowledge, your physical, mental and emotional health, and so on.

**Remember it's OK to feel OK about yourself and others** — Regardless of your own situation, the situation you are in, and other people's situations, it's OK to feel happy when someone else is not.

**Recognise when you have made mistakes and try to fix it** — Instead of beating yourself up over things you feel you have “got wrong”, work out a way to fix or resolve the situation. It's OK to make mistakes.

### Focus on your achievements

**Take the time to think about what things you have achieved** — no matter how small.

**Focus more on what you have achieved** — rather than what you haven't achieved.

**Write down your achievements** — Don't shy away from mentioning them when appropriate, talk about them — be proud of what you have achieved, no matter how small.

### Three achievements I am proud of:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

**Think about the areas in your life that you would like to change but have been putting off** — Have you been putting them off because of your lack of self-confidence? Is there an outside factor or past experience that is contributing to you putting off making this change? How can you address this?

**What are your goals?** — Make a list of your goals can help you identify what skills you have that you can use to achieve them, and what skills you already have so that you can build on them and use them. What types of changes can you focus on to achieve these goals? For example, modifying expectations, building and focusing on skills, asking for help, researching.

**Asking am I happy with my current skills and with what I am achieving?** — Do I need to build these skills to achieve my goals? How and where can I get help to work on building up my skills?

## Seeking out positive experiences and people

**Remember to balance your life** — So that you have positive experiences and are surrounded with positive people.

**Get out, speak to someone, and socialise** — When you are isolated, it's important to find ways to still communicate with the outside world and people in it. This can help ground you and help you find your focus. Just remember to take it at your own pace.

**Make sure your support networks are positive** — In the way of people, personal experiences and your environment. Surround yourself with people who respect you, and don't always focus on the negatives.

**Do this in your personal life** — What you choose to listen to, watch, read and surround yourself with can affect how you feel about yourself. Be conscious of your personal surroundings, and the content you consume, is important — balance is necessary.

## Positive affirmations and positive talk

How they can help us retrain how we talk to ourselves.

**Replace negative talk** — For instance, replace “I had a bad day because I didn't get these things done” with “Today was good because I got these things done, despite everything that was going on”.

**Tell yourself positive phrases** — Such as “I accomplished more than I thought I would today”, “I got out of bed”, “I am good at \_\_\_\_\_”, “I did well at \_\_\_\_\_”, “I am proud of myself for \_\_\_\_\_” etc. These help you start focusing on the positive aspects of yourself and your life, rather than just the negatives. Remember this takes time.

## Rewarding ourselves

**Rewarding yourself encourages you to focus on the positives —**  
Continuing to focus on the positives can slowly lead us away from constantly thinking of negative things that could happen.

## My five-step plan to boost my self-esteem and confidence:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on its right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

## Recognising my skills and knowledge

**The top three things I like about myself are:**

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**The things I have done that I am most proud of are:**

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**The positive qualities others tell me I have are:**

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**The three top qualities I like most about myself are:**

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**The top three qualities I would like to work on are:**

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**After writing these down, I feel:**

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## Building self-confidence – my ongoing list!

**Five things I like about myself:**

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**Five things I am proud of in my life:**

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**Things I have tried to do that I am proud of:**

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## NOTES

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## NOTES

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