What is Advocacy?

Tips and tricks to becoming a successful advocate
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Introduction

- I’m Thomas Simpson
- Chair of the Advocacy Committee of Lupus Canada
- I am a passionate advocate for creating a more equitable society
- Favourite quote: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”
What is Advocacy?

• What do you think advocacy is?
• Share in the comments section.
What is Advocacy?

• As we have seen, there are many different definitions of advocacy.
• Advocacy is not a science.
• You don’t have to know influential decision-makers or high-powered executives.
• Advocacy is all about raising awareness (influence) to an issue and working together to make a positive change.
What is Advocacy?

• Example 1: A corporation is educating the public on the importance of having more women in leadership roles. Is this advocacy?
• Example 2: A grassroot organization is seeking changes to a government support program to change the eligibility criteria. Is this advocacy?
• Example 3: Jill is not happy with her lupus care from her doctor. She is asking for a second opinion. Is this advocacy?
• Which one of these examples are advocacy? Comment in the chat.
What is Advocacy?

• The answer: they are all different types of advocacy!

• There are several types of advocacy:
  ▪ Third Party
  ▪ Systemic
  ▪ Individual or self-advocacy

• Today we will focus on self-advocacy.
Are you an Advocate?

• Do you consider yourself an advocate?
• Without realizing, you probably are a good advocate for yourself and you don’t even realize.
• You probably advocate for yourself everyday – asking for more information, seeking accommodations, making requests to fit your needs.
Advocacy and Lupus

- The unpredictable “flares” of lupus can severely affect many aspects of daily life.
- While you might rely on family, friends, the medical system or government for help, this can be frustrating.
- Advocacy is all about **self-empowerment**!
- It is the conviction that every person has the right to be heard, the right to understand, the right to decide, the right to that “level playing field”.
Advocacy and Lupus

• Why might a person with lupus need to advocate?
• Share in the comments section.
Advocacy and Lupus

• More flexibility and support at work.
• Better help and attention from your doctor or specialist.
• Need support from government programs (EI, CPP-D, ODSP).
• The list goes on.
The Advocacy Plan

• It’s always important to have a plan in place, to make sure you’ve got your ducks in a row.

• Remember, advocacy is about influencing others to make a positive change.

• Advocacy is not complaining.

• Advocacy is solution-oriented.
The Advocacy Plan

1. Define the problem – simply and specifically
2. List possible solutions
3. Collect information for each option
4. Consider the options and decide
5. Consider further action
6. Take action

Tip #1: Keep details of everything you do and every conversation you have. These notes will come in handy. Stay organized!
The Advocacy Plan

- Define the problem – simply and specifically.
- Sometimes the problem you have might be clear to you.
- Often, the problems or challenges that individuals are advocating to change are complex and multifaceted.
- By clarifying the problem, you make your argument easier and more time can be used to discuss solutions rather than explaining the problem.

Tip #2: Stay away from jargon and principles. Assume that the person who you are speaking too has never heard of your issue before.
The Advocacy Plan

- List possible solutions.
- It is easiest to advocate for yourself when you are armed with potential solutions.
- Collaborating and working together with governments and organizations can produce solutions, but this takes time.
- Often those advocating need changes made quickly. Coming to the table with possible solutions indicates that you are ready to work now.

Tip #3: Try to come up with multiple solutions. Most options to resolve your issue will enable a more timely resolution and collaboration, than one stubborn solution.
The Advocacy Plan

• Collect information for each option.
• Remember, the more you know, the better you can advocate.
• By having all the information ready at your arsenal, you can challenge institutions that may not want to help.
• Often, government may not see your problem as their problem. By having information at hand, it is easier to persuade people to your cause.

Tip #4: While your problem may be close to your chest and personal, your solutions should be built on solid research and evidence.
The Advocacy Plan

• Consider the options and decide.
• After listing all your solutions and gathering the relevant information, you may find that one of your solutions is not feasible.
• This is okay.
• By having several possible solutions, you can pick the best ones that will help you achieve your goal.

Tip #5: It is okay to go back to the drawing board. Bounce your ideas off a family member or friend, who doesn’t know much about the issue.
The Advocacy Plan

- Consider further action.
- This is the tricky part.
- How do you take your issue and solutions and where do you go? Who do you talk too? What is the best approach?
- This can be stressful and cause anxiety.
- With some practice and determination, you’ll be successful in no time.

Tip #6: Remember, Lupus Canada is here to help! If you are stuck and have no idea where to go next, we can provide advice and guidance.
The Advocacy Plan

• Consider further action.
• Start by finding the proper audience.
• Governments are becoming much more accountable and transparent.
• If you don’t know where to go, checking out a government website. Often, they will have a directory where you can find a chain of command within the government.
• Unfortunately for private corporations and services you may have to call a generic number and be bounced around before you find the appropriate authority for your problem.
The Advocacy Plan

• Consider further action with Government.
• Government is big, hairy and complex – regardless of what level.
• Each level of government administers a different responsibility, as defined by Canada’s Constitution.
• Check out Lupus Canada’s simple guide to Where to Go and Divisions of Power (https://lupuscanada.org/get-involved/advocate/where-to-go-division-of-power-in-canada/)
The Advocacy Plan

• Government of Canada Electronic Directory
• Google: GEDS
The Advocacy Plan

Provincial Government Directories

- Alberta: Government Staff Directory ([https://www.alberta.ca/staff-directory.cfm](https://www.alberta.ca/staff-directory.cfm))
- Manitoba: Contact Government ([https://www.gov.mb.ca/contact/index.html](https://www.gov.mb.ca/contact/index.html))
- New Brunswick: Contacts Directory ([https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/contacts.html](https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/contacts.html))
The Advocacy Plan

- LinkedIn is your best friend!
The Advocacy Plan

• Consider further action.
• Once you’ve found the right person to go to, next you’ll want to determine your approach.
• Determine the following:
  ▪ What should I say to ensure that my problem is simple and specific and capture all the relevant information?
  ▪ What is my best argument?
  ▪ Should you request a meeting with the relevant authority?
  ▪ Should you write a letter to an organization?
  ▪ Should I involve a political figure to move this forward?

Tip #7: Keep it simple! Explain the issue. Explain why it is important. Explain what can be done.
The Advocacy Plan

- Take action!
- You’ve considered the steps you need to take, now go forth and make it so.
- It can be daunting to get to this point and go forward.
- Hit send on that email. Make that call.
- You are ready to advocate!
Summary

• Any one can advocate when they feel empowered.
• Take it step-by-step and stay organized.
• Remember, advocating without solutions is just complaining.
• Keep it simple.
• It’s okay to take a break. Self-advocacy can be tiring. It’s okay if you don’t have a spoon to advocate today.
• Lupus Canada is here to help.
Questions?

• You have questions? I have answers!
• Reach out at info@lupuscanada.org with the subject line “Advocacy Question”.