
Culture Shock: Helping Your Student Adjust to the Online Classroom and Develop Lifelong Skills in the Process

A guided discussion by Libby Udelson and
Erika Hardaway



Welcome!

Goals for Today:

Participants will be able to

- **Define** “self-advocacy”
- **Implement** self-care and time-management techniques
- **Create** a plan to reduce the stress of online learning
- **Empower** themselves to shift their mindset from perfectionism to healthy striving





Agenda

1. Reframing Online Learning
2. Self-Advocacy 101
3. Self-Care 101
4. Concluding Thoughts, Q&A

About Us



Libby Udelson is a longtime ACT/SAT tutor approaching 12 years working with teenagers. She owns and runs Udelson Tutoring, which specializes in test prep and academic tutoring for high schoolers. She is based out of Santa Monica, CA.

Erika Hardaway is the Managing Dean of Students at Windsor Terrace Middle School (Prospect Schools Network). She also is an experienced consultant in the education field, specializing in anti-racist program development, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and grant writing. She is based out of Brooklyn, NY.



– Online learning vs. Disaster learning... online

- Online learning *can be* and often *is* an effective alternative to in-person school.
- This, however, is better understood not as online learning but *disaster* learning.



— How to cope with disaster learning?

Is there anything to be gained from my experience with online school?



Change, don't *lower*, expectations for your student and their education



- One effective way to reduce frustration is to alter expectations. But don't lower them!
- ...and practice patience!

Change, don't lower, expectations for your student and their education

- What fraction of the benefits of school can be successfully translated into online learning?
- Look beyond content knowledge.



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What skills do students build at school?



How to *change* expectations (again, not *lowering* them)

For today, let's focus on the skills our students can sharpen that are most relevant to the current circumstances:

1. Self-Advocacy
2. Self-Awareness
3. Self-Care



How to *change* expectations (again, not *lowering* them)

For today, let's focus on the skills our students can sharpen that are most relevant to the current circumstances:

1. **Self-Advocacy**
2. Self-Awareness
3. Self-Care



Self-Advocacy



self-ad·vo·ca·cy

/self 'advəkəsē/

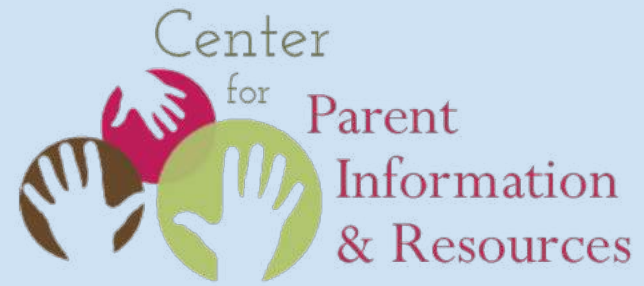
noun

1. the action of representing oneself or one's views or interests.

What does self-advocacy entail?

- Speaking up for yourself, asking for help
- Making life decisions for yourself
- Learning how to get information so that you can understand things that are of interest to you

Sources for this slide:



Students & Self-Advocacy

- Although many have learned from a young age to ask for help, many still do not do this.
- Several reasons students do not ask for help.



Why do students struggle to ask for help?

Reason #1: they don't ask "on principle"

- "I shouldn't need to ask for help. My teachers should know that I need it."
- "I shouldn't need to ask for help. It's my fault that I need help, so I just need to be better."



Why do students struggle to ask for help?

Reason #1: they don't ask "on principle"



"...I don't feel prepared for the APs in the slightest bit. But I shouldn't need a tutor if I focus in class"

- Real student, April 2020

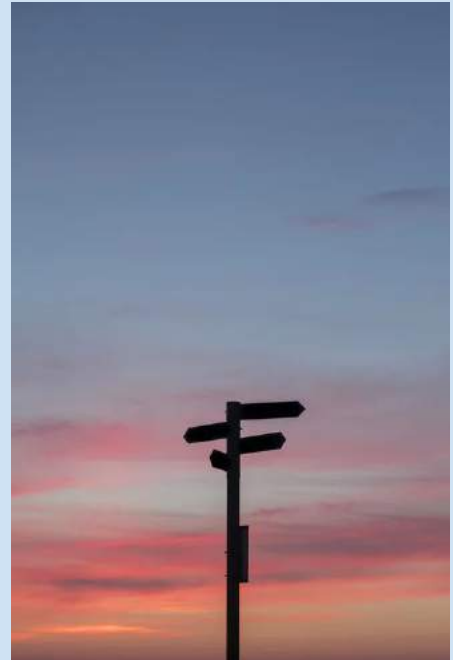
Why do students struggle to ask for help?

Responding to students who don't want help "on principle"

"Yes, and"

Example: "Yes, you're right. These circumstances are challenging. You should not have to be in this position..."

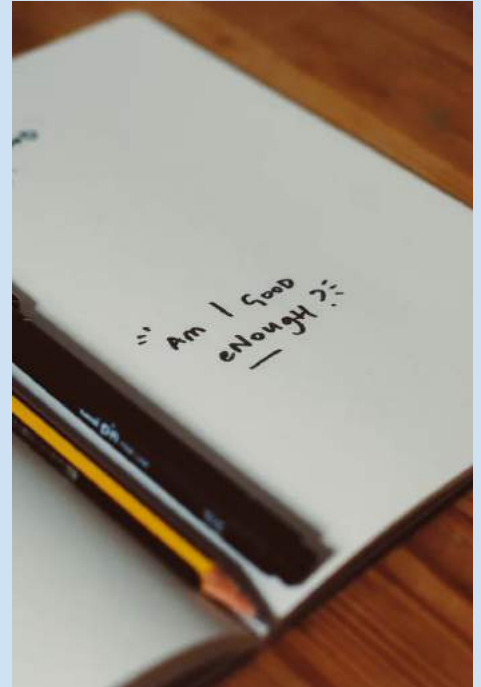
...and it's important that we find a way for you to feel like you are grasping the material, even if it means scheduling more time with your teacher or seeking outside help."



Why do students struggle to ask for help?

Reason #2: they are embarrassed/don't want to appear as if they require "special treatment"

- "I've never needed to meet with my teacher or get tutoring for school. That's for other kids, not me."
- "I know my teachers are doing the best they can, so I don't want to bother them. It's okay, I'll figure it out."



Why do students struggle to ask for help?

Responding to students who don't ask for help because they are embarrassed/feel undeserving



- **It's OK to need help.**
- **If you're having trouble, it's very likely that other students are having trouble as well.**

Why do students struggle to ask for help?

Reason #3: they don't know they need help/they aren't able to articulate what exactly is going wrong

- **"I feel like I have no idea what's going on, but my grade is fine, so that's what matters."**
- **"I told my teacher I don't get it, but when they ask me 'what don't you get', I don't know what to say."**

Why do students struggle to ask for help?

Reason #3: they don't know they need help/they aren't able to articulate what exactly is going wrong

- **"I feel like I have no idea what's going on, but my grade is fine, so that's what matters."** Careful - this type of thinking can lead to loss of motivation
- **"I told my teacher I don't get it, but when they ask me 'what don't you get', I don't know what to say."**

**Side note for the educators in the room:
Show vs. tell is key**

Did you know?

Oftentimes the students who need the most help are the least likely to ask for it.



Becoming a Stronger Self-Advocate

Self-Advocacy requires (some)
Self-Awareness.

In education, that **self-awareness** is called ***metacognition***.

Self-Advocacy requires Self-Awareness

Metacognition is “thinking about one’s thinking” or “awareness of one’s own awareness.”

Metacognition, for our purposes, refers to a student’s ability to adapt their learning to new contexts or tasks by thinking of themselves of learners in different contexts.



Thanks, Aristotle! ??

Self-Advocacy requires Self-Awareness



“Metacognitive practices help students become aware of their strengths and weaknesses as learners... A key element is **recognizing the limit of one’s knowledge or ability** and then **figuring out how to expand that knowledge or extend the ability.**”

–Nancy Chick of Vanderbilt University’s Center For Teaching

How can I help my student become more “metacognitive”?

Start by having them ask themselves questions such as

What is going well in online school?

In which classes do I feel I’m learning the most?

How is the format of those classes different from my other classes?

How can I help my student become more “metacognitive”?

Start by having them ask themselves questions such as

What components of in-person class do I miss?

Are there classes during which I zone out the most? Which ones are those, and do they have anything in common?

How do I know when a certain amount of homework is “too much”? How does my current homework load compare to my homework from before?

Let's open up the floor.



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Students: Think of the online class that you find to be most effective so far. Can you list some of the qualities of that class?



— Discuss: how might this awareness translate into stronger self-advocacy?



— Sample scenario: self-advocate by providing teacher feedback about their (online) class

Dear Ms. Hardaway,

Thank you for holding live Zoom classes online. The live classes are so helpful because it makes us feel like you care, which is really important right now.

I noticed that in one of my other classes, the teacher calls on us to participate in the middle of online class. I like that because it keeps me engaged and forces me to focus, which can be hard after sitting at my computer all day. Do you think you could start calling on us during class?

Otherwise I feel like I'm learning a lot and look forward to your class every day.

Thank you,
Student

— Sample scenario: self-advocate by providing teacher feedback about their (online) class

Dear Ms. Hardaway,

Start with something you appreciate

Thank you for holding live Zoom classes online. The live classes are so helpful because it makes us feel like you care, which is really important right now.

Politely provide feedback

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Specific solution

End with something you appreciate

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Students: how can you tell when your homework load has become "too much"?



Discuss: how might this awareness translate into stronger self-advocacy?



— Sample scenario: self-advocacy when there's too much homework

Dear Ms. Hardaway,

Thank you for giving us materials to keep us on track. The flexibility your class offers us is a welcome change from Zoom classes.

I noticed that when I do the homework for your class, it takes me a long time, and after doing the daily reading and watching the daily video, I feel like I learn less over time when I do the rest of the work and instead just get stressed out. Is there a way we could spread out these assignments more? Maybe we can alternate days when there is a video vs. a reading?

Otherwise I feel like I'm learning a lot and am thankful for how organized class is.

Sincerely,
Student

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Self-Advocacy Checklist

- ☐ **Self-Awareness:** Be aware of your strengths and weaknesses, have a clear goal in mind, and put your feelings into words (write them down or tell someone you feel comfortable with).
 - ☐ **Know your rights:** You have a right to take control of your education.
 - ☐ **Communicate:** Express your feelings and/or needs.
 - ☐ **Self-Care:** Congratulations! You've completed the daunting task of advocating for yourself. Now, you should take 10-15 minutes to do something relaxing. Self-care is key!
-

- # Strengthening Self-Advocacy in Sum
- Self-advocacy is a lifelong skill!
- Strong self-advocacy is informed by a deep sense of self-awareness or *metacognition*.
- The sudden switch to online school is an opportunity for students to take note of what works and what doesn't (in online school, and retrospectively, in the classroom)

– Strengthening Self-Advocacy in Sum

Last words of advice:

- Measure these school days not by *what* you learned, but by *how* you learned.
- Becoming more aware of what works for you *is* learning.
- Recognizing the limits of your knowledge *is* a form of learning, too!





The Importance of Self-Care



Neil Webb

@neilmwebb

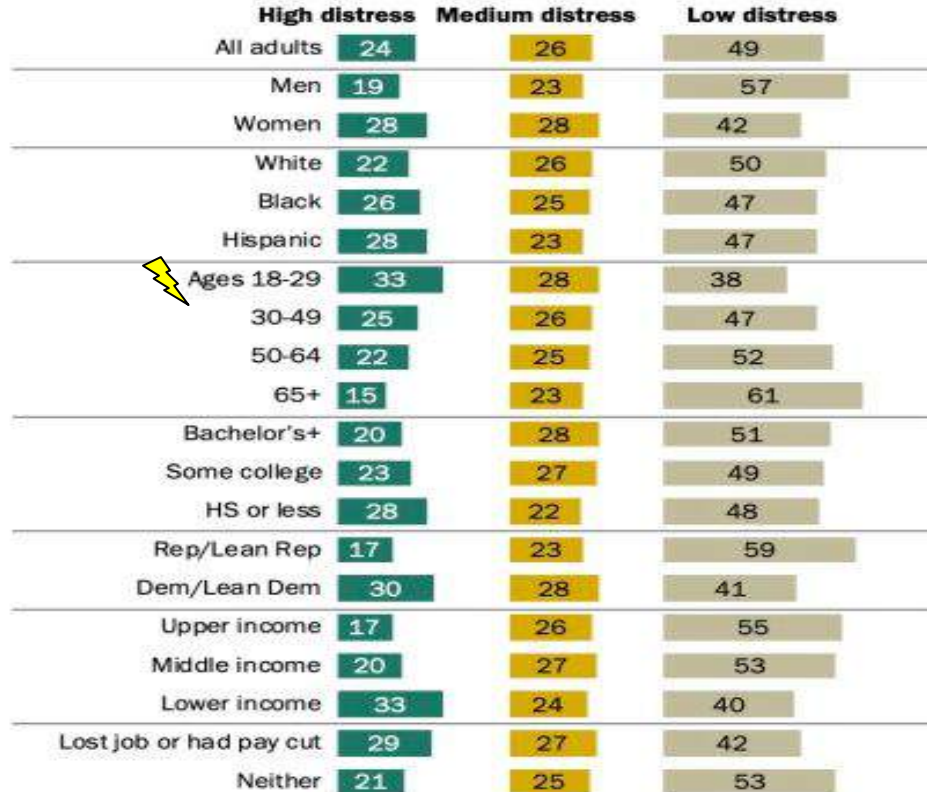
"You are not working from home; you are at your home during a crisis trying to work."

I've heard this twice today.
I think it's an important distinction worth emphasising.

1:39 am · 01 Apr. 20 · [Twitter Web App](#)

Young people and those financially affected by the outbreak are experiencing more psychological distress

% of U.S. adults who fall into each category of psychological distress



Let's look at a
chart from
the Pew
Research
Center

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What is your gut reaction to this data?



What does anxiety look like?

- **PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS:** headache, nausea, diarrhea, excessive sweating, shortness of breath, insomnia, panic attacks, exhaustion
 - **EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS:** feelings of anger, fear, helplessness, disappointment, mood swings, mental paralysis
 - **BEHAVIORAL/COGNITIVE:** difficulty concentrating, acting out in class, thinking about themselves negatively, comparing themselves to others negatively
-

“Understanding the difference between **healthy striving** and **perfectionism** is critical to laying down the shield and picking up your life. **Research shows that perfectionism hampers success.** In fact, it's often the path to depression, anxiety, addiction, and life paralysis.”

— Brené Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection*

Focus on healthy striving by...

- Using effective time management techniques
 - Making self-care and communication a part of your daily routine.
-

Ms. Hardaway's Time Management Tips

- Put your tasks for the day into categories: I **must**, I **will contact**___ for support, it **would be nice to**, I **must do** ____ to practice self-care (prioritize)
 - Use your calendar to support you- block off time for your “must” list AND your self-care list
 - Break big tasks into small ones
 - Minimize distractions & make sure you have everything you need to complete your work in one space
 - Think about what time of day you're most productive and block off work time in that window when possible
 - Use alarms to manage your breaks throughout the day
 - Organize your space
 - Manage your commitments--Say NO when you can :)
-

Which time-management technique will you try for the next 30 days?

"Must"/"Would be nice"/I will
contact.../Get self-care system

Blocking off time for
"Must"/Self-care

Break big tasks into small steps

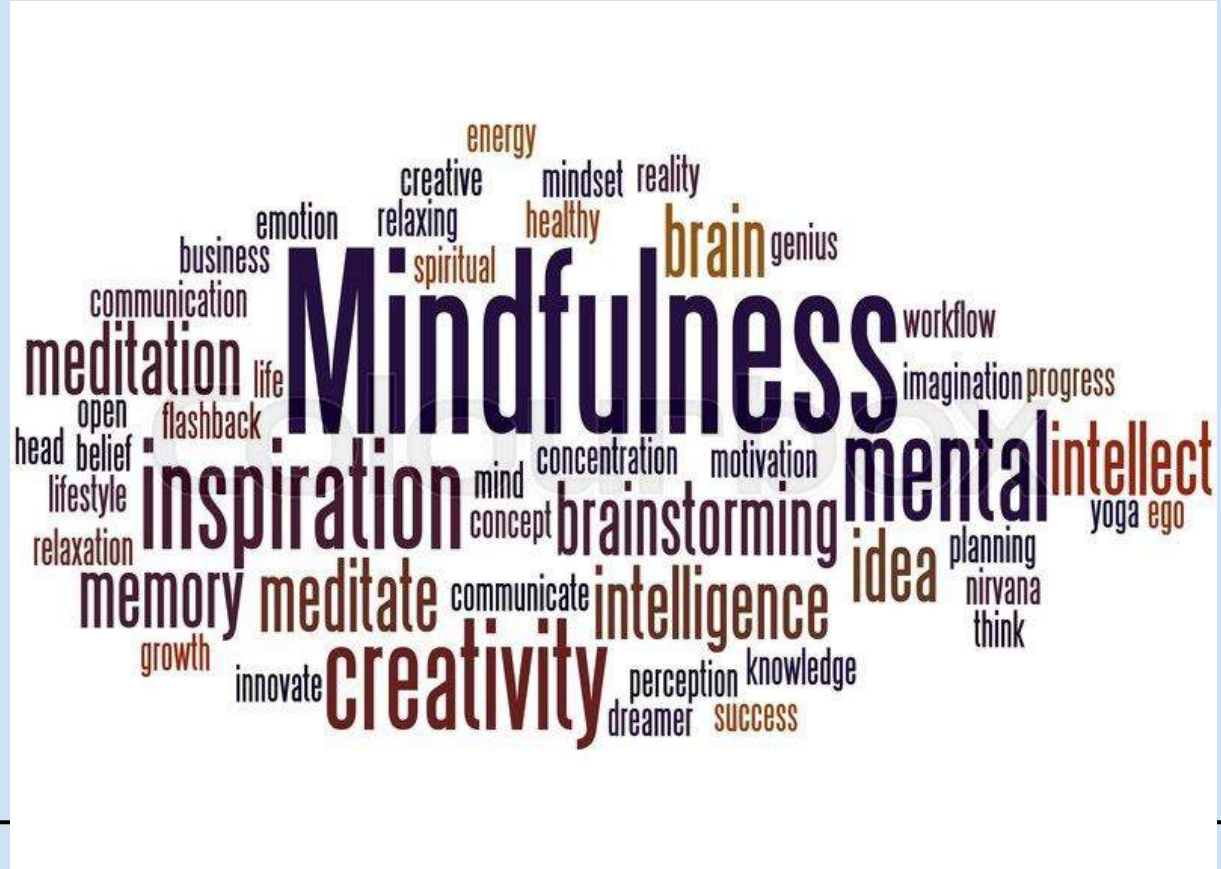
Minimize distractions by
organizing workspace

Say "NO" when you can



How can we make self-care a priority?

- Answer this question at the beginning of every week: what are you doing to take care of yourself this week? **Then, find an accountability partner.**
 - Reach out for help if you feel overwhelmed
 - Develop a mantra
 - Make room for mindfulness in your daily routine
-



Mantra example from an Intensati class *(note: mantras should be aspirational)*

- I am **powerful** beyond measure
 - I am **stronger** than I think
 - I am **braver** than I seem
 - I am **blessed** with all I need
-

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Final reflection: what are you taking away? What questions do you have?



Thank you!