

Suggestions and Helpful Reminders for SAPARS Advocates*

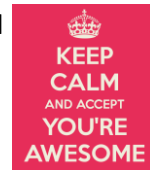
Personal processes that impact healthy advocacy skills:

- Know your personal biases
- Do your own work on your personal history and experiences (not while supporting another)
- Avoid assumptions, always (this takes lots of practice)
- Watch the judgments you make about people, places and things
- Practice on-going self-care
 - Define what self-care means to you
- Your choices may not be someone else's choices
 - Recognize how this feels for you
- Be familiar with your materials (helpline binder, emails re: specific callers, etc.)



When engaging with the people we serve:

- Introduce yourself simply and clearly
 - Many people don't know what SAPARS stands for, so saying the agency name is best
- Listen with your full attention, even to the 'hard stuff'
 - Be okay with pauses and silence
 - Don't rush people, allow them to gather their thoughts and to try to express them
- Set a calm, non-judgmental tone, including not sounding/acting/looking shocked
 - Advocates don't need to know everything to be effective
- Hear what is being said and what is being unsaid (verbally and non-verbally)
 - Paying attention to tone, inflection, vagueness, coded disclosures, etc.
- Discuss safety concerns
- Clarify when something is unclear
- Believe! even the unbelievable or when you find it difficult
 - Validate feelings, not specific situations
- Provide empathy and compassion with limits and boundaries
- Normalize reactions/impact without minimizing
 - Language is important, your verbal tone is everything!
- Listen for and reflect back growth, strengths, courage, and positive/healthy coping skills
- Be a sounding board
 - The people we serve will often come up with their own answers
- Discuss options and choices
 - Respect that the people we serve can make choices
- Reassure individuals about their rights
- Stay in your lane, know what hat you are wearing
 - Advocates do not give legal or medical advice and refrain from providing technical information and explanations of those processes
- Advocates don't fix things or take away problems
 - The people we serve need to be active participants as much as possible



- Discuss how to deal with unpleasant or harmful feelings/thoughts
 - What has worked in the past? What hasn't worked?
 - Brainstorm together
- Ask the tough questions about self-harm and suicide
 - Don't make someone else's crisis your own
 - Stay grounded and calm



**This list is not all inclusive, as advocacy is unpredictable and is a personalized process to the individual being served.*