



# Mini But Mighty Skills for Well-Being

*Self-Advocacy  
in the Face of Conflict*



American College of Physicians  
Leading Internal Medicine, Improving Lives

## Meet Our Lead Faculty



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## Learning Objectives

- Define self-advocacy and its role in conflict
- Implement the three pillars of self-advocacy
- Apply the DESC method to make clear requests

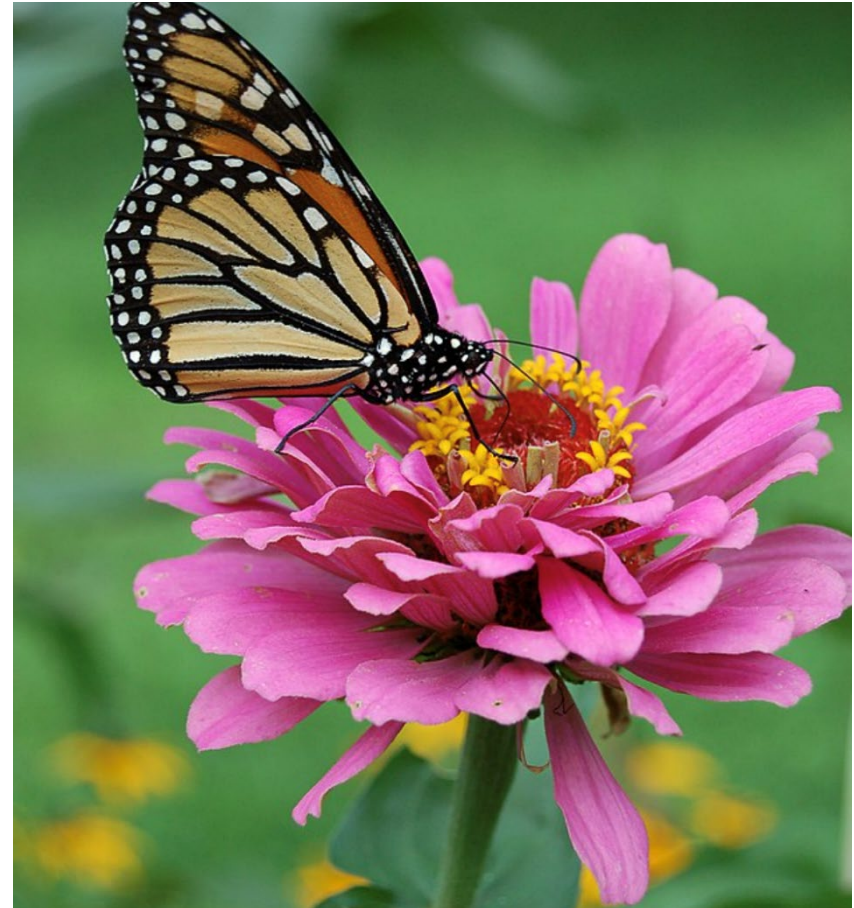


# Self-advocacy in the face of conflict

The power of clear communication

## What is Self-Advocacy

- Self advocacy is the ability to communicate your needs, rights and interests effectively.
- It is about you taking charge of your own life and ensuring that your voice is heard when decisions are being made about you.



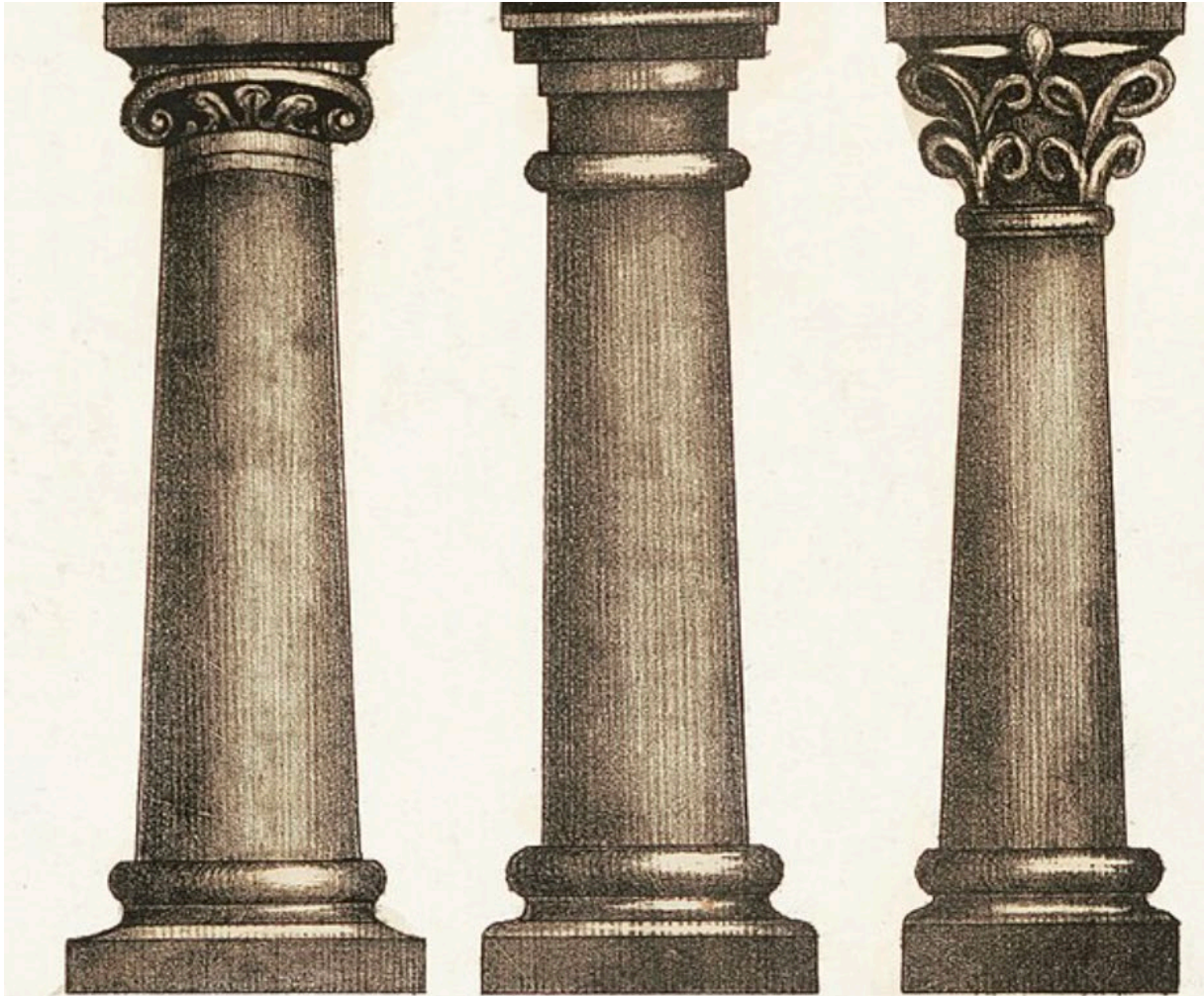
## The Challenges to Advocating for Yourself

- **Social conditioning:** The fear of being labeled “difficult or “not a team player”
- **Power dynamics:** Navigating the risk of speaking to those in authority
- **Conflict avoidance:** The urge to prioritize short-term peace over long term boundary setting.



## The Three Pillars of Self-Advocacy

1. Know yourself
2. Know what you need
3. Know how to get what you need



# Know Yourself

Values, Boundaries, Triggers



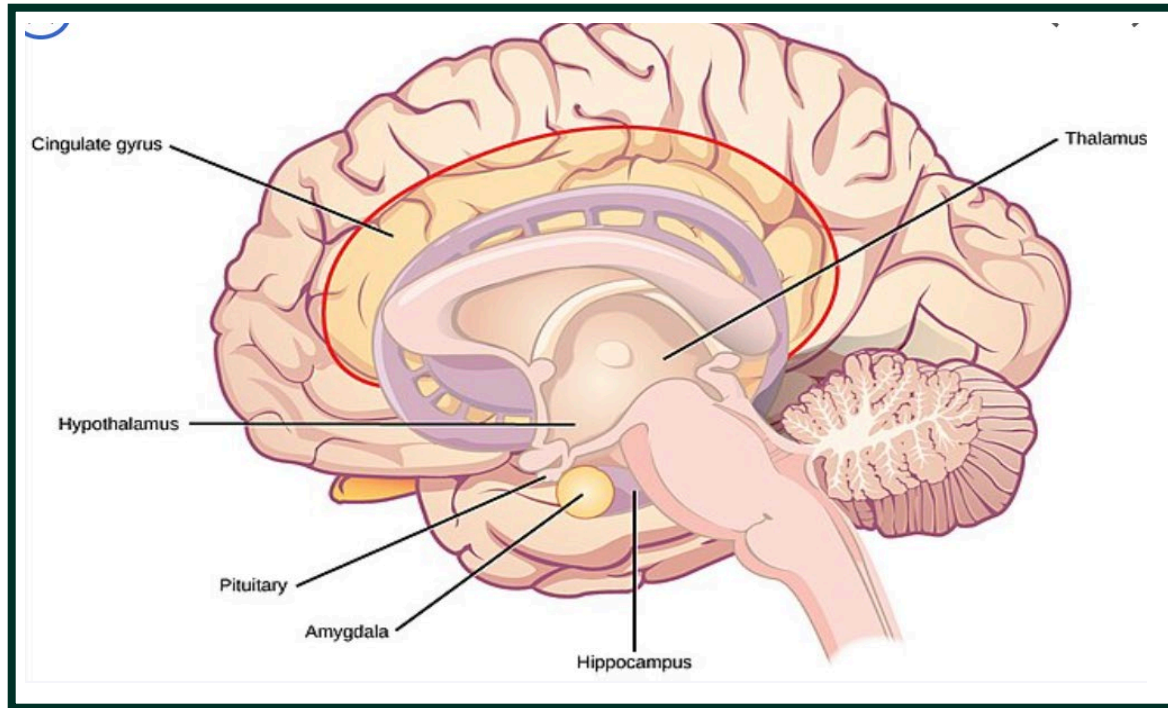
## Know Yourself

- Understand your values
- Identify your boundaries
- Recognize when you are emotionally triggered





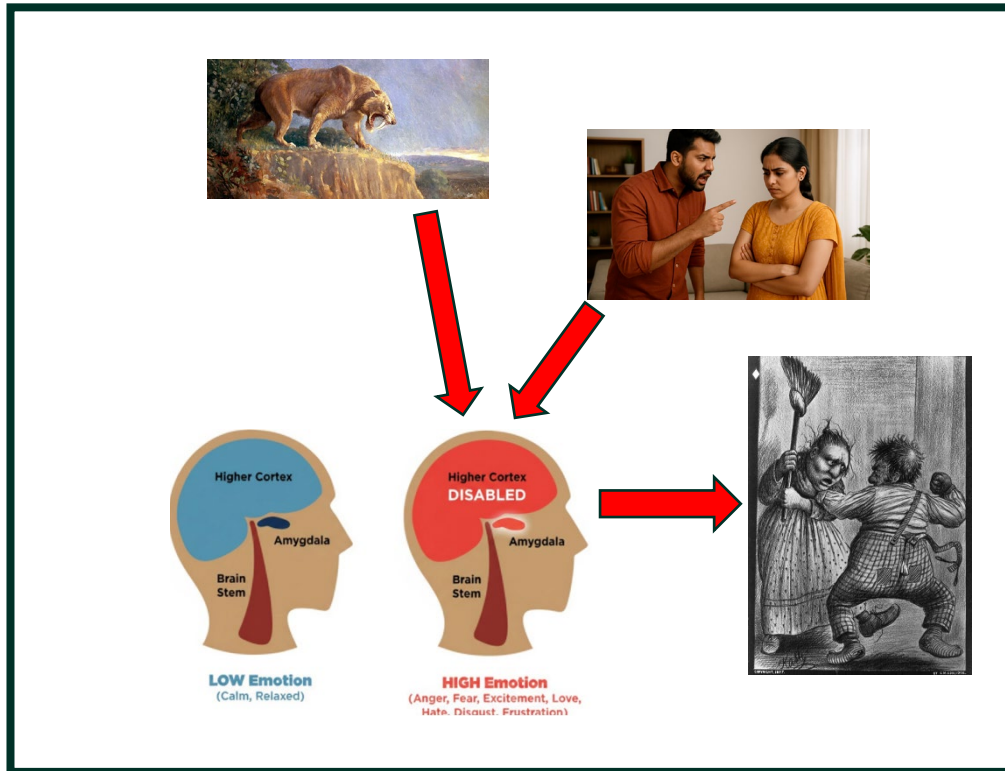
# The Biology of Conflict: The Amygdala Hijack



- The limbic system is the part of our brain involved in behavioral and emotional responses.
- The Amygdala is a major processing center for emotions, especially fear.



# The Biology of Conflict: The Amygdala Hijack

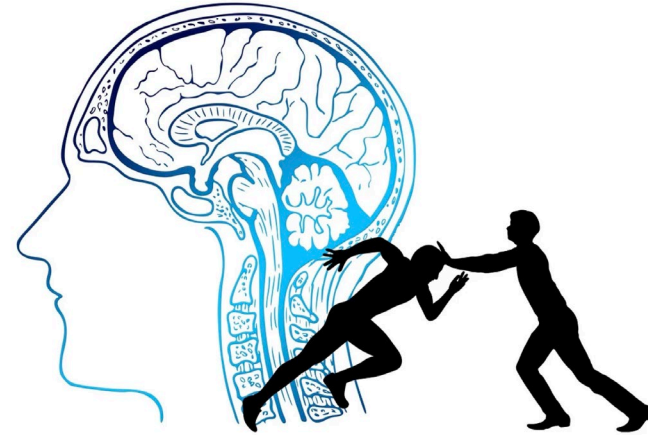


- The higher cortex, especially the frontal lobes, allows people to make rational decisions.
- When the Amygdala gets triggered, it can “hijack” the frontal lobes, actually shutting them (and our ability to think) down.
- When it matters most, we tend to do worst.



## The Top Reasons for the Amygdala Hijack

- Lack of respect
- Being treated unfairly
- Feeling unappreciated
- Feeling that you are not being listened to or heard
- Being held to unrealistic deadlines



## Managing the Hijack - Mastering Your Emotions

- Understand your triggers
- Notice that you are being triggered
- Acknowledge and label your feelings
- The Tactical Pause – Take a 5 second breath before talking



# Know Your Needs

You cannot advocate for what you haven't defined for yourself



## Know Your Needs

<b>From (the emotion)</b>	<b>To (the specific requirement)</b>
<b>Judging the person</b>	<b>Identifying the gap</b>
<i>“You are being controlling”</i>	<i>“I need more autonomy”</i>
<b>Leading with a feeling</b>	<b>Leading with a solution</b>
<i>“ I feel overwhelmed and stressed”</i>	<i>“I need two extra days to finish the project”</i>



**Know How to Get What You Need**



# The DESC method

Step	Action	Focus	Example
<b>Describe</b>	State the behavior objectively	Facts, dates, specific action	NO: you are always late YES: you were 15 minutes late to our meetings three times this month
<b>Express</b>	Share your feelings or the impact	Use “I” statements to show how it affects you	NO: I feel like you don’t care YES: I feel frustrated
<b>Specify</b>	State exactly what you want changed	Clear, actionable and measurable goals	YES: I need you to be on time for the meetings
<b>Consequences</b>	Outline the “if/then” results	Focus on the positive outcome of the change	YES: If you are on time, we can make sure that we cover the agenda and finish on time.



# Power Phrases

## Setting Boundaries (saying “no” without the guilt)

Instead of :”I am sorry, I am just so busy right now”

Try: “ I am not able to take on a new commitment right now, but I can check back in with you on ...”

## Navigating Interruptions

Instead of: Staying silent and feeling annoyed

Try: ”I’d like to finish this thought before we move on to the next point.”

## Addressing Disrespect or Conflict

Instead of: “You are being really rude.”

Try: “ I am happy to have this conversation, but I would like to do it when we can both speak calmly.”



# Summary

## The Three Pillars

- Know yourself
- Know your needs
- Know the strategy

## The DESC Method

- Describe the facts
- Express the impact
- Specify the change
- Consequences (positive outcomes)





## Access additional well-being resources

[www.acponline.org/minibutmighty](http://www.acponline.org/minibutmighty)

[www.acponline.org/wellbeing](http://www.acponline.org/wellbeing)

[www.acponline.org/supporthub](http://www.acponline.org/supporthub)

[www.acponline.org/coaching](http://www.acponline.org/coaching)

