



Westchester Institute
for Human Development

<https://www.wihd.org>

Welcome!

Community Support Network Transition Institute 2022

My journey of self-advocacy: Roadmap to Independence and Wellness

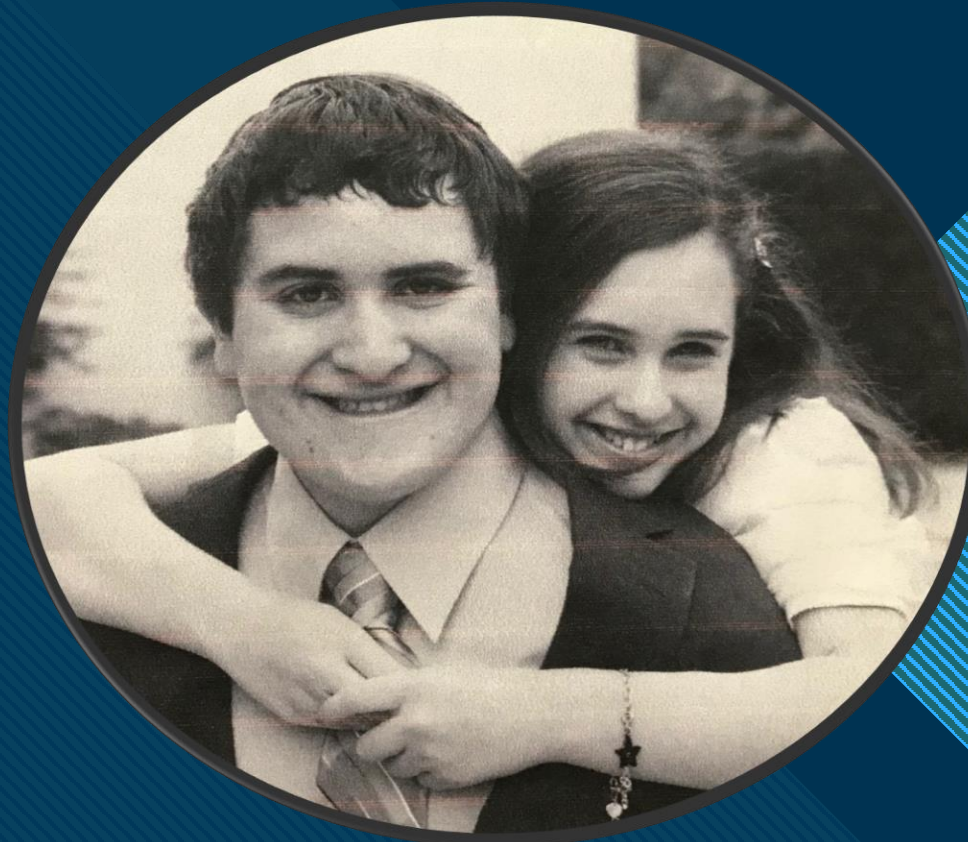


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Introducing myself

- A college student
- A son
- A brother
- A dog lover
- A certified fitness instructor
- A friend
- An employee at a financial company
- A young person living with a developmental disability

My family



My early years



The beginning of my special education journey.

- I was diagnosed with PDD/NOS (Pervasive Developmental Delay/ Not Otherwise specified) at 3 years old. This diagnosis falls now under the umbrella of Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- I have a very supportive family that was determined to help me achieve goals.
- I had good access to doctors and medical providers.
- I also had supportive therapists and teachers at school.



My inventory of skills:

Areas of difficulties

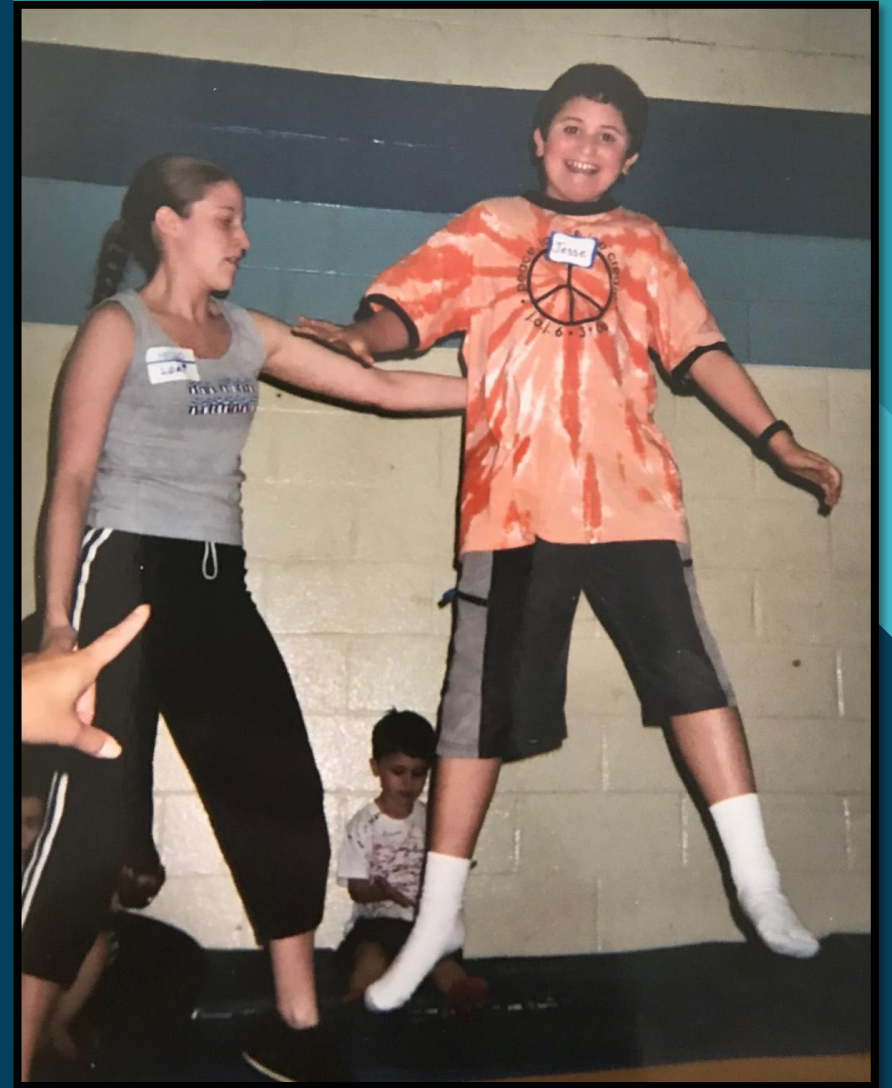
- Learning disabilities
- Communication challenges
- Poor comprehension
- Processing issues
- Social difficulties
- Sensory issues

Personal strengths

- Good motivation to accomplish goals
- Good memory
- Strong technology skills
- Musical
- Great math skills
- Good listening skills and positive attitude

Interventions/supports I had as a child:

- Speech therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Audio Integration Therapy
- I participated in an alternative sports league
- Adaptive skiing
- Special accommodations at school:
 - Alternatively assessed
 - Extra time in tests
 - Books on tape



Most of all...

I was a busy kid, loved learning, liked challenging myself and was surrounded by people who believed in me and encouraged me to keep trying.



There were bumps along the road

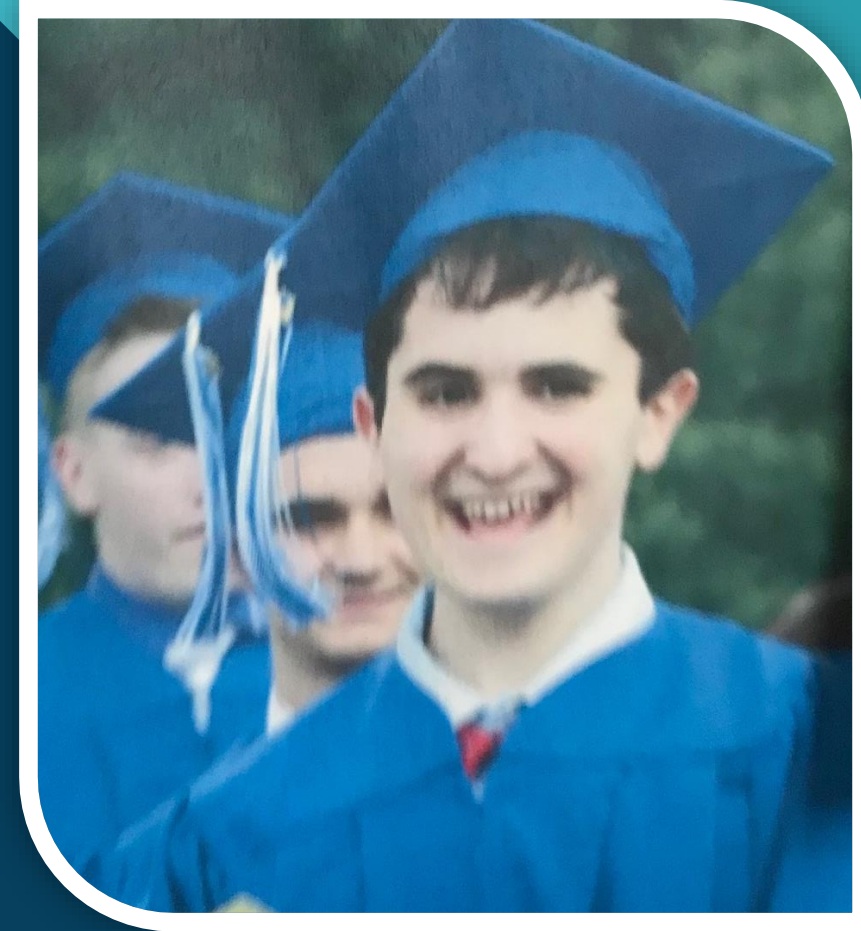
- I experienced bullying at school
- There were times when I tried to participate in activities and it didn't work
- I had a hard time showing my personality and connecting with others.
- I was afraid of balloons and bells.
- Life could be overwhelming at times

A time of change and transformation

- During adolescence I showed a desire for bigger challenges
- I was more confident as a student
- My areas of strength in math were more evident
- I was a better learner both at school and in my community activities.

A high school diploma

- This was the beginning of my self-advocacy journey
- I participated in my IEP meeting
- We looked for educational programs that would support my goal of graduating with a regular high school diploma vs. a life skills diploma.
- I started at Eastchester High School at 16 with the goal of graduating with a high school diploma



A high school diploma

- I was tested on my strengths and was placed in a financial accounting class
- I was required to take NYS Regents exams. I had never taken tests.
- I was scared but determined to work hard to achieve my goals
- I graduated at 20 years old with a Local High School diploma



After high school

- I attended Westchester Community College and graduated with an Associates Degree in Accounting
- I became certified to teach kickbox, Zumba, spinning and senior fitness
- I became a licensed driver
- I got involved in self-advocacy
- I work at Clarfled Citizens Group as an Investment Assistant.

“If it doesn’t challenge you, It
doesn’t change you.

Get out of your comfort zone”

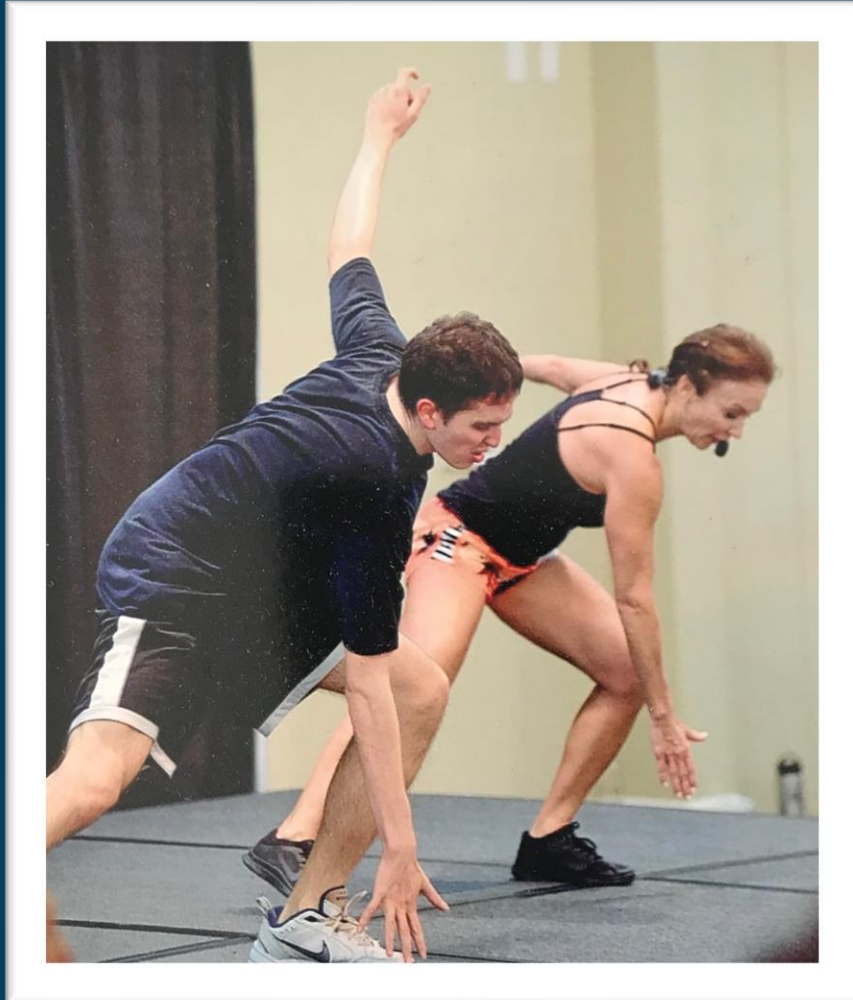


My love for Zumba

Turning a childhood interest into a career



Believe in your dreams!



Get Cathe Streaming

Get Instant Access to the Entire Cathe Friedrich Video Exercise Library!

A photograph of Cathe Friedrich in a boxing class. She is wearing a black t-shirt with "The BOSS" written on it, black boxing gloves, and checkered leggings. She is in a dynamic boxing stance, with one arm raised and the other bent. Other participants are visible in the background, also in a boxing class setting.

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Watch on Your Computer or with Our Mobile Device Apps...

- ✓ Your Favorite Web Browser
- ✓ Apple iOS and iPadOS
- ✓ Google Android

Or Our Apps on Your Big Screens

What helps me succeed?

BUILDING HABITS THAT SUPPORT OUR SUCCESS

- Know your strengths
- Build a team around your goals – different people help you in different ways.
- Spend time doing things that you love and keep you healthy – I love fitness and it helps me feel my best.
- Think about all aspects of your life: a healthy diet, good habits, good sleep.
- You don't have to accomplish everything at lightning speed – Trace your own path to success.

Being part of a community

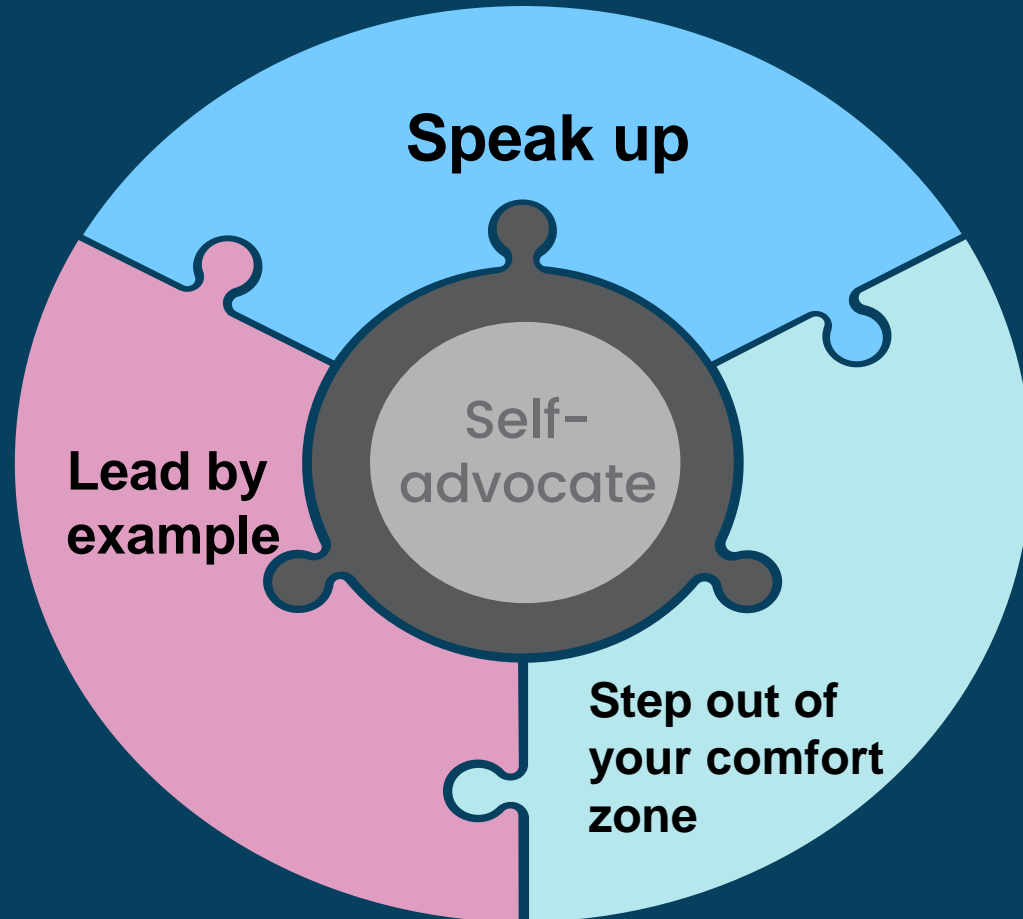
Finding ways to be a valuable member of your community

- My first community is my family
- I teach Zumba to several groups: Adults and children.
- I go to fitness conventions where I meet people that love fitness as much as I do.
- I share my journey as a self-advocate.

Find your community!

**What does it mean to
be a self-advocate?**

What does it mean to be a self-advocate?






Speak up

- ❑ Being a self-advocate means that I tell people what I might need to be successful in an activity.
- ❑ It means asking lots of questions, taking risks and being confident in what you need to be successful.

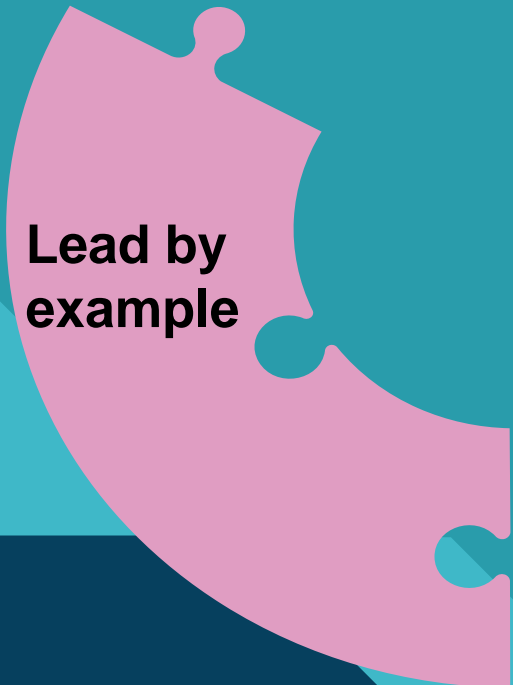
❑ Sometimes it feels easier to not speak up. If I want to achieve my goals, I need to practice stepping out of my comfort zone to let people know what I need.

❑ I have to be confident that what I am asking for will be meaningful in my path, that it will help me achieve my goals.



**Step out of
your comfort
zone**

- Being a self-advocate means showing people what I can accomplish.
- When people see me achieving my goals, it teaches them to expect more from people with disabilities.
- By sharing my journey, I encourage other self-advocates to speak up, take risks and ask for what they need.



**Lead by
example**

My journey towards physical health

Interacting with medical providers

My medical journey

- As a child, I interacted with several doctors and medical providers.
- I was encouraged by my family to speak up and participate to the extent that I could.
- My first recollection of self-advocacy happened during a dental appointment.
- I listen to suggestions but always adapt things to fit my lifestyle.

What helps me be successful at medical appointments?

- Get to know your doctor before your appointment.
- Plan the day of your appointment
- Write down all my symptoms and questions before the appointment

Before the appointment

What helps me be successful at medical appointments?

During the appointment

- I let my doctors know that I need to take notes during the appointment. I offer them a choice to record them if they don't want to wait for me to take notes
- Ask about ways to get follow up questions answered
- Ask about a patient portal and who can help you get it started

After the appointment

- Discuss your appointment with someone in your circle of support that can help you process the information you received
- Ask your follow up questions
- Make a plan on how to implement the recommendations.

“Being assertive does not mean to be angry or rude. Ask politely for what you need, know your rights, and remember that you always have options.”

Jesse

Every day has the potential to be a great day!



Questions?

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