Creating Access - Claire Bertholli

Claire: Self-advocacy means looking out for yourself and speak up for yourself and your rights and not feel intimidated or scared. At uni, I speak up for myself by sending an email out to all my lecturers and that outlines ways which they can support me. I make sure that rooms are accessible and that my assessments are accessible, too. I also mentor with youth that are disengaged from schooling. I help them by giving them advice as how to advocate for themselves and just making sure that they know that I'm there if they need help. I have learnt to kind of ask for what I want and work out what I want. And, yeah, that's taken a process and a little while to figure out. Society is still very biased and ableist, but then you've got to kind of think about how you can make that better or change things. I think that's something I can do and I'm very passionate about that because not everyone feels confident to do it and I know there's days where I don't feel confident doing it. Self-advocacy can weigh you down a lot if you're not supported and there's certain times where you've just got to pick your battles and when you do advocate, 'cause it can get very tiring and frustrating. Very frustrating. I think people don't advocate for themselves because they either don't know how to so don't have the tools or the experience or they might be anxious to, which we all understand. I think everyone can advocate for - find a way to advocate for themselves in some way. Even if it's really, really small you've got to at least just start. Do something. The biggest thing I think I've learned is that people actually listen to you when advocate. People actually care about what you have to say and that is the issue that people don't think that people will listen to them or that it'll lead to any changes, but it does. Even in small amounts, it does, and it's really good when that happens.

Graphic: Download free self-advocacy resources at [www.creatingaccess.org.au](http://www.creatingaccess.org.au)