

# Experiences of Self-advocacy Behaviors Extend Beyond Seeking Academic Accommodations for Undergraduates with Learning and Attention Disabilities

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DOI: [10.5014/ajot.2023.77S2-RP3](https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2023.77S2-RP3)

Date presented: April 20, 2023

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**PURPOSE:** Self-advocacy (SA) research for undergraduates with learning disabilities and attention disorders (LD/ADHD) focuses on advocacy related to requesting academic accommodation. Little is understood for supporting SA across all critical contexts (e.g., social) of young adulthood. The purpose was to 1) explore SA behaviors that undergraduates with LD/ADHD employ outside of garnering academic accommodations (non-accommodation SA) and 2) identify the contexts in which SA behaviors occur.

**DESIGN:** A qualitative descriptive design was used.

**METHOD:** Thematic analysis was used to analyze existing individual interview transcripts (N = 15); data were collected to inform the habits and routines of undergraduates with LD/ADHD enrolled in a larger study. Open coding was used to identify text describing SA-related experiences. Codes were reduced to conceptual themes through an iterative process of discussion among multiple coders, code refinement, and constant comparison to the data. Rigor was enhanced by peer debriefing and achieving coding consensus.

**RESULTS:** The purpose of non-accommodation SA included 1) garnering psychological/emotional support, and 2) intentionally orchestrating situations to foster performance, and manage and minimize symptoms. Non-accommodation SA behaviors included both overt behaviors and subtle actions. Overt behaviors included explicitly requesting needed social support. Subtle actions included using personality descriptors (e.g., scatterbrain) to explain social performance to others. SA behaviors were described for supporting occupational performance in daily tasks, health and wellness, and social contexts.

**CONCLUSION:** The multifaceted nature of non-accommodation SA actions highlights areas for future SA research and suggests potential areas for SA skill development.

**IMPACT:** OTs can support SA skill development and use to facilitate young adults' occupational performance.

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