



July 18

Tips for Making Our Concerns and Voices Heard by Policymakers

We will share and discuss tips and tools self-advocacy groups use to help their members speak up.

Your Legislator
is ...
...just like you



#1 Goal is to Build a Relationship with your legislator based on trust

Having a relationship with your legislator
before you have to ask for them to do
something makes it easier to ask for a
favor.



You are meeting with a PERSON

- Your person will want to know why you are interested in an issue.
- Focus on your REAL REASON, not the data.
- Connect your issue to your values, your hopes for the future, or your experience.
- Be specific and clear about any requests you are making.



Top Tips for Working with Your Person

- Keep your emotions in check. Crying or yelling is not a good idea. Think about it.
- Try to find out the best time to provide useful information.
- Be respectful of the rules and the people you are dealing with.
- Be clear in your requests and feedback.
- Be prepared when meeting with your person or testifying.



What to do if you feel angry or upset during meetings. It is important as a leader to manage your emotions. This tip will help you calm down and focus on getting your message across.

Let's do some Toe Curls

- Put your feet flat on the ground
- Curl your toes.
- Hold it for 10 seconds. (or pinch your leg if you are not able to curl your toes).
- This redirects your brain from feeling angry and relaxes your body.
- It also helps to take a deep breath. This helps you focus on the meeting.



Remember:

The TOP GOAL for meetings is to build a relationship.

Be yourself. Have a real conversation.

**You want to make your key points,
AND you want to make a personal
connection with the Person.**



Be prepared

- Practice what you are going to say.
- Make a plan on how you will stay calm and respectful.
- It is your job to keep the meeting on track when they start talking about something else.



Sample Agenda for a LEGISLATOR Meeting

Introduce yourself with just a few sentences.

- Say your full name, where you live and one interesting thing about yourself.
- The Person might ask questions here, to be friendly.
Keep answers short and keep the intros moving along.

Then, ask them to introduce themselves.

- If the Person says something that you don't understand you can ask a question, but keep it short.

Thank the Person for taking the time to meet with you.



Sample Agenda for a LEGISLATOR Meeting

- Tell the Person why you asked for the meeting
- VERY BRIEFLY describe the issue that is important to you.
- Have a factsheet to give them at the end of the meeting. Don't give them a giant packet of information. One piece of paper is plenty.
- Have a pen available, in case they want to take notes.



Sample Agenda for a LEGISLATOR Meeting

- Ask them how they are going to vote on your issue,
- Write down all questions they ask - even if you answer them right away
- Do NOT argue with the Person. Just listen and clarify or answer questions if needed.
- Let them know you want to continue the conversation with them, and that you will email them with some additional materials.
- Send your email as soon as you can after your meeting, so you don't forget, and you have their questions fresh in your mind.



Sample Agenda for a LEGISLATOR Meeting

- Thank the Person for their time and for listening to you.
- If they showed support, thank them for that support.
Let them know you look forward to working with them on your issue.
- If they are opposed, don't agree, thank them for listening and tell them you will continue to be available to answer questions.
- Ask the Person if they have any additional questions or requests from you. The more you can act as a resource, the better your relationship will be.



Get Ready – Decide what you want to say

Before you have your meeting, think about each part of the meeting and write down what you want to say.

You will need a few sentences to introduce yourself and your issue.

Also, write down 3 important things you want to make sure you say in the meeting.

And write down *Thank You* so you don't forget to say it.



Remember: Your Story Is Interesting & Important

Focus on your Happy Ending.
Talk about what you want, rather
Then what you do not want

Why...Why...Why...
But don't just say what you
want. Tell them Why you want it!

Always tell the truth





Get Ready for the meeting

- Keep the meeting short 20-30 minutes total.
- All the people at the appointment with the legislator should talk ahead of time and agree on who you will say..
- Be sure to allow the legislator some time to talk.
Remember a key goal is to build a relationship, even if they don't agree with you right off.

Stay on message – use pivots if necessary

- I see your point. The way I look at it is...
- That's a good question. (pause) Here's how I think about this issue...
- The important thing to remember is...



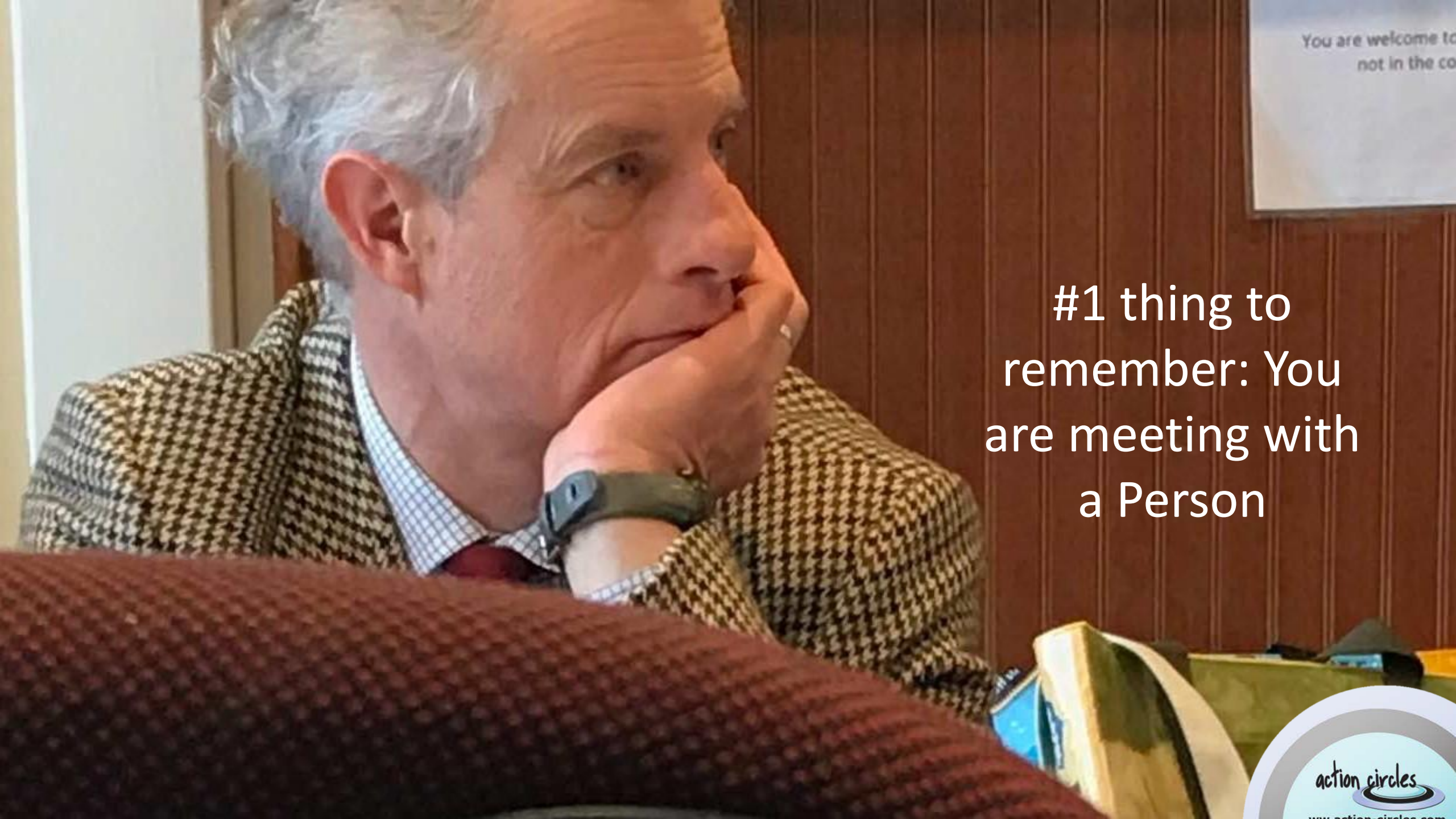
Follow up if you don't know the answer

When you are talking with your legislator about issues that are important to you, you don't have to know everything.

It is helpful to understand what is happening in their decision-making process and some things about them as people.

It is ALWAYS ok to say you don't know the answer and to let them know you will follow up with the answer.





#1 thing to
remember: You
are meeting with
a Person