

Self-Defense Rights and Responsibilities

Knowing our rights helps us to think about how we deserve to be treated, and how all people deserve to be treated. Being aware of our rights can help us advocate or take action for ourselves, our friends, and/or people in our communities. As we know, in our society everyone does not have equal rights. Some people have more rights than others based on race and ethnicity, how much money you have, and/or your sexual preference and gender identity, to name a few categories. Thinking about and acting on our responsibilities to ourselves and to others can help us live in a way that promotes respect and equality for all.

SELF-DEFENSE RIGHTS

I have the right...

1. To be treated with respect and as an equal
2. To feel safe and not be harmed physically or emotionally
3. To decide who can touch me and when I'm comfortable being touched
4. To say yes, to say no, and to change my mind, at any time
5. To express my identities on my own terms
6. To have a clean and safe place to live, and if in a temporary housing situation, to be housed in one that matches my gender identity
7. To be safe using a bathroom that matches my gender identity
8. To safer sex
9. To end a relationship
10. To refuse a client, or negotiate with a client pushing your boundaries
11. To get support even if I have caused harm to myself or others
12. To change my name on my birth certificate
13. To good health care and counseling and to feel safe and respected in hospitals and emergency rooms
14. To a job and respect at work, and/or an education and respect at school
15. To say who I am and act on my own behalf without being afraid of harmful consequences

SELF-DEFENSE RESPONSIBILITIES

I have the responsibility to...

1. Decide my boundaries and communicate them

2. Respect the boundaries of others
3. Think about my actions to see whether they have positive or negative results for me
4. Practice safer sex
5. Treat others with respect and try not to cause physical or emotional harm
6. Recognize the difference between short-term gains (how I might be tempted to respond in the moment) and long-term goals (the response that will best serve me in the situation, and keep me as safe as possible)
7. Speak directly to people I am having trouble with instead of behind their back
8. Help others by supporting them and sharing with them what I have learned
9. Respect the guidelines of any community or organization I choose to be a part of, and if I do not think the guidelines are fair, discuss this with the appropriate person