



# cracking the mask

From “**Advocating as Student**”  
to “**Advocating for Students**”  
in my Early Career

OCUL Accessibility Symposium 2.0  
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# Emma Bullerwell

she/they

Former Library Accessibility Services  
Assistant, Queen's University Library

BA in Music, Acadia University, 2022

[Find me on LinkedIn](#)



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# honouring place

emotionally  
physically  
positionally



Kespukwtk and Sipekne'katik in Mi'kma'ki /  
Yarmouth & Acadian Shores and  
Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia  
Unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq peoples.

honouring  
where we  
are



Katarokwi / Kingston, Ontario  
Traditional territory of the Anishinabek,  
Haudenosaunee, and the Huron-Wendat peoples.

honouring  
where we  
have been

# today's topics

- What is the mask?
- Recipe for self-advocation
- How do we advocate for a culture of inclusion?
- How can we support a culture of inclusion?

# the mask

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“Masking” is the conscious or unconscious attempt to conceal neurodivergent traits.

This allows the neurodivergent individual to appear neurotypical.





# recipe for self-advocation

## Ingredients:

- confidence
- crack the mask
- communication



# CONFIDENCE

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*What does effective confidence look like?*

- Acceptance
- Anti-ableist action
- Discovery

Emma @ 22 years old

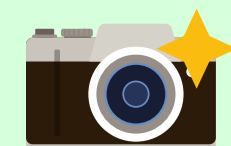


photo taken April 2022

# CRACK THE MASK

*What does effectively cracking the mask look like?*

- Setting boundaries
- Finding language that you are comfortable with
- Dismantling shame around your disability



# CRACK THE MASK: CONTINUED

“As a neurodivergent person, my daily life is affected by my disability. I believe people with disabilities should be in positions assisting those with accessibility needs, because **we understand what it is like to ask for, fight for, and receive support.**”

Queen’s Library Accessibility Services Assistant Cover Letter, August 2022

# COMMUNICATION

*What does effective communication look like?*

- Speaking your truth
- Standing up for yourself and others
- Making space for accommodation



how do we  
**advocate** for  
a culture of  
inclusion?

- Get **LOUD**
- Get **CREATIVE**
- **LEAD** by example
- **DISCOVER** what other institutions & activists are doing

# how do we **support** a culture of inclusion?

- **CONSCIOUSLY** work towards a culture of inclusion
- **LISTEN** carefully
- Allow for **INNOVATIVE** solutions
- **REPLICATE** best practices
- Regularly **CONVERSE** about inclusion



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Masking is a survival tool, but so is advocacy.
- You do not have to disclose to be a good advocate.
- Confidence in advocacy improves confidence in self-advocacy, and vice-versa.
- Advocating for a culture of inclusion requires innovative action. Educate yourself and lead with best practices.
- Supporting a culture of inclusion requires a conscious effort, an open mind, and a willingness to change.

*“nothing about us without us”*

“I get by with a little help  
from my friends...”

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*A warmest “thank you” to those who have  
taken a chance on me and supported me  
throughout my career so far.*